

Week 1: Introduction

1. What are we doing here? What is a hymn?
2. Let's look at a few examples.
3. What makes a *good* hymn?

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?
 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?
 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”?