

PART ONE & PART TWO

an explanation

The collected edition, *A House of Praise*, was published in 2003. It contains 285 hymn texts with their accompanying Notes and Indexes; and is still in print.

Three supplements followed, *A Door for the Word*, 2006; *Praise to the Name*, 2009; and *Beyond our Dreaming*, 2012, each containing 36 new texts. The supplements will not be reprinted, since those 108 texts (again, with Notes and comprehensive Indexes) are all included in this present collected edition, together with some forty new and unpublished hymns.

This book is therefore a continuation of that first collected edition, and contains hymns Nos. 286–435. The two books together include all my hymn texts up to the end of 2013, so making a single work in two parts, which explains the title: *A House of Praise, part two*. The consecutive numbering of the hymns means that in future any text of mine can be identified by number as well as by the first line.

At the time that *A House of Praise* was published there was no expectation that there might one day be a second volume. The title on the cover of *A House of Praise* in its present edition, and in catalogues etc., does not therefore include the words ‘*part one*’; but throughout this book it is referred to as *A House of Praise, part one*, to avoid any possible confusion.

TDS

‘AND DAILY . . . IN EVERY HOUSE
THEY CEASED NOT
TO TEACH AND PREACH
JESUS CHRIST’

Acts 5.42

*Songs and psalms and hymns of praise,
worship by the Spirit given,
teach us truth in all our ways,
lift our inward eyes to heaven.
Tell of all that God has done,
let his love in Christ be known!
Praise the Father, Spirit, Son!
Glory be to God alone!*

HYMN 431

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Foreword

Everyone can picture a house. The picture may vary with geography or circumstance, but a house is easy to imagine. The word conveys the image, by what we call ‘imagination’. For children, a house will be one of the first of their infant drawings that can be recognized for what it is: in western countries a square box, a sloping roof, four windows and a door. By contrast, ‘life’, ‘being’, ‘personality’ are much less easy on the imaginative faculty, so it is not surprising that Jesus, the supreme teacher, chose the metaphor of a house to represent these things. Perhaps, with his knowledge of the Scriptures, he was drawing on the Book of Proverbs, 12.7 or 14.11. In his story of the two houses, the one on a solid foundation and the other on shifting sand, the houses stand for the whole of a person’s life, being and personality.

The Title

So it is with the title shared by these two books. The phrase appears in the epigraph to *A House of Praise, part one*, where it is taken from a hymn written in the 1970s for the Cathedral of the Holy and Undivided Trinity, Norwich:

Here may faith and love increase,
flowing forth in joy and peace
from the Father, Spirit, Son,
undivided, Three-in-One:
his the glory all our days
in this house of prayer and praise!

There, of course, the word denoted a real building; and indeed the title *A House of Praise* is not unsuitable for a book of hymns intended to be sung mostly in a church. But ‘house’ also has a metaphorical sense. Consider No.324 in this book, ‘Make of our life a house of praise’, where the thought is not of the church building but of the life and fellowship of the church family.

In the Lord’s message to his young church in Laodicea there is the well-known image of the risen Christ standing before a closed door, knocking for admission into the ‘house’ of an individual life (Revelation 3.20); the whole message or letter is to a church, but the invitation is clearly to a person: ‘If anyone hears my voice. . .’ The scene has been captured, with a wealth of symbolism, in Holman Hunt’s famous picture of *The Light of the World*. It is for many an iconic image, illuminating for them

that step of faith by which Christ enters and takes possession of their lives. And when the door of our being, our very self, heart and personality is opened to Christ's knock, then surely any life becomes 'a house of praise'.

All that, too, is implicit in the title of these two books, whose exact relationship to one another is explained on page vi. This book is simply the second part of a single collection, as the numbering of the hymn texts shows.

The Texts

In April 1892 the President of Magdalen College, Oxford, visited Tennyson at Farringford, his home on the Isle of Wight. The President, Herbert Warren, was an old friend, and with Tennyson's son Hallam he made some notes of their talks together. Benjamin Jowett, Master of Balliol, had admired the short 'hymn' in Tennyson's dialect drama *The Promise of May*, and had asked him to write another. 'Will you write the hymn?' Warren enquired, to be met with this reply:

'A good hymn is the most difficult thing in the world to write. In a good hymn you have to be commonplace and poetical. The moment you cease to be commonplace and put in any expression at all out of the common, it ceases to be a hymn . . . What will people come to in a hundred years? do you think they will give up all religious forms and go and sit in silence in the Churches listening to the organ?'

That was more than a century ago, and hymns are still firmly with us. I do not suppose that 'the most difficult thing in the world' was more than an expression, in casual conversation, of the fact that a hymn written without difficulty ('facile' would be the unkind epithet) is unlikely to be a good hymn. It seems to me on a par with a phrase like 'Nothing is more important . . .' which taken literally is almost always absurd: 'Nothing is more important than to have the kettle really boiling when you make the tea!' As for 'commonplace', I think Tennyson means what Isaac Watts discovered long before. Watts wrote in the Preface to his *Hymns and Spiritual Songs* (1770):

'I confess myself to have been too often tempted away from the more spiritual designs I proposed, by some gay and flowery expressions that gratified the fancy; the bright images too often prevailed above the fire of divine affection; and the light exceeded the heat: yet, I hope, in many of them the reader will find, that devotion dictated the song, and the

head and hand were nothing but interpreters and secretaries
to the heart.

Nearer our own day, Erik Routley expressed the same sentiment when he described hymn writing as 'lyric under a vow of renunciation'.

'Commonplace and poetical' was Tennyson's phrase. There must be many poets who would agree with Donald Davie when he wrote (*The Purity of Diction in English Verse*, 1952) of

'... our sense of an unfair advantage enjoyed by the hymn-writer over other poets. The themes of the hymn-writer are ... so important, that our sense of their urgency can excuse or even conceal in our minds the poverty of their expression.'

This recognition of importance, and indeed urgency, in the content of hymnody is very welcome. But it means that for the hymn writer, no less than for the poet, the aim must be (to borrow a phrase from a review of the poems of C. Day-Lewis) 'an authentic emotion controlled by an assured art'. It seems to me, therefore, encouraging that a Laureate like Tennyson should have recognized, even in a casual talk with an old friend, that hymn writing is not—indeed, should not be—without its own difficulties.

For myself, as I think I have said elsewhere, hymn writing seems to require more 'gruelling' (Walter de la Mare's description) as the years pass. I would like to think part of this comes from the search for higher standards, but some is certainly due to memory-loss. I often cannot recall from which text of mine a given line is taken; nor even if the line I am working on now appears satisfying because it has been used before, perhaps by me, perhaps by someone else. I do not in fact much mind repeating the occasional line from an earlier text, since few hymns are sung on any one occasion; but I would like to be aware that I am doing so. While writing this Foreword I met an example which illustrates my point. One of my early carols (No. 29) begins:

Hush you, my baby,
the night wind is cold . . .

I have recently been reading about C. Day-Lewis, Poet Laureate. In his 'political', not to say 'communist' years, I found that he had written:

O hush thee, my baby,
thy cradle's in pawn. . .

Perhaps, I thought, these four or five opening words belong to a lullaby or a nursery rhyme. Dictionaries of quotations showed not dissimilar phrases—from *Porgy and Bess*, in the 1930s, and from an American verse of 1884—but no real correspondence. I turned to the Opie's *Oxford Dictionary of Nursery Rhymes*, 1951; and they gave me, not a nursery rhyme, but a footnote leading to Sir Walter Scott. There, sure enough, I found his 1815 'Lullaby of an infant chief', beginning:

O hush thee, my babie, thy sire was a knight
Thy mother a lady, both lovely and bright. . .

Perhaps I had read it and forgotten it. But it may be that such an opening comes from a common stock, and that what matters is not that succeeding generations of writers draw on it, but what use they make of it.

The arrangement of the texts into the nine sections that make up this book is bound to be somewhat arbitrary. Where should one place a hymn whose succeeding verses move from the incarnation through to Pentecost? In general, I have tried to place a text where it might reasonably be sought, bearing in mind its main thrust or theme. This explains why some texts 'based on' a part of Scripture (perhaps a psalm) are not always included in those named sections, but are scattered through the book according to theme. They can easily be located from the Index of Biblical References on page 299.

A new section is the one headed 'Twelve Minor Prophets'. The major prophets have always been an inspiration to hymn writers; think, for example, of Charles Wesley's 'O for a heart to praise my God' from Ezekiel 36.26, or 'Bright the vision' by Richard Mant from Isaiah 6. There are, in fact, texts in this book drawn from Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel. But there are treasures, too, in what are rather disparagingly termed 'the Minor Prophets', and I wrote a text echoing an image in the book of Micah (his famous vision of swords to ploughshares) some thirty years ago. In this section, there is a hymn 'based on' each of the twelve, and that earlier text from Micah is repeated for the sake of completeness. It is the only text which appears in both *part one* and *part two*. In the following paragraph I repeat some of what appeared about such texts in the Foreword to *A Door for the Word*.

A century ago George Adam Smith published his celebrated *The Book of the Twelve Prophets*, explaining that they share a common unity and title

in the Hebrew Bible as ‘The Book of the Twelve’ (no mention of ‘minor’ here!). He describes how these twelve authors

bring forth and speed on their way not a few of the streams of living water which have nourished later ages, and are flowing today. Impetuous cataracts of righteousness—*let it roll on like water, and justice as an everlasting stream*; the irrepressible love of God to sinful men; the perseverance and pursuits of His grace; His mercies that follow the exile and the outcast; His truth that goes forth richly upon the heathen; the hope of the Saviour of mankind; the outpouring of the Spirit; counsels of patience; impulses of tenderness and of healing; melodies innumerable,—all sprang from these lower hills of prophecy, and sprang so strongly that the world hears and feels them still.

I would like to think that some reader of these words, or of the texts that follow, may want to turn again to that part of their Bible. As with the lady who enjoyed *Hamlet* ‘because it was full of quotations’, so these books provide a rich vein of familiar and often precious verses, even if memory does not always identify the exact source; and of course in my texts I have been able to echo or allude to only a few of them.

Once again, hymns for Christmas and Epiphany are well represented. This is because for more than forty years there has been such a hymn on my Christmas card—and the numbers mount up. There are also a few commissions; from the Scottish Bible Society and the Moody Bible Institute, the Royal School of Church Music and the College of St Barnabas; for a *festschrift* for Donald Hustad; from churches, from a university, a school and a friend; and an attempt to meet for the third time a request from the Scripture Union: see Nos. 105 and 221 in *part one*, and No.337, ‘God of unchanging grace’ in this book.

The Notes

It has long been my practice to add a Note to each text, beginning with my first self-published *A Collection of Hymns, 1961–1981* of November 1981. These days I write the Note, in a first draft, as soon as I am satisfied that the text has found its final form. It gives an opportunity to identify, for those interested in such things, the sources on which the text draws, Biblical and otherwise; to acknowledge debts and allusions; to explain the underlying structure; and sometimes to say how the text arose, and perhaps for whom it was originally written.

I find these Notes have grown longer—often considerably longer—

over the fifty or so years since I began; but enough correspondents have said that they find them useful (as indeed I do myself) for me to maintain the practice. Inevitably these Notes, like the texts themselves, include a few repetitions, since they have been written at intervals and not as a consecutive sequence. Indeed, many of them were already in print in three different collections, published over some six or seven years; and though all have been revised, I have not eliminated every repetition, for each Note is quite independent of its neighbour, and the same point may well apply to more than one of these texts. The Notes, therefore, are a tool for reference rather than intended for consecutive reading.

The Indexes

Four indexes which appeared in *A House of Praise, part one*, are not included here. 'Anthems and other Sheet Music' has been easily absorbed into the general 'Index of Publications'; a list of 'Discontinued and Altered Texts' is not needed as there are none in this period. An 'Index of Recordings' has become impossible adequately to maintain with changes in technology and the rise of so many 'domestic' and self-published recordings; as far as I know there has been no commercial recording in this period comparable to the Kingsway CD in their 'HymnMakers' series of the 1990s. No 'Index of Translations' is needed since there have been so few.

Sir Stanley Unwin, doyen of the mid-twentieth-century publishers, had a wise word to say about indexes in his *The Truth about Publishing* (1926; but mine is the 'extensively revised' edition of 1960):

For an index, the *via media* is essential. Too full an index, with every slight reference to a subject, is almost as useless as too slight a one. . . in Biblical references so many texts are sometimes referred to that the reader despairs, and if he turns them up he finds that many are trivial and might have been left out.

It is advice I have tried to follow here, notably in the 'Index of Bible References'. My usual practice is to list only those verses or passages which form the theme of a hymn, or of a distinct portion of one. It does not set out to be a comprehensive list of Biblical allusions or quotations. I have tried in compiling it, and in listing 'Themes and Subjects', to ask myself 'If I was preaching on this passage or subject, would this hymn have something to say?' Two new Indexes are the 'Combined Index of Themes and Subjects', and the 'Combined Index of First Lines'. They

cover both *A House of Praise, part one*, and this present book. The 'Index of First Lines' is almost self-explanatory, except that instead of giving page numbers, it gives only the number of the hymn. From that, it is a simple matter to find either the text or the Note in whichever book they occur, since both text and Note are numbered consecutively, Nos. 1–285 in *part one*, and 286–435 in this book. The 'Index of Themes and Subjects' could easily be a case of just what Sir Stanley Unwin was warning against. Many of my texts refer to more than one subject, and a particular theme may find mention in a single verse—or even a single line—so that it is not easy to steer a middle course. It would not be difficult, for example, to double the number of texts in the sections 'Praise and Worship' or 'Lord Jesus Christ', which are already inconveniently large. A slightly different problem arises with the two headings in this Index suggesting texts appropriate for 'Children' or 'Youth'. Both categories, of course, cover a diverse range of age, ability and understanding; these lists can therefore be little more than an attempt to offer a leader of worship a few possible suggestions. What best constitute 'hymns for children' is not a new question. John Julian has a historical survey in his great *Dictionary of Hymnology* covering four pages of small print. John Ellerton corresponded on the subject, and John Keble was drawn into it. John Bunyan and (famously) Isaac Watts attempted whole collections, as did Mrs Alexander and many less well-known authors. Percy Dearmer made a brave stab at it in *Songs of Praise Discussed*; and nearer our own day Brian Castle, Bishop of Tonbridge, in his *Sing a New Song to the Lord* (London, 1994) offers a warning and a plea to Christian educators:

The hymns sung in schools in the early 1960s are those frequently sung in churches today. Although today hymns are rarely sung in secondary schools, they are alive and well in many, though not all, primary schools. The hymns that are sung do not tend to be those used in churches . . . if the hymns to be sung in church in thirty years' time are those currently being sung in school, then there will be a repertoire of hymns on which the sacred story does not impinge.

This is, I believe, as tragic as it is true; but the occasion of mentioning it here is simply to illustrate the problems of such an Index. I can but ask the understanding of those who find it frustrating and wish I had done it differently.

I have not provided a similar index devoted just to this book, since as can be seen in the explanation at the top of page 318 the Combined

Index of Themes and Subjects clearly divides the texts into those from *part one* and those in this present book. There is, however, an Index of First Lines at the very back of the book which refers for convenience only to the texts in this *part two*.

* * *

This Foreword would be sadly incomplete if it did not record my heartfelt thanks to all those who have encouraged me to continue to write the words of hymns. High on the list must be the Hymn Societies, of Great Britain and Ireland, and in the United States and Canada. They have honoured me with appointment as an Honorary Vice-President and as a Fellow, but more importantly they have offered me friendship, interest and support in a variety of ways. If any readers of these words are not already members of one (or both), believe me when I say that I am confident they would find such membership rewarding. I note too that I was humbled, grateful (and astonished!) to become in 2011 a Fellow of the Royal School of Church Music.

I thank those who have worked with me on suggesting tunes for these texts, notably two retired physicians, Dr Peter Tucker and Dr Jonathan West. Our friendships go back to the 1940s; and between them they offer immensely varied experiences of music-making in Christian contexts. Mr William Llewellyn, well-known as a Director of Music and for his work for the Royal School of Church Music, has been more than generous in giving unstinted friendship, hospitality, time and expertise to act as Music Editor for the series of my texts with music, published first by Christine Smith of Canterbury Press, and latterly by Tim Ruffer of the RSCM. I owe more than I can say to the friendship and unfailing generosity and support of the late George Shorney of Hope Publishing Company and his wife Nancy; and now to his sons who carry on the family tradition and who, with Oxford University Press, are the publishers of this book and its predecessors. From the days of Joyce Horn and Julian Elloway, who welcomed and encouraged me when I was simply a contributor to their various Oxford hymnals, to Simon Wright, David Blackwell and Philip Croydon, together with their colleagues who handle my permissions and publish these books, my links with the Press have been a source of support and pleasure to me. I thank them all; as I do also my daughter, Caroline Gill, for much skilled and painstaking care in helping prepare this book for the press.

Nor would I fail to mention the composers—some of their names appear in the Notes—who have written or provided tunes for these texts;

and the considerable number who send me tunes they have composed to my words. I still maintain, as I have from the beginning, a file of such music for editors and other to consult; it fills six large lever-arch files and continues to grow. There are a host of other names I would have liked to record here, since this may well be my last opportunity to do so in print; but I hope that the wide circle of friends hymn writing has brought me will know that I do not value them the less, even when I cannot weary every reader with further names. Many of these have come to me through the two Hymn Societies of which I am a member, and I have added their addresses at the end of this Foreword in the hope that some readers may explore further.

And does the publication of this book, which completes *A House of Praise*, signal the end of my hymn writing? I believe not. I hope for a little longer to continue to write, and to send out each autumn a clip of my new texts to composers, editors, and interested friends, as I have done now for some thirty years. If any reader would like to receive this, I am always ready to send it to anyone who asks for it. And who knows? perhaps such future unwritten texts might one day be collected—*Swansong* would be a good title for a small booklet—but for the moment these two parts of *A House of Praise* contain between them all my published texts. I have some sympathy with any who feel that there are already too many of them. We have recently seen the completion of the true successor to John Julian's massive *Dictionary of Hymnology* (1907). This is the on-line *Canterbury Dictionary of Hymnology* containing over 4,000 individual entries. It was a task that had defeated earlier editors, and indeed not long since been declared 'impossible'. But modern technology, and the skills and dogged perseverance of Professor Watson and his fellow-editors, have brought it to fruition. It is a wonderful resource; but a niggling little voice at the back of my head sometimes reminds me of those rather ungracious words of Robert Bridges, all the more cutting because they contain a grain of truth:

When one turns the pages of that most depressing of all books ever compiled by the groaning creature, Julian's hymn-dictionary, and sees the thousands of carefully-tabulated English hymns, by far the greater number of them not only pitiable as efforts of human intelligence, but absolutely worthless as vocal material for melodic treatment, one wishes that all this effort had been directed to supply a real want.

With every respect to a Poet Laureate and a great hymn writer, I find myself answering him, rather defensively, I admit, with the plea that hymn texts are more than ‘vocal material for melodic treatment’ and that among the texts in these two books a number will be found ‘directed to supply a real want’, whether for the great festivals or for occasions such as Harvest or Mothering Sunday when a new hymn may play its part in refreshing the worship of a local church.

The observant may be asking why this is a Foreword, when ‘Preface’ would be the proper term for ‘a personal note by the author about the book’. It is partly that I find ‘Foreword’ seems to fit more comfortably with what I have wanted to say, and partly that I can then conclude the books with an ‘Afterword’ which you will find on the final page. It is a wise word, and also an expression of homage to Derek Kidner who was my mentor and encourager throughout the years when I was making my way in hymn writing: how fortunate I was! Finally I conclude by repeating in substance the words which end the Preface to *part one*:

Hymn writing has been for me a most enriching and entirely unexpected gift: indeed, with other aspects of Christian ministry, ‘the best of all trades’ [an allusion to an earlier quote from Hilaire Belloc: ‘It is the best of all trades to make songs, and the second-best to sing them’]. So the title chosen for these collections expresses chiefly my thankfulness to the Giver of all good gifts, to whose praise these hymns were written, and to whose praise may they be sung!

TDS

Ford, 2014

As this book goes to press, the Hymn Societies mentioned can be found at the following addresses. Addresses change, however; and if at some later date these no longer apply the Societies can be located through the Internet or through the publishers of this book.

The Hymn Society of Great Britain and Ireland, Windrush, Braithwaite, Keswick CA12 5SZ, UK (www.hymnsocietygbi.org.uk)

The Hymn Society in the United States and Canada, 8040 Villa Park Drive, Henrico, VA 23228, USA (www.thehymnsociety.org)