



# SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST HYMNODY

## A CHRONOLOGY

The following is a selective listing of hymn-related musical events and noteworthy hymnals and songbooks in English produced by or for the Adventist church from 1843 to the present. They are extracted from a more detailed listing, "Significant Mileposts in Seventh-day Adventist Hymnody," available from the Adventist Heritage Center in the Andrews University James White Library. Many of the hymnals and song books listed below were on display Sabbath afternoon of the hymn festival weekend.

### 1843

At a Millerite meeting held in Litchfield Plains, Maine, evangelist James White, begins his meeting by dramatically marching down the center aisle beating time on his Bible and singing, "You will see your Lord a-coming, You will see your Lord a-coming, You will see your Lord a-coming, in a few more days."

White claimed that singing in this manner could "hold nearly a thousand persons in almost breathless silence." He continued to say there was great power in Advent singing in those days. "It seemed to me that not a hand or foot moved in all the crowd before me till I had finished all the words of this lengthy melody. Many wept and the state of feeling was most favorable for the introduction of the grave subject for the evening.

### 1849

James White publishes the first hymnal, the first book of any kind of the Sabbath-keeping Adventists, fourteen years before the official organization of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. It was titled, *Hymns for God's Peculiar People, That Keep the Commandments of God and the Faith of Jesus*, and was drawn extensively from the *Millennial Harp, or Second Advent Hymns*, both published by Joshua V. Himes in 1842, 1843, and 1848.

### 1852

*Hymns for Second Advent Believers Who Observe the Sabbath of the Lord*, commonly called *Advent and Sabbath Hymns*, is published. This hymnal includes Annie

## JAMES WHITE

(1821-1891)



James White, along with his wife, Ellen, was a key person in the development and growth of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. While he is best known for his abilities as an organizer, publicist, writer and editor, preacher, and Bible student, he was also interested in music, due in part to the fact that his father was a teacher of vocal music.

He led out in early efforts to produce song books for a people who would become Seventh-day Adventists and kept up with trends in American church music, owning personal copies of the most recent hymnals. In spite of the breadth of his interests and many commitments, White single-handedly edited and published four hymnals and five supplements between 1849 and 1863.



Smith's "Long Upon the Mountains Weary," the first published hymn by the sister of Uriah Smith.

### 1854

Anna White, sister of James White, publishes *Hymns for Youth and Children*, the first song book for young people.

### 1855

*Hymns for Those Who Keep the Commandments of God and the Faith of Jesus* is published. It is unique in that it contains seventy-six tunes. Previous Adventist hymnals contained only words and no music.

### 1863

The first official hymnal, *Hymns and Tunes for Those who Keep the Commandments of God and the Faith of Jesus*, is published by the fledgling General Conference. It has 424 pages, 536 hymns, and 125 tunes. Eighty-seven of the tunes are in the now familiar four-part harmony on two staves. Prior to this time, the tunes were presented in several different ways.

### 1878

J. Edson White, oldest son of James White, issues his first hymnbook, *Hymns of Praise for Use at Lectures and Revival Meetings*. It has 64 pages with 60 hymns, mostly from previous hymnals of his father, but includes eight new gospel hymns and music at the back. White also publishes *The Song Anchor: A Choice Collection of favorites for Sabbath School and Praise Service*.

In the last half of the 19th century gospel songs, characterized by buoyant rhythms, easy-to-sing melodies, and repetition, swept through American churches and the Seventh-day Adventist church as well. Names such as Bradbury, Lowry, Doane, Sankey, Alexander, and Rodeheaver appeared on the pages of America's hymnbooks. The same was true in the Adventist Church.

*The Song Anchor* was the Adventist gospel collection. It includes 137 hymns and 133 tunes, ten composed by White. Besides containing gospel songs, this book is noteworthy in several ways. It was printed by Pacific Press, the second Adventist publishing house, in a horizontal instead of vertical format, all hymns were set to music, authors and composers names were listed, copyright notices were printed, and the first works by F. E. Belden were included.

### 1880

The temperance movement is going strong in America and Adventists are involved as a result of the 1863 visions of Ellen White on healthful living. Edson White prints *Temperance and Gospel Songs, for the Use of Temperance Clubs and Gospel Temperance Meetings*. Its 134 songs and hymns are, for the most part, new and original, "written especially for the book by the best talent in the land."

### 1886

*The Seventh-day Adventist Hymn and Tune Book for Use in Divine Worship*, more commonly known as *Hymns and Tunes*, "largest and most comprehensive



## JAMES EDSON WHITE

(1849-1928)

Edson was the second and oldest surviving son of James and Ellen White. He started working at age 15 in the Review and Herald Publishing Association and became proficient in all aspects of printing. That skill was coupled with an astute business sense inherited from his father. In 1870 he married Emma MacDearmon, whose sister later married F. E. Belden.

While at Pacific Press in California he became deeply involved in the production of *Song Anchor*, a Sabbath school songbook. After returning to Battle Creek, Michigan, in 1880, he became connected with the Sabbath school work. During this time he also began the J. E. White Publishing Company, which in the mid-1880's did the typesetting for both music and words for *Hymns and Tunes*, the second official hymnal of the Adventist church.



hymnbook ever published by the Church," is released. It has 1,413 hymns, most printed as two staves with one verse in the score and the remaining text and other hymns in the same meter being printed below. F. E. Belden is the largest Adventist contributor with eighty hymn texts and eighty-seven tunes. It will be the official hymnal until 1941.

1900

*Christ in Song*, one of the most popular songbooks in the Adventist church, is published. It is largely the result of F. E. Belden's effort and contains 742 hymns and 692 tunes. The 1908 revision is one that later in the century will be remembered with affection by older Adventists. It is designed by Belden to be used as a church, Sabbath school, and young persons' hymnal and will become the unofficial hymnal of the church, continuing in that role even after the release of the new *Church Hymnal* in 1941.

1931

The *Junior Song Book* later changed to *Missionary Volunteer Songs*, is released by the General Conference Young People's Missionary Volunteer Department. A

collection of songs for young people, it is the first Adventist song book to include spirituals, a total of four.

1941

*The Church Hymnal*, first official hymnal since 1886, when *Hymns and Tunes* first appeared, is printed. One of the moving forces behind the development and production of this hymnal is Harold Hannun, who helped to get the music in shape for publication. It contains 703 hymns and is not an immediate success because some feel the hymns are too "high" church; others feel there are too many "cheap" gospel songs, and poor-quality tunes. It will not be accepted and used widely for over a decade.

1944

*Gospel Melodies and Evangelistic Hymns* is released as a reaction against *The Church Hymnal*. A revision of an earlier compilation of gospel music by Roy Allen Anderson, *Gospel Melodies*, released in 1931, its content is determined by a review committee of evangelists, musicians, and "ministers of good musical judgment" appointed by The General Conference Ministerial Association.



FRANKLIN EDSON BELDEN (1858-1945)

F. E. Belden was the eldest of five children born to Stephen and Sarah (Harmon) Belden, older sister of Ellen Harmon White. About 1876 he moved to California where he began to compose music. Because of health problems he moved to Colorado, where he met and married Harriet MacDearmon, who was also talented in music. In the 1880's they returned to Battle Creek, where he connected with the Adventist publishing work. He and Edwin Barnes served as music editors of *Hymns and Tunes*, released in 1886. Belden also collaborated with his cousin, J. Edson White, on several song books.

A disagreement arose between Belden and the *Review and Herald* over the royalties from *Hymns and Tunes*. It was reported that Belden was greedy and wanted the money. In reality the agreement with the General Conference in 1886 was for his share of the royalties to go to mission work. When the *Review and Herald* took over the copyright to the hymnal, Belden did not want

his share to go to the publishing house. Disillusioned, he separated himself from church work, but did not "forsake his allegiance to the church or to the Lord."

Belden's abilities in both music and poetry were often demonstrated by his writing a song to fit a sermon while it was still being delivered. He would take the preacher's text and by the end of the service have a song ready for performance. *Christ in Song* is Belden's most recognizable contribution to Seventh-day Adventist hymnody, though he wrote hundreds of other songs throughout his career.

