

Reformation Series 2010
(Lecture One: Why Should We Sing Hymns?)

I. Why Should We Sing Hymns?

A. Introduction.

1. When we think of the Reformation, we generally think of those people and movements the Lord used to bring it about:
 - a. Pre-Reformation: Waldenses, Mysticism, Scholasticism, Wycliffe, Lollards, Huss, Savonarola.
 - b. Reformation: Luther, Erasmus, Calvin, Zwingli, Tyndale, Latimer, Ridley, Cranmer.

2. We don't think as often of the continuing Reformation.
 - a. But it was inevitable:
 - (i) The motto of the Reformation was *Reformata et Semper Reformanda*.
 - (ii) The church was Reformed, but needed continued reforming.

 - b. Certainly there are things that never need to be reformed:
 - (i) Sola Scriptura: Scripture alone is God's Word and authoritative.
 - (ii) Solus Christus: Christ alone is our Mediator.
 - (iii) Sola Gratia: We are saved by grace alone, apart from our works.
 - (iv) Sola Fide: For salvation to be by grace alone, it must be by faith alone.
 - (v) Soli Deo Gloria: God alone is to receive the glory.

 - c. But there were things that yet needed reforming.
 - (i) The Puritan movement we've been looking at for the past three years is an excellent example.
 - (a) There were things in the English church that needed yet to be conformed to God's Word.
 - (b) The Puritans were willing to do whatever was necessary to make that happen.
 - (c) So much of what they did was so very good, and we can still benefit from them today (Puritweets).
 - (d) But they were not infallible. Some of their views needed correction.

 - (ii) One such doctrine we find in worship.
 - (a) The Puritans, for the most part, believed in singing only psalms.
 - (1) Another way of putting this – perhaps more comprehensively – they believed in singing only inspired songs in worship.
 - (2) There are those today who still hold to canonical songs only.

 - (b) But there are also those who believe that to do so would be contrary to Scripture.
 - (1) What we're going to consider this evening is why we *should* sing hymns.
 - (2) This is a necessary step before we move on to study the Great Hymn Writers of the Church.

(3) We need to know that this is God's will.

B. Let's begin by considering why we should sing.

1. First, the Lord commands us to worship Him with song.
 - a. Remember the Regulative Principle we saw this morning:
 - (i) The Lord must tell us how He is to be worshipped.
 - (ii) We may not worship Him anyway we please.
 - (iii) Anyway not commanded is forbidden.
 - b. It's clear that He commands us to sing.
 - (i) "Sing praises to the LORD, who dwells in Zion; declare among the peoples His deeds" (Psalm 9:11).
 - (ii) "Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms *and* hymns *and* spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God" (Col. 3:16).
2. It's appropriate also to ask why the Lord wants us to sing.
 - a. Why does the Lord want us to praise Him in verse with music?
 - b. He doesn't actually tell us, but the only reasonable answer must be because it has the tendency to stir up *holy affections*. On this topic, Edwards writes,

"This appears from the nature and design of the ordinances and duties, which God hath appointed, as means and expressions of true religion.

"To instance in the duty of *prayer*: it is manifest, we are not appointed in this duty, to declare God's perfections, his majesty, holiness, goodness, and all-sufficiency, and our own meanness, emptiness, dependence, and unworthiness, and our wants and desires, to inform God of these things, or to incline his heart, and prevail with him to be willing to show us mercy; but suitably to affect our own hearts with the things we express, and so to prepare us to receive the blessings we ask. And such gestures and manner of external behavior in the worship of God, which custom has made to be significations of humility and reverence, can be of no further use than as they have some tendency to *affect* our own hearts, or the hearts of others.

And the duty of *singing* praises to God seems to be appointed wholly to excite and express religious affections. No other reason can be assigned why we should express ourselves to God in verse, rather than in prose, and do it with music but only, that such is our nature and frame, that these things have a tendency to move our affections" (Edwards, *Religious Affections*).

- c. If Edwards' argument is sound, it will help us further down when we consider what type of music is suitable for worship. Singing was ordained to excite religious affections.

C. Granted we are to sing. What kind of songs should we use to excite holy affections?

1. Certainly, we are to sing psalms.

- a. The Lord has given us inspired songs – psalm means: songs of praise, sacred songs, hymns of praise.
 - b. Psalms certainly formed the staple of praise for the Old Covenant church.
 - c. Should we use the psalms in our worship today – now that we have moved from the Old into the New Covenant? Yes.
 - (i) We are commanded to do so: “And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord” (Eph. 5:18-19).
 - (ii) “Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms *and* hymns *and* spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God” (Col. 3:16).
 - (iii) Now we can sing psalms with greater understanding: the shadows of the Old Covenant have become clear through the light of the New.
2. But should we sing any other kinds of songs? *This is the question.*
- a. We’ve already noted that historically the Reformed Churches believed we should sing only psalms or canonical songs (inspired songs).
 - (i) Calvin writes, “We should have songs that are not only upright but holy, that will spur us to pray to God and praise Him, to meditate on His works so as to love Him, to fear Him, to honour Him, and glorify Him. *For what St. Augustine said is true, that one can sing nothing worthy of God save what one has received from Him. Wherefore though we look far and wide we will find no better songs nor songs more suitable to that purpose than the Psalms of David, which the Holy Spirit made and imparted to him. Thus, singing them we may be sure that our words come from God just as if He were to sing in us for His own exaltation.* Wherefore, Chrysostom exhorts men, women, and children alike to get used to singing them, so as through this act of meditation to become as one with the choir of angels” (From Calvin's *Preface to the Geneva Psalter* of 1543).
 - (ii) Westminster: “The reading of Scriptures with godly fear; the sound preaching, and conscionable hearing of the Word, in obedience unto God, with understanding, faith, and reverence; singing of Psalms with grace in the heart; as also, the due administration and worthy receiving of the sacraments instituted by Christ; are all parts of the ordinary religious worship of God: besides religious oaths, vows, solemn fastings, and thanksgivings upon special occasions, which are, in their several times and seasons, to be used in an holy and religious manner” (WCF 21.5).
 - (iii) A. A. Hodge: “The *regular* worship of God is to be conducted in the public assembly, in the private family, and personally in secret. The worship of God in the public assembly is to consist in the reading, preaching, and hearing of the Word; prayer, singing of psalms; and the administration and receiving of the sacraments instituted by him. In the Word, read or properly preached, God speaks to us, and we worship him by hearing with reverence, diligent attention, and self-application and obedience. In prayer and the singing of praise we address to God the holy affections, desires, and thanksgivings inspired in our hearts by his Holy Spirit. In the sacraments God communes with and enters into covenant with our

souls, and we commune with and enter into covenant with him” (A. A. Hodge, *Confession*).

- (iv) I hope these comments will at least inspire us to sing more psalms.
- (v) But the question before us now is, “Was it God’s will then, and is it His will today, that we only sing psalms or canonical songs in worship?”

b. Let’s consider some evidence that this is not what He intends.

(i) Biblical arguments:

(a) First, we might be surprised to find that Old Covenant believers sang songs other than canonical psalms.

(1) Those who lived before the psalms were written sang other songs.

(A) We don’t know what Adam and Eve, the Antediluvians, or the patriarchs sang; but it seems unlikely that they didn’t sing at all: the Lord had given man the ability to make and play musical instruments (Gen. 4:21). Were they not to use these to sing to His glory?

(B) Elihu, a contemporary of Abraham, who lived before the writing of the psalms, indicates in his day that men sang of God’s works,

(I) He said to Job, “But no one says, ‘Where is God my Maker, who gives songs in the night’” (Job 35:10).

(II) He further said, “Behold, God is exalted in His power; who is a teacher like Him? Who has appointed Him His way, and who has said, ‘You have done wrong’? Remember that you should exalt His work, of which men have sung” (Job 36:22-24).

(C) Moses taught Israel to sing a song of deliverance praising the Lord when He delivered them at the Red Sea (Ex. 15). It was an inspired song, but not a psalm in the technical sense (Ex. 15). He also wrote a song that he taught the children of Israel as a witness against them (Deu. 32) that is not included in the psalms.

(D) When the Lord gave His people water in the wilderness, Israel sang a song to commemorate it (Num. 21:17), not included in the psalms.

(E) Deborah and Barak sang a new song when the Lord gave Jabin and Sisera into their hands (Judge 5); not included in the psalms.

(2) There’s also evidence that songs were composed and sung, after the psalms were written, not included in the psalms

(A) There were songs composed and sung regarding David and his exploits (1 Sam. 21:11), not included in the psalms.

(B) David wrote a lament that he commanded to be taught to the children of Judah (2 Sam. 1:17-27), that isn’t included in the psalms.

(C) In praising the Lord for mercifully healing him, Hezekiah says, “Lo, for *my own* welfare I had great bitterness; it is You who has kept my soul from the pit of nothingness, for You have cast all my sins behind Your back. For Sheol cannot thank You, death cannot praise You; those who go down to the pit cannot hope for Your faithfulness. It is the living who give thanks to You, as I do today; a father tells his sons about Your

faithfulness. The LORD will surely save me; so we will play my songs on stringed instruments all *the* days of our life at the house of the LORD” (Isa 38:17-20).

(I) Here he was referring either to songs that would be written about him – about his recovery – or songs he had written or would write regarding the Lord’s mercies to him, none of which appear in the book of Psalms.

(II) If he meant the latter, then this is a great illustration of the next argument.

(D) Not all of these songs were inspired – the fact that they are mentioned in Scripture doesn’t necessarily mean they were. They show us that Israel sang more than just those songs included in the book of Psalms.

(b) Second, in the psalms, we are commanded to sing to the Lord *a new song*.

(1) Examples:

(A) “Sing to Him a new song; play skillfully with a shout of joy” (Psalm 33:3).

(B) “He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God; many will see and fear and will trust in the LORD” (Psalm 40:3).

(C) “O sing to the LORD a new song, for He has done wonderful things, His right hand and His holy arm have gained the victory for Him” (Psalm 98:1; cf. Ps. 96:1; 144:9; 149:1; Isa. 42:10).

(2) By a new song, He means a new composition based on a new work of God, a new act of mercy or deliverance, a new reason to praise Him.

(3) It’s what we see being done in Revelation 5:9 for God’s work of redemption, “And they sang a new song, saying, ‘Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood *men* from every tribe and tongue and people and nation,’” or in 14:3, the song of the 144,000 – the redeemed Jews from the tribes of Israel – “And they sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders; and no one could learn the song except the one hundred and forty-four thousand who had been purchased from the earth.”

(4) That’s why the songs we surveyed outside of the psalms were written.

That’s why many of the psalms themselves were written – they grew out of the desire to praise God for His deliverance.

(5) Has the Lord done anything since the completion of Psalms that we should sing about?

(A) What about the coming of Christ and the completion of His Work?

(B) What about His gracious acts in the preservation and advancement of the church that we’ve studied year by year in the Reformation Series?

(C) What about His continuing acts of mercy today?

(D) We are to bring *our* thanksgiving into God’s worship for His continuing mercies that are new every morning.

- (E) To do this requires new songs.
- (c) Third, we're commanded in the New Covenant to sing psalms, *hymns and spiritual songs*. "And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord" (Eph. 5:18-19).
- (1) It's true that these designations refer to the different types of songs used in the book of psalms.
 - (2) But they don't refer exclusively to the book of Psalms.
 - (A) First, these words are used in the LXX of the songs in the book of Psalms because it is a collection of songs. Remember that psalm means song of praise, sacred song, hymn of praise.
 - (B) Second, these terms don't exhaust the kind of songs found in Psalms: there are other kinds of songs besides these. Are we to conclude that Paul is limiting us to particular types of psalms and that we're not free to sing the whole Psalter?
 - (C) Third, the words "hymns and songs" are also used to refer to songs that are in the OT, but not in the book of Psalms: if Paul had meant the book of Psalms only, he would have had to use a different description.
 - (D) Fourth, the word "spiritual" isn't mentioned at all in the OT: again, showing us that he wasn't referring exclusively to the book of Psalms.
 - (E) Finally, the book of Psalms is referred to in the NT primarily as the book of Psalms, Psalms or as individual psalms: not in a threefold designation: psalms, hymns and spiritual songs (Shaw, *The Worship of God*, 214-215).
 - (F) The conclusion is that Paul wasn't requiring the singing of psalms or even canonical songs exclusively. He was actually promoting the singing of hymns and spiritual songs along with the psalms.
 - (G) A. T Robertson indicates that hymns refers to "praises to God composed by the Christians like 1 Timothy 3:16" and that spiritual songs is a "general description of all [such compositions] whether with or without instrumental accompaniment" (*Word Pictures*).
- (d) A fourth argument is that the NT contains some hymns that were in use in the New Covenant church. New hymns were being composed in the New Covenant Church.
- (1) "For this reason it says, 'Awake, sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you'" (Eph. 5:14).
 - (2) "By common confession, great is the mystery of godliness: He who was revealed in the flesh, was vindicated in the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory" (1 Tim. 3:16).
 - (3) "It is a trustworthy statement: For if we died with Him, we will also live with Him; if we endure, we will also reign with Him; if we deny Him, He

also will deny us; if we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself” (2 Tim. 2:11-13).

- (4) Certainly, if everything we’ve seen above is true – that Old Covenant believers sang songs other than psalms, that they sang extra canonical songs, that they sang new songs according to God’s command, that they sang hymns and spiritual songs aside from psalms – then it shouldn’t surprise us to find some of these hymns recorded in the NT.

(ii) We also have some arguments from reason:

- (a) Hymns are nothing more than an expression of praise, adoration, thanksgiving and supplication to God. It’s exactly what we find in prayer, only hymns are metrical and often accompanied by music. If we’re not limited to the precise language of Scripture in our prayers, why would we be limited in our songs? Edwards writes, “But what is more especially found fault with, in the singing that is now practiced, is making use of hymns of human composure. I am far from thinking that the book of Psalms should be thrown by in our public worship, but that it should always be used in the Christian church to the end of the world. But I know of no obligation we are under to *confine* ourselves to it. I can find no command or rule of God’s Word, that does any more confine us to the words of the Scripture in our singing, than it does in our praying; we speak to God in both. And I can see no reason why we should limit ourselves to such particular forms of words that we find in the Bible in speaking to him by way of praise in metre and with music, than when we speak to him in prose, by way of prayer and supplication” (*Some Thoughts*).
- (b) A second argument – which is really more powerful – is this: to require the singing of psalms and canonical songs only would be to require that we worship the Lord in the New Covenant under the shadows of the Old. Edwards continues, “And it is really *needful* that we should have some other songs besides the Psalms of David. It is unreasonable to suppose that the Christian church should forever, and even in times of her greatest light, in her praises of God and the Lamb, be confined only to the words of the Old Testament, wherein all the greatest and most glorious things of the gospel, that are infinitely the greatest subjects of her praise, are spoken of under a veil, and not so much as the name of our glorious Redeemer ever mentioned, but in some dark figure, or as hid under the name of some type. And as to our making use of the words of others, and not those that are conceived by ourselves, it is no more than we do in all our public prayers; the whole worshipping assembly, excepting one only, makes use of the words that are conceived by him who speaks for the rest” (Ibid.).

(iii) Finally, an historical argument.

- (a) We’ve already seen the existence of hymns in the apostolic church.
 (b) But Christians continued to sing hymns from the earliest times.
 (c) Our hymnal contains several of the early hymns written in the church.
 (d) We have several written by Martin Luther, showing that he continued this practice in the reformation church.

- D. Granted that we may sing hymns, what kind of hymns should we use for worship?
1. Since hymns by definition are human compositions – by the way, the metrical psalms also are human compositions – what should be our criteria for composing them or using those already composed? Should it be our own pleasure?
 - a. No. We're not to seek our own pleasure, but God's.
 - b. On the other hand, they should be a pleasure to sing.
 - c. But the pleasure we find in them should be in glorifying God.
 2. It should be the same criteria we use to compose godly prayers.
 - a. They must be God/Christ centered: not self-centered.
 - b. They must be true/Biblical: we can't expect to honor God through false teaching.
 - c. They must give glory to God for His Being and works.
 - d. They must express the affections of a regenerate heart: love, desire for God's glory.
 - e. They must lift up petitions we are authorized to ask.
 - f. In short, they must be composed of God-honoring truth that we can assent to, that we can end with an amen.
 - g. The psalms are the example to follow.
 - h. We're going to look at several other examples of excellent hymns as we move on to look at our four hymn writers.
- E. What about instruments? May we use instruments in worship?
1. Many of the reformers rejected the use of instruments.
 - a. Consider Calvin's comments on Psalm 71:22, "In speaking of employing *the psaltery* and *the harp* in this exercise, he alludes to the generally prevailing custom of that time. To sing the praises of God upon the harp and psaltery unquestionably formed a part of the training of the law, and of the service of God under that dispensation of shadows and figures; but they are not now to be used in public thanksgiving. We are not, indeed, forbidden to use, in private, musical instruments, but they are banished out of the churches by the plain command of the Holy Spirit, when Paul, in 1 Corinthians 14:13, lays it down as an invariable rule, that we must praise God, and pray to him only in a known tongue" (*Commentaries*, 5:98).
 - b. The argument appears to be that instruments were invariably linked to the Ceremonial worship, as a shadow of things to come, and so became obsolete when Christ brought in the New Covenant.
 - c. This is a typical argument within certain Reformed circles.
 2. But consider,
 - a. Prayer, the reading and exposition of the Word, and sacraments were also part of Old Covenant worship, but they have not passed away.
 - b. There is nothing in Scripture to suggest that worshiping the Lord with instruments began with the Mosaic dispensation, any more than these other elements.
 - c. The psalms themselves, which the Reformers insisted we sing exclusively, command the use of instruments.
 - d. That if the Lord commands something to be done, it remains in force until He forbids it: since some elements of worship continue, then all of it has not been

abolished, and since it all hasn't been abolished, then we must have a specific directive abolishing of the use of instruments.

- e. The playing of instruments is not speaking to God in an unknown tongue.
- f. Calvin allows for the use of instruments in private worship – believing that God might be honored in them. If He would be in private, then why not in public?

F. Finally, what about the style of music?

1. What should be our criteria? Does anything go?
 - a. The Bible doesn't give us principles of music theory, only ethical principles.
 - b. Whatever we use shouldn't be sinful.
 - c. Is there music that is? How can it be?

2. We need to bear in mind the principle that music can drive certain emotions.
 - a. Consider what Calvin writes, "As to public prayers, there are two kinds: the one consists of words alone; the other includes music. And this is no recent invention. For since the very beginning of the church it has been this way, as we may learn from history books. Nor does St. Paul himself speak only of prayer by word of mouth, but also of singing. And in truth, we know from experience that song has a great power and strength to move and inflame the hearts of men to invoke and praise God with a heart more vehement and ardent. One must always watch lest the song be light and frivolous; rather, it should have weight and majesty, as St. Augustine says. And thus there is a great difference between the music that is made to entertain people at home and at table, and the Psalms which are sung in church, in the presence of God and His angels. Therefore, if any wish rightly to judge the kind of music presented here, we hope he will find it to be holy and pure, seeing that it is simply made in keeping with the edification of which we have spoken, whatever further use it may be put to. For even in our homes and out of doors let it be a spur to us and a means of praising God and lifting up our hearts to Him, so that we may be consoled by meditating on His virtue, His bounty, His wisdom, and His justice. For this is more necessary than one can ever tell.

"Among all the other things that are proper for the recreation of man and for giving him pleasure, music, if not the first, is among the most important; and we must consider it a gift from God expressly made for that purpose. And for this reason we must be all the more careful not to abuse it, for fear of defiling or contaminating it, converting to our damnation what is intended for our profit and salvation. If even for this reason alone, we might well be moved to restrict the use of music to make it serve only what is respectable and never use it for unbridled dissipations or for emasculating ourselves with immoderate pleasure. Nor should it lead us to lasciviousness or shamelessness.

"But more than this, there is hardly anything in the world that has greater power to bend the morals of men this way or that, as Plato has wisely observed. And in fact we find from experience that it has an insidious and well-nigh incredible power to move us whither it will. And for this reason we must be all the more diligent to control music in such a way that it will serve us for good and in no way harm us.

This is why the early doctors of the church used to complain that the people of their time were addicted to illicit and shameless songs, which they were right to call a mortal, world-corrupting poison of Satan's.

“Now in treating music I recognize two parts, to wit, the word, that is the subject and text, and the song, or melody. It is true, as St. Paul says, that all evil words will pervert good morals. But when melody goes with them, they will pierce the heart much more strongly and enter within. Just as wine is funnelled into a barrel, so are venom and corruption distilled to the very depths of the heart by melody” (Preface to the Geneva Psalter, 1543).

- b. With this in mind, we should use music that is suitable to the content: celebrative, joyful, thoughtful, somber. We should use music that undergirds and lifts up the lyrics and doesn't overpower them.
3. Are there styles of music or instruments that wouldn't be suitable for worship?
 - a. Each culture should be free to express their praise to God with music that is suitable.
 - b. But each culture also has music which isn't suitable that needs to be avoided because it drives the wrong affections.
 - c. With this in mind, let me close by dispelling one widely held myth regarding the historic use of music in worship: the idea that the Wesleys purposely used barroom music for their hymns to create an association between that music and good Christian truth to promote the Gospel. Even if they did, they are not the standard.
 - d. I thought this was their practice until I read this article. Perhaps as we read it together it will help correct your understanding and show you how important appropriate music was to the Wesleys. It was written by Dean B. McIntyre, director of music resources for the General Board of Discipleship for the United Methodist Churches.

“There is a popular misconception that continues to survive among United Methodists that John and Charles Wesley made use of tavern, drinking, or bar songs, as melodies for their hymns. The same is often heard of the great reformer and musician, Martin Luther. This claim is sometimes made to show the extent of their evangelistic zeal; namely, that they would go out into the secular culture, even into the taverns, saloons, and parlors frequented by the sinners they sought to redeem and make use of the musical language, the familiar drinking song tunes, for their own sacred hymns. The claim continues to be made today by some musicians, pastors, worship leaders, composers, and hymn writers. Unfortunately, this is a misapplication of a historical inaccuracy.

“The truth is that the Wesleys and Luther never made such use of saloon songs, nor would they have condoned such use. The misconception stems from confusion over a musical term bar form. In German literature and music of the Middle Ages, ‘Bar’ was a poem consisting of three or more stanzas. Each stanza was divided into two Stollen (section a) and one Abgesang (section b), which yielded a form of AAB. The term ‘bar form’ is commonly used today to refer to any poem or musical

composition in this AAB form, or any variation of bar form, such as AABA. A number of Luther's hymns and tunes used this form, including 'A Mighty Fortress Is Our God.' Other chorales ('Praise to the Lord, the Almighty') and hymns ('What a Friend We Have in Jesus,' 'Come, Christians, Join to Sing,' 'When I Survey the Wondrous Cross,' 'Rescue the Perishing') also use bar form. A number of tunes accompanying Wesley texts in the current United Methodist Hymnal also use bar form . . .

"It is not difficult to understand how the musical term, bar form, also sometimes referred to as bar tune, can become confused in an uninformed person's mind with barroom tune, drinking song, or some other title to indicate music to accompany the drinking of alcoholic beverages.

"There is also the deeper issue of whether the importing of secular and drinking songs into the church to accompany congregational singing would be acceptable to the Wesleys. Wesley issued three collections of tunes: the Foundery Collection in 1742, Select Hymns with Tunes Annexed (in which first appears his celebrated 'Directions for Singing,' reprinted on page vii of The United Methodist Hymnal) in 1761, and his last, Sacred Harmony, in 1780. What we find in these collections yields an important insight into Wesley's musical aesthetic for hymn tunes. Here we find the simple, traditional psalm tunes and hymn melodies, primarily from Anglican song. A number of these survive in our own 1989 United Methodist Hymnal (nos. 60, 96, 142, 181, 302, 385, 414, 450, 682). However, many of Charles's texts were in increasing number and complexity of meter and required new sources for tunes to accompany them. John made use of new tunes composed or adapted from folk tunes, sacred and secular oratorio, and even operatic melodies. It should not escape us that whenever Wesley allowed the use of secular music as from oratorio and opera he used music of accepted high standard and almost always from classical rather than popular sources. In no instance did Wesley turn to tavern or drinking songs or other such unseemly sources to carry the sacred texts of songs and hymns.

"Another help to understanding what Wesley considered appropriate in hymn tunes is to be found in his 'Directions for Singing.' Of particular importance is a portion of his fourth direction: 'Be no more afraid of your voice now, nor more ashamed of its being heard, than when you sung the songs of Satan.' It is clear that Wesley intends the 'songs of Satan' to no longer be sung. Also important is his seventh direction:

'Above all sing spiritually. Have an eye to God in every word you sing. Aim at pleasing him more than yourself, or any other creature. In order to do this attend strictly to the sense of what you sing, and see that your heart is not carried away with the sound, but offered to God continually; so shall your singing be such as the Lord will approve here, and reward you when he cometh in the clouds of heaven.'

“Wesley’s aesthetic to ‘above all sing spiritually’ simply would not allow drinking songs to accompany hymn texts.

“Finally, in no hymn book, tune book, or other publication of the Wesleys can there be found any example of or encouragement to use drinking songs for singing hymns.

“The question still remains, ‘What about today? Just because Luther and the Wesleys didn’t use drinking song tunes and other popular music for their hymns, does that mean we shouldn’t?’

“Whether Wesley did or didn't use drinking songs is not really the issue. Rather, the issue is why Wesley did or didn't use them. Wesley found the close association of hymn text and tune (even commonly referred to as a ‘wedding’) to be of such importance that the use of tavern songs was beneath consideration. It was never a possibility. That question remains for us to answer today. Do we find it acceptable, appropriate, and commendable to select the music of drunken sailors or the local tavern for our worship? If Wesley's reasoning for the Methodists of his time remains valid for our own, then the answer is no; and those who choose to use such music in worship should be able to dispute Wesley’s practice convincingly. Further, those who justify in our day the use of secular culture and influences in United Methodist worship by claiming that Wesley used drinking songs in his own day should be called to account.”

- e. With these issues now behind us, we can now proceed to examine the lives of the Great Hymn Writers and their hymns and know that they did in fact give glory to God in their ministry and through their hymns. This is what we’ll do beginning next week.

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