

HOW THE *EVENING LIGHT SONGS* HYMNAL WAS PUBLISHED

Probably *the best* all-around songbook ever published by the Gospel Trumpet Company for use in general worship services was *Select Hymns* in 1911. This book was published and republished for many years and was used by Church of God congregations around the world, whether conservative or liberal. But by the 1940s the Gospel Trumpet Company began to move away from the publication of that old popular hymnal and introduced a new hymnal called, "Hymns and Spiritual Songs." This new hymnal contained many of the old songs written by D. S. Warner and the other early songwriters of the movement, but it also excluded many others, including in their stead songs from other sources. The conservative saints soon became quite dissatisfied with this new hymnal. They missed many of the old songs that had been excluded from it and wished they could still purchase *Select Hymns*, but it was no longer available. A great desire arose among them to somehow get *Select Hymns* reprinted. Since the Gospel Trumpet Company had held the copyright to most of the songs, it was obvious that the way would have to be cleared through them for anyone else to publish the songs. So, it was decided to look into the matter.

The Quest to Republish *Select Hymns*

Brother Ostis B. Wilson, Jr. was living in Los Angeles, California during the 1940s, while Andrew L. Byers, a songwriter and former member of the Gospel Trumpet Company, was living in Sacramento. Bro. Ostis Wilson, Jr. decided to go visit A. L. Byers and discuss with him what the possibility might be of getting the permission of the Gospel Trumpet Company to reprint *Select Hymns*. The parents of Ostis Wilson, Jr., Ostis B. Wilson, Sr. and Mattie [Bolds] Wilson, were old acquaintances of A. L. Byers in the early days of the movement. (In fact, D. S. Warner performed their wedding ceremony in 1895, a few months before his death.) The following is a portion of the correspondence that took place after Bro. Ostis Wilson, Jr.'s visit with Bro. A. L. Byers that ultimately cleared the way for Faith Publishing House to print the hymnal we enjoy and use today, called *Evening Light Songs*.

Andrew L. Byers' Letter to Ostis B. Wilson, Jr.

2610 Fifty-first Street
Sacramento, California
January 26, 1949

O. B. Wilson, Jr.
Los Angeles, California

Dear Brother Wilson:

Enclosed find letter to A. T. Rowe, which please send to him along with your own letter to him.

After you left, I was wishing I had asked you to leave the song list with me for a day or two. I omitted to discuss with you the matter of the copyright status of three songs in *Select Hymns* composed by other (outside) authors. They are most readily found in the list, but not having the latter I have gone through the book carefully to find them.

The first is #146 – “I’ll Go Where You Want Me to Go.” It seems we used this song without a copyright notice. Just how this came to be I don’t know. But on looking up the matter I find that it was renewed in 1922 by C. E. Rounsefell and is owned by Homer Rodeheaver. By this, of course, the renewal would expire in 1950. I really believe there would be no complaint from Rodeheaver should he see it in your republication of S.H.

The next is #248 – “Hallelujah, Praise Jehovah!” The Kirkpatrick songs passed into the hands of the Hope Company, Chicago, some years ago. In view of using this song in our hymnal I wrote to said company asking if the song had ever been renewed. You will notice that copyright entry was made in 1899, so the renewal would carry it to 1955. But they told me by letter dated August 2, 1929, that it was free of copyright. In the same letter they said that the song, “Jesus is All the World to Me” (which I had also asked them about) was also copyright free. But since the G. T. Company have included this song in the hymnal the Hope Co. have been trying hard to bluff the G. T. into the idea that the song was under copyright. I sent their letter to the G. T. Co. and they have it in their files; and they have been having quite a time warding off the bluffs, but are holding their ground. However, we have also used #248, and the Hope Co. has never attacked us on that. So I am assuming that you also would be safe in using it.

Then there is #427 – “I Must Tell Jesus.” The Hope Co. also have that; but as you will see by the copyright entry in 1893 the full limit of copyright protection would occur in 1949 – this year. So you will be safe on that also.

Now I am not sure that I have not missed any others. But should you have any question about any danger of infringement anywhere in the list, let me know and I will do the best I can for you.

By the way, I found your father and mother’s picture taken together in the book, *Familiar Names and Faces*, published in 1902. I was wishing I had shown it to you while you were here. Success to you in your undertaking.

In Christian love and service,
Andrew L. Byers

Andrew L. Byers’ Letter to A. T. Rowe of the Gospel Trumpet Company

Rev. A. T. Rowe:

I am sending this letter to you in care of O. B. Wilson, Jr. of Los Angeles, that it may accompany a letter to you direct from him. Bro. Wilson represents one of the Church of God groups in L.A., though they worship independently of our (G.T.) people. His mother,

Mrs. Ostis B. Wilson, used to be Mattie Bolds, a sister of Otto Bolds and daughter of George E. Bolds – names which probably used to be familiar to you.

In behalf of the people he represents, Bro. Wilson comes to us with the proposition of duplicating and reprinting, by means of photostat and offset printing the contents of our former songbook, *Select Hymns*. Having occasion to pass through Sacramento, he stopped to confer with me about the matter of obtaining clearance of any possible remaining copyright impediment. I have accordingly looked into this copyright question quite thoroughly and am giving you the benefit of my findings in order that you may speak the more intelligently from the Gospel Trumpet Company's viewpoint in your reply direct to him.

Our publication of *Select Hymns* in 1911 (copyright same year) was for the purpose of combining in one book the best of our song material published in former books. There was very little of new and original matter in S.H. Then in 1918, just before the issuance of *Songs of Grace and Glory*, the G. T. Co., in behalf of the music authors (Warren, Teasley, and myself) made assignment to these authors of all the songs of which they respectively were the musical composers and which had been held up to that time by the company as proprietor of the various book copyrights. J. T. Wilson was President of the Company at that time. I have my copy of the assignment as recorded in the copyright office at Washington and returned to me. By this means the authors came into possession of their own musical compositions. This assignment, as you see, did not affect any new and original compositions appearing in S.G.G. (Songs of Grace and Glory) or any other book issued since 1918.

Now the point in this explanation is that the copyright privilege with respect to anything published prior to 1918, whether subsisting in the book copyright by the Company or in individual copyright by the authors, ended its first period (28 years) by 1946 or prior thereto, depending on dates of entry of the book copyright in former books. This statement concerning copyright expiration covers the entire contents of S.H.

The only question remaining is, how about book copyright renewals? Were the copyrights on *Songs of the Evening Light*, *Salvation Echoes*, *Truth in Song*, *Select Hymns*, and *Junior Hymns*, expiring respectively in 1925, 1928, 1935, 1939 and 1942 – were these renewed? While I was in the employ of the company, I notified the latter of the expirations then occurring, but I have no way of knowing whether the renewals were actually made. I never renewed any of my own copyrights, and I don't believe that either Bro. Teasley or Bro. Warren ever renewed any of theirs. Renewal of copyrights were never in our thinking. We were not like men who make song publishing their business, whose copyrights are their stock in trade and who are very keen about renewals. By reason of the assignment made in 1918 we authors hold nothing any more in *Select Hymns* or in any former book, because we did not get those assigned copyrights renewed.

But assuming that the mentioned book copyrights were renewed, the song material still held by them through renewal, after deducting all material assigned back to the authors and all other matter dead as to copyright (such as many of the movement's

original songs by J. C. Fisher, H. R. Jeffrey and others) would be very negligible indeed at this date of 1949. Such a thing as any infringement therefore in the republication of *Select Hymns* would be most remote and difficult to establish. Therefore, so far as any possible infringement is concerned, I am advising that the G. T. Company grant a full permission to Bro. Wilson or whomever would be the responsible party for the republication of *Select Hymns*. You may, however, view the matter from quite another angle; and from this point on you can communicate with him directly as to what your pleasure may be in this matter.

Andrew L. Byers

**Letter From Harold L. Phillips of the Gospel Trumpet Company
Regarding the Reprinting of Select Hymns**

March 31, 1949

Mr. O. B. Wilson, Jr.
4254 ½ Perlita Avenue
Los Angeles, California

Dear Brother Wilson:

Brother A. T. Rowe has asked me to answer your correspondence to him concerning the old *Select Hymns* songbook.

Bro. Byers claims that most of this music has now passed into public domain, and therefore anyone who wishes to make use of it is free to do so. Consequently, to that extent you do not need our permission. However, we would not want you to use the title, "Select Hymns," or exactly the same selection or order of selection.

As far as we can see, you are free to make use of the individual songs in any combination you might wish, provided you do not duplicate the entire book or use the title "Select Hymns." If you did so it would cause confusion. If this is not clear, please write me again.

Yours sincerely,

Harold L. Phillips
Editorial Department

Faith Publishing House of Guthrie, Oklahoma, Proceeds to Publish a New Songbook

The way having thus been cleared for publishing the contents of *Select Hymns* in another combination, the following proposition for a new songbook titled, *Evening Light Songs*, appeared in the September, October and November issues of the Faith and Victory paper, 1949.

The New Song Book Proposition

The saints are praising God for the encouraging prospects of soon having a new song book, with hymns chosen from the "Select Hymns" song book to make up the new one, also a few choice songs lately composed.

This song book proposition was placed before the saints at the Monark Springs camp meeting and at the Oklahoma State camp meeting at Guthrie, and all were delighted with the thought of having a song book with these "Select Hymns" songs to use. The general desire of the saints was that the new book should be entitled, "**Evening Light Songs.**"

The cost of making this song book will be quite large, as the music plates will have to be made, which is very costly. The Standard Engraving Co. of Oklahoma City offered to make the plates for \$3.50 each. If the book contains 450 songs, that alone would cost \$1575.00. There will be much more cost of getting the first edition printed than for later editions. Each saint should feel his or her responsibility in getting this new song book in print and send money for a plate and a song book, and those whom God blesses with means should donate money for the platemaking. Once we get the plates made, we can reprint the book any time we need a new supply.

The proposition which we have before the saints now, is that everyone who can may send five dollars, which will entitle you to one plate and one song book when they are finished. The book will be postpaid to you and the plate will be held here at the print shop to be used again when needed. With your payment of \$5.00 you may state the title of your favorite song you desire placed in the book.

Up to date sufficient money has been received with which to pay for 90 song plates. Since we have had the offer of \$3.50 for the making of each plate, we have found a company that will make the plates for some less money, so if your five dollars pays for more than the plate and book costs, the balance over will be used in the cost of printing and making the books. We expect to make 2,000 books for the first edition. The cloth binding of the books alone will cost perhaps a thousand dollars, and the paper and printing will be near double that amount.

The price of the song books when printed will be \$1.50 plus the postage. Postage can be paid when books are shipped and amount is known. Each individual and all the congregations of saints should find out how many books they will need and send in the order during September so we can rush the plate making and printing, and if possible have the new book ready not later than December 1st. Anyone having from one hundred to five hundred dollars to loan on the plate-making and printing without interest, and receive the principal back as the books are sold can please the saints and the Lord by sending it in soon and thereby enable this work to go right on without further delay.

Let us all pray that God will so work, and the plates and book will all be made and the books be ready at least before Christmas so the new books can be used in the winter assembly meetings.

Following is a list* of song numbers in the “Select Hymns” songbook that are not in the original selection of songs for the new book, and will be left out unless the saints desire some of them put in. Persons desiring any of these songs placed in the new book may send their selection with reasons for desiring it, and the song will be considered. [*The list was very long, therefore is being omitted here to save space.]

– Fred Pruitt, *Faith and Victory*, September 1949, page 12.

The New Song Book

In comments on “the new song book proposition,” published in the September issue of “Faith and Victory,” we tried to make clear the amount of money needed in getting the plates made and books printed and covered. There has been quite a lively response from many of the saints, which shows that they are anxious that this new song book be printed for God’s children to use.

Up to the present time, \$1337.00 have been received for the making of the plates. This amount includes the offerings and a \$100.00 loan, together with the \$5.00 which each one sent in to have a plate made and a song book. This amount which has been sent in to date, Sept. 19th, is very little more than the plate-making will cost. We expect to go right ahead and have the plates made, and if we do not receive enough money to do the printing, it will have to wait until the Lord supplies it.

The offerings and money for the plates and song books have almost ceased to come in at the present time and we are praying that God will stir up the saints everywhere to send in donations or loan money for the printing without interest and receive the principal back when the books are sold. It seems now that if the book printing goes on when the plates are made, someone (or more than one) will need to loan money for this work. Those who have from \$100.00 to \$2500.00 which they could conveniently spare of the Lord’s money, should lay this proposition before the Lord and see what he would have them do in the matter. We can only do here and move on with the printing of the book as the Lord supplies the means. Our hearts’ desire is to go on with the printing just as soon as the plates are made up in order to get the books finished before the holidays. We are praying with that end in view. Will all the saints agree in prayer with us in this?

— Faith Publishing House Family, *Faith and Victory*, October 1949, page 6.

The New Song Book Proposition

Since our last report concerning the new song book in the October issue of “Faith and Victory” paper, up to date (Oct. 17) there has been nearly \$500 more sent in to help get the plates made and the books printed. Some of this money was donations, some was for

plates and books, and some was sent by congregations for books after they were printed. One brother from Missouri sent in a hundred dollars as a loan. When loans are sent in, we put the name and amount of loan on our record book and send the party making the loan a receipt for the same, showing the amount loaned and for what purpose, and that the said loan is to be paid back without interest as the song books are sold. We are praying that God will move on more of the saints to send loans or donations so there will be no stoppage in getting the books printed. We have received plates from the company and thirty-two pages of the song book are printed. The rest of the book will be printed just as fast as the company gets the plates ready and to us. A company in Shreveport, La. is doing the plate making. There will be a need of at least \$2000.00 more to complete the two thousand books that are being printed and made up. Congregations who have not sent in money for books should find out how many books they will need and send in their order now with the money for same so the money can be used in getting the books printed. The books will sell at \$1.50 each. These books will be well made and cloth bound. We shall be looking to the Lord to move on his children to send in donations, orders for books, and loans to complete the printing job. We shall go right on with the printing of the books with our faith in God alone to see all the books finished up in good shape, ready to send out to those who have ordered and those that will order. Please be agreed in prayer with us that we can and will be workers together with God until all is finished.

It was quite a joy to our souls to see those good, inspired songs rolling off the press. It will be far better when they are in book form ready to be used in making melody in our hearts to the Lord.

– Fred Pruitt, *Faith and Victory*, November 1949, page 5.

A WORD ABOUT THE SONG BOOK PRINTING

The song book printing is progressing slowly. There have been some hindrances because of the condition of plates received from the engraving company. Some were over type-high, and some have been faulty and had to be returned and made over, which has delayed the printing. However, some progress is being made, and some are sending offerings and money for books and plates. Much means is needed yet to finish the job. We hope and pray that a much better report can be made in next issue of the paper. Pray for us, as we do our best to get the books printed and ready for use.

– Fred Pruitt, *Faith and Victory*, December 1949, page 6.

The New Song Book

The Lord has so blessed that we have the new song book entitled, “Evening Light Songs,” completed. By the time this paper gets in circulation we will have sent out all the books that have been ordered.

If there is anyone who has failed to get their book or books which you have ordered, please let us know, giving us the correct street numbers and address in full. We have tried to be very careful to fill every order, but mistakes will be made sometimes.

This song book contains 480 pages with shaped notes. The songs are mostly selected from the book entitled, "Select Hymns." It is well made, cloth bound. Single copy, \$1.50 plus 15 cents for postage and wrapping. Orders of 12 or more books will be sent postpaid. Order from, Faith Pub House, 920 W. Mansur Ave., Guthrie, Oklahoma.

– Fred Pruitt, *Faith and Victory*, February 1950, page 3.

Ruthe Byers, a young, consecrated Faith Publishing House worker, and Lawrence D. Pruitt, a son of Fred Pruitt, were responsible for the compiling and arranging of the songs selected for the new book. Besides selections made from *Select Hymns*, a few favorites were chosen from other sources, and a few newer compositions were included, some of them coming from songwriters Ulysses and Ella Phillips.

Bro. Fred Pruitt wrote, "Sister Ruthe Byers of Louisiana ... came in the fall of 1948 and labored faithfully here for more than a year. She was very efficient, and all of her labors were appreciated; but one outstanding service which the Lord enabled her to render was helping to compile the songs for the *Evening Light Songs*, the book the saints in general had prayed and labored for a number of years. In the early part of 1950 Sis. Ruthe felt the Lord was permitting her to return to her former job in Shreveport, Louisiana. After a few months of labor there, she became the wife of Brother Lawrence Taylor of Dinuba, California" – *God's Gracious Dealings*, pages 244 – 245.

[Note: Lawrence Taylor was a grandson of Mary Ann (Sorrell) Taylor, who was a sister of my great-great-grandfather, Elijah Sorrell, of Myrtle, Missouri. Mary Ann was originally from the Myrtle area.]



Ruthe Byers



Lawrence Pruitt and wife, Maybelle

I am happy to have in my possession a copy of the first edition of the *Evening Light Songs*, published in 1949. The preface gives the following acknowledgements:

“To the Gospel Trumpet Company we gratefully acknowledge its permission to use the contents of *Select Hymns*.

“To A. L. Byers and B. E. Warren we express our appreciation for permission to use their songs in this new edition.”

I understand that, after the new book was printed, Faith Publishing House mailed A. L. Byers and B. E. Warren each a free copy. A. L. Byers mailed a postcard to Bro. Fred Pruitt dated September 11, 1950, which read as follows:

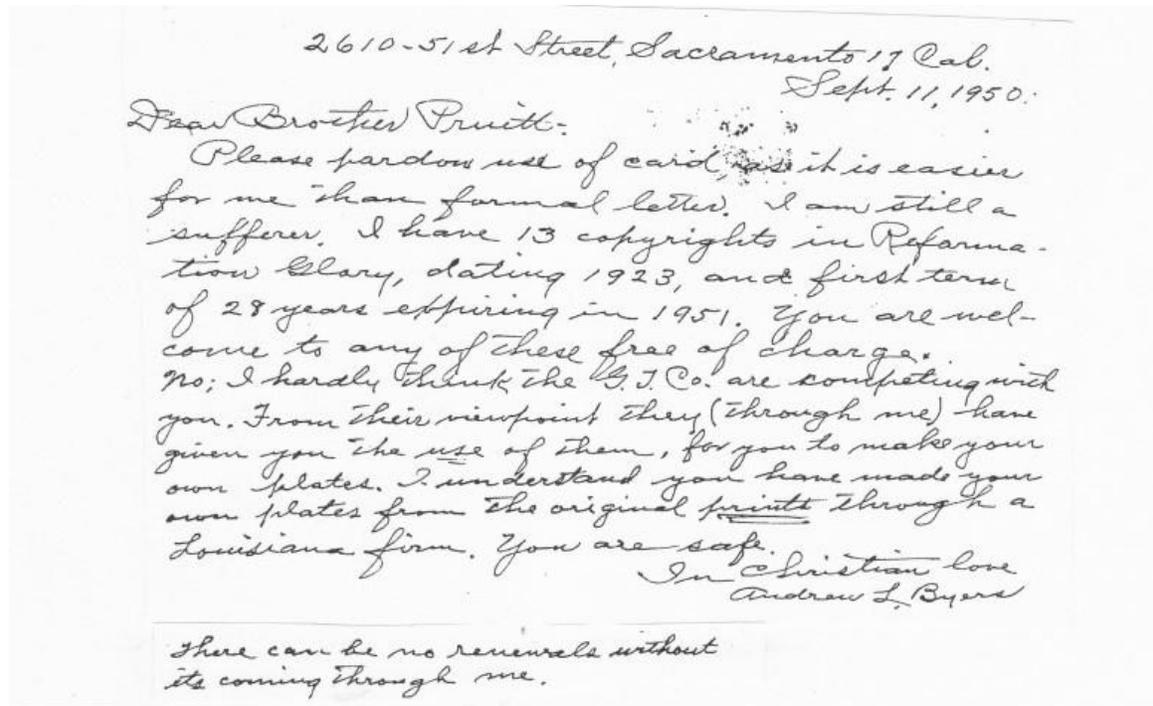
“Dear Brother Pruitt,

“Please pardon use of card, as it is easier for me than formal letter. I am still a sufferer. I have 13 copyrights in *Reformation Glory*, dated 1923, and first term of 28 years expiring in 1951. You are welcome to any of these free of charge. No, I hardly think the G. T. Co. [Gospel Trumpet Company] are competing with you. From their viewpoint they (through me) have given you the use of them for you to make your own plates. I understand you have made your own plates from the original prints through a Louisiana firm. You are safe.

“In Christian love,
Andrew L. Byers

P.S. “There can be no renewals [of copyright] without its coming through me.”

Following is a copy of the handwritten postcard from A. L. Byers to Fred Pruitt, founder of Faith Publishing House (1923) and first editor of the *Faith and Victory* publication.



In 1976, Faith Publishing House printed the remaining portion of *Select Hymns*, not published in *Evening Light Songs*, in a new songbook titled "Echoes from Heaven." Regarding that publication, Bro. Lawrence D. Pruitt, who was then editor of publications, wrote:

"In the year of 1975, Bro. Harlan Sorrell expressed a desire to have a new songbook composed of the songs in the old *Select Hymns* book that were not used in the *Evening Light Songs* book which was first published in 1949.

"Accordingly, the remaining songs, numbering about 180 from the old *Select Hymns*, appear in this new collection. Added to this number, is a new song by Bro. Ulysses Phillips, plus a few selections by individuals from other sources, making a total of 195 songs under the title, *Echoes from Heaven*, a name which was suggested by Bro. Harlan Sorrell from Bro. B. E. Warren's song appearing as the first song in this book.

"This collection is not primarily designed or arranged for the general services of the Church, nor to take the place of our standard hymnal, *Evening Light Songs*, but merely as a supplemental songbook from which songs may be selected for special singing. We trust that the singing of these vital messages of Bible truth will inspire every hearer and bring glory and honor to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

“For the production of this volume, grateful acknowledgements are extended to Bro. Harlan Sorrell of Myrtle, MO, Sister Opal Kelly, and all the co-workers at the Lord’s Printshop, Guthrie, Oklahoma.”

– The Publishers, L. D. Pruitt, November 1976.

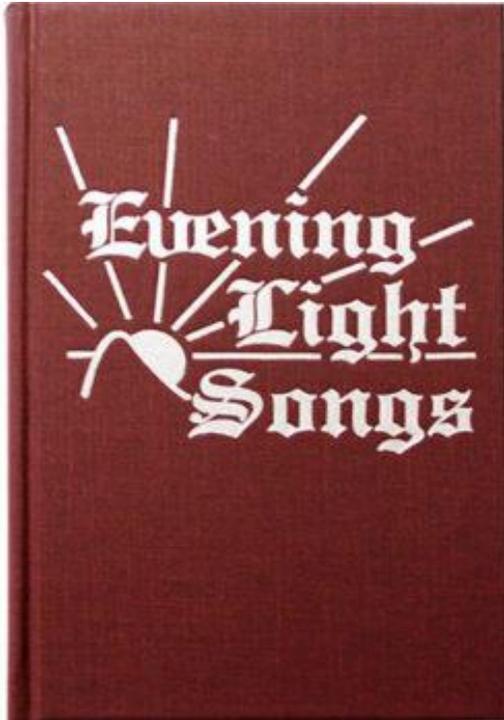


Sister Opal Kelly, former missionary to Mexico

Many blessings we enjoy today are ours because of sacrifices made by those gone before us. Ecclesiastes 11:6 says, “In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good.”

“And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them” Rev. 14:13.

– Harlan Sorrell
December 2021



<https://www.churchofgodeveninglight.com/product/evening-light-songs-hymnal/>

