

## Favorite Hymn for August 16, 2020

### Offertory Hymn “The Love of God”

*A favorite of Ray Utterback and his father.*

A simple and lovely rendition of this hymn, though the refrain is only sung once, at the end of the hymn: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NUy3yaSd9b0>

Frederick Martin Lehman, (Born: August 7, 1868, Mecklenburg, Schwerin, Germany. Died: February 20, 1953, Pasadena, California.), the author of this hymn in 1917, wrote its story in a pamphlet in 1948:

*“While at camp meeting in a mid-western state, some fifty years ago in our early ministry, an evangelist climaxed his message by quoting the last stanza of this song. The profound depths of the lines moved us to preserve the words for future generations.*

*Not until we had come to California did this urge find fulfillment, and that at a time when circumstances forced us to hard manual labor. One day, during short intervals of inattention to our work, we picked up a scrap of paper and, seated upon an empty lemon box pushed against the wall, with a stub pencil, added the (first) two stanzas and chorus of the song. (Note: The “we” here is Lehman’s daughter.)*

*...Since the lines (3rd stanza from the Jewish poem) had been found penciled on the wall of a patient’s room in an insane asylum after he had been carried to his grave, the general opinion was that this inmate had written the epic in moments of sanity.*

*The key-stanza (Third verse) under question as to its authorship was written nearly one thousand years ago by a Jewish songwriter, and put on the score page by F. M. Lehman, a Gentile songwriter, in 1917.”*

The identity of that incarcerated prisoner is unknown, but it is now recognized that his scribbled message was adapted from an eleventh-century acrostic Jewish poem entitled Haddamut (or Akdamut) of ninety couplets written in the Aramaic language with the author’s name woven into the concluding verses. It was composed in the years around 1050 to 1096 by a Jewish rabbi and cantor in the city of Worms, Germany, named Mayer (or Meir) ben Isaac Nehorai (c. 1020-1096). Rabbi Meir Bar Yitzach Nehorai wrote the Akadamut as an introduction to the reading of Ten Commandments. Presently, it is a liturgical poem in the Ashkenazi Jewish tradition. Typical Ashkenazi worshipers recite the Akadamut on the first day of Shavuot.

The hymn discusses some important facts about God’s love for us.

Verse 1 teaches us that God’s love is greater than anything that we can tell

Verse 2 teaches us that God’s love is stronger than anything that we can know

Verse 3 teaches us that God’s love is more enduring than anything else

1. The love of God is greater far  
Than tongue or pen can ever tell  
It goes beyond the highest star  
And reaches to the lowest hell  
The guilty pair, bowed down with care  
God gave His Son to win  
His erring child He reconciled  
And pardoned from his sin

*Refrain* O love of God, how rich and pure!  
How measureless and strong!  
It shall forevermore endure  
The saints' and angels' song

2. When hoary time shall pass away,  
And earthly thrones and kingdoms fall,  
When men who here refuse to pray,  
On rocks and hills and mountains call,  
God's love so sure, shall still endure,  
All measureless and strong,  
Redeeming grace to Adam's race  
The saints and angels' song. *Refrain*

3. Could we with ink the ocean fill  
And were the skies of parchment made  
Were every stalk on earth a quill  
And every man a scribe by trade  
To write the love of God above  
Would drain the ocean dry  
Nor could the scroll contain the whole  
Though stretched from sky to sky. *Refrain*