

Most of the tunes in the current Spanish hymnal have been deleted in subsequent editions of the English hymnal. Over the past seventy years the inadequacy of a large quantity of our hymns has become apparent, and conscientious editors have retired them from the official repertory of the American hymnal. This, I think, is now imperative for the Church in Latin America. The time has come for a new body of congregational hymns with original Spanish texts set to fresh melodies. If some of the old favorite tunes must remain, they should be provided with texts written by Latin-American poets—persons residing in their own countries, capable of conveying their own experiences in the light of the Gospel. They are the only ones capable of doing this in the best way. I do not apologize for expressing my opinion that university-trained linguists and even Latin-Americans with long residence in the United States should be excluded from the task.

We need a concerted effort to locate the poets and musicians within the Church in all countries of Central and South America who could spearhead the revision of the Spanish hymnal. In a world-wide church such as ours, exchange of ideas can be of great benefit. The task would be tremendous and the problem of communication and coordination even greater, but the challenge would be exciting.

The French Hymnal

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Early in the history of the French missions, Church leaders encouraged the publication of hymnals. In 1899, the Swiss Mission published a collection of Mormon hymns which became the basis of the French hymnody. When the publication of this collection was exhausted in 1907, Sylvester Q. Cannon, president of the Netherlands-Belgium mission, printed *Hymnes de Saints des Derniers Jours*. Paul Roelofs, D. B. Richards and M. C. Giauque, as well as an unnamed investigator from Lausanne, translated many LDS Hymns into French. Thus appeared in the Francophile countries such hymns as "Now Let us Rejoice," "Guide Us O Thou Great Jehovah," "How Firm a Foundation," "How Great the Wisdom and the Love," "Come, Come Ye Saints" and "O My Father."

In 1954 the French hymnal was revised once again. *Eglise de Jésus Christ Des Saints Des Derniers Jours* repeats many of the old translations, with occasional improvement, completes the process of translation (for example, adding the fourth verse of "Come, Come Ye Saints"), and adds newer hymns, mostly from the English Hymnal. Particularly after World War II, when America was held in high esteem by the French speaking people, the translation of the "American" hymnal was favorably received. It is important to note that the hymnbook appeared prior to the publication of the French *Doctrine and Covenants, Pearl of Great Price*, and the corrected version of the *Book of Mormon*. It also appeared prior to the building effort resulting in many chapels and two temples in Western Europe.

Now, some twenty years later, significant social and political changes have occurred. The ravaged cities of France, Belgium and Luxembourg are now rebuilt and the memory of the American liberation is dimmed. Through the common market, French speaking countries have developed a stronger sense of political, economic and cultural affiliations. Church leaders have recommended that the Saints not emigrate to the United States but instead build Zion where they live. With the erection of chapels in which they can worship and temples in which they can receive

their endowments, there is a greater self-confidence and independence among the French Saints.

Hymn writing and singing is part of the French heritage. From the innovations in hymn singing at the Notre Dame Cathedral in the Middle Ages to the present, French hymnody has had a rich and various tradition. Louis F. Benson, in his *The English Hymn*, states:

Carol singing was brought over from France at a very early date, and by the XIIIth century the Norman carols began to give way to those in English, often retaining the French refrain . . .¹

Two French poets of the Renaissance, Clément Marot and Théodore de Bèze, set all of the Psalms of David to metrical patterns.² Their work culminated in the Geneva Psalter which was to become a model throughout Europe. Albert Edward Bailey records that Psalm singing had become so popular in sixteenth century France that it was referred to as the "Geneva Giggs."³ Between 1533 and 1873 more than 200 French poets published versions of some of the Psalms. These were set to music in the nineteenth century by César Malan. His publications number over a thousand hymns, many of which are comparable in quality to those of Watts and Wesley.⁴ His poetry is personal, deep and religiously moving.

The foregoing demonstrates that there is such a thing as French hymnody and that qualified poets and musicians have already contributed worthy texts, some of which are compatible with Latter-day Saint theology. In addition to these, contemporary hymns, written on request by qualified French members, could provide a wealthy supplement to the American and English hymns already existing in *Hymnes*. Except for a few carols, the 1954 hymnbook contains almost no original French texts. It does contain a Bach five part chorale, a Mozart Ave Verum and a Beethoven anthem—all of Germanic origin.

Hymnes has other editorial shortcomings. It lacks a preface; it fails to give credit to the translators; it lists only English poets and composers; the translations are of uneven quality; the indexes are incomplete and inaccurate (for example, Easter is not listed in the topical index); some hymns are printed on two pages backing each other, which makes the book awkward to use, especially for the director and pianist, and helps deteriorate the already poor binding of highly acidified paper; and the organization is neither alphabetical nor topical (hymns for children, youth, congregation and choir are all intermixed). All of these weaknesses could and should be eliminated in a new edition.

In spite of these shortcomings, *Hymnes* has fulfilled an important need for the French Saints. Thousands of meetings have been enriched with it and many lives comforted and encouraged. In addition, it has helped teach the principles of the gospel to the French-speaking people and has been instrumental in uniting them with the Church in general. The publication of a truly French Latter-day Saint hymnal could enhance each of these positive contributions.

¹(New York: Hodder and Stoughton, 1915), p. 19.

²Waldo Selden Pratt, *The Music of the French Psalter of 1562* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1939); see introductory chapters.

³Albert Edward Bailey, *The Gospel in Hymns* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1950), p. 13.

⁴John Julian, *A Number Dictionary of Hymnology* (New York: Dover Reprints; also London: John Murray, 1908); see entry on French hymnody.