

Hymnology

#530 “Spread, O spread thou mighty word (Gott sei Dank): This hymn bears witness to the transition that took place in early nineteenth century thought and action in Germany. It represents a move away from individualistic pietism to a worldwide concern for education and mission. Jonathan Friedrich Mahnmaier, pastor of Kirchheim in Württemberg and a principal member of the editorial committee of the influential *Gesangbuch* (Württemberg, 1842), wrote the hymn sometime before 1827; after that year it was issued as a separate imprint. The hymn was also included in *Versuch eines allgemeinen evangelischen Gesang- und Gebetbuch* (Hamburg, 1833) [An Attempt at a General Protestant Hymnal and Prayerbook]. It was this publication that became the source for Catherine Winkworth’s English translation, which appeared in *Lyra Germanica: Second Series* (London, 1858). The music originally appeared in Freylinhausen’s Pietist hymnal, *Geistreiches Gesangbuch* (Halle, 1704) [Witty Songbook]. Its first English appearance was in the supplement to Johann Christian Jacobi’s *Psalmodia germanica* (London, 1765). The tune was known in Episcopal hymnals as Lübeck until *The Hymnal 1982*, which restored the original German association.

#385 “Many and great, O God, are thy works” (Dakota Indian Chant): This Native American hymn is deeply rooted in the tradition of the Dakota Indians of South Dakota. The original text is based on Jeremiah 10: 12-13. It appeared in *Dakota Dowanpi Kin* (Boston, 1846), the supplement to the 1842 words-only edition of *Dakota Odowan* (Dakota Hymns). A contemporary translation by Sydney H. Byrd, a member of the Dakota Presbytery and of the Dakota tribe begins “Great Spirit God, the things which are Thine, / Are great and numerous.” The importance of this hymn in the lives of Native Americans, especially those of the Dakota or Sioux Indians, is related in a letter dated 7 November 1986 by Mr. Byrd to Mrs. Lois C. Willand, a Minnesota writer who has done extensive research on this hymn. Mr. Boyd wrote: “One of the most moving sermons I have ever heard was given by an old Presbyterian missionary, the Rev. Abraham Crawford, at First Presbyterian Church in Flandreau, South Dakota...He told of the hanging at Mankato of Dakota Indians by orders of a military court on 26 December 1862, in the largest mass execution in American history. The Dakotas had no legal counsel and testified in their own behalf. Nearly all of them were found guilty and condemned to death...Missionaries had been in the prison compounds ministering to the Indians. They were also engaged in teaching the prisoners to read and write in their own language. A remarkable change began taking place! There were mass conversions to Christianity. The missionaries appealed to President Lincoln to show leniency to the prisoners. After personally reviewing all their records the President commuted the sentences of all but 38 of the condemned men...On the fateful day [of the execution], the 38 prisoners were led out of the compound. They were chained together...The women began wailing... One of the men cried in a loud voice, [translated] ‘Hear me, my people! Today is not a day of defeat. It is indeed a day of victory. For we have made our peace with our Creator and now go to be with Him forever. Remember this day. Tell our children so they can tell their children, that we are honorable men who die for a noble cause.’ He then lifted up his voice to lead the condemned prisoners in a hymn of praise. Rev. Crawford concluded his sermon by saying in an emotional voice, ‘And one of those who went to be with his Creator was my grandfather!’” The hymn they had sung was “Many and great.” The tune is identified as a native Dakota air to which Joseph Renville attached his text. The text and tune were published in the 1879 *Dakota odowan* with a

harmonization by James Ramsey Murray of Andover, MA. The other name for the tune is Lacquiparle, which is French for “Lake that speaks.”

#660 “O Master, let me walk with thee” (Maryton): Washington Gladden wrote this text in 1879 as a devotional poem for publication in the magazine *Sunday Afternoon*. The text was published as a hymn in Richard’s *Christian Praise* (New York, 1880). It entered the Episcopal hymnal in 1916. The tune Maryton was composed for John Keble’s hymn “Sun of my soul” and first appeared with that text when it was published in *Church Hymns with Tunes* (London, 1874). Because of its association with Gladden’s text, the tune is more often sung in the US than in Great Britain.

#582 “O holy city, seen of John” (Sancta Civitas): This song of the heavenly Jerusalem was written by Walter Russell Bowie for *Hymns of the Kingdom of God* (New York, 1910), edited by Henry Sloane Coffin and Ambrose White Vernon. It entered the Episcopal hymnal in 1940. Dr. Bowie wrote: “It was written at the request of Dr. Henry S. Coffin who wanted some new hymns that would express the conviction that our hope of the Kingdom of God is not alone some far off eschatological possibility but in its beginnings, at least, may be prepared for here in our actual earth.” Critics speak of this Bowie text as one of the finest of the twentieth century. It has gained acceptance and use in English-language hymnals around the world. The music, by the eminent English composer, Herbert Howells, is considered to be one of the important tunes of our time. It was composed for the Bowie text by commission for inclusion in *Hymns for Church and School* (Henley-on-Thames, 1964). Soon thereafter it was included in *100 Hymns for Today* (London, 1969). The *Hymnal of the United Church of Christ* (Philadelphia, 1974) was the first hymnal in the US to include it.

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If you would like to receive *Hymnology* several days before Sunday’s service please contact Tony Antolini to be put on the St. John’s Choir e-mail distribution list (Google Groups). Tony’s e-mail address is <aantolin@bowdoin.edu>