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Search

Search

Pages

- [About](#)
- [My Story](#)

Archives

- [August 2011](#)

Tuesday Hymns: “Come, Thou Almighty King”

November 3, 2009 at 10:08 AM ([Hymns](#))

We Presbyterians are often chided because we like to sing all the verses of the hymns during corporate worship. Growing up as a Baptist it was not unusual to leave out a verse of a hymn, usually the third, prompting comedian Grady Nutt to once remark, “I am as lonely as the third verse in a Baptist hymnbook.”

Our Tuesday Hymn is a prime example of why leaving out a verse is not necessarily a good idea. *Come, Thou Almighty King* is a great hymn of praise to the Triune God. Verse one praises the “*Father, all glorious,*” verse two praises “*Thou Incarnate Word,*” verse three praises the “*Holy Comforter,*” and the last verse praises the “*Great One in Three.*” How many times in our churches has the Holy Spirit been left out of this great hymn of praise to save an extra 30 seconds?

We do not know who wrote this hymn (no, it was probably not Charles Wesley) but I will be forever grateful for his succinct and direct hymn praising the Triune God. It is sung to the tune, [TRINITY](#).

Come, Thou Almighty King, help us Thy name to sing, help us to praise. Father, all glorious, o'er all victorious, come and reign over us, Ancient of Days.

Come, Thou Incarnate Word, gird on Thy mighty sword, our prayer attend. Come, and Thy people bless, and give Thy Word success; Spirit of holiness, on us descend.

Come, Holy Comforter, Thy sacred witness bear in this glad hour. Thou who almighty art, now rule in every heart, and ne'er from us depart, Spirit of pow'r.

- July 2011
- June 2011
- May 2011
- April 2011
- March 2011
- February 2011
- January 2011
- December 2010
- October 2010
- September 2010
- August 2010
- July 2010
- June 2010
- May 2010
- April 2010
- March 2010
- February 2010
- January 2010
- December 2009
- November 2009
- October 2009
- September 2009
- August 2009
- July 2009
- June 2009
- May 2009
- April 2009
- March 2009
- February 2009

Categories

- Church History
- Culture
- Doctrine
- ecclesiology

To the great One in Three eternal praises be, hence evermore. His sovereign majesty may we in glory see, and to eternity love and adore.

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2 Comments

1. **Robert** said,

November 5, 2009 at 7:59 AM



Thanks for your comments on “Come, Thou Almighty King.” I’ve always thought Wesley’s authorship was a possibility, since it was first published in a leaflet with other hymns we know are his. But that is only a guess, and Author Unknown is probably the best designation.

- Eschatology
- Family
- Gospel Worship
- Grace
- Humor
- Hymns
- Law and Gospel
- miscellaneous
- New s
- Ordinary Means of Grace
- Personal
- Presbyterian Church in America
- Providence
- Psalms
- Sanctification
- Sin
- Sovereignty of God
- The Church
- The Fourth Commandment
- The Glory of God
- The Holy Scriptures
- Trials and Suffering
- Uncategorized

Meta

- Register
- Log in
- Entries RSS
- Comments RSS

The song was published shortly after “God Save the King” came into common use, and some similar phrases are used in the hymn. It seems the intent may have been to remind believers of their allegiance to a higher Authority than the king of England.

As to omitting verses from congregational hymns, that gave me a smile. Since my retirement (semi, perhaps) my wife and I have been attending a little Baptist church where the worship leader omits the 3rd stanza about 8 out of 10 times—and always the third. (We’ve missed some great things that way!) And I do agree that some songs, such as your example, have a logical flow that is missed if we skip any of the verses.

However, that being said, in many years of leading services, both as a senior pastor and a director of music, I was not shy about leaving verses out. The reasons varied. Occasionally, it was because of some questionable doctrine there. But usually it was designed to focus on the theme of the Bible message to come.

Omitted verses were sung at other times, but my purpose was to use the ones that clearly supported the theme. Sometimes I connected a couple of stanzas of one hymn with a couple from another to accomplish this. Sometimes I had the congregation read stanzas that weren’t sung. A bit of variety is a good thing, especially if it is purposeful and well thought out.

It should also be noted that many of our older hymns, as published, have already lost some of the verses. It was not unusual for a hymn to have eight or a dozen stanzas, and editors have chosen only a few. Sometimes real treasures are missed that way. If so, I would sometimes print missing stanzas in the church bulletin, so we could include them.

Reply

- o **cliftonr said,**





Thanks, Robert, for posting. I readily admit that verses have been left out of our hymnals by the editors...since some songs may have many stanzas. I also agree that if there is deficient doctrine in a verse, it should not be sung (That is why we never sing It Came Upon a Midnight Clear). All that being said, I still lean heavily toward singing every verse (that we have in the hymn book) because the editors have normally worked diligently to keep the theme of that particular hymn in tact. I have always appreciated John Wesley's rules for singing [especially the rule that says, "Don't bawl."];^)

1. Sing all. See that you join with the congregation as frequently as you can. Let not a slight degree of weakness or weariness hinder you. If it is a cross to you, take it up and you will find a blessing.
2. Sing lustily, and with a good courage. Beware of singing as if you were half dead, or half asleep; but lift up your voice with strength. Be no more afraid of your voice now, nor more ashamed of it being heard, then when you sing the songs of Satan.
3. Sing modestly. Do not bawl, as to be heard above, or distinct from, the rest of the congregation, that you may not destroy the harmony; but strive to unite your voices together, so as to make one clear melodious sound.
4. Sing in time. Whatever time is sung, be sure to keep with it. Do not run before, not stay behind it; but attend closely to the leading voices, and move therewith as exactly as you can. And take care you sing not too slow. This drawling way naturally steals on all who are lazy; and it is high time to drive it out from among us, and sing all our tunes just as quick as we did at first.
5. Above all, sing spiritually. Have an eye to God in every word you sing. Aim at pleasing Him more than yourself, or any other creature. In order to do this, attend strictly to the sense of what you sing, and see that your heart is not carried away with the sound, but offered to God continually; so shall your

singing be such as the Lord will approve of here, and reward when he cometh in the clouds of heaven.

Thanks again for posting. You made some good points.

Clifton

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