



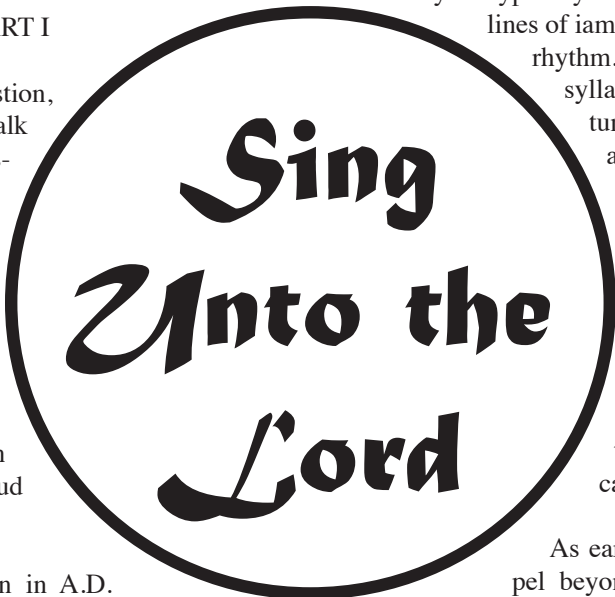
## Sylvia's NOTES

by: Sylvia Chai

### WHAT IS THE OLDEST HYMN IN THE TRINITY HYMNAL? OR HYMN HISTORY - PART I

To answer this question, let us first take a walk through "hymn history." The earliest Christians adopted the liturgical forms, chants and songs of the Jewish temple and synagogue. (The tune *Maoz Zur*, which appears in many hymnals, is an example.) During the first three centuries A.D., when early Christians met in secret to avoid persecution, loud singing was limited.

Following the Edict of Milan in A.D. 313, Christianity became the religion of the Empire, and Christians began to sing as an expression of joy and freedom. They sang the psalms, with a joyful "Alleluia" and a concluding jubilus (an extended musical phrase on the final syllable of Alleluia). One of the widely popular forms of singing was the responsorial psalm,



which alternated ornate solo verses w/ a refrain sung by the people. Another popular form was antiphonal singing, which was adopted by Ambrose, Bishop of Milan (347-397) and later Pope Celestine I (422-432). Hymn #58 "O Splendor of God's Glory Bright" in the Trinity Hymnal is one of the hymns traditionally attributed to Ambrose and also the oldest hymn in the Trinity hymnal (in answer to this article's title).

Ambrosian hymns deal with fundamental Christian teachings, use simple, dignified language, and the expressions and language of the people for whom they were written. These hymns present a contrast to the irregular, unsymmetrical prose forms of the psalms. Each

hymn typically had eight stanzas written in four lines of iambic dimeter, a popular folk-like rhythm. The melody had one note per syllable, and an easily remembered tune. The hymn could be called

a spiritual folksong and was the forerunner of the Protestant church chorale. Meanwhile, because of difficulties with northern barbaric tribes, Emperor Constantine moved the seat of government of the Roman Empire from Rome to Constantinople in Byzantium in A.D. 330 making it the capital of the empire.

As early Christians carried the Gospel beyond Palestine, Syria became a hub of activity. In an effort to counteract Arian heresy, early in the fourth century antiphonal singing was introduced at Antioch and the congregation became responsible for chanting the psalm verses. The term responsorial psalm as used in the Eastern churches meant "octave"---boys and men singing together an octave apart. Later, it came to mean a group of singers answer-

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## Finance Committee Report

Financial Summary January - April 2009			
	Actual	Budget	Variance
Offerings	\$178,924	\$170,748	\$ (8,176)
Expenses	\$158,270	\$175,604	\$ 17,334
Other Income	\$ 619	\$ 0	\$ (619)
<b>Net Surplus</b>	<b>\$ 21,273</b>		

## Syvia's Notes, Cont.

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ing another group of singers.

The foremost Syrian hymn writer, Ephraim (who died in 373 A.D.), took popular tunes of heretical groups and substituted orthodox texts for Christians to sing.

A mere 40 years after the founding of Constantinople, the Council of Laodicea (A.D. 367) forbid congregational singing and the use of instruments in the service. Furthermore, it decreed that only the words of scripture could be sung. So, hymn writers were limited to setting to music the words of canticles and the psalms. Byzantine hymns, which were influenced by Jewish traditions and Syrian practice developed in Eastern church worship as unaccompanied monophonic chant, mainly diatonic, lacking in strict meter and closely following the rhythm of the text. These hymns first emerged during the fourth and fifth centuries as short prayers sung between the reading of the psalms called troparia. By the sixth century they developed into a short introduction followed by eighteen to thirty troparia (stanzas) of uniform structure and ending with a refrain. The troparia were connected either alphabetically or acrostically. If alphabetic, the initial letter of each troparion followed in alphabetic order. If acrostic

the initial letters of each troparion made a sentence giving the title of the hymn and the name of the author. The outstanding hymn writer of this period was Romanus (c. 500), who usually signed his name in acrostic as "the humble Romanus".

The canon, a long poem of nine odes (hymns), each originally consisting of from six to nine toparia between each ode, appeared in the eighth century. A chief hymn writer of this period was Andrew of Crete (c. 650-730), who wrote #574, "Christian, Dost Thou See Them". Another hymn writer of this time was John of Damascus (d.c. 780), who wrote "The Day of Resurrection" #267, which is a translation of the first ode of the Golden Canon for Easter day, and "Come, Ye Faithful, Raise the Strain" #265 and #266, which is a translation of the first ode of the canon for the first Sunday after Easter. These forms--troparion and canon—are still used in the Eastern church.

*Thus concludes "Hymn History - part I." Stay tuned for part II in the coming months.*

### Birthdays

Brian Armstrong 6/7

Mary Beckel 6/7

Emily Strickland 6/9

Joe DeNitto 6/10

Lucas Lambers 6/14

Martha Thompson 6/14

Marsha Craig 6/15



Kevin Connolly 6/15

Willa Jackson 6/18

Tommie Bolanos 6/19

Ruth Gallup 6/20

Tony Carrillo 6/26

Elliot Rodriguez 6/28

### Anniversaries



John & Diane Keen 6/2

Lindsay & Connie Trim 6/4

Steve & Laura Strickland 6/25

Rob & Holly Edwards 6/26

Brian & Cathy Armstrong 6/28

Are we missing a birthday or anniversary? Please help us keep our records up to date by emailing the missing information to church@seminolepca.org or calling 877-6783.



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*"Seek the welfare of the city to which I have called you. Pray to the Lord on its behalf; for in its welfare, you too will have welfare."  
Jeremiah 29:7*