

Hymns: Roots and Wings for the Next Generation

I. What is a hymn?

- a. A song of praise?
 - Gr. = ὕμνος (humnos), ὑμνέω (humneó) e.g. Eph. 5:19, Col. 3:16, Mk. 14:26, Mt. 26:30, Acts 16:25

- b. A poem for group singing
 - Hymn: *“... a poem, designed for group singing, and written as a sequence of identical units called stanzas. Each stanza has the same line length, rhythms and rhyme scheme as its predecessor, so that the hymn can be sung, stanza by stanza, to the same tune.”* – Brian Wren¹

 - Chorus:

 - Refrain/gospel song:

- c. A teaching aid for gospel truths
 - *“Many of the great hymn writers weren’t musicians... they worked as theological poets, writing hymns in meters that were commonly used amongst the churches, relying on melodies that were written by others.”* – Mike Cospers²

- d. Historically set to a variety of musical styles
 - *“... Western worship is one way of orthodox singing, but in no way can we impose on varied cultures around the globe that this is the only way.”* – Matt Boswell³

¹ Wren, Brian. *Praying Twice: The Music and Words of Congregational Song*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000. pg. 100.

² Cospers, Mike. *Sing Them Again*. <http://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/tgc/2011/03/01/sing-them-again/>

³ Boswell, Matt. *Modern Hymns, Choruses and NPR*.

www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/tgcworship/2013/07/09/modern-hymns-choruses-and-npr/

II. Why do we need hymns today?

- a. We need roots into a historic, credible faith
 - *“My grandmother saved it, my mother threw it away, and now I’m buying it back”: this summarises church music in the last 50 years!*” – Kevin Twit⁴

- b. We need wings from the formative power of the gospel.

- c. We need to relearn the art of meditating on God’s Word

III. How can we pass on hymns to the next generation?

- a. Find and choose good hymns
 - *“[Good hymns are those] which, once heard, are remembered without effort, remembered involuntarily, yet remembered with renewed and increasing delight at every revival.”* – James Montgomery⁵

- b. Sing them to yourself
 - *“I say without qualification, after the Sacred Scriptures, the next best companion for the soul is a good hymnal.”* – AW Tozer⁶

⁴ Twit, Kevin. *Reformed Worship Magazine*; Dec 2003. <http://bit.ly/1bI9ybl>

⁵ Montgomery, James. *The Christian Psalmist or Hymns, Original and Selected*. London: Griffin and Co, 1826. Preface. <http://www.ccel.org/cceh/archives/eee/montcps.htm>

⁶ Tozer, Aiden Wilson. *We Travel An Appointed Way*. Christian Publications, 1988.

- c. Sing them with your family
 - "...Rarely would any person develop a taste for either soul pickles or vegemite later in life. But if introduced to either one in childhood, they have the appetite for it the rest of their lives and view it as perfectly normal to eat."
– Allen Raynor⁷

- d. Sing them with your church community
 - "The best results happen when theologically deep and emotionally rich texts are wedded to music that is aesthetically fitting and culturally resonant, that connects at every level." – Ron Rienstra⁸

Questions for reflection:

For everyone...

Do I know of at least one hymn to help me to repent of my sin and trust Jesus in times of:
Joy? Grief? Celebration? Lament? Doubt? Other experiences in the normal Christian life?

What could I do in the next 3 months to encourage the use of good hymns in:

- My personal prayer and devotions?
- My family?
- My church community?

For those who plan and lead worship services...

- Are the hymns we sing corporately "folk songs" or "specialist songs"?
- Can unmusical people sing them?
- Can unliturgical people understand them?
- Do the hymns we sing teach us about the gospel and its implications to the normal Christian life? (e.g. What hymns could my church family sing at a funeral?)
- Do we sing our hymns to music that aesthetically fits and resonates with who's in our church?
What about with who could be in our church?

⁷ Raynor, Allen. *The significance and duty of family worship*. Baptist Press.

<http://www.bpnews.net/BPFirstPerson.asp?ID=40323>

⁸ Rienstra, Ron. *Reformed Worship Magazine*; Dec 2002.

A SELECTION OF FURTHER READING

- Kevin Twit's comprehensive list: http://newscottishhymns.com/blog/kevin_twit_resources/
- My personal list of tunes to try with hymn texts: <http://hymnal.chongsworship.com/tunes/>

About hymns and hymn-writers:

- Faith Cook. *Our Hymn-Writers and Their Hymns*. Grace Distribution, 2005.
- **Robert J Morgan. *Then Sings My Soul* series.** (*hymns and hymn stories*)
- John Julian. *A Dictionary of Hymnology*. <http://archive.org/details/imslp-dictionary-of-hymnology-julian-john>

Historical hymnals:

- Charles Spurgeon. *Our Own Hymn-book: A collection of psalms and hymns for public, social, and private worship* (1883).
- Duke Divinity School. *Charles Wesley's Published Verse*. <http://divinity.duke.edu/initiatives-centers/cswt/wesley-texts/charles-wesley> (All of Charles Wesley's hymns)
- Isaac Watts. *Psalms and Hymns of Isaac Watts*. <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/watts/psalmshymns.toc.html>
- James Montgomery. *The Christian Psalmist*. <http://www.ccel.org/cceh/archives/eee/montcps.htm>
- JC Ryle. *Hymns for the Church on Earth*. <http://archive.org/details/hymnsforchurch00ryle>
- John Newton, William Cowper. *Olney Hymns*. <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/newton/olneyhymns.html>
- John Rippon. *A selection of hymns from the best authors: intended to be an appendix to Dr. Watts's Psalms and hymns* (1801). <http://archive.org/details/selectionofhy1801ripp>.
- William Gadsby. *Gadsby's Hymnal*. <http://www.gracegems.org/C/Gadsby.htm>. (Contains all of Joseph Hart's hymns)

Online hymnals:

- hymnary.org
- cyberhymnal.org

Printed hymnals:

- **Word Music. *The Hymnal for Worship & Celebration* (1986).** <http://wordmusic.com/hymnals/worship-and-celebration/the-hymnal-for-worship-celebration.html>
- Great Commission Publications. *Trinity Hymnal* (1990). www.wtsbooks.com/trinity-hymnal-zzz-gcp040010 (OPC/PCA)
- Faith Alive. *Lift Up Your Hearts: Psalms, Hymns and Spiritual Songs* (2013). www.liftupyourheartshymnal.org

Modern hymns:

- Keith and Kristyn Getty. www.gettymusic.com
- Stuart Townend. www.stuarttownend.com

Retuned hymns:

- Indelible Grace Music www.igracemusic.com
- Sovereign Grace Music. *From Age to Age* (2012). www.sovereigngracemusic.org/Albums/From_Age_to_Age
- Bruce Benedict (Cardiophonia) - list of all re-tuned hymns to his knowledge: <http://tinyurl.com/rehymns>