

## An Interview with Leonard Ellinwood



Leonard Ellinwood, distinguished hymnologist and musicologist, has directed the HSA's Dictionary of American Hymnology Project for more than 30 years.

(This is a conversation between the Editor of *The Hymn* and Leonard Ellinwood at the headquarters of the Dictionary of American Hymnology Project in Bethesda, Maryland on March 26, 1984.)

**The Hymn:** Would you tell us something of your background?

**Dr. Ellinwood:** I grew up in the White Mountains of New Hampshire in the town of Littleton where my dad had a hardware store and plumbing shop. I loved to work in it and always thought that's what I'd do for my life's career. About the only music in town was at three or four Protestant churches with small pipe organs. My own church was the Advent Christian Church which at that time had no organ. I was taking piano lessons and the organ appealed to me. So by the time I was in high school I started playing in one church, then another. I was so brash they couldn't stand me more than a year at a time! I also played trumpet with the town band. Later, I got a little high school orchestra going. Then I went to Mount Hermon School for a year where I had fun in a brass quartet. I went on to college, a year at Amherst which I couldn't stand because of the social life, and then on to my own denominational college in Aurora, Illinois. There I played organ at a Methodist church. There was no instrumental music at the college so I got a band and orchestra going. By then things had fallen apart at home,

my parents died and the store burned. After college, I spent several pleasant years as a housemaster at Mount Hermon School where I also had a band and orchestra. I had so much time on my hands, I thought it was an ideal place for composing. So I started going to Eastman School of Music in the summers to study composition. After the third summer they told me I'd better change my plans since I had no imagination. I could write good counterpoint, but that was all.

I decided to stay around and discovered the school had purchased an 11th-century music treatise. Having had six years of Latin I did my master's thesis on the treatise of Hermanus Contractus. The director, Howard Hanson, was so pleased he decided to have it published. That got me started in musicology in 1934. I didn't want to work on another treatise, though Hanson wanted me to stay on and do a doctorate. One day one of the theory teachers asked me where he could find some of the music of Francesco Landini. I was working in the library and could discover only a few short pieces in books and articles, so I decided to do a doctorate compiling the collected works of Landini. This was in 1936. I then taught for three years at Michigan

State University in theory, musicology, and orchestration. I had fun getting a Collegium Musicum started and delved into old music which you didn't hear on the concert stage; today most universities have courses in this. But I found that if I wanted to continue to work in musicology I had to spend all my vacations in eastern libraries, for the material wasn't readily available in those days. So I came to Washington to work in the Library of Congress, instead of teaching. That was in 1940, and I've been here ever since. I started working on Notre Dame conductus but it was very slow going and there wasn't much time for it during the war years.

I also had decided that, upon coming to Washington, I would not play a small church organ but would try to sing in the cathedral choir under Paul Callaway. This choir of men and boys has always been one of the best in the country. Dr. Callaway found I could sing counter-tenor so I enjoyed doing that for 35 years. I'd been drawn to the Episcopal Church ever since high school. When the *Hymnal 1940* came out, Canon Charles Winfred Douglas formed a committee to produce a companion which the Episcopal hymnal had not had previously. Canon Douglas died after a year or so and the mantle fell on my shoulders because of my connection with the Library of Congress. As a result I spent my spare time the next four or five years, with help from others, getting out *The Hymnal 1940 Companion*.

**The Hymn:** One feature of that companion that is so significant is your publication of the original texts.

**Ellinwood:** Yes. I might add that many of the companions and handbooks of the time did not check origi-

nal sources before making claims. So we pointed out to readers with an asterisk that we had seen the originals with our own eyes. This helped raise the quality of subsequent books.

**The Hymn:** This handbook is still in print after all these years.

**Ellinwood:** Yes, but there is a committee at work to produce a companion to the *Episcopal Hymnal 1982* which will be published in June of 1985.

**The Hymn:** Who will be in charge?

**Ellinwood:** It hasn't been announced yet. Raymond Glover is general editor of the hymnal.

**The Hymn:** Did you have any unusual experiences in researching materials for the *Companion*?

**Ellinwood:** Well, there was "Away in a Manger." A school teacher had written to the Music Division saying she had taught that carol to her school children. When they came back after Christmas one child said, "Teacher, you taught us the wrong tune." So she wrote to the Library of Congress to find the right tune. My colleague, Dick Hill, began looking, and finally wrote an article in the *Music Library Association Notes* entitled, "Not so Far Away in a Manger" in which he proved the text was first published anonymously in Philadelphia in the 1840s and that there have been some 40 different tunes used to it. I've always been a devout person: one of the true miracles in my life came up in connection with the *Companion*. I had finished my work, had sent in the galley-proofs, and was ready to return the page-proofs to the publisher when a

pamphlet came to my desk. It shouldn't have. In the first place it was the kind not usually catalogued. But it was catalogued and, moreover, had come to me instead of to the person in the appropriate subject-area. The author of the pamphlet, Dom John Stephan, had examined all the manuscripts of "Adeste Fideles" and was able to prove that both the text and tune were the work of John Francis Wade, not the anonymous attributions made previously. So the work of the *Companion* took my spare time for much of the 40s. In 1946 I had begun to go to our church music conferences in Evergreen, Colorado, and it seemed to me that I should seek ordination as a perpetual deacon. The cathedral could use an extra hand so many times. So in 1948 I was ordained. The *Companion* itself came out in 1949.

**The Hymn:** What did you teach at Evergreen?

**Ellinwood:** Music history primarily. Also repertory. From time to time I've edited things from the medieval or renaissance period that we could use at the cathedral. About the time I finished the *Companion*, the Hymn Society set up a committee under Henry Wilder Foote (who had written an important work on the history of American hymnody) to work with a similar committee of the British Hymn Society in preparing a revision of Julian's *Dictionary of Hymnology*. That had some American materials when it came out, but didn't really cover the field well. When Dr. Foote's committee got to work they soon realized we needed a dictionary of American hymnody. Julian would never encompass all we had to provide. So we organized and began work. A lot of individual surveys had

been done when Dr. Foote had to give it up. Again the mantle fell on me, around 1952. We continued as a committee, with a hymnologist from each of the major denominations and surveyed the hymnals they had brought out. Then the Society provided money so we could hire students during the vacations to index these hymnals.

**The Hymn:** Do you recall the other members of the committee?

**Ellinwood:** I have them listed in the preface of the *DAH First-Line Index* which is in the process of being published. We continued to work over the years, sometimes two or three people indexing at Princeton and Hartford as well as the Library of Congress, and later at Springfield, Ohio, St. Louis, and Fort Worth. We gathered individual hymnals elsewhere which people worked on. About 1954 a colleague in an adjoining section where I worked was widowed. One day I asked her what she did in her spare time. She said she played solitaire a lot. I said I could give her some better cards than that to play with. So Elizabeth Lockwood started taking hymnals from the Cathedral Library and indexing them herself. But as we got several thousand cards, we set up a coding arrangement, identifying denomination and hymnal. Elizabeth has coded and filed over a million cards in the subsequent years. Her husband had a recreation room in their basement which she turned into the dictionary area. Now there are over 700 card boxes, 2000 cards per box. They overflow this recreation room into the furnace room.

**The Hymn:** Would you comment on the tremendous scope of the project?

**Ellinwood:** In 1960, when Elizabeth was starting to code-number these cards, we took the 1960 yearbook of the National Council of Churches, which listed all the denominations in the country, and set up numbers for each of those denominations. We weren't able to find hymnals for every one; some of them never did have their own hymnal. This is American hymnology, not just Christian hymnology, so we began with the A's—the Adventist groups, the Amish, etc. In the B's were the Baha'i and the numerous Baptists such as the Duck River Association of Baptists and the National Baptists, the

**The Hymn:** Your hymnals are divided in files in both denominational and non-denominational collections.

**Ellinwood:** Most of the hymn singing, volume-wise, in America has been done in revival meetings, with evangelists like Sankey and so on. So we have over 3100 hymnals which are not associated with a specific denomination. Some were commercial hymnals put out by a publisher to a broad public. Others are the products of a particular revivalist. This was done by, for example, the Billy Graham Crusades. We have a hymnal from the Ethical Cultural movement and a number of hymnals for Jewish congregations.

. . . we have over 3100 hymnals which are not associated with a specific denomination.

Free-Will, the Primitive, the Independent, Regular, Separate, Seventh-Day German Baptists, which included the Ephrata Community (an interesting 18th century monastic group)—these were among the others. Then there were the various Brethren groups, a hymnal from Buddhist churches and quite a group of Canadian hymnals. Hugh McKellar of Toronto has been a strong supporter and collaborator for the Canadian hymnals. Others were the Church of God in North America, the Swedenborians and the Unification Church of Sun Myung Moon. We said it was to be American in the full meaning of the word, so we also have hymnals from Latin America. Curiously enough, we've only had a few Orthodox hymnals since these churches don't use hymnals in the congregational sense associated with Protestant churches.

**The Hymn:** I believe you have indexed hymnals in various languages as well.

**Ellinwood:** This was a surprising thing to me. In Michigan I'd run into Lutheran churches that had services in German as well as English. The extent of German hymnody in this country is enormous. You have the Moravians, the Mennonites, the Church of the Brethren, and the various Lutheran bodies, both German and others—Swedish, Norwegian, Danish. Theo. DeLaney, who at the time was Executive Secretary for the Missouri Synod Commission on Music and Worship, covered what he called the prairie hymnals, ethnic groups that had their own hymnals in those states. We have a number of French hymnals and one or two Italian ones from communities on the

east coast. There are Spanish hymnals from Latin America. Because of printing problems, and the fact that there is little or no relation save that of translation from languages already included, we have not indexed the few American hymnals published in non-Roman alphabets. Nor have we included hymnals in Hawaiian, Eskimo or American-Indian languages for the same reason.

**The Hymn:** I believe the total is something like 7800 hymnals.

**Ellinwood:** Yes, though I'm not sure of the exact number. They're all published in the *Bibliography of American Hymnals* that we got out last year.

It's been fascinating to see a classic hymn of Wesley or Watts that an evangelist would stick refrains on.

**The Hymn:** Is the cut off date 1978?

**Ellinwood:** The 1978 *Lutheran Book of Worship* is the last hymnal we put in. Around 1965 or 70 we decided we needed a cut-off date in order to get things edited and published. So we decided not to take any more of the gospel material after 1960 but would continue to take major hymnals. So from 1960 to 1978 coverage is more sketchy but with the more important denominational hymnals included.

**The Hymn:** Would you describe what you and Elizabeth Lockwood do on the dictionary in a typical week?

**Ellinwood:** Until she retired in 1974 she would spend evenings and weekends working on these cards in her home. I would keep track of things at my desk at the library after hours or at noon. After I retired in 1975 I realized we had to draw a halt

and edit the files to establish authors accurately, and think of publication. There was so much raw material. You might get a thousand hymnals that had, for example, "Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus." It's been fascinating to see a classic hymn of Wesley or Watts that an evangelist would stick refrains on. These of course came into existence at camp-meeting revivals where perhaps the leader was the only one to have a book for singing stanzas. When I was in college I visited with a black congregation in a storefront church. They sang the first stanza then a refrain six times then a second stanza, then six more refrains and so on. I suspect this may have been done many times at camp-meet-

ings. At any rate a number of refrains were tacked on these hymns. Many times the same refrain would be tacked on to a number of different hymns, e.g. "Then Palms of Victory, Crowns of Glory."

**The Hymn:** Will there be a way of locating these refrains?

**Ellinwood:** Yes. Through the editing process we began to sort these out. The cards we used were designed for us in the 50s by IBM, when modern computer work was still a dream. These punch-cards give the first line, the refrain, the title, the original first-line in case of translations and centos taken from longer hymns. On the right side of the card are the name of the author and, at the bottom, the translator. We hoped, and still hope, that these elements can be put on computer so each may be brought out. And, for refrains, it may be possi-

ble one day to show all the hymns that use, for example, a refrain of "Shout glory."

**The Hymn:** What remains to be done?

**Ellinwood:** Because of the size of the project, all publication will probably have to be in microform. If funds are found for computerization, it could be on computer discs. Work has begun this past year on an author file

which, when completed manually, can be filmed for distribution, paralleling the *First-line Index*. Some thought has also been given to bringing out a ten-year supplement. But it is time for the mantle again to pass on to a younger generation. The new DAH project director will need, and welcome, all the talented assistance which I have received over the years from many members of the Hymn Society of America. And so, in the words of the ancient Romans, "Ave atque vale."