

Sounds of Worship

Easter Day

The hymns set for today are very familiar and require very little introduction. However, I have included some historical background to the two I have selected to focus on, to encourage you to read the words as though for the first time rather than as a familiar friend you have known for many years.

I start with "Jesus Christ Is Risen Today" AM 205 which was written in the 14th century as a Bohemian Latin hymn titled "Surrexit Christus hodie".

The original author is unknown but the text was preserved on manuscripts written in Munich and Breslau. The original Latin text had eleven verses. It was first translated into English in 1708 by John Baptist Walsh to be included in his *Lyra Davidica* (Collection of Divine Songs and Hymns). The verses of the hymn were revised in 1749 by John Arnold. Initially only three of the original Latin verses were translated with just the first verse being a direct translation; in 1740 [Charles Wesley](#) added a fourth verse to the hymn as an alternative although this is not included in the hymn book we use.

There is no record of the composer of the tune (Easter Hymn) to which the hymn was set in the *Lyra Davidica*.

Like so many hymns the original words and music come from widely different sources and eventually find the ideal partnership. In this case, the words can first, from the 14th Century set much later to music in the 18th.



Figure 1 "Jesus Christ is risen today" AM 205 Click on the arrow-head and again on the next one to play the video

1. Jesus Christ is risen today, Alleluia!
our triumphant holy day, Alleluia!
who did once upon the cross Alleluia!
suffer to redeem our loss. Alleluia
2. Hymns of praise then let us sing Alleluia!
unto Christ our heavenly King, Alleluia!
who endured the cross and grave, Alleluia!
sinners to redeem and save. Alleluia!
3. But the pains which he endured, Alleluia!
our salvation have procured; Alleluia!
now above the sky he's King, Alleluia!
where the angels ever sing. Alleluia!

The second hymn I discuss is "Thine be the glory risen conquering Son" AM 218 which would have been our concluding hymn.

G F Handel composed the tune that is set for "Thine Be the Glory" in 1747, for use in his Oratorio "Joshua". The tune itself proved to be a great success and, as was common practice in the early 18th century, Handel re-cycled it and inserted it into another of his Oratorios, "Judas Maccabaeus".

In 1884, after the death of his first wife Marie de Vayenborg in Lausanne, Switzerland, Edmond L. Budry was inspired to write words to Handel's tune, which he titled, "A Toi la Gloire" It was later published in a French hymn book, "Chants Evangéliques". The hymn was first translated from French into English by Richard B. Hoyle in 1923. He was commissioned to translate it by the World Student Christian Federation. It was later published in the Federation's hymn book, "Cantate Domino Hymnal".

Unlike "Jesus Christ is risen today", the tune of "Thine be the glory" pre-dates the words but the combination is greater than the sum of the parts.



Figure 2 "Thine be the glory, risen conquering Son," AM 218

1. Thine is the glory, risen, conquering Son;
endless is the victory Thou o'er death hast won.
Angels in bright raiment rolled the stone away,
kept the folded grave-clothes where Thy body lay.
*Thine be the glory, risen, conquering Son;
endless is the victory Thou o'er death hast won.*
2. Lo, Jesus meets us, risen from the tomb.
Lovingly He greets us, scatters fear and gloom;
let His church with gladness hymns of triumph sing,
for the Lord now liveth; death hath lost its sting.
*Thine be the glory, risen, conquering Son;
endless is the victory Thou o'er death hast won.*
3. No more we doubt Thee, glorious Prince of life!!
Life is nought without Thee; aid us in our strife;
make us more than conquerors, through Thy deathless love;
bring us safe through Jordan to Thy home above.
*Thine be the glory, risen, conquering Son;
endless is the victory Thou o'er death hast won.*

I had planned to conclude the service by playing "Saraband for the Morning of Easter" by Herbert Howells, but the magic of modern technology means I can insert a non-organ piece. What could be better to express the celebration of Christ's resurrection than "Hallelujah" from Handel's Messiah. It was written as the conclusion of Part 2 of "Messiah" which covers Christ's passion, death, resurrection, ascension, and the first spreading of the gospel through the world.

Jesus Chris is risen today. Alleluia!



Figure 3 "Hallelujah" from Messiah by G F Handel