

CFBC Hymns Class 38

William Gadsby (1773-1844)

Red Mountain Music on Gadsby's Hymns and Hymnal

Gadsby's Hymns, published in several stages during the first half of the 19th century, is a collection of hymns from multiple writers containing songs dating back to the 17th century. Some of the 1,156 songs in this hymnal are familiar, but most of these great lyrics have simply been forgotten in the modern church. Interestingly, William Gadsby (the original compiler of the hymnal, a great preacher and hymn-writer) did not permit the use of instruments in public worship. This mindset aided in making many of the original tunes and melodies unknown for these hymns. There is a companion tune book for Gadsby's Hymns, but it wasn't published until 1927. It is very possible that these hymns have had multiple tunes and arrangements over the years....We hope that you love these hymns as much as we do and that you are able to sing them again in your church. ***One last thing: Go buy a copy of Gadsby's Hymns. Then go buy a bunch more, and give them to all your friends. May this exceptional hymnal feed your soul the way it has fed ours.***

<https://redmountainmusic.bandcamp.com/album/the-gadsby-project>

***It pleases the Father that all fullness should be in Christ;
therefore there is nothing but emptiness anywhere else.***

William Gadsby

Biography of William Gadsby (by his son John Gadsby) Excerpts

WILLIAM GADSBY was born in the village of Attleborough, Warwickshire, about Jan. 3rd, 1773. As his parents were poor, he had little or no education. When 13, he was apprenticed to a ribbon weaver, but was subsequently compelled to leave that trade, in consequence of a tenderness of the chest; and he then became a stocking weaver. In 1790, he went to see men hung, and the horrid spectacle had such an effect upon his mind that he was never afterwards like the same youth; for the thoughts of eternity preyed much upon his spirits. The lengths of folly into which he ran prior to this time were often related by him in his ministry...Suffice it to say, that, in 1793, he was baptized, and joined Mr. Butterworth's church at Coventry.

In 1796 he received his dismissal from that church, and joined a few people who met in a barn at Hinckley. The first time that he stood up and took a text was on

Whit-Sunday, 1798, in an upper room in a yard at Bedworth, Warwickshire. His text was 1 Pet. ii. 7. In 1800, a chapel was built for him at Desford, Leicestershire, and he at the same time often preached in the barn at Hinckley. The word is said to have been greatly blessed. In 1802, a chapel was built at Hinckley. In 1805, he removed with his family to Manchester, to the chapel in which a Mr. Sharpe formerly preached, in St. George's Read, now called Rochdale Road, where he remained until his death, Jan 27th, 1844.

While over the church at Manchester, he travelled for preaching more than 60,000 miles, '(railways were unknown during many of his earlier years,) and must have preached nearly 12,000 sermons. In the "Gospel Magazine" for 1824, there is an account of the laying of the foundation stone of Mount Zion Chapel, Plymouth Dock, (Devonport) when an address from 1 Cor. 3. 11, was delivered by Mr. Gadsby, in the presence of upwards of 6,000 persons."

His Selection of Hymns...was first published in 1814. In 1838, a new edition was issued with a Supplement, now called the "First Supplement," many of Mr. G's original hymns being curtailed to make room for it. In 1846-7, (that is, after his death,) the whole of Hart's hymns which did not already appear in the Selection, were added thereto, making the total number of hymns in the book 882. In 1849-50, in consequence of a fire at my premises in London having destroyed the stereotype plates of the hymn book, the Second Supplement, by Mr. Philpot, of 256 hymns, was added, increasing the total number to about 1130...My father also published a Selection of Hymns for Sunday Schools. Many of his own hymns were inserted in various volumes of the "Gospel Magazine," signed "A Nazarene," which was in deed his usual signature in that magazine. These hymns, with many other originals, were published by him in a separate volume, under the title of "The Nazarene's Songs." His signatures in the "Gospel Standard" were, "An Old Soldier" and "A Lover of Zion."

...His last words were, "I shall soon be with him, shouting, Victory, victory, victory," (raising his hand) "for ever." "Free grace, free grace, free grace" He died without a struggle, without moving hand, or foot, or head.

By John Gadsby – from Memoirs of the Principal Hymnwriters and Compilers – 1855
<https://testallthings.com/2010/12/29/john-gadsby-biography-of-william-gadsby/>

"I say without qualification, after the Sacred Scriptures, the next best companion for the soul is a good hymnal....To read or sing a true hymn is to worship with a great and gifted soul [meaning the author] in his moments of intimate devotion.... Every Christian should have, laying beside his Bible, a copy of some standard hymn book." A. W. Tozer

Using the Hymnal in Private and Family Devotions (Excerpts)

One of the richest blessings for Christians in the 21st-century is the abundance of devotional material that's available at a moment's notice...With limitless devotional resources available, one of the best and underutilized is the hymnal.

Hymnals provide wonderful support for private and family devotions, and a well curated hymnal contains carefully selected Christian poetry that spans centuries, denominations, nations, and languages...Here are some ideas of some ways you can dive into this treasure trove in your own devotions.

1. Research the history of a hymn and sing the hymn by yourself or with the people that you love.

The website www.hymnary.com is an excellent resource to learn about hymns. If you are not comfortable singing around your family, remember that your family deserves the valuable experience of hearing you sing.

2. Use the hymnal to support your daily Bible reading and prayer time.

After your daily Bible reading, use the "Scriptural Bases for Hymns" index in the back of the hymnal to find hymns that are relevant to your reading. Figure out how the hymn relates to your scripture reading.

Singing is a wonderful way to pray, so sing the hymn as a prayer to God to complete your devotional time. God will be pleased with your prayer, no matter how you think you sound.

3. Find inspiration from the life of a hymn writer.

Knowing about the lives and times of hymn writers adds another dimension to understanding their hymns. Good places to start are Isaac Watts, John Newton, Augustus Toplady, Charles Wesley, Fanny Crosby and their stories are well documented in books and online. You may find all of their hymns using the Authors Index in the back of the hymnal.

4. Personalize the hymn by writing an additional stanza.

A stanza (sometimes called a verse) is a repetition of the hymn tune with new words. You may add to the hymn by writing a stanza of your own. Don't forget that each hymn has its own meter, so make sure the words and music line up so you can sing your new stanza.

5. Learn hymns that you don't know.

We all have our favorite hymns, and that's great! Intentionally focusing on hymns you don't know so well is a way of expanding your heart and mind.

6. Explore hymns by topic.

In your devotions, are you meditating on a specific topic? If so, you can find relevant hymns in the Topical Index in the back of your hymnal.

7. Get ready to sing together!

While hymnals are a wonderful devotional tool for individuals and families, hymns are ultimately meant to be shared together in worship. Our private devotions should motivate us to worship God together, so even as you're utilizing the hymnal as a resource for private devotions, prepare your heart and mind for worshipping God together in church on Sunday.

<https://www.bonsackbaptist.org/blog/hymnal>

Preface to William Gadsby's Hymns - Last Edition (Excerpts)

To be employed with solemn pleasure in singing the praises of God with the spirit and with the understanding also, is a blessing peculiar to God's elect; nor can even they be thus engaged, only as the blessed Spirit influences the mind, and favours them with the union of his grace. It is one thing to have the ear charmed, and another to have the heart engaged in this most delightful part of God's worship in his church below. "Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound."

It may be thought by many a great piece of folly for such an obscure mortal as I to publish a selection of hymns for the public worship of the eternal Three-One God; nor shall I attempt to make many apologies for having done so...Various circumstances, together with a desire in my own breast and ***the express wish of others to have a selection of hymns in one book free from Arminianism, and sound in the faith that the church might be edified and God glorified, were what induced me to attempt this work.***

The last one hundred and fifty-seven hymns are of my own composing. In the former editions, many of these were too long for public worship, consequently comparatively useless, extending the size of the book without a proportionate benefit.

In the present edition I have curtailed them; but as I have been careful to leave entire, or nearly so, the first verse of each, and as I have not materially altered the language of the remain verses which still appear, I think but little inconveniences will be experienced, particularly if the hymns be given out from this edition, as in that case no verses can be read which are not in all the books. It will be seen that I have sometimes taken a line from another author, but for this, not professing perfection, I shall offer no apology...

The pages gained by the curtailment of my own Hymns, as above named, are occupied with a Supplement, consisting of 120 hymns, which have principally been selected from Hart and Berridge, these two men being, I believe, the sweetest and greatest experimental writers that have left any hymns on record. If the dear Redeemer will be gracious to make this selection of hymns a blessing to his people, I hope the same grace which will accomplish this end will influence me to feel amply rewarded for my labour, and cheerfully give him all the glory.

WILLIAM GADSBY.
Manchester, November, 1838

Some Original William Gadsby Hymns...
“Good News” Eph. 1. 3; Num. 23. 21;
W. Gadsby L.M.

What joyful news the gospel is,
To guilty sinners in distress!
It speaks of mercy, rich and free,
For such polluted worms as we.

Jesus, my Shepherd, lived and died,
Rose, and now lives to intercede;
He bears my name upon his heart,
Nor will he ever with me part.

For me he bore the wrath of God;
For me he in the wine-press trod;
He magnified the law for me,
And I for ever am set free.

[He loved me ere the world began;
Nor did my Saviour love alone;
The Spirit and the Father joined,
As one Jehovah, in one mind.]

In endless love, the Holy Three
All blessings have secured for me;
All good that's worthy of a God,
For me in Jesus Christ is stored.

What glory, yea, what matchless grace,
Appears in my Redeemer's face!
All Deity can there agree
To smile upon a worm like me.

“No Help for Sinners but in Christ” Acts 4. 12

W. Gadsby 148th

Where must a sinner fly,
That feels himself undone?
On what kind hand rely,
Eternal wrath to shun?
Can wit or reason help him out,
And bring a lasting peace about?

Reason no help can give,
But leaves him in distress;
Nor can he be reprieved
By works of righteousness;
The law as loud as thunder cries,
“The soul that sins against me, dies.”

[Should creatures all agree,
To give him settled rest,
They cannot set him free,
Nor cheer his troubled breast;
No human arm his case can reach,
Nor men, nor angels heal the breach.]

Salvation is of God;
Jehovah is his name;
The Saviour shed his blood;
The Lord of Life was slain;
And by his own atoning blood,
He made a precious way to God.

Here sinners may draw near,
With all their sin and guilt;
Nor death nor danger fear,
Since Jesus' blood was spilt;
A door of hope is opened wide,
In Jesus' bleeding hands and side.

“The Lord be with you all” 2 Thess. 3. 16

W. Gadsby C.M.

The Lord himself be with you all,
To teach you his own will;
And guide you safe from every thrall,
To Zion's heavenly hill.

Be with you to unfold his grace,
And prove his truth divine;
Unveil the glories of his face,
And make his counsels shine.

Whatever be your state or case,
The Lord himself be near;
Support, protect, defend, embrace,
And make your passage clear.

Thus may you prove his promise true,
And glorify his name;
And every day your songs renew,
While life and breath remain.

The Lord be with you to the end,
And land you safe above;
A long eternity to spend,
In singing, “God is love.”

Worship Leaders: Imitate William Gadsby and Charles Spurgeon

"Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith." -Hebrews 13:7

In the time span of over 50 years two hymnbooks were published in the 19th century. William Gadsby published his hymnbook, now known as Gadsby's Hymns, in 1814 (and later in 1838).

Charles Spurgeon published his hymnbook, known as Our Own Hymn-book, in 1866. Both men compiled these hymnbooks in a very comparable fashion and I think it is worth our time to find out why and imitate their example.

While both men have many admirable qualities that would be beneficial for Christians to study and emulate, I want to focus on the strikingly similar pastoral concern that both men had for their congregations concerning the worship of God through singing. From reading the preface of each hymnbook we discover the reasons why Gadsby and Spurgeon made the effort to compile their hymnbooks in the first place. I want to take a look at what reasons both of these men gave in their own words and see how we might benefit as worship leaders by imitating these two great men of faith.

Gadsby's Reasons

When Gadsby became the pastor of his church they had already been established in singing hymns from Watts, Hart, and from Rippon's Selection. He writes, "Though some of these hymns are big with the important truths of God, there are others...which give as legal a sound as if they had been forged at a certain foundry. This was one reason which induced me to publish a selection. Another was, we had three editions of Hart's Hymns amongst us, either differently arranged or differently paged; so that when any of those hymns were given out, one part of the congregation was unable to find them. ***These circumstances, together with a desire in my own breast and the express wish of others to have a selection of hymns in one book free from Arminianism, and sound in the faith, that the church might be edified and God glorified, were what induced me to attempt this work.***"

Spurgeon's Reasons

Spurgeon wrote a bit more about why he felt it necessary to compile a hymnbook but we can gather his primary motives through the following excerpts:

"Our congregation has long used two hymn-books [Watts and Rippon]...and we should most probably have been very well content with those books had it not been for difficulties connected with the remarkably complex arrangement of their content. To strangers it was no small task to discover the hymn selected for singing; for, in the first place, there were two books, which was in itself an evil; but the matter was made far worse by the fact that these two volumes were each a puzzle to the uninstructed...We felt that such ought not to be the state of our service of song."

“None of the collections already published are exactly what our congregation needs, or we would have cheerfully adopted one of them...Our congregation has distinctive features which are not suited to every compilation, not indeed by any known to us.”

“Subjects frequently passed over or pushed into a corner are here made conspicuously the themes of song; such, for instance, as the great doctrines of sovereign grace, the personal Advent of our Lord, and especially the sweetness of present communion with Him.”

Concern for Order, Unity and Intelligibility

Both men laud the efforts of the likes of Dr. Watts’ and Dr. Rippon’s collections but they understood that the way in which their congregations used these wonderful resources hindered worship greatly. The collections were contained in multiple volumes and editions which lead to endless page-flipping and book switching after every song. Various editions of the same hymnbook would produce confusion as to which hymn number the congregation was going to be singing and certain verses might be laid out in a different order or omitted altogether.

The lack of a uniform means of presenting songs no doubt led to an improperly ordered service. The lack of participation due to these reasons led to disunity. Both of which led to unintelligibility of praises. Spurgeon writes, “The providence of God brings very many new hearers within the walls of our place of worship, and many a time we have marked their futile researches, and pitied the looks of despair with which they have given up all hope of finding the hymns, and so of joining intelligently in our words of praise.”

These men saw a problem and out of their concern for congregational order, unity and intelligibility they produced a hymnbook which accomplished all three. Not only did this solution edify the church, but it also broke down unnecessary barriers to unbelievers who might visit.

Concern for Sound Doctrine

It is apparent that both men had a deep concern for their congregations to have a steady diet of sound doctrine in their hymns. Gadsby introduces his hymnbook with Psalm 47:7 “sing ye praises with understanding.” Both men were aware of the educational impact of hymns and sought to squelch shoddy theology

and emphasize that which is good. Spurgeon made it a priority to not only include doctrinal songs but to highlight them and push them to the forefront of congregational singing. ***Gadsby, a true Strict Baptist of his time and a man of stronger backbone than most today, found it necessary to not only emphasize sound doctrine, but to make sure his collection was devoid of Arminian theology. Here both men are truly acting like Shepherds for their congregation; guarding, tending and feeding all at the same time.***

Concern for Their Flock

Ultimately these men cared greatly and deeply for their congregations. They wanted to see the praises of God sung orderly, with unity and intelligibility, through sound doctrine “that the church might be edified and God glorified.” And while I am sure that these men loved the Church universal, it is abundantly apparent that they loved their local congregations very, very deeply. The hymnbooks that they produced for their churches are landmarks of this love. That Spurgeon’s compilation became known as Our Own Hymn-book is evidence enough that the local church was the primary focus of the project.

Gadsby and Spurgeon knew their congregations intimately enough to recognize that they couldn’t just copy or mimic another congregation. They needed to produce something specifically for their people. Spurgeon recognized that his congregation’s “distinctive features [were] not suited to every compilation.” Gadsby gave ear to the “express wish of others” concerning content for the hymnal.

Another indication of the love and concern these men had for their flock is the fact that they composed hymns for them. Gadsby composed and included over 150 hymns in his compilation. Spurgeon composed several himself and tells us why. “The editor [Spurgeon] has inserted with great diffidence a very few of his own composition, chiefly among the Psalms, and his only apology for so doing is the fact that of certain difficult Psalms he could find no version at all fitted for singing, and was therefore driven to turn them into verse himself.” Spurgeon knew what his congregation needed and he supplied it, however hesitantly, out of love.

An additional point we should consider is the way in which both men seem to be plainly aware of Christian Pop-culture’s influence on their congregational music. In deciding how to shape his hymnbook Charles Spurgeon writes,

“We have not cast about for models suggesting by the transient fancy of the hour, but we have followed the indications given us in the word of God and the long established usage of the universal church; desiring to be obedient to the sacred precept, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom: teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.”

And Gadsby takes aim at Watts and Rippon’s work, saying that some of their hymns “give as legal a sound as if they had been forged at a certain foundry.” The imagery he offers is that these popular songs, which are gospel-less, are being pumped out of the same mold (sound familiar?). Neither Spurgeon nor Gadsby attempted to copy Christian pop-culture but instead “followed the indications given us in the word of God.” And this was done out of a love for their church.

What This Means for Us

There is much we can learn from William Gadsby and Charles Spurgeon and their compilation of hymns for their congregations. Though we could spend hours discussing ways in which we could imitate these men (and I hope this does spur more discussion!), I want to look at three concerns they had that we would be wise to imitate in our ministries.

- 1) Imitate their concern for order, unity and intelligibility in worship. What is it that hinders any of these aspects as it relates to your congregational worship service? What are you going to do to remove those hindrances? Is it a visual issue? A sound system issue? A leadership issue? Whatever the case, I encourage you to read through 1 Corinthians 14 and prayerfully consider those things that hinder orderly, united, intelligible worship.
- 2) Imitate their concern for sound doctrine. Don’t just throw in a song every now and then because it has a lot of doctrine. I encourage you to make doctrinal songs a priority in your congregational singing! Emphasize theology! The more you know about God the more you will love God! Spurgeon puts it this way, “Oh, if you knew Him better, you would fly to Him!” Ask God which aspects of the worship service have overlooked or shoved specific doctrine into the corner.
- 3) Imitate their concern for the local church. The motive of all of this reforming was a deep love for the church. Both men wanted their hymnals to be of service to their local churches specifically. Any blessings that the hymnbooks might have outside of their local congregations were simply afterthoughts.

I mentioned before, these men like Shepherds did their best to guard, tend and feed their flocks. The hymnbooks they produced sought to accomplish just that. This is the duty of all those who lead and minister the congregation. As a worship leader you have the privilege and responsibility to care for your people when selecting and leading songs and when you plan (in whatever capacity) the worship service. Take time to meditate on passages such as John 21:15-19, and the books 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus. Imitate great men of faith like William Gadsby and Charles Spurgeon and shepherd the flock with similar concern.

Learn More:

Purchase a copy of Gadsby's Hymns and Our Own Hymn-book from Grace and Truth Books

Tons of great info and more about Spurgeon can be found at The Spurgeon Archive

Also, I highly recommend checking out Red Mountain Music. They have done an excellent job of re-tuning a few of Gadsby's Hymns.

<https://sounddoxology.blogspot.com/2010/04/worship-leaders-imitate-william-gadsby.html>

A Tribute of High Esteem and Love (Excerpts)

By J. C. Philpot, 1844

When the Lord called to Himself the soul of our dear friend, William Gadsby, with truth it might be said, "There is a great man fallen this day in Israel" (2 Sam. 3:38). We believe we are but speaking in full unison with the feelings and sentiments of the living family of God in this country when we say that, taking him all in all, we have lost in Mr. Gadsby the greatest minister that God has raised up since the days of Huntington.

Our remarks we may conveniently throw under two heads—what he was viewed **NATURALLY**—and what he was viewed **spiritually**.

His natural **intellect** seems to us to have been singularly clear, sound, penetrating, and sagacious. We have in our day met with men of more capacious mind, greater reasoning powers, and more varied and versatile talents—but with few or none so quick-sighted and ready-witted. ***He seemed at once intuitively to penetrate through the folds of delusion and error, and with a glance of his eye to look into the very heart of everything that he turned his attention to.***

We venture to say that few people ever spoke to Mr. Gadsby without his knowing pretty well the end of the sentence before they had got halfway through it, or before his quick and humorous eye had not already deciphered the character of the speaker. His quick, ready witted replies, embodying so much in a few words, will be long remembered by those who heard them from the pulpit or in the parlour.

Though not possessed of much **education** (an advantage, by the way, much overrated), **he was a man of much reflection, and may be said in this way to have educated his own mind far better than school or college could have done for him.** His mind was of that class which rises according to the emergency. Some minds sink and fail when unusual circumstances and pressing difficulties arise...But there are other minds (and Mr. Gadsby's was one of that class) which rise with, and are called out by difficulties and emergencies, and shine most conspicuously when weaker minds give way.

The Lord had appointed Mr. Gadsby to be a **leader**, and to stand for half a century in the front rank of His spiritual army. **God therefore bestowed upon him a mind not to be daunted with difficulties and dangers, but to rise with and to be ready for every new emergency.** He was to occupy a post also in keen-witted and energetic Manchester—where, perhaps, of all places in the kingdom, strength, decision, and soundness of mind are most required; and to labor much in the North, where brains or the lack of them are quickly perceived by its sagacious inhabitants. The Lord therefore gave him a mind eminently adapted for his post. **Classics and mathematics, grammar and history, and all the lumber of academic learning were not needed; but an acute, sagacious, clear, and sound understanding was required for such a commanding post, as Mr. Gadsby was to occupy. We only knew him when his mental faculties were guided by grace, and made to glorify God;** but, viewed in that light, we consider that his mental endowments were admirably fitted for his post.

Benevolence and sympathy with suffering, in every shape and form, we believe to have been natural to Mr. Gadsby...

But we pass on to view him **SPIRITUALLY**, and here we freely confess our inability to do him justice. We shall briefly mention first what strikes us as the prominent features of his ministry, and then what we have observed in him as connected with his Christian profession.

Thorough soundness in every point seems to have been peculiarly stamped upon his ministry. **Whether he handled doctrine, experience, or precept—his speech and his preaching were sound, clear and scriptural.**

We know no preacher who was so equally great in these three leading branches of the Christian ministry. Some may have excelled him in clearness and fullness of doctrinal statement; others may have entered more deeply and fully into a Christian's diversified experience; and others may have more powerfully enforced the precepts of the gospel. But we never heard anyone who was so uniformly great in all—and so clearly, ably and scripturally gave to each their place, and yet blended their distinct colors into one harmonious gospel tint.

In **doctrine** he was not dry, in **experience** he was not visionary, and in **precept** he was not legal...

In handling **DOCTRINE** he **showed "integrity"** (Titus 2:7), and was singularly free from fanciful interpretations, strained and mystical views upon dark texts, and that false spiritualization which passes with many for wondrous depth, but which he valued at its due worth. ***In reading his published sermons we have been much struck with the soundness, clearness, simplicity and sobriety of his interpretations. He saw too clearly that his doctrine was the doctrine of the Scriptures to wrest any part of the Word from its connection, or to rest a truth upon a text which did not clearly declare it, when there were so many passages in which the Holy Spirit had plainly revealed it.***

His object was not that William Gadsby should be admired for his ingenuity, learning, depth of eloquence—but that the God of all grace should be glorified. He did not dare to make the pulpit a stage for 'creature display', still less a platform from which he might keep up a perpetual excitement by some new view of a passage, some startling paradox, some dazzling array of figures and illustrations...

But our limits remind us that we must not dwell too long upon his ministry, and therefore we proceed to drop a few hints on his **CHRISTIAN CHARACTER**, more especially as it came under our personal observation.

One feature we have often admired in Mr. Gadsby's character—his singular HUMILITY. Who ever heard him angle for praise? Who ever heard him boasting of, or even alluding to—his popularity as a preacher—his large congregation—his gifts for the ministry—his acceptance with the people of God—his numerous invitations to preach at different places, and the blessing that generally rested upon his pulpit labors?

His conduct out of the pulpit, as far as our observation goes, was singularly consistent with all his profession in it...Kindness and friendship, and courtesy to all, sometimes even to a fault, shone forth in him.

But we feel we must stop. Our limits do not allow us to dwell upon his extensive labors in the ministry, his frequent and long journeyings to preach the gospel—his self-denying and temperate habits of life—his prudence in domestic and monetary matters—his kindness and liberality to the poor—the noble manliness of his character—and his entire freedom from hypocrisy, and whine. We highly esteemed and loved him, and revere his memory with growing affection. We consider it a privilege to have known him...