



AND *when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.*
(Matt 26:30, Mark 14:26)

Have you considered the difference between the ancient and classical hymns of the Church and the light and often frivolous ‘kum–bah–yah’ songs of the modern Church? Do you not feel a spiritual difference when such light songs are sung in the solemn worship of the Lord?

A few months ago, I was invited to a Wednesday prayer service by a close friend. The church was a Baptist church, so I presumed the music and sermon would be based on reverence and biblical doctrine. Well, one out of two is not bad! The sermon was indeed very biblical and reverential – it was even based upon the Received Text of the Bible. But the musical portion of the service lacked much to be desired. For each ultra-modern ‘gospel’ song that was sung, a young lady came up to “lead” the singing. The lyrics were projected upon a wall in the front of the church. But the music director was the only one who knew the songs and made any effort to sing them. As a result, all of the singing was done solo.

As I looked around at the worshippers (who averaged 60 years of age and older) I saw a vacant look on the faces of the people. In the pew rows were excellent copies of the Baptist hymnal containing many great old hymns; yet, this was not used. It seemed obvious to me that the congregation would have loved nothing more than to sing the beautiful old and meaningful hymns of the church rather than simply sit idly in the pews and listen to the meaningless (and I mean meaningless) songs being sung by the leader of music. I wondered why such frivolous songs came to take the place of the powerful hymns of the past. Perhaps it is due to a decline in spirituality and reverence in religion; or maybe it is due to the lack of copyright profits that are not available in the use of the ancient hymns. The modern songs that pass for worship today are the very product of a

generation that has turned its back on serious bible study and teaching in preference for 'feel good' songs that just happen to make a handsome profit for the creator of such cheapened songs.

The best example of a hymn in Holy Scripture is the Psalms of David. In fact, these were the only hymns sung in some churches of the Reformation. After all, who could find fault with singing the Word of God? But there also arose a practice of singing hymns that were intended to reinforce doctrine and biblical faith. These hymns rely upon direct points of doctrinal truth outlined in Scripture. But in the more modern setting of the past one hundred and fifty years, another genre of spiritual song came into existence. Most of these were quite spiritual and personally meaningful to the singer; but these were directed inward to the soul and not, as a hymn, outward to the praise and worship of our Maker. Below is an example of a classic hymn. Can you discover Biblical references in this hymn? I have pointed out just a few:

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!
Early in the morning our song shall rise to Thee;
Holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty!
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!

First Stanza (above)

"Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory." (Isaiah 6:3)

". . . . early will I seek thee." (Psalm 63:1)

". . . . thou art a gracious and merciful God." (Neh 9:31)

". . . . our God, the great, the mighty." (Neh 9:32)

"For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one." (1 John 5:7)

Holy, holy, holy! All the saints adore Thee,
Casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea;
Cherubim and seraphim falling down before Thee,
Who was, and is, and evermore shall be.

Second Stanza:

"The Lord is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him." (Ex 15:2)

"4 And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold. 5 And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God. 6 And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind. (Rev 4:4-6)

"8 Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever." (Heb 13:8)

"2 Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. 3 And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory." (Isaiah 6:1-3)

We could continue with the remaining two verses of this great hymn, but you can see the point in just these two verses.

The purpose of worship is to praise God and render due worship to Him – not men! A hymn serves that purpose. It is directed toward God. But a gospel song, though it may be of comfort and spiritually encouraging, is directed toward the worshipper and not the One being worshipped.

Below are the first two verses of a modern gospel song. Choose whatever profound truths from this you may detect other than the elementary nature of God:

God is so Good

God is so good,
God is so good,
God is so good,
He's so good to me!

He cares for me,
He cares for me,
He cares for me,
He's so good to me!

This kindergarten song has become a mainstay in the liberal churches, and it represents a dumbing down process in worship. While it is true that God is good, and He cares for the little children, should mature worshippers not focus on the deeper truths of the Gospel concerning the nature of our Triune God? I have witnessed this song being sung, *ad infinitum*, in charismatic worship services as the standing congregation, with uplifted arms, sway to and from with the singing for nearly 30 minutes. It essentially becomes a mantra rather than a song of worship among mature congregations. The song is attributed to Velna A. Ledin who wrote only the first verse in 1933 to keep the children occupied during long drives by automobile. Many have been added by desperate parents.

Notice that every verse (there are dozens) ends with the word, ME!

I suggest that our classical worship has been dumbed down by both modern and light-hearted singing as well as deviant Bible versions that attack the divinity of Jesus Christ as well as to sterilize the Church against discipline and judgment. Political correctness has rendered the Church sterile in the area of condemnation of sin and the polemic defense of cardinal biblical doctrines.

The Church underwent a serious Reformation five hundred years ago. Perhaps we should now exert our efforts to a Restoration of the pure doctrinal and biblical truths achieved during that Reformation. This cannot be achieved by a shameful and effeminate clergy and laity – it will require strong and courageous propagation of the Truth once delivered to the saints by men and women of faith – by fathers and mothers who love their children ardently. If we burn, so be it!