



This is the start of a series of studies of the Hymns of the Church - their meaning, authors, purpose, and relevant histories. I feel an introduction to this series will be helpful in understanding all that follows in the devotions. We must begin to embark with a clear understanding of what a hymn really is and what purpose it serves in worship - public or even private.

What is a Traditional Hymn of the Church? A hymn is a spiritually biblical song set to morally sound, uplifting music. It is primarily intended for the praise of God and to glorify Him in worship. Not only must the words be biblical and true, but the music itself must be of a nature that evokes reverence, love, and inspiration. In a sense, a hymn is a prayer set to reverential music. If we cannot say '**Amen**' to a hymn, then it is not suitable for worship.

Does the style of music matter that much? Of course, it does matter. There truly is Godly, and ungodly, music. If the music does not evoke respect, but rather immoral emotions, then it is not fit to be set to the Godly words of a hymn.

We are counseled throughout Scripture on the value and importance of hymns and Psalms. In the ancient churches, the only hymns to be sung were from the Psalms; however, we have a multitude of beautiful and lovely hymns today that have developed a testimony of their own over time. If we sing the good, old classical hymns of the church, we will learn to hear many biblical passages and clear doctrine of the Church. Unfortunately, today, many churches have abandoned Godly hymns for light and trivial kindergarten themes which enforce the dumbing-down process taking place generally in our society today.

The Songs of Moses, David, and Solomon remind us of the importance of joyful song in thanking and praising God for His wonderful works toward us. Because we have become new creatures in Christ Jesus, our songs should be filled with joy and celebration of that new birth. *And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord.* (Psalm 40:3)

There are also songs of sorrow recorded when God brought sure and certain judgment upon a rebellious people when Jerusalem fell to Nebuchadnezzar and were carried away captive to Babylon. *By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion.* (Psalm 137:1-3) Sadly, America may be singing the same song if repentance does not soon follow.

The last thing Christ did following the Last Supper was to sing a hymn before going into the sorrow of Gethsemane. *And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.* (Mark 14:26)

We are counseled to sing hymns and spiritual songs: *Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;* (Ephesians 5:19-20) You may have noted that our hymns and Psalms even become a part of our Christian vocabulary. *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.* (Colossians 3:16) So some may ask: What is wrong with mixing popular tunes and lyrics with the more serious hymn? If we do and say **everything** to the glory of God, there will not be space, particularly in worship, for such light and trivial words and tunes. *And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.* (Colossians 3:17) Remember, in worship we come into the very presence of the Lord. If God commanded Moses to remove his shoes before the Burning Bush because it was Holy Ground, how much more so must we maintain a spirit of reverence, respect, and awe before God in His House of Worship!

***But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.*** (Luke 18:16)

*And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them.* (Mark 10:16)

We may often tend to believe that some hymns are for children and others for adults, but I believe this simple and perfect little hymn is for all ages - the very young as well as the very old. Its simplicity has lent itself for wide use on the mission field as well. Should we not, being Children of God, be as little children in the innocence of singing as well as living and faith? Not only was the hymn conceived in an innocent and pious heart, but it has gained a long-living testimony from the moment of its creation among young and old.

Several years ago, an old church down in Atlanta was having a Pastor's Appreciation Day. Many of the surviving past pastors of the church were still living and were invited to attend the service and be honored. The eldest of these was a 95-year-old pastor who had led this Church in the early days of its existence into green pastures and still waters. He was asked to say a few words that would represent the most comforting to him in his long years of ministry. Slowly he arose, and haltingly walked up to the Pulpit. He said, These are the words from which I have derived the most comfort as a Christian and as a minister over my entire life from childhood. He then began to sing in a weak but sure voice, ***Jesus loves me, this I know, For the Bible tells me so;*** With that, he took his seat. In a sense, what greater truth can we know than that which occupies the opening lines of this little hymn? You do know that Jesus loves you, don't you? And you know it because you are told He loves you in the Holy Bible.

The great lady who composed this hymn was Anna B. Warner. She wrote the hymn while teaching Sunday School to the cadets at, of all places, the U.S. Military

Academy at West Point in 1860. She and her sister, Susan, lived on an island of the Hudson River facing the Military Academy. Every Sunday, they would row from their home on Constitution Island (later donated by them to the Academy) in order to teach the Bible to the cadets. The hymn was doubtless first sung at West Point. Though there are many great soldiers and patriots buried in the military cemetery at West Point, there are also two conspicuous Sunday School teachers buried there as well - Anna and Susan Warner.

### **Jesus Loves Me, This I Know**

Jesus loves me, this I know,  
For the Bible tells me so;  
Little ones to Him belong;  
They are weak, but He is strong.

Yes, Jesus loves me,  
Yes, Jesus loves me,  
Yes, Jesus loves me,  
The Bible tells me so.

Jesus, take this heart of mine;  
Make it pure and wholly Thine.  
Thou hast bled and died for me;  
I will live henceforth for Thee.

Yes, I love Jesus.  
Yes, I love Jesus.  
Yes, I love Jesus.  
In prayer I tell Him so.

Jesus loves me! This I know,  
As He loved so long ago;  
Taking children on His knee,  
Saying, Let them come to Me.

*Refrain*

Jesus loves me still today,  
Walking with me on my way;  
Wanting as a friend to give  
Light and love to all who live.

*Refrain*

Jesus loves me! He who died,  
Heaven's gate to open wide;  
He will wash away my sin,  
Let His little child come in.

*Refrain*

Jesus loves me! He will stay,  
Close beside me all the way;  
Thou hast bled and died for me,  
I will henceforth live for Thee.

*Refrain*

*I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me. (Proverbs 8:17) It is really rather simple, isn't it?*