

# Dwight Armstrong's Work

Dwight Armstrong, brother of Herbert Armstrong, wrote many songs for use by the the Worldwide Church of God. Now these songs form part of the heritage of the many groups that have formed since the original organization lapsed into dispensationalism.

The words of all of Dwight Armstrong's songs are translations, paraphrases or adaptations of scripture for singing in English. Most of them are based on the Psalms.

Recently it has been discovered that the words of many of Dwight's songs were either taken almost directly from metrical psalms found in various Protestant sources, or were adapted from those sources. We do not know if Dwight was working from the original sources of these words, or from one or more recent hymnals which contained modernized versions of the words, but so far we have been able to identify three of the original sources on which a more modern hymnal would have been based.

As we have analyzed the language and style of the the words used in his songs it appears likely that he used similar but still unidentified sources for a significant additional number of his songs beyond those identified here.

**Some sources of the original words on which Dwight Armstrong's songs may have been based:** below are the sources we have identified, along with the songs that came from or were adapted from those sources.

- **"Old Bible"**

The old "Radio Church of God" hymnal credits an "Old Bible" as the source of the words for several of Dwight Armstrong's songs. This credit was dropped in later hymnals, beginning with the hardcover 1974 hymnal.

It was a common practice until recently to include psalms and hymns for singing in the back of Bibles. For example, the original Geneva Bible published by John Calvin and the other reformers includes a copy of Sternhold and Hopkins Psalms. Apparently Dwight's "Old Bible" contained one of these Protestant rhymed psalters. The actual Bible is now in the possession of Ross Jutsum, who has told us that we may see it any time we wish to visit him in east Texas. Perhaps this "Old Bible's" collection was taken from all of the other sources listed below.

Psalm 37	Thirty Seventh Psalm ("Rest in the Lord" - WCG 74) ("Wait Upon the Lord" - WCG-93)
Psalm 48	<a href="#"><u>Mount Zion Stands Most Beautiful</u></a>
Psalm 50	Pay All Your Vows to God Most High ("Give Thanks and Offer Praise")
Psalm 54	<a href="#"><u>The Mighty God is My Helper</u></a> ("Save Me O God") O, Had I Wings Like Some Swift Dove ("Unto My Earnes Prayer Give Ear")
Psalm 55	Note: the RCOG and 1974 WCG hymnals had 3 verses, covering verses 1-6 of the Psalm. The 1993 WCG hymnal

added a fourth verse, covering verses 7-11 of the Psalm.

- **The Book of Psalms for Singing (The Trinity Psalter)**

Current editions published by The Board of Education and Publication, Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America. *The Trinity Psalter* is a words-only version of *The Book of Psalms for Singing*

Psalm 1                      [Blest and Happy is the Man](#) (Original words)

- **The Psalter Hymnal**

The hymnal of the Christian Reformed Church.

Psalm 44                      [O God We Have Heard](#) (Original words)

- **The Psalms of David in Metre**

Otherwise known as "The Scottish Metrical Psalter," or just "The Scottish Psalter." The Scottish Psalter was first published 1650 and been printed many times with different tunes, but the words have not been altered since its original publication.

The Scottish Psalter, like all of the early Protestant psalters, translated the entire text of every Psalm. Great care was taken to ensure that the text followed the original Hebrew as closely as possible. This care, plus the "King James" style English employed in the Psalter explains why some of the psalms seem so much like scripture itself.

Comparisons of Dwight's words with the Scottish psalter show almost no departures from the Scottish wording in some cases and significant departures in other cases. The Scottish Psalter is held in greatest esteem by most people who know its history and reputation. Virtually all hymnals which draw on its words use them as they appeared in the original, without alteration, and with careful attribution to the original source. It seems odd that the source of these words was never acknowledged. We urge that any future publication of these songs give proper acknowledgement to the highly esteemed Protestant source from which their words are drawn.

Interestingly, the original Radio Church of God hymnal contained several songs with words drawn from the Scottish Psalter and tunes by other composers. (Psalms 23, 46, 103,130) In these cases, the Scottish Psalter was acknowledged as the source of the words in the RCOG hymnal, but not when the same songs were used in the 1974 or 1993 WCG hymnals. (Psalms 23, 46, 130)

The following are the Dwight Armstrong songs we have identified whose words are taken from the Scottish Psalter:

Psalm 5	<a href="#"><u>Give Ear Unto My Words, O Lord</u></a>
Psalm 7	<a href="#"><u>Vindicate The Justice You Command</u></a>
Psalm 8	<a href="#"><u>How Excellent Is Thy Name</u></a>
Psalm 13	<a href="#"><u>How Long Wilt Thou Forget Me Lord?</u></a>
Psalm 19	<a href="#"><u>The Heavens God's Glory Do Declare</u></a>

Note: this version was extensively condensed, but is still identifiable as being based on the Scottish version. Most of the parallelism (the main characteristic of the Hebrew poetry) was lost in the process.

Psalm 25	<a href="#"><u>To Thee I Lift My Soul</u></a> (First - short metre version, verses 1-7)
Psalm 25	<a href="#"><u>Our God is Good and Upright</u></a> (First - short metre version, verses 8-14)
Psalm 25	<a href="#"><u>Mine Eyes Upon the Lord Continually Are Set</u></a> (First - short metre - version, verses 15-22)
Psalm 48	<a href="#"><u>Mount Zion Stands Most Beautiful</u></a>
Psalm 54	<a href="#"><u>Save Me, O God, By Thy Great Name</u></a> (Some modifications were made to the Scottish text.)
Psalm 60	<a href="#"><u>Return Again, O God</u></a> (Another example of a very close match, but with some noticeable changes.)
Psalm 71	<a href="#"><u>For Even From My Youth, O God</u></a> (Verses 17-22, reworked, but the approach of the Psalter remains.)
Psalm 95	<a href="#"><u>Oh Come and Let Us Worship Him</u></a> (Some changes)
Psalm 98	<a href="#"><u>Sing Praises and Rejoice</u></a>
Psalm 101	<a href="#"><u>I'll Sing of Mercy and of Justice</u></a>
Psalm 114	<a href="#"><u>When Israel Out of Egypt Went</u></a>

- **[John Milton](#) (click here to see more of Milton's psalms)**

Milton is best known for his vivid allegories about the fall of man, heaven and hell. However, in his youth he set several Psalms into English metre. One of Dwight's songs uses Milton's version of Psalm 80.

Psalm 80	<a href="#"><u>Thou Shepherd that Doth Israel Keep</u></a>
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- **William Kethe**

William Kethe was a Scotch clergyman during the early days of the Protestant Reformation. He was one of the translators of *The Geneva Bible*, he contributed approximately 25 Psalm paraphrases to the original Geneva set of metrical Psalms. Several of his psalm settings are also found in the Sternhold and Hopkins English psalter that appeared in 1562. This version of Psalm 100 also appeared as an alternate version of this Psalm in the Scottish Psalter of 1650

Here is the original Psalm version by Kethe.

Psalm 100      [All People that On Earth Do Dwell](#)  
(Kethe's original version.)

*"I would be most unwilling to wrong such shining lights of this art, by obscuring their names, and arrogating anything to my self, which any ways might derogate from them."*

(Edward Millar, from his introduction to the 1635 Scottish Psalter, concerning the work of others which he had adapted for his Psalter)