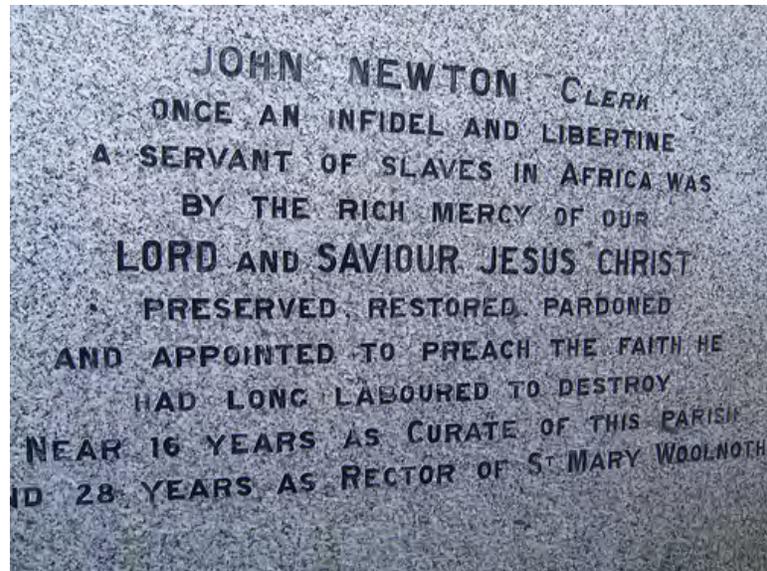


Hymns of the Church – *Jesus, I come* – 17 February 2015, Anno Domini (In the Year of our Lord)



⁴¹ Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, *Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me.* ⁴² And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me. ⁴³ And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, *Lazarus, come forth.* ⁴⁴ And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, *Loose him, and let him go.* (John 11:41-44)

A random note on music: Beyond doubt, Johann Sebastian Bach is, if not the greatest, than at least one of the greatest composers ever to see the light of day. He believed God inspired his mind and heart in the composition of great chorals and other religious music. Regarding the purpose of music, Bach wrote: *"Music's only purpose should be for the glory of God and the re-creation of the human spirit."* By the term 'recreation,' Bach did not intend the popular use of the term today, but a *re-creation* of the human soul in bringing it nearer to its Maker. Bach initialed his blank manuscript pages with the marking, 'J.J.' ('Help me, Jesus') or I.N.J. ('In the name of Jesus'). At the manuscript end, Bach routinely initialed the letters S.D.G. ('Soli Deo Gloria', 'To God alone, the glory'). This is the place and purpose of music and, indeed, all true art forms – to glorify God and to imitate the beauty of His Creation.

Now for an examination of a hymn of deep humility and strong spiritual meaning - *"Jesus, I Come."* The powerful words of David might be recalled in considering the depths of darkness from which we are redeemed by our Lord: *I will extol thee, O LORD; for thou hast lifted me up, and hast not made my foes to rejoice over me. O LORD my God, I cried unto thee, and thou hast healed me. O LORD, thou hast brought up my soul from the grave: thou hast kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit.* (Psalms 30:1-3) Not unlike the corrupting body and soul of Lazarus were we called and made alive in Christ. (Eph 2). We may wonder that we were ever so dead as Lazarus, but surely we were before we were brought to the Bench of Mercy and Throne of Grace by the prompting power of the Holy Ghost. This hymn was first published in 1887 by William T. Sleeper who wrote the lyrics; but as important as the lyrics is the endearing tune composed by George Stebbins. The lyrics and tune fit together as hand-in-glove to attain the greatest of spiritual truth and power. Stebbins also wrote the music for *"Have Thine own Way, Lord"* and *"Jesus is Tenderly Calling you Home,"*

Jesus, I come

Out of my bondage, sorrow, and night,
Jesus, I come, Jesus, I come;
Into Thy freedom, gladness, and light,
Jesus, I come to Thee;
Out of my sickness, into Thy health,
Out of my want and into Thy wealth,
Out of my sin and into Thyself,
Jesus, I come to Thee.

Out of my shameful failure and loss,
Jesus, I come, Jesus, I come;
Into the glorious gain of Thy cross,
Jesus, I come to Thee.
Out of earth's sorrows into Thy balm,
Out of life's storms and into Thy calm,
Out of distress to jubilant psalm,
Jesus, I come to Thee.

Out of unrest and arrogant pride,
Jesus, I come, Jesus, I come;
Into Thy blessed will to abide,
Jesus, I come to Thee.
Out of myself to dwell in Thy love,
Out of despair into raptures above,
Upward for aye on wings like a dove,
Jesus, I come to Thee.

Out of the fear and dread of the tomb,
Jesus, I come, Jesus, I come;
Into the joy and light of Thy throne,
Jesus, I come to Thee.
Out of the depths of ruin untold,
Into the peace of Thy sheltering fold,
Ever Thy glorious face to behold,
Jesus, I come to Thee.

Those great old Negro spirituals that arose from the hearts of field slaves of the South were touched by a known feeling of abandonment of hope, but elevated by that greater hope that is only available in a Savior who liberates. Once we have known cruel bondage at its worst, then we can appreciate more fully the blessings of liberty. Such are the sentiments expressed in this hymn from the first to the last stanza. There is no greater bondage than that which sin imposes. But that bondage is not as great as the power of the Lord to redeem and to set free from it. *"Out of my bondage, sorrow, and night, Jesus, I come, Jesus, I come; Into Thy freedom, gladness, and light, Jesus, I come to Thee."*

The long, dark night of death enshrouds all who are dead in trespasses and sin; but the penetrating voice of Christ will not be silenced even by that pale hand that holds the throat of its victims. "Lazarus, Come Forth!" Substitute your own name for Lazarus and you may get the spirit of the power that called you forth from sin and death. *"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls."* (Matt 11:28-29) Jesus does not exchange one set of chains for another, but He

grants perfect Liberty to all who come. Looking unto Jesus, we have a perfect liberty that the world can little appreciate: *"But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed."* (James 1:25) He frees the mind and heart of depression, darkness and sorrow at a simple Word.

"Out of my sickness, into Thy health, Out of my want and into Thy wealth, Out of my sin and into Thyself, Jesus, I come to Thee." Were you before sick? Yes, most certainly you were – you were afflicted with the leprosy of sin that you inherited from your ancient parents in Eden. But is there not a Balm in Gilead to heal the sin-sick soul? *"Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?"* (Jer 8:22) Yes, there is, and that Balm is Jesus Christ. If we are dead in sins, it is because we have not consulted that great Physician there. All of the treasures of Creation and of Heaven belong to Him and, if we are in Him, we will suffer lack of nothing. We have the greatest wealth in Christ, and we shall want not. Our sins are washed away by the cleansing Blood of our Lord and Savior.

"Out of my shameful failure and loss, Jesus, I come, Jesus, I come; Into the glorious gain of Thy cross, Jesus, I come to Thee." Were we heirs of a ten billion dollar estate, our loss would be immeasurable if we were lost to Christ. All of our best efforts are shameful rags when compared with the righteousness of God and the Ensign He has raised among His people. Following Christ does not merely limit us to walking the peaceful shores of Galilee, or the Banks of Jordan Waters – it means also following ALL of the WAY to Calvary. Were we not required to bear a cross, why would He command us to take it up? *"And he said to them all, **If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it.**"* (Luke 9:23-24)

"Out of earth's sorrows into Thy balm, Out of life's storms and into Thy calm, Out of distress to jubilant psalm, Jesus, I come to Thee." The world is full of sorrows and is the source of all sorrows. But in Christ is perfect peace. That peace is not contingent on environmental factors. A soldier, in the heat of battle, can have that very peace that *"passeth all understanding"* in spite of the shot, shell and gore that lies all about. Whether on the stormy seas of Galilee, or rounding the treacherous passage of Cape Horn, there is one present who can still the threatening waves and gales – Jesus Christ. By a Word, the Sea of the Heart is stilled and the discordant billows are hushed. Even in the fires of persecution, many of which rage in parts of our world today, the heart might break forth in joyful song to God our Maker. An example of this great joy, even in the fires of terror, was displayed by the Bohemian priest, John Huss, who had preached that only the Bible, and not the Pope, was true and immutable. He was sentenced to be burned at the stake in 1415. As the flames engulfed him, Hus began to sing in Latin a Christian chant: *"Christ, Thou Son of the Living God, have mercy upon me."*

Christ is not only our Passover, but our Sabbath (rest). *"Out of unrest and arrogant pride, Jesus, I come, Jesus, I come; Into Thy blessed will to abide, Jesus, I come to Thee."* One of those emotions and sinful dispositions that cause unrest is PRIDE itself. PRIDE exalts self-will, but submission to the Lord evokes a willingness to surrender our wretched and ragged will to His will. We ABIDE in His will – not simply a sometime practice. It is in His loving bosom that we *"shall find rest unto our souls."*

"Out of myself to dwell in Thy love, Out of despair into raptures above, Upward for aye on wings like a dove, Jesus, I come to Thee." You cannot remain in your old sinful ways and, at the same time, dwell in the Love of Christ. Though the Lord loved you ere you came to Him, you could not dwell in His love until you surrendered that love of sin and the world. The world is the source, too, of despair; but when you enter into the Ark of

Christ, you are raised higher and higher above the flood waters of sin and despair. In Christ, there can be no despair. It is the Dove of the Holy Ghost that lifts you to that Higher Ground in Christ.

“Out of the fear and dread of the tomb, Jesus, I come, Jesus, I come; Into the joy and light of Thy throne, Jesus, I come to Thee.” I hope you are not as the lost sinner – fearing death and the tomb. I experienced a very close call with death a few years ago, but I was surprised to learn that death held no fear for me. I am as weak as any true Christian can be; yet, death is not a fearful specter before me. I know whom I have believed, and you can know the same if I can. There is only joy and light at the Throne of God. In reality, this life is full of darkness until we approach that Throne while yet in this life. We can see the glory and grandeur of it afar off. In our old age, we do not cringe at approach death, but actually embrace it for the greater glory it represents in drawing, not only near the Throne of God, but to its very base.

“Out of the depths of ruin untold, Into the peace of Thy sheltering fold, Ever Thy glorious face to behold, Jesus, I come to Thee.” The annals of history are filled to the brim of men and women who have arisen from sheer ruin and decadence to a life devoted to God. Look at the old British sea captain, John Newton – as despised and decadent as any man could be, even if he tried his best. John Newton had only two years of formal education, but became a great minister who brought thousands of souls to Christ after being saved at sea from a mighty storm that threatened to expedite John’s journey to Hell. He repented of his evil and wicked ways and embraced the Christ that his mother had taught him on her knee as a seven year old lad. He wrote such notable hymns as *“Amazing Grace”* and *“Glorious things of Thee are Spoken.”* If God can save from the waves and depths of ruin a drunken, cursing, slave-trading John Newton, is there no hope for you and me? If God could mold a minister of God out of the soul and carcass of Newton, perhaps we have no idea what wonderful calling He may have for you, for me, or for the drunk on skid row today. These are the words that Newton had inscribed as his epitaph: *“John Newton, Clerk, once an infidel and libertine, a servant of slaves in Africa, was, by the rich mercy of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, preserved, restored, pardoned, and appointed to preach the faith he had long labored to destroy.”*

What words will they inscribe on your epitaph, Friend?