

## **The contemporan value of somme millerite hymns from the XIX Century**

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The Romanian collection of Millerite hymns "Aproape-i Mirele Ceresc" ("Near Is the Heavenly Bridegroom") materializes the intention of the author to bring to memory and actualize another most valuable and unknown or little known group of Millerite songs for the neu-protestant community in Romania.

This collection limits itself strictly to the Millerite period: The 52 Millerite hymns of this collection were selected from Joshua V. Himes's Hymnal "Millennial Harp ... Three Parts in One Volume", published in Boston in 1843. The circulation of these selected hymns was adopted in later published hymnals, most of them being found again in the Hymnal "The Jubilee Harp", Boston, 1867 and "The New Jubilee Harp", Boston, 1881. Of the following American hymnals, most of these 36 selected songs disappeared abruptly and had been totally forgotten until today. Apart from the beauty and expressiveness of the melodies and prosodies themselves and their constant actuality, the new musical arrangements of these hymns - made by the author for the mixed choir or for organ accompaniment to the singing congregation - procures interesting new modal harmonic sonorities derived from the structure of the original melodic material.

The Romanian version of this hymns takes his profit from the wonderful poetical verses of Benone Burtescu and Cornelius Greising, the most gifted Adventist prosodiers in Romania after St. Demetrescu, P. Paulini and Aurora Ionescu. Not only their excellent incisial structure of the hymns, but the high methaforical language and the new support and development they gave to the tradional Adventist doctrines, all this confers a special Romanian contemporary value to the selected Millerite hymns. The 52 Millerite hymns of this collection are addressed to all Christians who believe in the Second Advent, for the most part to church workers and church choirs. The importance of the Millerite hymns was often stressed. Spalding mentions their effect on the Millerite believers, the joy and the supreme ardor in the messianic expectation, and points out that the Adventists of today no longer sing these songs.

In his opinion, it is time to reconsider the value and force of these hymns as an absolute essential spiritual food for the community of the saints. (Spalding II, 133). The present time is oportune for the restoration of Millerite singing in the community and to counterbalance in this way the uncontrolled development of rock music in the church. The Adventists of our time appreciate the Millerite singing and praise their legacy. The historians stress the musicality of the Millerite Adventist leaders. Miller himself composed hymns. The role played by the well-educated Fitch and Himes or the most talented young people Phoebe Palmer and Annie Smith was decisive for the success of the Advent Movement. James White, a fervent musician, concentrated his publishing effort in 1849 und 1853 with songbooks made on the model of Himes; his sons Henry and James and his nephew Francis Belden were acknowledged singers and composers. The Adventists were born on music (Spalding II, 135).

On the scores, we encounter names of authors from the 18th and 19th Cent.: Isaac Watts, Charles Wesley, Johann Winkler, Joseph Swain, Josias Hopkins, Samuel Glasgow, J. Curwen, M. Byles and Michael Bruce as poets, and composers Lowell Masson, James Lucas and H. Zeugner. But unimaginably high is the number of hymns claiming no authorship, the presence of many "Anonymous" people known only by God. The work of the souls of these people has engendered a movement of high-voltage thought-and feeling-renewal without precedent. In the Millerite song a large scale of Christian destiny is reflected: the Falling in Love with Jesus, the Abandonment of the Disciples, the Waiting of the Church, the Preparation of the

Meeting with the Lover, the Reiterated Disappointment provoked by the Chronic Absenteeism of the Lover, the Phoenix-like Rebirth of the Church, the Timeless Resumption of the Waiting for the Purpose of a Quick Wedding.

The history of pre-Millerite hymnology mentions the relatively strong influence of "The Bay Psalm Book", a collection of plain and monotone metrical psalm-melodies, utilized until the 18th Cent. In the middle of the 18th Cent. the American Protestant churches were reached by the "hymn": free religious texts put to popular tunes or to musical compositions by educated musicians. The two categories- psalms and hymnes - coexisted for a period of time until the Great Controversy of Psalmody of the Presbyterian Church in 1789 when the "Bay Psalm Book" was practically eliminated during worship. In 1819 reverend Samuel Worcester published a new collection of hymns. This collection was also utilized by the Millerites until the publishing of their first hymnals. (Julian, Diehl, Bohy). A third category of church songs known as "Spiritual Songs" spread through the churches at the turn of the 19th Cent. It involved taking anonymous folk melodies and giving them religious words, primarily by an unknown author. One of the first song books published was "The Village Hymns" edited in 1831 (Bohy). Songs such as these were very much in demand at tent-meetings. Disgusted by the low quality of these songs, a number of well-educated musicians such as L. Masson or Thomas Hasting, followed by others, began to compile, compose and publish collections of "Church Melodies" in the 1830s. (Bohy)

The Millerite Singing (1840-1844) is the consequence of the rapid growth of the "Second Advent" Movement promoted by William Miller and his followers. The existence of hundreds and thousands of members who frequented the Millerite meetings and the separation of the Millerites from their original churches determined the leaders of this movement - especially the excellent organizer and well-educated Himes - to compile and publish collections of hymns to be used in the mammoth congregations of the Great Tent (1842) and of the Tabernacles (1843).

One must consider that Himes not only selected the most popular songs but also stimulated a poetical and musical creative activity under the Millerite believers. It would not be impossible to suspect Himes himself for the authorship or coauthorship of many of the anonymous songs in his hymnals. In the journals of the movement, there are announcements regarding the musical creative activity and the musical publications. It is also possible that the time trial which characterized the movement would not permit emphasizing the authorship.

The Millerite memorial literature attests the existence of some Millerite hymns that could not be found. For example the most popular hymn "Send the Glory" appears only with words in the collection (3) - "Second Advent Hymns" - 1842, and disappears in following collections. A similar case is seen in the song "The Devil is Mad and I am Glad" included only in the collection of 1842 without melody. Is there a theological inadequateness here which might explain the disappearance of this song?

The great liberty in which American hymns took in circulating from one melody to another might explain why a hymn like "There is a Land of Pure Delight", Miller's favorite hymn, appears in 1853 under a different tune and amplified by a long refrain nonexistent in the original tune (1844).

The settlement of many hymns (texts) on one melody (tune) constitutes a large utilized American method of creating new hymns. The hymn of Annie Smith "How Far from Home?" published in "The Advent Revue and Sabbath Herald" from 29 Sept. 1853 carries the

indication: "to be sung on the tune 'Tis Midnight Hour". Two more examples of a text converted from profane to sacral are the hymn "How Sweet are the Tidings" on a melody from a ballad and the hymn "Come to Jesus Just Now" (Jubilee Harp, Nr. 272) put to the melody of the well-known profane song "Oh, my Darling Clementine". Regularly, the Millerites sang unison and a cappella. Although some churches admitted the use of organ in the church, and some Millerites permitted the accompaniment of hymns with instruments - as for example, the instrument "melodeon" in Boston - most Millerites were strictly against the use of any musical instrument. The consequence was the difficulty of proper intonation and the disaccord, that hymns were often forgotten. At best, the believers had some song-booklets with only words and no notes. The leader indicated the number and the title. The choir-leader then selected one melody - of the few known by the congregation - with the same metrical index and gave the tone, meaning the hymn was sung in a loud voice and the congregation took it over. A problem arose when singing unknown hymns. Here the Choir-leader had to exaggerate his gesticulation and give some "cabal signs" with his hands. (Bohy) The development of the Millerite musical notation shows different stages. The first hymnals with notes contained systems of two staves, each staff with a single melodic line, the upper staff with treble clef for the soprano, and the lower staff with bass clef for the bass line. Alto and tenor were not inscribed. The words of the first stanza were located between the staves under the soprano line, the others in the lower part of the page. The hymns of the "Millennial Harp" Part I (1843) do have this kind of notation. The next writing method used three staves: the upper staff with the soprano line, the middle staff with alto or tenor line and the lower staff with the bass line. Some scores show the tenor line in the upper staff. Another modality was to put the tenor on the upper staff, the soprano and the alto together on the middle and the bass on the lower staff. This type of notation can be found in "Millennial Harp" Part II and in "The Jubilee Harp" (1867). After this time, the notation of hymns reached the actual stage with a system of two staves, the upper staff with tremble clef and soprano and alto lines and the lower staff with bass clef and tenor- und bass-lines. A short analysis of the 12 Millerite and post-Millerite songbooks consulted for this collection show the inexplicable disappearance of most Millerite hymns. From ca. 1,000 hymns published in the Millerite and immediate post-Millerite period, only 9 were kept in the SdA Hymnal of 1987 (7 of them in fact rendered in Nix's collection too) (see Table I). In relation to the 695 hymns of the SdA Hymnal (1985), these 9 Millerite hymns represent a very small proportion ( 1,3%). The situation is similar in the case of the Hymnal of the Advent Christian Church - "Hymns of Heritage and Hope" (6 from 787 = 0,76% Millerite hymns). Despite this fact, the last edition of the Advent Christian Hymnal (2001) shows an outstanding tendency to improve the number of hymns with Second Advent subjects: from 14 Adventist hymns in 1967 to 58 Adventist hymns in 2001, a praiseworthy tendency, which means 7,4% Adventist hymns, a higher proportion compared with 5% of the SdA Adventist hymns ( 35 from 695 hymns). We can say though, that there has been a significant reduction in hymns with advent messages since Miller's time (100%) until today (5%). As possible reasons for the phenomenon of the disappearance of Millerite hymns one could blame theological non-accordance, esthetic inconsistencies and chronic lack of usage of these hymns in the church.