

# Music:

## Its Place in the Modern World and Its Importance for Christian Piety

*(With Recommended Psalms and Hymns)*

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*Music is “either the first or one of the principal” gifts of God “to recreate man and give him pleasure... Wherefore we must be the more diligent in ruling it in such a manner that it may be useful to us and in no way pernicious. For this reason the early doctors of the Church often complain that the people of their times are addicted to dishonest and shameless songs, which not without reason they call mortal and Satanic poison for the corruption of the world.”*

~ John Calvin<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Cited in Calvin Stapert, *A New Song for an Old World: Musical Thought in the Early Church*, p. 195.



## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this lesson on music is to explain the reason why we do what we do with respect to music at our church. We want our congregation to understand why we choose to sing certain kinds of songs and not others. One of the main reasons given in churches that embrace new forms of music is the argument that it is necessary to do so in order to be "relevant." One problem with this mindset is that our attempts at relevance often result in cultural accommodation and compromise, as this lesson seeks to demonstrate. Another is that the attempt to be relevant will always exclude someone: some people will love a particular kind of music, while others will hate it. We should not use music to reach out to one group (e.g. youth) while excluding another. The purpose of music in the life of the church is not to be an evangelistic "hook" for a particular group that we want to target. Instead, music is to be a means by which we give praise and thanks to God, and a means by which God's Word dwells within us richly (see Colossians 3:16). You may disagree with the decisions that we have made about music at our church, but we hope to encourage you to think further about the reasons for your disagreement. Too often, when we hear arguments against something that we like, our tendency is to react defensively and simply assert our disagreement, without actually taking time to consider and respond to those arguments. It is our hope that Christians will give much more careful thought to their musical choices, and this lesson is offered towards that end.

## MUSIC IN CONTEMPORARY CULTURE AND IN THE CHURCH

What should Presbyterians think about "Reformed rap"? A recent *World* magazine article reported the attempt of some Reformed Christians to utilize hip-hop music to spread the word about the doctrines of grace.<sup>2</sup> The article cites these lyrics from a song by an artist named Curtis "Voice" Allen:

*I been exposed to bright lights, the doctrines of grace,  
I'm elected, imputed perfected,  
becuz of the power of God resurrected and his gift of faith,  
that when we see his face we're not rejected.*

What are we to make of this? Among Christians who favor more traditional musical styles, critiques of contemporary musical forms are often leveled at the lack of theological depth in the lyrics. But what if that problem is alleviated? What about T.U.L.I.P.<sup>3</sup> set to a hip-hop beat?

This brings us to a much larger question: How should the church go about making musical choices for its worship? Does the regulative principle of worship<sup>4</sup> have anything to say to the question of musical style? For many Christians, the answer would appear to be 'No,' because musical forms are frequently understood as value-neutral and capable of being filled with either good or bad content. In the words of Curtis "Voice" Allen, "There's no verse saying this particular music is good or bad."<sup>5</sup> This mindset leads to a musical free-for-all in the church's worship. In the supposed absence of any biblical guidance regarding musical style, the church often ends up adopting whatever form is most popular with its membership or target audience.

Contrast that approach with an example given in a lecture by Ken Myers, one of our most astute observers of contemporary culture.<sup>6</sup> Myers points out that the thinking that led the medieval church to begin using the organ in its worship was very different than the thinking that leads contemporary Christians to bring hip-hop into worship. While we tend to think of the organ as an almost exclusively "religious" instrument, Myers points out that this was not always the case. In fact, the organ was brought into Christian worship after having had a long association with

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<sup>2</sup> Mark Bergin, "Holy Hip-Hop," *World Magazine*, February 3, 2007, pp. 36-37.

<sup>3</sup> T.U.L.I.P. is an acronym for the "five points of Calvinism": Total Depravity; Unconditional Election; Limited Atonement; Irresistible Grace; and Perseverance of the Saints.

<sup>4</sup> The phrase "regulative principle of worship" means that the Bible needs to regulate how we worship God.

<sup>5</sup> "Holy Hip-Hop," p. 36.

<sup>6</sup> Ken Myers, "After Evangelism: The Cultural Lives of Christians and Their Neighbors," Lecture 1 (2006 *Discipleship Conference at Christ Presbyterian Church, Marietta, GA*; available for purchase online at <http://christpresbyterianmarietta.org/afterevangelism.php>).

secular culture. In addition, the organ was not incorporated into worship due to its popularity with the common folk, since the average medieval peasant did not attend organ recitals. Instead, the organ was eventually embraced as an especially suitable instrument for Christian worship because of the recognition that the way in which it produced sound was consistent with what God reveals to us through both general and special revelation. The organ is reflective of human nature itself, and it is also reflective of the manner in which the Holy Spirit works within the redeemed. To explain this, Myers cites a 17<sup>th</sup> century work entitled *Syntagma Musicum* by musician Michael Praetorius, in which Praetorius writes the following about the organ:

“Almighty God alone can never be given sufficient thanks for having granted to man in his mercy and great goodness such gifts as have enabled him to achieve such a perfect, one might almost say the most perfect, creation and instrument of music as is the organ, in its arrangement and construction, and to play upon it with hands and feet in such a manner that God in heaven may be praised, his worship adorned, and many moved and inspired to Christian devotion.”

Myers shows that, for Praetorius and other Christians, including Tertullian in his work *De Anima*, the way in which the organ is constructed makes it an especially appropriate “symbol of cosmic harmony.”<sup>7</sup> In other words, the reason why the church began to use the organ after nearly a millennium of strictly acapella music was due to the recognition that there was something about the construction of this instrument that was in keeping with the way in which God has made the world. An organ produces sound through the opening and closing of valves, as air is moved from the wind chest through the instrument’s pipes. This is remarkably similar to the way the human body produces sound. And it is also reflective of the biblical imagery of rushing wind as a metaphor for the activity of the Spirit in the people of God (see John 3:8). Moreover, the organ’s ability to produce many different and harmonious sounds at the same time is reflective of the nature of the church as one body with many parts that is indwelt and enlivened by one Holy Spirit.

This example shows us how a decision about music in the church was made on the basis of careful reflection upon how well a particular musical form developed the order that God has woven into the created order. When we contrast this with the popular modern notion that musical forms are value-neutral, it becomes evident that these two approaches reflect two very different ways of conceiving of culture. As Myers explains, one approach sees “culture as the development of order placed in creation by God,” while the other sees culture as “the human effort to impose meaning on a meaningless world.”<sup>8</sup>

When we understand man’s cultural endeavors as the cultivation of a God-given order, we are able to see that not all cultural forms are created equal. It is not cultural snobbery to say that certain musical forms are better than others, or to argue that some forms are better suited for use in worship than others. Contrary to popular opinion, music is not merely a matter of personal taste.

Nevertheless, this popular opinion remains quite popular. Consider this statement by RUF campus minister Kevin Twit, who seeks to defend the use of all musical forms in the church’s worship: “there is no style that is irredeemable!”<sup>9</sup> In other words, it would appear that Twit believes that there is no musical style that should not be used in a service of corporate worship. On one hand, Twit is right to point out that redemption extends to all areas of life. The gospel is not only about the salvation of human souls, but about the renewal of the entire creation. On the other hand, the problem with Twit’s statement is that it reflects a confusion of the categories of “structure” and “function” (or what could also be described as “direction”). These categories are explained by theologian Gordon Spykman:

“The God-given orders and structures of creation precede and define their respective functions...Against the backdrop of a finished creation, and with ‘nothing new under the sun,’ the divinely appointed structures of the creation order delineate the boundaries as well as the potentials for every creaturely enterprise.”<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Myers, Lecture 1.

<sup>8</sup> Myers, Lecture 1.

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.igracemusic.com/resource/articles/musicstyle.htm>

<sup>10</sup> Gordon J. Spykman, *Reformational Theology: A New Paradigm for Doing Dogmatics*, p. 158.

‘Structure’ refers to those things which are inherently a part of the world that God has created. ‘Function’ (or direction) refers to the various ways in which a given structure is developed as a result of human cultural endeavor. It is possible for human beings to develop creational structures in directions that are more consistent with the way in which God made the world, and it is also possible for human beings to develop creational structures in a direction that is less consistent with the way in which God made the world. For example, God has created human beings so that we need to eat food in order to survive. But eating is not simply a utilitarian function for people. God has also created us in such a way that food can be a source of pleasure and a context for fellowship with others. That is the structural aspect of eating. Now, consider this question: are some ways of eating more in tune with God’s structural purposes than others? Which is better: enjoying a home-cooked meal with loved-ones, or eating a drive-thru burger and fries in the car? While the latter is not necessarily wrong, who would argue that it is on par with the experience of sharing a meal with one’s family?

Applying this to music, we would say that God created human beings with the ability to produce and enjoy various types of musical sounds. That is the structural aspect of music. The creation of various musical styles is a result of human cultural development. That is the functional (or directional) aspect of music. To say that every musical style is “redeemable” is to confuse structure (a world in which music can be made) with function (the various musical styles that people make). It reveals an attitude of aesthetic relativism, which believes that it is impossible to create a bad musical style and, therefore, believes that any style, regardless of the purpose for which it was developed, can be used in the context of public worship.

In addition to judging between “good” and “bad” music, we also need to remember that not everything that is permissible in certain contexts is suitable for the context of corporate worship. For example, there is nothing inherently wrong with wearing a swimsuit in certain contexts, but this does not mean that we should feel free to wear our Speedos to corporate worship. Similarly, there is nothing inherently wrong with enjoying alcohol in moderation, but this does not mean that it would be appropriate for a preacher to drink a pint of beer while preaching. Along the same lines, not every kind of musical form is appropriate for use in worship.

The reason why this is the case is because musical forms have meaning in and of themselves, apart from lyrics. Marching band music says something in and of itself. A lullaby says something in and of itself. A mother would not try to put her infant to sleep by singing the lyrics “Rock-a-bye baby in the tree top” to the tune of “Seventy-Six Trombones.” Musical style contributes significantly to the meaning of a song.

Too often, the contemporary church has failed to consider the meaning conveyed, and the sensibilities fostered, by the dominant musical styles of our culture. Instead, our use of music has tended to be guided by subjective preferences and a market-driven mentality. We need to do better at reflecting upon the way music is used in contemporary culture, and upon the place of music in the life of the church.

Towards this end, let us consider how the average 21<sup>st</sup> century American thinks about and interacts with music. What are the dominant musical sensibilities of our culture? First, in contemporary culture, music has largely ceased to be an activity in which people participate and has instead become a commodity that is consumed. When most modern people think about “music,” they think of it as a recorded object. This results in a very relativistic way of thinking about music. Musicologist Julian Johnson observes that ours is “a commercial culture that accords equal validity and equal status to all of its products. In the marketplace, all music becomes functionally equivalent.”<sup>11</sup> When music is treated as a product for consumption, the preferences of the consumer reign supreme. Nevertheless, there is also a certain irony to this. The leveling effect of the commodification of music does not in fact make us as free as we might think we are. Instead, as Johnson writes,

“Our musical choices are rarely the wholly free and independent actions of a sovereign individuality, surveying products of world music from on high. They are more often our responses to the continual demands to select from a changing but always determined musical choice...Just as the process of commodity culture requires that we buy, our own identity is confirmed and enhanced by our participation in that process. Investing in the products of the music industry is one way we define our personal identity... This identification process is often profound and intense: the line ‘it’s all a matter of taste’ also has a

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<sup>11</sup> Julian Johnson, *Who Needs Classical Music? Cultural Choice and Musical Value*, p. 14.

defensive function, because a challenge to the music through which one identifies oneself is experienced with the same anxiety as a personal attack.”<sup>12</sup>

We can especially see this phenomenon among teens and “tweens.” For most of them, the kind of commercially-produced music with which they identify is a significant factor in the shaping of their identity.

Another aspect of our culture’s use of music has to do with the function that music is expected to perform. For many modern people, the sole use of music is to serve as background or distraction in the midst of another activity (e.g., driving, shopping, dining, studying, etc.) Music helps to set or alter a mood. Thus, music is judged on the basis of its ability to arouse a certain set of emotions. However, since the hearer is not actively engaging the music to which he is listening, it has to have the ability to connect with his consciousness in an immediate and pre-rational way. When music makes this immediate connection, then we judge it to be good. Johnson compares this to a person who attempts to judge the quality of a wine while getting drunk on it.<sup>13</sup>

This way of handling music might be characterized as a commitment to perpetual musical adolescence. It reflects a fundamental resistance to the idea that music is something that requires work. Instead, music is only valued when it can serve as a source of immediate pleasure. Defenders of this approach to music argue that it is elitist to expect people to exhibit the patience and reflection required to profit from other forms of music. But consider Johnson’s response to this argument:

“Those who reject what cannot be immediately grasped as obscure and thus elitist have a strange sense of democracy and undervalue both the reach and aspiration of the human spirit. Five hundred years ago, political democracy was thought to be impossible because the broad mass of the population was illiterate. How politically correct would it look now to have dug in one’s heels with the argument that ‘reading is elitist and imposes the interests of a dominant class on a working poor who have no interest in books?’ ...Our culture is not just ignorant, it is stubbornly and arrogantly so.”<sup>14</sup>

In a culture that conceives of leisure as a release from having to think, any musical form that requires more thoughtful participation and work is going to be viewed as irrelevant and burdensome. This is why so many churches have cast away their hymnbooks in favor of contemporary songs projected by PowerPoint. As church musician Leonard Payton observes, “A great deal of the problem with much contemporary music is that it is primarily commercial, which means that it is designed to please the greatest number of people without reminding them of the hard, demanding side of Christian discipleship.”<sup>15</sup> This is a significant factor to keep in mind as we think about the music that is employed in our worship and in our daily practice of the faith. Music has power. And that power can be directed towards either good or bad ends. John Calvin observed this when he wrote these words in his introduction to a 16<sup>th</sup> century *Psalter*:

“There is hardly anything in the world with more power to turn or bend, this way and that, the morals of men... It [music] has a secret power to move our hearts in one way or another. Wherefore we must be the more diligent in ruling it in such a manner that it may be useful to us and in no way pernicious.”<sup>16</sup>

Calvin was by no means alone in holding the opinion that music could be a corrupting influence. As Calvin Stapert demonstrates in his recent book, *A New Song for an Old World*, this was the overwhelming view of the early church. Furthermore, he contends that it has essentially been the view of every time and culture with the exception of modern Western civilization.<sup>17</sup> It was certainly the view espoused by the ancient Greek philosopher Plato, whose words almost seem to be prophetic of our culture:

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<sup>12</sup> Johnson, p. 15.

<sup>13</sup> Johnson, p. 41.

<sup>14</sup> Johnson, pp. 88-89.

<sup>15</sup> Leonard Payton, *Reforming Our Worship Music*, p. 13.

<sup>16</sup> Cited in Paul S. Jones, *Singing and Making Music*, p. 292.

<sup>17</sup> Stapert, p. 55.

“[I]t is in music and poetry that our guardians must build their bulwark. At any rate, lawlessness easily creeps in there unnoticed. Yes, as if music and poetry were only play and did no harm at all. It is harmless – except, of course, that when lawlessness has established itself there, it flows over little by little into characters and ways of life.”<sup>18</sup>

Isn't this what we are seeing in our culture? Think about how you feel when you are at an intersection and a car pulls up to you with its windows down and its stereo blaring out with heavy metal or hip-hop music at full blast. Don't you feel at least a little bit unsafe? Would you be proud if it was your own child who was behind the wheel of that car? Deep down, I think we all know that music really does have the power to influence and shape our character.

Still, many people (and many Christians), insist that it is prudish to suggest that music can be harmful in and of itself. But that is only because we are so immersed in the aesthetic relativism of our culture. And this is precisely why we need to think so carefully about the place of music in the life and worship of the church.

### **BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES ABOUT MUSIC**

What is the purpose of music in worship? What is the purpose of music in the Christian life? Consider this example from the life of James Montgomery Boice, the deceased pastor of Philadelphia's historic Tenth Presbyterian Church. Boice's friend R.C. Sproul writes: “O how I loved to stand next to him on the chancel floor as we sang the great hymns of the church. Jim would put his right hand in the right rear pocket of his suit pants as he sang. He would rise and fall on his toes as he lifted his voice in exuberant praise. He was remarkable in his memory of all the verses of the classic hymns.”<sup>19</sup> Boice knew many of the church's great hymns by heart, and he loved to sing them.

In Colossians 3:16, Paul issues the following command: “Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.” (NASB) The NASB (as well as the KJV and NKJV) correctly translates the dative case nouns ‘psalms’, ‘hymns’, and ‘spiritual songs’ as the instruments by which the teaching and admonition is done: “teaching and admonishing one another *with* psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.” This indicates that there is a very close connection between congregational singing and the ministry of the Word. Congregational singing is intended to be a means by which the Word comes to richly dwell within God's people. This is expounded by church musician Leonard Payton, who writes:

“Unless the parishioner is continuously singing what the preacher is continuously preaching, the preacher's words will be of little effect...[C]ongregational singing is a fellow warrior in the ministry of the Word together with preaching. I do not mean that preaching ought to take a lower profile in our churches. To the contrary, I assert that we already have too low a view of preaching, not to mention congregational singing. We use music for emotional engineering, not for teaching and admonition as the Bible commands. Then when the preacher looks out over a spiritually desiccated congregation, he feels compelled to profusely explain, to cajole, to sell the gospel, in short, to produce a crop in unprepared ground by his own efforts.”<sup>20</sup>

Similarly, Edmund Clowney writes,

“Not only is the preaching of the word a means of grace in corporate worship, the singing of the people of God also ministers grace. Songs are not only addressed to the Lord in praise and petition, but also to one another as we instruct, warn and encourage. The preaching of the word in worship is accompanied and supported by the ministry of the saints to one another as they sing the new songs of Zion.”<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Cited in Paul S. Jones, *Singing and Making Music*, p. 293.

<sup>19</sup> *Give Praise to God: A Vision for Reforming Worship*, Philip Graham Ryken, Derek W.H. Thomas, and J. Ligon Duncan III, eds., xiii.

<sup>20</sup> Leonard Payton, “Congregational Singing and the Ministry of the Word”, posted on <http://www.the-highway.com/articleJuly98.html>

<sup>21</sup> Edmund Clowney, “Corporate Worship: A Means of Grace,” in *Give Praise to God*, p. 97.

This means that we need to give much more careful consideration to both the lyrics and the musical forms that we employ in our worship. The lyrics and music used in worship should be suitable not only for expressing heartfelt thanks to God, but also for teaching us the profound truths revealed in Scripture and admonishing us to live in the fear of the Lord. Church music needs to feed us by teaching us the Word.

While the Bible may not contain explicit teaching about musical styles, it does convey a number of principles that speak to this matter. What follows are seven biblical insights that relate to the use of music in the church's life and worship.

First, as noted earlier, we live in a culture in which music is primarily seen as a product for consumption, rather than an activity in which we participate. Music is often used as background for some other activity (driving, exercising, shopping, studying, etc.) It is employed in order to set, alter, or reinforce a particular mood. As a result, we expect music to affect our emotions while requiring very little thought, reflection, or mental exertion. This has caused many Christians to expect worship music to function in the same way. We want worship music to have an immediate impact upon our emotions, while requiring minimal mental effort and engagement. This mindset is reflective of our culture's notions about music, but it is not consistent with the teaching of Scripture, which calls Christians to worship and love the Lord with our entire being, with both the heart and the mind. (see 1 Cor. 14:15b) We need to beware of our culture's tendency to use music to manipulate emotions, and we should strive to use the kind of worship songs that encourage us to worship God with both our hearts and our minds.

Second, the Bible also shows us that the musicians who served in Israel's temple were faithful believers who were highly skilled as musicians and well-trained as theologians (they were taken from the Levites, Israel's priestly tribe – see 1 Chron. 25:7). While not every pastor has musical skill, he should have a sound grasp of Christian doctrine and a decent understanding of what the Bible teaches about worship. For this reason, the pastor, working together with the church's elders, must maintain leadership over the musical component of the church's worship. When trained musicians are used to help support the congregation in its singing, they should always remain under the leadership of the church's session (the pastor and elders). In addition, church musicians should be faithful Christians, should have sufficient musical skill to be a help to the congregation, and should understand that they are to render their musical service to the glory of God (not for personal glory).

Third, the Bible teaches that music is a vital aspect of the Christian life. While the Bible provides us with very little information about what heaven will look like, one thing that it does tell us is that singing is an activity in which God's people will be engaged for all eternity. (see Rev. 5:13) It is significant that, in many of the biblical passages in which God draws near to his people, singing is involved (see Isa. 6:3; Lk. 1-2; Rev. 4-5). For these reasons, it seems fairly obvious that all Christians should sing. Men especially need to exhibit musical leadership in their families by being men who sing. Every church home should have at least one copy of the church's Hymnal and Psalter, and singing should be a regular part of life, along with Bible reading and prayer.

Fourth, the Bible shows us that the musical styles used in worship are not merely a matter of personal taste. The prevailing mood of our worship should be one of reverence and awe (see Heb. 12:28-29), and our music should contribute towards this. Music itself, apart from its lyrics, conveys meaning. Different forms of music serve different purposes, and not all of them are acceptable for use in the worship of God. Worship music should not foster a sentimental practice of the Christian faith (to be 'sentimental' is to engage the emotions in a superficial manner, apart from an adequate engagement of the intellect). Neither should it encourage a casual attitude about our relationship with God. Our worship music should foster an atmosphere of God-centered reverence, should be capable of carrying the weighty doctrinal content of Scripture, and should be of high aesthetic quality.

Fifth, the Bible clearly teaches that the songs that we sing in worship are a means by which God's Word comes to richly indwell us. (Col. 3:16) As church musician Paul Jones observes,

“Hymns have always been effective carriers of Christian doctrine, and without their definitive presence our collective theological understanding has become shallower. But this should not surprise us if we take a good, hard look at ourselves. In the postmodern, post-Christian age in which we live, worship and the music of corporate worship in evangelical churches have both followed the relativistic path of our culture.”<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Paul S. Jones, *Singing and Making Music*, p. 191.

We must not follow that path. Instead, our songs need to be compatible with the threefold task of song in worship: teaching, admonishing, and expressing thanks. Our songs should have lyrics that are faithful to Scripture, convey substantial theological content, and are consistent with the message conveyed by the music itself.

Sixth, the Bible says that wisdom is obtained by listening to our elders and conforming our lives to their teachings. (see Prov. 1:7-9) But in our culture, the voice of tradition is largely rejected, and everything is expected to conform to our personal interests and desires. This is especially evident in our approach to music. In the post-1960's era, much of our culture's thinking about music has been influenced by the sensibilities of rock and pop music. These sensibilities include: an attitude that rejects tradition in favor of that which is new; an impatient and prideful exaltation of youth over older generations; and an emphasis upon impulse and emotion that has little patience for careful reflection. In such a culture, a culture that makes an idol of new-ness and takes its cues from its youth, the church needs to exercise great discernment in how it thinks about music in worship. In order to avoid the tyranny of trendiness, we should make use of the best music from church history and learn the churches great hymns.

And seventh, our thinking about music in worship should be mindful of the fact that the goal of Christian discipleship is Christian maturity. (see Col. 1:28) Therefore, the songs that we sing should not encourage a perpetual state of adolescence, but should help move us onward towards maturity in Christ.

On a related note, the biblical Psalms are especially effective in cultivating a mature spirituality, a point that is made in the Preface to the *Trinity Psalter*:

“[A] distinctive piety develops as a result of Psalm-singing, a strong, militant and bold spirituality...Nearly every Psalm refers to the conflict between the righteous and the wicked...The Psalms will stiffen a church accustomed to accommodation and compromise with the world. The Psalms are also...the songs of the *suffering church*. Whenever in the midst of persecution, death, physical illness, depression, or spiritual ‘desertions’ (as the Puritans called them), the people of God have found unparalleled ‘refuge and strength’ in the God of the Psalms. At the same time, the ‘songs of Scripture’ are the hymns of the *church triumphant*. They inspire the church to believe in the ultimate triumph of its cause...Nowhere in Scripture will we find a clearer vision of the triumph of the Gospel. As the church in America finds itself more and more in a hostile environment, it is indeed ‘of the Lord’ that the congregational singing of the Psalms be revived.”

Congregations not used to singing the psalms will sometimes be shocked to find themselves singing lyrics like this: “Hold them guilty, O my God; Them for all their sins expel; Let them fall by their own craft, For against Thee they rebel.” (Psalm 5 in *Trinity Psalter*) While such words might make us feel uncomfortable, they are contained in the only Spirit-inspired hymnbook that we have. Surely it is a sign of a weakness in our spiritual formation when we find it difficult to sing of these things.

Our denominational hymnal and psalter (*Trinity Hymnal* and *Trinity Psalter*) provide an excellent selection of songs from a wide span of church history. The following list highlights the best that these books have to offer.

### **RECOMMENDED HYMNS AND PSALMS FROM THE TRINITY HYMNAL AND TRINITY PSALTER:**

#### **Praise, Opening Hymns**

- 1 All People That on Earth Do Dwell (Ps. 100)
- 2 O Worship the King
- 4 All Praise to God, Who Reigns Above
- 5 God, My King, Thy Might Confessing (Ps. 145)
- 7 From All That Dwell below the Skies (Ps. 117)
- 12 Exalt the Lord, His Praise Proclaim (Ps. 135)
- 15 Stand Up and Bless the Lord
- 16 Come, Let Us Sing unto the Lord (Ps. 98)
- 18 You Holy Angels Bright (Ps. 148)
- 34 The God of Abraham Praise

38 Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise  
 48 O Lord Most High, with All My Heart (Ps. 9)  
 53 Praise to the Lord, the Almighty (Ps. 103)  
 57 Hallelujah, Praise Jehovah, O My Soul (Ps. 146)  
 76 Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven (Ps. 103)  
 92 A Mighty Fortress Is Our God  
 99 My Song Forever Shall Record  
 100 Holy, Holy, Holy  
 101 Come, Thou Almighty King  
 102 All Glory Be to Thee, Most High  
 103 Holy God, We Praise Your Name  
 105 O God, We Praise Thee  
 165 Ye Servants of God, Your Master Proclaim  
 166 Wondrous King, All-Glorious  
 168 I Greet Thee, Who My Sure Redeemer Art  
 170 Fairest Lord Jesus  
 172 Let Us Love and Sing and Wonder  
 181 We Come, O Christ, to You  
 279 Christ Jesus Lay in Death's Strong Bands  
 303 Blessed Jesus, at Your Word  
 310 Rejoice, the Lord is King  
 371 O Lord of Hosts, How Lovely (Ps. 84)  
 374 Arise, O Lord Our God Arise (Ps. 132)  
 378 Here, O My Lord, I See Thee Face to Face  
 379 Lord Jesus Christ, Be Present Now  
 382 God Himself Is with Us  
 389 This Is the Day the Lord Has Made (Ps. 118)  
 390 Lord of the Sabbath, Hear Us Pray  
 391 Safely through Another Week  
 396 Come, My Soul, Thou Must Be Waking  
 400 O Bless Our God with One Accord (evening)  
 401 All Praise to Thee My God This Night (evening)  
 700 Come, We That Love the Lord (evening)  
 Ps. 46 (Tune of "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God")  
 Ps. 72 (Tune of "Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates")  
 Ps. 81 (Tune: Brother James Air)  
 Ps. 84 "O Lord of hosts, how lovely..."  
 Ps. 99 (Tune of "The God of Abraham Praise")  
 Ps. 122 (Tune of "Guide Me O Thou Great Jehovah")  
 Ps. 134 (Tune of "Let Us Love and Sing and Wonder")  
 Ps. 145 (Tune of "Jesus Shall Reign")  
 Ps. 150 (Tune: Creation)

### **Responses of Praise**

733 Doxology  
 735 Gloria Patri

### **God's Creation**

113 The Heavens Declare Thy Glory (Ps. 19)  
 115 All Creatures of Our God and King  
 116 For the Beauty of the Earth  
 119 I Sing the Almighty Power of God  
 125 Let All Things Now Living

### **God's Decrees**

108 Whate'er My God Ordains is Right  
128 God Moves in a Mysterious Way

### **Repentance, Plea for Deliverance**

51 O Jehovah, Hear My Words  
485 O Thou That Hear'st When Sinners Cry  
486 God, Be Merciful to Me (Ps. 51)  
490 Out of the Deep I Call  
554 From Depths of Woe I Raise to Thee (Ps. 130)  
608 To God My Earnest Voice I Raise (Ps. 142)  
Ps. 5 (Tune of "Jesus, Lover of My Soul")  
Ps. 7 (Tune of "I Greet Thee, Who My Sure Redeemer Art")  
Ps. 130 (Tune of "Alas and Did My Savior Bleed")  
Ps. 143 (Tune of "Fairest Lord Jesus")

### **Christ's Person**

161 O Christ Our Hope Our Heart's Desire  
162 Of the Father's Love Begotten  
170 Fairest Lord Jesus  
181 We Come, O Christ, to You  
301 Join All the Glorious Names  
515 How Lovely Shines the Morning Star  
646 Jesus Thou Joy of Loving Hearts

### **Christ's Saving and Mediating Work**

156 O Lord, How Shall I Meet You  
164 O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing  
242 Not All the Blood of Beasts  
243 Praise the Savior Now and Ever  
247 O Sacred Head, Now Wounded  
248 Ah, Holy Jesus, How Hast Thou Offended  
252 When I Survey the Wondrous Cross  
254 Alas! And Did My Savior Bleed  
257 Stricken, Smitten, and Afflicted  
261 What Wondrous Love is This  
455 And Can It Be That I Should Gain  
457 Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing  
460 Amazing Grace!  
469 How Sweet and Awesome is the Place  
473 Jesus Sinners Doth Receive  
482 Come unto Me, Ye Weary  
499 Rock of Ages  
512 I Lay My Sins on Jesus  
521 My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less  
524 Thy Works, Not Mine, O Christ

### **Thanksgiving**

81 O Love of God, How Strong and True  
92 A Mighty Fortress is Our God (Ps. 46)  
98 Now Thank We All Our God  
99 My Song Forever Shall Record  
156 O Lord, How Shall I Meet You

164 O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing  
172 Let Us Love and Sing and Wonder  
243 Praise the Savior Now and Ever  
295 Crown Him with Many Crowns  
296 All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name  
302 Come, Christians, Join to Sing  
613 Give Thanks unto the Lord, Jehovah (Ps. 118)  
614 Now Israel May Say, and That in Truth (Ps. 124)  
637 What Shall I Render to My God (Ps. 116)

### **Illumination**

60 Thy Mercy and Thy Truth, O Lord (Ps. 36)  
94 How Firm a Foundation  
303 Blessed Jesus, at Your Word  
383 Almighty God, Your Word Is Cast  
411 Shine Thou upon Us, Lord  
557 Blest Are the Undeclared (Ps. 119)  
558 That Man Is Blest Who, Fearing God (Ps. 1)

### **Faith, Discipleship, Protection, Guidance, Pilgrimage**

36 Lord, Thou Hast Searched Me (Ps. 139)  
38 Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise  
87 The Lord's My Shepherd, I'll Not Want  
92 A Mighty Fortress is Our God (Ps. 46)  
94 How Firm a Foundation  
263 Lift High the Cross  
317 Wake, Awake, for Night is Flying  
349 O Thou Who the Shepherd of Israel Art (Ps. 80)  
385 God Be with You Till We Meet Again  
457 Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing  
473 Jesus Sinners Doth Receive  
482 Come unto Me, Ye Weary  
498 Jesus! What a Friend for Sinners  
505 I'm Not Ashamed to Own My Lord  
510 Thou Hidden Source of Calm Repose  
512 I Lay My Sins on Jesus  
515 How Lovely Shines the Morning Star!  
521 My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less  
524 Thy Works, Not Mine, O Christ  
527 The Beatitudes  
529 Love Divine, All Loves Excelling  
534 O for a Closer Walk with God  
557 Blessed Are the Undeclared (Ps. 119)  
558 That Man Is Blest Who, Fearing God (Ps. 1)  
573 Am I a Soldier of the Cross  
576 Awake, My Soul, Stretch Every Nerve  
598 Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah  
602 O God, My Faithful God  
628 Come, My Soul, Thy Suit Prepare (prayer)  
642 Be Thou My Vision  
656 Jesus, Priceless Treasure  
657 In Sweet Communion, Lord, with Thee (Ps. 73)  
662 As the Hart Longs for Flowing Streams (Ps. 42)  
682 In Thee, O Lord, I Put My Trust  
695 By Grace I Am an Heir of Heaven  
706 Jesus Lives, and So Shall I

- Ps. 4 (“Answer when I call, O God who justifies”)
- Ps. 11 (Tune of “This Is My Father’s World”)
- Ps. 13 (Tune of “O Sacred Head Now Wounded”)
- Ps. 14 (Tune of “O Word of God Incarnate”)
- Ps. 28 (Tune: Tallis Canon)
- Ps. 85 (Tune of “Come, Ye Thankful People, Come”)
- Ps. 91 (Tune of “Jesus What a Friend for Sinners”)
- Ps. 94 (Tune of “Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken”)
- Ps. 121 (Tune of “O God, We Praise Thee”)
- Ps. 128 (Tune of “Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing”)
- Ps. 142 (Tune of “O Lord Most High, with All My Heart”)

### **The Church**

- 342 Christ is Made the Sure Foundation
- 345 Glorious Things of Thee are Spoken
- 347 The Church’s One Foundation
- 349 O Thou Who the Shepherd of Israel Art
- 353 I Love Thy Kingdom, Lord
- 358 For All the Saints
- 361 O Praise Ye the Lord (Ps. 149)
- 364 Let Children Hear the Mighty Deeds (Ps. 78)
- 371 O Lord of Hosts, How Lovely (Ps. 84)
- 373 Within Your Temple Lord (Ps. 48)
- 374 Arise, O Lord Our God Arise (Ps. 132)
- 377 Jesus, Where’er Your People Meet
- 378 Here, O My Lord, I See Thee Face to Face
- 469 How Sweet and Awesome is the Place
- 542 Who Are These like Stars Appearing
- 544 How Bright These Glorious Spirits Shine!
- Ps. 133 (Tune of “O, For a Thousand Tongues to Sing”)

### **Christ’s Second Coming**

- 317 Wake, Awake, for Night is Flying
- 319 Day of Judgment! Day of Wonders
- 546 The Sands of Time Are Sinking

### **Conflict with Sin**

- 92 A Mighty Fortress Is Our God
- 567 Rise, My Soul, to Watch and Pray
- 569 Jesus, Lord of Life and Glory
- 574 Christian, Dost Thou See Them
- Ps. 101 (Tune of “The Church’s One Foundation”)

### **Trials, Protection**

- 30 Our God, Our Help in Ages Past (Ps. 90)
- 32 Great is Thy Faithfulness
- 75 O Father, You Are Sovereign
- 87 The Lord’s My Shepherd, I’ll Not Want
- 92 A Mighty Fortress is Our God (Ps. 46)
- 94 How Firm a Foundation
- 128 God Moves in a Mysterious Way
- 330 Holy Ghost Dispel Our Sadness
- 402 Abide with Me: Fast Falls the Eventide
- 609 Why Should Cross and Trial Grieve Me?

662 As the Hart Longs for Flowing Streams (Ps. 42)  
669 Commit Now All Your Griefs  
670 If Thou But Suffer God to Guide Thee  
689 Be Still, My Soul  
691 It Is Well with My Soul  
695 By Grace I Am an Heir of Heaven

### **Witness, Missions**

441 Jesus Shall Reign  
449 We Rest on Thee  
469 How Sweet and Awesome is the Place

### **Offering**

432 We Give Thee But Thine Own  
729 All Things Are Thine

### **Baptism, Covenant Family**

364 Let Children Hear the Mighty Deeds (Ps. 78)  
411 Shine Thou upon Us, Lord  
457 Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing

### **Lord's Supper**

156 O Lord, How Shall I Meet You  
162 Of the Father's Love Begotten  
193 Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence  
243 Praise the Savior Now and Ever  
247 O Sacred Head, Now Wounded  
248 Ah, Holy Jesus, How Hast Thou Offended  
252 When I Survey the Wondrous Cross  
254 Alas! And Did My Savior Bleed  
261 What Wondrous Love is This  
279 Christ Jesus Lay in Death's Strong Bands  
378 Here, O My Lord, I See Thee Face to Face  
420 At the Lamb's High Feast We sing  
421 Soul, Adorn Yourself with Gladness  
422 'Twas on That Night When Doomed to Know  
427 Amidst Us Our Beloved Stands  
429 Let Thy Blood in Mercy Poured  
469 How Sweet and Awesome is the Place  
515 How Lovely Shines the Morning Star  
646 Jesus, Thou Joy of Loving Hearts  
656 Jesus, Priceless Treasure  
657 In Sweet Communion, Lord, with Thee (Ps. 73)

### **Close of Worship**

385 God Be with You Till We Meet Again  
405 God, That Madest Earth and Heaven (evening)

### **Christmas and Advent**

193 Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence

194 O Come, O Come, Emmanuel  
195 Joy to the World! The Lord is Come  
196 Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus  
198 Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates (Ps. 24)  
201 O Little Town of Bethlehem  
203 Hark! the Herald Angels Sing  
207 Good Christian Men, Rejoice  
208 O Come, All Ye Faithful  
210 Silent Night! Holy Night!  
211 God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen  
213 What Child is This  
214 Angels We Have Heard on High  
216 Infant Holy, Infant Lowly  
217 All My Heart This Night Rejoices  
218 Angels, from the Realms of Glory  
219 All Praise to Thee, Eternal Lord  
220 From Heaven High I Come to You  
221 Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming  
225 Once in Royal David's City  
226 As with Gladness Men of Old  
227 On Christmas Night All Christians Sing  
230 Thou Who Wast Rich beyond All Splendor  
232 O Jesus Sweet, O Jesus Mild

### **Palm Sunday**

198 Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates (Ps. 24)  
235 All Glory, Laud, and Honor  
237 Ride On, Ride On in Majesty

### **Good Friday**

242 Not All the Blood of Beasts  
247 O Sacred Head, Now Wounded  
248 Ah, Holy Jesus, How Hast Thou Offended  
252 When I Survey the Wondrous Cross  
253 There Is a Fountain Filled with Blood  
254 Alas! And Did My Savior Bleed  
257 Stricken, Smitten, and Afflicted  
260 Were You There?  
261 What Wondrous Love is This  
263 Lift High the Cross

### **Easter**

100 Holy, Holy, Holy  
263 Lift High the Cross  
265 Come, Ye Faithful, Raise the Strain  
274 Thine Be the Glory  
275 The Strife is O'er, the Battle Done  
277 Christ the Lord is Risen Today  
279 Christ Jesus Lay in Death's Strong Bands  
284 This Joyful Eastertide

### **Ascension**

289 A Hymn of Glory Let Us Sing  
290 Hail the Day that Sees Him Rise

295 Crown Him with Many Crowns  
296 All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name  
302 Come, Christians, Join to Sing

**Pentecost**

330 Holy Ghost, Dispel Our Sadness  
332 Come, Holy Spirit, Heavenly Dove  
335 Gracious Spirit, Dwell with Me