

July Hymn of the Month

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

The Hymn



"Come, Come Ye Saints" is a wonderful hymn of Christian perspective. The "Saints" referred to are not the canonized

type, but everyday church members striving for saint-like piety and virtue.

The overarching message of the hymn is that obtaining the promised blessings of the Lord may require a lot of tremendously hard work, sacrifices and trials. Unlike the usual human perspective, the hymn teaches that these hard experiences are not bad, nor are they indicative of disfavor with God, but are often necessary for our sakes and should be handled with joy. Even death is not to be feared, as all will be well when we are sincerely engaged in the Lord's discipleship.

If we sometimes feel that life is not fair, that our "lot" or worldly fate is less than we deserve, and too hard to bear, the hymn gives us a different perspective in the thought that we may not have been given a punishment but rather an opportunity to earn a "great reward." The opportunity is likely to require courage and strenuous action. The instruction to "gird up your loins" is common in the scriptures and refers to preparing for a strenuous task. In Biblical times, men wore loose long tunics and robes and a girdle similar to a belt. When action was required the clothing was tucked up and secured out of the way with the girdle which was also used to gird, or bind, on a sword.

The hymn reminds us that the Lord is with us in the hard times, and if we are aware we will see His grace as we go through our day. It also points out that some of the things that we are concerned about are not important in the long run.

The last verses convey the message that whether we live to see our 'promised land' or not, all is well, and we can sing praises to God for the blessings He has given. Pondering what constitutes our own 'promised land,' or to paraphrase the hymn, 'the place which God prepared for me,' can give personal meaning to the hymn as we sing it today.

The hymn is of Latter-day Saint origin, written over 160 years ago, and to members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS), 'Come, Come Ye Saints' is the quintessential pioneer hymn. It is frequently sung in the month of July to commemorate the July 24, 1847 arrival of Brigham Young with the

The Author



William Clayton was born to Thomas and Ann Critchley Clayton in July of 1814, at the village of Charock Moss, County Palatine, Lancashire, England. He was the oldest of fourteen children of which three died in infancy.

It is said that William was educated in the local schools and had a love of

books and of nature.

At the age of twenty-two, he married Ruth Moon, (October 9, 1836) and in the next year heard missionaries from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) preaching the gospel. The missionaries are said to have been Heber C. Kimball and Orson Hyde. William was reported as not easy to convert, Ruth accepted the gospel first but after a time William became a believer and it was not long before he became a leader in the church and a missionary himself. In 1838, he was ordained a High Priest and appointed as a counselor to Joseph Fielding Smith who presided over the church in Europe at the time.

In 1840, William is said to have led one of the first groups of LDS converts from England to Nauvoo, Illinois. They left England on the packet ship "North America" in September, arriving in Nauvoo a month later and in Nauvoo on November 24, 1840.

By 1842, he had become a trusted friend of the founders of the church and was appointed one of the secretaries to the church President and Prophet, Joseph Smith, Jr., and also served for a time as Temple Recorder, Recorder of Revelations, and Treasurer of the City of Nauvoo. He continued in positions of responsibility throughout his life. After the martyrdom of Joseph Smith, Jr., William served his successor, Brigham Young, as clerk of the Camp of Israel on the exodus from Nauvoo to Winter Quarters, Nebraska, and as historian of the first Pioneer company that left for the Salt Lake Valley in April of 1847. He is remembered for his part in the invention of a wagon-wheel odometer and for his careful journal entries which provided much of the history we have today of their experiences on the journey.

Once established in Utah, William served as Treasurer of Zion's Cooperative Mercantile Institution (ZCMI), Recorder of Marks and Brands, Receiver of Weights and Measures, and Territorial Auditor. He also maintained his interest in music, playing in the pioneer orchestra and the orchestra of the Salt Lake Theatre and is said to have been civic minded. he is also noted to have written other hymns.

William valued education and made many sacrifices for the schooling of his large family. His home was open always to his friends, and although he is reported to have been serious and earnest in his conduct, he was also witty and had a keen sense of

The Composer



The hymn tune ALL IS WELL is said to be an English folk tune, carried by oral tradition until about 1838 or 1844 when J.

T. White's arrangement was

included in the publication "The Sacred Harp."

The photo above is of the J. T. White hymn in a later publication, 'The Southern Harmony, and Musical Companion,' 1854. The melody on the second line has some variations but is recognizable. The text of the first two verses reads as follows:

"What's this that steals, that steals upon my frame!
Is it death? Is it death?
That soon will quench, will quench this mortal flame.
Is it death? Is it death?
If this be death, I soon shall be from every pain and sorrow free,
I shall the King of Glory see.
All is well! All is well!

Weep not my friends, my friends weep not for me, All is well! All is well!
My sins forgiv'n, forgiv'n, and I am free,
All is well! All is well!

There's not a cloud that doth arise,
To hide my Jesus from my eyes,
I soon shall mount the upper skies.
All is well! All is well!

This text used by J. T. White is said to be an adaptation of a folk song and the text and tune are believed to have been a catalyst for William Clayton in the writing of "Come, Come, Ye Saints," which came about two years after the 1844 first edition of 'The Sacred Harp.'

It was very common at that time for hymn tunes to be used with a number of different texts.

The hymn tune arranger, Jesse Tom (J. T.) White is said to have been born in May of 1821 in Spartanburg County, South Carolina. Jesse's uncle, Benjamin Franklin (B. F.) White is noted as the main compiler of "The Sacred Harp." Jesse is said to have composed or arranged several pieces of music published in this collection. The music of which was printed in the sight-singing system of shape notes.

Jesse was a member of the Baptist Church and with his wife, Caroline, lived in South Carolina, Mississippi and Texas. He was active in church and community life, serving at various times as a deacon, and as a county clerk, justice of the peace and notary public.

J. T. White passed away in July of 1894 in Mt. Pleasant, Texas. His foundational work in bringing the folk tune ALL IS WELL into publication continues to benefit those who came after him.

first company of Latter-day Saint pioneers in the Salt Lake Valley of present day Utah. The photo above represents some of the difficult terrain they traversed.

The pioneers' journey had begun the preceding year, 1846, as they were forced by threat of violence to leave the city they had built, Nauvoo, Illinois, on the east bank of the Mississippi River, and the first companies crossed the river in the cold of February.

Before his martyrdom in June of 1844, it is recorded that the first prophet and president of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Joseph Smith, Jr., spoke at length with Brigham Young and others of the future removal of the people to the Great Basin of the Rocky Mountains where they would be out of the power of their enemies. At this time, the area was outside the borders of the United States of America.

Consequently, this was the destination of the Latter-day Saint people as they left Nauvoo. The first part of the journey was across Iowa Territory and it took the lead companies four months to travel the approximately 300 miles.

It is instructive to note that Iowa Territory had only been opened to settlement thirteen years before. The first dirt roads were developed from Native American trails and some other early roads were merely plowed furrows to mark the way. Hard surfaced roads were not common until after 1919 and Iowa soil was well noted for being a 'sticky quagmire' when it rained.

The pioneers traveled with wagons drawn by horses and oxen, and they encountered much of the sticky Iowa mud from frequent rains. Thunderstorms would blow down their tents and soak everything. The travel was slow and arduous and freezing temperatures were frequent, even noted in April. They purchased provisions as they went or they would send men to work for area farmers and merchants in return for supplies. The musicians in the company (including the author of our hymn) were formed into a band and would give concerts to raise money.

This was the context in which the hymn was written. On April 15th of 1846 the author's company was about six miles west of Locust Creek near the Missouri border, and less than halfway across Iowa. The author, William Clayton, recorded in his journal that he had received word through a letter that his wife, Diantha, who had remained behind in Nauvoo, had been delivered of "a fine fat boy," although sick with other illness, and that he had written a new song that morning, "All is well." A glimpse of William's character is revealed as he then wrote of his feelings in these words: "I feel to thank my heavenly father for my boy and pray that he will spare and preserve his life and that of his mother and so order it that we may soon meet again. Bless thine handmaid and fill her

humor. He valued honesty, order, honor and right. He was generous to the poor and deplored extravagance.

William Clayton left a large posterity and a legacy of faithful service when he passed away in December of 1879 at the age of sixty five.



"Come, Come Ye Saints"

Text as found in the 1985 LDS Hymnal

Come, come, ye Saints, no toil nor labor fear;
But with joy wend your way.
Though hard to you this journey may appear,
Grace shall be as your day.
'Tis better far for us to strive
Our useless cares from us to drive;
Do this and joy your hearts will swell –
All is well! All is well!

Why should we mourn or think our lot is hard?
'Tis not so, all is right.
Why should we think to earn a great reward
If we now shun the fight?
Gird up your loins; fresh courage take.
Our God will never us forsake;
And soon we'll have this tale to tell –
All is well! All is well!

We'll find the place which God for us prepared,
Far away in the West,
Where none shall come to hurt or make afraid;
There the Saints will be blessed.
We'll make the air with music ring,
Shout praises to our God and King;
Above the rest these words we'll tell –
All is well! All is well!

And should we die before our journey's through,
Happy day! All is well!
We then are free from toil and sorrow, too;
With the just we shall dwell!
But if our lives are spared again
To see the Saints their rest obtain,
Oh, how we'll make this chorus swell –
All is well! All is well!

with thy spirit, make her healthy that her life may be prolonged and that we may live upon the earth and honor the cause of truth."

An account is said to have been published in 1921 that Brigham Young had concern about the complaining occurring among the people along the way and approached William Clayton with a request to write a hymn that the travelers could sing at their evening campfires to give them succor and support, and help them fight the many troubles and trials of the journey. The source of this account is not known to have been identified or the validity verified, however, subsequent events proved that the use and effect of the hymn was precisely what was purportedly requested.

The first three verses of the hymn were included in the 1889 Latter-Day Saints Psalmody. The tune name was identified as WINTER QUARTERS and used as the title (see photo extract below.) The music is written in $\frac{3}{4}$ time with a number of fermatas in the first two lines.

The music was written in a different style than is common today, the tenor clef printed above the treble clef, and the meter (P.M. or Particular Meter) indicated under the title.

The hymn has appeared in all the subsequent LDS hymnals and in later editions the hymn alternates between 4/4 and 3/4 time without as many fermatas. In the 1985 edition, the tune is identified with the tune name ALL IS WELL and is transposed to a lower simpler key.

The hymn text has also been modified by at least two known authors and used by other denominations. The essential message of the hymn appeals to many Christians.



Information in this article came from:

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