

Hymnology

#61 “Sleepers, wake! A voice astounds us.” (Wachet auf): The original German text was written by Philipp Nicolai while he was pastor in Unna, Westphalia, during a terrible epidemic that raged from July 1597 to January 1598. During this time more than 1300 people perished and Nicolai’s parsonage overlooked the churchyard where the daily interments often numbered as much as thirty. In these circumstances it is hardly surprising that his thoughts should turn to the contemplation of the life to come. As he wrote in the preface to his meditations from this time, published as *Freuden-Spiegel des ewigen Lebens* (Frankfurt, 1599): “Day by day I wrote out my meditations, found myself, thank God, wonderfully well, comforted in heart, joyful in spirit, and truly content; gave to my manuscript the name and title of a *Mirror of Joy*...to leave behind me (if God should call me from this world) as the token of my peaceful, joyful, Christian departure, or (if God should spare me in health) to comfort other sufferers whom he should also visit with the pestilence...” The first English translation appeared in *Lyra Davidica* (London, 1708). A translation from Catherine Winkworth’s *Lyra Germanica* (London, 1858) entered the Episcopal *Hymnal* in 1892 and continued through the 1940 edition. Our current edition has an updated translation by Carl P. Daw, Jr. The music was also written by Philipp Nicolai and published in the same book as the words. J.S. Bach immortalized the chorale in his Cantata 140, which is based on this melody. He also arranged a movement of the cantata as one of the *Schübler Chorales* for organ. Felix Mendelssohn used the tune in the overture and as one of the choruses of his oratorio *St. Paul*.

#72 “Hark! the glad sound! the Savior comes” (Richmond): The source of this text is a seven-stanza poem by Philip Doddridge entitled “Christ’s Message, from Luke 4: 18, 19” and dated 28 December 1735. A modified version appeared in the *Scottish Translations and Paraphrases* (Edinburgh, 1745). Subsequently, several colorful stanzas were omitted that would raise at least a smile nowadays: “He comes from the black Films of Vice / To clear the mental Ray / And on the Eye-Balls of the Blind / To pour celestial day. His Silver Trumpets publish loud / The Jub’lee of the Lord / Our Debts are all remitted now / Our Heritage restored.” This hymn has been included in Episcopal hymnals since 1808. The tune Richmond was written by Thomas Haweis for his “O thou from whom all goodness flows,” in his *Carmina Christo or Hymns to the Saviour. Designed for Use and Comfort of Those who worship the Lamb that was slain* (Bath, 1792). The present version of the tune is an arrangement by Samuel Webbe, Jr., and appeared first in his *A Collection of Psalm-Tunes for Four Voices* (Liverpool, 1808). The tune is also known as Chesterfield and Spa Fields Chapel. The name Richmond honors a friend, the Rev. Leigh Richmond, at the time rector of Turvey, Bedfordshire.

#57 “Lo! he comes with clouds descending” (Helmsley): Titled “Thy Kingdom come,” this hymn first appeared in Charles Wesley’s anonymously published *Hymns of Intercession for All Mankind* (Bristol, 1758). It is indebted to John Cennick’s “Lo! He cometh, countless trumpets” for the general concept. Having contained versions of the hymn since 1871, the *Hymnal* made a basic return to Wesley’s four-stanza original in *The Hymnal 1940*, which form is maintained in the present hymnal. John Wesley printed a version of Helmsley with this text in his *Sacred Melody* (London, 1765) with an attribution to Thomas Olivers. It has been said that Olivers adapted the tune from something he heard whistled on the street. Martin Madan, first chaplain of the Lock Hospital, London, had probably printed the tune with its

present name and text in his *Collection of Psalm and Hymn Tunes Never Published Before... To Be Had at the Lock Hospital* (London, ca. 1763). The tune flourished in Nonconformist circles, in Scotland, and from 1799 in the US, when it appeared in John Cole's *Sacred Harmony*. Helmsley was not widely used in Episcopal circles until Ralph Vaughan Williams picked it out for *The English Hymnal*. He transformed it into a stately Edwardian hymn tune by his harmonies. Helmsley is a small Yorkshire town whose vicar, Richard Conyers, was one of Wesley's friends and allies in the Church. He introduced congregational hymnody at Helmsley parish church shortly after his "conversion" on Christmas Day 1758.

#63 "O heavenly word, eternal light" (Verbum supernum prodiens): The original Latin poem was found in a tenth-century manuscript and in several later sources. The anonymous text is assigned in the Roman use to the Office of Readings for Advent. The music is drawn from a twelfth-century manuscript used at the Cathedral of Saint-Cyr in Nevers, France. Musicologists have been puzzled by the last note of the tune, an A, which does not correspond to any of the sanctioned schemes of modal theory of the time. Some experts suspect that the origin of the melody might be a popular song.

#73 "The King shall come when morning dawns" (St. Stephen): This hymn by John Brownlie first appeared in his *Hymns from the East, being Centos and Suggestions of the Service Books of the Holy Eastern Church* (Paisley, 1907). As translator, Brownlie did not indicate the source on which this hymn depended, and research by Erik Routley for *A Panorama of Christian Hymnody* (Collegeville, MN, 1979) refers to it as an anonymous Greek hymn. The text first appeared in the US in *The Hymnal* (Philadelphia, 1912). The tune, also known as Nayland or Newington, was first published in *Ten Church Pieces for the Organ with Four Anthems in Score* (London, 1789) by William Jones.

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