

Home, Sweet Home

Paul Hammond

The most popular song of the nineteenth century was "Home, sweet home." Richard J. Wolfe documents that, within two years of its first printing, this song was published in more different editions and sold more copies than any song up to that time.¹ It continues to live in contemporary culture at the very least through the cliché, "be it ever so humble, there's no place like home." We should not be surprised, therefore, to find that religious parodies of the song also ensued and were published well into the twentieth century.

English composer Henry Rowley Bishop (1786-1855) included "Home, sweet home" in his opera *Clari: or the Maid of Milan*, which premiered at Covent Garden on May 8, 1823. John Howard Payne (1791-1852), an American actor, wrote the libretto for the opera and for its most noted song. The song appeared in America later that same year.²

'Mid pleasures and Palaces
though we may roam,
Be it ever so humble
there's no place like home!
A charm from the skies
seems to hallow us there,
Which seek through the
world, is ne'er met with
elsewhere!

Refrain

Home! Home! sweet, sweet,
Home!

There's no place like Home!
There's no place like Home!

An Exile from Home,
Splendour dazzles in vain!
Oh! give me my lowly
thatch'd Cottage again!
The Birds singing gaily that
came at my call,
Give me them with the
peace of mind dearer
than all.

The first hymn parody came from British Baptist pastor David Denham (1791-1848), author of more than 1,000 hymns. His six-

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stanza poem was probably composed during his pastorate at Margate (1826-1834), and the first publication in England was in Denham's large compilation of original hymns, *The Saints' Melody* (1837), under the title "The Saints' Sweet Home."³ According to the *Dictionary of American Hymnology*, the first American printing of Denham's parody occurred in 1829 in *Hymns of Zion; being a Selection of Hymns for Social Worship, compiled chiefly for the use of Baptist churches*. An interesting comparison may be made with the text of the first American printing of the song to see how Denham translated the longing for an earthly home into the longing for a heavenly home.

'Mid scenes of confusion and creature
complaints,
How sweet to my soul is communion with
saints;
To find at the banquet of mercy there's
room,
And feel in the presence of Jesus at home.

Refrain

Home, home, sweet, sweet home,
Receive me, dear Saviour, in glory, my
home.

Sweet bonds that unite all the children of
peace,
And thrice precious Jesus, whose love
cannot cease:

Research Report

*Example 1
Joshua Leavitt, The
Christian Lyre (1830)*

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95. *The Saint's Sweet Home.*

1 'Mid scenes of confusion and creature complain,
How sweet to my soul is communion with saints
To find at the banquet of mercy there's room,
And feel in the presence of Jesus at home.

CHORUS.

*Home, home, sweet, sweet home,
Prepare me, dear Saviour, for glory, my home.*

2 Sweet bonds that unite all the children of peace!
And thrice precious Jesus, whose love cannot cease
Though oft from thy presence in sadness I roam,
I long to behold thee, in glory at home.

3 I sigh from this body of sin to be free,
Which hinders my joy and communion with thee;
Though now my temptations like billows may foam,
All, all will be peace, when I'm with thee at home.

4 While here in the valley of conflict I stay,
O give me submission and strength as my day;
In all my afflictions to thee would I come,
Rejoicing in hope of my glorious home.

5 What'er thou deniest, O give me thy grace,
The Spirit's sure witness, and smiles of thy face;
Indulge me with patience to wait at thy throne,
And find even now a sweet foretaste of home.

6 I long, dearest Lord, in thy beauties to shine,
No more as an exile, in sorrow to pine,
And in thy dear image, arise from the tomb,
With glorified millions to praise thee, at Home.
*Home, home, sweet, sweet home,
Receive me, dear Saviour, in glory, my home*

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96. *Sweet Home.*

1 An alien from God, and a stranger to grace,
I wandered through earth, its gay pleasures to trace
In the pathway of sin I continued to roam,
Unmindful, alas! that it led me from home.
Home, home, sweet, sweet home,
O Saviour! direct me to heaven, my home.

2 The pleasures of earth, I have seen fade away,
They bloom for a season, but soon they decay,
But pleasures more lasting, in Jesus are given,
Salvation on earth, and a mansion in heaven.
Home, home, sweet, sweet home,
The saints in those mansions are ever at home.

3 Allure me no longer, ye false glowing charms!
The Savior invites me, I'll go to his arms;
At the banquet of mercy, I hear there is room,
O there may I feast with his children at home!
Home, home, sweet, sweet home,
O Jesus, conduct me to heaven, my home!

4 Farewell, vain amusements, my follies, adieu,
While Jesus, and heaven, and glory I view;
I feast on the pleasures that flow from his throne,
The foretaste of heaven, sweet heaven, my home.
Home, home, sweet, sweet home,
O when shall I share the fruition of home!

5 The days of my exile are passing away,
The time is approaching, when Jesus will say,
'Well done, faithful servant, sit down on my throne,
And dwell in my presence for ever at home.'
Home, home, sweet, sweet home,
O there I shall rest with the Savior at home.

6 Affliction, and sorrow, and death shall be o'er,
The saints shall unite to be parted no more;
There loud hallelujahs fill heaven's high dome,
They dwell with the Savior for ever at home.
Home, home, sweet, sweet home,
They dwell with the Savior for ever at home.

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¹Richard J. Wolfe, *Secular Music in America, 1801-1825: A Bibliography*, 3 vols. (New York: The New York Public Library, 1964), pp. 60-62.

²Charles Hamm, *Yesterdays: Popular Song in America* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1979), pp. 165-170; and W. Thomas Marrocco and Harold Gleason, *Music in America* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1964), pp. 310-312.

³Ernest K. Emurian, *Stories of Songs about Heaven* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1972), pp. 68-73.

⁴Benjamin M. Hill, *Hymns of Zion; Being a Selection of Hymns for Social Worship Compiled Chiefly for the Use of Baptist Churches* (New Haven: Durrie and Peck, 1832), pp. 214-215.

⁵*Dictionary of American Hymnology*; copy available to this author is in Joseph Hillman, *The Revivalist* (Troy, N.Y.: Joseph Hillman, 1869), p. 172.

⁶Emurian, p. 72.

This article is an excerpt and revision of "Parody in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century American Hymnody," in *We'll Shout and Sing Hosanna: Essays on Church Music in Honor of William J. Reynolds*, ed. David W. Music (Fort Worth, Tex.: School of Church Music, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1998), pp. 187-191.

Though oft from thy presence, in sadness I roam,
I long to behold thee, in glory, at home.

I sigh, from this body of sin to be free;
Which hinders my joy and communion with thee;
Though now my temptations like billows may foam,
All, all will be peace when I'm with thee at home.

While here in the valley of conflict I stay,
O give me submissions and strength as my day;
In all my afflictions to thee would I come,
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Whate'er thou deniest, O give me thy grace!
The spirit's sure witness, and smiles of thy face;
Indulge me with patience to wait till thou come,
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I long, dearest Lord, in thy beauties to shine,
No more, as an exile, in sorrow to pine,
And in thy fair image, arise from the tomb
With glorified millions to praise thee at home.⁴

Joshua Leavitt printed Denham's version in *The Christian Lyre* (1830) with an additional parody on the facing page, "An alien from God, and a stranger to grace" (Example 1). Compilers also included SWEET HOME in such notable collections as *The Sacred Harp* (1844), *The Christian Minstrel* (1846), and *The Social Harp* (1855).

By the time Joseph Hillman included "Sweet Home" in *The Revivalist*, compilers had merged the first stanza of "Mid scenes of confusion and creature complaints" and the remaining three stanzas of the second parody, "An alien from God, and a stranger to grace." A third parody, "I have started for Canaan, must I leave you behind?," appeared with the tune SWEET HOME as early as 1846 in *A New and Choice Selection of Hymns, for Social Worship and Private Devotion* compiled by Moses Spencer.⁵ This third text was written by an S. Hoyt, about whom nothing else is known to this author.

With the appearance of the hymn in the 1928 edition of *The New Cokesbury Hymnal*, the religious parody of "Home, sweet home" made its way into the twentieth century.⁶ According to the version printed in Emurian's *Stories of Songs about Heaven*, *The New Cokesbury Hymnal* selected stanzas 1, 2, 4, and 5 of Denham's original rather than the blend of two parodies incorporated in earlier collections. As a result, this popular parody spanned more than a century of American hymnody. ■