

Beulah Land in Christian Music Tradition,
Isaiah 62:4 (KJV)

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THE FORMER PROPHETS

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Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate; but thou shalt be called *Hephzibah* and thy land *Beulah*; for the LORD delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married.

Isaiah 62: 4 (KJV)

This verse from Isaiah contains many descriptive words regarding the relationship of God and His people. Jerusalem's old names of Forsaken and Desolate are being changed by God. They will no longer apply. God is giving Jerusalem new names of Hephzibah and Beulah. The imagery of Beulah has a specific meaning in this context. The purpose of this paper is to compare and contrast the meaning of Beulah in Isaiah 62:4 and the meaning and use of the word Beulah in Christian music tradition.

I began this study by finding as many hymns with the words Beulah or Beulah Land in their lyrics as I could locate. I found that there are quite a few and that by far the majority of these hymns were written in a historical timeframe and connected with the holiness movement. I did find a few contemporary pieces that have carried into present day the meaning and use of Beulah.

I next did an exegesis of the text in Isaiah, studying the historical context, the authorship, and specific words so that I could gain an understanding of the biblical use of the word Beulah. Having done the exegesis of Isaiah 62:4, I began to look at specific hymns to see how various hymn writers used the word Beulah. I found that I had to put each hymn into its historical context to understand its meaning. It would be easy to look only at the lyrics without considering their historical context, but then I would not have understood what the words and images meant to each hymn writer and to the congregations that loved to sing these hymns. It became important to do an exegesis, so to speak, of the historical context and meaning of the

hymns just as I did for the verse in Isaiah. I was then able to compare and contrast the biblical use of the word Beulah with the use of the word by the hymn writers.

The authorship of Isaiah has been the subject of debate among biblical scholars through the centuries. Scholars up until the Enlightenment accepted without question that “the sixty-six chapters of the biblical book of Isaiah were the work of the great prophet of that name in the last decades of the 8th century.”¹ In contrast to that, most scholars today would agree with Flanders that Isaiah is “neither the work of a single author nor from the same historical period.”² Flanders describes Isaiah as “clearly an anthology of materials arising across many years, while also an anthology with a unity of prophetic emphasis and concerns.”³ Conrad concurs and describes Isaiah as “a collection of material that grew over a period of three centuries or more.”⁴

Even among the scholars who have agreed that Isaiah was written by more than one author there are different opinions regarding how to delineate different sections by their authorship and corresponding historical context. There is agreement that chapters 1-39, beginning around 740 B.C. and continuing into the following century, were written by the prophet Isaiah. In 1775 J. C. Doderlein was among the scholars who detached chapters 40-66 and “set them in the period of the exile in the sixth century.”⁵ He did so, noting the historical background, differing themes, style and use of vocabulary by separating the book of Isaiah into two different sections. Achtemeier records: “All but the most conservative scholars are convinced that a second Isaiah corpus, made up of chapters 40-66 must be separated from Isaiah 1-33 and attributed to an anonymous prophet writing probably in Babylonia some years after 550 B.C.E.”⁶ Flanders describes this prophet of the exile: “He belonged to the disciples of Isaiah of Jerusalem among whom that great prophet’s ideas were preserved and passed on. In fact, he is the climax of the Isaian heritage, for in many ways the disciple surpassed the teacher.”⁷

Chapters 40-55 deal with the time of the exile in Babylon and many scholars contend that these chapters were written by an author designated as Second Isaiah. Second Isaiah was a disciple of First Isaiah even though they were generations apart. According to Knight, “His [Second Isaiah] unified document is an editing of the sermons he delivered in Babylon in the years 541-540 or so.”⁸

In 1892 Bernhard Duhm separated chapters 56-66 from chapters 40-55, thus creating a third section which Duhm contended was written by one author known as Trito-Isaiah. According to Duhm, Trito-Isaiah was a “contemporary of Ezra who wrote in the middle of the 5th century.”⁹ Scullion notes that, following Duhm, there wasn’t agreement by scholars concerning the authorship, date and construction of chapters 55-66. Scullion asserts:

In recent decades however there has emerged a broad consensus with regards chaps. 55-66 by and large as the work of a single prophet in the generation immediately after the exile, that is the period 538-500, give or take a few years. This prophet knew well the writings of the great Isaiah of the 8th century and the work of the prophet of the exile; he resumed, adapted, and applied words, phrases and verses from chaps. 40-55 to the postexilic situation in Jerusalem and Judah.¹⁰

Oswalt disagrees with Scullion and states that many scholars reject the idea of one author of chapters 55-66 and see them as a composite of several sources. He states:

There is little unanimity among higher critics as to the authorship and composition of these chapters. Among those who advocate multiple authorship of the book, while many see chapters 40-55 being the work of a single author, there are few today who would see 56-66 in the same light. The proposal of Bernard Duhm that they were the work of Third Isaiah has now been largely rejected. Most today would agree with Paul Hanson that it is a composite from several sources collected over a period of time after the return.¹¹

Knight and other scholars assert that the last sections of chapters, 56-66, were written by an author who was among those returning to Jerusalem from the exile in Babylon. Knight states:

According to the early chapters of the book of Ezra, considerable numbers of thoughtful, energetic, faithful, and dedicated Israelites set about pulling up their roots in Babylon after fifty year’s residence there. They prepared to return home to their native

land, Judah, and to their beloved city, Jerusalem. Ezra's figures would seem to cover several caravans of returnees who made the long trek over the next decade or two. Those returnees, whom we are interested in, however, are those who were the first to set foot on the ruins of Jerusalem ca. 538-546. Among these intrepid adventures was our Third or Trito-Isaiah. We recognize him to be responsible, perhaps with a group of his own disciples, for this is the third section of the book of Isaiah.¹²

Some scholars include Second Isaiah as one of the authors but also noted that other disciples also contributed. Achtemeier observes that "many responsible scholars have maintained that chapters 56-66 are also the work of Second Isaiah, spoken after the return from exile and supplemented by the utterances of disciples."¹³ John Bright states: "The great prophet would surely have made the return—had he been able so much as to crawl."¹⁴

This thought of multiple authors contributing to Isaiah has been expressed in the idea of an Isaianic School. This theory is supported and utilized by many current scholars and is seen as not only relevant to chapters 55-66, but to understanding the book of Isaiah in its entirety.

Achtemeier explains how this Isaianic school developed and its importance:

In the case of the Isaiah corpus of chapters 1-66, the community which formed around Isaiah of Jerusalem in the eighth century B.C. was evidently vital enough to become the beginning of an Isaianic 'school' that lasted for at least two centuries, through the experience of the exile and the return. This Isaianic school was responsible for preserving and assembling Isaiah 1-39, and then for adding first chapters 40-55, and for assembling and then adding chapters 56-66.¹⁵

The Isaianic school is described by Achtemeier as being the community behind Trito-Isaiah. It was not a single author that wrote chapters 56-66. Achtemeier describes Trito-Isaiah as "essentially a unified product of the Isaianic school of 548-515 B.C., . . . Trito-Isaiah is therefore a communal expression, exhibiting the variety characteristic of any community, and yet one in its basic themes, structure, and vocabulary."¹⁶

Conrad, as well as other scholars, sees the work of a redactor in Isaiah. This redactor is not just a collector but is a creative editor who "creates and shapes and therefore gives new

meaning to the original words of the prophet.”¹⁷ For this reason Conrad contends, “the Book of Isaiah is increasingly being seen not so much as a grouping of largely unrelated small units of material but, because of the creative role of the redactor, as a ‘redactionally unified whole’.”¹⁸

Although scholars do not agree on the authorship and construction of the book of Isaiah, it is important to note that there seems to be agreement on the purpose and the intent of the ending chapters of Isaiah. Their theme is “salvation and salvation alone, that is, Yahweh’s intervention on behalf of his people and its consequences.”¹⁹

It seems that scholars cannot say with certainty who wrote Isaiah 62: 4 but there is agreement on its intended audience and the historical context. The community that was described by Achtemeier as the community behind Trito-Isaiah, is a community that is returning from exile to their homeland. It is important to know the historical context of this community to understand Isaiah 62: 4. Achtemeier speaks to the importance of the need to understand and read any prophetic writings in their historical context. She asserts:

There is therefore no legitimate way in which the prophetic writings can be read today as timeless truths. We may think to lift out one or another prophetic saying as a statement of an eternally valid religious or ethical principle, applicable always to the nature of God or to the character of human life; but by divesting the prophetic oracle of its concrete historical context, we turn it into a bloodless corpse, having no relation to actual human life. Through the prophets, God dealt with the realities of Israel’s day-to-day living. The prophetic writings can only properly be understood in that realistic context.²⁰

As was stated earlier, chapters 56-66 are addressed to the returned exiles in the years after 539 or 538 B.C. This is a community of survivors. Conrad describes this community as “a community of survivors with minority status. The community as a royal servant is a community that suffers and is threatened by murder and bloodshed.”²¹ In 539 Cyrus had conquered the city of Babylon and at once liberated all the displaced persons he found there from many lands. Among these displaced persons were many Jews who had been in exile. Although they could

now return to Jerusalem they were still under the authority of another power. Motyer described their situation:

They were exiled as from Jerusalem as a subject people, dominated by the imperial power of Babylon. To return home by permission of Cyrus the Persian left their situation unchanged; they were still subject, still under an imperial power. David had not returned; there was now not even a puppet king in Zion; national sovereignty seemed more of a dream than ever! So when will the Lords' people really be a free people, free of worldly influence and oppression?²²

The exiles are free to return but they return to miserable conditions and to a Jerusalem with its temple in ruins. Bright describes the early years of the restoration as “bitterly disappointing; bringing little but frustration and discouragement. As year followed disheartening year the morale of the community sank dangerously.”²³ Bright also describes the spiritual condition of the community:

The glowing picture of the triumphant new exodus and the establishment of Yahweh's universal rule in Zion bore no resemblance to realities. To be sure, Second Isaiah and his disciples continued to speak, promising a great ingathering of Yahweh's people, Jews and Gentiles alike, to a Zion restored and transformed, proclaiming the glad tidings of redemption, summoning men to unremitting toil and prayer for the cause of Zion, and telling of God's new creation about to appear of which the present trials were but the birth pangs.²⁴

There was a huge discrepancy between the actual situation and the hope for the restoration of Jerusalem. Knight speaks of the affect of this discrepancy: “For it was at this juncture upon the return from exile that eschatology, though present in seed from earlier prophets, was now becoming central to the theology of thoughtful persons.”²⁵ Knight is among the scholars that would contend that the writer of the ending chapters of Isaiah, whom he designates as TI, was expressing an eschatological perspective. He states:

He, (TI) sees the Return to be of eschatological significance—that is, as an event rooted, not first of all in history, but primarily in eternity. Because of this order of thought, TI sees this moment in history as revelation of what is in the heart of the living God. He sees the ‘resurrection’ of Israel as a historical moment from which God reveals to Israel an aspect of his purpose and plan as Savior.²⁶

Some scholars see the last chapters of Isaiah as having eschatological meaning. Other scholars focus on the meaning of these passages to the intended audience and the context of the restoration and return from exile. Both interpretations are seen as valid but I have chosen to focus on the historical context as I look at specific words and phrases of Isaiah 62:4.

I begin my analyses of Isaiah 62:4 by first looking at several different translations. I selected four different translations:

It will no longer be said to you, “Forsaken,” Nor to your land will it any longer be said, “Desolate”. But you will be called, “My delight is in her.” And your land, “Married”; for the LORD delights in you, and to Him your land will be married. (NAS)

You shall no more be termed Forsaken, and your land shall no more be termed Desolate, but you shall be called My Delight Is in Her, and your land Married; for the LORD delights in you, and your land shall be married. (ESV)

Never again will you be called the God forsaken City or the Desolate Land. Your new name will be the city of God’s Delight and the Bride of God, for the LORD delights in you and will claim you as his own. (NLT)

Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate; but thou shalt be called Haphzibah and thy land Beulah for the LORD delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married. (KJV)

The King James Version is the only translation that used the word “Beulah.” There are key words or phrases in each of these translations. The verse begins with a declaration that there is going to be a change. The different translations begin: “It will no longer be”; “You shall no more be termed”; “Never again will you be called”; and “Thou shalt no more be termed”. God is doing something new during this time of restoration. Oswalt sees that the focus is “more on the change in Israel itself and less on the change in its circumstances. That change has primarily to do with Israel’s relationship with God. This is the truest evidence that she is ‘no longer forsaken’.”²⁷

This change is described by McKenna:

Dame Zion has experienced the disgrace of being a woman who is unmarried and undesirable. She is named Forsaken and Desolate. But God has plans for her. Instead of Forsaken, she will be named Hephzibah, which means ‘The Lord delights in you,’ and instead of Desolate, she will be named Beulah, which means ‘your land shall be married.’”²⁸

It is noted by McKenna that the imagery of naming and renaming in this verse is reminiscent of Hosea 1. He states:

It is a continuation of the ‘insteads’ that have been frequent in this subdivision (Isa. 60:17, 61:3, 7), expressing God’s constant desire that ashes should give way to beauty, and deprivation to abundance. It is also reminiscent of the promises of 49:14, 23 and 54:1-8. Although it might appear that God had forsaken his people forever, leaving his land desolate for all time, that is not the case.²⁹

Achtemeier also observes that it was Yahweh who has given Judah the new names. She states: “Previously the name has been affixed by the nations or by Judah herself; now it is given by God; and that means that it will have everlasting significance.”³⁰ Achtemeier also notes the significance of the new name in Old Testament tradition. “A name, according to the Old Testament, is the bearer of essence, and when a name is changed, a new essence and existence are given.”³¹ The significance of a new name is also noted by Freehof who states, “A new name is a symbol of a new and better life.”³² In Israelite culture, the giving of a new name also was “a sign that the receiver of the name is coming under the authority of the giver of the name.”³³ In giving Zion a new name, God was calling Zion to be under his authority.

The word “Hephzibah” is translated from Hebrew as “My Delight is in Her”. This word is expressing God’s love and tenderness towards His people. According to Haak, the word “Hephzibah” is “found in only two places in the Bible. First, it was what the God-fearing Hezekiah called his wife. In II Kings 21:1 we learn that Hezekiah’s wife was called “Hephzibah” and Hezekiah could say concerning his wife, ‘My delight is in her’.”³⁴

God is delighting in his people. In the last part of Isaiah 62: 4 God is calling them into a relationship “where thy land shall be married.” The marriage imagery is used to indicate that Yahweh is inviting his people to be in relationship with Him. This is what the word Beulah is signifying. Yahweh is the groom, Israel the bride. The marriage theme is used throughout the Old Testament and the author of verse 4 uses it to “describe the relationship between Yahweh and his people, much as his predecessors, Hosea, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Second Isaiah, had done.”³⁵ Isaiah 62:4-5 gives a complete picture of the marriage imagery. Verse 5 speaks of God rejoicing, “For as a young man marries a virgin, so shall your sons marry you, and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you.” (KJV)

In the imagery of the marriage is found the relationship between God and His people as they return from exile to their homeland. Their relationship is being restored. Motely describes this restoration:

The Anointed One will achieve a transformation like the change from lonely desolation (4ab) to happy marriage (4c-5). . . The new names of Haphzibah (‘My delight is in her’), and Beulah (‘Married,’) are explained in the two halves of verse 5: respectively the wedding and the honeymoon. Zion’s sons make their marriage vow to their bride to ‘love and to cherish,’ to give themselves in devoted service to the welfare of Zion, and the Lord goes on honeymoon with his people, rejoicing over them. With such economy of words and beauty of imagery Isaiah depicts the loving unanimity that characterizes Zion and her intimate union with the Lord.³⁶

The restoration is both physical and spiritual. The promises of this verse were given in the present situation or the return from exile. God is present with His people to bring protection and restoration and joy. The word Beulah means married and defines the new relationship God has with His people as they have returned from exile.

All through this study I wrestled with the question of how to view the verses from Isaiah. I can see that the verses were written to an intended audience and as such were meant to be fulfilled in that context. I found myself wondering, as I imagine the Jews returning from exile

themselves wondered, how these verses can speak to the present reality. Were they meant for the present reality or only to give a future hope? This became an important question as I looked at the hymns or gospel songs that were using the word “Beulah Land.” The writers of the hymns appropriated the words of Isaiah and put them into a context that had meaning for them. Were they speaking of the historical context, their present reality or only on a future hope? Were the hymn writers intentionally referencing the Isaiah passage or merely using the word Beulah as it had been understood by Christians at the time these hymns were written? Would those in the congregation have known that or was the meaning of the songs mostly apart from the scriptural context? These were some of the questions I sought to answer. I looked for connections to Isaiah 62:4-5 in the lyrics of the hymns. I also looked for connections to the themes of exile, restoration, new name, and marriage that were part of the meaning of the verses from Isaiah.

I mentioned in my introductory remarks that it was important to know about the hymn writers, their understanding and use of scripture, and their historical context. Many of the hymns that I have collected are from the Holiness Movement. The Holiness Movement is:

composed of people who believe and propagate the belief that the ‘carnal nature’ of man can be cleansed through faith and by the power of the Holy Spirit if one has had his sins forgiven through faith in Jesus. The benefits professed include ‘spiritual power’ and an ability to maintain purity of heart (that is, thoughts and motives that are uncorrupted by sin). The doctrine is typically referred to in Holiness churches as ‘entire sanctification.’³⁷

According to the Holiness Movement, sanctification is a “personal experience, after one has already been regenerated, in which one dedicates oneself fully to God and is given the ability to lead a more holy life. It has been called a ‘second touch,’ a second blessing,’ a ‘filling with the Holy Spirit’.”³⁸ In the 19th century a renewed interest in Christian Holiness began among the Methodists. This interest was based on a rediscovery of John Wesley’s doctrine of Christian Perfection. Other non-Methodists contributed to the Holiness Movement and organizations such

as the National Camp Meeting for the Promotion of Holiness began. At the Camp Meetings, “people were encouraged to repent of their sins, accept Christ as their Savior, and commit their lives to holy living.”³⁹

Out of the Holiness Movement came Holiness hymnody, which is the source of many of the hymns based on Beulah Land. The theology of the Holiness Movement was expressed in the hymns. Wilhoit asserts:

When any hymn is widely sung, it should be viewed as an important window into the belief system of those singing it. And precisely because it is a popular, corporate, and usually unconscious statement of belief or practice, it provides a unique opportunity for the understanding of a large cross-section of ‘ordinary believers,’ which differs immeasurably from the carefully crafted and highly conscious individual statements of church leaders and theologians.⁴⁰

Wilhoit observes: “As one begins to address a body of hymns that may exhibit Holiness characteristics, one is impressed by the regular appearance of certain terms or phrases which, when employed both singly and in combination, seem clearly to articulate various Holiness conceptions.”⁴¹ Some of these words in Holiness hymns include “cleanse, consume, fill, perfect, restore, sanctify, wash, all, every, full, no more, glory, peace, victory, and power.”⁴² There are several metaphors that occur frequently in Holiness hymns. One of these metaphors is the altar phraseology made popular by Phoebe Palmer. Beulah Land is another metaphor that was popular during the Holiness movement of the hymns written during the 1850s and 1960s and the years following.

Wilhoit writes:

Although the term’s origin comes from Isaiah 62:4 as a figurative expression of restored Palestine during the millennial kingdom, its currency in Holiness circles was more directly related to its inclusion in Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress* as the symbol of a land of promised rest and blessing.⁴³

It is difficult to know whether when the hymn writers used the words Beulah land in their lyrics if they were referencing Isaiah 62:4 or the Beulah Land of *Pilgrim's Progress*. It is also difficult to know if the congregations who loved to sing the Holiness hymns connected the words Beulah Land to the scriptural context of Isaiah 62: 4 or to the popular context of *Pilgrim's Progress*.

As noted earlier, scholars apply the promises of restoration in Isaiah 62: 4 to the present reality of the return from exile as well as the hope for the future. In a similar way, different hymns reference Beulah Land as either a present reality or as the hope for the future. These are two perspectives depending on the use of the verb tense of present or future. In the hymns I collected, I found both perspectives. According to Wiloit, the earlier eighteenth-century Holiness hymns of Charles Wesley utilized the future tense. The state of mind of these hymns was a “future-looking expectation and hope of the Spirit’s promised work.”⁴⁴

This future-looking expectation of Wesley’s eighteenth-century hymns was contrasted by the present tense emphasis of the hymns of the American Holiness movement. In these hymns is found an emphasis on sanctification in the present tense. Beulah Land was not a future land but a present reality. It is in these hymns that I find the most correlation to the scriptural use of the words Beulah in Isaiah 62:4. Although this present tense is expressed in many hymns of the American Holiness Movement, many hymns also expressed the future tense. Many hymns expressed a future tense while others expressed the idea that it was possible to have an immediate fulfillment of the longed-for blessings of God.

In the hymns that utilized the future tense, Beulah Land was seen as synonymous with heaven. It was the hope expressed and longed for that would be found not in the present life but in the future. It seems to me that, in the hymns where Beulah Land represents heaven, it is difficult to see the connection to the historical context of Isaiah 62:4. It may have been that the

hymn writers were referencing Isaiah 62:4, but saw the verse applying not to the current situation, but to the hope of a future restoration and coming kingdom.

Beulah means “married” and the verse from Isaiah is stating the relationship between God as Jerusalem as that of a groom and his bride. Marin notes: “There will be joy in Jerusalem one day, and God will delight over Israel as a bridegroom delights over a bride. ‘For as a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee: and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall they God rejoice over thee’ (Isaiah 62:5).”⁴⁵ The analogy of God’s people being the bride is applied to all believers in the New Testament. In the new covenant, the bride is the church and Christ is the bridegroom. The marriage imagery is seen in many of the hymns of the church including the Beulah Land hymns being studied. Beulah Land is seen as a type or representation of the covenant of Christ. To be in Beulah Land is to be in the presence of Christ. Some hymn writers speak of that in the present tense; many see it as a future hope of glory. Just as the kingdom of God is described as both a present reality, “The kingdom of God is here with you now” (Luke 17:21), and a hope for the eternal future, Beulah Land is described in hymns both as a present reality and the eternal hope of a “new heaven and a new earth” (Rev. 21:1-2).

The Holiness Movement in American led to the formation of several churches or missionary groups. Among them was the Church of God of Anderson, Indiana. In this movement there is a rich heritage of hymns that expressed the beliefs and faith of the congregations. Many of these hymns used the Beulah Land metaphor both in the present and future sense. In these hymns is the expression of the present reality, “Praise God, I live in Beulah land, My house will all the storms withstand; It is not built on sinking sand, My home is on the rock,”⁴⁶ and anticipation of the future, “Is not this the land of Beulah, Blessed, blessed land of light, Where the flowers bloom forever, And the sun is always bright?”⁴⁷

In 1875 Edgar Page Stites wrote the words to “Beulah Land” which became one of the most known hymns from the Holiness Movement. According to Esther Rothenbusch, the “imagery and rhetoric of ‘Beulah Land’ comprise a crucial link between Wesleyan theology and American Holiness, although it was sung so widely beyond Holiness circles that it lost that association outside such circles.”⁴⁸ Rothenbusch cites both the connection to the Isaiah passage:

The term Beulah (Hebrew for ‘married’) is from God’s promise in Isaiah that the nation of Israel would be desired and her land would be married—repopulated after the captivity. The name is rich in images of environmental healing, wholeness, and fruitfulness, implying both agricultural prosperity and the harmonious, nurturing relationship between a godly people and their restored land.⁴⁹

Rothenbusch asserts that for many the familiarity of the Beulah was from John Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*:

Used seldom in the Old Testament, Beulah was the name John Bunyan gave to the Promised Land in *Pilgrim’s Progress*, known by many Americans the previous century perhaps as well as the Bible; the term would have thus been known to virtually any nineteenth-century Protestant. Whether or not the name actually entered Holiness rhetoric by means of this text, the song’s immediate and wide-ranging popularity indisputably galvanized Beulah imagery in song and sermon language of the movement.⁵⁰

Dagle relates the story behind the writing of “Beulah Land”. The song came out of the experiences of the summer camp meetings which were popular in the late 1800’s. The camp meetings at Ocean Grove, New Jersey were among the most famous. The camp ground was filled with tents, and summer cabins and became an important gathering place of meetings. Dagle relays the important role of music at the Grove meetings: “The most popular songwriters at that time would visit each summer: Sankey, Doane, Kirkpatrick, Sweeney, Hewitt and Fanny Crosby—just to name a few. Truly the ‘grove summers’ were a foretaste of what Heaven would be someday.”⁵¹

Dagle continues,

With each new summer, Stites looked forward to what the Lord was going to do at Ocean Grove. Then, in the summer of 1875, the Lord moved upon the heart of Edgar Page Stites. After the first day of meetings, he returned to his cottage and exclaimed, ‘All this and Heaven too!’ There under the light of a kerosene lamp, he started to write, ‘I’ve reach the land of corn and wine and all its riches fully mine; here shines undimmed one blissful day for all my night has passed away’. His pen would pour out three more stanzas; and then as if seeing beyond this life, he added this chorus which is the hope that is found in Christ and Christ alone: ‘O Beulah land, sweet Beulah land! As on thy highest mount I stand, I look away across the sear where mansions are prepared for me, And view the shining glory shore, My heaven, my home forever more’.⁵²

Although the last verse speaks of heaven there is also an emphasis on the present life. This hymn was understood in the context of the Holiness Movement to also speak of the possibility of living a sanctified life now. Rothenbusch describes this aspect of the Holiness Movement, especially as experienced and expressed in the camp meetings and the hymns sung at those meetings. She states:

Many came to associate the beautiful physical site where they received sanctification with a state of mind they sought to carry into the world—a utopian, spiritualized ‘campmeeting in the heart,’ a state of perfect love, a ‘veritable heaven on earth.’⁵³

In the text of “Beulah Land” Stites references the Old Testament promised land, images from Bunyan and a phrase from a Wesley hymn. In Stites’s hymn there is an emphasis on describing not only a heavenly land but a present sanctified state. According to Rothenbusch

“Holiness writers from Stites onward appropriated Beulah for their own understanding. Clearly not the afterlife, Stite’s land of zephyrs, sunlight, and rest is only ‘heaven’s borderland,’ a foretaste of heavenly joys from whose highest mount ‘the shining glory shore’ could be glimpsed even now. In this land ‘shines undimmed one blissful day,’ the Saviour communes with the pilgrims ‘and gently leads [them] with His hand,’ a sweet perfume is borne from ever-vernal trees, flowers never fade, and the streams of life flow.”⁵⁴

Rothenbusch further states: “Stites’s hymn generated a tradition of songs in which the theology of Beulah land became explicated in increasing detail, just as it was in contemporaneous sermons, testimonies, and devotional literature.”⁵⁵

As I researched Beulah Land hymns, the majority of the ones I found were from the tradition of the Holiness Movement. In my research it is apparent that there are many more hymns that reference Beulah Land than I have gathered so far. Some hymns I have only learned of the titles and have not yet found the text or music. I did find a few more contemporary gospel songs as well as a few newly written songs that carry on the tradition of Beulah Land. Most of the newer songs focus on Beulah land as a representation of heaven and not as referencing either Isaiah or the emphasis on the sanctified life of the Holiness hymns. It seems that some of the theology expressed in the earlier hymns has been lost in the more contemporary settings.

Before undertaking this study, I was unaware of the meaning of Beulah in either the Isaiah passage or in the Christian music tradition. It has been a study that has highlighted the importance of understanding the context of Scripture and how Scripture can then find expression in the music of our faith. The words of Isaiah 62:4 were given to a people who were discouraged by their present circumstances. God in His love, grace, and faithfulness to His people gave an expression of His relationship and commitment to them. God promises restoration to those who will be in obedient relationship to Him. The same promise is extended to believers today. God speaks to us in our present situation and gives us a future hope. I believe that because we are in relationship to God, or we are married to Him, which is expressed in the word Beulah, God is extending His blessings and restoration to us, both now and in the future.

The hymns that I studied are largely unknown to me and my community of faith. The word Beulah itself is not one that continues to be known or understood. I was recently privileged to hear a lecture and discussion on life of the Rev. Dr. Marcus H. Morgan, Sr. The lecture was presented by Dr. Philip M. Royster and Dr. Phyliss M. Royster. Rev. Dr. Marcus H. Morgan, Sr. was an important leader in the Church of God Reformation Movement. Part of that lecture

included a presentation of the various hymns that were so important to the movement. Dr. Philip M. Royster described the camp meetings where these hymns were sung. He described the worship style as “extremely inviting”⁵⁶. The hymns were “contemplative and meditative, rational as well as spiritual”⁵⁷. As was true of the camp meetings of Stites and Ocean Grove, the camp meetings that took place at West Middlesex, Pennsylvania were a meaningful time for believers to gather together. Even the campground itself reminded people of the Holy City or Zion. There was the expectation and anticipation that Christ was coming soon, but in the meantime, it was possible to live a sanctified life. The hymns were the expressions of these beliefs. They were important then and continue to remain so today. I was delighted to learn of these hymns because I found that they were part of the hymns that used the Beulah land metaphor. I could tell by the passionate way the presenters spoke of these hymns that they carried great meaning to them as expressions of their beliefs and their heritage.

Having had this opportunity to study these hymns, I now have a deeper appreciation for their meaning. I have discovered the depth of emotion and the theology that is being expressed in these texts. It is probably true that we all sing many hymns without either knowing or considering what the text is really conveying. I have gained a greater appreciation for what can be gained by entering into such a study, taking the time to find out about the scriptural basis for the hymns or songs we sing. There is a rich heritage in the hymns of the church. I have enjoyed this study as I seek to praise God in Beulah land, both now and in the future.

¹ John Scullion, *Isaiah 40-66*. Old Testament Message, A Biblical-Theological Commentary, V. 12. Eds. Carroll Stuhlmueller and Martin McNamara (Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier, Inc. 1982), 16.

² Henry Jackson Flanders, et. al., *People of the Covenant*, 4th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), 366.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Edgar W. Conrad, *Reading Isaiah: Overtures in Biblical Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 6.

⁵ Scullion, 17.

⁶ Elizabeth Achtemeire, *The Community and Message of Isaiah 56-66* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1982), 12.

⁷ Flanders, 421.

⁸ George A.F. Knight, *The New Israel: A Commentary on the Book of Isaiah 56-66*. International Theological Commentary, ed. George A.F. Knight and Carlson Holmgren (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1985), xi.

⁹ Scullion, 146.

¹⁰ Scullion, 147.

¹¹ John N. Oswalt, "Isaiah 60-62: The Glory of the Lord," *Calvin Theological Journal* 40.1 (April 2005), 97.

¹² Knight., xii.

¹³ Achtemeire, 13.

¹⁴ John Bright, *A History of Israel* 4th Ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), 367.

¹⁵ Achtemeire, 15.

¹⁶ Ibid., 16.

¹⁷ Conrad, 13.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Scullion, 147.

²⁰ Achtemeire, 9.

²¹ Conrad, 157.

²² Alee J. Motyer, *Isaiah*. The Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries. ed. D.J. Wiseman (Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 1999), 17.

²³ Bright, 364.

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- ²⁴ Ibid., 367.
- ²⁵ Knight, 62.
- ²⁶ Knight, xvii.
- ²⁷ Oswalt, 102.
- ²⁸ David L. McKenna, *The Communicator's Commentary: Isaiah 40-66*. ed. Lloyd J. Ogilvie (Dallas: Word Books, Publisher, 1994), 631.
- ²⁹ Ibid.
- ³⁰ Achtemeire, 97.
- ³¹ Achtemeire, 97.
- ³² Solomon F. Freehof, *The Jewish Commentary for Bible Readers: Book of Isaiah* (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1972), 309.
- ³³ David T. Andersen, "Renaming and Wedding Imagery in Isaiah 62," *Biblica* 67 (1986), 75.
- ³⁴ Rev. Carl Haak, "Hephzibah: My Delight is in Her," <http://www.pcca.org/refwitness/1997/1997may11.html>,
- ³⁵ James Muilenburg, "Exegesis," in *The Interpreter's Bible*, Vol. 4., ed. George Arthur Buttrick (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1956), 719.
- ³⁶ Moyter, 382
- ³⁷ "Holiness movement," http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holiness_movement
- ³⁸ Ibid.
- ³⁹ Ibid.
- ⁴⁰ Mel R. Wilhoit, "American Holiness Hymnody Some Questions: A Methodology," http://wesley.nnu.edu/wesleyan_theology/theojml/21-25/25-12.htm, 1.
- ⁴¹ Ibid., 2.
- ⁴² Ibid.
- ⁴³ Ibid., 6.
- ⁴⁴ Ibid., 6.
- ⁴⁵ Virginia Marin, "Beulah Land," http://www.suite101.com/print_article.cfm/messianic_jdaism/110386.
- ⁴⁶ Ruthe Byers, and Lawrence D. Pruitt, compilers, *Evening Light Songs*. Guthrie Oklahoma: Faith Publishing House, 1949, 497.
- ⁴⁷ Ibid., 301.
- ⁴⁸ Esther Rothenbusch, "Is Not This the Land of Beulah?": The Search for the Holy Spirit in American Gospel Hymns," *Review and Expositor* (Winter 1997), 60.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Bill Dagle, “Hymn Story—Beulah Land,” <http://www.songtime.com/hymn/hymn0605.htm>.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Rothenbusch, 61.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Philip M. Royster and Phyliss M. Royster, “Lecture and Discussion on A Biography of the Rev. Dr. Marcus H. Morgan, Sr.: In Response to Questions and Insights from The Rev. Dr. Gary Sattler, Professor, Northern Baptist Theological Seminary (9 March 2006).

⁵⁷ Ibid.

Appendix

Hymns of Beulah Land

<u>Title</u>	<u>Words</u>	<u>Music</u>	<u>Date</u>
1. "Beulah Land" ("There Is a Land of Corn and Wine") Two versions of text	Edgar P. Stites	John R. Sweney	1876
2. "Beulah Land" (Isaiah 62:4)			Living Word Bible Church 2005
3. "Beulah Land"	Lelia Naylor Morris		
4. "Dwelling in Beulah Land" ('Far Away the Noise of Strife Upon My Ear')	C. Austin Miles	C. Austin Miles	1911
5. "I Have Entered Beulah Land"	Fanny Crosby	John R. Sweney	1886
6. "In Beulah Land"		Mark Caruth	2005
7. "Is Not This the Land of Beulah?"	Harriet Requa		
8. "Is Not This the Land Of Beulah?"	William Hunter	William Bradbury	1911 Published in <i>Evening Songs</i> 1949
9. "I've Pitched My Tent In Beulah"	Margaret J. Harris	Margaret J. Harris	1908
10. "My Home Is On the Rock"	Johnson Oatman, Jr.	Adam Geibel	published in <i>Evening Light Songs</i> 1949
11. "Sweet Beulah Land"	Squire Parsons	Rick Lunsford	1979
12. "The Land of Beulah"	Rev. J. Haskell		
13. "The Sweet Beulah Land"	Henry J. Zelle		

Lyrics to Hymns

1. *Beulah Land*

Edgar P. Stites, John R. Sweney, 1876
From *Christ in Song Hymnal* of early 1990's

I've reached the land of corn and wine,
And all its riches freely mine;
Here shines undimmed one blissful day,
For all my night has passed away.

My Savior comes and walks with me,
And sweet communion here have we.
He gently leads me by His hand,
For this is heaven's border land.

A sweet perfume upon the breeze,
Is borne from ever eternal trees,
And flowers, that never fading grow
Where streams of life forever flow.

The zephyrs seem to float to me,
Sweet sounds to heaven's melody,
As angels with the white robed throng
Join in the sweet redemption song.

Beulah Land (There Is a Land of Corn and Wine)
From *Church Hymnal* of 1940

There is a land of corn and wine,
And all its joys will soon be mine;
There shines undimmed one blissful day,
for earth's dark night has passed away.

My Savior then will walk with me;
O sweet communion that will be!
He'll gently lead me by the hand,
In that celestial, happy land.

A sweet perfume upon the breeze,
Will come from ever vernal trees,
And flowers that never fading grow,
Were streams of life forever flow.

The zephyrs then will laden be
With sounds of sweetest melody,
As angels, with the ransomed throng,
join in the sweet redemption song.

Refrain

O Beulah Land! Sweet Beulah land!
Upon thy heights I long to stand,
And view the radiant, jasper sea,
And mansions fair, prepared for me,
And find on that eternal shore My heaven,
my home, forever-more.

2. *Beulah Land* (Isaiah 62:4)

Living Word Bible Church, 2005

In Beulah Land I'm going to dwell
And rest in my Savior's arms
I'll walk by His side
And always abide
With Him in Beulah Land

As life rushes by 'til the day that I die
Or He gathers me up in His hand
I'm sure of one thing
Of this I will sing
I'm going to Beulah Land

The plans have been made,
the price has been paid
I'm ready to go even now
But my hope and my prayer
Is together we'll share
The beauties of Beulah Land

Refrain:

In Beulah Land what glories I'll see
In Beulah Land what joys await me
I'm told in God's word
That Christ has prepared
A place for me in Beulah Land

4. *Dwelling In Beulah Land*

C. Austin Miles, 1911

Far away the noise of strife upon my ear is falling.
Then I know the sins of earth beset on every hand.
Doubt and fear and things of earth in vain to me are calling.
None of these shall move me from Beulah Land.

Far below the storm of doubt upon the world is beating.
Sons of men in battle long the enemy withstand.
Safe am I within the castle of God's Word retreating.
Nothing then can reach me—'tis Beulah Land.

Let the stormy breezes blow, their cry cannot alarm me;
I am safely sheltered here, protected by God's hand.
Here the sun is always shining, here there's naught can harm me.
I am safe forever in Beulah Land.

Viewing here the works of God, I sink in contemplation.
Hearing now His blessed voice, I see the way He planned.
Dwelling in the Spirit here I learn of full salvation.
Gladly I will tarry in Beulah Land.

Refrain

I'm living on the mountain, underneath a cloudless sky.
I'm drinking at the fountain that never shall run dry.
O yes! I'm feasting on the manna from a bountiful supply,
For I am dwelling in Beulah Land.

5. *I Have Entered Beulah Land*

Fanny Crosby, John R. Sweney 1886

Oh, my cup is overflowing
With the goodness of the Lord;
I am trusting in His mercy,
And rejoicing in His Word.

Refrain

I have climbed the rugged mountain,
On its summit now I stand;
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!
I have entered Beulah land.

From the sighing and the longing,

That so oft my heart oppressed,
With my Savior and Redeemer
Now in perfect peace I rest
There's a palace o'er the river
And its jasper walls I see,
And among its many mansions
There is one prepared for me.

I have climbed the rugged mountain,
But my Savior led the way;
Unto Him shall be the glory,
When I reach eternal day.

6. *In Beulah Land*

Mark Caruth (New setting of original hymn)

One day I'll reach my journey's end
And leave this world behind
Pain and sorrow gone forevermore
I'll shout and sing unto the King
Worthy is the Lamb

When I step upon that heav'nly shore
In Beulah Land
I'll meet my blessed Savior
Friends and loved ones there I'll see face to face
We'll gather 'round the throne with all His own
And live eternally in Beulah Land

We'll stand by God's amazing grace
My weary feet await a street that's paved with purest gold
A home prepared by Jesus, God's own son
So I'll run the race, I'll keep the faith
I'll trust His Holy Word
Oh I want to hear Him say "Well done"
In the sweet, in the sweet by and by, by and by

8. *Is Not This the Land of Beulah?*

William Hunter, William B. Bradbury, 1911

I am dwelling on the mountain,
Where the golden sunlight gleams
O'er a land whose wondrous beauty
Far exceeds my fondest dreams;
Where the air is pure, ethereal,

Laden with the breath of flow'rs,
They are blooming by the fountain,
'Neath the amaranthine bow'rs

Refrain

Is not this the land of Beulah?
Blessed, blessed land of light,
Where the flowers bloom forever,
And the sun is always bright!

I can see far down the mountain,
Where I wandered weary years,
Often hindered in my journey
By the ghosts of doubts and fears;
Broken vows and disappointments
Thickly sprinkled all the way,
But the Spirit led, unerring,
To the land I hold today.

I am drinking at the fountain,
Where I ever would abide;
For I've tasted life's pure river,
And my soul is satisfied;
There's no thirsting for life's pleasures,
Nor adorning, rich and gay,
For I've found a richer treasure,
One that fadeth not away.

Tell me not of heavy crosses,
Nor of burdens hard to bear,
For I've found this great salvation
Makes each burden light appear;
And I love to follow Jesus,
Gladly counting all but dross,
Worldly honors all forsaking
For the glory of the cross.

Oh, the cross has wondrous glory!
Oft I've proved this to be true;
When I'm in the way so narrow,
I can see a pathway through;
And how sweetly Jesus whispers:
"Take the cross, thou need'st not fear,
For I've tried the way before thee,"
And the glory lingers near.

9. *I've Pitched My Tent in Beulah*

Margaret J. Harris, 1908

I long ago left Egypt for the promised land,
I trusted in my Savior, and to His guiding hand;
He led me out to vict'ry through the great Red Sea,
I sang a song of triumph, and shouted, I am free!

Refrain

You need not look for me, down in Egypt's sand,
For I have pitched my tent far up in Beulah land;
You need not look for me, down in Egypt's sand,
For I have pitched my tent far up in Beulah land.

I followed close beside Him, and the land soon found,
I did not halt or tremble, for Canaan I was bound;
My Guide I fully trusted, and He led me in,
I shouted Hallelujah! My heart is free from sin!

I started for the highlands where the fruits abound,
I pitched my tent near Heron, there grapes of Eschol found,
With milk and honey flowing, and new wine so free;
I have no love for Egypt, it has no charms for me.

My heart is so enraptured as I press along,
Each day I find new blessings which fill my heart with song;
I'm ever marching onward to that land on high,
Some day I'll reach my mansion that's builded in the sky.

10. *My Home Is On The Rock*

Johnson Oatman, Jr., Adam Geibel

Praise God, I live in Beulah land,
My house will all the storms withstand;
It is not built on sinking sand,
My home is on the rock.

Refrain

My home is on the rock,
The everlasting rock,

I do not fear when storms are near,
My home is on the rock.

When come life's trials thick and fast,
When clouds are o'er my pathway cast,
Secure, I can withstand the blast,
My home is on the rock.

When troubles come that would appall,
When other buildings round e fall,
I rest in Christ my all in all,
My home is on the rock.

And when my time has come to die,
I'll have a mansion in the sky;
But still I'll sing as ages fly,
My home is on the rock.

11. *Sweet Beulah Land*
Squire Parsons, Rick Lunsford, 1979

I'm kind of homesick for a country
To which I've never been before.
No sad goodbyes will there be spoken,
And time won't matter anymore

Refrain
Beulah Land I'm longing for you,
And someday on thee I'll stand.
There my home shall be eternal.
Beulah Land . . . sweet Beulah Land

I'm looking now across that river
to where my faith is gonna end in sight.
Theres just a few more days to labor,
Then I'll take, my heavenly flight

I see the lights, I hear singing
A brand new song of joy divine
My soul rejoices just in knowing
That soon these pleasures will be mine.

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