

Week 1: Introduction

1. What are we doing here? What is a hymn?

- a. Hymns sit at the intersection of poetry, music, history, and theology
 - i. We're here to learn a little bit about each of these things
- b. Funny numbers and weird names
 - i. Tune name are used to identify the tune since the same tune may be used for multiple texts.
 - ii. Many hymns use either "Common Meter" (8.6.8.6) or "Long Meter" (8.8.8.8)
 - iii. A "D" after the meter means "double", so 8.6.8.6 D is really 8.6.8.6.8.6.8.6.
- c. Text & Tune
 - i. Just because the meters match doesn't guarantee the stresses are the same
 - i. Groups of accents are known as "feet"
 - ii. Most common feet are "Iambic" (short-long) and "Trochaic" (long-short)
 - ii. Consider the first line of "All Glory, Laud, and Honor" (7.6.7.6 D):
 - i. ST. THEODULPH is the usual tune. Sing once to remember the hymn.
 - ii. ST. KEVIN has the same meter, but the stresses are inverted. Sing and note the uneasy feeling.
 - iii. MUNICH has the same meter, and the stresses fit too. Sing and compare to the other two.

2. Let's look at a few examples.

- a. The word "hymn" has connotations today that doesn't necessarily fit hymns from all times and places. Consider these examples of "early" hymns:
 - i. Kenosis Hymn
 - ii. Phos Hilaron
 - iii. Cædmon's Hymn
- b. We shouldn't fall into the trap of discriminating against hymns based on when they were written. In fact, it's not always easy to tell when a hymn was written just by looking at the words or music. Guess the year for the following hymns based on the text alone:
 - i. Lord Whose Love Through Humble Service (1961)
 - ii. Mothering God, You Gave Us Birth (c. 1390)
 - iii. As Pants the Hart for Cooling Streams (Verses 1 and 4, 1696; Verses 2 and 3, 2005)
 - i. Verses 1 and 4, 1696: Tate and Brady's New Version
 - ii. Verses 2 and 3, 2005: Kathy Kuhl, alt. Davide Marney

3. What makes a *good* hymn?

- a. **Christ-centric**, turning the heart heavenward
- b. **Theologically rich**, not just doctrinally sound
- c. **Crafted with quality**, finesse in poetry, musicality, and expression

Holy, Holy, Holy

Text: Reginald Heber (1783–1826), 1827

- Born into an educated, well-to-do family
- Entered Oxford University at age 17, won two awards for poetry
- Sought to publish a collection of hymns organized according to liturgical calendar, but was denied by the Bishop of London
- Passionate missionary, appointed Bishop of Calcutta in 1823
- Died suddenly of apparent stroke in India three years later
- Most of his hymns were published posthumously

Tune: John Bacchus Dykes (1823–1876), 1861

- Leading English church musician

- Authored over 300 hymn tunes
 - Named tune NICAEA after the Council of Nicaea in AD 325, when the doctrine of the Trinity was first expressed (in the Nicene Creed)
1. This hymn was written to be sung on Trinity Sunday, with the tune later composed specifically to match. In addition to the obvious line “God in three persons, blessed Trinity!”, what other trinitarian references and symbols are present?
 - a. Threefold praise, “Holy! Holy! Holy!”
 - b. Sets of three present in each verse:
 - i. God is: holy, merciful, and mighty
 - ii. Adored by: saints, cherubim, and seraphim
 - iii. God who: wert, art, and shall be
 - iv. Perfect in: power, love, and purity
 - v. Praised in: earth, sky, and sea
 - c. Opening three notes form a major triad
 2. The first verse contains the phrase “early in the morning our song shall rise to thee”. What’s the significance of “early in the morning”? How does that play into the themes of the hymn?
 - a. Some hymnals have chosen to replace the line for:
 - i. “Gratefully adoring, our song...”
 - ii. “Morning and evening, our song...”
 - iii. “Holy, holy, holy, our song...”
 - iv. “Morning, noon, and night, our song...”
 - b. Possible connections to Psalm 63:1?
 3. Read Revelation 4:1-11. Much of the hymn is paraphrased from this passage. Of the symbols used, which stand out to you as the most powerful? Are any unclear or confusing?
 4. Verse 3 contains a thought not directly taken from Revelation: “Though the darkness hide thee, though the eye made blind by sin thy glory may not see...” In what way does sin “blind” us to God’s glory? Who or what is responsible for this “darkness”?
 - a. See Exodus 20:21, and Exodus 33:20-23.