

Hymnology

Introduction

- I. HYMNOLOGY – Defined: *The study of hymns, their history, classification, etc. The composition of hymns. Hymns collectively.*

- II. THE TEACHING POWER OF MUSIC – John and Charles Wesley in their founding of the Methodist movement in eighteenth century England understood the power of singing in the church. A modern author has stated it this way: "Singing attracts attention (music, rhythm, rhyme); it turns passive listeners into active participants; it engages members of an assembly in a common constructive activity... Moreover, singing allows people with no or low literary skills to become familiar with key texts; it has a mnemonic function, and may therefore be a more efficient and less tedious medium than, say, preaching: it could be, and has been, used to teach doctrine to the theologically untrained." Or as Paul said in (Colossians 3:16) – *"teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs."* – From: *The Hymn: A Journal of Congregational Song, Summer 2005, Volume 56, No.3*, "Hymns as Literature, Language and Discourse: Wesleyan Hymns as a Case Example (p. 23)

- III. THE SHIFTS IN MUSIC – Note: This is an overview of "secular" music beginning in 1600.
 - A. The Baroque Period (1600AD to 1750AD)
 - i. The Baroque period is characterized by strict musical forms and highly ornamental works. Baroque music began in Europe around 1600. It continued until about 1750.
 - ii. Composers: Johann Bach, George F. Handel, George P. Telemann, Henry Purcell, etc.
 - B. The Classical Period (1750AD to 1830AD)
 - i. The music of the Classical period is lighter and clearer than Baroque music. In broad terms, it is less complex and is primarily homophonic.
 - ii. Composers: Franz J. Haydn, Wolfgang A. Mozart, Ludwig van Beethoven.
 - C. The Romantic Period (1830AD to 1900AD)
 - i. The Romantic period sought express emotion, both negative and positive, through music. Orchestras became much larger during this period.
 - ii. Composers: Frederic Chopin, Franz J. Liszt, Giuseppe Verdi, Johannes Brahms, Richard Strauss, etc.

- D. Ragtime and Blues – (Early 1900’s)
 - i. Scott Joplin began to release very new music. This began the genre of ragtime, characterized by a syncopated, ragged rhythm.
 - ii. When W. C. Handy heard blues played in a train station, he went on to publicize this genre, and brought recordings of blues music to the general public. Blues draws from African traditions and spirituals.
- E. New Orleans Jazz – (Early 1910’s)
 - i. Buddy Bolden (while he never recorded), fused ragtime and blues as early as 1904. This fusion formed the basis of jazz.
- F. Beginning of Country Music – (1920’s)
 - i. Country music has its origins in the songs of the Appalachian Mountains, but by the early 1920’s, it was developing into a new musical genre, first popular in the southern states.
- G. Big Band Era – (1930’s)
 - i. By the 1930’s, jazz had led to the birth of a new genre, big band swing music. These were many times large bands, producing lively dance music.
- H. Beginning of Rhythm and Blues – (1940’s)
 - i. Rhythm and Blues began in the 1940’s, relying on the sounds of blues music. R&B was marketed primarily to African-Americans and was characterized by a strong beat, with influences from more traditional blues music.
- I. Beginning of Rock Music – (Early 1950’s)
 - i. Rock music began in the early 1950’s, relying on various music genres, including blues, jazz and gospel, as well as country music. By the mid- to late – ‘50’s, this music was largely guitar driven, and eventually fueled a growing young culture.

IV. MUSIC HAS POWER

- A. Music at Creation (Job 38:1-7)
- B. At the end times (Revelation 5:8-10)
- C. The word *musick* occurs 16 times in scripture
 - i. 15 times in the Old Testament (1 Samuel 18:6; 1 Chronicles 15:16; 2 Chronicles 5:13; 2 Chronicles 7:6; 2 Chronicles 23:13; 2 Chronicles 34:12; Ecclesiastes 12:4; Lamentations 3:63; Lamentations 5:14; Daniel 3:5, 7, 10, 15; Daniel 6:18; Amos 6:5)
 - ii. 1 time in the New Testament (Luke 15:25)

- D. It is found on Earth and in Heaven throughout time
- i. Old Testament
 1. In the Old Testament you find more than once the songs of the Children of Israel follow a pattern of rejoicing and praising God (note: in some cases, these were praises to God for victory over an enemy).
 - a. Moses and the Children of Israel at the victory over Egypt (Exodus 15:1-21)
 - b. Miriam and the women of Israel (Exodus 15:21)
 - c. Israel's singing at the digging of a well (Numbers 21:17)
 - d. The song of Deborah and Barak (Judges 5:1-31)
 - e. The song of the women of Israel when David killed Goliath (1 Samuel 18:6)
 2. One will also note that the Levites and priests had the job of playing and singing. One that David greatly developed while king. These too were songs of praise to God.
 - a. Songs to be played/sung before the Lord (1 Chronicles 6:32, 33, 39) (Note the names Asaph and Heman – 1 Chronicles 15:19)
 - b. Those given jobs to sing and play before the Lord (1 Chronicles 16:1-7) The Psalm given to Asaph (1 Chronicles 16:7-36; cp Psalm 105)
 3. Note: The Psalms are songs and prayers to God. A good portion of the Psalms were written by David and Asaph, while the rest were written by Heman, Solomon, Moses, Ethan the Ezrahite, and the remaining being anonymous.
 - a. In some cases, the Psalms were written for a certain group of people to sing or play. For instance, you'll find the sons of Korah mentioned in the following subtitles: (Psalm 42; Psalms 44 through 49; Psalm 84 and 85; Psalm 87 and 88).
 - b. The Psalms dealt with times of trouble that the Psalmist had faced (See Psalm 34, note subtitle of Psalm 34; Psalm 54, note subtitle of Psalm 54).
 - c. Other times, they concerned sin (Psalm 51)
 - d. They many times would teach a doctrinal truth about God; for instance the lovingkindness of God (Psalm 107; note verse 43)
 - e. While other times they were focused on praising God (Psalm 145:1)

4. Other times they involved special occasions (Ezra 3:11)
 - a. Involved praising God
 - b. Involved thanking God

ii. New Testament

1. The first (chronological order) occurrence of any reference to musick or singing is found in the Gospel of Luke
2. No, it's not in Luke 2, but in Luke 15.
3. Luke 2 never states that the heavenly hosts sang. (Note: it does state that they praised God, with what we know from the Old Testament about praising God, there is a good chance that they in fact sang).
 - a. The prodigal son (Luke 15:25)
 - b. The hymn sung the night of the last supper (Matthew 26:30; Mark 14:26)
 - c. Paul and Silas sang in the midst of a prison (Acts 16:25)
 - d. Singing with the spirit of understanding (1 Corinthians 14:15)
 - e. Singing Psalms in James (James 5:13)
 - f. Singing is also found in Revelation
 - g. A new song of the saints (Revelation 5:9-10)
 - h. A new song of the 144,000 (Revelation 14:3)
 - i. The song of Moses (Revelation 15:3)

V. MUSIC FOLLOWS TWO GREAT STREAMS

A. The Songs of Salvation

- i. The importance of the songs (1 Chronicles 25:7)
- ii. The importance of proficiency (Psalm 33:3)
- iii. Praise unto God (Psalm 40:3)
- iv. Full of joy (Psalm 137:3-4)

B. The Songs of Satan (Ezekiel 28:11-15)

C. Consider how these two lines of music work in this world today

- i. The songs of salvation (Ephesians 5:18-19; Colossians 3:16)
 1. They praise God (Psalm 7:17; Psalm 89:1; Acts 16:25)
 2. They teach doctrine (Deuteronomy 31:19-21; Psalm 119:54)
 3. They encourage godliness (Isaiah 30:29)
- ii. The songs of Satan

1. Mocks holiness (Job 30:9-10; Ecclesiastes 7:5)
2. Glorify sin and express despair (Psalm 69:12; Isaiah 23:15)
3. Teach rebellion (Ezekiel 27:25; 28:5-6)
4. Encourages wickedness (Isaiah 23:15-17; Exodus 32:18-19; note verse 25 of Exodus 32, they were “naked unto their shame”)

VI. MESSAGE OF SONG – “TEACHING AND ADMONISHING”

- A. In the Words (Psalm 78:1-4; Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16)
- B. In the Music (1 Corinthians 14:7-8)
- C. In the Messenger (Colossians 1:28; Romans 15:4; 1 Thessalonians 5:11-12)

VII. THE SIGNS OF CORRUPT MUSIC IN CHURCH

- A. Increasing Appeal to the Flesh (Exodus 32:18-26; Daniel 3:1-18)
 - i. By beat
 1. Back beat
 - a. Refers to the practice of accenting the normally unaccented beats of a song; the backbeat is often provided by a bass instrument
 - b. The backbeat (and offbeat) is the foundational basis for all rock music; hard rock hits every beat
 - c. Backbeat is designed to create a physical, sexual tension in people
 2. Off beat
 - a. Also called syncopation; refers to the practice of placing accents between normal beats off time from the regular accents
 - b. Used in soft rock and in most modern music
 - c. Creates a desire to jump in jerky movements; to dance
 - d. It de-emphasizes the message of the music by overemphasizing the physical response to the music
 3. Boogie beat
 - a. Uses an 8/8 rhythm with the pattern of a dotted eighth followed by a sixteenth note
 - b. A jazz style of piano playing coming from bars and clubs; the honky-tonk sound
 - c. As in the other styles, it appeals to the flesh

- ii. By fleshly words
 - 1. Using words of the world to describe the Lord or our love for Him
 - 2. Exalting fleshly actions instead of the Lord
- iii. By fleshly sounds
 - 1. Using music of the world “to exalt the Lord”
 - 2. Exalting fleshly actions by the sounds of the music (rhythm, beats, etc.

B. Diminishing Emphasis on the Message

- i. No doctrine
- ii. Repeated phrases

C. Increasing Emphasis on Performance

- i. Exalted people
- ii. Entertaining medium
- iii. Worldly lighting, effects, etc.

D. Message Changing from Joy to Despair (Job 30:31)

- i. Despair in the message
- ii. Despair in the tone
- iii. Despair in the musical key – minor key emphasis
- iv. Unlike the songs of Zion (Psalm 137:3; 1 Chronicles 16:7; Job 30:31)

VIII. THE PURPOSE OF CHURCH MUSIC – (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16)

A. Songs Should Teach

- i. Songs should teach us since we are to be “teaching... one another” with them. In order to do this, they should be doctrinally sound and should teach the basics of biblical doctrine. We use songs to teach the alphabet to our children and God used the song of Moses to teach Israel of their relationship with God (Deuteronomy 31:19-21).
- ii. Music should speak, that is the quality should be of such to be spoken (Ephesians 5:19). The poetry should be of such quality that the words without the music should still have a great message.

B. Songs Should Admonish

- i. They should warn us of sin, or the danger thereof and urge us to have the right actions as a Christian. Very little of this is seen in today’s music.
- ii. Modern Christian music today neither teaches or admonishes – a direct offense to the command of God (Colossians 3:16)

- C. Songs Should Praise and Exalt God
 - i. We sing to the Lord, as such, songs are an integral part of our worship of God.
 - ii. With songs, we make melody to the Lord and sing unto Him.
 - D. Songs Should Speak to Our Hearts
 - i. We sing with grace in our hearts. The right kind of songs help us to do this. They stick with us because they are a pleasure to sing. We sing them as we go about our day.
 - ii. Modern music emphasizes (and perverts) the praise and popularity while ignoring the teaching and admonishing ministries of proper church music.
- IX. WHY STUDY HYMNOLOGY?
- A. The Above Facts
 - i. We've already covered why music is of such an importance
 - ii. The music of the church should be of such that exalts the Lord and exhorts the believer.
 - iii. It should encourage the believer to love the Lord, exhort them to obey Him.
 - B. Understanding
 - i. To understand the history of Christian hymnody
 - ii. To acquire an understanding of the theology of hymn texts and characteristics of hymn tunes
 - C. Appreciation & Experience
 - i. To gain an appreciation of Christian hymnody
 - ii. To experience the music from the psalms, hymns and spiritual songs from across the ages.
- X. QUOTES ON THE IMPORTANCE OF GODLY MUSIC
- A. "Every good hymn learned and loved is another window through which the worshiping soul looks toward heaven" - *Worship and Service Hymnal, 1957*
 - B. "Should it but stir the flesh, it is temporary; to stir the soul is eternal" – *Psalms and Hymns and Spiritual Songs, 2018*
 - C. "Sing unto God, sing praises to his name: extol him that rideth upon the heavens by his name JAH, and rejoice before him." – *Psalm 68:4 (KJB)*