

Libraries

The library of The Hymn Society was begun in 1925 when John Barnes Pratt gave an unknown number of books, gathered from his work at A. S. Barnes Company, and Augustus S. Newman donated his extensive collection, numbered by Emily Perkins as 1,791 volumes. Following negotiation with Union Theological Seminary, all of these were placed there. On March 21, 1929, The Newman Collection was opened in room 512 at Union, only a few months after Newman's death. The books of THS and those of the seminary were intershelved, though ownership was marked on each volume.

In February 1935, gospel song collections were removed from THS holdings and given to the seminary. The following year, as reported in *The Diapason*, the two collections were "merged." After the death of Emily Perkins in 1941, eighty books from her personal library were added. William Walker Rockwell, librarian both of the seminary and the Society, stated in 1953 that their joint hymnological libraries contained more than 10,000 volumes. THS portion grew again in 1954 through the bequest of books (described by Van Burkalow as "several hundred") by Reginald L. McAll. Duplicate books were donated to other libraries through the years, with minutes recording specific transfers to the University of Marburg in Germany, where a library was destroyed by fire, and to Lutheran Theological Seminary in Philadelphia.

After the School of Sacred Music at Union Theological Seminary closed in 1973, THS collection remained in its Burke Library but received little institutional attention. In February 1977, THS donated the collection to the seminary, with the understanding that it would be maintained intact and that, should the seminary close, the collection would be returned to the Society.

In her July 1984 article in *The Hymn*, Anastasia Van Burkalow reported that the books were integrated into the general collection following the closure of the music program and described the holdings, then counted as 900 items. Seth Kasten, a long-time member of the library staff, who held the S.M.M. from Union and had worked with Van Burkalow, sent a letter to the editor in the April 1998 issue regarding access, which provided reading privileges to Society members but required advance notice and a letter of reference to examine older items. Society members who sought to use the collection reported concerns about service and maintenance.

In 2002, Union Theological Seminary approached THS seeking permission to incorporate the Society's books into the general collection at Columbia University, which was taking possession of the contents of the seminary library. Executive Director Daw declined this offer on behalf of the Society and arranged with Union for the 900 volumes that could clearly be identified as the property of THS to be deposited in the library of the Boston University School of Theology, where they would have permanent preservation under climate control. The transfer was completed in 2005.