A brief history of Christian hymns, with an emphasis on the 2006 Hymnal of the Nippon Sei Ko Kai (Anglican Church in Japan)

Note: this article was written in the summer of 2010 by request. It was to have been included in the Nippon Sei Ko Kai Hymnal Companion. As of April, 2011, however, the Companion remains unpublished. Hymn numbers given in this article refer to those found in the above Hymnal. As rule, I have not given tune names in the text, a fact that will require readers to refer to the Hymnal in order to fully follow the article. If time allows, I will add these to a future, revised version.

By Scott Shaw (copyright August, 2010)

1. Music of the Early Christian Church

Introductory remarks

The congregational song contained in the 日本聖公会「聖歌集」 (Hymnal of the Nippon Sei Ko Kai), 2006, which will hereafter be referred to as Hymnal, has its roots in many different times and places. When considering the words of the hymns we sing, we find texts that date from several thousand years before Christ (the Psalms), and everything between early Christian texts (3rd and 4th centuries) and words written in our own time. While not quite as long a span, the music of the hymns comprise music composed over a period of more than one-thousand years. Texts and music have been created in all places where Christians have gathered, and continue to be written in our own time.

The purpose of this essay is to give the reader a perspective on this tremendous body of sacred song. It is certain that all who use this Hymnal have musical likes and dislikes. We all have opinions on what we consider sing able or not, and what is appropriate or not. When using the Hymnal for personal singing, this is not necessarily a bad thing. But when we gather for congregational worship, the choice of hymns for use must not be reduced to the personal likes and dislikes of those present. After all, there is
no guarantee that one's "good taste" in hymns will be appreciated by the person across the aisle. A knowledge of the background and history of our hymns should give one a broader perspective, and allow one to appreciate a much wider range of hymns than would otherwise be possible. The reader is encouraged not only to consider genre that have been unfamiliar (or even disliked) to this point, but also to reconsider the hymns he or she loves, in order to see what exactly it is that differentiates them. It can be a lifetime study, and there is no better time than the present to make a start.

History of the Early Church and its music

The Christian Church has used music in its worship from its very earliest days. The famous direction in Paul's letter to the Colossians (chapter 3, verse 16) to "sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs" tells us that at least by the middle of the first century Christians were not only singing during worship, but that they used different types of congregational song. It is likely that from around this time Christians made efforts to create a new body of congregational song distinct from that of Jewish worship. As music was not written down until around the tenth century, it is difficult to say what type of music was used. Still, several things can be surmised. Certain types of texts were used: psalms, canticles from both the Old Testament (The Song of Moses, etc) and New Testament (The Song of Mary, etc.), and hymn-like texts such as Ephesians 5:14. Somewhat later, texts from the Mass may also have been sung by the people. These texts were probably neither in a regular meter, nor arranged in stanzas, as our hymns are today. The tunes were most likely single-line (monophonic) and sung unaccompanied. However they performed these texts, Christians were known for singing. Plinius the younger, a first-century Roman official, wrote that Christians "sing songs to Christ, and address him as god." Many other references to Christians singing exist in writings from the first to fourth centuries. But since there is no written music dating from the early church, one must speculate on the sound of ancient Christian song. Some scholars suggest that the music sung in present-day Orthodox churches of the Middle East may have certain aural links with the song of the early church. The music of these churches continues to be passed down by word of mouth. It was never Latinized; each church sings in its own language. It also makes use of non-Western scales, and vocal techniques that have long been lost to
Western music such as minute pitch inflection (of less than one half step), vocal ornamentation, etc. Interestingly, many of these points do exist in Japanese traditional music. If one listens to recordings of these traditions now, and if one accepts that they might contain elements of early Christian music, it becomes clear how different our modern-day congregational song is from that of its origins.

Today nearly all of our hymn texts are in a similar format. They have a concrete metrical scheme (for example, the first line of text will have the same number of syllables in all verses, etc.), and are sung in stanzas. This type of text allows a relatively short tune to serve as the hymn’s melody. This in turn makes it possible for a congregation with no literary skills or hymnals to sing communally by memorizing the hymns. Two men were instrumental in the creation of this type of text; Hilary of Potiers and Ambrose of Milan, both of whom were active in the fourth century. The Hymnal contains one hymn text by Hilary (198) and several by Ambrose. Though hymn 198 is set to a modern tune, several by Ambrose appear with Gregorian melodies (9, 10, 20, 196). It is unlikely these are the same exact tunes used to sing the texts in Ambrose’s day. It is not impossible, though, that they contain elements of the original tunes. As far as the Hymnal goes, these are the oldest pairings of text and tune, and have been sung for over a millennium. These types of melodies, known as Gregorian or Plainsong chant will be covered next.

2: Gregorian Chant

Forward

Gregorian chant (also Plainchant or Plainsong) is the oldest music of the Western Christian church. It has been continuously sung for over one-thousand years, and forms the backbone upon which all Western music is built. It may come as a surprise, then, to realize that for the many centuries, Gregorian chant was a totally aural music. It was passed down by word of mouth, and performed by memory. The first attempts at notation appear in the ninth or tenth centuries, but it was not until the eleventh century that musical notation progressed enough to allow one to look at a piece of music and to be able to decipher the melody without previously knowing the tune. Considering the many
thousands of chants in existence, it is clear that this music was not specifically created to be sung by all the people present at a mass, but by a trained group of singers; the choir. This is not to say that congregations did not sing Gregorian chant; it is likely that simpler hymn-like chants were indeed sung by non-trained singers. But certainly most of the complex music of the sung mass was performed by those who were trained to do so.

History

The music that would eventually be called Gregorian chant appears to have been sung at all of the early Western church centers. In Italy alone there were numerous independent bodies of local chant. Among these are Old Roman, Ambrosian and Gregorian, among others. Outside Italy one could find the Mozarabic chants (Spain), Gallican chants (France), Frankish chants (Germany), Sarum chants (England), etc. The roots of all these various traditions probably lies in the cantillation of the Scriptures in the Jewish synagogue. From the fourth century Latin replaced Greek as the language of the church in Rome, and it is thought that independent Western liturgies and music developed from this time. Though there are many conflicting theories, it is probable that one of the older Italian bodies of chant (Old Roman?) was taken north of the Alps, where it replaced the Gallican rite native to the Frankish Kingdom. During the reigns of Frankish kings Pepin the Short (752-68) and Charlemagne (768-814), liturgical uniformity was pursued vigorously; this included the texts and music of the chants sung during liturgies. Though the goal was to import authentic traditions from Rome and to disseminate them throughout the kingdom, inevitably differences appeared between Italian practice and Frankish practice. With the growing power of the Frankish kingdom, it was their version of the chant that was to become the official song of the Roman Catholic Church, displacing all other traditions. Eventually re-imported to Rome, It is this group of chants that we now call Gregorian. One factor that probably cemented its successful propagation was the invention of musical notation, something that occurred first in the Frankish kingdom.

The development of chant did not stop after Gregorian melodies were adopted throughout the Western church. Creation of new liturgies required new chants. And within a few centuries of the appearance of musical notation, composers began creating polyphonic music known as organum. By the 14th century, entire masses were being
written in polyphonic settings, though based on Gregorian melodies. Of course, Gregorian chant continued to be sung along side these more elaborate compositions. Major efforts were made to revise the chants in the sixteenth and nineteenth-centuries, and in the early twentieth-century a series of official Vatican chant books were published. With the decision of the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) to drop Latin as the official ceremonial language of the Roman Catholic Church, however, Gregorian chant lost its role as the officially sanctioned music of that church.

While Gregorian chant will probably never regain its role as the main music of the Roman Catholic Church, certain of the Gregorian hymns continue to be sung in many Christian denominations. The Anglican Church began singing some of the simpler hymns after translating them to English in the late-nineteenth century. In the *Hymnal* there are approximately fifteen Medieval Gregorian hymns tunes, ranging from extremely simple tunes (10) to somewhat more melodically complex ones (298). Others in a Gregorian style, but written in later centuries also are included (64, 176, 255, etc.). One will notice that in the *Hymnal*, all tunes of Gregorian origin are given in two versions - unharmonized single-line versions, and versions with a keyboard accompaniment. Though there is nothing inherently wrong with accompanying these tunes, it is good to keep in mind that for many centuries they were sung in unison and unaccompanied. In a way, singing them without accompaniment links us with the Christians who created them. Hymn tunes of Gregorian origin: 7, 9, 10, 20, 25, 40, 71, 115, 142, 193, 196, 253, 254, 298.

**Types of Gregorian Chants**

There are three basic types of Gregorian chant, all of which are found in the *Hymnal*. The first category is the most familiar - hymns. These types are the most likely to have been known to and sung by congregations in the Medieval church. They consist of texts that are arranged in verses. Verses are structured with a definite number of syllables per line, and this structure is followed for all verses of the text. This allows a relatively short tune to be used for each verse of the text.

The second type of Gregorian chant was that of the texts of the Mass itself. These included the main texts of the Ordinary (Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus-Benedictus, Agnus dei, and Ite, missa est), as well as those of the Propers (Introit, Gradual, Alleluia, Offertory,
Communion). Unlike the words of a hymn, these texts are not arranged for easy singing to hymn-like melodies. One will find that the melodies for these texts tend to flow from beginning to end, without definite repetition or easily perceivable structure. This aspect makes them more difficult for congregations to sing. In fact, the singing of most parts of the Mass in the Medieval church was the role of trained singers, not the congregation. Congregational participation in the singing of the mass chants only came about from after the liturgical reforms of the 1960's. An example of a Gregorian Mass setting can be found in the *Hymnal* at S40. This is a complete setting the Ordinary of the mass, as well as several other chants. This is one example of the hundreds of mass settings that were sung in Roman Catholic Church up until the Second Vatican Council.

The third type of Gregorian chant is that of the psalm tune. Just as in the Latin bible, the texts of the psalms in Japanese translation are not given a metrical structure. One line of text might comprise twenty syllables, for example, while another in the same psalm might have far more or less. Singing this sort of prose text can be difficult without the use of a special system. Fortunately, the Medieval church devised such a way to sing metrically non-structured prose texts. Examples in the *Hymnal* include S2-1, S5-1, S6-1, S7-1, S8-1, S9-1,2, S10-1, S11-1,2, S18.

### 3: Congregational music of the Reformation

**Lutheran Chorales**

The Protestant Reformation is normally dated to 1517, when Martin Luther wrote his famous 95 theses to protest certain practices of the Roman Catholic Church. Though Luther's actions began as an attempt to reform the Catholic Church from within, the end result was the creation of the German Lutheran Church, the first of the Protestant churches to break with Rome. This church developed a worship service based on that of the Roman Catholic Mass, but with changes to reflect Protestant belief and German language.

Luther's own preferences and tastes had a major effect on the type of music that was chosen for use in the Lutheran Church. He was a proficient amateur musician and
appreciated the music of the Roman Catholic Mass - both its Gregorian chants and polyphonic choral music. His reforms led to an important new musical role for the congregation in Lutheran services, but he was also careful to preserve what he considered the most appropriate parts of the Latin Mass. Let us examine this aspect of the Lutheran service.

In 1526 Luther published a *Deutsches Messe*, or Mass in German. The contents of this mass book demonstrate Luther's hands-on approach to the music people were to sing. All of the Mass was to be sung, except for the sermon and the Lord's Prayer. The music was a combination of chants and hymns. The chants were taken from Roman practice, but translated into German. Hymn-like music was to be sung by all the people present; this was a radical change from the status of the Roman Catholic worshiper, who was a silent observer. This newly created hymn-type congregational song is known as "chorale." Chorales were used both as normal congregational hymns, as well as for parts of the Ordinary of the Mass. For example, the Latin Credo was translated into German and sung as a chorale by all present (*Wir glauben all in einen Gott*). In the *Hymnal* we find a chorale dating from this time that could be used as an Agnus dei, (372). If you read the text, (*O lamm Gottes, unschuldig*), it is clear that this is a paraphrase of the original Latin Agnus dei.

It should be remembered that this *Deutsche Messe* was an early work, and that it was probably more for weekday worship than Sundays, and more for village churches than city parishes. Luther did not wish to eliminate Latin, and in larger churches it was normal for the service to include Latin portions, polyphonic music sung by the choir alone, as well as German language chorales for all to sing. It does, however, clearly demonstrate the early Lutheran church's concern that the people participate in the service.

We shall now consider the music of the chorales themselves. Luther's first priority was to create a body of tunes that people could sing with confidence. Some of the chorales were re-workings of Gregorian hymns that would have been familiar to German Christians. For example, the plainsong melody of *Veni redemptor genitum* was revised to be sung as a German chorale. This revised version appears in the *Hymnal* (59) as *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland*. Though it appears harmonized here, the original would have consisted only of a melody, and would have been sung unaccompanied. A glance at the melody shows a technique often used in chorales: the opening melodic line returns at the
end of the chorale. This type of repetition made chorales easy to memorize quickly. In addition to chorales that reused older melodic material, Luther and others composed new tunes. A well known melody by Luther is *Ein feste Burg* (453). Though twice as long as *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland* (59), it is structured so as to be immediately singable. The second line of the tune is an exact repetition of the first line. Furthermore, the final two measures of the melody are a repetition of the final two measures of lines one and two. A further aid to memory is the use of a descending octave scale in these three places (わが強き盾、など). Other chorales and chorale-like melodies in the *Hymnal* include Nos. 58, 60, 72, 131, 145, 146, 158, 180, 188, among others.

**Metrical Psalms**

Though the Lutherans were the first Reformation era sect to create music specifically for congregational use, they were not the only Protestant group to have done so. Jean Calvin (1509-1564) and the Reformed Church also created a unique body of congregational song in the vernacular. Calvin, a Frenchman, was originally a Roman Catholic. He converted to Protestantism around 1530, and was forced to leave Paris for Switzerland in 1534. His next place of activity, Strasbourg, where he was a pastor to the French refugee community, is important to the history of congregational song. It was there that he published his first collection of metrical psalms for congregational use, the *Alcuns pseaulmes et cantiques mys en chant*. In 1541 he returned to Geneva and spent the rest of his life working for the church there. His final publication of metrical psalms was in 1562, when all 150 of the biblical psalms were given rhymed metrical settings in French. These publications by Calvin represent the first time that the psalms had been arranged for congregations to sing, rather than for choirs or other trained groups.

Unlike the Lutherans, Calvin and the Reformed Church chose to use the words of the Book of Psalms for their congregational music. In fact, aside from a few canticles, the psalms were the only texts allowed to be sung in Reformed worship. The problem with singing psalms, of course, is the fact that their texts are in prose form, that is, they consist of lines of varying numbers of syllables. In order to enable a large group of people to sing the psalms with confidence, it was necessary to reshape these texts into metered versions. Doing so regularized the line-lengths of the texts and made it possible for hymn-
like tunes to carry them. As an example, the prose version of Psalm 23 from the Nippon Sei Ko Kai *Book of Common Prayer*, verse one, line one has 23 syllables. Yet, verse two, line one has 32 syllables. This means that the same hymn-like tune cannot be used for both verses. The poets Calvin relied upon for his collections solved the problem by rewriting the psalms in metered form. An example of this process can be seen in hymn 461, where the first lines of all verses, for example, consist of fourteen syllables.

Though Calvin, like Luther, was a lover of music, his vision for the Reformed service did not allow for organs or other instruments, choirs, polyphonic music, or harmonized congregational song. In fact, the only type of music allowed in a Reformed Church service was the unaccompanied, unison metrical psalm, sung by all present. Other types of music were certainly created and enjoyed by the members of the Reformed Church, but only for use outside the worship service.

In the *Hymnal* one can find several of the tunes used by the Reformed church for the singing of the psalms. Hymns 209/317, 333/559 and 410 are all tunes originally sung at Geneva by Reformed congregations. Other tunes that also may have been used include 61 and 237. Though the *Hymnal* contains many texts that are metricized psalms, none appear to be paired with their original Genevan tunes. In general, the modern Anglican church has not made much use of metrical psalms, probably because of its own unique tradition of singing prose psalm texts to Anglican chant tunes. The early Anglican Church did use Genevan-style metrical psalms in their worship, a fact that will be explained in the next section. Examples of metrical or paraphrased psalm texts paired with non-Genevan tunes in the *Hymnal*: 304, 332, 392, 444, 461, 486, 556, 565, 567.

**Anglican Congregational Song**

The Reformation of the English Church was a long and often violent process. It is normally said to have begun with Henry VIII's Act of Supremacy (1534), but the real changes in the worship service began after Henry's death (1547). In 1549 the Act of Uniformity was passed by Parliament, which required all churches in England to use the English Bible and newly published English *Book of Common Prayer* in their services. Latin was disallowed, and with it, practically all church music in use up to that time. Unlike the methodical efforts by Luther and Calvin to provide theologically sound, singable music for
their congregations, the English approach was more disorganized, especially at the parish level. As the English church at this time leaned more toward the Reformed tradition than the Lutheran, collections of metrical psalms in English were published by Thomas Crowley and Thomas Sternhold. These were the efforts of individuals, rather than the national church, and were made useless by the ascension of Roman Catholic Queen Mary in 1553, and event that dragged the church back to Rome and the Latin mass. As her reign lasted for a mere five years, the English church again returned to Protestantism with the crowning of Elizabeth in 1558. Though the Elizabethan age is recognized as one of the great periods of English church music, it must be stated that this is only true as it applies to cathedrals and chapels (royal or university). There seems not to have been any organized attempt across the national church to encourage congregations to sing. Despite this, however, the singing of metrical psalms in English spread through the church rapidly during Elizabeth’s reign. These tunes imported from Geneva were called "Genevan Jigs" by the Queen and others, due to the quick tempo of congregational singing.

The use of metrical psalms for English parish worship was given a boost in 1562 with the publication by John Day of *The Whole Booke of Psalmes, Collected into English Meter* (also known as Sternhold & Hopkins, or The Old Version). This was the first publication of all one hundred fifty psalms in English metricized verse, and included forty eight tunes for the singing of the texts. Though this book also contained canticles and a few original hymns, it was the psalter that was important to the future of English congregational song. Though other psalters were published during Elizabeth’s reign, it is this book that formed the basis of most congregational song for over a century.

As we have seen, the modern-day Anglican church does not make much use of the metricized psalter. But between the sixteenth and eighteenth-centuries, however, virtually the only music in a typical English church was the unison, unaccompanied metrical psalm. Thus, the basis of Anglican congregational song is neither Gregorian chant nor the Lutheran chorale, but the metrical psalm imported from the Genevan Reformed Church. Hymns, as such, did not come into use in the Anglican church until the efforts of John Wesley and others in the eighteenth-century.
4: 18th Century Methodist Hymns

The First Hymns in English

For roughly two hundred years (from the sixteenth to eighteenth-centuries), congregational song texts of the Anglican Church comprised not hymns, butmetrical psalms. Though it seems that the psalm tunes were sung with gusto and at a good tempo when first adopted by the English church in the sixteenth-century, they had lost all vitality over the succeeding centuries. By the eighteenth-century, Anglican singing was infamous for it's lack of energy, inaccuracy and extremely slow tempos. Even so, the church resisted the adoption of either more contemporary music, or texts other than the psalms. When Watts, the Wesleys and others began to introduce the singing of non-biblical texts, or "hymns," many in the Anglican church found it scandalous. If we view the topic from the perspective of the twenty-first century, the practice of singing only psalms does seem odd. The psalms were written long before the birth of Christ, and thus, do not speak directly to the Christian experience. Furthermore, relying on just one hundred fifty texts for all of Christian worship seems theologically limiting. These same points troubled the Wesley brothers, Isaac Watts and others in the eighteenth-century, leading them to write thousands of new hymn texts that addressed topics close to the life of people living in their time.

Isaac Watts (1647-1748) was an English minister in an Independent (non-Anglican) church. He is sometimes called the "father of English hymnody" due to his role as the creator of a new body of congregational song, beginning in the late-seventeenth century. He wrote approximately seven hundred fifty texts for singing that were based on Christian experience; these were published in four collections during the early eighteenth-century. His work challenged the then-prevalent practice of singing only metrical psalms in worship. One might say that he gave the singing Christian his own voice in hymns such as "When I survey the wondrous cross" (370). Here the focus is on Jesus' cross, but through the eyes of a Christian, thus one finds the repeated use of the words 'I', 'my' and 'mine'. The Hymnal includes seven hymn texts by Watts: 47, 68, 327, 370, 399, 405, 452.
Following in Watts' footsteps were John Wesley (1703-1791) and his brother Charles (1707-1788) both of whom were Anglican clergymen who saw the need for reform of the church from within. Though their followers eventually did create a new Protestant sect, the Methodist Church, the Wesleys remained lifelong Anglicans. One of the trademarks of the Methodist movement was hearty singing by participants in their services, both those conducted indoor and those performed outdoor. While the Anglican Church remained mired in the slow, uninspiring singing of metrical psalms, the new hymns and tunes created by the Methodists inspired their followers. Naturally, this lead to jealousy on the side of the Anglicans. A 1762 pamphlet included a chapter entitled "The Methodists' profane Manner of Singing," accused the Methodists of singing popular ballad tunes in church. Were the Methodists' tunes really that bad? Their first published hymnbook (1742) included forty-three melodies, of which thirteen were German chorales, nineteen were English psalm tunes, ten were from various sources, and one was from an opera by G. F. Handel. One can examine four of the tunes from this first Methodist collection that appear in the Hymnal and decide for one's self. These are: 8, 159, 229, and 348. They do not appear very scandalous to the eyes and ears of the twenty-first century observer. It is possible, of course, that the type of tune which angered the Anglicans has passed out of use and is unused in today's hymnals. Three more collections of hymns were published during the Wesley's lifetime, the last one appearing in 1781. Compared with the first collection, which included only unison melodies for unaccompanied singing, this last collection included bass lines for the tunes, reflecting the late 18th century demand for harmonized (and accompanied?) hymns. We can now see a form of congregational song that is similar to that of our own day. Two tunes found in the Hymnal representative of this form of later Methodist hymnody are 56 and 346.

One final point about the Methodist tradition that should be understood is the attitude of the Wesleys toward congregational singing. All of the people were supposed to join, and they were supposed to understand what it was they were singing. Among other directions, the Methodist leadership told its preachers that they were to:

1. choose hymns appropriate to their congregations
2. teach the people the hymn tunes note-by-note
3. correct wrong singing when it occurred
4. regularly stop the people mid-hymn and ask them if they really understood what they
had just sung
5. not to make the people sing too much - Wesley's texts were very long, so no more than five or six verses were to be sung at one time

Though we do not now sing many of the Methodist's tunes, their texts are still influential. More important to us is their attitude toward congregational song, and they ways in which they encouraged it. Perhaps we, in our day, could benefit from the use of John Wesley's techniques?

5: Nineteenth to Early Twentieth-Century English Hymnody

The Roots of Modern Anglican Hymnody

Up to this point we have considered the music of the church over a span of roughly one thousand seven hundred years, from the earliest Christians to the eighteenth-century. To varying degrees, all of the genre covered have influenced the Hymnal. If one were to record all of the hymns sung on a given Sunday across the Nippon Sei Ko Kai, however, it is likely that a great deal of the tunes would not originate from these earlier traditions, but from the nineteenth-century. Once the Anglican Church finally decided to allow and encourage the singing of hymns over metrical psalms, a tremendous amount of creative energy was released. This resulted in the great body of hymns that many people in the church today consider "normal" hymns.

Even though the Methodists released collections of hymns from the 1740's on, the Anglican Church took much longer to give up their metrical psalms. The 1810 Collection of Psalms and Hymns by Cotterill was rejected by the church as "inappropriate." The opposing sides of metrical psalms vs. hymns went so far as to take the matter to court, where it was decided in 1820 that it was "not illegal" to sing hymns in church, especially if done so before or after the service. From this tepid approval of hymn texts in the 1820's we see a flood of new hymns being composed and used by the Anglican Church in the 1830's. It was not coincidence that the church finally warmed toward hymn texts in the 1830's - this was also the time of the Oxford Movement in England. The movement was an attempt by clergymen from Oxford to revive the moribund Anglican church.
energy was imparted to the celebration of the Eucharist, and with it, the creation of appropriate music to accompany the liturgy. Over a span of several decades, the Anglican church created a new tradition of congregational hymn singing, often with the lead and support of a trained choir, and later, organs.

The first hymnal to be published in England that could be considered truly national was the 1861 *Hymns Ancient and Modern*. This publication was so popular that it sold 4.5 million copies in its first seven years of existence. It was different from hymn publications up to then, in that it included hymns from different times and places. It also set the pattern for today's hymnals in the organization of its content: hymns were arranged in order of the liturgical year, something we consider to be the norm today. But the most important aspect of it for us was the inclusion of newly composed hymn tunes, many of which form the backbone of our singing tradition today. These were the creation of first-rate church musicians of the day, including Samuel Sebastian Wesley (1810-1876), John Goss (1800-1880), William Henry Monk (1823-1889), John Bacchus Dykes (1823-1876), and others. The tunes of these composers generally have rich harmonies that support the melody and pull the singer forward. Two examples of this style are the tunes *Aurelia* (285/391) and *Eventide* (31). It makes an interesting experiment to play through the melody of one of these tunes alone, and then to play it again with its harmony. Though they could certainly be sung unaccompanied in unison, it is the combination of the melody and harmony that makes this type of tune great. Some other tunes from this period include 24, 36, 50, 126, 130, 136, 140, 157, 200, 233, 251, 309, 342, 343, 352, 368, 400, 516, etc.

The other influential English hymnal in this period of English hymn creation was *The English Hymnal* (1906). One of its editors was the great English composer Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958). He was not only editor, but composed new tunes and arranged English folk songs for the collection. Due to his efforts, the overall musical quality of the collection is very high. His influence is to be found in the Nippon Sei Ko Kai *Hymnal*, which contains eleven of his tunes in three categories: 1) harmonizations of earlier tunes (5, 219); 2) arrangements of traditional English melodies (86, 236, 408, 508); 3) original compositions (173, 204, 207, 384, 523). Apart from Vaughan Williams' own works, the hymnal included large numbers of Gregorian melodies. This aspect of the book made it attractive to the High Church side of the Anglican Church. It also included German chorales with English texts and, of course, the standard nineteenth-century English tunes
found in Hymns Ancient and Modern. In one way, the Hymnal stands in the tradition of this hymnal, with its balanced inclusion of various periods of hymn tunes and texts.

Why is it that these two English hymnals have been for more influential on the Japanese Christian church than those of other traditions? It is most likely because the publication of Hymns Ancient and Modern, in particular, coincided with a period of great Protestant missionary work originating in England. Wherever Anglican missionaries worked around the world, it is likely that this book went with them. This includes Japan, of course. One can see the direct influence on the hymnals of the Nippon Sei Ko Kai by examining not only their contents, but even by glancing at their titles – 古今聖歌集 (Kokin Seikashu), which is, of course, a direct translation of the English title.

6: American Hymn Tunes before the Twentieth-Century

Spirituals - White and Black

Just as in eighteenth century England, congregational music of colonial America consisted of metrical psalm singing. Extremely slow tempos led to simultaneous improvisation by members of congregations, with records of the period commenting on the way each singer tried to out-sing his neighbor. Whereas in England a shift over to hymns led to the classic hymn tunes of the nineteenth-century, the situation in the United States created a different type of hymn tune. Lacking a trained group of musicians, local pastors relied on self-trained singing masters who moved from area to area when not working as farmers, etc. To make reading the hymn tunes easier, a system was devised known as shape-note, where different tones of the scale were represented by four different note-head shapes. These so-called shape-note hymnals were published in the hundreds over the next century and a half. Little attention was paid to European compositional rules; the melodies were largely pentatonic (relying on the five black notes of a keyboard). These tunes have been called White Spirituals, and are a truly original creation of pre twentieth-century America. Two of these shape-note tunes are found in the Hymnal: 424, 540. The latter of these two is widely known in Japan, particularly under its text name Amazing Grace. Interestingly, two hymn tunes in the Hymnal by twentieth-century American
composers were written in this style. Composers Richard Proulx (332) and Gerre Hancock (337) created tunes that have strong similarities to the white spirituals in their melodic shape and strong rhythms.

Black Spirituals were created under vastly different circumstances than those of the whites. These songs are the original creation of a population enslaved and basically illiterate. Many are thought to express Christian topics on the surface, while containing hidden meanings that only fellow slaves could interpret. The tunes were all originally improvised and passed down by word of mouth, and are said to contain West African elements, both in the flow of the music, and in the way they were sung. They only became known to the wider population after efforts were made to notate them in the nineteenth century. Many of these tunes have become known outside Afro-American circles, and two are contained in the *Hymnal*: 147, 259.

**Mainstream Nineteenth-Century Hymn Tunes**

Mainstream American hymn tune composition has probably exerted as much, or more, influence over Japanese Christian congregational song than nineteenth-century English hymn types. While a few examples each of white and black spirituals are to be found in the *Hymnal*, they are far outnumbered by the next type hymn tune we will examine.

Composers who wished to emphasize European-style compositions over native American styles created a large body of tunes, many of which found their way into Japanese hymnals of most Protestant denominations. Lowell Mason (1792-1872) rejected the shape-note rustic style of music, and attempted to compose what he saw as "correct" music, in the process creating over one thousand five hundred hymn tunes. His tunes were shaped to produce an emotional response in the listener/singer. In a way, these hymns tend to focus the singer inward, rather than to produce a communal sense between all the singers. Examples of his style that are in the *Hymnal* and widely known and sung are 450 and 519.

Another prolific composer of hymn tunes was William Bradbury (1816-1868). He wrote at least 800 tunes in the Mason vein, but often with more "catchy" melodies and refrains that made them popular. Curiously, many of his tunes were written for Sunday
School use but were taken over into adult worship service against his wishes. If analyzed from a classical music standpoint, one must conclude that they are simplistic tunes at best. Frequently used in Protestant revival services of the nineteenth-century, they are classified as "white gospel" tunes. Tunes by Bradbury: 484, 498, 520.

Composers who continued in Bradbury's style were Dwight Moody, Ira Sankey, Philip Bliss, and William Doane, all of whom were active in the nineteenth-century, and all of whom produced hymn tunes in an unashamedly popular, "white gospel" style. Examples of this style include 437, 465, 496, 506, 518, 535.

Black gospel, a tremendously important and unique creation of the United States, appeared in the early twentieth century, rising out of the Black Spiritual tradition, blended with elements of Blues. For better or worse, this style of music has not generally been included in mainline denominational hymnals, either in the USA or Japan. It has, however, been tremendously influential on worldwide secular pop music, and is, therefore, not unfamiliar to the great majority of people in both countries.

7. Hymns of Our Time

Hymns by Japanese Poets and Composers

After a tour of hymns beginning with the early Christian church and ending in the nineteenth century we finally reach our own day. What new elements and trends can be seen in this twenty-first century Hymnal? Probably the most important aspect is the presence of a large number of texts and tunes written by Japanese. With the contribution of these people one can say that the Nippon Sei Ko Kai has found its own voice. 83 of the 580 or so texts were written by Japanese poets (about 14% of the total). Additionally, over two-thirds were written by people alive at the time of publication. Most authors contributed a single text; a few considerably more. The most prolific single author is Aoki Mizue, with seven texts, followed by Miyazaki Hikari and Suzuki Nobuaki with five each. The Hymnal Committee itself authored ten texts. As well as singing the words of authors of past centuries and places, the user of this book is able to savor the words of those who have experienced Christianity in its twentieth century Japanese aspect.
Whereas the language of the previous Nippon Sei Ko Kai hymnal, the *Kokin Seikashu*, was in classical Japanese, the new hymns tend to be in a more modern Japanese style. This trend was visible in the new hymn texts of overseas hymnals of the twentieth-century as well. The first reaction to texts in familiar language is often one of surprise - "is it really acceptable in church to sing in such casual language?" is a question one might encounter. Another comment frequently heard at the release of new hymnals is "the new (i.e. modern language) hymns are not the same quality as the older ones." Quality is, of course, subjective. It is human nature to love the familiar (even if not totally understanding it?) and dislike the unfamiliar. Perhaps we should focus more on the question of understandability. Do hymn texts speak directly to the soul of the twenty-first century singer? For the mission of the church, this is a more compelling question than the hard-to-define issue of "quality." Judged from this perspective, the inclusion of hymn texts in modern language is definitely an improvement.

Beside the issue of understandability was that of the need to provide new texts to match the theology of the Nippon Sei Ko Kai 1990 *Book of Common Prayer*. The release of a new book of common prayer is always a major event in the life of liturgical churches. New theological concepts and changes in liturgical focus must be reflected in the texts of communal song. It would probably not be overstating the case to say that normally a new book of common prayer creates the need for a new hymnal. New services require new music; new concepts require new texts for the people to sing. For example, the newly created service 「誕生感謝の祈り」 (thanksgiving service for the newly born) inspired the creation of new hymns for it: 288, 289. Both the texts and tunes of these two hymns were newly created for this *Hymnal*.

Unique to this book are several texts that address specifically Japanese issues. Three, in fact, refer to war-time experiences and places: 421 (平和の鐘が広島から流れ る), 422 (長崎の空は足もとわらはじまっている), 423 (沖縄の磯に十字架を立てて); this is a unique example of a composer utilizing a Japanese melodic mode for the melody of a hymn tune). These types of specifically Japan-related text were not to be found in previous hymnals of the Nippon Sei Ko Kai.

Turning to tunes composed by Japanese we see that thirty different composers are included, twenty-four of whom were living when the *Hymnal* was published. Together they contributed seventy-three hymn tunes, forty-six of which are original compositions.
Though most composers contributed a single tune, four professional composers were responsible for nearly half of the original tunes in the Hymnal; they are Miyazaki Michi (7), Miyazaki Naoshi (5), Suzuki Ryuta (5) and Sakamoto Hina (4). In addition to his original tunes, Suzuki Ryuta was responsible for writing and/or arranging accompaniments for twenty other hymn tunes. With these statistics in hand, we can now examine what type of music was created for the Hymnal.

The early twentieth century was a turbulent time in musical circles outside the church. The harmonic system that had developed continuously from the 17th century was basically rejected, and new techniques adopted in its place. Extreme dissonance was one trademark of the period, creating a great divide between those who could understand and appreciate the new music, and those who found it incomprehensible. Some of the new styles found their way into church music, especially through organ compositions, and, to a lesser degree, choral music. But when it came to congregational song, there was virtually no adoption of the newer styles. Hymnals that were released in the first half of the century contained mainly musical material of earlier periods. When the great explosion of new hymn text and tune composition occurred in the latter half of the twentieth-century, the extreme period of extremely dissonant composition was nearing the end of its course. Music adopted by the church for congregational singing at this point, then, totally skipped the secular modern classical compositional style. The Hymnal, prepared as it was at the end of the twentieth century, does not contain extremes of modern styles or popular idioms. "Folk song" type hymn tunes of the 1970's, so popular in certain churches of the USA, for example, have not been adopted. Instead, one finds two types of newly-composed tunes: 1) those with their roots firmly in older styles of hymn tunes, yet written to carry Japanese texts, and 2) those with roots in modern popular styles of music, but also created specifically as settings of Japanese text.

Hymn tunes by the three composers who contributed the most new music will be examined here. Miyazaki Michi, with seven new tunes, writes in many different musical styles. Two hymns written to accompany texts by the Youth Assembly (172, 576) are in a warm harmonic style the composer compares to pop or musical tunes. Both melodies have repeating lines that make it easy for a singer to grasp quickly and to sing confidently. Four of Miyazaki's tunes appear to have stylistic links with nineteenth-century American hymn tune styles (186, 374, 412, 472). 374 and 472, both in 6/8 meter are reminiscent of
'white gospel' styles (see above), while 186 reminds the listener of the hymns of Bradbury and others of the period. 412 is in a strong, confident march style. It has the feel of the 1830 American tune *Webb* (Stand up, stand up for Jesus). 487 makes use of a gapped melody similar to early-American tunes such as *New Britain* (540). In creating new tunes for this hymnal, Miyazaki has blended his own musical language with that of both new and old styles of music familiar to Japanese Christians, thus creating tunes that are quickly mastered by the singer.

Sakamoto Hina also writes hymn tunes in various styles, but her musical influences are different from those of Miyazaki. 98 is in Dorian mode and was purposely written in a style reminiscent of that of the Medieval period. This effect is particularly strong when the optional descant part is sung, since it creates the effect of organum, the earliest type of polyphony to be found in Western music. The melody of hymn 99 resulted from Sakamoto's efforts to preserve the natural intonation of the Japanese text. It has the feel of a traditional English Christmas carol, contrasting considerably with No. 98. Hymn 185, on the other hand, has a cheerful melodic flow similar to that of Western European traditional folk song. The key of Db Major was chosen deliberately in order to reflect the mysticism of the text. It uses melodic repetition (lines 1-2, 3-4) so that the singer can quickly remember the tune. One hymn tune by Sakamoto in twentieth-century style is 132. This richly dissonant harmony does an excellent job of expressing the sense of the Lenten text by Aoki. Two full stops in the vocal line are unusual, and allow the singer to meditate upon what he or she has just sung.

The work of Suzuki Ryuta has added a layer of musical unity to the *Hymnal* not only through his five original hymn tunes, but by the fact he wrote or arranged accompaniments for another twenty hymn tunes. In contrast with Miyazaki and Sakamoto, the five new hymn tunes by Suzuki are in a single musical language. The composer draws influence from the typical style of nineteenth-century hymn found in the *Kokin Seikashu*, but blends it with his own harmonic language. This combination of a recognizable structure (four part writing, traditional harmonic flow) with gentle dissonance is a trademark of his hymn tunes. Hymns 38, 120 and 489, if analyzed, prove to contain considerable harmonic dissonance. Yet to the ear, the overall impression is of lush harmony; dissonant intervals do not call attention to themselves. 288 and 458 sound more traditional, as they make less use of dissonance. In composing his tunes, Suzuki works to preserve the
The inflection of Japanese language with the melodic flow of his melodies.

The same style Suzuki used for his original compositions carries through the twenty accompaniments he either composed or arranged for the *Hymnal*. In some cases, tunes without accompaniments (Gregorian melodies, for example) were given new music. In others, the original accompaniments were re-composed in order to make them more accessible to organists in the Nippon Sei Ko Kai. In some cases this meant simplifying the texture of the accompaniment part; in others it meant adjusting harmonies to make the tune more palatable to the congregations who will be singing these tunes.

One final point concerning the work of Japanese hymn-tune composers is that of how they set modern Japanese texts. As modern language texts can, in some cases, have more syllables per line than traditional language, occasionally more notes are required to carry the text. One way to deal with this is to create tunes with many eighth-notes. A few examples: 185, 363, 421. This use of melodies containing many eighth-notes is not unique to Japan, however. Examples of these Western tunes of a similar type include 13, 243, 375, 426, etc.

**Hymns by non-Japanese Poets and Composers**

Tunes that were not in the *Kokin Seikashu*, but which are regarded as Anglican classics, have been added to the repertoire. Though the older hymnal had only three hymns by Vaughan Williams, the new *Hymnal* includes eighteen of his original tunes and arrangements. Excellent tunes by other English composers Parry (304, 339, 426, 511), Stanford (305, 376) and Holst (100, 532), among others, are represented. New hymns written closer to our day include a large selection by John Bell. Unusual in that he often writes both the text and tune of a hymn, his compositions speak directly to our times through both their words and music. An example of a Bell hymn tune that shows his unique musical style is 243 (God's Table). Strikingly rhythmic verses coupled with a tuneful refrain make it a memorable tune.

Hymns from musical traditions outside the English-speaking world have been included in greater numbers than in earlier hymnals. Hymns from Asia include 284, 324, 514, 534, 564 (Korean), 179 (Chinese), 258, 303, 418 (Tagalog). There are many other musical and poetic traditions that are newly included in this Nippon Sei Ko Kai *Hymnal*. 
Conclusion

With the advent of the 2006 Nippon Sei Ko Kai *Hymnal* Japanese Christianity has received a tremendously flexible new book for worship. It is firmly anchored in the Anglican tradition, with its historical roots in England and the USA, but has broadened the repertoire to represent most important historical types of hymn. It also includes many texts and tunes written near or in our own times, providing a fresh outlook on the Christian life through song. And, finally, it has given the Japanese church its own voice, through the contribution of many authors and composers in this country. It is hoped that we have reached the day when the Japanese church contributes to worldwide hymnology, and where members of the Japanese Christian church sing their own hymns alongside the creations of other times and places. This book provides an excellent way in which to do so.