Spiritual music has always been a part of the Negro race. It helped them when in slavery and formed a prominent place in the development of early minstrel, ragtime and jazz. Some of the music used at funerals and in Negro church services are many of the music given below. Scared music was always used by the Negro race and a hymn used in the Civil Rights Movement (We Shall Overcome) was a moving testament to their faith. Many of the hymns given below are foundations of early jazz.

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We Shall Overcome – 1947

The words are derived from a gospel song written by Reverend Charles Tindley. It was published in 1947 as “We Will Overcome.” The song became associated with the Civil Right movement from 1959 and quickly became the unofficial anthem of the movement. It was sung at rallies, folk festivals, etc by people such as Joan Baez. This gospel song influenced the writing of “Blowin’ in the Wind.” as seen below.

It became one of the well known protest songs of the Civil Rights movement in 1959.

Deep River – N.D.

The Negro Spiritual holds a place of importance in the development of early American popular music. The art of singing a spiritual demanded a style and talent to embellish a melody. This technique of improvising was one of the main influences in the development and evolution of the jazz style and was to be one of the most exciting elements of jazz. Preserving these early spirituals – an oral music – was long neglected, either from a lack of foresight, and/or from the difficulty of notating an oral musical technique, a style that presented a different musical performance each time. Through the dedication and foresight of a few, some of these early spirituals were preserved. Such a person was Robert Emmett Kennedy, from Algiers, Louisiana. Kennedy wrote down both the lyrics and music of the spirituals he heard around the New Orleans area. These may be found in his books: “Mellows,” and “More Mellows.” (See <Basinstreet.com> for copies of these books.)

An emphasis and realization of the importance of using American national music of the Negro and the American Indian musical heritage was created by the visit of the world renowned composer Anton Dvorak in 1897. Through the influence of Dvorak, a number of American composers began using Negro and Indian melodies as compositional material. H.T. Burleigh, a pupil of Dvorak (An early Negro composer and vocalist), published a number of spirituals in a rich harmonic style, one of which is “Deep River.” Another source can be found in the publication...
“Wa Wan Press” of Arthur Farwell, published by Arno Press. (Also see: Essays II on my web site – Basinstreet.com)

**Steal Away to Jesus**

This hymn was composed by Wallace Willis, a Choctaw Indian freedman. Missionary Alexander Reid transcribed a number of songs while ministering. Reid
sent the music to the Jubilee Singers of Fisk University and the group began singing this song on their tour. The granddaughter of Willis wrote the following:

“My grandfather was a slave of the Wright family when dey lived near Doaksville, and he and my grandmother would pass de time by singing while dey toiled away in de cotton fields. Grandfather was a sweet singer. He made up songs and sung ‘em. He made up “Swing Low Sweet Chariot” and “Steal Away to Jesus.” He made up lots more’n dem, but a Mr. Reid, a white man, liked dem ones de best and he could play music and he helped grandfather to keep dese two songs.”

Another quote from the Choctaw Freedmen states

“In 1871, when the Jubilee singers first visited Newark, New Jersey, Rev. Alexander Reid happened to be there and heard them. The work of the Jubilee singers was new in the north and attracted considerable and very favorable attention. But when Prof. White, who had charge of them, announced several concerts to be given in different churches of the city he added, “We will have to repeat the Jubilee songs as we have no other.” When Mr. Reid was asked how he liked them he remarked, “Very well, but I have heard better ones.” When he had committed to writing a half dozen of the plantation songs he had heard “Wallace and Minerva” sing with so much delight at old Spencer Academy, he met Mr. White and his company in Brooklyn, New York, and spent an entire day rehearsing them. These new songs included, “Steal away to Jesus,” “The Angels are Coming,” I’m a Rolling,” and “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot.”

Swing Low Sweet Chariot

This spiritual was written by Wallace (Wallis) Willis, a Choctaw freedman around 1862. It is said he was inspired by the Red River that reminded him symbolically of the River Jordan, and the verse of Elilzah being taken to heaven by a chariot. Willis also wrote the above spiritual “Steal Away to Jesus.”

Like many spirituals the lyrics are said to refer to the Underground Railroad. We find references to being carried away toward freedom and to the liberation of slavery. But it is documented that runaway slaves contend that this spiritual and others are about making their way northward to freedom.
Go Down Moses

This is an American Negro spiritual and describes events in the Old Testament of the Bible. Exodus 5:1. It dates sometime before 1862 and was a rallying anthem for the Contrabands at Fort Monroe. It is said in some articles as dating about 1853 and from Virginia. The song was made famous by Paul Robeson. Harriet Tubman was referred to as “Moses, the liberator. In the spiritual Canaan & heaven refer to Canada; The Pharaoh - the slave master. And it bears a relation
between the Jews being freed from Egypt and the slaves from the plantation. It is a good example of the retelling of Exodus.

Michael Row the Boat Ashore

This song is an Afro/American spiritual. It came to attention during the American Civil War on the St. Helena Island, off the coast of South Carolina. The white occupants of the island abandoned their land and the Union navy arrived only to find slaves. Charles Pickard Ware wrote down a number of spirituals he heard from the freedmen. The lyrics are said to refer to the Michael of the Bible and it is noted that the slaves on the island did a lot of rowing, taking their previous masters from the island to the mainland.

There are few ‘rowing’ songs in the repertoire of Negro spirituals. Perhaps the most famous is ‘Michael.’ The origin of most spirituals are not known as this was not a written music. There were fortunately a few scholars that did transcribe many of them. It was first mentioned in about 1863 and was from the area of the Georgia Sea Islands, a place that we do have a number of the slave spirituals. It is apropos that it is a rowing spiritual as this was the only way that slaves could travel between the islands in this area. This song is mentioned by the teachers that went to these islands with each plantation having their own rowing songs. Like many spirituals the words often have double meanings or are in the ‘slang’ of the Negro slaves. Most probably the ‘Michael mentioned is the archangel Michael who often is called on to help improve the life of the slaves. The lyrics “Michael, row the boat ashore” might be reference to crossing over to the north for freedom.

The words of the last verse; “O I wheel to de right and I wheel to de left,” The best meaning of this might be the statement of a slave that said: “Dat mean if you go od de left you to destruction, and if you go on de right got to God for sure.”

Follow the Drinking Gourd
This is a prime example of a spiritual with a definite message. Slaves knew that freedom was to the north. They knew of the North Star and the metaphor of a gourd (drinking utensil) was the big dipper in the sky. The North Star (Polaris) was known as the guiding star. In Africa music was a vital part of society and music always had a purpose, not as an art form but a way of transmitting a message. Thus they carried over to their new land this same practice.

“Follow the drinking gourd” is a coded spiritual. The message of the direction to follow was given to slaves by Peg Leg Joe, a former sailor who had a missing left leg. It is said that Peg Leg Joe, a carpenter by trade would move from one plantation to another teaching the slaves the correct escape route.

The song was first published in 1928 with the earliest date collected was 1912. The lyrics of the song have been analyzed - From Mobile North up the Tombigbee River, over land to the Tennessee River, then down the river to where the Tennessee and Ohio Rivers meet near Paducah, Kentucky and then cross over the Ohio (best in winter when river is frozen). This journey took most of the year.

I give just a few of the lyrics translated:

“When the sun come back” = Taken together this use suggests escaping in the spring and heading North to freedom.
“When the firs’ quail call” = Alludes to the hollowed out gourd used by slaves as a water dipper. Code name for the Big Dipper star formation, which points to Polaris, the Pole Star and North

“For the ole man say” = Ole man is captain – operator Peg Leg Joe

“The riva’s bank am a very good road = 1st river Tombigbee

This is just a few lyrics translated. There are many verses that would have similar meanings for the slave.

In the first 4 verses, we find a coded description of their purpose:

1st verse: How to follow route from Mobile North

2nd verse: The route through Northern Mississippi to Tennessee River.

3rd verse: End of route in Paducah, Kentucky.

Go Tell it on the Mountain
This is a song written by John W. Work dating to at least 1865. It is both considered an African/American spiritual and also a Christmas Carol as its lyrics celebrate the Nativity. When recording the song Peter, Paul and Mary and their musical director Milt Okum substituted some lyrics to make it applicable to the Civil Rights struggle.

**Dry Bones**

This is a song that is sung by most kids in elementary school. It is a well-known traditional spiritual and is a good way to learn basic anatomy. The melody was composed by James Weldon Johnson. The lyrics are based on Ezekiel 37:1-14, where the prophet Ezekiel visits the Valley of Dry Bones and brings them to life under God’s command. Ezekiel had a vision and is taken by God’s spirit into a valley filled with old bones. Ezekiel heard a noise, and behold, all the bones came together bone to bone.
Nobody Knows the Trouble I’ve Seen

JUNE - THE MUSICAL OBSERVER
THE STORY OF THE NEGRO SPIRITUAL "NOBODY KNOWS THE TROUBLE I'VE SEEN" by Clarence Cameron White. (Clarence Cameron White is an American composer-violinist, who has made an extended study of Negro folk songs and spirituals, and whose article should be helpful to music club members as study material. His setting of four of these spirituals, "Bandanna Sketches," has attained a wide vogue.)

The story of any Negro Spiritual necessarily begins with the story of that dark cloud of human slavery, which for two hundred years hung ghost-like over the American nation. Each Spiritual is but the reflection of the slaves' mental picture of experience during that period of our history. Of the bards who brought these songs into being, we know nothing, as individuals, but we do know that each and every "Spiritual" reflects an individual talent closely akin to genius. Even though these songs were born of a very vital depression and sorrow, we can today catch something of the lyric pathos and beauty of these inspired melodies.

Upon extensive research, we find that "Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen" first sprang from the heart of a Negro slave whose trials were almost more than he could bear. After having his wife and children sold away, he withdrew to his little cabin and poured out his sorrow in this song. His singing of it was so heartrending and reflected the experience of the other slaves on the plantation to such an extent that it was soon learned and chanted at all the "meetings" of the slaves held after the toils of the day were over. Thus it became one of the best known and most frequently used in all parts of the Southland and the Sea Islands off the Atlantic Coast. The treatment of the words "Nobody Knows" shows in its drop of a sixth, just how hopeless this slave felt over his loss.

Figure 1

Then notice the serene flow of the melody "Nobody Knows but Jesus,"

The thoughts occurred that there was comfort in knowing that Jesus, who knows all things, knew and understood this great sorrow and loss, and the voice raises in praise for this comfort in the lines "Glory Hallelujah,"
Then there appears a recitation of his many trials in the lines "Sometimes I'm Up, Sometimes I'm Down." The word "down" coming quite properly on a downward inflection.

The slave's hope of salvation and a re-union comes in the words "If you get there before I do, Tell my friends I'm coming, too," and in the ending "Oh, yes, Lord"; notice the sounding of conviction in the biblical promises in the broad accented phrase of the music.

The setting of these Spirituals "Bandanna Sketches" (of which "Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen" is No. 1), published by the Carl Fischer Company, was the suggestion of the late Dr. Booker T. Washington during a visit to Tuskegee in the summer of 1915. These songs were sung at Tuskegee as solos with the important lines accompanied by choir voices and they seemed to me especially suited to the violin, utilizing effective double stopping in the chorus parts. So upon my return to Boston, I began to transcribe the numbers for violin - truly a labor of love. These settings remained in manuscript for two years before they were submitted for publication to the Carl Fischer Company, and it has been a great source of pleasure, to say the least, that they have been programmed by such artists as Fritz Kreisler, Zacharewitch, Mayo Wadler, Isadore Berger, Roderick White, Kathryn Platt Gunn, Irma Seydel, Pauline Watson and numerous other artists.
They have recently been used in orchestral version by numerous large orchestras throughout America, and were included in the "Pop" concerts at Symphony Hall, Boston. During the present season, the orchestral version was played by the Chicago Symphony at the High School memory contest held in Chicago in March, and the arrangement for military band has been used at concerts by municipal bands at Baltimore, Washington and numerous other places.

Battle of Jericho
This is an Afro/American spiritual and is supposed to be the product of pre-Civil War slaves and dates to the first half of the 19th century. Originally there were words in a Negro dialect. We know that the slaves often wrote these songs to signal an escape or to express their personal hope for freedom. The bible verse Joshua 6:15-21 and the double meaning of the phrase “and the walls of Jericho came tumbling down” is easily noted i.e. the slave escapes the walls and goes to freedom with the phrase a glorious victory of escaping the collapsed walls to freedom.

**Sometimes I Feel like a Motherless Child**

This song is a traditional Negro spiritual. It dates back to the slave era and bemoans the practice to sell the children of slaves away from their parents. Back in the 1870s it was sung by the Fisk Jubilee singers. It is one of the saddest spirituals with expressions of despair and pain and the feeling of hopelessness of a child who has lost her parents. But there is presented a ray of hope with the use of the word ‘sometimes.’ It also shows the separation of the slave from his family in Africa.

**Lonesome Road**
This is an interesting story about this song. It was written by Gene Austin and Nat Shilkret in 1929. Many might think it is an old Negro spiritual but, it was written in the style of an African/American work song. It first appeared to the public in the 1929 movie Show Boat

Look down, look down that lonesome road,... Hang down your head an' cry. The best of friends must part some time,... Then why not you... an' I?...

**Popular Hymns**

In most of the hymns given the words were usually written first with perhaps original melodies, or borrowing well-known melodies of others, often having more than one melody until the best ones finally are the ones we recognize.

**Abide With Me – 1820**

The text was written by Henry Francis Lyte. It is said that he wrote the verse following the death of a minister friend, probably in 1820. He put the final touches on it in 1847 as a farewell before he left Lower Brixham, England for Rome because of his health. He never reached Rome dying in Nice, France. The publication date was in 1847. The tune as we know it now was written in 1850 by William Henry Monk to tune “Eventide or Monk.” It first appeared in 1861 in Lyte’s “Hymn ancient and Modern.”
Fairest Lord Jesus

Also called “The Crusaders Hymn” there is little known as to its origin. Legend has it that it was sung by 12th century German Crusaders. It was thought to be an old German Silesian folk song dating to the Crusades. Heinrich August Hoffman von Fallerslebein, upon hearing a service in Glaz copied down the words and music and published it in his “Schlesische Volslieder in 1942. It was adapted by Richard Stovs Willis in 1850.
Faith of Our Fathers

Frederick William Faber wrote the text. He was an Anglican clergyman turned Roman Catholic priest who promoted congregational singing in the Catholic Church. It was included in hymn books in 1949. It was first believed that the melody was by Mendelssohn but is now believed to be a tune by Henry Frederick Hemy. The adaptation of the tune for use with Faber’s hymn was made by James George Walton. It was first published in 1874 in “Plain Song Music for Holy communion.”

Onward Christian Soldiers
The text is by Sabine Baring-Gould. He was born in Exeter, England. His early career was that of a school teacher. One day he was to accompany his school boys to a children’s festival in the nearby community of St. Peters in England. He knew how mischievous boys could be during a long walk. So to help the discipline he looked for a suitable hymn for them to sing while walking on their trip. Finding none he decided to write the work himself. He picked a melody and in 15 minutes he had the lyrics to fit the tune. The lyrics he wrote were published later that year in the “Church Times” of 1864. Later he showed the lyrics to Arthur Sullivan – then a 29 year old organist who then wrote the melody we know today. Baring-Gould also wrote “Now the Day is Over.”

Nearer My God to Thee

The text was written by Sarah Flower Adams (1905-1848). Minister John fox asked Sarah and her sister Eliza to write a new hymn basing it on the story of Jacob and Wsau for the book to accompany a sermon that was going to preach on the subject. While working on the hymn Eliza died. Sarah continued on the project which became a most famous hymn to comfort her dying sister who was dying of tuberculosis. Published in 1841 with the original tune by Eliza and Sarah it was put in Fox’s “Hymns and Anthems.” She also caught tuberculosis and died in 1848. A new setting was written by Lowell Mason and it first appeared in the 1859 “Sabbath Hymn & Tune Book.” In 1912 as the titanic was sinking, the ship band is said to have played “Nearer My God to Thee.”
20

A Mighty Fortress is Our God

This is the most famous hymn by Martin Luther “Ein Feste Burg. In 1517 Luther posted his thesis on the door of the cathedral at the University of Wittenburg. In 1920 he was being threatened for his religious views by the church in Rome. He ‘escaped’ and received asylum by a sympathetic German prince at the Wartburg Castle near Eisenach. During this time he translated the New Testament and wrote hymns in the vernacular (in this case German) so the common people could read the Bible. (It was in Greek and Latin) It might have been the security of his situation that was in Luther’s work as he composed his best known hymn. The Reformation rediscovered the art of congregational singing. The hymn was the most powerful hymn of the movement It was published in 1829 Wittenburg hymnbook.
that year. When Luther died in 1846 the hymn was sung at his funeral and the first line of the hymn put on his tombstone. The text was translated into English by Harvard Professor Frederick Henry Hedge. The melody was used from one of J. S. Bach’s works – a 1717 Cantata #80.

**God of Our Fathers**

The text for this hymn was written by Daniel Crane Roberts, living on Long Island, New York in 1841. It was written when Roberts was 35 year old and a minister at St. Thomas Episcopal Church in Brandon, Vermont for a local celebration of the Nation’s Centennial Independence Day. Originally it was set to a Russian National anthem the melody we know was written by Alexia Feodorovich Lvov. The new melody was from the tune “National Hymn” by George W. Warren. I was to be used at the centennial celebration of the US Constitution in 1892

**Holy, Holy, Holy**

The text was written by Reginald Haber (1783-1826) an Anglican minister in England. The date usually given is in 1826. Tune was composed in 1861 by John Bacchusl Dykes. It first appeared in “Hymns Ancient & Modern in 1861. Haber was born in 1783 and educated at Oxford. For twenty years he was ;with a church in Shropshire, England. He was appointed Bishop of Calcutta, India where he died in 1826. He was the author of 57 hymns, with ‘Holy’ became the most famous. The hymn acquired worldwide attention when Dr. John Dykes added music to the verses. The origin title was “Nicea”. Dykes had a worldwide reputation as a music scholar and he is credited with being the first to show that writing hymns can be musical without hurting its spiritual purpose. He died in 1876
Rock of Ages
The text is by Augustine Montague Toplady in 1775. It had a strange beginning and is in “Life a Journey” in 1776. The tune was composed in 1830 by Thomas Hastings. It was first published in 1932 in “Spiritual Songs for Social Worship” Later Lowell Mason arranged it in its present form in 18859 in “Sabbath Hymn and Tune Book.”

The writing of the hymn had its inspiration from an incident in the Gorge of Burrington Combe in the Mendip Hills in England. Toplady, a preacher in the small nearby town of Blagdon was walking along the gorge when a sudden storm approached. Lightening, followed by a burst of thunder and then heavy rain lashed mercilessly down, pouring streams of heavy pounding volumes of water from heaven. The rain streamed down the ragged sides of the primeval mounds of rock. A shelter from the storms of life was found and Toplady waited there for the storm to cease. As he waited there between two massive rocks of the native limestone, he thought of a title for a hymn. He scribed down the initial lyrics of the hymn on a playing card. The fissure where he took refuge is now marked as the “Rock of Ages” both on the rock itself and on some maps, and is also found in the name of a nearby tea shop.

The hymn is usually sung to the tune ‘Toplady.’ By Thomas Hastings. The lyrics that Toplady wrote are taken by some as a criticism of the theology of John Wesley and the early Methodists. Toplady had a bitter argument with Wesley dating back to 1769. Toplady, when close to death arose from his death bed and was carried to his church pulpit and delivered a sermon denying Welsey’s charge on his alleged change in his beliefs and affirming his opposition to Wesley religious views.

This hymn was played at the funeral of” Prince Albert, J.E.B. Stuart and William Ewart Gladstone

Like the scene on the Titanic, where the British ship “London went down in the “Bay of Biscay” January 11, 1866, the last thing which the last man who left the
ship hears as the boat sank was the voices of the passengers still aboard singing “Rock of Ages.”

The text of this hymn was written by Knowles Shaw with the use of the Bible verse 126:6 “He, who continually goes forth weeping, bearing seed for sowing, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.” At a later date George Minor put the melody we know today. The hymn was dedicated to A. D.
Fillmore a musician and singer of the day. Minor’s melody is very similar to Shaw’s and seems to be based on it.

Blest Be the Tie That Binds

Written by John Fawcett and Hans G. Ngeli, pastor Fawcett tells the story of the writing of this hymn thusly: Fawcett was pastor of a small church in Wainsgate, England and was called from his parish to a larger church in London in 1772. He accepted the call and then preached his final sermon to his small flock. His books and furniture were all loaded on a wagon and all was ready for his departure when his parishioners gathered around the wagon with tears in their eyes and begged him to stay. His wife said, “John, John, I cannot hear this.” John said, “Neither can I.” and I will not go. They unloaded the wagon and put everything as it was before. His decision was hailed with great joy. It was a little later that he wrote the words of this hymn in commemoration of this event.
Reverend George Bennard, during the early part of his ministry, was praying for a complete understanding of the meaning of the cross and its place in Christianity. Bennard spent numerous hours in study, meditation and prayer. In his searching for enlightenment he remarked that “I saw the Christ of the cross as if I were seeing John 3:16 leave the printed page, take form and act out the meaning of redemption,” and the answer came to him in the form of a song.

While staying at the Methodist parsonage at Pokagon, Michigan he worked and perfected his composition, both words and music. Services in reverence to this song are observed annually at this same church and inscribed on a large stone near the church is the names of the original choir members and stating the significance of this annual event.

The hymn was introduced before a convention in Chicago and became an immediately success. There is a 12 foot wooden cross on a roadside near Reed City, Michigan honoring the composer Bennard. One reads the words “Old Rugged Cross” reminding the passersby that this is the town of Rev. George Bennard.
George Bennard

Shall We Gather at the River?

Robert Lowry

1. Shall we gather at the river, Where bright and golden feet have trod; 
2. On the bosom of the river, Where the Saviour's footsteps trod; 
3. As we reach the shining river, Lay we ever 'hymn' the Lord; 
4. Soon we'll reach the shining river, Soon our pilgrim age will cease; 

With its crystal tile, for ever Flowing by the throne of God, 
We shall meet and sorrow never 'Neath the glory of the Lord.
Grace our spirit will be given, And provide a robe and crown, 
Soon our happy hearts will quiver With the immeasurable peace.

Refrain

Yes, we'll gather at the river, The beautiful, the beautiful river.

Gather with the saints at the river, That flows by the throne of God.
The text and tune is by Robert Lowry (1826-1890). In the summer of 1864 an epidemic sweeping New York City Lowry was visiting the sick in his congregation and burying others who had died. Exhausted he began to think of the great reunion at the river of life. He didn’t stay lying down on his couch, arose and was busy writing. He left his own account of this event:

“One afternoon in July, 1864 when I was pastor at Hanson Place Baptist chruch, Brooklyn, the weather was oppressively hot, and I was laying on a lounge in a state of physical exhaustion I was almost incapable of bodily exertion, and my imagination began to take to itself, I had visions of the future passed before me with starkly vividness. The imagery of the Apocalypse took the form of a tableau. Brightest of all was the throne of God, the heavenly river and the gathering of the saints. My soul seemed to take new life from the celestial outlook I began to wonder why the hymn writers had said so much about the ‘river of death’ and so little about ‘the pure water of life.’ Clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and the lamb. As I mused the words began to construct themselves. They came first as a question of Christian inquiry “Shall we Gather?” then they broke out in a chorus, as an answer of Christian faith. ‘Yes, we’ll gather.’ On this question and answer the hymn began to develop itself. The music came with the hymn.’

The hymn was first published in 1865 in the ‘Sunday School Hymnbook, Happy Voices.’ It was not a southern camp meeting song from a folk tradition.

Aaron Copeland included it in his “Old American Songs.” The hymn was sung at the funeral of supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas in 1975 and was included in the 1985 Academy Award winning film “Trip to Bountiful.” It is used when common people would be taken “down to the river to be baptized.

I have to add a joke told by a Pastor about a happening:

This pastor was completing a sermon on the evils of drinking. “If I had all the beer, the wine and the whiskey in the world, I’d take it and pour it into the river.” The sermon complete he sat down and the song leader, very cautiously stood up and announced the closing hymn, “for our closing song, let us sing Hymn #365 Shall We Gather at the river.”

We Gather Together

The text was written to celebrate Dutch Independence from Spain in the late 16th century to the tune “Kremser.” While first published anonymously in “Nederlandtsch Gedenckclank” in 1626, it is thought that the date of the song was from around 1625. It was considered to be a Dutch folk song. In 1984 it appeared as an anthem setting for his “Prayer of Thanksgiving” that was published in 1917.
Christ the Lord is Rise Today

The text is by Charles Wesley in 1739 and published a year later. He wrote a number of stanzas for the 1st worship service at the Wesleyan Chapel in London. It is an old Latin melody probably from the 14th century. The alleluias at the end of each line were not in the original hymn of Wesley. The composer of the music has not been identified. They praise God after each phrase.
Whispering Hope

`The text and the music were written by Septimus Winner with the pseudonym of Alice Hawthorne. He was the composer of “Listen to the Mocking Bird,” “Ten Little Indians” and “Oh where has my Little Dog Gone?” Winner did not intend it to be a religious song. He was somewhat amazed and amused that its great popularity was achieved as a hymn. His brother Joe E. Winner, became jealous of his brother’s success he wrote “Little Brown Jug.”
Now Thank We All Our God

This is known as a Thanksgiving hymn and was composed by Martin Rinkart during the difficult times of the thirty Years War. The music is by Johann Cruger. The hymn began as a family prayer before meals and was sung after the war as a national Thanksgiving. During the long war Rinkart helped refugees as well as helping the sick and dying. He conducted 1000s of funerals including that of his wife. At the age of 31 Rinkart became a pastor in the town of Eilenberg. Rinkart was a prolific writer and wrote 66 hymns. When his town was overrun by a Swedish and with the commander demanding a large tribute, which the town’s people couldn’t afford he said to his people, “Come, my children, we can find no mercy with man-let us take refuge with God.” Rinkart led his people in prayer and in the
singing of a familiar hymn. The commander was very much impressed by this
demonstration of faith and lowered the demands of the tribute.

**Wade in the Water**

This is another spiritual that is coded. The song gives advice to the runaway
slave in how to avoid being tracked by bloodhounds by not going directly across the
river but downstream when coming out. The river Jordan is really a code name for
Canada. The words “If you should get there before I do tell my friends that I’m
comin’ too” refers to the journey.

**What a Friend We Have in Jesus**

Joseph M Scriven was the composer of this hymn, first written as a poem in
1855 to comfort his mother living in Ireland and Scriven was in Canada. The poem
was set to a melody by Charles Crozat Converse in 1868. After graduating form
Trinity College in Dublin he fell in love with a young lady and they planned to marry but the evening before the wedding his bride drowned. Following this tragedy he left for Canada to teach and having gotten engaged a 2\textsuperscript{nd} time but again tragedy followed him and just before the wedding she became ill and died.

Suffering much tragedy in his life he became depressed both his spirit and his finances went into a steep decline. One night as Joseph Scriven was in his room alone with a friend in the next room, the friend went to check on him and found the room empty. It was not until the middle of the next day that they found his body lying in some water. It was never determined if the death was an accident or suicide.

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=0.3\textwidth]{jmscriven.jpg}
\end{center}

\textbf{J. M. Scriven (1819-1886)}

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=0.7\textwidth]{whatafriend.png}
\end{center}

\textbf{Didn’t My Lord Deliver Daniel}

This is another spiritual that was used to inspire the slave in their quest for freedom. It tells the story of Daniel in the lion’s den. Daniel is believed to have been protected from harm through Divine intervention, thus highlighting the idea of the
socially proscribed power of hierarchy being upset by God’s protecting the deserving servant.

There’s a Church in the Valley by the Wildwood (in the Vale)

One day a young William Pitts was traveling to visit his bride to be in Fredericksburg, Iowa. When reaching the town of Bradford, 14 miles from his bride the stagecoach in which he was riding stopped and before continuing on his trip he had a little time to stroll around the area enjoying the green foliage, the tall tress and the gentle rolling hills while thinking of his bride. There was one area in the valley formed by the Cedar River that was of particular beauty. In his mind Pitts envisioned a small church and this vision would not go away. Days later, after returning home, he wrote a poem about his imaginary brown church and composed a melody. This was in 1857. Upon returning to Bradford 7 years later he was amazed to find, in this beauty spot a small church being erected on that very spot. Upon finishing the construction the building began painting the new church brown. Pitt located his long forgotten song and upon the dedication of the new church his singing class from his school sang the song for the first time. Pitt then enrolled and studied medicine and his song was forgotten. As time past Bradford had almost ceased to exist as a town with the railroad bypassing the town and instead went
through Nashua a town 2 miles to the west. Weeds and other bushes consumed the area around the old church and the church was closed. Upon a revival the congregation reopened the church and re-painted the church in its original brown. Gradually traveling musicians and others discovered Pitt’s song and it began spreading around the country. The little church and the song became famous and now it is the place of many weddings. It is the custom after a pair gets married that together they pull the rope that rings the bell.

**Old Time Religion**

This hymn dates from 1873 where it is found in a group of Jubilee songs. Some scholars say that it may trace back to English folk songs. It was written down by Charles D. Tillman who first heard it at an 1889 camp meeting in Lexington, South Carolina. Some think that it is about the harm that organized religion as done throughout history i.e. the Crusades, the inquisition, the battles between Protestants and Catholics in Ireland, etc. Some Evangelical Christians attack the song because it had no mention of Jesus Christ and implies that there are other ways to salvation than being born again.

![Jester Hairston](image)
Old Hundredth

This tune was composed to the 134th Psalm in the Geneva Psalter but its composer remains unknown. The famous composer Handel ascribes it to Luther or Claude Gondimel who was assassinated at Lyons during the massacres of St. Bartholomew but most believe it was by Guillaume le Franc, composed or compiled it from old Roman chants. The Queen of Henry II sang this, her favorite psalm. Haydn heard the melody in London and was greatly impressed as was Berlioz.

Doxology

This verse was written by Thomas Ken in 1674 and set to the tune ‘Old Hundredth’. It is a hymn of praise to the Holy Trinity. Ken wrote this verse in an era when the established church believed only Scripture should be sung as hymns with emphasize on the Psalms. He wrote this to be used only by his student’s rooms at Winchester College. Originally it was the final verses of 2 longer hymns – “Awake My Soul and With the Sun,” and “Glory to thee, my God, this night.”

I Love to Tell the Story

A lady by the name of Katherine Hankey was fond of telling others about Jesus Christ. Katherine was born in 1834 to a wealthy English family. Her joy was to bring the message of Jesus to poor and downhearted get to know Christ. Early in her life she began to conduct Bible classes around the city of London. When
Katherine became 40 years old she became very sick and the doctor told her she needed to take some time off from her work and rest. She rested for a year. During her convalescence she took her pen and wrote a long poem about Jesus Christ. In the second half of her poem we find the lyrics to this hymn:}

```
1. I love to tell the story Of un-seen things a-bove, Of
2. I love to tell the story, More won-der-ful it seems Than
3. I love to tell the story, 'Tis pleasant to re-peat What
4. I love to tell the story, For those who know it best Seen

Je-sus and His glo-ry, Of Je-sus and His love, I love to all the gold-en fan-cy, Of all our gold-en dreams, I love to seem, each time I tell it, More won-der-ful-ly sweet, I love to hun-ger-ing and thirst-ing To hear it like the rest. And when, in

tell the sto-ry, Be-cause I know 'tis true; It sat-is-fies my I love to tell the story, It did so much for me; And that is just the tell the sto-ry, For some have nev-er heard The mes-sage of sal-sons of glo-ry, I sing the new, new song, 'Twill be the old, old

long-ings As nothing else can do, rea-son I tell it now to thee, I love to tell the story, 'Twill

reason From God's own holy Word, sto-ry That I have loved so long.

be my theme in glo-ry To tell the old, old sto-ry Of Je-sus and His love.
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Katherine Hankey

Jesus Loves Me

Two sisters Anna and Susan Warner lived near the West Point Military Base. Being very religious they saw many young soldiers come to know Jesus. They would conduct Bible classes for those young men that were interested. After their father died, Susan began writing fictional novels. One novel was entitled “Say & Soul. During the writing there was a situation in the book that called for a poem that would give comfort to a dying child. Anna sat down and wrote this poem entitled “Jesus Loves Me.” Dr. William Bradley in 1861 wrote the tune and added a chorus to this hymn. It became popular and all around the world children sing this hymn.

Carl Gustav Boberg

How Great Thou Art

The inspiration for the poem written by Carl Gustav Boberg in Sweden in 1885 came one day when Boberg was walking home from his church near Kronoback and heard the church bells ringing. As quickly as a clanging of the first bell a sudden huge storm came upon him and just as suddenly the storm stopped and there fell unto him a peaceful calm and even a rainbow could be seen. When Boberg arrived home he entered his house and looked out his window and gazed at the scenery of beautiful Monssteras. As he looked across the bay he heard the song of a thrush and along with the ever ringing of the church bells. It was the combination of sight, sound and experiences that caused him to be inspired and begin to write his poem. Boberg great-nephew Bud Boberg remarked, “My dad’s story of its origin was that it was a paraphrase of Psalm 8 and was used in the...
underground church’ in Sweden in the late 1800s when the Baptists and Mission Friends were persecuted.

Car Boberg also spoke of his inspiration, “It was that time of year when everything seemed to be in its richest coloring, the birds were singing in trees and everywhere. It was very warm; a thunderstorm appeared on the horizon and soon thunder and lightning. We had to hurry to shelter. But the storm was soon over and the clear sky appeared. When I came home I opened my window toward the sea. There evidently had been a funeral and the bells were playing the tune of ‘When eternity’s clock calling my saved soul to its Sabbath rest.’ That evening, I wrote the song. Soon the poem was paired with an old Swedish folk tune. The hymn was published on April 16, 1891. The hymn gained popularity, first in Germany
Work for the Night is Coming

This is a 19th century hymn written by Anna L. Walker/Coghill when she was 18. Lowell Mason wrote the melody in 1864. The theme is from the Bible – John 9:1-7 “I must work the works of him who sent he while it is day, the night is coming when no one can work.” The hymn is often sung at Grange meetings. Others have used the slogan “to work is to pray.”

Walker was born in England and when visiting Canada where she was 18 she penned the words of this hymn. Her motivation might have been the shorter days in the northern country. The verse was first published in Annie’s work Leaves from the Backwoods in 1861 Around 1863 Annie returned

Mason had noticed Annie’s original poem and with several changes put music to the verse. (It was reported that Annie was not pleased with Mason’s changes.

Annie continued to write, publishing 6 novels, a book of children’s plays, a number of poems and other works.
St. Thomas Aquinas was asked by Pope Urban IV to write music for the Feast of Corpus Christi (Body of Christ), a celebration to honor the Eucharist and for the Benediction of such. It is a prayer of praise and adoration. It is taken from his composition Pange Lingua, being the last two stanzas of the larger work. It is sung on the Thursday following Trinity Sunday. Two other well known songs are from the Pange Lingua – the Doxology and Panis Angelicus.
Panis Angelicus

Cesar Franck adapted the Panis Angelicus of St. Thomas of Aquinas in 1871. It was originally found in St. Tomas’ hymn *Sacris Solemilibis*. This hymn begins with the words Panis Angelicus (bread of angels) and has been set to music separately from the rest of the larger hymn. The most famous is the setting by Cesar Franck. Two other works of St. Thomas became separate hymns – O Salutaris Hostia, and Tantum Ergo.
Ave Maria

Through the centuries numerous composers have set the text of ‘Ave Maria’ to music. Probably the most famous is the setting by Franz Schubert. The text comes from the closing canto III from Sir Walter Scott’s The Lady of the Lake. It was written in 1825. When writing this he said that he felt a certain religious devotion when writing it one that came to him naturally and effortlessly. It was first published in 1826. This song was written when Schubert was at the height of his musical powers.
### Texts of Song

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Latin</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ave Maria, gratis piena</td>
<td>Ave Maria, full of Grace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominus tecum, benedicta tu</td>
<td>The Lord is with you, blessed are you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fructa Maria, Sancta Maria</td>
<td>Among women &amp; bless is the fruit of your womb.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sancta Maria, Sancta Maria</td>
<td>Mary pray for us</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nobis pecatoribus</td>
<td>for us sinners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nunc et in hora</td>
<td>now and in the hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IN hora mortis nostrae</td>
<td>in the hour of our death</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Schubert wrote the music *Ellens Dritter Gesang* in German. The original text of Schubert is from the German translation:

**German translation**
Ave Maria, maiden mild! Listen to a maiden’s prayer! Thou canst hear though from the wild. Thou canst save amid despair. Safe may we sleep beneath thy care. Though banished, outcast and reviled. Maiden hear a maiden’s prayer. Mother dear a maiden’s prayer Mother, list a suppliant child. Ave Maria.

In the original Scott poem Ellen Douglas, the ‘lady’ of ‘the lake’ has gone with her father to hide in the ‘Goblin’s cave’ nearby to avoid drawing the vengeance of the King on their host, the Clan-Alpine chieftain Roderick Dhu, who has been affording them shelter since the King had exiled them. She sings a prayer to the Virgin Mary, calling upon her for help. The stanza ‘Ave Maria’ is said to have led to the verse and setting it Schubert’s melody. Schubert had used the German text for his song.

In a letter to his father and step-mother Schubert wrote:

“My new songs from Scott’s Lady of the Lake especially had much success. They also wondered greatly at my piety, which I expressed in a hymn to the Holy virgin and which, it appears, grips every soul and turns it to devotion. I think this is due to the fact that I never forced devotion in myself and never composed hymns or prayers of that kind unless it overcomes me unawares, but then it is usually the right and true devotion.

When the Saints go Marching In

This well known spiritual is attributed to Katherine Purvis who modified the words to an old spiritual and by James Millon Black who was associated with the Methodist Episcopal Church in Williamsport, PA. Purvis was a music teacher at the seminary there. He was a Sunday school teacher and wrote gospel songs. The spiritual was long established and like many spirituals the origin of most of them are not traceable. The spiritual had a revival by the Weavers in 1951. Some sources say that it was written in the 1800s by a Scotsman. This spiritual was an inspiration to Paul McCartney and this relationship can be found in his “I Saw Her Standing There.”
Oh Didn’t He Ramble
This song is from an ‘old’ song that has no definite origin or composer. In 1902 Negro entertainers Bob Cole and the Johnson brothers were working on a Broadway show. For the show they appropriated this old song that was sung all through the south with original words that unprintable. The tune though was irresistible. The trio re-wrote the verses, with a different theme and it told an entirely different story. They left the chorus as it was and published the song. This song was adopted by the funeral bands in New Orleans.

Closer Walk with Thee
This song is possibly of Irish origin. Its text is taken from the Bible—Corinthians 13:4. Kenneth Morris was waiting for his train at a station where he heard a porter singing this spiritual. He boarded the train but couldn’t get the tune out of his head. He disembarked at the next stop, took a train back to the previous station and had the porter sing the song for him as he wrote it down. We find a publication of the spiritual in 1940. This hymn has been closely related to the funeral bands in New Orleans.
Now the Day is Over

The text for this song was written by Sabine Baring-Gould and published around 1865. Gould is best known for his composition “Onward Christian Soldiers.” The tune was composed by Joseph Barnby.

Holy God, We Praise Thy Name

The text of the hymn was taken from the 4th century hymn “Te Deum Laudamus.” Which is credited to St. Ambrose. It is said that St. Ambrose improvised it when he baptized St. Augustine. Many scholars believe it is the work of Nicetas of Remesiana. Also connected to the tune is Ignaz Franz. The English translation was by Clarence Augustus Walworth which is dated around 1850/53.
Come, Thou Almighty King

Are there song hymns that might be considered subversive? If so this hymn might be in that group. We do not know who composed this hymn. It first appeared in a pamphlet in 1757 and was thought to have been written by Charles Wesley. One thought was that it was subversive because it appeared about 15 years after another song was written (God Save Our Gracious King). The hymn is now sung to a different tune from those of this ‘British anthem’ but were originally sung to the same tune. One might surmise that the tune was written to a higher allegiance then the King of England.

During the Revolutionary War British soldiers entered a Long Island, New York church one Sunday morning and ordered the congregation to sing “God Save Our Gracious King.” The congregation responded by singing “Come, Thou Almighty King” (different words) sung to the same tune.

Is it possible that the composer may have intended to remain anonymous to avoid persecution for subversion.
God Be With You Till We Meet Again

Just like the parting of a friend, just like “Spock” would say “Live Long and Prosper” this is Christian good-bye – God Be With You.” Hymn. The hymn was written by Jeremiah E. Rankin and sent to two composers and choose the one by William G. Toner. It was first published in a little hymn book It was first sung in the First Congregational Church in Washington, D. C. of which I was pastor. Rankin considered it a wedding of words and music.

Rankin was the Pastor of the First congregational Church in Washington, D. C. He was searching for a hymn that was appropriate to use as a closing hymn to the worship service. He could not find a suitable hymn so he set out to write one. He took his dictionary from his bookshelf and began looking up words for ‘farewell’ and ‘goodbye’ and hoped that this research would spark his imagination. One definition he found for ‘goodbye’ was ‘God be with you” – thus a hymn was being created.

Ira Sankey, the music director for Dwight L. Moody heard of the hymn and began using it an Moody’s evangelistic service, popularizing the hymn to world wide approval.

The text is a parting blessing, giving a message that God will guide and protect you He became president of Howard University in Washington, D.C. in 1889.
Sweet Hour of Prayer

The composer of this hymn was William Walford of Coleshill, England. He was a wood-carver by trade and owned a small trinket shop. He was a devout Christian and often preached sermons in local churches. One day his shop was visited by the Reverend Thomas Salmon. Walford asked the Reverend to write
down the text of a poem he had completed. The text began: “Sweet hour of prayer, that calls me from a world of care.”

Reverend salmon was on a visit to New York City and while he was there he gave the text written by Walker to the editor of the New York Observer. The poem appeared in the September, 1845 issue. It remained relatively unknown for 14 years. The famous composer William Bradbury saw the poem and put it to music in 1859 and it became one of the most famous hymns of all time. It spread around the world and was sung by millions.

The reason that Walford asked the Reverend Salmon to write it down for him - Walford was blind.

The Church’s One foundation

The text of the hymn was written by Samuel John Stone. Stone was born in Staffordshire, England the son of a minister. He was going to be a soldier but decided to become a minister. He first served at Windsor where he wrote many of his hymns written for his fellow villagers who, not being as educated did not understand the truths of the Bible.

He was in the middle of a controversy. In 1863 Bishop John William Colenso of South Africa had accepted the so called documentary hypothesis that affirmed the human evolutionary developments of the scriptures rather than its divine inspiration. He wrote about his views in a book “The Pentaleuch and Book of Joshua.” For this Bishop Robert Gray deposed Colenso and issued a strong defense of the Bible. A strong supporter of Gray, Stone published his “Lyra Fidelim” (lyre of the Faithful). This hymn was ninth of 12 hymns in this collection. It appeared also in the 18666 “Hymns Ancient and Modern set to the tune Aurelia a composition of Samuel Sebastian Wesley.
He Leadeth Me: O Blessed Thought

Joseph Gilmore as a young graduate from Brown University & Newton Theological Institution was giving a talk in March of 1862. When he got to the words “He leadeth me.” He paused and his mind wandered on that thought.

After the service a few of the participants gathered in the parlor and discussed the thought which Gilmore had emphasized. Right there Gilmore took his pencil and began writing on a blank piece of paper while still taking part in the discussions. Finished he handed it to his wife and didn’t think about it. His wife submitted the poem to the Watchman and Reflector and it was published in that journal. It was in 1865 that William Bradbury saw the poem and put music to it, Gilmore still no aware of the poem’s future.

Gilmore went to Rochester, New York to preach and on his way into the church he picked up a hymnal and in it he saw his poem set to music in its pages. The only change was that Bradbury had added an additional two lines at the end. “His faithful foll’wer I would be, for by his hand he leadeth me.”
O God, Our Help in Ages Past

Progress is often made in challenges to the present status quo. A young man of 20 named Isaac Watts was complaining about the state of hymns in his church, thinking that they were grim and ponderous. In his day to sing anything other than the actual words of Scripture was said to be an insult to God. Isaac was challenged by his father to write something better for the congregation to sing. At this time in England, religious freedom was severely controlled. Watts’ father was jailed twice for his religious views and Isaac was considered to be a radical churchman with the hymn writings of human composure as the texts were not taken directly from the Bible. This hymn was a commentary on the subject of time and how God stands above human time. John Wesley changed the first line from “Our God” to “O God.”
Amazing Grace – c1880s

The story is told that the words to this song were written by the captain of a slave ship (John Newton) in the 1880’s. While bringing a ship load of slaves to the New World he was wracked with guilt about his profession and upon hitting a horrific storm he turned the ship around and sailed back to Africa and freed all the slaves on board. He then wrote the words to explain his change of heart which caused him to abandon his profession.

The true story is more complicated. The words were penned by a former slave trader but only after numerous decades after he had given up his profession and became a minister of God. Eventually Newton grew into his conversion to Christianity but it was years after his experience at sea and his conversion was a slow process over many decades.

How Firm a Foundation

The lyrics were written to the tune the “Portuguese Hymn” c 1780. It has been credited to Marco (real name Simao) Portogalic (Mark the Portugal, the chapel master of the Portuguese King) While the composer of the verses is unknown, it is possible that it is Robert Keene, the musician of Dr. John Rippon’s church in London. Rippon published a manual “A Selection of Hymn from the Best Authors. In it was ‘Fiorm’ without any listing of who the composer was and only possessing a ‘K’ on the manuscript. This setting of the Portuguese Hymn was the
favorite of President Jackson’s wife Deborah. President Jackson asked for it on his deathbed and R. E. Lee requested it be sung at his funeral.

Lead, Kindly Light

John Henry Newman (Cardinal Newman) was converted to the Catholic faith when he was 15 with the influence of his teacher at Oxford, Russell Froude. He was also a very good musician. Suffering from poor health and troubled by the doubt of the Protestant faith he traveled around the Mediterranean to Palermo, Sicily where he fell ill and stayed for 3 weeks. He then traveled to Marseilles. It was during this voyage that he wrote the hymn lyrics. Dr. Dykes added music in 1865 to the tune “Lye Benigna”. Dykes said that the tune came to him while walking through the Strand in London.

We Shall Meet Beyond the River

The words to this hymn were written by the Rev. John Atkinson in 1867 soon after the death of his mother. His ministry was in the revival movement. On night working in his study meditating on his faith a song sung itself into his heart. And he said, “I would better write it down or I shall forget it. There in the silence of his study and near to midnight he wrote this hymn. The tune was added by Hubert P Main in 1867. There is also a melody by S. J. Vail. Adding to the verse when she
heard it was Fanny Crosby the famous blind poet. Main had played the tune for her and she unfailingly would come up with an appropriate verse.

The Idea was an old theme. The ancient Celts had a belief that beyond the rive lies a region where the departed spirit are sent.

Hallelujah Chorus from The Messiah

ON August 22, 1741 Handel began to compose his great work “The Messiah.” His career was at a standstill, his style was becoming old-fashion. Even his sponsor Frederick the Great had lost faith in his creativity. A friend, Charles Jennens, sent him a libretto of bible text about the life of Christ. One verse caught Handel’s eyes and this verse was what inspired Handel to write this great work. He finished the work in less than a month.

If one has not attended a concert of the Messiah one might not know about the tradition of standing during the Hallelujah. It was during a performance on March 23, 1743. The King of England, George II was at the performance. During the Hallelujah the King arose from his seat. It is not known for what reason he stood up. But the audience, in respect also stood up, thus a tradition was founded. That tradition is still in effect today.
Let There Be Peace On Earth - 1955

Written by the husband and wife team of Jill and Sy Miller, the song was introduced at a church camp where 180 youngsters sang it and then shared it when they left camp to their homes, schools and churches. From a local exposure the song and its message spread throughout the world.

One Easter Sunday Jill and Sy Miller heard a radio message of peace—peace that would surely come when every person lived it. Jill was inspired to write the words to the music that her husband wrote. This was in 1955.

The Millers have made no money from the song. It is their gift to the world and they always give permission to use the song.

Personal peace did not come easily for Jill. Motherless at 3, rejected by a stepmother by 5, she became a ward of the Kansas City Juvenile Court at age of 9. After an unhappy adolescence she left Missouri and moved to Hollywood and as Jill Jackson became a heroine on horseback in a movie. After her unhappy first marriage ended Jill reached total despair and even contemplated suicide. It was then that she reached out and found inspiration. She dedicated herself to live each day fully and joyously.

Bridge Over Troubled Waters - 1970

This tune was recorded by the duo – Simon and Garfunkel and became a hit. After finishing the first two verses the tune still did not have a name. It was later
called “Hymn.” Even later as the lyrics were more developed it was called “Like a Pitcher of Water.” Within a few years the title became “Bridge Over Troubled Waters.” Simon said the inspiration for the song came from the song “Oh Mary Don’t You Weep,” a song recorded by a group named “The Swan Silvertones” in which the singer scats: “I’ll be your bridge over deep waters.”

**You Light Up My Life – 1977**

Featured in the movie of the same name it was composed by the movie’s director, Joseph Brooks. He had needed a title song for the movie, so he composed the song halfway through the filming. The movie was not picked up for distribution for over a year and while it was to be sung by a jingle singer Kasey Cisyk, Brooks decided to have Debbie Boone record it. Perhaps he decided that Debbie Boone, whose father was Pat Boone, might reach the audience of her father who had a very loyal and very religious fan base. The song won the Oscar for best musical song.

Debby was in a Gospel Quartet and like her father was very religious. When asked who she was singing about, her answer was “God.” Brooks took exception because that was not what he wrote about. He never said who or what person he had in mind, perhaps a woman? He never asked Debby to record another song. She faded out of the musical scene, not because of anything but more of a desire to live a good Christian life far from the popular scene.

**You’ll Never Walk Alone - 1945**

The earliest time this song was heard was with the Fred Waring group singing it at Warings’ mother’s funeral. The day of the funeral was a miserable day. There was a terrible storm during the funeral with lightning, thunder and a heavy rain. This did not cancel the funeral. As singers reached the words “never” in the final line, the storm suddenly stopped and the sun broke through the clouds and cast a beam directly on the coffin. The entire congregation together let out a spontaneous audible gasp. The song had been cut from the show as it thought to be too solemn but then the producers ‘saw the light.’

**I Believe - 1953**

This song was written by Erwin Drake who also wrote—Good Morning Heartache for Billie Holiday, and “It was a Very Good Year” for Sinatra, wrote this song with Frankie Laine having the most popular recording. The song accomplished a strong opinion as its lyrics stated all the things that needed to be said in a prayer and yet it didn’t use any of the holy words like Lord, God, Thine, etc. It said the same things as sacred hymns but in a popular song and is said to have changed the thinking of a scared song in popular style. Jane Froman, bothered by the Korean conflict in 1952 asked the composers to compose a song that would give hope and faith to the American public.
**May the Good Lord Bless and Keep You – 1950**

Written by Meredith Willson in 1950 for the closing number of a radio program on NBC – *The Big Show*. The show starred Tallulah Bankhead. All the regular and guest performers joined in singing with each taking one line. After the first time it was included on each following show as a tradition. Frankie Laine made the most popular recording of the song and during the Korean War it was the song most often requested by G.I.’s.

Wilson said his inspiration to write the song came from a greeting his mother habitually gave every Sunday to the children in her Sunday school class in Mason City, Iowa.

**It is No Secret What God Can Do - 1949**

Stuart Hamblen was born in Texas in 1908 and died in 1989. Stuart was a heavy drinker who swore off alcohol (rum) and made religion the central part of his life in 1949 after attending a revival by Dr. Billy Graham in Los Angeles. Stuart and his wife went to the Langham Hotel, one block off Wilshire Blvd. at 4 a.m. asking to be prayed for. Hamblen was ‘broken up and crying.’ Billy said, “We’ve been praying for you for weeks.”

He gained inspiration from his friend John who had worked with him in a number of minor western movies. John asked Stuart: “What’s this I hear you got religious?” Hamblen answered: “It is no secret what God can do in a man’s life.” His friend John Wayne remarked: “Well that sounds like a song,” thereby planting the idea in the songwriter’s mind.

Graham had appeared on Hamblen’s radio show before a revival he was planning for public relations to advertise the revival. Hamblen had showed up at the revival and got the holy message of Graham.

Stuart had written a number of popular songs that included: “Remember Me, I’m the One That Loves You,” and “This Old House” that was recorded by Rosemary Clooney. While he gained religion he lost his radio show because of his refusal to do a commercial promoting alcohol.
It Is No Secret

Stuart Hamblen

It is no secret what God can do.

C  F  C7

What He's done for others, He'll do for you.

C  G  G7  C

With arms wide open, He'll pardon you.

C  C7  F  C7

It is no secret what God can do.

C  C7  Dm  F  G7  C