



A CLOSER LOOK

AT THINGS PERTAINING TO THE FAITH

February 2003 Special Issue

Praise for the Lord An Interview with John Wiegand

(Editorial note: What follows is an interview I conducted with John Wiegand, one of the compilers of this relatively new song book. If you are looking for a song book to replace the ones you currently use, you may want to check out this one titled *Praise for the Lord*.)

STEVE: Why another song book?

JOHN: We wanted to sing from a hymnbook that featured both the great, classic hymns and the best of the contemporary praise songs, all arranged for congregational, *a cappella* use. Although *Great Songs of the Church* was quite out of date by the 1990s, many of us had enjoyed singing from it in our youth, and we hoped to produce a hymnbook that would match its excellence.

STEVE: In an earlier phone conversation you said that some songs were not written with *a cappella* use in mind. What does the phrase “a cappella” mean? And can you give me an example or two of songs that were not written with “a cappella use” in mind?

JOHN: The term *a cappella* now means “without instrumental accompaniment.” In the original Italian, it means “in church style,” indicating that, at the time the term was coined, singing in the church was distinguished by the absence of musical instruments. Some of the hymns that we sing were written for the melody to be sung in unison,

and the harmony to be present only in instrumental parts. Some examples of this are:

- 679 - *They'll Know We Are Christians*
- 927 - *He Is Able*
- 935 - *I Have Called You by Your Name*
- 972 - *Sing of the Lord's Goodness*

An example of an older song that, for its stanzas, was dependent on instrumental harmonies is:

- 37 - *Angry Words*

STEVE: What accounts for some of the changes you have made to some of the songs? For example, in 321 “If Jesus Goes With Me” you have “sunshine” in the first verse where other books have “desert.” In “This World is not My Home” you omit verse 3 and in 351 “Jesus is Coming Soon” you omit verse 2.

JOHN: Generally, we have tried to present each hymn with its original words. When a stanza of a hymn is inconsistent with Scripture, we have dropped that stanza rather than modify the words. For example, the original words of the end of the second stanza of 682 “To God Be the Glory” are:

The vilest offenders who only believe
That moment from Jesus a pardon receive.

All the previous hymnbooks in use in churches of Christ re-write these words with varying degrees of awkwardness. We deleted the entire stanza.

In 351 “Jesus Is Coming Soon,” the second

stanza states that there will be signs of Christ's return. This conflict with 1 Th. 5 arises from a misinterpretation of Mt. 24. The signs relate to the destruction of Jerusalem, not Christ's return. We again deleted the entire stanza.

In 684 "This World Is Not My Home," the third stanza had previously been edited by hymnbook compilers. We deleted the entire stanza.

In 321 "If Jesus Goes with Me," you have discovered a typographical error that no one had yet called to our attention. We had not intended to substitute "sunshine" for "desert."

In a few cases, we left the words changed because the changed version had become fully accepted. For example, in 238 "Holy, Holy, Holy," the original words to the end of stanzas 1 and 4 is: God in Three Persons, Blessed Trinity.

This hymn's first appearance in a hymnbook used by churches of Christ was in an 1882 book compiled and published by the Fillmore Brothers. One of their source books was *Hymn Tune & Service Book* (1879). This source book was edited by Unitarians, who would have objected to the original words. In this source book, the end of stanza 1 and 4 is the now-familiar: "...God over all and blest eternally."

The source book does not note that its compilers had edited the text. The Fillmores apparently identified "Holy, Holy, Holy" from this Unitarian book as a hymn they should include in their own book. Not knowing that the text of the hymn had been edited, they adopted the edited version. Interestingly, the Fillmores had no objection to the term or concept of the Trinity. In fact, their hymnbooks included other hymns that referred to the Trinity. The hymnbooks of the Fillmore Brothers, in turn, became source books for most later hymnbooks used in churches of Christ. E.L. Jorgenson used the modified version of "Holy, Holy, Holy" in *Great Songs of the Church*, and, consequently, the modified version became the standard version in the brotherhood. We use the modified version, but note that the original text is altered and identify the source of the alteration.

STEVE: When I was a child I learned to read music playing a musical instrument. When I first began worshiping God in song as a young adult I remember noticing that the notes in the church songbook were "misshaped." I assumed it was due to poor printing. Someone finally clued me in on "shaped notes." Since you have published a songbook using them would you explain to the reader what "shaped notes" are and their value.

JOHN: Shaped notes are used by churches that engage in a *cappella*, congregational singing. This includes not only churches of Christ, but also Mennonite Churches, Primitive Baptist Churches and some Free Will Baptist Churches.

Shaped notes are very useful to non-professional singers in reading harmony parts. Unlike the placement of a note on a staff, which shows the pitch in an absolute sense, shaped notes show pitch relative to the key in which the hymn tune is written. For example, the triangle shape is used for the hymn's tune key (the "do" of "do, re, mi, fa, so, la, ti do"). If a hymn tune is written in the key of C, every C in the hymn tune, whether soprano, alto, tenor or bass, will have the triangle shape. If a hymn tune is written in the key of F, every F in the hymn tune will have the triangle shape. Likewise, the third tone of the scale ("mi") is always indicated by the diamond shape. If a hymn tune is written in the key of C, every E will have the diamond shape. If a hymn tune is written in the key of F, every A will have the diamond shape. Many members of churches of Christ who sing harmony with reasonable accuracy do so by relative pitch.

STEVE: There are six indices in your songbook. Four of them are self-explanatory; Authors, Composers, Sources; Scripture; Topics; First Line & Titles. But would you explain the value of the other two indices: Tunes, Metrical and Tunes, Alphabetical.

JOHN: The tunes for hymns, in contrast to gospel songs, have names of their own. Many of these names reflect the country of the tunes' origin. For example, LOBE DEN HERREN originated in

Meter

Lyricist

Title

Composer

Name of Tune

442
664,666-4
Ray Palmer, 1830

My Faith Looks Up to Thee

OLIVET
Lowell Mason, 1832

1. My faith looks up to Thee, Thou Lamb of Cal - va - ry, Sav - ior di - vine;
2. May Thy rich grace im - part Strength to my faint - ing heart, My zeal in - spire;
3. When life's dark maze I tread, And griefs a - round me spread, Be Thou my guide;
4. When ends life's transient dream, When death's cold, sullen stream Shall o'er me roll,

{ Now hear me while I pray }
{ Take all my guilt a - way; } O let me from this day Be whol - ly Thine
{ As Thou hast died for me, }
{ O may my love to Thee } Pure, warm, and changeless be - A liv - ing fire.
{ Bid dark - ness turn to day, }
{ Wipe sor - row's tears a - way, } Nor let me ev - er stray From Thee a - side.
{ Blest Sav - ior, then in love, }
{ Fear and dis - trust re - move; } O bear me safe a - bove, A ran - somed soul.

Treble Clef

Bass Clef

Key Signature

Notice the shape of the notes:
Some are triangle, some square
and others cone like.



