

# Preface

“May God bless this modest symbol of a Christendom united to adore him!”

*CANTATE DOMINO, 1938*

WHEN THE APOSTLE PAUL, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, penned the words in Col 3:16 to “teach and admonish one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs,” he did so with the full realization of the power and potential of communicating truth through music. Singing of hymns was already part of his Jewish belief system, culture, worldview, and worship practice. After all, the great apostle had been raised a “Hebrew of the Hebrews” (Phil 3:5) and within that culture, singing psalms and hymns was common.<sup>1</sup> In writing to the church at Colossae, the Apostle Paul charged his audience to:

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in *psalms* and *hymns* and *spiritual songs*, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatever you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him (Col 3:16–17, NKJV, emphasis added).

Obviously, the Apostle Paul understood something about the mentoring role those leading worship have when exhorting the Colossians to teach and admonish. *Teaching* implies instruction and *admonishing* seems to be strong encouragement.<sup>2</sup> It is a bit curious that Paul uses musical genres to

1. See Larry W. Hurtado, *At the Origins of Christian Worship: The Context and Character of Earliest Christian Devotion* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000); and Jutta Leonhardt, *Jewish Worship in Philo of Alexandria*, Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism, 84 (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001).

2. Richard R. Melick, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, vol. 32. The New American

describe his primary communication platform for this teaching task.<sup>3</sup> All three words imply that “music [can be] a vehicle through which a message is delivered.”<sup>4</sup> In this case for teaching and encouragement.

Paul’s charge in Colossians sets the stage for our goal in this series, as we explore the history and practice of those who have set out to worship God in song. First, primary to our study here is the role of these psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs in whatever form or fashion they take throughout the history of the church. Hymns and the singing of our human journey have been part of every culture and every generation since God made man and woman. These melodic messages have not always been called hymns. At times, these songs have taken on other titles such as “odes,” “heart-songs,” “psalms,” or “melodic prose.” Whatever the term used to describe the art form, the singing of song has always been part of the human journey and a representation of people’s relationship with God.

Second, as our investigative review unfolds and the narrative for this project becomes clear to the reader, it becomes obvious that God always uses people as the primary means to carry out his purposes—not programs, organizations, or institutions. When this happens, those writing the hymns experience “hymnody” in its truest sense—the creation and practice of using hymns. Over the centuries, God has moved in the hearts and minds of individuals and prompted them to document their life journey in to the words and songs of a hymn.

Third, hymnology as a discipline is a “living document.” It is an ever-changing study of the working of God in the lives of his people through song. When looking at hymnology as a discipline, the research related to it, whether historical or theological, becomes an investigation of God’s revelation to humans and the human response through melody, harmony, and rhythm.

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Commentary, (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1991) 3:16.

3. On this, Daniel I. Block says, “Although it is unclear whether ‘psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs’ function as synonyms or reflect three kinds of music, it is clear that together these terms signify all kinds of music.” *For the Glory of God: Recovering a Biblical Theology of Worship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014) 234.

4. Melick, 3:16; see also James D. G. Dunn, who comments on this passage, “Prior to the invention of printing, hymns and songs were a necessary and invaluable means of implanting Christian teaching.” *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996) 3:16.

## THE PURPOSE OF HYMNS

The hymn is generally a statement of deep commitment to something greater than the writer of the hymn. Hymns are expressions of devotion, affirmation, affection, and assurance. They are statements of conviction and loyalty about God that overflow into melodic and harmonic commitment to God. Hymns may be deeply personal—for the person writing the lyric and the one singing. Or, they may be inclusive—thoroughly representing a specific denomination, religious group, or theological position. Hymns may also be somewhat universal—intended for the broader “Body of Christ” to sing in full power and commitment.

Second, the hymn is a facilitator for the teaching of theology and Christian doctrine. Hymns have always had the potential of being used for the communication of doctrine. Certainly, Martin Luther realized this with his hymns on God’s greatness, grace, and assurance. And John Calvin, while choosing to sing only lyrics taken from the Psalms, employed songwriters and musicians to write new melody for the express purposes of providing for the church fresh opportunity to sing song to the Lord. Isaac Watts, John Newton, and others elucidated a Reformed Theology throughout their hymns. Conversely, John and Charles Wesley, and Fanny Crosby, etc. produced hymns promoting Armenian theologies and in doing so gave the church more than six thousand hymns and songs. Regardless of the theological location of individuals, the church has relied on hymns for clarifying, proliferating, and training individuals for theological commitment.

Third, the hymn is a tool for encouraging and edifying God’s people. In part, this is the intent of the Col 3:16 passage, “teaching and admonishing (encouraging) one another,” and, “singing with Grace in your heart.” While Colossians addresses the mission of hymns in corporate worship, the sister passage in Eph 5:18b–21 (NKJV) embraces hymn singing in private worship by “making melody in your heart to the Lord:”

Be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another in the fear of God!

In both passages, believers are encouraged and edified by singing hymns, “giving thanks to the Lord,” and “submitting to one another in the fear of God.”

Fourth, the hymn is a tool for developing community. Since the early times, singing of hymns and the joy of sharing together as community has

been part of worship. Even the persecuted Christians of the first, second, and third centuries sang hymns, often as they were running for their lives. For example, In AD 111, Pliny the Younger, Roman governor of Bithynia and Pontus, characterized Christian as pacifists—honest and trustworthy. Pliny wrote the Roman Emperor Trajan about early Christian worship services:

They were wont to assemble on a set day before dawn and to sing a hymn among themselves to Christ, as to a god, and . . . they pledged themselves by vow not to some crime, but that they would commit neither fraud, nor theft, nor adultery, nor betray their word, nor deny a trust when summoned; after which it was their custom to separate and come together again to take food—ordinary and harmless food.<sup>5</sup>

Singing hymns as a community of believers is one of the joys of heaven. Soon, we will join together with thousands upon thousands around the “throne of God” and sing together the hymn, “Worthy is the Lamb!” (Rev 5:11–12).

Lastly, the hymn is a representation of culture. Because the use of hymns has such a rich and engaging heritage, one can generally go to almost any hymn written during any given period of time and draw conclusions about the culture during the time in which it was written. Hymns are perhaps one of the best gauges for determining historical and cultural nuance of the church in a particular era. A study of ancient hymns will reveal communication techniques, patterns of speech, and theological controversies of that age. Similarly, a study of the hymns written during post-Civil War America will reveal something of the spiritual condition of a broken nation. Hymns provide opportunity to knowingly peek into the heart and soul of a nation, culture, or people clarifying the concerns and practices of the church (and of particular Christian believers) at that specific moment in history.

Down through the centuries, history documents that the most effective and enduring hymns are those that best represent the voice of the people, their “heart song.” It is the study of these people, the hymn writers themselves, that provides opportunity to understand the depth of Christian faith, in action. Their lives, gifts, theology, cultures, ideology, heartache, successes, and beliefs that make the hymns they write and the theology they practice believable and practical for the average person to sing. In many ways, hymns represent “The People’s Song.” It is often through these “New Songs and Hymns” that paradigms in worship are introduced to the Body of Christ and people are introduced to new and innovative ways of worship.

5. Elmer Towns and Vernon M. Whaley, *Worship through the Ages: How the Great Awakenings Shape Evangelical Worship* (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2012) 72–73.

People represent God's plan for redemption, worship, and free expression of faith. And, it is through the changed lives of people that God speaks moments of peace, affirmation, praise, and adoration that become the lyric through which we sing hymns. So, we study the lives of hymn writers, the hymnist, and discover their stories are much like our own—full of life experiences. These are often powerful stories of grace, mercy, forgiveness, tragedy, and heartbreak. At other times, their stories reflect simple, quiet moments—their times alone with God. No matter how the hymn is written, or the circumstances through which the words have been penned, their stories are real, their life experiences are human, and their encounters with the “God of the Ages” are very much genuine—but, rooted in the mercies of Lord which are renewed every morning (Lam 3:21–23).

### CONCEPT OF THE BOOK

Often, the most practical theologians of the church are those who communicate in a language that the laity understand and assimilate into their heart, lives, and practice. Thus, we submit, this project, as an introductory and exploratory textbook describing the most influential hymnists and movements of hymnody within the liturgy of the global church. In total, there are sixty chapters in this three-volume set. This text evaluates the theological perspectives of the major hymnists and composers who have impacted the church. These volumes do not necessarily tell “the story” of how songs are written. But, they do provide opportunity for laity, clergy, and academics to understand the lives of the hymnists and view the rich history of practical theology represented in the hymns of the church from the first century through the beginnings of the twenty-first century.

The twenty chapters in volume 1 represent hymnists and their theologies in the early church and through the Renaissance era. These are primarily document hymnists and movements “From Asia to Europe” up and through the fifteenth century. Volume 2, “From Catholic to Protestant Europe,” encompasses the sixteenth through the eighteenth century, beginning with the Reformation and extending through the eighteenth-century. And volume 3, “From the West to the Global South,” embodies nineteenth century hymnists to the contemporary movements of the twenty-first century as the population loci of the church moves southward toward the majority world.

What follows will provide a unique perspective in the field of worship and liturgical studies as it not only explores the history of the most influential liturgists and hymn writers of the church, but also the theology they communicated in their musical writings. It is our conviction that musicians

of the church are in fact theologians who connect to the body of Christ through poetry and song. Certainly their medium for assimilating information is often different than teaching and preaching from a pulpit, yet their theological influence on the church is significant. This text will evaluate the undergirded theology of hymnists and the movements to which they belong. We hope that it will inspire the musicians of the church to recognize their role as practical and practicing theologians and that their faithful ministry of music and reflection will bring glory to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

### **RATIONALE AND MISSION OF THE BOOK**

The mission of this project is first to reintroduce to the church the major eras, movements, and individuals responsible for shaping hymn singing, sacred music, and worship throughout the history of the Christian church; second, to analyze the major theological themes that rise to the surface during these eras or in the works of individuals; and third, to consider the contributions this era or individual made to the ongoing practice of worship/liturgy in the church today. What is communicated in song is in fact theological in nature and deserves to be analyzed as more than just a trend tied to social constructions, but an opportunity for robust reflection on the reality of humanity in relation to our God who condescended himself by taking the form of Servant in Jesus Christ.

This study of hymns and hymnists is intentionally broad and eclectic in scope. Our study includes a comprehensive examination of hymnody from the Early Ancient Hymns; Latin, Byzantine, and Georgian Chant; and Catholic Reformation Hymnody to American Gospel Song and the Modern Praise and Worship Movement. Each stylistic offering represents a tradition, community of believers, and group of songwriters keenly committed to telling their story of salvation in their own vernacular and within the framework of their own culture. And each tradition contributes something of value to the story of “the hymn.” In reality, we are intentionally looking back to the hymn writers of past centuries, observing trends and practices, and documenting theology and doctrine. We do this so that we may better shape, create, write, and present songs of worship for those God has called us to serve today and tomorrow.

This textbook is neither reformed, evangelical, liturgical, free church, ecumenical, Catholic, nor Protestant. Rather, this textbook is a strategic documentation of events, rich historical influences, experiences, and theologies that have shaped the lives of those who have written our hymns. We

study these hymnists and the hymns they write so that we can better understand how to outline, profile, affect, and form the hymn writing processes for future generations. What you will find in these pages is *not* a Protestant, Catholic, or Orthodox analysis of the history of hymnody—but instead, a *Christian* history of hymnody, made up by contributions from a wide variety of authors.

Thus, each chapter of the book is similar in format, feel, and purpose. Each chapter purposes to situate the present study in the *historical background* followed by an analysis of *theological perspectives*, an overview of their *contributions to liturgy and worship* followed by a brief and final listing of *notable hymns and/or songs* in this genre or by this individual. This text is not a collection of stories or documentation of anecdotal influences or experiences related to the writing of our favorite hymns. Hymnologists from a wide variety of backgrounds have already rummaged through letters, diaries, periodicals, hymnals, tunebooks, denominational minutes, hymn book prefaces, and preaching outlines sufficient to gather meaningful stories about hundreds of hymns. This text is a chronological documentation of hymnists, the theology they asserted through their hymns, and their influence on the worship we practice and songs we sing as the church of the living God.

## EDITORIAL ORGANIZATION AND CONTRIBUTIONS

More than fifty authors, hymnologists, academics, theologians, musicians, and educators have contributed to this project. No single individual is *the* expert on all aspects relating to the study of hymns and hymnody. Thus, our approach in this project was to utilize the expertise of a multitude of scholars with varied expertise and theological commitments across the spectrum of Christendom.

As the three general editors of this project, we come to the study of worship, each from our own lenses—none of which prepares us for explaining or highlighting the impact and significance of Gregorian Chant, Byzantine Hymnography, or Marian Hymnody. Therefore, we have relied on the expertise of our colleagues around the globe—their study, their passion, and their experience for interpreting and relating to the readers a historical and theological introduction to the history of hymns and hymnody. To this end, we have relied heavily on the input and various expertise of our Editorial Advisory Board.

This board is made up of seventeen scholars with a wide assortment of backgrounds, experiences, convictions, and theologies. Their expertise

was first solicited in the beginning stages of the project as we sought to delimit our survey of this historical introduction. They were extremely helpful in making sure that the product you see today is both comprehensive in breadth, and narrow in importance. It could be easy in a project such as this to follow the rabbit trails of favorite research topics, making more of a nuance than it deserves. Their faithful eye and substantive feedback has helped us in both breadth and specificity. To them we owe much appreciation and would like to briefly acknowledge them by name here, although much more fully below: Margo Fassler, Jo-Michael Scheibe, Lester Ruth, David W. Music, Lim Swee Hong, Iain Quinn, Martin Tel, Stephen Newby, Kimberly Belcher, Alexandra Buckle, Jeremy Dibble, C. Michael Hawn, Joseph Herl, Pedrito U. Maynard-Reid, Bryan Spinks, Karen Westerfield Tucker, and Mel R. Wilhoit. The success of this project relies much on their commitments and expertise, any fault likely lies with us.

We hope that this project will encourage the church to worship Christ “in Spirit and in truth” (John 4:24, NIV), and along with the Psalmist’s call our neighbors to with us say,

Make a joyful shout to the Lord, all you lands!  
 Serve the Lord with gladness;  
 Come before His presence with singing.  
 Know that the Lord, He *is* God;  
*It is He who* has made us, and not we ourselves;  
*We are* His people and the sheep of His pasture.  
  
 Enter into His gates with thanksgiving,  
 And into His courts with praise.  
 Be thankful to Him, *and* bless His name.  
 For the Lord *is* good;  
 His mercy *is* everlasting,  
 And His truth *endures* to all generations.  
  
 (Psalm 100, NKJV)

*Soli Deo Gloria,*  
 Mark A. Lamport, Benjamin K. Forrest, and Vernon M. Whaley  
 Easter 2019