

Longyear Historical Review

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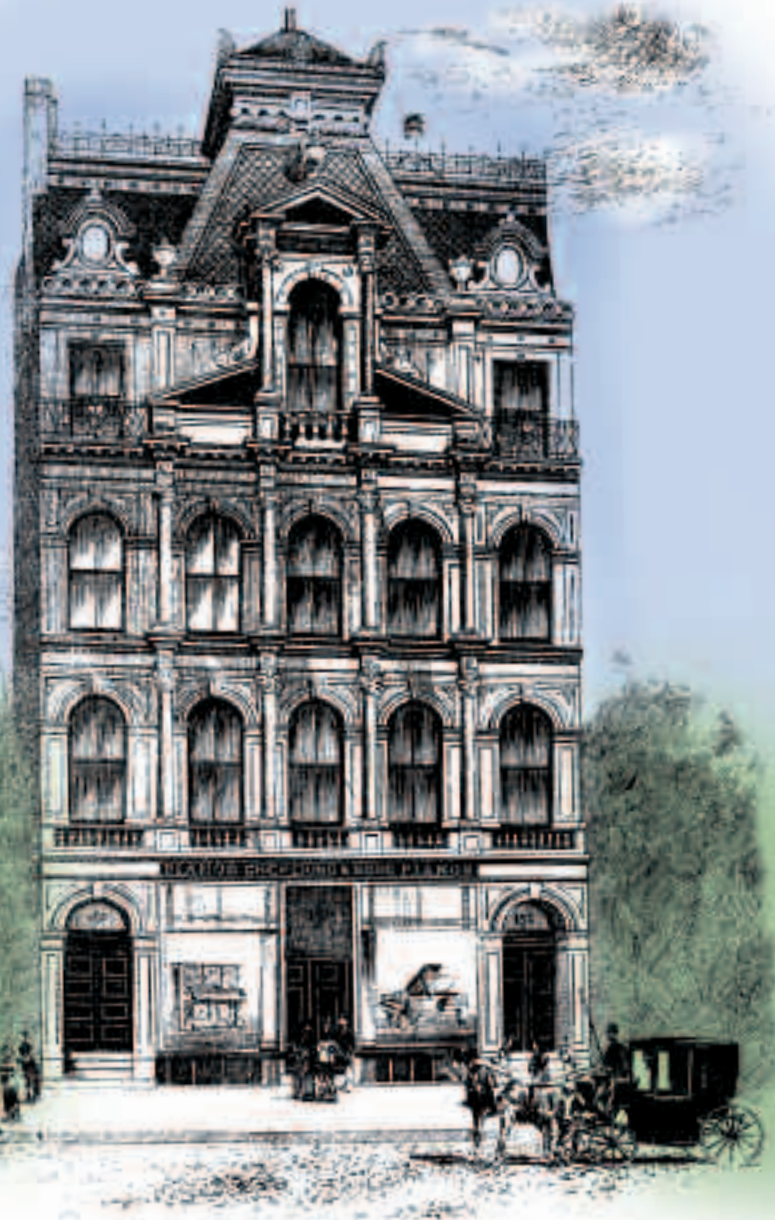
Vol. 39 No. 1

Longyear Museum preserves material relating to the life of Mary Baker Eddy, the Discoverer and Founder of Christian Science.

Lyman Foster Brackett *A Musical Pioneer in the Church of Christ, Scientist* Peter J. Hodgson

The current edition of the *Christian Science Hymnal* contains five easily recognized tunes by Lyman Brackett. His simple, sweet, singable settings for Mary Baker Eddy's poems "Feed My Sheep," "Christ My Refuge," and "Communion Hymn," are well known to Sunday School pupils and congregations throughout the Church of Christ, Scientist. Brackett's tunes for Francis A. Fox's "In Thee, O Spirit, true and tender" and Laura C. Nourse's "Now sweeping down the years untold" are likewise familiar to many. Several of these tunes have been reprinted in the *Song Dex Treasury of Hymns*,¹ and his frequently used setting of "Feed My Sheep" may also be found in the *Book of Worship for the United States Forces*.²

What is probably not so well known is that Lyman Brackett was an interesting and influential musical presence in the formative years of the Church of Christ, Scientist, and played a significant role in shaping emerging attitudes toward music in this church.



Chickering Hall in the 1880s. Christian Science services were held here from 1885 to 1894. In this same building Lyman Brackett had a teaching studio.
Longyear Museum collection.

In recognition of his services to her and to her church, Mary Baker Eddy requested as early as May 4, 1887, that Lyman Brackett be made an honorary member of the Students' Association of the Massachusetts Metaphysical College. His use on certain occasions of the initials "C. S." after his name, as on his setting of Mrs. Eddy's "Feed My Sheep," suggests his willingness to be publicly identified as an adherent of Christian Science.

While information concerning this musical pioneer in the early days of Christian Science has hitherto proved sketchy, it is now possible to offer a somewhat more complete account of Lyman Brackett's life and work based on both published and unpublished sources, supported by additional local research. This new view of Brackett invites a reappraisal of his musical contribution to the Church of Christ, Scientist.

The five Brackett tunes in the *Christian Science Hymnal* are "Alma" (#154), "Communion" (#298), "Guidance" (#304), "Norton" (#254), and "Science" (#197).

"A well-known teacher of the piano"

Lyman Foster Brackett was born on September 30, 1852, in Charlestown, Massachusetts, to Charles and Sarah Parsons Brackett, who then resided in Lawrence, Massachusetts. An 1880 census report has Brackett, then aged twenty-seven, living with his parents in Somerville, Massachusetts. He was married to Alma C. Morton, after whom his tune written for Miss Fox's text was probably renamed in the 1932 revision of the *Christian Science Hymnal*. At the time of his passing, on May 8, 1937, his residence was in Roslindale, Massachusetts.

Before he began his active service to the Church of Christ, Scientist, in the 1880s, Lyman Brackett was well established in Boston

as an organist, choir director, pianist, and piano teacher. An announcement in *The Christian Science Journal* of October, 1889 describes him as "...a well-known teacher of the piano, and director of music in churches for fifteen years past..."³ In other *Journal* notices, he is referred to as "Professor Brackett," suggesting that, by the late 1880s, although only in his thirties, he was a professional musician of some standing in the city.

"A most agreeable and kindly man"

A younger contemporary of Brackett, William Lyman Johnson, describes him as "a most agreeable and kindly man, always ready to assist wherever he could."⁴ Johnson observes elsewhere that "from what I know of Mr. Brackett, I cannot feel that he was the type of man to force himself into public prominence," — this when defending Brackett against criticism from fellow church members for "projecting himself into undue prominence" through his very visible work on the new Christian Science hymnal.⁵ This description of Brackett's gentle and modest disposition is consistent with qualities found in his music, which is always approachable, warm, and unpretentious. Well-crafted and musically sensitive, but without ostentation, his compositional style shows a penchant for the mellifluous and sweeter musical characteristics quite popular in that period.

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Estey organ used at Christian Science services in Chickering Hall. Longyear Museum collection.





With permission of the Harvard Map Collection, Harvard College Library.

Lyman Brackett in the Boston Area

-  Charlestown, where Lyman Brackett was born in 1852.
-  Somerville, where Lyman Brackett lived c. 1852 to c. 1897.
-  152 Tremont Street, Boston, site of Chickering Hall in the 1880s and 1890s, where Christian Science services were held from 1885 to 1894, and where Lyman Brackett had a music studio.
-  Roslindale neighborhood, where Lyman Brackett lived toward the end of his life.



Above: Interior of Chickering Hall, viewed from stage.
 Mrs. Eddy preached here during the late 1880s, when Chickering Hall was used for Christian Science services.
 Center inset shows opposite view looking toward stage.
 (See page 1 for exterior view of Chickering Hall.)
 Longyear Museum collection.

Poster for concert given at Chickering Hall in 1887, to raise funds for construction of a Christian Science church edifice in Boston. Lyman Brackett listed as pianist.
 Longyear Museum collection.



Feed My Sheep



Plain 4

Words by
Rev. Mary B.G. Eddy.
President of Mass. Metaphysical College.
Set to Music by
Lyman Brackett.

In 1887, Lyman Brackett set Mary Baker Eddy's poem "Feed My Sheep" for solo voice with piano accompaniment, the first such setting of Mrs. Eddy's poems to be published.

Composed for medium-high voice in F major (range d-f'), the song is in a Romantic idiom. While Brackett's treatment is relatively conservative, it is not without interest, including a harmonic move to the mediant minor early in the first verse and with other chromatic shifts that maintain a gentle forward momentum to the progress of the song. The ABA structure of the setting corresponds with the three verses of the poem, a more animated middle section for the second verse contrasting with the Andante movement of the first and last verses.

Two editions (1887, with photograph of Mary Baker Eddy, and 1898) of Lyman Brackett's solo setting of Mrs. Eddy's poem "Feed My Sheep." Complete score of 1898 edition is reproduced on pages 6–9. Longyear Museum collection.

FEED MY SHEEP

WORDS BY
Rev. Mary B.G. Eddy.
PRESIDENT OF THE
MASS. METAPHYSICAL COLLEGE

SET TO MUSIC BY
LYMAN F. BRACKETT

Boston
Christian Science
Publishing Society
95 FALMOUTH ST.
PRICE 50 CENTS

FEED MY SHEEP

Words by Rev. Mary B. G. Eddy.

Music by Lyman F. Brackett. C. S.

Shepherd, show me how to go
O'er the hillside steep,
How to gather, how to sow,—
How to feed Thy sheep;
I will listen for Thy voice,
Lest my footsteps stray;
I will follow and rejoice
All the rugged way.

Thou wilt bind the stubborn will,
Wound the callous breast,
Make self righteousness be still,
Break earth's stupid rest.
Strangers on a barren shore,
Lab'ring long and lone,
We would enter by the door,
And thou know'st Thine own;

So, when day grows dark and cold,
Tear or triumph harms,
Lead Thy lambkins to the fold,
Take them in Thine arms;
Feed the hungry, heal the heart,
Till the morning's beam;
White as wool, ere they depart,
Shepherd, wash them clean.

Andante sostenuto.

The musical score is written in 4/4 time with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). It begins with a piano introduction in the right hand, followed by a piano accompaniment in the left hand. The vocal line enters in the second measure. The score is divided into three systems, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The first system covers the first two lines of lyrics. The second system covers the next two lines. The third system covers the final two lines. The piano accompaniment features a steady eighth-note pattern in the left hand and chords in the right hand. The tempo is marked 'Andante sostenuto' and the dynamics are mostly piano (p). The word 'cantabile' is written above the piano accompaniment in the second system.

Copyright, 1898, by Rev. Mary B. G. Eddy.

cres - - - - -

how to sow,— How to feed Thy sheep ; I will lis - ten
to the fold, Take them in Thine arms ; Feed the hun - gry,

The first system of music features a vocal line on a treble clef staff and a piano accompaniment on a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The vocal line begins with a *cresc.* marking. The piano accompaniment consists of chords in the right hand and a melodic line in the left hand.

cen - - - - - do.

for Thy voice, Lest my footsteps stray ; I will fol - low
heal the heart, Till the morning's beam ; White as wool, ere

The second system continues the vocal and piano parts. The vocal line has a *cen* marking above it. The piano accompaniment includes a *cen* marking in the bass line. The system concludes with a *do.* marking above the vocal line.

f *rit.* *1st time.* *2d time.*

and re - jice All the rug - ged way. clean.
they de - part, Shep - herd, wash them

The third system features a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line starts with a forte (*f*) dynamic and a *rit.* (ritardando) marking. It includes first and second endings. The piano accompaniment also begins with *f* and *rit.* markings.

First system of piano accompaniment. The right hand features a complex rhythmic pattern with sixteenth and thirty-second notes, while the left hand provides a steady bass line. Dynamics include *f*, *pp*, and *ppp*. A *ritard.* marking is present in the third measure.

Piu Allegro.

Second system of music featuring a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line begins with a *f* dynamic. The lyrics are: "Thou wilt bind the stub - born will, Wound the cal - lous breast,". The piano accompaniment is marked *colla voce.*

Third system of music featuring a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line begins with a *poco rit.* marking, followed by a *f* dynamic. The lyrics are: "Make self righ - teous - ness be still, Break earth's stu - pid rest." The piano accompaniment includes *poco rit.* and *rit.* markings.

Adagio patetico.

p

Stran - gers on a bar - ren shore, Lab - 'ring long and lone,

The first system of the musical score consists of a vocal line on a treble clef staff and a piano accompaniment on a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The vocal line begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic and contains the lyrics "Stran - gers on a bar - ren shore, Lab - 'ring long and lone,". The piano accompaniment features a series of chords and moving lines in both hands, with a piano (*p*) dynamic marking.

We would en - ter by the door, And Thou know'st Thine own;

rit.

The second system continues the vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line contains the lyrics "We would en - ter by the door, And Thou know'st Thine own;". The piano accompaniment includes a *rit.* (ritardando) marking towards the end of the system.

Basso cantabile.

D.S.

D.S.

The third system shows the piano accompaniment continuing. The vocal line is silent. The piano part is marked *Basso cantabile.* and includes two *D.S.* (Da Capo) markings. The system concludes with a double bar line and repeat signs.

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His 1887 solo vocal setting of Mrs. Eddy's poem "Feed My Sheep" illustrates these qualities (see pages 5–9).

"A fluent technique"

Brackett first came into prominence in the Christian Science movement in the mid-1880s, when he participated in various musical events to help raise funds for the construction of The Mother Church in Boston. These included concerts in which he appeared as pianist. Johnson describes him as possessing "a fluent technique."⁶

Chairman of hymnal committee

All of his preceding professional activity, coupled with his developing interest in Christian Science, prepared Lyman Brackett for his next and most demanding assignment — appointment in 1890 as chairman of the seven-person committee authorized to compile the first official *Christian Science Hymnal*, which was completed and published in 1892.

In accepting this task, Brackett was entrusted with supervising the work of the committee as designated by the Christian Science Publishing Society. The committee's distinguished membership included the then Clerk of The Mother Church, William Benjamin Johnson (William Lyman Johnson's father), and Julia Bartlett, an experienced practitioner and teacher of Christian Science.

It was this committee's exacting and by no means easy charge to find an adequate number of hymn texts and tunes suitable for the diverse needs and tastes of the growing church membership for whom this new hymnal would play a central musical and spiritual role. The magnitude of the responsibility felt by the committee is reflected in the preface to this first edition, which begins with the disclaimer: "In presenting this Hymnal for the use of Christian Scientists the Committee do not claim that it is strictly scientific, as they were obliged to select very largely from hymns composed by those who were unacquainted with the teachings of Christian Science. While not entirely composed of hymns written exactly in accordance with the doctrines of Christian Science it presents the



1892 *Christian Science Hymnal* belonging to Mary Armstrong, C.S.D. Longyear Museum collection.

Below: Notice in the October 1889 issue of *The Christian Science Journal* announcing Lyman Brackett's involvement in compiling a hymnal for Christian Scientists, and soliciting "favorites."

acme of religious and poetic thought contained in the best hymns of the day, as well as in the best compositions thus far contributed by Christian Scientists.”⁷ Later, it acknowledges Brackett’s prominent role in this compilation by saying “...great credit is due Mr. Lyman Brackett of Boston, Mass., for untiring effort to present the most useful and varied collection of tunes ever issued in one hymnal, — the purpose being to appeal to every lover of church music, of whatever taste or ability.”⁸

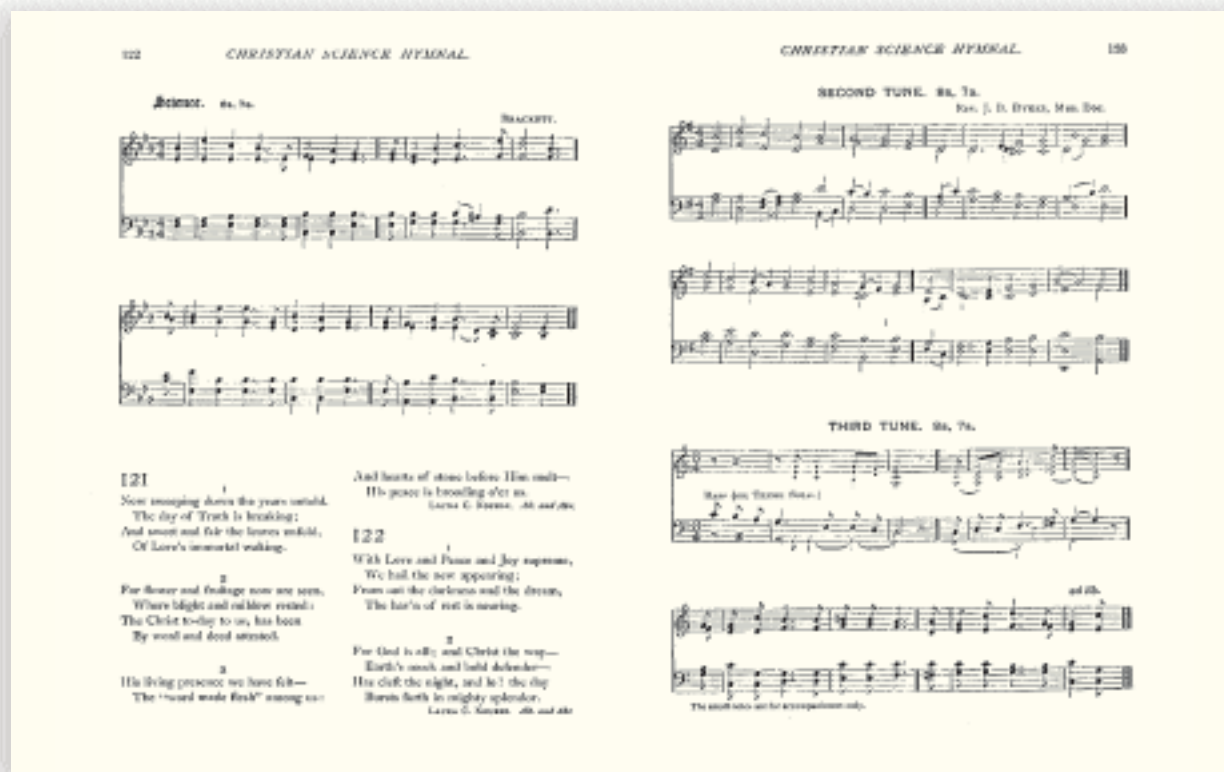
An astonishing total of 99 new tunes

As well as chairing the committee, Brackett was, in fact, the hymnal’s music editor. He designed an overall plan for the hymn book which was considered unique by its committee: two facing pages displaying three tunes — one tune at the top of the left-hand page and two on the right-hand page — with, in most cases, two hymn texts occupying the lower left-hand page. Any of the three tunes could be used for

either of the two texts. The third tune in every case was composed for the hymnal by its music editor, Lyman Brackett, as were three of the first tunes.

The result was an astonishing total of ninety-nine original tunes specially crafted by Brackett to meet the choral and congregational needs of those attending the Christian Science church services in the last decade of the nineteenth century. Brackett’s hymn tunes were composed mainly in the style of evangelical gospel songs which were immensely popular at that time, and whose easy tunes were intended to reinforce the message of the text with repetitive and memorable music. None of his tunes are long or musically complex, yet the undertaking of

A *hymn* consists of two elements, a *text* and a *tune*, where *text* refers to the several stanzas of the hymn, and *tune* means both the melody and its harmonization. Brackett’s tunes numbered ninety-nine in the 1892 edition; sixty-four in the 1898 edition; forty-four in the 1910 edition; and five in the 1932 edition.



1892 *Christian Science Hymnal* showing format of texts and tunes (first and third tunes by Lyman Brackett). Longyear Museum collection.

writing so many different pieces in various arrangements was in itself an extraordinary feat of musicianship, given the time constraints within which the committee was working, and since each tune must be carefully crafted and suited to its purpose as described in the hymnal's preface.

It should also be noted that, at the time of this first hymnal's compilation, the structure of Christian Science services allowed for choirs, small vocal ensembles, and solo singing. Therefore, it was natural that Brackett's music should provide for these opportunities with both four-part settings, in the style of the gospel hymn tunes, and music featuring different vocal ensembles.

1898 revision: new layout

Although Lyman Brackett declined Mrs. Eddy's invitation to serve as the first organist for the newly-erected Mother Church in Boston in 1895, perhaps due to contractual obligations elsewhere, he continued to serve the church as music editor of the first revision to the *Christian Science Hymnal* in 1898. This revision involved a complete redesign of the layout of the hymnal's pages, because of the decision to interline the words of all hymns between the staves of music — a practice introduced in only a few hymns in the first edition of the hymnal. This change necessitated the elimination of many of the third tunes Brackett had composed for the 1892 *Hymnal*.

Congregation becomes the choir

This revision, with its interlining of the words to facilitate the reading of text and tune, occurred during the period when the use of a choir was being gradually phased out of Christian Science services. This change signaled a major shift for the Church of Christ, Scientist, away from a musical ministry dependent on a trained choir, to one in which the congregation would become, in effect, the choir. Brackett's role in this shift of emphasis from choir to congregation is reflected in his careful reordering of musical priorities in this second edition of the *Christian Science Hymnal*.

Brackett's work in compiling a hymnal for the Church of Christ, Scientist, was primarily one of furnishing a serviceable book of congregational song for a wide diversity of users who were, for the most part,

enthusiastic but untrained singers with average voices and not much opportunity for weekly musical preparation. In this context, it will be seen that Lyman Brackett filled an essential niche in responding to the needs of the people in the pews, and in emphasizing the key role of the whole congregation of lay-people singing their heartfelt praise to God. 🙏

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- ¹ Song Dex, Inc., New York, 1959.
- ² *Book of Worship for the United States Forces*, 1974, hymn 128.
- ³ *The Christian Science Journal*, October, 1889, vol. 7, no. 7, p. 367.
- ⁴ William Lyman Johnson, *The History of The Christian Science Movement*, The Zion Research Foundation, Brookline, Mass., 1926, vol. 1, p. 49.
- ⁵ *ibid.*, pp. 379-380.
- ⁶ *ibid.*, p. 49.
- ⁷ Preface to the *Christian Science Hymnal*, 1892.
- ⁸ *ibid.*



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