

April – 2000

The Debate Rages...Hymns or Praise Choruses

An old farmer goes to the city one weekend and attends the big city church. He comes home and his wife asks him how it was. “Well,” says the farmer, “it was good.” They did something different, however. They sang praise choruses instead of hymns.”

“Praise choruses,” says his wife, “what are those?”

“Oh, they’re okay. They’re sort of like hymns, only different,” says the farmer.

“Well, what’s the difference,” asks the wife.

The farmer says, “Well, it’s like this. If I were to say to you: ‘Martha, the cows are in the corn,’ well, that would be a hymn. If, on the other hand, I were to say to you:

*Martha, Martha, Martha,
Oh, Martha, MARTHA, MARTHA,
the cows, the black cows, the white cows,
the black and white cows,
the COWS, COWS, COWS are in the corn,
in the corn, are in the corn, are in the corn,
the CORN, CORN, CORN,*

Then, if I were to repeat the whole thing two or three times, well, that would be a praise chorus.”

As luck would have it, the exact same Sunday, a young, new Christian from the city church attends the small town church. He comes home and his wife asks him how it was.

“Well,” says the young man, “it was good. They did something different, however. They sang hymns instead of regular songs.”

“Hymns,” says his wife, “what are those?”

“Oh, they’re okay. They’re like praise songs, only different,” says the young man.

“Well, what’s the difference,” asks his wife.

The young man says, “Well, it’s like this: If I were to say to you, ‘Martha, the cows are in the corn,’ well, that would be a regular song. If, on the other hand, if I were to say to you:

*Oh Martha, dear Martha, hear thou my cry.
Inclined thine ear to the words of my mouth,
Turn thou thy whole wondrous ear by and by
To the righteous, inimitable, glorious truth.*

*For the way of the animals, who can explain
There in their heads is no shadow of sense,
Hearkenest they in God's sun or his rain
Unless from the mild, tempting corn they are fenced.*

*Yea, those cows in glad bovine, rebellious delight,
Have broke free their shackles, their warm pens eschewed.
Then goaded by minions of darkness and night
They all my mild Chilliwack sweet corn have chewed.*

*So look to that bright shining day by and by,
Where all foul corruptions of earth are reborn.
Where no vicious animal makes my soul cry
And I no longer see those foul cows in the corn.*

Then, if we were to sing only verses one, three, and four...and do a key change on the last verse, well that would be a hymn."