

Titanic's final concert

by David Rumsey

Tradition has it that the band aboard the ill-fated White Star liner, Titanic, played "Nearer my God, to Thee" in the doomed ship's final moments on April 15th 1912. In fact a remarkably similar story was first associated with events on the steam ship *Valencia* as she sank off Vancouver Island, Canada, on January 22nd 1906.

"... As the life raft departed into the waves, the women sang "Nearer My God to Thee. ... ""

Some regard this as the possible origin of the Titanic story; some suspect it may never have applied to Titanic. In any event it is now especially promoted by the film industry for fully understandable commercial reasons - it is wonderfully sentimental, poignant symbolism and certainly helps sell movies. Perhaps the Valencia chronicle was known to band, crew or passengers aboard the Titanic and this was their deliberate, copy-cat repertoire choice, but

posterity has passed on nothing to us in that connection. Nor is it definitively known which of the available associated tunes was used in either case. For readers who want the Titanic version of this topic more fully expounded, reference to Walter Lord's book, "The Night lives on" (William Morrow & Co. New York 1986) is mandatory. In it a performance of a work popular in Britain - but not America - during the immediate pre-Titanic era, "Songe d'Automne" by Archibald Joyce, is convincingly presented as the most likely music to have been played on the occasion. Yet somehow "Autumn Dream" seems to be a strangely inappropriate choice for a moment such as this.



1906 report on Valencia's sinking

Be that as it may, if it was the hymn, then it might more appropriately have been played on

an organ, yet obviously there was no choice at the time: neither Valencia nor Titanic had an organ, and power or bellows-treaders would assuredly have been in short supply at that precise time, to say nothing of organists.

The most significant ship's organ ever built was, and remains, the roll-playing *Welte Philharmonie* now preserved at the *Swiss Museum für Musikautomaten*, Seewen, Canton Solothurn (Seewen Museum). This instrument was originally built for Titanic's sister, *Britannic*, and survives along with over 1,400 *Welte Philharmonie* player-rolls, carefully preserved in the Seewen Museum's archives. They are now the focus of digitization, part of a Swiss federally-funded project called "*Wie von Geisterhand*" (the reference is to the "ghostly hands" of the dead who seemingly still play "live" from piano or organ rolls.)

A recording by Joseph Bonnet (1884-1944) of his own work "In Memoriam Titanic -

to the Memory of Titanic's heroes" has recently come to light, preserved in Seewen's roll-collection, now truly a unique world cultural heritage. The music to "In Memoriam" was published in 1925, but dating the work this way could be deceptive: in fact Bonnet's recording of it for Welte was already released by 1914. Thus it has much closer temporal connections to Titanic, containing signposts that could be useful to us, especially information that we might no longer be readily aware of e.g. in the choice of musical themes from known melodies of the day or survivors' reports. Indeed, Bonnet's work is identified as "based on Nearer my God, to Thee," something which the Italian organist, Vincenzo Ninci, notes, having recorded "In Memoriam Titanic" himself on CD and posted, inter alia, the following on his web-site in 1999:

"Il naufragio nel transatlantico Titanic suggerì a Joseph Bonnet la composizione di In Memoriam op. 10 n. 1, dedicato "To the memory of the TITANIC'S heroes". Questa ampia fantasia su melodia preesistente (il manoscritto reca l'indicazione "based upon Nearer my God to Thee") lascia aperto qualche interrogativo sulla provenienza del corale. Esiste - è vero - un cantico con questo titolo nel repertorio della chiesa evangelica anglofona, ma del tutto diverso da quello utilizzato da Bonnet; d'altra parte il fatto che il compositore stesso ne attesti l'esistenza farebbe cadere l'ipotesi che possa trattarsi di una melodia da lui composta per l'occasione."

Ninci is to be thoroughly commended for his fine initiatives and excellent notes to these recordings, and possibly he has meantime researched this topic further. I would not blame him or anybody else outside the precious culture of British hymnology for being unaware of the origins of the tune that Bonnet used. Indeed, since this hymn tune has fallen out of use in the second half of the 20th century, few people under 70, even if from English cultures, would know it. Most people hearing Bonnet's work would now come to the same conclusion as Ninci. Certainly he is correct thus far: it is not the traditional US tune that now circulates so widely with its special blessing from Hollywood-inspired Titanic films. But, as we shall see, nor did Bonnet compose the hymn tune used in his piece. It already existed.

19thc and early 20thc English hymnody is a rather specialized musical culture. It includes the use of a specific name - a kind of nickname, often a place name - to identify a tune. Together with the British Empire these hymns and their associated melodies spread the globe from the 18th century onwards and particularly in the 19th with a new style of text which used the "first-person-singular" - "I" and "my" - far more frequently. The music developed its own styles and associations - a mix of simplicity in harmony and a modest chromaticism typified it along with melodies somewhat more harmonically conceived than, e.g. those in Handelian style from the 18th century. Newly-composed tunes were regularly added to the inventory of already-existing ones to the point that, as with the British Empire itself, the sun never seemed to set on them from the mid-19th century onwards. This culture of nick-naming hymn-tunes was, and mostly remains, outside the realm of Roman Catholic or most Reformed European churches. It was, however, well developed in both Establishment (Anglican) and especially Free Churches (notably the Methodists) by the second half of the 19th century. The extent of its dispersion was quite impressive: England, North America (both USA and Canada), English-derivative South Africa, former Rhodesia, other African or Indian sub-continent countries, and the general Hong Kong-Singapore-Australia-New Zealand-Pacific Island arena. This increases the chances that the rainbow of multi-national Titanic passengers might recognise one of these tunes if it was played - which Walter Lord notes was unlikely at

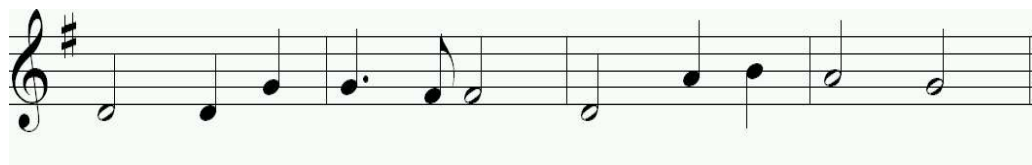
Titanic's demise on the grounds that this would destroy, rather than boost passenger morale. Against that we must remember the *Valencia* chronicle where it seems to have either boosted morale or been an expression of despair; perhaps both.

Nevertheless, with the text of "Nearer my God, to Thee" and its many tunes we have a prime example of a hymn tradition meshing globally with a clearly-defined sociology and religious culture. There is importance here to any consideration of the Titanic context.

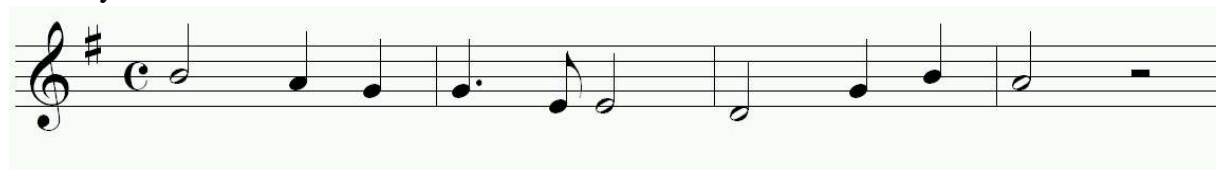
In November 1840 the 5-verse text of "Nearer my God, to Thee" was written by Sarah Fuller Flower Adams (1805-48), an English actress and poetess. Adams was a Unitarian, who wrote her hymns specifically for that denomination. We should note here that the text was English-British in origin. Other denominations, as it suited them, freely took over such poetry, often provided it with new tunes and otherwise adapted it to their own, often sectarian, styles and purposes. Thus, for example, a sixth verse was later written for "Nearer my God, to Thee" by Edward H. Bickersteth Jr, and some other modifications to it also exist.

At least 15 different tunes became associated with this hymn in the 80 years or so after it was written. Listed here, with a selection of incipits, they include (alphabetically):

American



Bethany



Communion



Horbury



Liverpool



Propior Deo



Rothwell



- some other tunes, again alphabetically, are Bethel, Excelsior (another name used for Bethany), Southhampton, St. Edmund, Werburgh, Whiteford. At least a further 3 unnamed tunes are known to exist.

As far as it is possible at present to accurately reconstruct it, the following chronology represents a general evolution and propagation of this hymn and its associated tunes.

* 1841: in a collection compiled by William Johnson Fox entitled “Hymns and Anthems” it was set to a tune written by Adams’ sister, Eliza Flower;

* 1859 *Bethany* (*Excelsior*): tune written by Lowell Mason (1792-1872); although it appeared almost immediately in the US we find no trace of it in English hymnals until 1905;

* *American*: origin, date and composer unknown;

* 1861: *Horbury*, composed by John Bacchus Dykes (1823-1876), appeared first publicly in 1863, then achieved global dissemination in the ca. 1869-70 edition of “Hymns Ancient and Modern,” a standard English hymnal which was used - with few major revisions - well into the second half of the 20thc;

* 1865: the text appeared again in “The Chorale Book for England ” with a set tune, apparently without a name, composed by one of the editors, Otto Goldshmidt:



* 1869: *Bethany* seems to have crossed the Pacific long before it crossed the Atlantic, appearing in a collection of “hymns for all occasions” published under the title of “The New Melodeon” in Melbourne, Australia. This transfer may have been connected with the gold-rush there which attracted many from north America - specifically California - where the hymn was by then becoming well-known. As interesting as this might be, it has no likely connection with Titanic’s passengers or musical repertoire;

* 1870s? *Liverpool* by John Roberts: the date of the tune is unclear, Roberts lived 1822-77 ;

* 1872: the text was included in “The European Psalmist,” set to *Communion*, by Samuel S. Wesley;

* 1872: *Propior Deo* was composed by Arthur S. Sullivan (1842-1900);

* 1881: in “Church Praise” *Propior Deo* first appears as third alternative to i. *Whiteford*, and ii. *Horbury*. Sullivan also wrote another, little used, tune for it, *St. Edmund*, (date unclear);

* 1884: the hymn was included in “The London Mission Hymn Book” set to *Horbury*;

* 1900: it was included in “The Free Church Mission Tune Book and Hymnal” set to the tune *Werburgh* by Sir R. Stewart;

* pre-1906: in “The Casket of Song” (sacred music for Sunday Schools, anniversaries, and the home circle) it was set to a tune without a name by J.N. Cullingford;

* *Bethany* may have first come fully to attention in England after the 1901 assassination of American President, William McKinley when it was performed at a memorial service for him in Westminster Abbey, London. For McKinley it was a known favourite, and had been played several times in his honour in the US.

* 1905: it was included in the “Sunday School Hymnary”, where *Bethany* was probably first published in England, but where *Southampton* is also given as an alternative tune;

* 1911: it was included in the “Hymnal Companion to the Book of Common Prayer”, where *Bethany* is given as a second tune to *Bethel*;

* in 1915 the tune, *Rothwell*, was written by Geoffrey T. Shaw, but this post-dates Titanic’s demise. Nevertheless, if a new tune was perceived as necessary at this stage, it at least indicates that *Bethany*, in existence in Britain for about a decade, had still not gained the favour it was later to get.

By the time Titanic was heading for her iceberg the most widely-used tunes on the north-eastern side of the Atlantic, and in the English-speaking world globally were *Horbury* (its distribution, especially through “Hymns Ancient and Modern,” was British-Empire-wide) and *Propior Deo*. On the north-western side of the Atlantic it was another story, with *Bethany* as the most likely choice, at least well-dispersed around the more fundamentalist arena.

There are thus clearly three main contenders for use aboard Titanic in her final moments:

* *Bethany*

- has featured in the majority of “Titanic” films, but not all. The first film does not enter into question since it was from 1912 (Germany, titled “In Nacht und Eis”), made immediately after the disaster but before sound-tracks, so no possibility exists of identifying music. Perhaps some day an original pit-orchestra, piano or cinema-organ score might show up - but that is extremely unlikely now. The film in any case includes no scene likely to perpetuate the “Nearer my God, to Thee” chronicle.

Much later *Bethany* first appears in the 1943 version (“Titanic”, also from Germany, made under the Nazis - played by a brass band in this film), another of 1953 by Jean Negulesco, and again in that of James Cameron in 1997. (These films were all accessible on the Internet at the time this article went to press - e.g. www.youtube.com). Since *Bethany* was published in only relatively obscure British hymnals, first in 1905 then 1911, in both cases as one of several possible tunes, its use aboard Titanic was unlikely, given the facts and England’s renowned conservatism. It is doubtful whether any except American passengers were ever acquainted with it.

The *Deutsches Musikautomaten- Museum* at Bruchsal, Germany, possesses an

orchestration said to have been intended for

Titanic: the writer of a letter in a recent issue of “Titanic Commutator” (Vol 32 Nr. 184, dated 2008) comments that the version of “Nearer my God to Thee” that the Bruchsal organ plays is “not that traditionally associated” (i.e.

Bethany), but another, “unfamiliar tune”. In fact Bruchsal does play *Bethany* - just that it is a slightly elaborated version of the tune and not so immediately recognisable. The roll used, Welte #133, is a curiosity, apparently from the New York branch of the Welte firm (a “Philharmonic” - cf. European “Philharmonie”), played by an organist identified as “A. Menner” and wrongly attributed to Stephen Forster. It therefore has little credibility in its own right and no demonstrable connection as such with either Titanic or Bruchsal’s organ. “Menner” might seem likely to have been an Americanization of “Maenner” - another organist appearing on Welte rolls, including one of “Nearer my God, to Thee” (Roll #167). However the US “A. Menner” also plays “My old Kentucky home, good night” (Roll #165) and “Old folks at home” (#166) whereas the European “J.B. Maenner” plays a repertoire otherwise entirely of Germanic hymns. All rolls seem to be from about 1922, but they cannot be used as proof or disproof of anything in this connection.



c1912 Dutch postcard quoting *Bethany*

A Dutch postcard from about 1912, with a fully-harmonized version and the first verse,

is the single early source which associates the hymn with Titanic and this melody. The card's origins are obscure. Connections between North American churches and Europe - e.g. Canada and Lutheranism - indicate that there were significant points of contact here. The fundamentalists, most notably the Dutch Reformed Church, had relatively good lines of communication with diasporas, including Canada: perhaps the Valencia connections can be felt here? Nevertheless it is unlikely to be supportive of *Bethany* and Titanic links. Failing better evidence it can hardly be regarded as more than an interesting, if mystifying curiosity in the Titanic context. European passengers formed a minority aboard the vessel and Dutch passengers can have had little to do with the band's choice on that evening. There was only one Netherlander aboard (First Class, not a survivor).

If it was the band's choice, then English-British culture would have prevailed here and *Bethany* is effectively ruled out by Walter Lord in "The Night lives on".

All of this underlines again the "power" that *Bethany* had in the USA: it had seemingly become as popular as Stephen C. Foster's songs and was even mistaken for one by 1922. With the possible exception of the Netherlands postcard, it was still 10 years after Titanic's sinking that this melody began to appear in Europe. It was only included in the Austrian Catholic hymnal from late 20thc and still does not appear in the Swiss.

* *Propior Deo*

Titanic's Dödshymn

Psalmen, som spelades ombord å Titanic under det fartyget sjönk, återfinnes i engelska kyrkans psalmbok nr 277. Här nedan återfinnes den i svensk översättning, sådan den återfinnes i Svenska Baptistsmissionens sångbok.

Närmare, Gud, till Dig.

Närmare, Gud, till Dig,
Närmare Dig!
Om det än blir ett kors,
Som drifvet mig,
Skall det dock bli min sång
Här under tidens tvång:
Närmare, Gud, till Dig,
Närmare Dig.

När på min pilgrimsfärd,
Solen gått ned,
Mörker omger mig,
Allen jag är,
Fader, till Dig jag då
Vill uti bönen gå:
Närmare, Gud, till Dig,
Närmare Dig.

Visa mig då Din väg
Hem till Ditt land,
Lär mig att taga all
Ifrån Din hand;
Vare Du då min tröst,
Slut mig intill Ditt bröst:
Närmare, Gud, till Dig,
Närmare Dig.

När ifrån jordens grus,
Sorg och besvär,
Du har mig kallat hem,
Där själf Du är;
Skall det dock bli min sång,
Evidt bland helgon mång:
Närmare, Gud, till Dig,
Närmare Dig.

c1912 Swedish postcard quoting *Horbury*

- could well have been used aboard Titanic since it was reasonably widely known in England around this time, although mainly by Methodists. Titanic's bandmaster, Wallace Hartley, is sometimes quoted as "liking this tune" and wanting it performed at his funeral. He was British, Methodist, and would have known both *Horbury* and *Propior Deo*, but is less likely to have been familiar with *Bethany* or have any preference for it. His father was a Methodist choirmaster and is said to have coupled the words of "Nearer, my God, to Thee" with *Propior Deo* consistently for over thirty years.

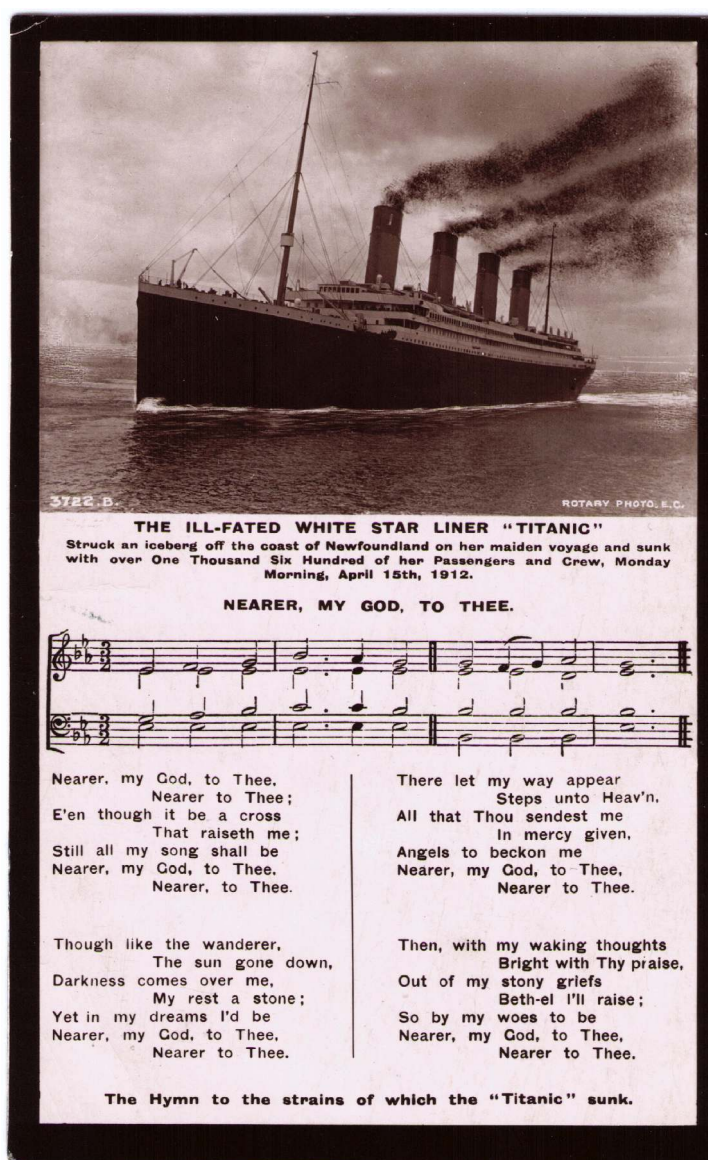
Hartley's descendants believe he used *Propior Deo* on Titanic, and an incipit of it appears on a memorial to him. There is thus a case that this tune could have been used. Against this its circulation seems to have been confined to a certain socio-economic stratum - poor British miners, Methodists with hints even of anti-Establishment - that would hardly have related to the majority of Titanic's passengers. The typical British passenger's culture - including the band - seems to

have been mostly conservative, Establishment and Anglican (i.e. Episcopalian or Church of England). Church services were overwhelmingly Church of England aboard the vessel.

Accordingly, if *Propior Deo* was the tune played, then it was for Wallace's own personal reasons. It would have been less likely to be recognized - and reported, if it ever was - by the general run of survivors. Against that it needs stating, that the passengers were of very mixed nationalities - even putting the USA, British and Canadians together we only arrive at just around 51% (GB 25.4%; US 23.2%; Canada 2.6%). Few of the remainder would have had much idea of the connections with these melodies to say nothing of being within earshot of the final piece to be played (again see Walter Lord in "The Night lives on."). This could give added credence to it having been Wallace's personal choice since few of his "audience" was going to know what he was playing. Yet one doubts they could have been paying much attention to the music at such a moment. The tune does not even enter contention for such authorities as Walter Lord.

* *Horbury*

- by 1912 was the most widespread and traditional English tune to these words, long with an effectively world-wide distribution. It had appeared in English hymnals only 2 years after *Bethany*'s creation in the US and had maintained a predominant position there for half a century until and through the era of *Titanic*'s demise. It had become globally known for most of that time, especially through its early inclusion and dissemination in "Hymns Ancient and Modern." It was the traditional tune used by England's Establishment, Anglican and thus general musical circles. In an era when that stratum of society was purchasing tickets for *Titanic*'s maiden voyage, this tune and hymn association would, for most of the English-speakers, have either been deeply entrenched or at least very well-known. Interestingly *Horbury* was adopted in 1958 for Roy Ward Baker's film about the tragedy - "A Night to Remember". Some contemporary postcards - one in Swedish - others mainly in English, all quote *Horbury* as the tune.



c1912 postcard quoting an incipit of *Horbury*

So the choice narrows. But since 2007 the Seewen Museum has acquired an unexpected and interesting role to play in this question. In that year the organ was restored and found to be the one originally destined for Titanic's successor, "Britannic". Subsequent examination of the nearly 1,500 rolls which are associated with it, now forming a unique world-heritage of early recorded performances, is bringing many important details to light. One of them is a recording of Joseph Bonnet playing his own work, "In Memoriam Titanic - To the Memory of Titanic's Heroes", on Welte's Roll #1611. Bonnet accounts for a total of at least 44 organ roll recordings for Welte: in 16 of them he performs works of his own.

"In Memoriam Titanic" is preserved as a Master-roll in the Seewen Museum's archives. Bonnet was born in 1884 in Bordeaux and was already travelling as a recitalist and making recordings by 1913. He died in 1944 in Québec, Canada. As we have noted, from the music's publication date, 1925, it could appear to have been written about a decade after Titanic's demise. However his actual recording sessions at the Freiburg Welte premises are noted as commencing on 6th February 1913. Since W.H. Goss-Custard was next (20th February 1913) Bonnet's sessions must have been completed by then. We know of no other such recording sessions involving Bonnet and his Welte rolls were release-dated between 1913 and 1926. The Master-roll of "In Memoriam Titanic" in Seewen's possession is clearly dated 1914, fully supporting a recording date of February 1913. He must therefore have composed this work very soon after the sinking. That certainly brings the music and its themes far closer to the event than, for example, any of the "Hollywood" re-creations, a 1925 publication date for the work, or indeed most other speculation on this hymn's melodies in connection with sinking ships.

From 15th April 1912 to 6th February 1913 is a comfortable time to compose a major work of this kind - 12 minutes' duration - and to do the necessary background research, as he had to into the hymn-melody. It is based on the tune *Horbury*.

This at least clears up Vincenzo Ninci's statement about the tune being unknown - in fact it was very well known, but understandably, those from outside the slightly arcane traditions of British hymnology in the century or so to about 1960 would not normally come across it. Bonnet, also outside this tradition, must have had some advice on this tune, because he, too, would not normally have encountered it before 1912-13 through his French background. It may be significant here that one postcard quoted the music in full and a 4-verse version of the text in both French and English, but whether this ever came to Bonnet's notice is unknown and would now be very hard to investigate. Certainly it clearly alerts us to the existence of a French interface with *Horbury* in this connection.

Thus, if any hymn tune was played as Titanic sank, it was probably *Horbury*, evidence now strengthened by the facts of Bonnet's 1912-1913 composition and recording. If it was *Propior Deo*, then it was bandmaster Wallace's personal choice but that would have been less familiar to the passengers; if *Horbury*, then it was what most passengers capable of recognition of hymns knew best, are most likely to have identified and possibly later reported; if *Bethany*, then it must have been a little prophetic and lacked significant connection with most passengers, band or crew.

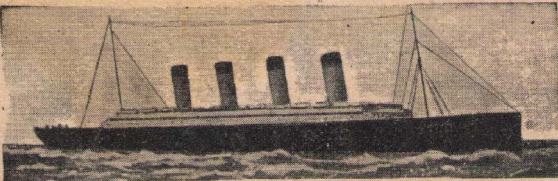
The existing evidence so far accumulated thus leaves *Horbury* and *Propior Deo* as the most convincing contenders, but, while well-researched films, British hymnology, musical tradition, Wallace-family reminiscences and English sociology endorses them as the chief possibilities - and who is to say for certain whether none, one, or more well-known tunes to this hymn were played? - Bonnet's dedicated work does clearly provide a highly important signpost to *Horbury*.

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331

PLUS PRÈS DE TOI MON DIEU !

Célèbre Cantique du "TITANIC"




Plus haut, plus haut ! c'est le cri de ma foi :
S'il faut courber la tête sous le glaive,
Je veux encor que mon âme s'élève
Plus près de toi, mon Dieu, plus près de toi !

Lorsque la nuit se fait autour de moi,
Quand j'erre seul dans le désert immense,
Que de mon âme encor ce cri s'élance :
Plus près de toi, mon Dieu, plus près de toi !

Prends, ô mon cœur, les ailes de la foi,
Vole au-dessus des monts et des vallées,
Chante, au travers des plaines étoilées :
Plus près de toi, mon Dieu, plus près de toi !

Quand tu viendras, ô mon céleste Roi,
Me recueillir dans ta pure lumière,
Que je redise à mon heure dernière :
Plus près de toi, mon Dieu, plus près de toi !

NEARER MY GOD TO THEE !



Nearer my God, to Thee,
Nearer to Thee ;
E'en though it be a cross
That raiseth me,
Still all my song shall be
Nearer, my God, to Thee,
Nearer to Thee.

Though, like the wanderer,
The sun gone down
Darkness comes over me,
My rest a stone ;
Yet in my dreams I'd be
Nearer, my God, to Thee,
Nearer to Thee.

There let my way appear
Steps unto Heav'n,
All that Thou sendest me
In mercy given,
Angels to beckon me
Nearer, my God, to Thee,
Nearer to Thee.

Then, with my waking thoughts
Bright with Thy praise,
Out of my stony griefs
Beth-el I'll raise,
So by my woes to be
Nearer, my God, to Thee,
Nearer to Thee.

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c1912 postcard quoting *Horbury*, with French and English text

Sources and references:

http://www.historylink.org/index.cfm?DisplayPage=output.cfm&File_Id=7382
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See also Swiss SF1 TV “Einstein” program:

<http://videoportal.sf.tv/video?id=1be676e5-769d-486b-9d59-382af51256d3&referrer=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.sf.tv%2Fsendungen%2Ffeinstein%2Fsendung.php%3Fdocid%3D20100114>

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After publication of this article - in slightly differing format, and here with some minor corrigenda and additional graphics - the following arrived from Simon Colvin (Melbourne, AUS) which lists additional occurrences in other hymn books. It is here appended and acknowledged with gratitude:

- * The Sunday School Hymnary [a Twentieth Century Hymnary for Young People - words and music edited by Carey Bonner] (published MDCCCCV 1905) includes two tunes at #519
 - o Bethany [Lowel Mason]
 - o Southampton [Anon c 1880]
- * Church Hymnal General Synod of the Church of Ireland [7th edition 1883 edited by Sir

Robert Prescott Stewart (Stanford's teacher)]

- o #285 Mistley [Rev L G Hayne, Mus.D.]

- * Church Hymns with Tunes [edited Sir Arthur Sullivan 1891 SPCK]

- o #437 Propior Deo [Arthur Sullivan]

- o #438 St John [Otto Goldschmidt]

So this solves one of your questions, the name of the tune by Otto Goldschmidt ... two other tunes called Bethany ... appear in The Bristol Tune Book. Only the first line of words are given:

- o #171 Moravian [God of mercy, God of grace]

- o #823 Henry Smart [Saviour, sprinkle many nations]

When this hymn comes up in Hymns Old & New on 3MBS [103.5 FM Melbourne - www.3mbs.org.au] from time to time I think it's Horbury which we use from St Paul's Cathedral, London.

Further considerations:

Karg-Elert wrote organ pieces associated with the Titanic disaster, but based them on *Bethany* a Fantasia of his also appears to be from 1913.

See also: www.hymnsocietygbi.org.uk/70%20articles/1970s/Titanic.pdf

Additional information received from the daughter of Joseph Bonnet, Mme Francoise Brown-Bonnet of Nancy, France (delivered in Seewen on 29th November 2012 - summarized in the text box).

Titanic went down on 14th April 1912. One month after the sinking, Bonnet gave a benefit concert for the "Titanic" Fund at Huddersfield (GB). In the middle of the recital the hymn, *Nearer, my God, to Thee*, was sung by the audience. Then Bonnet improvised on the tune. A journalist wrote at the time: "Not the least notable of his performances was his remarkable improvisation on the hymn *Nearer, my God, to Thee* which was sung in the midst of the recital. Out of this unpromising material, he constructed, with that power of logical development peculiar to the great French organists, an impassioned fantasia, rising to a height of anguished expression, and then calmly down to a mood of resignation."

On 9th October (Huddersfield), 12th October (Sheffield) 14th October (West Hartlepool) 1912 Bonnet again played works with similar titles, all dedicated to the "Heroes of the Titanic". Bonnet wrote to G.H. Barnes concerning the West Hartlepool recital that the Titanic Disaster "has touched me very much and I have great admiration for the heroism of that day."

It is thus now clear how Bonnet came to use the *Horbury* tune, the one on everybody's lips in England at the time. We also get a clearer picture of his creative processes in writing the work. It must therefore have been the "final version" of what commenced as an improvisation in Huddersfield in May 1912, one month after the disaster, and became a recording in 1913.

Revision of 6 December, 2012