

## **Joyful Noise: On-line Resources 1–10**

The following On-line Resources are posted as supplements to *Joyful Noise: A Guide to Music in the Church for Pastors and Musicians* (Franklin, TN: Providence House, 2007), by William S. Smith. Copies of the 321-page book may be obtained from the author by remitting a check or money order in the amount of \$29.00 (which includes \$4.05 for handling & shipping) to William S. Smith, 1826 Ridgeover Place, Jackson, MS 39211-6501. For additional copies in same order, to be sent to same address, remit only \$24.95 each, there being no additional postage and handling charge.

The author takes this opportunity to express appreciation to his son, Andrew J. Smith, for his making his website available for these resources.

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## **On-line Resource No. 1: Choosing the Best Hymnal for Your Church**

Note well: Not “perfect” hymnal, but “best.” There is no perfect hymnal. Note also the words “for *Your* Church.” There is no hymnal that is best for all churches. And note, too, the word “Church”—the church you serve. Remember that the song belongs to the people; it is the church’s hymnal, not yours. It is also helpful to keep in mind that every switch in the hymnal used is a trade-off: You gain some and you lose some. The members of a Sunday school class for seniors with which I am familiar can not seem to remember that a particular hymn they have come to love is not contained in the older hymnal now used in Sunday school, but only in the “new” and still-grouched-about-collection used in the sanctuary for just 15 years!

### **Making the Case for a New Hymnal**

Except for new congregations, choosing a hymnal usually means choosing *another* hymnal, a *new* hymnal, one that will replace an older one. Hymnals, like other artifacts, have a shelf (or pew) life that seems generally to be limited to a generation or so. Some congregations send their old, tattered hymnals off to be rebound. Other churches acquire, by purchase or by gift, hymnals being discarded elsewhere. But it is not just that the old hymnals show signs of wear and tear; a percentage of their texts and tunes also will, upon examination, appear to be dated. They no longer appeal, if they ever did, to the congregation. Some hymns continue to serve well for centuries. Most do not. Some do not survive from one hymnal to its successor. In any case, the world turns, language evolves, church and society face new situations that call for some fresh songs to be added to the treasure that has come down from the past. While every worship service should give the worshipers a sense of continuity with the past, there also needs to be an element of freshness, of newness. And fresh hymns are not lacking; since the 1960s there has been a torrent of new English-language hymns produced—the phenomenon known as the “Hymn Explosion” (see Chapter 5, under “The God of the Hymn Explosion”). And the flood of new texts and, to a far lesser extent, tunes has not abated.

It is because hymnody is, in its very essence, a kind of folk song that we must never close the door to new hymns written in the idiom of our day . . . . What is important is that we give each generation its turn at expressing its devotion in the idiom of its day. Christian hymnody is like a great art museum. It has treasures from a great variety of ages and cultures, but it always seems to have room to show the best of contemporary works as well [Old, 339].

### **A Hymnal in Your Church's Tradition**

The question as to how a congregation goes about choosing its hymnal varies from one denomination to another. Any congregation that is related to a denomination should look first at the current hymnal of the denomination. All things being equal, it is in such a hymnal that the congregation will find itself and have its identity further strengthened. Even congregations with no denominational ties can find that one hymnal more faithfully than others reflects the tradition(s) from which it has come. (It has to be admitted that many congregations possess very little sense of who they are; tradition has very little interest for them.)

In addition to the denominational publishers of hymnals, there are a number of commercial firms and even individuals that together offer a wide variety of choices. Some of these will be glad to send examination copies to churches seeking a new hymnal. Area churches would probably loan, for your examination, copies of the hymnals they are using. New hymnals are normally reviewed a year or two after their publication; consult back issues of *The Hymn* and *The American Organist*.

### **The Structure for Selecting a New Hymnal**

You may think you already have at least a pretty good idea as to what kind of hymnal you think your congregation should have. Maybe you even know a specific hymnal that would be just the ticket. Pastors and church musicians may have already given more thought to the matter and had more relevant experience than most, if not all, of the members of the congregation. It is tempting in this situation to take the shortest, easiest route to get the new hymnal into the pew racks. What a saving of the congregation's time this would mean, time they could spend doing other worthwhile things! Whatever we may say in favor of this approach, however, there is another that has the potential for yielding far more dividends for song in your congregation.

In my denomination the choice of a hymnal is the responsibility of the governing body of the local congregation, with the concurrence of the pastor, and in consultation with such musicians and educators as are available to the governing body. In any congregation, a committee should be named by those governing the congregation, and be charged with the responsibility of studying and making recommendations. For the selection process to be of maximum benefit to the congregation, certain things must be borne in mind:

1. The pastors, staff musicians, and all sectors of the congregation should be represented on the committee.
2. All members of the committee must be brought to appreciate the importance of congregational song, and must be willing to give the time necessary to get at least a basic grasp of the subject. This will require knowledgeable leadership and an educational effort;
3. All members should understand that their decision will impact the faith and life of many people for many years;
4. Suggestions should be sought from the congregation;
5. From time to time, members of the committee should share with the congregation the rationale they are following in their work, and give progress reports. We want the congregation to “buy into” the new hymnal, to understand that it is theirs;
6. One year is most certainly not too long to devote to this project.

This approach, *coupled with a thoughtfully planned and ongoing introduction* of the new hymnal over time, can result not only in the acquisition of a new hymnal, but also in a renewal of the congregation’s song. Carol Doran and Tom Troeger encourage us to look at this whole process as an opportunity to revitalize the congregation’s life, as a way to examine and expand the people’s relationship to Jesus Christ, to each other, to the larger church and to the world. It will never be possible to please everyone, but in our choosing a new hymnal and learning to use its resources with grace and joy we are growing in Christian maturity. We are preparing for the ultimate goal of all human existence: To know and enjoy God forever.

#### **Some Things to Look for:**

All of the various issues addressed in chapter 4 of *Joyful Noise* should be borne in mind. In addition, I offer these considerations:

1. We want our hymns to be biblical, true to what we perceive to be the message of God’s revelation in its entirety, honoring its emphases and its silences. Hymns should not be expected to be mere versifying of Scripture (as are “Bible Songs,” which also have their place in a hymnal); rather they should be the church’s faithful response to Scripture, what the church says to and about the God who has first spoken.

2. Four principles that guided the selection of hymns included in one collection from 1987 are: biblical, catholic, confessional, and pastoral [Brink, 11-13].
3. The hymns of the faithful come from every age and from every sector of the church; our hymnal should reflect that catholicity. Every hymnal should include some of that part of the church's song that is the oldest and truly universal, the Psalms. Examine a hymnal for texts and tunes originated since 1950. Breadth of repertory helps assure that our hymns reflect "the whole counsel of God," and helps save us from fads. All the central doctrines and practices of the universal church should be represented in the collection chosen. (Hymns about the resurrection of the body are scarce to next to non-existent in *every* hymnal I have seen.) We cannot demand that hymns be theologically precise; their aim is to express the truth in terms of *feeling*.
4. A committee working in the 1970s surveyed a large number of English-language hymnals considered to be representative. The committee inventoried the hymns that had been deemed important enough for widespread inclusion. The resulting list of 227 hymns was published in 1976. Of these, 167 are among the 314 hymns appearing on a survey-based list published in 1997. These lists are worth consulting. The list of the 227 hymns is given in *The Hymn* of October 1977, 192-209. The 1997 update is to be found in *Hawn*. See also, in the following "Source List," Sydnor and Westermeyer.
5. As a whole, our hymnal should reflect the distinctive doctrines of our faith tradition, and no hymn should contradict them.
6. The hymnal should contain a full panorama of "objective" hymns, texts dealing with the mighty, saving acts of God in history. But, as the psalms of the Old Testament demonstrate, there is room also for the "subjective" hymn, the hymn of Christian experience. Do the texts mirror the experience of most of the membership of your congregation?
7. Steer clear of hymnals gotten together by only one or two people, or even by a committee dominated by one person, no matter how prestigious these individuals may be. Only a larger number of people working together can save us from the idiosyncrasies we all have.
8. Is a hymnal being examined gender-sensitive?
9. Learn what you can about the members of the committee that prepared any hymnal you are considering. Are these people known and respected in the fields of theology, music, poetry, and hymnology? How many of *their* hymns or hymns by people related to them are included in the collection? Favoritism should not play a role.

10. Is there a balance between the old and the new? Are some contemporary composers or authors overrepresented?
11. What hymns from your present or some previous collection must be found in the new?
12. Avoid the trap of looking for this or that favorite. No hymnal will have everything you might like. If you do look and do not find, consider whether there might have been good reasons for the non-inclusion. Remember, too, you can always paste copies of hymns in the rear of the hymnal (assuming copyright laws are observed).
13. What contemporary societal concerns confront the church that new hymns might address?
14. If your congregation observes the church year, you will most certainly want a hymnal that has songs for every special day and season gathered together in an order that corresponds to the church year.
15. What hymns are there on baptism, the Lord's Supper, opening and closing worship, special occasions like weddings and funerals? Tunes for weddings and funerals should be familiar.
16. Is there a variety of musical styles?
17. Consider only those hymnals published within the last twenty years.
18. A total of 500 to 600 songs seem to be about right, bearing in mind the weight and cost of the hymnal, fitting the book into a pew rack, and the wisdom of seeking to build a "core repertory." (See chapter 11 in *Joyful Noise*.) Among books in general, hymnals of every size tend to be bargains. A number of current hymnals published in North America weigh in the neighborhood of 2.5 pounds—a reasonable maximum.
19. Is the service music you use in worship (Doxology, Gloria Patri, Amen's, etc.) found in the hymnal? Or will other provisions be made for it? The Service Music division of a hymnal is very often underused. Dispensed with, there would be room for more hymns, or the hymnal would be lighter and less expensive. Service music sung only by the choir need not be included in the hymnal.
20. Some hymnals include material other than hymns, for instance, prayers, responsive readings, doctrinal standards, pithy sayings. Would such inclusions be helpful in your service? They do increase weight and cost.
21. Are the layout, printing, and binding attractive? Is the print large enough to be judged legible by seniors? Are the syllables of the words placed precisely with the notes of the music to which they are to be sung? Do paper and binding appear to be durable? Is a color available that does not clash with colors in your sanctuary?
22. Is the book well indexed? Indexes of first lines, tunes, meters, authors, composers, Scripture?

23. Do the pages have “running heads” (a caption on each page to indicate the theme of the hymn on that page, such as “Christmas”)?

24. Are more than one edition of the hymnal available? Large print (text only) edition? Musicians’ edition?

If your search presents you with more than one “winner,” chart the pluses and minuses of each one of them.

Bear in mind that how a new hymnal is introduced to the congregation is exceedingly important. (I know of one new hymnal that was shelved soon after its acquisition; I suspect that a helpful period of introduction would have prevented this.) Plan carefully for this phase; dedicate some months to it. Emphasize continuity with the former collection by favoring songs that are in both. For help, see the next-to-last item in the following Source List.

### Source List

Emily R. Brink, ed., *Psalter Hymnal* (Grand Rapids: CRC Publications, 1987), 11–15.

Carol Doran and Thomas H. Troeger, “Choosing a Hymnal: An Act of Ministry on Behalf of the Whole Church,” *The Hymn*, April 1986, 23–24. I am indebted to Doran and Troeger for some of the above.

C. Michael Hawn, “The Tie that Binds: A List of Ecumenical Hymns in English Language Hymnals Published in Canada and the United States Since 1976,” *The Hymn*, July 1997, 25–37.

Richard J. Mouw & Mark A. Noll, eds., *Wonderful Words of Life: Hymns in American Protestant History and Theology* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004), 251–64: “. . . [a] ranked list of 300 hymns . . . the most often reprinted found in American Protestant hymnals . . . published from 1737 to 1960,” prepared by Stephen A. Marini.

Hughes Oliphant Old, *Leading in Prayer: A Workbook for Worship* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995).

James R. Sydnor, *Hymns and Their Uses* (Carol Stream, Illinois: AGAPE, 1982), 24,25. The 1976 list of ecumenical hymns is given on pages 46–72.

James R. Sydnor, *Introducing a New Hymnal: How to improve congregational singing* (Chicago: GIA Publications, 1989).

Paul Westermeyer, *Let the People Sing: Hymn Tunes in Perspective* (Chicago: GIA Publications, 2005), 399–426. A list of appropriate texts and tunes for the Sundays and special days in one year.

## On-line Resource No. 2: Will a Hymn Preach?

If a sermon is to be a responsible proclamation of the word of God, may we use a *hymn* as the basis for a sermon? Many hymns, not least those of Charles Wesley, are replete with Scripture—not just Scriptural ideas, but the very language. A sermon based on a hymn may be said to be based on Scripture as seen through the prism of the hymn, through the eyes of the writer of that hymn, thus through the eyes of an interpreter of Scripture. Every sermon we preach is, hopefully, the word of God—as seen through the eye of interpreters, namely, those who preach. I have set down in what follows an outline of how I have used a particular hymn, one of the most beloved, “Love Divine, All Loves Excelling.” Using a hymn as the basis for a sermon can lend freshness to the service, as well as upgrade the significance of hymns in the mind of the congregation.

Herewith some of the scriptural passages from which Wesley might have drawn, keyed to the stanzas (some hymnals omit the second stanza, as did John Wesley in his *Collection* of 1780) of the hymn, “Love Divine, All Loves Excelling:”

1. “Love divine:” Malachi 3:1; Matthew 9:36; John 14:23; Acts 1:11; 1 Corinthians 16:22; Ephesians 3:16–19; Hebrews 13:8; Revelation 21:3; 22:20.
2. “Breathe O Breathe:” Joshua 21:43-45; John 8:32, 36; 20:22; Romans 7:21-25; 8:17; 2 Corinthians 3:17; Galatians 5:16-18; Hebrews 4:8-11; 2 Peter 3:11-14; Revelation 1–8; 14:13.
3. “Come, Almighty:” Psalm 145:2; 146:2; 1 Thessalonians 5:17; Hebrews 13:15.
4. “Finish, then:” Psalm 84:1-4; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 4:16–5:5, 17; Galatians 6:15; Ephesians 1:4; 2:15; 4:24; 5:27; Colossians 1:22; 1 Thessalonians 3:13; 5:23; Revelation 4:9-11; 5:9-14.

I introduce this sermon with something of a rationale like that given above. I want people to understand the relation between the hymn and the Scripture that underlies it. Herewith some possible “homiletical moves” (I have omitted illustrations.):

1. To sing is to pray, hymns are “prayers of the people.” Hymns are not fun songs, but serious business: we mean what we say. So we sing prayerfully. How does your prayer life compare with the prayer that is this hymn? Hymnal at home with your Bible! Use hymnal to nourish your prayer life. If you own a hymnal, you own a “Prayer Book.”

2. Whose prayer? Ours! First person plural. We are ones diagnosed, described. Needy sinners' prayer, those who need all these things. Petition, but also implied confession: Jesus in reality Alpha and Omega to us? The contradiction in our lives. Prayer for deliverance from hypocrisy, ambivalence, double-mindedness, divided allegiance.
3. Prayer to whom? Christian faith not just principles, but a living person. Our faith not generic; amazing grace has a name: "Jesus." Intimate, close, dwells in trembling breast and troubled heart. Embarrassing to have hand out to Jesus always? Jesus invites us to ask, is honored by our asking. Do we make our prayers to Jesus also? And to the Holy Spirit? Or do we address our prayers only to the Father, or the "Lord"?
4. What is this person like? The one who is love divine, whose love excels all other. This love known supremely in Jesus' suffering and death for us (Gal 2:20). Condescending love: Jesus makes humble dwelling in us! His mercies are faithful, "the same yesterday, today, and forever." *Hesed*: "steadfast love." He is the Almighty, he can do what is asked. So bring on your "let us"! Moses asked Pharaoh, "Let my people go." Child asks parent: "Let me." So we say to Jesus: "Let us this, let us that." Jesus can breathe his loving, life-giving Spirit of power. Genesis 1:2; 2:7; John 20:22: Divine CPR. "Comparisons are odious." Indeed. But Wesley piles on superlatives! Jesus is the "mostest." And Jesus is all about *us*. We are not Jesus' part-time job; all that Jesus does is for God's glory and our good. Jesus is God at our service!
5. Pray for what? Compare first 3 petitions of Lord's Prayer. Our prayers have this focus? Twenty-two verbs of asking, petition (including "come down" in the first stanza)! Our "to do list" for Jesus! To petition Jesus is all right, to be expected of finite, sinful creature. But petition Jesus for what? For all God has purposed and promised. That Jesus finish the job, crown what is already begun. A total makeover. "Take away the love of sinning" (originally "bent for sinning"), our default setting; sin is addictive. The prospect of being unable to do wrong! When Jesus is indeed Alpha and Omega to us. Rest: Not eternal siesta, but being in Promised Land safe from enemies (Joshua, Hebrews). "Not goal, but journey"? Both!
6. When? Promise of angels to disciples (Acts 1:11). This same Jesus. Fulfillment of covenant promise: never to be separated from God's presence. "Cast our crowns." The last abdication—en masse. Finally, no more pretenders to the throne. The first three petitions of Lord's Prayer answered. Following Church Calendar has merits. But biblical time is not going around and around; rather straight into God's promised future. Advent is always in season. "Come, Lord Jesus."

### **On-line Resource No. 3: A Hymn-based Service of Worship**

This service was designed to make the maximum use of hymns. What follows is intended as an example of what you may do along these lines. Should you choose to make the example your own, you may substitute other appropriate hymns for those named here. The sermon, based on Acts 2:1-21, is delivered in nine brief installments, each being followed by an appropriate response that is sung by the congregation. Where the congregation is to read rather than sing (because the music is unknown to the congregation, or for any other reason), that is noted. Hymn stanzas set to music unfamiliar to the congregation are given to the choir. (Not all hymnals give the same number of stanzas; if a stanza indicated here does not seem to be the most appropriate stanza in that hymn, you should adjust accordingly.) Two hymns are sung in their entirety from the hymnal. Otherwise, the stanzas of hymns sung or read are printed in the bulletin. At the end of each passage sung or read, the number in the hymnal (not done here) and stanza numbers are noted for the benefit of anyone seeking the hymn in the hymnal. The keyboardist is easily cued to begin introductions to stanzas and hymns at the appropriate times without any word from the pulpit in that regard. Musical introductions to stanzas printed in the bulletin should be of minimal length. The choir should rehearse the service in advance, so as to be able to support the congregation in what for them is an unfamiliar order. A brief word of explanation from the worship leader at the beginning of the service will be opportune. (I tell people that it may help them follow along if they will move a thumb down the bulletin as we proceed.) The service can be adapted to include the Lord's Supper and other rites or events not included in this service.

Prelude

PASTOR: Welcome and Announcements

PASTOR: Greeting

CHOIR: Choral Call to Worship

“All Glory Be to God on High” [st. 1]

\*ALL: “Praise the Lord, God's [His] Glories Show”

*The Forgiveness of Sins is Promised Us.*

ALL: "Saviour, Like a Shepherd Lead Us" [st. 2]

*We Confess Our Sin.*

ALL (read): "Have Mercy on Us, Living Lord" [st. 1, 2 & 4]

[This is Fred Anderson's Psalm 51.]

ALL: Silent Confession

CHOIR, Kyrie: "All Glory Be to God on High" [st. 2]

PASTOR: Assurance of Pardon

*We Respond to the Good News of Pardon.*

\*ALL: "O My Soul, Bless Your Redeemer" [st. 2 & 3]

[Ps. 103 in *The Book of Psalms*, 1871, alt.]

*We Pray for Illumination*

ALL (read): "Break Thou the Bread of Life" [st. 1]

*We Listen and respond to God's Word*

PASTOR, Text: Acts 2:1-21

PASTOR, Sermon: By Word and Spirit, God is with us.

ALL: "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God" [st. 4]

PASTOR, Sermon: The Spirit is God's gift to the church.

ALL: "Baptized in Water, Sealed by the Spirit" [st. 3]

PASTOR, Sermon: We pray for the gift of God's Spirit.

ALL: "Spirit of the Living God, Fall Afresh on Me."

PASTOR, Sermon: What the Spirit gives the church is a word.

ALL: "O Spirit of the Living God" [st. 2]

PASTOR, Sermon: The word is about what God has done in Jesus Christ.

ALL: "To God Be the Glory" [st. 1]

PASTOR, Sermon: God will bless the word.

ALL: "O Christ, the Great Foundation" [st. 1]

PASTOR, Sermon: God gives the word and Spirit to the whole church.

ALL: "Come, O Spirit, Dwell among Us" [st. 1]

PASTOR, Sermon: The church is called to make God's love known.

ALL: "Open My Eyes, That I May See" [st. 3]

PASTOR: The word given to the church is for all of life.

\*ALL: "O Christ, the Great Foundation" [st. 3]

*We Commit Ourselves to God and Our Neighbor*

PASTOR: Our Neighbors in Need [intimations]

CHOIR: "Living Word of God Eternal" [st. 4]

PASTOR: Intercessory Prayer

Worship through Offerings

\*ALL: "Jesus Christ Is Risen Today" [st. 4]

\*PASTOR: Prayer of Dedication

*We Go Forth to Witness and to Serve*

\*ALL: "O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing"

\*PASTOR: Benediction/Blessing

Postlude

## **On-line Resource No. 4: One Hymnfest**

Hymnfests (or hymn festivals) have the potential for strengthening congregational song in participating churches. They can also provide memorable “highs” in the life of a congregation. Hymnfests can be thrilling. They are best conceived, however, not merely as events that give pleasure, but as worship.

Benefits are multiplied if two or more congregations are involved. An annual hymnfest can be planned, rotating from one participating church to another. A choir may be a plus, but hymnfests may be organized without them. If choirs are employed, the choirs of the churches normally gather to form one choir. Depending on what is programmed, they may take their place before or behind the congregation, but in either case facing the congregation.

Worship leaders of all the participating churches should plan and lead the service. All can help with publicity.

If churches of more than one denomination are participating, commonality of repertory has to guide the selections. In such a situation, one possibility would be for the members of each denomination represented to sing one song that is especially identified with that tradition.

A hymnfest is not an illustrated lecture in hymnology, but brief remarks to be made before each selection should be planned in advance.

A hymnfest affords an opportunity for the use of instruments in addition to organ and piano. A brass ensemble and percussion are welcome, but should be used with restraint—perhaps in no more than two selections. Variety in how the hymns are sung should be planned. Keyboardists may be creative with respect to the introductions to the hymns.

The counsel I have found hardest to follow has been with respect to the choice of selections. A hymnfest is not a time to try to teach a lot of new tunes and texts to the congregation! It is a time to infuse known tunes and texts with excitement and energy. I recommend that no more than two hymns be unfamiliar to the participating congregations, and that care be taken to help the congregation sing any unfamiliar music.

Where I have lived and worked, an hour and a half seems to be the maximum duration desirable for a hymnfest. About twelve hymns and brief comments on them can be programmed.

Hymnfests should be organized around some common theme. Possibilities include: Historical development of congregational song, women hymn writers, North American hymn writers, denominational emphases and contributions, the different kinds of tunes used for hymns, the creed, and the church calendar. The theme of the hymnfest outlined below

is the close connection between Scripture and what we sing in church. Some of the material here is for the planners, and does not appear in the service bulletin. The choices here reflect the contents of the hymnal used and the congregations' familiarity with the selections. What follows here is an example of what may be done.

Make sure you have enough hymnals!

Childcare may be offered.

A reception may be planned.

The people need to stand now and then—and they can sing better standing. So get them up for some of the songs!

### “Singing the Scriptures”

Processional: Scripture-based (Ps 103: “Praise My Soul the King of Heaven”). With organ and brass. Unison on st. 1 & 2, parts on st. 3, unison with descant on st. 4. Brass on st. 1, 2, & 4, on introduction and on interlude. Majestic!

Geneva Psalm 47, “People, Clap Your Hands!” Line out st. 1, the congregation not looking at hymnal, then sing st. 1 & 2 from hymnal. Unison, lively, fast-paced. Light percussion? Organ?

English Psalm 90:1–5, “Our God, Our Help in Ages Past.” Alternate among groups as to responsibility for each stanza, one stanza a cappella in parts.

Israeli Folk Psalm 24, “Lift up the Gates Eternal.” Responsibilities to be divided among children, congregation and choir. Light percussion. A fiddler can be nice. Gradual acceleration of tempo.

Gelineau Psalm 23, “My Shepherd Is the Lord.” Soloist and congregation, with soft bells, synthesizer, or harp. Choir first sing refrain, then congregation sing refrain, then soloist on 1<sup>st</sup> st., all on refrain, etc.

Afro-American Psalm 150, “Praise Ye the Lord.” Soloist and, on refrain, congregation. Piano.

Plainsong Psalm 22:1-11, “Lord, Why Have You Forgotten Me?” Choir men on st. 1, choir women on st. 2, all on st. 3 & 4. Soft organ.

Scripture-informed hymn, “Love Divine, All Loves Excelling.” Vary responsibilities. Organ and a cappella.

Brazilian Folk Psalm 150, “O Sing to the Lord.” Youth and leader with guitar on st. 1, all with guitar on st. 2 & 3. Possibly a stanza in Spanish or Portuguese by small group.

Gospel song based on John 3:16, “To God Be the Glory.” All. Piano.

Taizé Sung Scripture, “Jesus, Remember Me.” Repeated a cappella several times by all, softly. Parts may be indicated at times.

Recessional: Paraphrased Psalm 72:5-17, “Jesus Shall Reign Where ’er the Sun.” Vary responsibilities. Descant on st. 5? Brass. Elaborated organ introduction. Triumphant!

### Source List

James Rawlings Sydnor, *Hymns & Their Uses: A Guide to Improved Congregational Singing* (Carol Stream, IL: AGAPE, 1982), 140-46.

James Rawlings Sydnor, *Introducing a New Hymnal: How to improve congregational singing* (Chicago: GIA Publications, 1989), 122-26.

Carlton R. Young, *My Great Redeemer’s Praise: An Introduction to Christian Hymns* (Akron: OSL Publications, 1995), 137-39, gives a sample hymnfest.

## On-line Resource No. 5: A Miscellany of Relevant Quotations

The words song/sing/singing may be found in about fifty of the Old Testament book of Psalms. Song or some other reference to music is found in more than two dozen of the prefaces (added later?) to the psalms. Consult a concordance for the many occurrences of “sing,” “song,” and “singing” in the psalms and in the book of Revelation. Other words, such as praise, extol, and bless may well be thought to include song. (The King James Version notwithstanding, Biblical Hebrew has no proper word for “thank,” “give thanks.”) Remember that many times a verb for uttering is translated as “speak,” even when it is clear that a song is in view. The qualifier “new” in “a new song” (Pss 33:2-3; 40:3; 51:14-17; 96:1, 12; 98:1-2; 144:9; 149:1, 3, 5, 9; Isa 42:10-11; Rev 5.9) often, if not always, indicates not merely a song that is new, but a song in praise of some new thing that God has done. “Joyful noise” is found in Psalms 66:1; 98:4, 6; 95:1-2; 100:1.

The dead do not praise God (Pss 6:4-5; 30:9; 88.10-12; 115:17; Ecclesiasticus 17:27-28. Cp. Ps 146.1-2 with the first line of Isaac Watts’ paraphrase of that Psalm as an illustration of how Watts “Christianized the Psalms), but to live is to breathe (Ps 150:6) is to praise God (Pss 118:17; 119:175; Isa 38:18-19). Believers praise God by their life (Eph. 1:12), but may also, even as did Christ, in whom Israel’s praise finds its fulfillment, praise God by their death (Jn. 17:1; 21:19). The activity of singing appears in the psalms in many different ways, including as conditional—a promise to sing if God blesses (21:13), and because God has blessed (63:3-7), because God has both gotten the victory and comes to judge the world in righteousness (98). As to mood, the largest category of praise is made up of those in the imperative (as in Ps 98:7-8, and the first lines of Pss 146–150). The psalmist sings the statutes of the Lord (119:54). Judgment brings an end to all kinds of music (Isa 16.10; Jer 7:34; Rev 18:22-23), turns singing into lamentation (Lam 5:14-16; Am 8:10); restoration from exile includes a restoration of music (Jer 33:11). The Lord sits “enthroned upon Israel’s praises” (Ps 22:3). The Lord is the source of the psalmist’s song (40:3; 105:43). The psalmist sings alone at night (42.8), in the assembly (9:1-2, 14; 22:22, 25; 82: 1-3; compare Heb 2:12) and, beyond that, among the people/nations (9:11; 18:49; compare Rom 15.9-12). The psalmist’s song is prayer (42.8). The psalmist in singing testifies to God’s saving acts (9:1-2); 89:1-2). The Psalmist praises God by re-presenting Israel’s history (78.2-8). God is praised for what God has done (124), and also for what God is (72.18-19). (The book of Psalms closes with the exhortation for everything that breathes to join in the music-making—from the sanctuary to the firmament immeasurably high above (150).

“I will declare thy name unto my brethren;

in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee.”

“My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation;

I will pay my vows before them that fear him” (Ps 22:22 & 25).

“Rejoice, O ye righteous, in the Lord,

For praise is fitting for the upright.

Praise the Lord with the lyre,

Make melody to him with the ten-stringed harp.

Sing unto him a new song;

Play skillfully on the strings with loud shouts” (Ps 33:1-3).

I have proclaimed the good news of righteousness in the great congregation;

as you know, O Lord, I have not restrained my lips.

I have not hidden your righteousness within my heart;

I have declared your faithfulness and your salvation;

I have not concealed your steadfast love and your faithfulness from the great  
congregation (Ps 40:9-10).

“The Lord will save me, and we shall sing to stringed instruments all our days at the house of the Lord” (Isa 38:20).

“The multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, ‘Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven!’” (Matt 21:9 & par. Compare Ps 118:25-26).

“And when they had sung the hymn they went out to the Mount of Olives” (Matt 26:30 & par.). [The hymn in this case was probably the Hallel (Pss 113–118), which was sung at certain non-sacrificial festivities in the Second Temple, and also sung at festivities outside the Temple, including to conclude the family’s Passover feast.]

“My soul magnifies the Lord. . . .” (Luke 1:46-55: the *Magnificat*. Compare 1 Sam 2:1-10; Hab 3:18).

This passage and the three that follow are known as the New Testament Canticles. They have assigned places in the liturgies of fixed-liturgy churches.

“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel . . . .” (Luke 1:68-79: the *Benedictus*, or Song of Zechariah. Lines from several books of the Old Testament are cited.).

“Glory to God in the highest . . . .” (Luke 2:14: the basis for what in due course became the *Gloria in excelsis [Deo]*, “The Greater Doxology”).

N. B. In the book of Revelation, angels are often pictured as engaged in praising, heralding, and teaching by means of song (even if the verb is not translated as “sing”).

“Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace. . . .” (Luke 2:29-32: the Song of Simeon, or *Nunc Dimittis*. This song borrows especially from the language of Isaiah.).

N. B. Several passages in the New Testament are thought by many to derive from the earliest Christian hymns, for instance, Eph 5:4; Phil 2:5-11; 1 Tim 3:16; 1 Pet 2:4-8. Such passages might also derive, however, from early confessions that were spoken, rather than sung. In the ancient Middle East, the distinction between singing and speaking was not so precise, and many references to prayer appear to have in mind singing.

“They lifted up their voice to God with one accord. . . .” (Acts 4:24-30) [Pss 146:6; 2.1-2].

“And at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners listened to them” (Acts 16:25).

“. . . so that you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom 15:6).

“I will pray with the spirit [that is, the Spirit-endowed self], and I will pray with the mind also; I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also” (1 Cor 14:15).

Two distinct kinds of singing are in view here, not one utterance that involves both “mind” and “spirit” at the same time. (See Chapter 2, under “When We Sing We Worship God with Our Whole Being.”)

“When you come together, every one of you has a hymn, a teaching, a tongue, a revelation, an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edification” (1 Cor 14:26).

N. B. What the apostle argues for in 1 Corinthians 14 is that worship must be edifying for all present. Intelligible, verbal communication is indispensable. Note the response on the part of fellow worshipers that is expected: “Amen” (14:16).

“Do not become drunk with wine, wherein is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Eph 5:18-20).

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom as you teach and admonish one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord” (Col 3:16).

“Through him [our high priest, Jesus], then, let us offer a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that confess his name” (Heb 13:15; compare Rom 12:1; 1 Pet 2:5).

“Are any among you afflicted? Let them pray. Are any cheerful? Let them sing songs of praise” (Jas 5:13).

“What type of worship is done with joy and good heart? You should say: It is song” (*Babylonian Talmud*, Arakin 11 An).

“Throughout our entire lives, then, we celebrate a feast, persuaded that God is present everywhere and in all things; we plough the fields while giving praise, we sail the seas while singing hymns, and on every other possible occasion we conduct ourselves skillfully” (Clement of Alexandria, d. before 216, *Strom.* vii, vii).

“For this purpose these harmonious melodies of the Psalms have been designed for us, that those who are of boyish age or wholly youthful in their character, while in appearance they sing, may in reality be educating their souls. For hardly a single one of the many, and even of the indolent, has gone away retaining in his memory any precept of the apostles or of the prophets, but the oracles of the Psalms they both sing at home and disseminate in the market place” (Basil the Great, c. 330–379, from the “Homily on Ps 1”).

“Oh, the wise invention of the teacher who contrived how we might at the same time sing and learn profitable things, and that thereby doctrine is somehow impressed upon our souls! What is learned under duress tends not to be retained, but what suavely ingratiates itself somehow abides within our souls more steadfastly” (ibid.).

“You have a psalm, you have a prophecy, you have the gospel precepts and the pronouncements of the apostles. While your tongue sings, let your mind search out the meaning of the words, so that you might sing in spirit and sing also in understanding” (Basil the Great, c. 330–379).

“When God saw that many men were rather indolent, that they came unwillingly to Scriptural readings and did not endure the labor this involves, wishing to make the labor more grateful and to take away the sensation of it, he blended melody with prophecy in order that, delighted by the modulation of the chant, all might with great eagerness give forth sacred hymns to him. For nothing so uplifts the mind, giving it wings and freeing it from the earth, releasing it from the chains of the body, affecting it with love of wisdom, and causing it to scorn all things pertaining to this life, as modulated melody, and the divine chant composed of number” (John Chrysostom, c. 345–407, from the “Exposition of Ps 46”).

“I wept at the beauty of your [that is, the congregation of Ambrose] hymns and canticles, and was powerfully moved at the sweet sound of your church singing. These sounds flowed into my ears, and the truth streamed into my heart, whence a feeling of piety surged up and my tears ran down, and these things were good for me” (Augustine, 354–430, *Confessions* 9.6).

“Who sings well prays twice” (attributed to, but not found in, Augustine). *Qui bene cantat bis orat.*

Very often in English translation the “well” is omitted. What must Augustine have meant by *bene*?

“Be sure that what you sing with your mouth you also believe with your heart, and what you believe with your heart you prove by your works” (Gennadius of Marseille, d. 492, or Fourth Council of Carthage, fourth cent.).

“Music is to be praised as second only to the word of God because by her are all the emotions swayed. Nothing on earth is mightier to make the sad gay and the gay sad, to hearten the downcast, mellow the overweening, temper the exuberant, or mollify the vengeful . . . .” (Martin Luther, “Preface to the Babst Hymnal,” 1545).

“This precious gift [music] has been bestowed on men alone to remind them that they are created to praise and magnify the Lord” (Martin Luther, “Foreword” to Georg Rhau’s *Symphoniae Iucundae*).

“The riches of music are so excellent and so precious that words fail me whenever I attempt to discuss and describe them . . . . In sum, next to the Word of God, the noble art of music is the greatest treasure in the world” (Martin Luther, “Foreword” to Georg Rhau’s *Symphoniae Iucundae*).

“God does not demand great sacrifices or precious treasure of great price for his blessings. No, he asks for the easiest work of all, namely to sing and praise” (Martin Luther, “Commentary” on Ps 147). [See Heb 13:15.]

“The worship of the New Testament . . . . is nothing else than song, praise, and thanksgiving. This is a unique song. God does not care for our sacrifices and works. He is satisfied with the sacrifice of praise” (Martin Luther, “Lecture” on Isa 42:10).

“The Book of Psalms is a sweet and delightful song because it sings of and proclaims the Messiah even when a person does not sing the notes but merely recites and pronounces the words. And yet the music, or the notes, which are a

wonderful creation and gift of God, help materially in this, especially when the people sing along and reverently participate” (Martin Luther, “Treatise on the Last Words of David”).

“Our songs and Psalms sorely vex and grieve the devil, whereas our passions and impatiences, our complainings and cryings, our “alas!” or “woe is me!” please him so well that he laughs up his sleeve” (Martin Luther, “Table Talk,” no. 615).

“I always loved music; whoso has skill in this art is of a good temperament, fitted for all things. We must teach music in schools; a schoolmaster ought to have skill in music, or I would not regard him; neither should we ordain young men as preachers, unless they have been well exercised in music” (Martin Luther, “Table Talk,” no. 794).

“Christ is “the chief conductor of our hymns,” the one who “hallows our lips. . . .to sing the praises of God” (John Calvin, “Commentary” on the Epistle to the Hebrews).

“As for public prayers, there are two kinds: the one consists simply of speech, the other of song. . . . And we know from experience that singing has great power and vigor to move and inflame men’s hearts to call upon and praise God with a more vehement and burning zeal” (John Calvin, in “Preface” to the Psalter of 1543).

“Now of the other things that are proper to recreate man and give him pleasure, music is either the first or one of the chief, and we must consider that it is a gift that God gave us for our use” (ibid.).

“Reasons briefly set down by the author, to persuade  
everyone [including women] to learn to sing.

First, it is a knowledge easily taught, and quickly learned, where there is a good master, and an apt scholar.

1 The exercise of singing is delightful to Nature, and good to preserve the health of Man.

2 It does strengthen all parts of the breast, and does open the pipes.

3 It is a singularly good remedy for stuttering and stammering in the speech.

4 It is the best means to procure perfect pronunciation, and to make a good Orator.

5 It is the only way to know where Nature has bestowed the benefit of a good voice: which gift is so rare, as there is not one among a thousand that has it: and, in many, that excellent gift is lost, because they want [that is, lack] Art [that is, skill] to express Nature.

6 There is not any Music of Instruments whatsoever, comparable to that which is made of the voices of Men, where the voices are good, and the same well sorted and ordered.

7 The better the voice is, the meeter [that is, more appropriate] it is to honour and serve God therewith: and the voice of man is chiefly to be employed to that end.

*Omnis spiritus laudet Dominum.*

Since singing is so good a thing,

I wish all men would learn to sing”

*Psalmes, Sonets, & songs of sadness and pietie* (1588)

(William Byrd, 1542–1623).

“The man that hath no music in himself nor is mov’d with concord of sweet sounds, is fit for treasons, stratagems and spoils; the motions of his spirit are dull as night, and his affection as dark as Erebus: let no such man be trusted” (William Shakespeare [1564–1616], *The Merchant of Venice*, V.1.

There let the pealing organ blow

To the full-voiced choir below

In service high and anthems clear

As may with sweetness, through mine ear,

Dissolve me into ecstasies,

And bring all heaven before mine eyes”

(John Milton [1608–1674], *Il Penseroso*).

“While we sing the praises of our God in his church, we are employed in that part of worship which of all others is the highest heaven, and its performance among us is the worst on earth” (Isaac Watts, Preface to *Hymns and Spiritual Songs*, 1707).

“The hymnal is a kind of response to the Bible, an echo and an extension thereof. In the Bible one perceives how the Lord communicates with humankind, and in the hymnal how humankind communicates with the Lord” (Count Nicolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf, 1700–1760).

“Sing all,” “Sing lustily, and with good courage,” “Sing modestly,” “Sing in time,” “Above all, sing spiritually.” From “Directions for Congregational Singing,” John Wesley (1761).

The text of all seven still relevant directions may be found in a number of places, including the current hymnal of the United Methodist Church (1989).

“Alas for those that never sing, But die with all their music in them!”

(Oliver Wendell Holmes, 1809–1894, *The Voiceless*, st. 1.)

Seated upon the convex mound Of one vast kidney,  
Jonah prays And sings his canticles and hymns,  
Making the hollow vault resound God’s goodness and mysterious ways,  
Till the great fish spouts music as he swims”

(Aldous Leonard Huxley, 1894–1963, *Jonah*).

“It is the voice of the church that is heard in singing together. It is not I who sing, but the church. However, as a member of the church, I may share in its song” (Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, 1939).

“What we can and must say quite confidently is that the community that does not sing is not the community” (Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV.3.16.72.4).

“A liturgical service takes on a nobler aspect when the rites are celebrated with singing, the sacred ministers take their parts in them, and the faithful actively participate” (*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, 1963, Art. 113).

“When in Our Music God Is Glorified” (Fred Pratt Green, 1972). Find in a hymnal this wonderful paean to the music of the worship service.

“. . . church authority has no means of stemming the flow of music” (Erik Routley, 1975, *A Short History of English Church Music* (Carol Stream, IL: Hope Publishing Company, 1997), 13.

Routley might also have said that the authority of the state is likewise impotent in this regard.

“Sound is one of the most compelling ways to help us drop our defenses, share in our common humanity, rejoice together, mourn together, share each other’s quiet and shouting, prayer and praise,” Alice Parker, *Melodious Accord: Good Singing in Church* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1991), 56-57.

“Music, especially song, is the most human of the arts. It needs no materials or tools other than the ear and throat—along with mind and heart. When we sing alone, we are led out of ourselves into the world of the song. When we sing together, we create a community, a communion in sound” (ibid.), 115.

Naming the grace that amazes:

“You ask me how this grace I know,

This grace of which I sing?

‘Tis found in Christ, to whom I owe

My life, my everything”

(Wm. S. Smith, 1994).

See Eugene H. Peterson, *Living the Message: Daily Help for Living the God-centered Life* (San Francisco: Harper, 1996), 74-75.

See John Bell, *The Singing Thing: A case for congregational song* (Chicago: GIA Publications, 2000), 56.

## On-line Resource No. 6: Colossians 3:16 & 17 and Ephesians 5:18

C: Let the word of Christ dwell among you (pl.) richly

*E: Do (pl.) not become drunk with wine, in which is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit*

C: In all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another, singing psalms, hymns,  
and spiritual songs

*E: Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and  
making melody*

C: From your hearts

*E: From your heart to the Lord*

C: With gratitude to God. And all that you do, in word and in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to  
God the Father through him. (See 3:15c.)

*E: Giving thanks always for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to  
God the Father.*

These two parallel passages in two similar New Testament epistles are two of the *loci classici* in the Testament regarding music in the church (the other being 1 Cor 12–14). Perhaps both epistles were written from the apostle's imprisonment in Rome, first Colossians, addressing a rather specific situation in Colossae, then, elaborating on that epistle in more general terms, Ephesians. Probably both addressees were largely Gentile in makeup.

In both these epistles, an exposition of the person and work of Christ is followed by a concluding *paranesis*, which, in its particulars, is rather like other *paranetic* passages in the epistles. Both passages are parts of pericopes (Eph 5:1-21: Col 3:1-17) within this *paranesis*. Both passages presuppose a gathering of believers, though not necessarily a worship service. In Colossians, the song is part of the new life in the Cosmic Christ, in the light of whom the philosophies

that had preoccupied the Colossian Christians are shown to be vain speculation. In Ephesians, the song is part of the new life that stands in contrast to the old, dissolute life.

That the church *sing* is in the New Testament commanded twice, in these two passages; that the church *baptize*, only once! There are perhaps in the New Testament, more references to baptism than to singing, though it is likely that some references to “praying” or “saying” have singing or at least a semi-musical utterance in view.

“The word of Christ:” Not the text of the songs sung, but the word spoken by Christ and His apostles, the word about Christ; not what is sung, the response to revelation, but the revelation itself. (See Col 1:5.)

“Let . . . dwell richly:” Let that word possess us, have large, controlling role in our lives. Its fruit will correspond to the place given it.

“Be filled with the Spirit:” It is the Holy Spirit that is in view. To be “filled with the Spirit” is a construction otherwise peculiar to Luke-Acts. The command here is to be understood as “Let God fill you with the Spirit.” As in other passages in Luke and Acts, and also in 1 Corinthians 12–14, likewise here: The Spirit is not the *result* of the utterance, but the *source*, the *cause* of it. As wine is to drunkenness, so is the Spirit to song. (Note the relation between sobriety and the Spirit in Luke 1:15 and Acts 2:13ff.) Both “the word of Christ” and being filled with the Spirit stand in priority to what follows. The Hymns of Qumran offer numerous references to the sovereign activity of God in the production of utterance (QH X.7, and 1QH XI.3-7, for instance).

“In your hearts:” The context has audible song in view, thus the phrase is not a reference to a “silent” song that is concurrent with an audible song of the mouth, as Zwingli understood it. Better understood as “from the heart,” “deeply felt,” “sincerely.”

“Teaching and admonishing one another:” This activity may be understood to be the form taken by the rich indwelling of the word, or, less likely, the result of the word’s indwelling? “Teaching” involves thinking through the implications of the salvation that has appeared in Christ. “Admonishing” has to do with the practical walk of the Christian. This mutual pastoral care is aimed at upgrading knowledge and obedience. The care is elsewhere related to specific persons charged with that ministry, but the individual members of the congregation, being themselves mature, are also to exercise it. The congregation is both subject and object of the word. (See Rom 15:14; Jas 5:16.) Is this two-fold activity to be understood as a separate activity parallel with the singing, as another way in which the word is to dwell in the church?

Or is singing to be understood as the mode through which the mutual edification takes place? It is impossible to say with certainty. The principal objection urged against the second interpretation is that it does not seem “natural” to teach and admonish by means of singing. This problem, however, may well be only a modern one. In 1 Corinthians 14:1-33 we do find reference to edification by the medium of song. Tertullian (160?–230?) refers to a woman edifying her husband by means of song.

“In all wisdom:” Insight into the salvation granted in Christ and especially practical implications of this understanding for the Christian walk.

“Giving thanks,” “with thanksgiving:” The singers’ disposition.

“Always for everything:” Everything, that is, for which there is reason to be thankful.

“To God,” “to the Lord:” The church’s grateful response in song is directed to the source of the grace given in Christ.

“Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs:” It is neither called for nor possible to distinguish among these three terms. In Matthew 26:30 and Mark 14:26, the “hymn” that Jesus and the apostles sang was a portion of the Psalms of the Old Testament. We would hardly expect young Gentile congregations to know the Hebrew Psalms. All three terms are used in early Christian writings to denote songs other than the Psalms of the Old Testament. “Spiritual songs” might include the charismatic utterances of 1 Corinthians 12 and 14, but not be limited to them. All three terms appear numerous times in the Septuagint (especially in superscriptions in the Psalms), where they are used as indiscriminately as the Hebrew words they translate. Indiscriminate use of musical terms also characterizes Philo, Josephus, and some of the church fathers. The Septuagint also employs a fourth word for song, *asma*. In the Septuagint, the word translated psalm does not always refer to the Psalms of the Old Testament; it sometimes refers to other songs, even songs of the wicked. Perhaps we may see something analogous in the indiscriminate use of musical terms in modern languages—“hymn,” “chorale,” “psalm,” and “song,” in English, for instance.

Such an accumulation of terms, as in our two passages, without thought of discrimination among them, is not only grammatically possible; a fullness of expression seems to be indicated by the context in both passages. Both stand at the end of their respective pericopes, in which there is a transition from the merely hortatory to an overflowing of the devotional spirit that manifests itself in a certain fullness of language. The piling up of synonymous or similar terms

having to do with praise is common enough in both Jewish and Christian writers (for instance, Ps 66:1-2; Rom 15:9-11; Rev 5:12). Moreover, a triplet figure is not rare in Paul (or Pauline writings; see 1 Cor 2:9; 13:13; Eph 5:9; 1 Tim 1:2. It is very difficult to distinguish among the four members in 1 Tim 2.1.

On these two passages, see W. S. Smith, *Musical Aspects of the New Testament* (Amsterdam: W. Ten Have, 1962), 59-65, 162-63, 166-76.

## **On-line Resource No. 7: Music for Weddings and Death Rites**

In contemporary North American society, even those for whom institutionalized religion plays no significant role in their lives are likely to ask for the services of the church or some other religious instance for weddings and funerals or memorial services. In these matters, as in all else, the church's role is that of servant. Yet the church serves in ways that correspond to its own self-understanding. This applies to its conduct of marriage- and death-related rites. Such rites conducted by the church's staff are worship services, subject to the church's norms for worship. It is to be expected that no one will require clergy or musician to do anything that might violate his or her conscience. Weddings and death rite services often provide musicians with opportunities to sing/play repertory they might not get to sing/play in the weekly worship service. People's requests in regard to these services can sometime create delicate situations. It is important that clergy and musician stand together at such times.

Wedding and death rites provide the church with unique opportunities. The servants and the served often do not know one another. They may express their faith in very different ways, and may cherish different ideas as to what is to be expected. Tastes and cultural values may differ. The circumstances surrounding both a wedding and a death rite are not those of everyday life. Tensions, emotions, and ignorance all may be in high gear. A protocol approved by the governing board of the church can be helpful at such times, especially in connection with a wedding, a copy being given at the outset to the parties involved.

Pastors and musicians can over time provide some education to the congregation as to how the church understands weddings and death rites. Pastor and musician can help families and individuals pre-plan a death rite that honors rather than compromises the faith of the church. A copy of such plans can be filed at the church for future reference. The memorial service allows more time for planning, communication, and coordination than the funeral typically does.

It is particularly the wedding that people may not understand to be a service of worship. (After all, much of traditional wedding music derives from outside the church—the royal court or music hall of an earlier age. What many young people today may prefer is sound track music.) Preparations for a wedding, however, normally occur over a period of time sufficient for meetings between the church staff and the parties to be married. It is recommended that ground rules be explained in the first meeting. Pastors should know the score for both themselves and the church's musicians. It may

have to be explained to some couples that, among other things, the church's organ or piano is incapable of reproducing the music of a movie sound track—even if that were desired. Contact with the musicians will be arranged. Many organists prepare a cassette tape of enough of each of about 30 selections (about 15 minutes of music) interspersed with titles of the selections; the couple is loaned the tape and asked to choose from it. Care must be taken not to violate copyright applying to any of the music used. Unless the keyboardist's contract state otherwise, he or she should be expected to provide keyboard services for all weddings and funerals held in the church. In the event another organist than the church's is requested, the staff organist may be considered a consultant to the guest organist and entitled to a fee; the church's organist makes at least a part of his or her living by playing, and is responsible for the instrument.

It sometimes happens that the parties involved prefer music other than that provided by an organist, an instrumental ensemble, for instance. In such a situation a representative of the musicians should confer with the pastor well in advance concerning the music planned and its use in the service.

Pastor and musician (and the governing board or the worship committee) should develop a policy regarding standards for music at weddings and death rites. The keyboardist is not responsible for teaching the music chosen to any other musicians. Fees for the musicians should take into account all the hours involved, including consultation with the parties, rehearsal, and the service itself. Pre-service music is normally desired for both weddings and death rites. A fee schedule should be agreed on in advance, and reconsidered annually. The fact that the musician is on on-call status, especially with regard to death rites, should be reflected in the fee schedule. In some circumstances, travel should also be compensated. The church should assume responsibility to see that the musicians receive adequate compensation, whether from the church or from the parties served.

As the pastor responsible for the worship service, I normally insist that all weddings, except for those in venues other than the church's worship space, include at least one congregational song. (Even the wedding party may be persuaded to sing from copies of the hymn.) There are a number of generic hymns of praise and thanks from the church's vast store that are appropriate. There are also a number of hymns written specifically for weddings; some are of recent origin. Asking a congregation to sing unfamiliar words and especially unfamiliar music at a wedding, however, is not recommended.

Some churches are fortunate enough to have sufficient choir members who are able to be present at death rites and contribute their services. I strongly urge the use of one or more congregational songs at death rite services, but do not

insist. By making suggestions as to suitable songs, we may be able to head off requests for whatever strikes the mind of the survivors with whom we are working, and keep the service focused on the faith of the church. Pre-service music at both weddings and death rites may be chosen to help familiarize the congregation with a hymn they will be asked to sing. Time before the worship service proper may be used to accommodate the desire for music that is requested, but that really has no place in the liturgy—sentimental favorites, for instance, such as “The Church in the Wildwood,” or “The Church by the Side of the Road.” When the service is held in a funeral parlor chapel, we may have to rely for singing on whatever collection the establishment has, or print and distribute handouts. Pastors should consult with the resident keyboardist in advance as to their musical selections.

### Useful Resources

Robert T. Anderson, *Wedding Processionals and Recessionals* (1987). Available from American Guild of Organists.

Robert T. Anderson, *Vocal Solos for Weddings* (1990). Available from American Guild of Organists.

John L. Bell, *The Singing Thing: A case for congregational song* (Chicago: GIA Publications, 2000), 37-42, about the role of sentiment in preferences for music for weddings and death rites.

Shirley Balk Boomsma, “Wedding Music for Organ, other Instruments, Solo Voice, and Choir,” *Reformed Journal*, June 1990, insert. Three pages of suggestions.

LeRoy Christoffels, “From Sorrow to Hope: Choosing Music for the Funeral Service,” *Reformed Worship*, June 1992, 24-25. Music for choirs, duets, and solos.

Joseph Fitzler, “Of Marrying and Burying: How to Fight Back with a Certain Amount of Class,” *The American Organist*, April 1983, 34-35.

Joseph Galema, “Sacred Music for a Sacred Service,” *Reformed Journal*, June 1990, insert. Five pages of suggestions for wedding music, for organ, solo voice and SATB.

Roy Hopp, “Alternatives to ‘O Perfect Love,’” *Reformed Journal*, June 1990, 20-22. Eleven hymn texts appropriate for congregational song at a wedding.

John Pagett, “Weddings, Funerals and Other Dilemmas,” *The American Organist*, February 1980, 24-25.

Martha Tibbe, "Organ Music for Funerals: A Selected Bibliography of Organ Collections," *Reformed Worship*, June 1992, 26-27.

### On-line Resource No. 8: Hierarchical/Political Images in Songs

How can anyone praise God without indulging in hierarchical language? The root metaphor of the Biblical book of praise is, according to James L. Mays, “The Lord Reigns.”\* In contemporary democratic society, some images drawn from a hierarchical society of days gone by (“king,” “lord,” and “master,” for instance) may be burdened with *negative overtones* of cruel and capricious despots from the past—or perhaps the more recent, sometimes bizarre carryings-on of some member of contemporary royalty. One response to this possible problem is to contrast whatever negative associations these hierarchical terms bring to mind with the virtues of an ideal king. We may find it comforting and strengthening to contemplate a king who is a “foil,” a king so different from any known or even imagined earthly ruler, who is all a ruler should be, who is as unimaginably transcendent as he is beneficent and concerned for our welfare. We may delight in singing the praises of the compassionate ruler (Ps 103) imaged in Henry Frances Lyte’s “Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven.” This ruler remembers that we are dust, and deals with us as a father his children—or a mother her children. All that is wrong in the best democratic society whets our appetite for the coming of one whose sovereign sway will finally fulfill the promises of the Beatitudes, and render every earthly political theory passé. “Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!” Analogously, two twentieth century hymns have used the seer’s vision of the New Jerusalem as an explicit foil for our cities today: “O Holy City, Seen of John,” and “O Lord, You Gave Your Servant John.”

The royal and hierarchical language of earlier ages is seen as problematic for us today, however, not just because of certain negative associations, but for other reasons, too. It is said to be out of touch with contemporary democratic ideals, to run counter to the premium the Christian faith places on humble servant-hood, and to imply nothing \**The Lord Reigns: A Theological Handbook to the Psalms* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994) helpful as to how we are to live in today’s world [Wren, 2000b, 230-31]. In the same vein, Robin Knowles Wallace writes: “In countries where kneeling and monarchs are not in use, the focus on King and on bowing or falling down to worship [as in “Praise and Worship” music] seems a bit out of place” [27].

I am not sure how Roman Catholics and Episcopalians (both hierarchically organized communions) and others who bow and kneel in worship might evaluate this.

Wren points out, correctly, I believe, that the image of the contradictory kind of kingship that characterizes Jesus (the crucified servant-king) was in due course overwhelmed by the earthly image of a domineering, triumphalist imperialism. It was this image that came to serve as the model for authority figures in both state and church [2000b. 228-29]. The New Testament itself does indeed present a double image of Christ (servant and king/lord), but “God-as-King language” no longer functions as it once did [2000b, 231].

The language of the court is said to be, nevertheless, still useful for the church today—provided the church learn to use such language in a new way. When the church is faithful to Christ as the One whom the powers of this world crucified, and as the One who at the same time is risen over them, the language of kingship “is bestowed, not on God, nor on Jesus Christ, but on ordinary people. Toppled from its imperial pedestal, it comes into its own as it cherishes and dignifies the poor and oppressed” [2000b, 234].

It is possible that to some this will bring to mind the program of the Levelers of seventeenth-century England, or those of certain egalitarians and populists of the twentieth. One of the slogans (and title of a book he authored) of a nationally known governor of my native state during my boyhood was, “Every Man a King.” The tyrant to be muzzled (not toppled) in this case was not the “governing powers,” but “big business,” namely, Standard Oil. Royal language appeared also in this colorful politician’s nickname, borrowed from the Amos and Andy radio show: The “Kingfish.”

For Wren, it is not only that images of royalty lead us astray in our thinking about God and neighbor; they also fail to give us political direction—which we have a right to expect of them. When monarchies were the rule, the metaphor of God/Christ-as-king did indeed give guidelines for public life: As God/Christ was to the universe, so was the emperor to the empire, the king to his kingdom. One and the same image could also lead in the opposite direction—to the egalitarian state—as it did in due course; if Christ is the only king, there is no other throne but his. In contemporary democratic societies, the image of kingship “no longer gives meaning and direction to public life” as it once did [ibid., 230].

In response to Wren, I make the following observations:

1) Two crucially important biblical concepts (not images) that have suffered perversion and misunderstanding have been: 1) “Justice”/“righteousness,” and 2) “Love.” The sixteenth-century Protestant Reformation in large measure turned on what was understood by the reformers to be a recovery of the biblical understanding of the first term. And surely no one is suggesting that, because of the perversion it has suffered, we shelve the word “love.” The church has chosen, rather, to retain the word and to help people understand its biblical meaning. A perverted *image* that is as central and certainly more

obvious is that of the *cross* itself. What the apostle understood to be already a “stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles” (1 Cor 1:23) has since had many centuries’ worth of a very different kind of offense added to it by its association with empire from Constantine forward. (Think Crusades and colonization! Think the *Hakenkreuz* of National Socialism!) Like the apostle, rather than jettisoning this symbol, the church continues to attempt to “explain” it. This “rehabilitation” of an image that has been misused is, it seems to me, what Wren suggests we do in connection with any use of royal language today, namely, stressing Christ crucified, and refusing the things that have been associated with kingship: war and conquest.

2) It seems to me that I come out with a social agenda for the church that is much like Wren’s, but that involves a paradigm that is quite different, one outlined in the New Testament, and that is still functional: “For we preach not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus’ sake” (2 Cor 4:5). This program exalts Christ as much as it benefits our neighbor. It seems to be in line with the way Richard Bauckham and Trevor Hart see the social upheaval introduced by the gospel:

So Jesus abolishes social status: that of slave. In a society of slaves, no one may think him- or herself more important than others . . . . As Dominic Crossan puts it, the kingdom is a ‘kingdom of nobodies’ . . . . If the kingdom belongs to them, others can enter it only by accepting the same lack of status [167].

Commenting on 1 Corinthians 9:19, Martin Luther wrote:

A Christian man is the most free of all, and subject to none; a Christian man is the most dutiful servant of all, and subject to every one.

3) There is no denying that our cup of hymns about the dominion of Jesus runneth over. If, however, the core of the church’s hymnody is of the devotional type, it is hard to see how at least a very large number of hymns could not but exalt Jesus in some way—and address him as exalted. Worship is more than the expression of admiration. The very act of addressing this person as the object of our devotion moves us in the direction of exalting the one who is so very special. Only one vested with authority and power can answer petitions. Only a powerful God can deliver—even from “the last enemy,” death.

Thou who hast by thy might led us into the light

(“Lift Every Voice and Sing,” 1921).

Two generations of Sunday school students have been nourished on the fruit of twentieth-century Biblical Theology: The Bible is a recital of “the mighty acts of God.”

4) While it is true that in the past God-language bore a meaningful relation to the way human society was structured and was to function (though the same model could be interpreted in radically different ways!), must we insist today that the church have in its hymns an image that models (reflects?) the structure and agenda of the state? Other possibilities (than the royal paradigm) for expressing the divine-human relation—and that might serve as a model for society—are explored, but Wren acknowledges that no satisfactory image has been found [2000b, 231-35]. No one can expect “the earthly city” of *any* design to provide anything other than very imperfect vocabulary for speaking with reference to “the city of God.” Is any political system less likely to provide an approximate language for worship than a democracy?

Hymns, as important as they are, are not the only tool the church has for helping us think through this or any other area of life. Owning the Lordship of Jesus does not give us anything like a detailed political agenda, but it does give us a framework within which we may, with others of like persuasion, seek to discern the will of the Sovereign. Whatever image we may use to conceive of God, for ordering human relations there is no shortage of biblical material—the biblical concern for righteousness and peace (which is not all of the church’s agenda), and above all else the commandment to love our neighbor. (If only within the church we could agree on how to translate it all into policy and action!) To keep hope alive we have the gift of the promised Spirit and the promise of the One who alone has the power to bring in the kingdom.

5) Allowing for “occasional” use of God-as-king language, Wren claims that if used “persistently and emphatically,” such language “narrows the worshiper’s focus, and God’s authority, to the world of personal and family life” [2000b, 231]. Does history bear this out? How much use is “persistent” and “emphatic” is hard to measure. It is tempting to refer to the use of such language in the not-too-distant past. Assuming that the hymn, *O Christ, the Great Foundation*,” is a faithful translation, believers in China in the 1930s were summoned in the name of “the Lord of all creation” to oppose the tyranny that gripped their land. During and after WWII, the church’s earliest known confession, “Jesus is Lord,” received emphasis in Western Europe: Ultimate obedience is to be rendered to Christ alone. This ancient, simple confession, far from giving no directions for political life, is just what the church has found decisive in the ultimate political act—resistance to the powers that be. A glance at the Barmen Declaration of 1934 makes plain the antithesis (“one Lord”—“other lords”) and, taken in the context of the times, in a way that continues to fascinate and impress.

Wren, however, makes it plain that his purview is that of modern, functioning democracies—which China in the 1930s and most of Europe in the period of 1933 to 1945 certainly were not. Perhaps it is most often in the “extreme”

situation that “Jesus-is-Lord” language is likely to stand up to be counted. In the face of the totalitarianism that was the scourge of the twentieth century, that confession was a priceless asset. As much as in the past, today when much of human society lives under, or is threatened by, tyranny, the confession “Jesus is Lord” is a pretty good thing to have around. Whatever the age or the place, the mother of all political questions is one of *authority*, “Who’s in charge?” Even in a democracy, “Jesus is Lord” can prove invaluable, providing an unshakeable platform for conscientious objection and civil disobedience. In some circumstances, the only possible political posture, even in the “democratic” United States, has seemed to be submission—and hope; singing “He is King of Kings” helped keep hope alive among the victims of slavery and Jim Crow.

One clear instance of the concept of God’s/Christ’s sovereignty functioning in more “normal,” democratic circumstances comes to mind. Abraham Kuyper, who himself served as Prime Minister of the Netherlands, led his late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century, psalm-singing, Dutch coreligionists to seek “God’s honor in every area of life.” “There is no square inch in life about which Christ does not say, ‘It is mine.’” Even “the little man” in the class-stratified Dutch society of that era was brought to an active, participatory role in any number of areas of society organized along confessional lines.

Even if God-as-King language had relevance only for “the world of personal and family life,” it would be a priceless asset, for that world is not a small one; it is overwhelmingly within the daily give-and-take that most of us live out our “threescore years and ten.”

Even in one of the “functioning democracies” of North America in the twenty-first century, it is so easy to see our political system as next to hopeless. As I write this, it seems that an Irish rock star may be doing more good in Africa than any government. Or is it simply that he is getting a better press? And he has made friends in high places. In any case, the star’s campaign began with a decision made by one person. As I write, the major portions of the two largest accumulations of wealth in the modern world have just been given to charitable foundations—by two individuals/couples.

6) With respect to the God-as-king language, the test is the one given to all worship: “What fruit does it bear in the lives of the worshipers?” As Wren concedes, “Some extremely conservative congregations liturgies are socially involved” [2000a, 508]. Indeed! *My* political, social, and economic opinions certainly set me at odds a great deal of the time with the powers that be.

7) There may be seen in the concern about overuse of God-as-king language a wholesome reaction to imbalance in the church's proclamation, an imbalance that extends far beyond this particular metaphor. The church's God-talk has overwhelmingly emphasized the divine sovereignty and omnipotence, while failing to note how God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are so often portrayed in Scripture as vulnerable, defenseless, thwarted. Reaction, however, always carries the risk of overreaction. The cross is not the last word. It is followed by the resurrection and the glorification of the same Jesus. In Acts, the epistles, and Revelation—together a little more than half of the New Testament—the predominant topic is what the exalted Christ is doing today in the church and the world. Gail Ramshaw claims too much when she writes that when Christ was crucified, “kingship itself was crucified” [in Wren, 2000b, 230].

We can, admittedly, find something of the language that Wren advocates even among the classical hymns of the church, for instance, Nicolaus Herman's stirring, sixteenth century “Let all Together Praise Our Lord:”

He undertakes a great exchange, Puts on our human frame,

And in return gives us his realm, His glory, and his name.

He a servant, I a Lord: How great a mystery!

This is a very different picture from that found, for instance, in Philippians 2:1-11.

Happily, just as we do not have to choose between divine sovereignty and vulnerability (both are held together in Scripture [Gen 50:20; Isa 10:5-20; Acts 4:27-28; Rom 8:18-39; 1 Cor 1:18-25; Rev 5:6]), so also the church does not have to choose between the exalted Lord who is worshiped and obeyed, and the humble servant-Christ who is emulated. Revelation 22:1 presents the two images in one scene. The challenge is to hold on to both in ways that give health to the church and life to the world. The two ways of seeing Christ give the church plenty to sing about.

In one other respect God-as-king language is said to serve us poorly: For us moderns, there is in our conception of the universe “nowhere for a divine king to sit” [Wren, 2000a, 506; see also 2000b, 230]. (A silly response to this statement is that the one who neither slumbers nor sleeps probably does not need to sit either.) I know that my cosmology is consonant with what I read in *National Geographic* (insofar as I am able to grasp it). But all the same, I really do miss the ancient Celtic symbol of the “High King of heaven” that some hymnal editors have dethroned from one of my favorite hymns. The psalmist speaks the same language: That of a pre-scientific view of a three-tiered reality shared in the ancient Middle East—the “firmament” (the waters above the earth), the earth, and the waters under the earth. “The Lord sits enthroned

over the flood.” That is to say, the Lord is firmly in control, and this means peace for the Lord’s people (Ps 29:10-11). Neither scientist nor layperson need stumble over this poetic representation—and certainly not hymn writers and hymn singers, who traffic in metaphors. Ancient Hebrews related God-as-king language to their politics, and Genesis 1–3 to their “science”—or did they, too, understand that the burden of the Genesis stories is not about astrophysics and geology, but the nature of *God*? Though for different reasons, the church today continues to find both the metaphor and the stories useful material for faith.

Is it possible that the hierarchical language that should bother us most is that used with reference to clergy—“the Reverend, “the Most Reverend,” “the Right Reverend,” “the Reverend Doctor”? (Such nomenclature is also frequently used in ways that violate “good” grammar.)

### Source List

Richard Bauckham & Trevor Hart, *Hope Against Hope: Christian Eschatology at the Turn of the Millennium* (Grand Rapids: Wm, B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999).

Jaroslav Pelikan, *Jesus Through the Centuries: His Place in the History of Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

Robin Knowles Wallace, “Praise and Worship Music: Looking at Language,” *The Hymn*, July 2004, 24-28.

Brian Wren, “God talk and congregational song: An interview with Brian Wren,” *Christian Century*, May 3, 2000a, 505-08.

Brian Wren, *Praying Twice: The Music and Words of Congregational Song* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000b).

## On-line Resource No. 9: Battle Language in Songs

In a large percentage of the hymnals currently in use in North America, there are not many songs that employ battle language. But who has not heard of the controversy in the 1980s over the inclusion/exclusion of “Onward Christian Soldiers”? This hymn does indeed set before our eyes the picture of a crusade in progress—arguably not our need just now. The militarism of “Onward, Christian Soldiers” might be toned down if a tune other than ST. GERTRUDE were used, one that did not move us to march in place.

I also find in this hymn words that are hard to sing with a straight face: “We are not divided, All one body we.” Far more apt for describing the real church are Bishop Stone’s familiar words, “By schisms rent asunder, By heresies distressed.” Already in 1902, Julia C. Cory penned “We Praise Thee, O God, Our Redeemer, Creator” as a replacement for a hymn judged to be too militant, “We Gather Together to Ask the Lord’s Blessing.” It may seem ironic that the appearance of this concern in its contemporary, reasoned form follows on the heels of a renewal of interest in the use in the worship service of the psalms of the Old Testament—songs that are not loath to use militaristic language. (One of my senior colleagues in Brazil had scrawled in the margin of his Bible at Ps 149:6 the words from the WWII song, “Praise the Lord and pass the ammunition.”) One of the criticisms leveled at some of the contemporary praise music is prompted by its fondness for military language. (See chapter 6.) The metaphor of “battle” is a part of our daily, civilian life—and death. “How goes the battle?” is a friendly greeting with equivalents in other languages. “John died after a long and courageous battle with cancer.”

Here as in other instances, examining the fruits is not out of order. The Salvation Army, in its terminology, as well as in its dress and organization, is steeped in matters military; what comes of this in practice? Hymns from two of America’s pre-Civil War “peace mongers” use the language of conflict: Arthur Cleveland Coxe’s “We Are Living, We Are Dwelling in a Grand and Awful Time,” and James Russell Lowell’s “Once to Every Man and Nation.”

If singing the language of battle distorts my perspective and my relation with any other people of the world, then God forbid that I should sing it! At the same time, we must not lose sight of the full-time, life-long battle to which we are called, that against *evil*. Both Jesus and the apostle used the most drastic kind of language possible in this regard: “cut it off,” “pluck it out,” “put to death.” And, as the apostle and Martin Luther remind us, the enemy is not flesh and blood, but spiritual—cosmic (Eph 6:12; Col 1:13. Psalm singers down through the centuries have seen in the enemies depicted by the psalmist their own, contemporary, flesh-and-blood enemies!) The conflict exists within and without, and on both personal

and global levels. In a world as conflicted as the only one we know has always tended to be, the church can profit from hymns that, like the New Testament, hold before us the reality and the dimensions of the *ultimate* battle—and the ultimate victory (Rom 16:20; 1 Cor 15:24-28, 57; Rev). As careful as the church must be about language, this concern must not result in obscuring the church's vision of the ferocity of the struggle presented by the Bible.

We need language, images, to think and discourse and sing about this battle. I am not sure how my brain processes images. I think that if I were to hear sung the old gospel refrain, “Throw Out the Lifeline,” for instance, my mind would not dwell long at all on anything nautical, but would quickly pass to what is imaged: evangelism. Two lovely texts that employ the metaphor, Jesus-as-tree, are: 1) a paraphrase of a seventeenth-century Hungarian poem, “There in God's Garden,” and, from an eighteenth-century New Hampshire collection, 2) “The Tree of Life My Soul Hath Seen.” It seems to me that the metaphors in both of these, rather than leading me to focus on anything silvicultural, act as a kind of lens through which our attention is focused on the surpassing attractiveness of Jesus/Christ.

John D. Thornburg takes the position that, whatever we may think of the matter, we are not obliged to discard those hymns that have come down to us that embody military images: Our hymnal is a “family album,” meaning we can sing hymns that may not be ours—we can sing them because they are part of the family; we are left free to wrestle with the tradition, including its militaristic metaphors. It seems to me that such an exercise might well be done around the piano at home, or in a hymn appreciation class. But in the congregation assembled for worship? It might as well be argued that we may there pray *spoken* prayers that are not “ours”—as long as we “wrestle with the tradition” (“Saved by Singing: Hymns as a Means of Grace,” *The Hymn*, 47.2, April 1996, 5-10).

Surely we must take care with the language of battle and triumph. It can be helpful to remember that the emphasis in the New Testament in this connection falls not on the offensive, but on the defensive. The order given the fully armored soldier in Ephesians 5:10-17 is to “stand” and “withstand.” What is implied in the image of “soldier” in 2 Timothy 2:3-4 are suffering and single-minded devotion. Some hymns all too readily conjure up the picture of a *crusade* (banners and the cross going before, our feet feeling the urge to move to the march rhythm of the tune), the picture of people spoiling for a fight. Is it helpful to sing such hymns today? If any image leads us into ungracious, arrogant mindset or behavior, it should be abandoned. Even the beloved image of God as “a mighty fortress,” set to its strong, insistent melody, is not apt in every context. (Markus Jenny points out that Luther's best known and most often used hymn is not a “battle song,” not a “Reformation song,” but, like the Psalm [46] that inspired it, a song of consolation and trust.\*)

\* Markus Jenny, “The Hymns of Zwingli and Luther: A Comparison,” in Johannes Riedel, ed., *Cantors at the Crossroads: Essays on Church Music in honor of Walter E. Buszin* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1967), 59.

Any use of militant hymns must be balanced. The “soldier” is also a “sheep,” a “child,” a “servant,” an “athlete,” a “pilgrim.” The paucity of militant hymns in many of today’s hymnals helps make balancing an easy task. In any case, the contemporary concern for the metaphors used in hymns should serve to make all aware that no human language is adequate to describe the spiritual realities that are at the heart of the Christian world-and-life-view; all our language must be used with care. Our choice of songs for the congregation must be guided always by pastoral concerns.

## On-line Resource No. 10: Should the Name of the Game Be Sound?

Today's culture, with regard to communication, places a very high value on the visual. Is not so much attention to sound, therefore, to the aural, to hearing, another sign of just how much the church is out of step with the times? If the church wants to communicate, should it not shift the emphasis in its worship from hearing to seeing? Shift from sound to sight? How shall we answer this question that some are asking in all seriousness? Surely we want to be open to using whatever is the most effective means of communication of the gospel that does not compromise the church's integrity nor distort its message.

On doing theology through music, drama, and the visual arts, see Brian Wren, 352-64, and Plantinga & Rozeboom, 144-49.

1. The visual is in fact already an important element in the church's worship service. As noted in chapter 8, the building itself and its furnishings all have the potential for making large contributions to worship. Congregation, choir, worship leader/preacher, the sacraments ("the word made visible"), in some instances cantor and song leader—all these are highly visible communicators. There may be organ pipes, stained glass windows, paraphernalia, and processions. The visual may receive prominence especially in fixed-liturgy churches.
2. Contemporary culture is by no means exclusively oriented to the visual. It offers spoken, sung, and instrumental sound 24/7. But are people really listening? Really hearing? The challenge for the church is to provide an opportunity for the ears of people to be opened, to hear. The church invokes the Holy Spirit to give people ears to hear—really hear.
3. To whatever extent contemporary culture's emphasis in the area of communication is on the visual, it is just possible that the church has its particular niche carved out, that is, what culture is neglecting, namely, the auditory. "We have almost forgotten how to listen. We are so eye-oriented that the page has become disassociated from the human sounds that gave it existence" [Parker, 14]. The spoken or sung word has far greater potential for affecting us than the same word read.
4. Controversy about the place of visual aids to worship has plagued the church down through the centuries. A large part of the church has had and continues to have serious reservations about such use, understanding visual, physical representations to violate the commandment not to make and use idols. The use of visible aids has been understood by a part of the church to involve the risk of substitution of the image for God, and of attempting to manipulate, control God.

And how can an inanimate, unchanging, dumb image faithfully represent a living, speaking, active God? (Dance and mime are in some respects exempt from this concern.)

5. There is also a positive theological rationale for the primacy the church gives the auditory. It is a word from the people's side that sets in motion the history of what became Israel (Ex 2:23-25). Israel's primal responsibility before God is to hear (Dt 6:4-9). Israel's God, in contrast with the dumb idols of the nations, is a speaking God (Deut 4). His word comes to his people through his servants, the prophets. That word culminates in the activity of Jesus and his apostles, whose word, together with that of the prophets, constitutes the once-for-all-time-foundation on which the church is built (Eph 2:20).

James Hastings Nichols contrasts contemplation of the visual representation with "the forceful spontaneity of prophetic prayer," "the summons to conscience, the voice of judgment and mercy" [171–75].

Even the visions the prophets and apostles saw, even the visible, sometimes dramatic signs they themselves gave, would have communicated nothing without the word of explanation. Their word, in turn, meant nothing to those who had not the ears to hear, that is, faith, and its correlate: obedience (Matt 13:10-17). In the new creation, faith and hope will have no place; they will not be needed, for then we shall, at last, see (Matt 5:8; 1 John 3:2). In the meantime, in this present age, an emphasis on hearing is consonant with the emphasis of Scripture on the voice, the word, the ears, and hearing. The church's very mode of existence is in this age one of faith and hope (Rom 8:24; 2 Cor 5:7; 1 Pet 1:8), and faith and hope come by hearing a *word* (Rom 10:14-17). (Seeing and hearing are often paired in the Bible; the "lower" of the five senses—touching, smelling and tasting—though not without significance, have far less prominence, and their use is often figurative [von Dobschütz].)

Is this theological rationale reinforced by the following? "[Vision] could never of itself create human society, nor our essential humanity. It is a fact of our biological inheritance that these emerged through the use of our ears and mouths" [Eric A. Havelock, *The Muse Learns to Write*, cited in Parker, 20]. In a quite different vein, Bernard of Clairvaux (1091–1153) claimed both hearing and sight for the present dispensation, but insists that hearing must precede vision:

You must know that the Holy Spirit, in order to cause a soul to advance in spirituality . . . educates the hearing before coming to the vision. Listen, my child, he says, and you shall see . . . Only the hearing attains to truth because it perceives the Verb. And thus one must awaken the hearing and train it to receive the truth.

6. It is the word, spoken or sung, that has pride of place also in the give and take of the congregation's mutual edification in worship (Ps 40:1-10; 1 Cor 12-14; Eph 5:18-20; Col 3:16).

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If the name of the game is indeed sound, then what about those who are hard of hearing or even totally deaf? How much music can we enable such people to hear? Answering this question goes beyond the scope of this book, but these concerns must be taken into account. Some churches offer signing that includes the words that are sung as well as those spoken; thereby the deaf can "visually hear." Some hymnals supply adaptations for sign language. In some situations, signing and movements are performed by a whole choir. A drum may also be used, providing rhythm and vibrations. One of the world's great percussionists, Evelyn Glennie, is quite deaf. Music is vibrations, and if these are strong enough they will register in the human body as a whole. In many worship services at least some vibrations are likely to be felt by any deaf in the congregation. A perusal of the Web will indicate some of the currently available resources to assist the deaf, and also Braille resources for the blind.

One example of such resources is a six-week course at Columbus State University, Columbus, Georgia, aimed at training leaders in the translation of the lyrics of worship music into American Sign Language.

### Source List

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