

“Bro. Bob Coleman” Singing Unity Throughout Texas

Tim Studstill—Dallas, TX



Robert H. “Bro. Bob” Coleman was one of the most influential leaders among Southern Baptists in Texas during the first half of the past century. Bob Coleman was influential in establishing the Baptist Young People’s Union in Texas in the late 1880’s. He was also actively involved with the Baptist General Convention of Texas, the *Baptist Standard*, the Baptist Annuity Board, the Dallas Baptist Association, and the Southern Baptist Convention. He also served on staff at the First Baptist Church, Dallas as George Truett’s associate pastor, song leader, and Sunday School Director from 1901 until his death in 1946. It was, however, his influence as a hymnal publisher that left a lasting impact upon Southern Baptists.

The Coleman Publishing Company produced 34 hymnals between 1909 and 1939. *The Modern Hymnal* (1926), *The American Hymnal* (1933) and *Coleman’s Songs for Men* (1932) are perhaps the most familiar. Coleman included familiar gospel songs popularized by Ira Sankey, new gospel songs characterized by B.B. McKinney, and a surprising representation of classic hymns. Many Baptist congregations were first introduced to these hymns, both old and new, through his hymnals. Coleman, recognized as one of the foremost congregational song leaders of his day, produced collections that appealed to a majority of Southern Baptists. Many churches gained a hymnic identity through his hymnals. Of the hymns popularized by Coleman, 175 made their way into the 1991 *Baptist Hymnal* published by the Baptist Sunday School Board. Among these are “Amazing Grace,” “He Keeps Me Singing,” “Love Is The Theme,” and “Lord, Send A Revival.” It is significant that this core of hymns, chosen by one man, has remained in common use by Southern Baptists for over eighty years. Coleman’s primary desire was to live out his commitment to God through his service to the church and denomination by encouraging Christian growth and providing hymnals to meet these needs. He was sensitive to people and understood what they wanted to sing. Coleman’s hymnals helped unify the congregational singing of churches throughout Texas and the Southern Baptist Convention. He used the great hymns of previous generations but also provided a new body of hymns and gospel songs that met the needs of his time.

Coleman’s message for today’s churches might well be, love the Lord and serve Him gladly. Sing. Use the best of the old and the best of the new.

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