

The
Art
&
CRAFT
of
Typesetting Hymns

David Schaap

 **Selah** Publishing Co.



Printed on recycled and acid-free paper

The Art & Craft of Typesetting Hymns

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Contents

Introduction	4
Planning a Hymn Collection	7
Musical Considerations	15
Text Considerations	28
Credit Considerations	36
Index Considerations	38
Appendix I	41
Appendix II	42
Appendix III	43

Introduction

I have been looking at and singing hymns all of my life, which doesn't necessarily qualify me to write this monograph on the proper typesetting of hymns. But I have overseen the typesetting and proofreading of nearly two thousand hymns and designed many hymnals and hymn collections in my career as a church music publisher. I have always had a great interest in visual arts and graphic design, and many years experience as a publication designer. That, along with strongly held opinions on what works and why in music typesetting, is why I decided to write this brief manifesto.

Selah Publishing Co., Inc.'s first hymnal, *Songs of Rejoicing: Hymns for Worship, Meditation, & Praise*, was published in 1989, and was the very first published hymnal to be typeset with the then new music typesetting software Finale®. It constantly crashed (this was version 1.0 and 1.1), and didn't yet have the flexibility it now has. But I persevered more than a year to get this 254 hymn/320 page collection in print. Even with this computer help, it was still a book provided on layout boards to the printer, with corrections sometimes made with an Xacto knife and ink pen, and with the music typeset and output separately from titles and credits. Music typesetting software has grown up, and Finale® and Sibelius®, the two most popular software programs, now have the capability to create most anything a church musician or publisher might have need to put on paper. The fact that they can do so right out of the box doesn't mean that what is produced is indeed publishable. It comes close, and often looks much better than hand written music, but what comes as a program's default typesetting is really a compromise of what is standard, normal music notation, not specifically geared toward hymnody.

I have many opinions you will read in the following pages, though I hope I adequately explain the reasons I have chosen one way over another. Over 20 years, my opinions have become more refined and have even changed. I will sometimes cringe when looking at our early typesetting, but I think I started on the right path: that the overriding concern must be the legibility of a page for use by a congregation. Elegance might not be the right word to explain what I look for, and I can use the axiom for good typesetting that "I know it when I see it." But the principles outlined in this book will help you obtain a consistency in your music typesetting and make the text and music more easily read by a congregation of singers.

No. 117.

Jesus is Coming.

REV. FORD O. OTTMAN.

COPYRIGHT, 1913, BY B. D. ACKLEY.

B. D. ACKLEY.

1. Hear the glad tidings, O Bride of the Bridegroom! Rouse ye from slumber, the
 2. Loins should be girded and lights should be burning, Watchmen are sounding the
 3. Cloudless the morning for which we have waited, Wait-ed so wea-ri-ly
 4. Sleep-ing or wak-ing, redeem'd ones to-geth-er, Caught up, the King in His

night is far gone; Mys-tic in splen-dor, the morn-ing star shin-eth,
 Jub-i-lee horn; Zi-on, her head from the dust is now lift-ing,
 wait-ed so long! Now it is com-ing, O sing Hal-le-lu-jah!
 beau-ty shall see; Death with its sting, shall a-gain threaten nev-er;

CHORUS.

Her-ald-ing ev-er the near-ing of dawn.
 Hail-ing the break of that glo-ri-ous morn. } Je-sus is com-ing, O
 Sing it! For this is the true glo-ry song.
 We, like our Lord shall for-ev-er-more be.

sing Hal-le-lu-jah! Je-sus is com-ing, in glo-ry to reign; Yes, He is

com-ing, O sing Hal-le-lu-jah, Je-sus is com-ing a-gain . . .
 is coming a-gain.

HOMER A. RODEHEAVEVR. OWNER.

If you provide the hymn on the previous page to a congregation, they will likely be able to sing it fairly well, without really noticing the music typesetting. The point is that maybe all that I have to say in the following pages is really irrelevant, that people will likely be able to sing from whatever is put in front of them. That might be true, but we shouldn't put impediments in place that prevent a singer or especially non-singer from better learning or singing a hymn. I won't launch into a discussion of aesthetics, but I firmly believe we should always strive to make things as beautiful as possible. And if it is a beautiful hymn, it should be typeset beautifully as well.

It used to be that music was engraved by hand, and it was the trained eye that guided where text and musical notes were most appropriately placed. We cannot rely on a computer to review what your own eyes may be trained to look for. Some of those earlier hand set music pages had an elegance and flow that cannot be matched solely by a mechanical computerized setting, and my hope is that through this manual on the "Art & Craft of Typesetting Hymns" you will be able to do so yourself.

I must extend my thanks and appreciation to my wife, Virginia Schaap, who has probably done more typesetting of hymns than all but maybe a handful of people in the world, and who mostly puts up with my quest for the perfectly typeset hymn. She has convinced me to change some of my strongly held opinions by her better reasoning, and also helped with the content of this small book.

David Schaap, president and founder
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