

Hymns That Live. Their Meaning 's and Message,
Frank Colquhoun, Intervarsity, 1980; 320 pp.,
Reviewed by Mrs. Helen Tangelder,

Hymns are for the people. "Let the clergy preach the sermons; the choir render their anthems; the people sing their hymns."

Canon Frank Colquhoun, former canon and dean of the Norwich Cathedral, England, has made a life-long study of hymns for his own personal enjoyment. He chose forty hymns used in the major denominational hymn books, including the little known "We Sing the Praise of Him Who Died", written by the Irishman Thomas Kelly, to the universal hymn of praise, "Holy, Holy, Holy", written by the clergyman Reginald Heber. One special feature of Colquhoun's study is a detailed biography of each hymn writer and an account of the influence of their music in the church.

Why do many "old time" hymns: live? They are based on scripture rather than on personal feelings and are set to poetry and music as an expression of the hymn writers' faith. "Now Thank We All Our God" is a free paraphrase of Ecclesiasticus 50:22-4. The spiritual songs of today are here now and gone tomorrow. Hymns live on in the church tradition of music as an expression of adoration, hope and confession.

Rev. Colquhoun's style is very readable. His book can be used for devotional reading. Why not Music is neither boring nor humdrum. Hymns such as "Jesus Lover of My Soul" can uplift the weary. They can comfort the sad: "The King of Love my Shepherd is." They calm the troubled: "Abide with me." They challenge the weak hearted: "For All the Saints Who from Their Labours Rest." And they give direction: "Guide me, O Though great Jehovah." It's all there. Our life's experiences of joys and sorrows have been put to music and live on for our own spiritual well being.

This is not a potpourri of hymns picked at random. Like a beautiful bouquet of fresh flowers, Frank Colquhoun has carefully selected hymns of the church for us to appreciate and enjoy. Excellent reading!