

## WHY WE SHOULD KEEP SINGING THE OLD SONGS

By Bob Young

The music of the church has been important in my life. Many Sunday afternoons, we either had someone over for dinner or we were invited to someone's house. After Sunday dinner, we often sat around and sang hymns. I grew up leading singing in the church. I sang in a cappella quartets. My Christian walk was nurtured by the words of old, memorable songs of faith. Across the years, brothers and sisters in Christ shared their favorite hymns with me so that their favorite song became "our song." Singing those songs still brings to my memory special friendships and relationships from my past.

Faith songs are monuments on our faith journey. A monument is something that commemorates a person or event. "We shall see the king someday" reminds me of the little white clapboard building down below the town square where my grandmother went to church. "Shall we gather at the river" brings to mind river baptisms illuminated by car headlights. "How Sweet, How Heavenly" is another song that became "our song"—a special reminder a dear missionary sister now with our Lord. I remember my mother singing "His Eye is on the Sparrow;" that song was sung at her funeral. My mother also loved "Far Away in the Depths," reminding her of peace in the storms of life. I could continue the list for a long time—three-fourths of a century of listening to songs, hymns, and spiritual songs; sharing faith with countless Christians.

Along the way, I have not shunned new songs. I was enchanted by the repertoire of the Melody Boys, and many of those songs, once unfamiliar, found their way into our newer hymnals. On the other hand, I would note that more and more we are trying to sing songs that will not endure the passing of time. The lyrics and the music are not eternal! The songs we sang ten years ago are no longer in vogue.

Please hear me! My plea is not to quit singing new songs. My plea is to be discerning. Not every song we hear on the radio is suitable for rearrangement as a church song. Instrumental bridges are hard to duplicate in vocal music. And above all—**may we never quit singing a good selection of the older songs of faith.** For many of us, those songs are the monuments that mark our faith journey and remind us of where we have been, who we are, and those who helped us arrive at the present moment.