

Music in Worship – Lesson 14

17th Century English Hymnody – AD 1600-1700

- Last time, we saw the beginnings of Protestant song in England, Scotland, and the Americas. The primary developments were in Psalmody and tunes but there were a few stirrings of hymn development.
- During the 1600s, hymns slowly became more common in English usage. Psalmody was still the primary practice of most English churches.
- In 1609, John Smyth, having become convinced of the errors of infant baptism, baptized himself and established a church in Amsterdam among exiled Separatists. Two years later, this church returned to England where their doctrine began to spread. Today, we call this group the General Baptists; they largely rejected singing in worship and were Arminian in doctrine.
- A new addition of the *Scottish Psalter* was published in 1615 which added more tunes to the previous edition. Ten years later, another edition came out which included the first harmonizations in the Psalter. The 1635 edition added harmonizations to all the tunes.
- The *Scottish Psalter* culminated in the 1650 edition which was almost completely new. Unlike the previous several versions, it did not include any music. This edition is the source of the metrical version of Psalm 23, “The Lord’s my shepherd, I’ll not want.” (#152) This edition was adopted as the official metrical psalter of the Church of Scotland and retained that position for over 300 years. It is still in use by several denominations around the world, including in the Free Church of Scotland.
- In 1623, George Withers published *Hymns and Songs of the Church*. This book was split into two parts: scripture paraphrases and hymns for the Church Year. The hymnal also included 16 new tunes, composed by Orlando Gibbons, for songs that did not fit the existing psalm tunes. The book was taken out of print due to opposition to hymn singing and none of the texts from it are in common use today.
- John Cosin published his *Collection of Private Devotion* in 1627 which is the source of “Come Holy Ghost Our Souls Inspire.”
- George Herbert’s small book *The Temple* was published in 1633. These poems (as well as the poems in Cosin’s *Collection of Private Devotion*) were not intended to be used in a church service and probably not intended to be sung at all. They were for private devotional reflection but later were set to music and used in church worship.
- It was about this time that a new group of Baptists, the Particular Baptists, appeared. They were much closer doctrinally to the rest of the Puritans, Calvinistic instead of Arminian. They fairly quickly became the more prominent Baptists and soon adopted singing as a valid part of worship.
- Seeking to improve the declining singing in the Church of England, John Playford, a music publisher, began to publish instruction books. His first, *Introduction to the Skill of Music*, appeared in 1654. He later compiled a combination psalter-hymnal, *Psalms and Hymns in Solemn Music of Four Parts on the Common Tunes to the Psalms in Meter*, which was published in 1671. This book included hymns alongside the metrical psalms. Playford’s attempt to introduce hymns into Anglican worship was largely unsuccessful.
- In 1674, Isaac Watts was born to a Congregationalist pastor. He began to compose hymns while still a teenager but had no significant publications until the 18th century.
- The Southwark Controversy
 - In 1668, Benjamin Keach became pastor of the Particular Baptist Church in Horsleydown, Southwark. By about 1673, he had convinced his congregation to allow the singing of a hymn at the close of the Lord’s Supper. Five years later, the church agreed to also allow a hymn on “public

- Thanksgiving days;” by 1691, Keach’s view of singing hymns of human composure in worship was completely adopted by the Horsleydown Church and singing hymns became a weekly practice.
- Not everyone in Southwark agreed with these changes and, lead by Isaac Marlow, a small group of Keach’s congregants began publishing pamphlets attacking hymn singing.
 - Keach responded with “pamphlets” of his own, the most significant of which was *The Breach Repaired in God’s Worship* in 1691. The same year, Keach also published, *Spiritual Melody*, a hymnal with almost 300 hymns.
 - By the end of the century, the practice of hymn singing was fairly well established among Particular Baptists and had begun to appear among General Baptist congregations.
- Other English denominations also began to include hymn singing in their worship. For instance, the Presbyterian ministers Richard Baxter, Joseph Boyse, and Matthew Henry all published hymnals by the close of the 1600s.
 - Thomas Ken, an Anglican minister and later Bishop, wrote several prayers and hymns for the students at Winchester College. These were published as *A Manual of Prayers* in 1695. Two songs from this collection remain in common use: “All Praise to Thee, My God, This Night” and “Awake, My Soul, and With the Sun”. Both of these along with a third, largely forgotten midnight song, were intended to be sung at the appropriate prayer times at the college. Each ended with the same final stanza, “Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow,” better known today as the “Doxology” (#14).
 - In 1696, two Irishmen, Nahum Tate and Nicholas Brady, published *A New Version of the Psalms of David, Fitted to the Tunes Used in Churches*. This psalter became known as the “New Version” of the English Psalter and finally replaced the 1562 “Old Version.” It was authorized by the king, William III, to be used in the churches of England and so caused much controversy and was strongly opposed by proponents of the Old Version. The 1700 edition of the New Version included “While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks by Night” (#216).

Class Summary

- Over 13 lessons, we have examined the history and the doctrine of music in the Church. While we could go into much greater detail on many (or all) of the specific points and passages, we have essentially covered everything that Scripture has to say about music in New Testament worship. And we have surveyed the various developments of corporate, musical worship from the Apostles until the 17th century.
- We began by looking at the distinct spheres of worship.
 - Worship in all of life
 - Private worship
 - Family worship
 - Corporate worship
- In this class, we focused entirely on the sphere of corporate worship (gathered Church worship).
- We discussed how the meeting of the Church (in this age as individual assemblies/local churches) is distinct from the rest of life.
 - Christ distinguished his presence in the assembly of a church from his presence with every believer – Matt 18:15-20

- Paul understood this to mean that the church operates with Christ's power when it is assembled together as the church – 1 Cor 5:4-5
- Paul distinguished the Church as God's house with particular rules for our behavior – 1 Tim 3:14-15
- Next, we saw that, for assembled, corporate worship, God expects adherence to his commands without the addition of anything that he does not command.
 - God commanded the tabernacle be built strictly and exclusively according to the pattern he showed Moses – Ex 25:8-9, 40
 - God killed Aaron's sons, the priests Nadab and Abihu, for bringing Israel's worship to him using "fire" that God had not told them to use – Lev 10:1-3
 - Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for adding hand-washing as a part of Israel's worship, telling them they had left God's commands by adding to them – Mark 7:5-8
- The previous points mean that Scripture commands the worship of the local church to be regulated according to God's commands.
- For music in the church, this means that we must carefully consider what God commands about music in worship and not simply do what we have always done or what feels right; we must make sure that we are not falling short of or adding to God's commands for musical worship.
- Next, we looked at the change in worship from the Old Testament to the New Testament.
 - Jesus taught that, because of his work, the specific commands for how his people worship are now different – John 4:19-24
 - The author of Hebrews explained that the way to approach God under the Old Testament was temporary and has been set aside and replaced by a better way, a better priest – Heb 7:18-19, 23-24; 9:9-12
 - The sacrifices of the Old Testament are forever replaced by the eternal sacrifice – Heb 10:1-4, 12-14
- We examined some specifics of New Testament worship requirements.
 - Worship must be given by those who have been regenerated – John 3:6, 4:21-24, 14:6
 - Worship must be centered on Christ. It must present a balanced theology of God as he has revealed himself to us (triune, holy, etc) – John 12:44-45; 14:9, 13; 15:26; 16:13-15
 - Worship must be thoroughly truthful, not false or shallow – John 4:21-24, 14:6, 16:13-15
 - Because these requirements are given to all Christians, every member of the congregation is responsible for guarding the worship of the church.
- Following that, we saw that singing is a part of New Testament worship.
 - Some passages give us examples of approved corporate worship that included singing – Matt 26:29-30, Mark 14:25-26
 - Another passage assumes that singing is part of corporate worship – 1 Cor 14:13-19, 26
 - Two passages command singing in assembled worship – Eph 5:19-20, Col 3:16-17
 - One passage suggests that singing will forever be part of the worship of the Church – Rev 5:9-10
- Further, Scripture commands the use of three specific kinds of song in worship; psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.
 - Eph 5:19 and Col 3:16 use these specific words to command singing.
 - "Psalms" refers (primarily) to the Old Testament Book of Psalms. This understanding comes from the 7 places the Greek word is used in the New Testament.
 - "Hymns" refers to songs that are direct praise of God. As the Greek word for "hymn" is only used in Eph 5 & Col 3, we had to look to the contemporary meaning of the word.
 - "Spiritual songs" refers generally to songs that are religious, pleasing to God, and having to do with the things and power of God. This definition came from the biblical meanings of the two words.

- Next, God does not command the use of instruments in worship, but he does allow for them to accompany our worship.
 - The command to sing psalms suggests that instruments are allowed in worship – Ps 4:1, 67:1, 76:1, 81:2-3, 150:3-5
 - The command to sing psalms is given using a word that implies the singing is accompanied by instruments – Eph 5:19, Col 3:16
 - The command to sing/make melody uses a word that implies plucking an instrument – 1 Cor 14:15, Eph 5:19
- Finally, we examined the purpose of singing in worship.
 - First, our singing is to praise God – Ps 19:1-2, 139:13-14, John 4:19-24, Eph 1:3-6
 - Second, our singing is to build up the believers who are worshiping with us – Eph 5:19, Col 3:16
 - The requirements for worship line up with those objectives.
 - God can only be worshiped using truth.
 - Songs are “sticky” and so we must be careful to teach those around us using only truthful songs.
 - The three kinds of song encompass a large variety of topics and so are able to address all of worship.
- Then we changed from looking directly at Scripture’s commands to applying those commands.
- First, we took a practical look at the hymnal, noting its features and what is required to be a good hymnal.
 - We saw the basic structure of a hymnal, the musical notations that improved the usefulness of it, and that these features have not always been present in hymnals.
 - We briefly considered that a good hymnal includes songs from the whole Church, not just those songs from a particular denomination.
- Last, we expanded on the idea of choosing the best songs.
 - We looked at some surveys of the songs used by various denominations and how these surveys compiled a list of the very best songs in use at that time from across Christianity.
 - This list allowed for determining basic qualities that are common to all of the best songs. These qualities track with what we have seen that Scripture commands regarding music.
 - Songs must be thoroughly biblical.
 - The emphasis of the songs must point us toward God.
 - The songs must consist of a complimentary blend of text and tune.
- So, over the course of 13 weeks, we built a biblical framework for considering musical worship, we surveyed Scripture’s commands regarding musical worship, and we briefly applied those commands to the practice of singing in worship. We also traced how these commands have been understood (or misunderstood) and practiced by Christians from the Apostles until shortly after the Reformation.