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PRESENTS

## *My Personal Notes . . .*

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### **WHAT IS WRONG WITH THE OLD HYMNS?**

For as long as I can remember, I have been going to church services, and as long as I can remember I have been singing in those services. I remember the song they sang when my mother was baptized, “Shall We Gather At The River.” Now it didn’t seem to matter to most folks that the “river” we were singing about was the one that “flows by the throne of God.” It was sung many times when people decided to be baptized and we gathered at the nearest stream of water. You understand that was the days before baptisteries!

Growing up we sang many of the old familiar songs. In fact, most of my life in places where I have lived and worked, we sang mostly those same familiar songs. One of the favorites it seemed was “Sweet Hour of Prayer.” It just seemed that it settled folks down and made them appreciate the time when led in prayer by a member of the congregation.

Sweet hour of prayer,  
Sweet hour of prayer,  
That calls me from a world of care,  
And bids me at my Father’s throne,  
Make all my wants and wishes known  
In seasons of distress and grief  
My soul has often found relief,  
And oft escaped the tempter’s snare,  
By thy return, sweet hour of prayer.

So goes the first verse of the song. And many of you can probably cite the other two verses by memory. This is one of the songs that I have heard all

my life and means a lot to me and I would like to hear more of it. It has depth and meaning that is taken from scripture. Not any more!

The Bible says [“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts unto God.”](#) (Colossians 3:16) One of the reasons we sing is to teach, admonish and encourage.

There is something about music that can accomplish that where other means of communication cannot. I do not understand all the underlying reasons but I know that people learn from songs, as we are told in scripture and they also are encouraged and admonished and their spirits are lifted.

Many of the songs that many larger churches sing these days are so called “praise songs” and in this preacher’s opinion, do little teaching though they do seemingly lift some spirits. Actually these “praise songs” are what I call “feel good” songs. They are more about us than they are about the Lord.

I do not begrudge our younger generation their taste in music. My problem is when most of the services consist of these new songs most of the congregation does not know. I believe we should learn new songs, as long as they are scriptural (and I realize that some of the songs in the books we have and have used for years are not). But the morning services of the church should not be the place to do it.

I realize that at my age I have slowed down some, in almost everything. I can no longer follow the music and the words of new songs at the same time, so new songs pose a problem to me. I am not alone! Many of our older saints do not read music like the younger generation. Consequently we just sit and listen rather than join the singing when such songs are used.

Another of my all time favorite songs is Rock of Ages.

Rock of ages cleft for me,  
Let me hide myself in thee,  
Let the water and the blood  
From thy wounded side which flowed  
Be of sin the double cure  
Saved from wrath and made me pure.

Those are powerful words about the salvation of our souls and how it came.

The last verse goes,

While I draw this fleeting breath  
When my eyes shall close in death  
When I rise to worlds unknown  
And behold Thee on Thy throne  
Rock of Ages, cleft for me  
Let me hide myself in thee.

There are many others. Too many to list here, but I have some other favorites.

O THOU FOUNT OF EVERY BLESSING  
MY HOPE IS BUILT ON NOTHING LESS  
THE OLD RUGGED CROSS  
COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS  
WHISPERING HOME  
WHERE THE ROSES NEVER FADE  
WHERE THE SOUL NEVER DIES

And many more!

[“Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your heart to the Lord.” \(Ephesians 5:19\)](#)

Oh, just one more thing. “Break Thou The Bread of Life” is not a communion song. Read it!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ed Smithson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

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