

Hymns

A brief history

**A selection of slides used at a
presentation during the
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by

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Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus ...

‘... in many churches, you can be absolutely sure of never hearing a sung Sanctus. After what is still one of most (properly) extravagant and imaginative passages in the liturgy, evoking heaven’s outpouring of praise, we break into murmured and embarrassed prose. Shouldn’t we find this a bit more strange than we do?’

- Archbishop Rowan Williams

Quotes about hymns

“More souls are saved by a few well-known hymn than by a plethora of sermons”

- Bishop Edwin Owen

“Music is the bicycle of liturgy”

“Nothing is more difficult than to determine what a child takes in and does not take in of its environment and teaching. This fact is brought home to me by the hymns which I have learned as a child, and never forgot. They mean to me more than the finest poetry, and they have for me a permanent value, somehow or other”

- D.H. Lawrence, writer, 1885-1930

‘Church music means singing the liturgy ...The function of church music is to emphasise and intensify significant parts of the liturgy...**Hymns and psalms are our response to hearing and receiving the word of God**...Music heightens and enhances the words of the liturgy...It brings a further dimension to the words, adding grace and conveying feelings.’

- Report: Silent Worship (Dublin,1990)

'The ancient fathers were seriously persuaded, and do oftentimes plainly teach, affirming that the house of prayer is a Court beautified with the presence of celestial powers; that we stand, we pray, we sound forth **hymns** to God, having his angels intermingled as our associates.'

- Richard Hooker, English preacher and writer, 1554-1600

Characteristics of hymns

- **Memorable terseness**
- **Mighty things in homely language**
- **A great story in a few words**
- **Reflect the moment / era / situation**
- **To God / About God**
- **Scriptural**

Psalms

- **Part of our Judeo-Christian heritage**
- **Used by Christ**
- **Say how we really feel - Praise, Protest, Prayer, Anger**
- **Truly ‘catholic / universal’**
- **Hebrew or literally translated**
- **Metrical versions: literally accurate rather than good poetry**
- **Free paraphrases (Isaac Watts)**
- **Original composition**

Example: Book of Common Prayer page 616 Psalm 23 The Lord is my shepherd

Church Hymnal Fifth Edition No 21: The Lord’s my shepherd

No 20: The King of love

No 645: Father hear the prayer we offer

Treatment of psalms

- **Said by one person or by all**
- **Said half verse about**
- **Recitation + response (said)**
- **Cantor sings verses, all sing response**
- **Plainchant**
- **Anglican Chant**
- **Metrical**

Hymns in the New Testament

A few examples:

**Canticle: Great and Wonderful - Revelation 15
Book of Common Prayer page 129**

**Canticle: Magnificat – Luke 1: 46 -55 BCP page 128;
CH 5 No 712**

**“Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead and Christ will
shine on you” Ephesians 5:14;
CH 5 No 143**

**Canticle: Nunc Dimittis – Luke 2: 29 – 32 BCP page 129;
CH 5 No 691**

The Office Hymn

St Ambrose, c. 340-397

- **Sung at particular point**
- **Simple and objective**
- **Contemplative**
- **Doctrinal**
- **Emphasis on personal discipline**

Some examples: CH5 No 60: O Jesus, Lord of heavenly grace

CH5 No 66: Before the ending of the day

CH5 No 699: Hail, gladdening light

Medieval Period (roughly CE 400 – 1400)

- **The Monastery and the Mass**
- **Not for the lay person**
- **Adoration and declaration of divine truth**
- **Real Presence; The Virgin Mary**
- **A few popular melodies e.g. CH No 79 Orientis partibus**
Examples: CH 5 No 437: Pange lingua - Now, my tongue (Corpus Christi)
CH 5 No 242: Verbum supernum / The heavenly word
CH 5 No 444: Soul of my Saviour

**Medieval Period → Renaissance
→ Reformation**

**The people of the medieval church
showed us what hymns could do**

**The Reformation showed us how to use
them**

The Reformation

Martin Luther (1483-1546)

- **A man of ‘artistic temperament’, witty and full-blooded.**
- **Religious ‘battle’ hymns - fighting the powers of darkness**
- **Marching hymns**
- **“Come let us defy the devil and praise God by singing a hymn”**

John Calvin (1509-64)

- **As different from Luther as one Christian can be from another**
- **A rigorous theologian**
- **Hymns composed by human not good enough – only Bible-based texts acceptable**
- **Psalmody of the strictest kind**
- **Plain and simple worship -prohibited musical instruments in church**
- **Lengthy logical sermons**

Reformation Hymns : 16th Century

CH 5 No 668 God is our fortress and our rock (Lutheran)

CH 5 No 142: Wake, O wake (Lutheran)

CH 5 No 683: All people that on earth do dwell (Geneva)

CH 5 No 329: Father, again (Geneva)

The Reformation

Two strands:

- **The medieval enthusiasts, Luther, the Wesleys and the revivalists – used the music from the world around them**
- **The orthodox medievals, Calvinists, English Puritans, the editors of Church of Ireland hymnbooks up to CH4, developed a distinctively ‘church’ idiom and kept it apart**

Isaac Watts 1674 - 1748

- **In England, officially, all the church's hymns were psalms during the 16 and 17th centuries.**
- **Psalms provided hymnody of zeal and righteousness; but also wrath and war.**
- **Watts queried why our praises should remain in the Old Testament.**
- **The father and liberator of English hymnody, he wrote of Christ as God.**
- **English Protestant Christian was set free to wonder and adore.**

Isaac Watts hymns

- **Designed to be sung in church and were inspired in church; simple tunes and metres**
- **Watts was the Father of the liturgical hymn**
- **1707: “Hymns and Spiritual Songs”**
- **Watts wrote approximately 750 hymns**
16 appear in the current Church Hymnal, for example:

CH 5 No76 Sweet is the work

CH 5 No 28 I sing the almighty power of God

CH 5 No 247 When I survey the wondrous Cross

CH 5 No 537 O God, our help (Ps 91)

CH 5 No 357 I'll praise my maker (Ps 146)

CH 5 No 353 Give to our God

John and Charles Wesley 18th Century

- **Successors of the Luther stream**
- **6,000 hymns**
- **Outcome of enthusiasm; devotion**
- **Individual conversion**
- **Written for private devotion and open-air meetings**

Watts and Wesley

Isaac Watts
(1674-1748)

16 hymns in CH5

Charles Wesley
(1707-88)

21 hymns in CH5

Two strands

- **Enthusiasm:**

**Luther → John Wesley (18th century) →
Moody and Sankey (late 19th C) →
Worship Songs (late 20th C)**

- **Devotion, adoration, wonder:**

**Calvin → Issac Watts (18th C) →
19th C. High Church tradition**

The 19th Century

Gradual merging of two strands – Watts and Wesley

1820s: Legalisation of hymns in the Church of England and Church of Ireland

1861: Hymns Ancient & Modern first edition

Revival in the Church of England - Oxford/Tractarian movement

Renewed interest in the middle ages - Doctrinal hymns

1840-1880: peak period for publication of hymn books

Hymn singing became very popular in the decades preceding WW1

Irish Hymn Writers

- **Richard Mant, 1776-1848** (CH 316, 461)
- **Thomas Kelly, 1769-1855** (CH 248, 269, 275, 285, 339)
- **Henry Francis Lyte, 1793-1847**
- **Cecil Frances Alexander, 1818-95**
- **Edward Darling (b.1933)**

Church Hymnal 2000

Almost 25% of hymns in CH5 are by 20th century hymn writers

20th Century writers in CH5

- **Albert Bayly (5)**
- **John Bell (8)**
- **George Briggs (5)**
- **Sydney Carter (3)**
- **Edward Darling (6)**
- **T. Dudley-Smith (19)**
- **Brian Foley (5)**
- **Michael Forster (8)**
- **H.G.A.Gaunt (3)**
- **Fred Pratt Green (14)**
- **Christopher Idle (5)**
- **Fred Kaan (6)**
- **Graham Kendrick (12)**
- **Graham Maule (8)**
- **Michael Perry (7)**
- **James Quinn (8)**

Some 20th Century hymns

- **Fred Pratt Green: CH 330 God is here as we his people**
- **F. Pratt Green: CH 399 An Upper Room**
- **Brian Foley: CH 299 Holy Spirit, come,**
- **James Quinn: CH 454 Forth in the peace of Christ we go**
- **Fred Kaan: CH 493 Now let us from this table rise**
- **H. O'Driscoll: CH 532 Who are we who stand and sing?**