

HYMNS FOR THE NEW MILLENIUM

are now being written. Keep tuned. But this Thinksheet is about

20th-century New Year's Hymns

Hymns affect, as well as reflect, thought & life. The below, in chronological order, were chosen for an upcoming adult-ed session on the meanings of some 20th-c. New Year's hymns. (The key to hymnals here referenced is at the end of the Thinksheet.)

LET'S BEGIN with collect #100 (H&B/40: THE BOOK OF ENGLISH COLLECTS):

O immortal Lord God, who inhabitest eternity, and hast brought us, thine unworthy servants, to the beginning of another year: Pardon, we most humbly beseech thee, our transgressions in the past, and graciously abide with us all the days of our life; guard and direct us in all trials and temptations, that by thy blessing we may grow in grace as we grow in years, and at the last may finish our course with joy; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

1910

All beautiful the march of days as seasons come and go; / The hand that shaped the rose hath wrought the crystal of the snow, / has sent the hoary frost of heaven, the flowing waters sealed, / And laid a silent loveliness on hill and wood and field. // O'er white expanses sparkling pure the radiant morns unfold; / The solemn splendor of the night burns brighter through the cold. / Life mounts in every throbbing vein, love deepens round the hearth, / And clearer sounds the angel hymn, "Good will to men on earth." // O thou from whose unfathomed law the year in beauty flows, / Thyself the vision passing by in crystal and in rose, / Day unto day doth utter speech, and night to night proclaim, / In ever-changing words of light, the wonders of thy name.--THUCC36; TPH292 & TNCH434 ("Good will to all on earth"; TNCH has "brilliant" instead of "white," which it considers a racist word).

1916

God of our life, through all the circling years, we trust in you; / in all the past, through all our hopes and fears, your hand we view. / With each new day, when morning lifts the veil, / we own your mercies, Lord, which never fail. // God of the past, our times are in your hand; with us abide. / Lead us by faith to hope's true Promised Land; be now our guide. / With you to bless, the darkness shines as light, / and faith's fair vision changes into sight. // God of the coming years, thro'paths unknown we follow you; / when we are strong, Lord, leave us not alone; our faith renew. / Be now for us in life our daily bread, / our heart's true home when all our years have sped.--TWC370; TNCH changes "Lord" to "God."

Turn back, O man, forswear thy foolish ways. / Old now is earth, and none may count her days. / Yet thou, her child, whose head is crowned with flame, / Still wilt not hear thine inner God proclaim: / "Turn back, O man, forswear thy foolish ways!" // Earth might be fair and all men glad and wise. / Age after age their tragic empires rise, / Built while they dream, and in that dreaming weep; / Would man but wake from out his haunted sleep, / Earth might be fair and all men glad and wise. // Earth shall be fair, and all her people one; / Nor till that hour shall God's whole will be done. / Now, even now, once more from earth to sky, / Peals forth in joy man's old undaunted cry: "Earth shall be fair, and all her folk be one!"--THUCC63

1944

By gracious powers so wonderfully sheltered, / and confidently waiting, come what may, / We know that God is with us night and morning / and never fails to greet us each new day.* // Yet is this heart by its old foe tormented, / still evil days bring burdens hard to bear; / O give our frightened souls the sure salvation / for which, O God, you taught us to prepare. // And when this cup you give is filled to brimming / with bitter suffering, hard to understand, / We take it thankfully, and without trembling, / out of so good and so beloved a hand. // Yet when again in this same world you give us / the joy we had, the brightness of your Sun, / we shall remember all the days we lived through, / and our whole life shall then be yours alone.--NHCS467; TNCH reduces "Sun" to "sun." ...* "an jedem neuen Tag" can mean, & here I believe does mean, "on each New Year's day": he called the piece "New Year 1945." Four months after writing this, Bonhoeffer was Nazi-martyred.

1945 Rejoice, O people, in the mounting years, / Wherein God's mighty purposes unfold; / From age to age his righteous reign appears, / From land to land the love of Christ is told. / Rejoice, O people, in your glorious Lord; / Lift up your hearts in jubilant accord. // Rejoice, O people, in the years of old, / When prophets' glowing vision lit the way, / Till saint and martyr sped the venture bold, / And eager hearts awoke to greet the day. / Rejoice in God's glad messengers of peace, / Who bore the Savior's gospel of release. // Rejoice, O people, in this living hour; / Low lies man's pride and human wisdom dies; / But on the cross God's love reveals his power, / And from his waiting church new hopes arise. / Rejoice that while the sin of man divides, / One Christian fellowship of love abides.--THUCC161

1968 This is the day when light was first created, / Symbol and gift of order and design. / In light is God's intention clearly stated, / The break of day reveals his loving mind. // This is the day of our complete surprising, / Repeat of Easter: Christ has come to life! / Now is the feast of love's revolt and rising / Against the rule of hell and death and grief. // We join to praise, with ev'ry race and nation, / The God who with the world his Spirit shares; / Strong wind of change and earth's illumination, / Dispel-ling static thoughts and darkest fears. // This is the day of worship and of vision, / Great birthday of the church in every land, / Let Christians all confess their sad division, / And seek the strength again as one to stand. // We pray that this, the day of re-creation, / May hallow all the week that is to come. // Help us, O Lord, to lay a good foundation / For all we do at work, at school, at home.--HS779 indexed as "New Year" (though it's also a creation/Easter hymn).

1978 This is a day of new beginnings, / time to remember and move on, / time to believe what love is bringing, / laying to rest the pain that's gone. // For by the life and death of Jesus, / God's mighty Spirit, now as then, / can make for us a world of difference, / as faith and hope are born again. // Then let us with the Spirit's daring, / step from the past and leave behind our disappointment, guilt, and grieving, / seeking new paths, and sure to find. // Christ is alive, and goes before us / to show and share what love can do. / This is a day of new beginnings-- / our God is making all things new.--TNCH417

1982 O day of peace that dimly shines through all our hopes and prayers and dreams, / guide us to justice, truth, and love, / delivered from our selfish schemes. / Make swords of hate fall from our hands, / our hearts from envy find release, / till by God's grace our warring world shall see Christ's promised reign of peace. // Then shall the wolf dwell with the lamb, / nor shall the fierce devour the small; / as beasts and cattle calmly graze, / a little child shall lead them all. / Then enemies shall learn to love, / all creatures find their true accord; / the hope of peace shall be fulfilled, / for all the earth shall know the Lord.--NHCS567

This is a time to remember the greatness of the Lord; / he has so faithfully led us as promised in his Word; / he has so bountifully given his grace like freshening rain; / he has so lovingly pardoned and made us whole again. // This is a time to remember the glories that have been; / this is a time to press onward to vistas yet unseen; / for Christ is alive in his people, he meets us face to face; / he grants us the power of the Spirit to serve him in this place. // This is a time to remember the church is his, not ours; / this is a time to surrender our wealth, our lives, our powers; / this is a time to be servants--to give ourselves away, / building the church of the future until the coming day.--TWC792

Hymnal Supplement 1991, A New Hymnal for Colleges and Schools, The Hymnal of the UCC, The New Century Hymnal, The Presbyterian Hymnal, The Worshiping Church

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