

## Week 11: The Church

### The Church's One Foundation

Text: Samuel John Stone (1839–1900), 1866

- Educated at Oxford and a lifelong priest in the Church of England
- Known as “the poor man’s pastor” because of his work in London’s East End
- In 1862, John William Colenso, Bishop of Natal in South Africa, published “The Pentateuch and the Book of Joshua Critically Examined”, causing widespread controversy over its arguments disputing the authorship and historical accuracy of Exodus, claims that Chronicles and Joshua were “fictitious” and “a myth”, and much more, leading many to call for his excommunication
- In response, 27-year-old Stone published “Lyra Fidelium”, a collection of twelve hymns affirming orthodox Christianity as found in the Apostle’s creed
- This text was written for the 9th article: “I believe in the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints...”

Tune: Samuel Sebastian Wesley (1810–1876), 1864

- Grandson of Charles Wesley and son of Samuel Wesley, a well-known British composer sometimes called “the English Mozart”; he was named after his father’s appreciation for Johann Sebastian Bach
  - Sang as a child in the Chapel Royal, eventually became a respected organist in the Church of England
  - Often noted for his passionate aversion to “equal temperament” tuning, despite its widespread adoption
  - The tune AURELIA, meaning “golden”, was originally written to accompany “Jerusalem the Golden”, a hymn text translated by John Mason Neale
  - Opinions are divided on its musical merits; British organist Henry Gauntlett denounced it as “secular twaddle”, but its use with this text (first paired by William Monk) has remained popular over the years
1. Amidst “schisms” and “heresies”, the hymn presents a picture of the church unified in “one Lord, one faith, one birth”. Is this message relevant today, as it was when Stone wrote it? How should we deal with “schisms” and “heresies” in our modern church?
    - a. Sarah Stankorb: “Every assembly of two Methodists is a committee with three opinions.”
    - b. John Wesley, “On a Catholic Spirit”, 1771: “Though we cannot think alike, may we not love alike? May we not be of one heart, though we are not of one opinion?”
    - c. Was the Reformation a good thing? We may agree with the theology, but look how many fractures and divisions exploded out of it: Lutheran, Reformed, Wesleyan, Baptist, Anabaptist, Pentecostal, Charismatic, in addition to Catholic and Orthodox...

### O Church of God, United

Text: Frederick B. Morley (1884–1969), 1953

- Born in Canada, Morley moved to the U.S. and studied at Syracuse University and Boston University
- Ordained a Methodist minister, he served in churches in New York and New Jersey
- The text was written for a contest sponsored by the Hymn Society of America with the theme “Jesus Christ — the Hope of the World”, though it failed to win

Tune: Traditional German

- The tune ELLACOMBE first appeared in the *Gesangbuch der herzoglichen Württembergischen katholischen Hofkapelle* (roughly translated, “Hymnal of the Duke of Württemberg’s Catholic chapel”)
  - Introduced into English hymnody by the 1868 edition of *Hymns Ancient and Modern*
  - Often paired with “Hosanna, Loud Hosanna” and “I Sing the Almighty Power of God”
1. Written in the middle of postwar America, the hymn has a particular sense of optimism as it describes “the upward way”. Does that cheeriness ring hollow today? Are we really seeing “the ordered ranks appear ... to serve one valiant leader”?
    - a. The tune definitely helps with this feeling ... “Hosanna, Loud Hosanna” and “I Sing the Almighty Power of God” are upbeat hymns of praise.
    - b. Church membership in the United States is rapidly declining:
      - i. United Methodist — 10,671,774 in 1970 to 7,392,654 in 2014 (30%)
      - ii. PCUSA — 3,131,228 in 1983 to 1,760,200 in 2013 (44%)

- iii. CRC — 310,014 in 1989 to 245,217 in 2014 (20%)
2. Morley's and Stone's hymns are different in tone, but there are differences in content as well. How do their images of the church compare? What would you say each one sees as the purpose of the church?
    - a. Stone focuses on the church as the "bride of Christ".
      - i. Christ sought the church, not the other way around. ("Elect from every nation...")
      - ii. The church is waiting, for oppression to cease, for "the consummation of peace".
    - b. Morley emphasizes the evangelism of the church.
      - i. Call to action: "proclaim to all one message".
      - ii. The church follows Christ, but makes a bright pathway for others.
    - c. Both emphasize unity:
      - i. Stone: "one foundation", "one o'er all the earth", "one Lord, one faith, one birth", "one holy name", "one holy food", "one hope"
      - ii. Morley: "one common Lord", "one message", "one people", "singleness of aim", "by love united", "single witness"
      - iii. Stone, however, connects this unity to the Trinity: "union / with God, the Three in One"

## From Greenland's Icy Mountains

Text: Reginald Heber (1783–1826), 1819

- Best known as the author of the hymn "Holy, Holy, Holy"
- A passionate missionary, was appointed Bishop of Calcutta in 1823 and died in India three years later
- The text was written for use on Whit Sunday (Pentecost) in 1819, when a country-wide collection was to be taken for the "Society for the Propagation of the Gospel"

Tune: Lowell Mason (1792–1872), 1823

- Also known for AZMON ("O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing"), ANTIOCH ("Joy to the World"), and HAMBURG ("When I Survey the Wondrous Cross"), among others
  - This tune, MISSIONARY, was written while he was a banker in Savannah, Georgia, when a local lady provided a copy of the words and asked Mason to compose a matching tune
1. With modern sensibilities, this hymn has rapidly fallen out of favor (and those few hymnals who include it have universally omitted the second verse since the 1930s). Is its point still valid, though — do we as the church need to make missions a priority? What is it about spreading the gospel in this way that makes us uncomfortable?
    - a. How do we balance local missions against international missions?
    - b. Do we really believe we can "deliver / their land from error's chain"?
    - c. Can we speak with certainty that we "are lighted with wisdom from on high"?