

The Music Herald

*“Teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.”
Colossians 3:16*

A “Well Adapted” Hymn Book

Carried about in the hands and tucked away in the hearts of countless people scattered across America is an unassuming but remarkable little hymnbook. It is a little black book only six inches tall, three and a half inches wide, and about an inch thick. It contains words only, no music. Yet it has been in continuous publication for almost two hundred years and has remained basically unchanged during that time.



This little hymnbook is called *Primitive Hymns*, or as it is more commonly known, “Lloyd’s hymnal,” after the name of its compiler, Benjamin Lloyd.

Born in 1804, Lloyd was a Baptist elder and one of the leaders in the formation of the Primitive Baptists in frontier Alabama in the early 1800s. The Primitive Baptists were forming at this time as a result of their resistance to a wave of “religious modernism” that was sweeping through America. As John Bealle, an authority on Alabama history, explains, “Although the issue of missions was the nominal cause of the split, at root was the nature of authentic Christian worship. Along with choirs, musical instruments, centralized denominational authority, seminaries, and Sunday schools, missions comprised one of the ‘human inventions’ that, Primitive Baptists believed, did not belong in the true church.”

The Primitive Baptists believed that the things that were being introduced into churches were manmade and unauthorized by Scripture. They, instead, made it their rule not to allow anything into worship that was not prescribed by Scripture, either by direct command, by inference, or by example, which they believed included the above named features. This had been one of the marks of the Protestant Reformation, a repudiation of all manmade innovation and a return to the simple worship described in the Scripture.

It was this desire out of which Lloyd’s *Primitive Hymns* sprang. Benjamin Lloyd desired to produce a thoroughly Biblical hymnbook that could be sung from by Primitive Baptists without question or reserve. He said that he had “become impressed with a sense of the importance of a well adapted Hymn Book among the Primitive Baptists at this

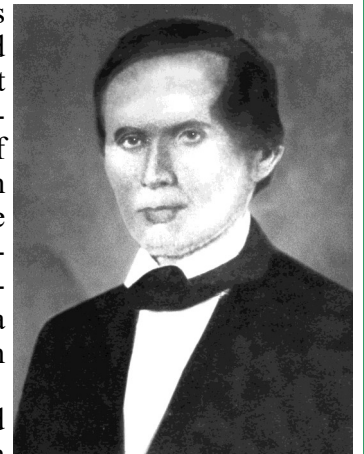
time.” He wanted to remove all hymns that placed emphasis on man or in any other way departed from the Scripture. He also designed the book to be an easily used book. He arranged it by topics so that anyone desiring to sing a hymn for any occasion could quickly and easily find one by looking under the appropriate topic. These topics were arranged chronologically throughout the growth of a Christian, as Benjamin Lloyd put it, “that order which appeared to me to agree with the plan of salvation, and the effect and progress of the gospel and the teachings of the Holy Spirit, by which the dear children of God are brought to a knowledge of the truth, and led to the ordinances of the gospel, and enabled to walk in them to the glory of their heavenly Father.”

That Benjamin Lloyd succeeded in producing a satisfactory, “well adapted” book is evident from its subsequent history. The first edition, in 1841, contained 535 hymns. It sold rapidly, and he quickly produced a second edition.

For his third edition in 1845, he made some major changes based on what he had heard back from those who had bought his first edition. This edition contained 700 hymns. In the preface, Lloyd wrote, “The work is dedicated to Christ and the Church. If it shall tend to the elevation of evangelical taste, the interest of worship, and the glory of God, my aims will be accomplished. To his peculiar blessing, to the candor of my brethren in the ministry, and to the patronage of my fellow Christians and a generous public, I humbly commit the work.”

Such has indeed been the effect of this book. It is this edition that has remained basically unaltered for almost two hundred years and has had a quiet but large influence on hymnody and simple, Biblical worship, especially in the American South. Among the hymns contained in this hymnbook are many hymns that continue to be part of standard hymnody today, hymns we would all know and love, too numerous to list here. To get a little sample, we have put a list of selected topics from Lloyd’s hymnal in the blue box below and, under each topic, have selected one hymn as a sample from that section of the hymnbook.

Benjamin Lloyd was a respected man on



Benjamin Lloyd

the Alabama frontier and served in many useful posts throughout his lifetime. He was in demand as a preacher and served several churches over his lifetime, sometimes two churches at the same time, alternating between the two. He also served as a farmer, a merchant, and a land speculator. On one occasion, in 1836, when an Alabama settler was killed by Indians, he even served as a military captain. On this occasion, the men of eastern Alabama where Lloyd lived, alarmed by the killing of the settler, sent their wives and children into the safety of Georgia and prepared for an attack. Lloyd was so respected in the area that the group of volunteers elected him their captain and marched to defend their homes and families under his leadership. It turned out that no battle took place, and the company voluntarily disbanded, but this incident is a testimony to the faith the Alabama frontiersmen had in Benjamin Lloyd and his ability and wisdom.

When Benjamin Lloyd died in 1860, he left behind his desire in his will that his hymnbook continue to be published. His wife Naomi faithfully carried on the work until her own death in 1884. This was remarkable in itself. She was the mother of about twenty children, fourteen of whom survived to adulthood. Just after her husband's death, the War Between the States began, and she sent nine sons to serve in the Confederate Army. She also remarried during this time. Yet she continued publishing her husband's hymnal. Upon her death in 1884, one of her sons, Jesse Cox Lloyd, took up the work of publishing, and it continued to be passed on to family members until it was finally bought by the Primitive Hymns Corporation in 1971, a corporation formed expressly to keep the hymnbook in print.

This hymnal remains a beloved one today. It is no museum piece, no mere relic of the past. It is very much alive today and is still sung from by the same churches that it was sung from in Lloyd's day, still maintaining the simplicity of worship and resistance to manmade innovation that has marked them. Beyond that, its influence is widespread and felt throughout Christianity, wherever Biblical hymns are known and sung and wherever the Lord is worshiped in truth and simplicity.

Because it adheres so closely to Scripture, it is a timeless collection, with hymns as relevant to us today as to fron-

tier Primitive Baptists in the 1800s. It is indeed "well adapted" to true Christians of all time. This is testimony to the soundness and depth of these great hymns. While modern religion continues to seek innovations, which come and go rapidly, it is the Biblically sound hymns that remain and endure in the hearts and upon the lips of Christians. This little hymnal is still sung from lovingly and devotedly by many, and its hymns are sung by countless thousands more. It deserves the special place it holds in hearts and in the ongoing history of hymnody.

Joyce Cauthen, *Benjamin Lloyd's Hymn Book*, Montgomery: Alabama Folklife Association, 1999.

Edwin F. Hatfield, *The Poets of the Church*, New York: Anson D. F. Randolph & Company, 1884.

Benjamin Lloyd, *Primitive Hymns*, Rocky Mount: The Primitive Hymns Corporation, 1841, reprinted 1971.

W. T. Whitley, "The Tune Book of 1791," *The Baptist Quarterly*.

Samples of Hymns Under Various Headings in Lloyd's Hymnal

Free Grace — "Amazing grace"
 Advent of Christ — "While shepherds watched"
 Sufferings of Christ — "Alas! and did my Savior bleed?"
 Glories of Christ — "Rejoice — the Lord is King!"
 Intercession of Christ — "Arise, my soul, arise"
 Invitations of the Gospel — "Come, ye sinners, poor and wretched"
 Conviction & Conversion — "Jesus, thou art the sinner's friend"
 Salvation Through Christ — "Majestic sweetness sits enthroned"
 Imputed Righteousness — "Jesus, thy blood and righteousness"
 Church Meetings — "Blest be the tie that binds"
 Christian Exercises: Rejoicing — "What wondrous love is this"
 Adoration and Praise — "God moves in a mysterious way"
 Praying and Praising — "Come, thou Fount of every blessing"
 Faith and Prayer — "When I can read my title clear"
 Supplication — "Father, I stretch my hands to thee"
 Conflict — "O when shall I see Jesus"
 Admonition and Encouragement — "Am I a soldier of the cross"
 Hope and Encouragement — "How firm a foundation"
 Morning Devotion — "Awake, my soul, and with the sun"
 Evening Devotion — "When all thy mercies, O my God"
 Prayer — "Prayer is the soul's sincere desire"
 The Sabbath — "Welcome, sweet day of rest"
 Before Sermon — "Come, Holy Spirit, heav'nly dove"
 After Sermon — "Almighty God, thy word is cast"
 Associations — "Brethren, we have met to worship"
 Seasons of the Year — "Great God, we sing thy mighty hand"
 Lamenting a Barren State — "Will God forever cast us off?"
 National Hymns — "My country, 'tis of thee"
 Heavenly Prospects — "I would not live away"
 Sickness — "God of my life, look gently down"
 Death — "Why do we mourn departing friends?"
 Resurrection — "And am I born to die?"
 Judgment — "Lo! He comes with clouds descending"
 Miscellaneous — "Rock of Ages, cleft for me"
 Doxologies — "Praise God from whom all blessings flow"

“Awake, My Soul, in Joyful Lays” to the Tune “Loving Kindness”

Lloyd’s hymnal begins with this magnificent hymn as hymn number one. This hymn traces the unmerited loving-kindness of God through all the vicissitudes of a Christian’s life. It shows God’s loving-kindness in all of its beautiful attributes — free, great, strong, good, unchanging, present in death, and eternal. It shows that this loving-kindness is truly undeserved, that it comes to a man when he is “ruined in the fall,” continues even when his heart is “prone from Jesus to depart,” and finally will allow him, resurrected, to “sing His loving-kindness in the skies.”

Samuel Medley, born in 1738, was the author of this hymn. A lover of the sea, he became a midshipman in the Royal Navy at the age of seventeen, and by the age of twenty-one, he had risen to the rank of master’s mate. It was in this position that he received a severe wound in a naval battle with the French during the Seven Years’ War at Cape Lagos, Portugal, in August of 1759.

Forced to return home to recuperate, he was taken to his grandfather’s house, who in God’s providence lived in London and was a deacon of the Baptist Church on Eagle Street pastored by Andrew Gifford, one of the most prominent preachers of the day. Nearby was the Tabernacle where another famous preacher named George Whitefield preached.

Under the influence of these three, his Godly grandfather, Pastor Gifford, and George Whitefield, Samuel Medley was converted by the “free loving-kindness” of God. He himself became a Baptist pastor in 1767 and preached until his death in 1799. During this time, he wrote numerous hymns, all written to accompany his sermons.

This particular hymn was written to accompany the text of Isaiah 63:7: *“I will mention the lovingkindnesses of the LORD, and the praises of the LORD, according to all that the LORD hath bestowed on us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which he hath bestowed on them according to his mercies, and according to the multitude of his lovingkindnesses.”*

Medley’s hymns were published in various ways over the years, some as leaflets and some in volumes. Interestingly, this hymn was published in Rippon’s *Selection* during Medley’s lifetime, which we have looked at over the past two newsletters. Perhaps that is one reason that it has become so widely known. It and “Oh! Could I Speak the Matchless Worth” are the two most famous of Medley’s hymns today.

This hymn can be read as Medley’s own biography, recounting how the Lord “safely led his soul along” with providential circumstances. Also seen in the hymn is Medley’s sailor background, as he uses the vocabulary of storms at sea and sea battles as an analogy to the difficulties that arise in the Christian life. He describes “numerous hosts of mighty foes” and “trouble, like a gloomy cloud.”

We give here the tune to which the hymn is most commonly sung today and to which it was probably sung in Benjamin Lloyd’s day. The tune comes from the shape-note tunebook known as the *Christian Lyre*, compiled by Joshua Leavitt in 1831. Interestingly, the only parts given are the melody line and a bass line. This tune is found in most hymnals today with all four parts.

LOVING KINDNESS. L.M.

A Major Samuel Medley, 1782.

Joshua Leavitt’s *Christian Lyre*, 1831.

A - wake, my soul, in joy - ful lays, And sing thy great Re - deem - er's praise, He - just - ly claims a song from me: His
lov - ing - kind - ness, O how free! His lov - ing - kind - ness, Lov - ing - kind - ness, His lov - ing - kind - ness, O how free!

From Joshua Leavitt’s *Christian Lyre*, 16th Edition, Revised, 1833, hymnary.org

2. He saw me ruined in the fall,
Yet loved me notwithstanding all;
He saved me from my lost estate;
His loving-kindness, O how great!

4. When trouble, like a gloomy cloud,
Has gathered thick and thundered loud,
He near my soul has always stood;
His loving-kindness, O how good!

6. Soon shall I pass the gloomy vale,
Soon all my mortal powers must fail;
O may my last expiring breath
His loving-kindness sing in death.

3. Though num’rous hosts of mighty foes,
Though earth and hell my way oppose.
He safely leads my soul along;
His loving-kindness, O how strong!

5. Often I feel my sinful heart
Prone from my Jesus to depart;
But though I have him oft forgot,
His loving-kindness changes not.

7. Then let me mount and soar away
To the bright world of endless day,
And sing with rapture and surprise
His loving-kindness in the skies.

"Awake, My Soul, in Joyful Lays" to the Tune "Derby"

Here we give the tune found in Rippon's tune book designated to go with Medley's hymn and probably the tune to which Medley himself sang it. The name of the tune is "Derby," named for a town where a young printer lived who was strongly influenced by William Carey and who printed the first Bible in the Bengali language in 1798.

The tune is stirring and beautiful and opens with a grand opening befitting the words "Awake, my soul." Its repetition of the phrase "His loving-kindness" serves to stamp indelibly upon the singer's heart the truly "free," unmerited loving-kindness of the "great Redeemer."

Derby. L. M.

Samuel Medley, 1782.

Rippon's Tune Book, 1791.

The musical score is arranged for four voices: Treble, Alto, Air, and Bass. The lyrics are as follows:

Treble: A - wake, my soul, in joy - ful lays, And sing thy great — Re - deem - er's praise, He just - ly

Alto: A - wake, my soul, in joy - ful lays, He just - ly

Air: A - wake, my soul, in joy - ful lays, And sing thy great — Re - deem - er's praise, He just - ly

Bass: A - wake, my soul, in joy - ful lays, And sing thy great — Re - deem - er's praise, He just - ly

The second system of the score continues the lyrics:

Treble: claims a song from me: His lov-ing-kind-ness, O how free!

Alto: claims a song from me: His lov-ing-kind-ness, O how free! His lov-ing-kind-ness, O how free!

Air: claims a song from me: His lov-ing-kind-ness, O how free! His lov-ing-kind-ness, O how free!

Bass: claims a song from me: His lov-ing-kind-ness, O how free! His lov-ing-kind-ness, O how free!

From Rippon's Selection of Psalm and Hymn Tunes, Performer's Reprints, www.performersedition.com



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