

# *I'll Go Where You Want Me to Go*

*Just as picturesque scenes can bring peace and calmness to the soul, so does beautiful music*

## The Hymn



Many of us can recall as children being sent by our fathers to fetch a tool, to do a chore, or to relay a message. We may have also been told

by him to stand straighter, to work and study harder or to get along better with our siblings.

In the United States as we celebrate Father's Day every June, we recognize fathers for their efforts in raising us, and encouraging us to become the best we can be.

While many in today's world did not grow up with their biological father taking an active, responsible part in their lives, the Bible tells us that we have a perfect Father in Heaven, our Eternal God, the father of our spirits, who loves us, knows what we can become and wants us to achieve it.

It is often difficult for those who did not have a loving relationship with their earthly father to trust that their Heavenly Father has their best interests at heart. The commandments of God found in the scriptures may seem dictatorial, but when viewed in the perspective of a caring, devoted father giving instructions to his children we can see that we are being asked to go, and do, and say those things that help us reach our fullest potential, and to help our brothers and sisters on the way.

In the text of the hymn, "I'll Go Where You Want Me to Go," we can see the trusting attitude of an obedient child toward a beloved father. As Christians

## The Primary Author



Mary M. Brown was born to Joseph and Lydia Higgins Brown in May of 1856. Some sources say she was born in Canada, others say it was at Natick, Rhode Island. Natick is one of the villages that

make up today's town of West Warwick, RI. The town is located about twelve miles southwest of Providence. It is said that most Natick residents were of Italian origin.

Mary is known to have had a sister and a brother. The family evidently must have moved during her childhood as she was reported to have received her elementary and high school education in the public schools at Rockport, Massachusetts. She then attended a normal school at Norwich, Connecticut, about thirty-five miles southwest of Natick, Rhode Island. At this time, a "Normal school" was a teacher's college, particularly for training elementary school teachers.

After graduation, it is believed that she taught school in Norwich for a time, and then went to Jewett City, Connecticut, about eight miles northeast, where she taught in the public schools for about twenty years. Jewett City is a borough within the town of Griswold.

Mary was an active member of the Baptist Church and is said to have served as a Sunday School teacher. She was a member of the Ladies' Aid Society, Mission Circle and a founding member and sometime leader of a local 'Whatsoever Circle of the The King's

## The Composer



Carrie Esther Parker Rounsefell was born to James C. and Clara A. Parker in March of 1862 at Merrimack, Hillsborough County, New Hampshire.

She is reported to have grown up in the larger town of Manchester, New Hampshire. Manchester is about ten miles north of Merrimack and fifty miles northwest of Boston, Massachusetts.

Little is known of her early life. In 1880, at the age of 18, she was working as a store clerk. In 1883, at the age of 21 she married William E. Rounsefell at Manchester. He is believed to have been a bookkeeper.

Carrie evidently had a gift for music. She is known for having traveled as a singing evangelist.

Between 1880 and 1935 evangelistic campaigns were common among Christian churches. Popular evangelists would undertake preaching tours to bring souls to Christ. Revival meetings used music as part of the service.

Carrie was noted to have been a 'tiny' woman, but undoubtedly robust as she is said to have toured throughout New England and New York. Automobiles were not in common use until the Model T Ford was introduced in 1908, heaters in cars were not common until the mid-1930s, and air conditioning was not available until the 1970s, so it is evident that her travels were not in the comfort we are accustomed to today.

we strive for this ideal attitude toward Heavenly Father and His only begotten son, our Savior, Jesus Christ, while struggling through personal weakness. The hymn text acknowledges this weakness with mention of having the Savior's guidance and his hand to hold ours as we undertake the Lord's errands.

The hymn is often associated with missionary work as the mention in the chorus of crossing mountains, plains and seas in the service of the Lord is so descriptive of this endeavor.

There are multiple meanings to be found, however, inside and outside of full-time missionary work. The literal bold, exciting, (or frightening) 'mountain height,' 'stormy sea,' and 'battle front' of the first verse contrast with the figurative 'paths that I do not know' that we may be asked to travel, or the 'lowly place' where we may be called to labor. A path that we do not know can be understood as something that we have not done or experienced before. A lowly place can be seen as an assignment that is menial and lacking recognition.

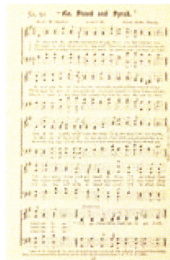
The message of the hymn stresses the importance of non-heroic discipleship, and recognizes this is not easy. There is symbolic meaning in combining the literal images with the figurative; the weaknesses we struggle with may be similar to a 'dark and rugged' mountain that we must climb over in order to keep the commandments and arrive at the end of the path we have not traveled before. There may be stormy seas of misunderstanding, criticism, or hostility to cross on the way, in order to seek a wanderer and deliver 'loving words.' The 'lowly place' we labor may require a battle against the adversary's weapons of discouragement, disappointment, or fear as we strive to do the Lord's will. Thus, while there may not be a literal mountain height, a stormy sea or a battle front where the Lord will

Daughters,' an inter-denominational Christian service organization.

Mary was noted as a teacher devoted to the interests of her students and school. She is also remarked for her great literary and artistic talents. Her poetical works were in great demand for various occasions. Her best known work is the text of our hymn, "I'll Go Where You Want Me to Go."

She is not known to have married. At the age of 61, Mary succumbed to influenza during the pandemic in January of 1918, and was buried in the same cemetery at Bozrah, New London County, CT, as her parents who had preceded her.

## The Secondary Author



Charles Edward Prior was born to Erastus and Sarah Burleson Prior in January of 1856 near Moosup, (Plainfield) Connecticut.

He is said to have shown an early interest in music. The family moved to Jewett City, Connecticut when he was about four years of age.

By the age of fourteen he was employed as a church organist. At twenty-two he went to the Baptist Church as their organist and music leader where he also organized a choir of young people and a Sunday School orchestra.

Charles was active on a larger stage, conducting song services for Christian Endeavor Conventions and Baptist Bible School Union annual assemblies.

He is said to have enjoyed singing oratorios in music festivals, and was very much interested in church music. He began composing anthems for his church choir and went on to write over 50 published songs. Some of these were included in three published song

As mentioned previously, Carrie was said to accompany her singing with a zither. Zithers are a family of stringed instruments with strings the same length as the soundboard they are attached to, so it is not known exactly what form her zither took. They are played horizontally flat on a table or a lap. Autoharps are in the zither family.

Carrie is best known for her hymn tune for "I'll Go Where You Want Me to Go" that was created at the Lynn, Massachusetts, revival meeting mentioned above. It is often referred to by the tune name MANCHESTER, likely after her childhood residence.

Serving as a traveling singing evangelist was not a common occupation for a woman of that time, and Carrie's life was quite remarkable. She passed away in September of 1930 at the age of sixty-eight and was buried in the Shiloh Cemetery at Durham, Maine.



have need of us, there may be figurative ones.

The scriptures contain a great deal of instruction on the way our Heavenly Father would have us go. The hymn text speaks of the "still, small voice," by which the Lord calls. The scriptures tell us that the Lord's voice is a still, small voice, and that he gives us instruction through the Holy Ghost. The importance of this personal revelation is woven throughout the hymn. In our lives, the call to an unknown path may take the form of new assignment for service from a church leader, but the confirmation that this is a call from the Lord comes through the 'still small voice.' Other promptings by the 'still, small voice' relaying needed actions may come directly to us in our daily lives as we interact with our families and others in our circle of influence. In these times, often it is in small ways that we go, say and be what the Lord wants us to be.

"I'll Go Where You Want Me to Go" was written about 125 years ago. The history of the hymn varies between sources. However, most sources appear to agree that the first verse of "I'll Go Where You Want Me to Go" was written by Mary Brown about 1890 for her Sunday School Class at a Baptist Church in Connecticut.

It is said that the song came to the attention of Charles Edward Prior, who was working in the same town as the author, Jewett City, Connecticut. He is believed by many sources to have written the second and third verses and the original tune. The hymn was published with the title "Go, Stand and Speak" in 'The New Song,' a Sunday School songbook, 1891, with text credited to Mary M. Brown and music by Charles E. Prior. Based on the dates it seems likely that this may have been the first publication of the text as we know it. (In the Author's column see an image of this publication as found

collections on which he collaborated, the first in 1883, the second in 1890, and the third in 1892, "Our Best Endeavor," which is understood to have included "Go, Stand and Speak (I'll Go Where You Want Me to Go.)"

Charles was not a full-time musician, he was also a businessman, working as a bookkeeper, paymaster, secretary, treasurer, and eventually a vice-president. It was while working as secretary-treasurer at the Jewett City Savings Bank that he is believed to have teamed with Mary Brown to produce the first version of our hymn. See photo above of the hymn as published in an 1891 collection.

He also served in his faith and his community, including time as president of the Hartford Baptist Union, as pianist and treasurer at the Italian Baptist Mission in Hartford, as a director of the Hartford YMCA and as a member of the Connecticut Historical Society.

Charles Edward Prior concluded his endeavors in June of 1927, at the age of 71, passing away at Bridgeport, Connecticut.

## "I'll Go Where You Want Me to Go"

Text as found in the 1985 LDS Hymnal

It may not be on the mountain height  
Or over the stormy sea,  
It may not be at the battle's front  
My Lord will have need of me.  
But if, by a still small voice he calls  
To paths that I do not know,  
I'll answer, dear Lord, with my hand in thine;  
I'll go where you want me to go.

Chorus:

I'll go where you want me to go, dear Lord,  
Over mountain or plain or sea;  
I'll say what you want me to say, dear Lord;  
I'll be what you want me to be.

at Hymnary.org.) It was published soon after in a collection edited by the composer, "Our Best Endeavor."

It is reported that about 1894, a pastor at a Baptist Church in Lynn, Massachusetts, presented singing evangelist Carrie Rounsefell with the words to the hymn at, or for, a revival meeting and requested that she set them to a new tune. The tune we associate with it today came to her as she sang and accompanied herself on a zither (similar to an autoharp.) The composition was written down and she copyrighted the work in 1894.

A number of twentieth century hymnals documented by Hymnary.org carry the hymn with a few changes in the text and authorship credited to Charles H. Gabriel. This appears to be an editorial credit as the earliest hymnals list Mary Brown as the author.

The hymn has also been called by the title "Consecration" and many of the early hymnals documented by Hymnary.org before 1910 use "I'll Go Where You Want Me to Go," with "Consecration" as a subtitle. CONSECRATION is also used as the tune name.

It appeared in the 1948 edition of "Hymns, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints" (LDS Hymnal) with the first phrase as the title, "It May Not Be on the Mountain Height." Mary Brown was listed as the author and Carrie Rounsefell as the composer. The text varies in a few words from the early versions. The music in 6/8 time is very much the same as early publications. The rhythm and melody support the text and lend credence to the account of the composition being based on it. The hymn continued in the same key in the subsequent 1985 LDS Hymnal, with some minor modifications to punctuation and musical harmony notation.

Perhaps today there are loving words  
Which Jesus would have me speak;  
There may be now in the paths of sin  
Some wanderer whom I should seek.  
O Savior, if thou wilt be my guide,  
Tho dark and rugged the way,  
My voice shall echo the message sweet:  
I'll say what you want me to say.

There's surely somewhere a lowly place  
In earth's harvest fields so wide  
Where I may labor through life's short day  
For Jesus, the Crucified.  
So trusting my all to thy tender care,  
And knowing thou lovest me,  
I'll do thy will with a heart sincere:  
I'll be what you want me to be.



The exact details of how the hymn came to be are not necessary to appreciate that it remains a timeless classic with application to every new generation.



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