

Week 9: Short Meter (and Variants)

I Love Thy Kingdom, Lord

Text: Timothy Dwight (1752–1817), 1800

- Grandson of Jonathan Edwards, preacher during America's "First Great Awakening" in the 1730s and 40s
- An intelligent child, graduated from Yale at age 17 and continued to work there as a tutor
- Became an Army chaplain during the Revolutionary War, and a Congregationalist pastor afterward
- Later served as president of Yale from 1795 until his death
- Published a revised version of Isaac Watts' psalm paraphrases in 1801 because of anti-British sentiment in the former colonies
- This text is the oldest American hymn text still in common use today

Tune: Aaron Williams (1736–1776), 1763

- Welsh-born music teacher and engraver who lived and worked in London (including as clerk at a Scottish Presbyterian church)
- Best known for his psalm tune collections, with the first being *The Universal Psalmist* in 1763
- The tune ST. THOMAS is actually an excerpt from a longer tune HOLBORN, which Williams wrote for Charles Wesley's text "Soldiers of Christ, Arise"
- Harmonization was done by Lowell Mason, composer of ANTIOCH (tune for "Joy to the World")

1. Dwight's text talks fondly about the church's vows and traditions, but how relevant is this today when more and more Americans are "religiously unaffiliated" or "spiritual, but not religious"? Why do you think so many people today look at the "institutional church" unfavorably?
 - a. Social views were actually very similar at the time when Dwight wrote this hymn
 - i. The Enlightenment period of the mid 18th century led to the rise of "rationalist" philosophies
 - i. Many prominent figures of the time were deist in their beliefs and looked skeptically at traditional Christianity
 - ii. Especially in the academic environments of Yale and Harvard, "enlightened" individuals were encouraged to question core beliefs like the accuracy of scripture
 - i. Recall Thomas Jefferson, who cut-and-pasted his own version of the New Testament with "objectionable" portions removed
 - ii. Dwight was a leader at the emergence of the Second Great Awakening
 - i. Revival was brought about through "Romantic" focus more on the emotional and socially-minded aspects of faith
 - ii. Members of the "Restoration Movement" still sought to dismantle church hierarchy, however, in favor of a "purer" Christianity
 - b. Short meter allows for a key turn of phrase between the third and fourth lines, because of the flow from the extra two syllables
 - i. Stanza 2: "apple of thine eye" / "graven on thy hand"
 - ii. Stanza 3: "cares and toils be given" / "toils and cares shall end"
 - iii. Stanza 5: "brightest glories" / "brighter bliss"

Soldiers of Christ, Arise

Text: Charles Wesley (1707–1788), 1749

- Following their conversion at Aldersgate, the Wesleys began ministry working with inmates in London prisons
- In late 1739, at the invitation of George Whitefield, they began "field preaching" – traveling around England and preaching to whoever would listen
- This was often against Anglican rules concerning parish boundaries, and the Wesleys were targets of persecution by clergy members
- In one case, the local curate incited a mob that broke the windows and shutters of the house where Charles was staying, drove away his horse, and used a fire engine to flood the house
- This text was first published in 1742, at the end of John Wesley's essay "The Character of a Methodist"

Tune: George Job Elvey (1816–1893), 1868

- Sang in Canterbury Cathedral as a child, later educated at Oxford and the Royal Academy of music
 - Worked as organist and choirmaster at St. George Chapel, Windsor, from age 19 until his retirement
 - Knighted in 1871, provided music for royal ceremonies in addition to his church music
 - Composed DIADEMATA specifically for Matthew Bridges' text "Crown Him With Many Crowns"
1. The idea of "spiritual warfare" and military imagery used in this hymn have also fallen out of favor in much of the modern church. Why do you think this is the case? Is this an acceptable trend, or is anything lost as a result?
 - a. This imagery is taken from Ephesians 6:10-18, so if people don't like it, they need to justify that against their view of Scripture
 - i. On the other hand, we need to remember the difference between *spiritual* warfare and *physical* warfare
 - ii. Christianity hasn't been exempt from religious violence (in the Crusades, inquisition, etc.)
 - b. Sometimes we forget what it means to be a Christian *after* initial conversion
 - i. For many people, the initial acceptance of Jesus is most important, while sanctification and spiritual growth takes a back seat
 - ii. The original published text had the title "The Whole Armour of God, or Confirmation", indicating Wesley intended it to be particularly useful for newly-confirmed Christians
 - c. War today is different than it used to be, which could account for some of the decline
 - i. Rather than the personal nature of swords, shields, breastplates, etc., today's wars are impersonal with drones, IEDs, bombing runs, and homing missiles from afar
 - d. The word "panoply" means a full suit of armor (today usually used metaphorically to mean "a complete or impressive collection of things")

Exercises

1. Use the opening line "I Love Thy Kingdom, Lord" to write a new concluding verse for the hymn. Consider why you love Christ's church and what your hopes and wishes are for the wider church here on earth.