

Hymns and Credal Worship in the New Testament

Introduction

For two millenia the Christian Church has engaged in the beautiful practice of singing hymns of praise to God. Nothing has been more formative for this practice than the writings of the Bible itself, which provide not only the mandate for singing praise to God, but also the revealed truth that constitutes the content of such praise as well as inspired examples of songs of praise. And while the Old Testament is an unlimited resource for praising God, it is the New Testament that brings to fulfillment the praises of the Old Testament and establishes the trajectory of all subsequent Christian worship.

Historical Background

Words for Hymns and Singing: The New Testament uses seven words to refer to singing, songs, hymns, and laments¹: *hymneō* (Matt 26:30; Acts 16:25; Heb. 2:12), *hymnos* (Eph 5:19; Col 3:16), *aidō* (Eph 5:19; Col 3:16; Rev 5:9; 14:3; 15:3), *ōidē* (Eph 5:19; Col 3:16; Rev 5:9; 14:13; 15:3), *psallō* (Rom 15:9; 1 Cor 14:15; Eph. 5:19; James 5:13), *psalmos* (Luke 20:42; 24:44; Acts 1:20; 13:33; 1 Cor 14:26; Eph 5:19; Col 3:16), and *thrēneō* (Matt 11:17; Luke 7:32; 23:27; John 16:20).

From these seven words and their uses throughout the New Testament we can discern four major purposes for songs and singing:

- 1) Praise and thanksgiving. Hymns allowed for spontaneous and sustained praise of God for his character, his works, and the blessings he bountifully provides. Matthew 26:30

¹ Louw and Nida. Words for rejoicing and praising are also relevant, but these words indicate a broader category than music and singing and so for this article we have only included the words in Louw and Nida's grouping around semantic domain. Some have speculated that different words refer to distinct categories of songs, but it seems better to acknowledge that the variety of words indicates a variety of types of songs and singing without assuming that each word refers to a specific and distinct genre of songs or type of singing.

reveals that Jesus and his disciples sang a hymn at the end of the Last Supper, which for Matthew is tied to Passover, the celebration of God's redemption of his people. Most likely this was one or more Hallel Psalms (Psalms 113–118). In the context of Matthew's gospel the singing of hymns follows after Jesus' statement that he will drink from the fruit of the vine again with his disciples in the kingdom of heaven, an event worth celebrating. The "singing" in 1 Cor 14:15 is explained further in verse 16 as "praising God." In Eph 5:19 and Col 3:16 singing is closely tied to gratitude. Heb 2:12 is a quote from Psalm 18, a psalm of praise declaring God's name in the congregation. James 5:13 instructs those who are cheerful to sing. Rev 5:9 and 15:3 are followed by hymns of praise.

2) Pastoral care, enduring suffering, lament. While the word *thrēneō* could just refer to mourning, its use in Matt 11:17 and Luke 7:32 suggests the idea of singing songs of lament.² Given the rich history of the poetry of lament in the Old Testament it is not surprising that such a use is present in the New Testament as well. In Luke 23:27 people are following Jesus mourning and lamenting as he goes to be crucified. In John 16:20 singing of laments is contrasted with rejoicing. In Acts 16:25 Paul and Silas are singing while they are in prison. Whether these are actually songs of lament or not, is not the issue. The use of singing in this context appears to be aimed at helping the singers endure the suffering of imprisonment. Given that Jesus is leaving the Last Supper to go and die on the cross, the hymn at the end of the meal might have also functioned as a lament or encouragement to him to endure the suffering that was coming.

3) Teaching doctrine, encouraging obedience and preventing idolatry. Eph 5:19 and Col 3:16 both refer to singing in the context of teaching and admonishing. In particular in Col 3:16 Martin Hengel observes, "for the author, the word of Christ in rich and constantly new

² See also the use of *thrēneō* in the LXX of Amos 8:3, 10.

forms, and as wisdom brought about by the Spirit, takes concrete form in worship through the multiplicity of songs which serve the mutual edification and admonition of the community.”³ Additionally, the fact that Luke uses *psalmos* to refer to the Old Testament book of Psalms (20:42; 24:44; Acts 1:20; 13:33) for theological instruction reinforces the point that the early church saw the archetypical hymns of Israel as instruments of theological instruction.⁴ First Corinthians 14:26 lists the hymns that individuals bring to worship services alongside of instruction, revelation, and tongues plus interpretation, all of which are for the strengthening, encouraging, and building up of the church. In this context the reference to singing in 1 Cor 14:15 implies not just praise, but also teaching since Paul is concerned that people sing “with understanding.”

4) Basking in the affection of God. The Old Testament background to this point comes from Zeph 3:17 where it is prophesied that God will “rejoice over you with singing.” Singing in the New Testament not only allowed the worshipper to praise God, but to feel God’s pleasure and to bask in the reality of his love. The reference to singing in Rom 15:9 is followed by the affirmation that God will fill his children with joy and peace as they trust in him so that they will overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Eph 5:19 connects singing songs to the presence of the Holy Spirit, the same Holy Spirit that enables believers to grasp God’s love for us (Eph 3:16–18). Col 3:16 is similar in that the singing of songs is connected to the peace of Christ ruling in our hearts.

It should be obvious that these four purposes are inter-related as evidenced by the fact that many of the passages cited above evince multiple purposes for the use of hymns and singing.

³ Hengel, *Between Jesus and Paul*, 80

⁴ The fact that Psalms is the most quoted book in the New Testament strengthens the point that singing was meant to teach theology, prevent idolatry, and encourage obedience.

Some passages emphasize one purpose more than another and no doubt some hymns and songs accomplished one purpose more than another, but all four purposes are connected.

Hymns, Songs, and Credal Statements in the New Testament: In addition to explicit references to singing in the New Testament, there are also hymns and credal statements whose lyrics form portions of the New Testament writings. While we cannot know for certain if these hymns were ever used in worship by the communities of faith that the New Testament authors moved among, nor can we know if the original readers of these documents sang these hymns or even if the human authors intended them to, there are enough explicit and implicit structural indicators to identify these passages as being hymns.

How do we identify such hymns in the New Testament? In three ways. First, there are indisputable examples like Rev 5:9–10 and Rev 15:3–4 where we are explicitly told that someone is singing and then given the lyrics to the song. There are also examples in Revelation which look similar to these two examples in form but we are told that someone is speaking these words as opposed to singing them. Yet the fact that they come in the context of the worship of heaven make them relevant. Such passages include Rev 4:8, 11; 5:12, 13; 6:10, 12; 11:15, 17–18; 19:6–8. Outside of Revelation we see an example of an explicitly identified hymn in Luke 2:14 where a great company of angelic beings are praising God saying, “glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.” Subsequent hymn writers have correctly identified this as a song to be sung.

Second, we have passages where a New Testament author is quoting Old Testament poetic material or appears to be consciously modeling a poetic construction of praise or lament on the Old Testament. Two of the most famous examples are Luke 1:46–55 (Mary’s *Magnificat*) and Luke 1:68–79 (Zechariah’s *Benedictus*). Traditionally Luke 2:29–32 (Simeon’s *Nunc*

Dimittis) is included as well given that it has a poetic structure and because of its relationship to the first two.⁵ Another example is Romans 3:10–18. It is a string of quotations, mostly from the Psalms. As opposed to other strings of quotations in Romans (9:25–29; 10:18–21; 15:9–12), there are no interruptions. It is as if Paul has written his own psalm made up of pieces of Psalms. If that is true, Romans 3:10–18 qualifies as a hymn in the New Testament. Of course, one could argue that every quotation of a Psalm or of poetry in the Old Testament is a hymn or fragment of a hymn in the New Testament, and by definition it must be. But Romans 3:10–18 looks much more like a Psalm than does Paul’s citation of Psalm 32:1–2 in Romans 4, for example.

Third, and finally, there are theological compositions that have some indicator that they were meant to be seen as poetic constructions. Among these indicators are: changes in pronoun person and number; pronouns lacking textual antecedents; poetic meter; and stylized constructions such as extensive parallelism. Admittedly these are highly debated and there is no consensus on what marks hymnic material in the New Testament. Some see such hymns everywhere. Some see them almost nowhere.⁶ Examples that do seem to fit this description include Phil 2:6–11, Col 1:15–20, and 1 Tim 3:16. We should add to these doxologies like Rom 11:33–36 and Jude 24–25 whose form is different, but whose purposes are similar.

The purposes of these hymns and poetic credal statements in the New Testament are consistent with the four categories that were identified above. First, some function to give words to the desire of the heart to praise God. Mary begins the *Magnificat* with, “My soul glorifies the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Savior” and the hymn comes in response to the promise and fulfillment of the previous verses. Just as Mary appears to have used the words of Hannah in 1 Samuel 2:1–10 as the inspiration for her own praise, so Luke intends Mary’s song of praise to

⁵ See Stephen Farris, *Hymns of Luke’s Infancy Narratives*, 144–146.

⁶ E.g. Brucker, “‘Songs’, ‘Hymns’, and ‘Encomia,’” 2014.

inspire his readers to praise God in song and verse. The doxology in Romans 11:33–36 has a similar purpose, allowing the readers of Romans 1–11 to put into words the praise that such a revelation of God demands both for the writer and the reader. Many have noted that when John pulls back the curtain of what is happening in heaven in the book of Revelation, it is meant to inspire the praise of people on earth who are reading the account.⁷

Second, the hymns and credal statements in the New Testament provide words of lament and pastoral care. Romans 3:10–18 gives voice to the discouragement and struggle all Christians feel when they observe the ubiquitous nature of sin. Likewise, Hebrews 2:6–8 provides pastoral care. Written in a letter to Christians who were enduring great suffering, the hymn of praise in 2:6–8 serves to remind the readers that though all things are not yet subject to Christ and therefore they are suffering, God is mindful of the affairs of humans and has promised that through Christ all things will be subject to him and to us. As a hymn, Hebrews 2:6–8 has close connections with Philippians 2:9–11 and the hymns in Revelation 5.⁸ Both Philippians and Revelation are writing into contexts of Christians suffering persecution and are meant to reorient the one who is suffering to the fact that Jesus is Lord of all things.

Third, it is easy to see that hymns such as Colossians 1:15–20 are meant to teach doctrine. In fact, much of the study of hymns and credal statements in the New Testament over the past fifty years have been occasioned by the opportunity to examine the Christology of the early church through what these hymns affirmed. As opposed to, for example, the placement of Romans 11:33–36 at the end of Paul’s teaching, Colossians 1:15–20 comes in the heart of the doctrinal teaching section within the book of Colossians. Likewise, both the content and the placement of 1 Timothy 3:16 suggest that its purpose is to teach doctrine.

⁷ For example, see Allen Ross, *Recalling the Hope of Glory*, 480–481.

⁸ Martin Hengel, *Between Jesus and Paul*, 85.

Finally, the hymns and poetic credal statements in the New Testament allow readers to bask in the glow of God's affections. Jude 24–25, which affirms God's power and intention to keep believers from stumbling, comes as the fitting close to a letter that opens with, "To those who have been called, who are loved in God the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ." Revelation 7:15–21 is modelled on Zechariah 14 and alludes to the Feast of Tabernacles. "In [Revelation 7] the saints celebrate because they have been redeemed from the judgment and enjoy the eternal blessings of a new world order."⁹ These hymns in their contexts are designed to remind the readers of God's love and power exercised on behalf of his children.

Theological Perspectives

To understand the theological perspectives of the hymns of the New Testament, we need to examine a representative sample of these passages, presented here in canonical order.

Luke 1:46–55: The theological focus of Mary's *Magnificat* is God the Father. While the use of "Lord" and the unity of the Father and the Son means that the hymn could be applied to Jesus as the second person of the Trinity, the original referent to "Lord" must be God the Father. In this hymn of praise Mary acknowledges that God is her personal Savior (vs 47), one who exalts and bestows blessings to her in her humility (vs 48) by doing great things for her (vs 49). These very personal praises give way to more general characteristics of God in his interactions with humanity. He is merciful to those who fear him; he has performed great acts for others; he has brought down the proud; he has lifted up the humble (vv 50–53). The hymn closes with affirmations of God's faithfulness throughout salvation history as he fulfilled his promises to Abraham and Abraham's descendants (vv 54–55).

⁹ Allen Ross, *Recalling the Hope of Glory*, 492.

Romans 3:10–18. Romans 3:10–18 is pieced together from Psalms 14:1–3 (=55:1–3); 5:9; 140:3; 10:7; Isaiah 59:7–8; and Psalm 36:1. The laments of the Psalmist and Isaiah are lifted out of their contexts and isolated from the positive declarations of God’s power and love and the promises of redemption and rescue that follow. Paul will make his own declarations of God’s power and love and his own explanation of redemption and rescue, but chooses to do so in prose rather than in poetry, even though Paul could have strung together quotes from the Old Testament to affirm the redemption plans and purposes of God. This highlights the fact that Romans 3:10–18 is quite consciously a psalm of lament. As such, the subject of the hymn is sinful humans. God is present in this psalm to the extent that sin is an offense against God and sinful humans choose not to seek God and have no fear of God. Christ is only present implicitly in that the surrounding context implies that Christ’s righteousness is being contrasted with the sinfulness of all of humanity.¹⁰ Although unusual, the theological emphasis of Romans 3:10–18 is the acknowledgement of human sinfulness and the psalm prepares readers/worshippers for the redemption that is going to be announced.

Philippians 2:6–11. The subject of this hymn is Christ, from beginning to end. Verse 6 declares his deity and equality with God the Father. Verses 6–7 affirm his incarnation. Verse 8 reminds the singer/listener of his death on the cross. Christ’s attitude of humility and self-sacrificial love are emphasized throughout the first three verses. Verse 9 switches grammatical subjects from Christ to God the Father, but Christ is still the thematic center. Verses 9–10 speak of Jesus’ exaltation, which also imply his resurrection though the fact of resurrection is not explicitly stated in the hymn. Verse 11 reproduces the core theological affirmation of the New Testament: Jesus Christ is Lord.

¹⁰ Joshua Jipp, *Christ is King*, 242–245.

1 Timothy 3:16: This hymn is part of a section in 1 Timothy where Paul reveals his purpose for writing: so that Timothy will know how people are to act in the church. Foundational to correct actions in this letter and to Paul's theology in general is right doctrine. As is fitting for this section, Paul includes a credal hymn. Both the introductory formula and the use of the third person singular personal pronoun, which clearly refers to Jesus but has no grammatical antecedent in the text, prepare the reader for a poetic credal statement, as does the content and form of what follows. The hymn contains six lines all of which are about Jesus. One way of understanding the six lines is to see the first line as the affirmation of truth about Jesus, namely that he appeared in the flesh. This refers to the whole of Jesus' incarnation (as in 1 John 4:2), rather than referring only to the Christmas story. The remaining five lines are logical supports for the truthfulness of this claim. "Was vindicated by the Spirit," means that at his baptism, through the working of miracles, at his resurrection, etc. the fact that Jesus was God in the flesh was shown to be true. "Was seen by angels" calls the angelic hosts as witnesses to the truthfulness of the Jesus story. At various points in Jesus' life (birth, Gethsemane, empty tomb) angels were present to verify Jesus' true identity and support him in his calling. "Was preached among the nations." This line may pair with the next "was believed on in the world" which follows Paul's logic in Romans 9–11: Jesus being preached and believed is proof that he is the fulfillment of the promises of God for salvation. The final line "was taken up into glory" refers to the ascension and exaltation, which is God the Father's affirmation of the human Jesus as Lord of the Universe.

2 Timothy 2:11–13: The introductory phrase, "here is a faithful word," the change in pronouns from first in verse 10 to third in verse 11, and the parallelism in the phrases highlight these verses as lines in a hymn. Interestingly, believers are the grammatical subject of the hymn,

but the thematic focus of the hymn is Jesus. Believers are the ones who die, live, endure, reign, disown, and are faithless, while Jesus is only the subject of the verbs “disown” and “remain faithful.” Implicit in each affirmation, however, is that believers are able to die, live, and reign with Jesus because of Jesus’ death, resurrection, and ascension. Likewise, Jesus’ Lordship is implicit in the idea that he has the choice to disown us or not to disown us and in the revelation of his absolute faithfulness in the face of our faithlessness. The deep theological truth of union with Christ runs throughout the hymn. The reason that believers are safe even when we are faithless is because we are one with Christ having been buried with him in death and raised to new life in him (Rom. 6:5). This hymn supports the contention that Paul made in verse 10 that salvation is “in Christ Jesus.” The complex theology of union with Christ is made simple through the lines of the hymn. In this way 2 Timothy 2:11–13 also teaches us that to sing about believers’ successes and failures in Christ is to sing about Christ.

Revelation 4–5: These two chapters of Revelation contain five separate hymns. While it is important to study each hymn individually (see below for an analysis of Revelation 5:9–10), the author of Revelation also intends for these five hymns to work together. This provides important New Testament precedent for combining different and distinct hymns together to produce a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts. Nowhere does the author of Revelation explicitly state that Jesus is God in these two chapters, but the effect of combining these various hymns (as well as the prose that surrounds them) does exactly that. John begins with a hymn to God the Father in 4:8 that is built on the background of Isaiah 6 and emphasizes the centrality and uniqueness of God’s holiness. John follows the trisagion hymn with a hymn to God the Father as creator of the all things (4:11), which the one familiar with the whole of New Testament theology will know is something other NT hymns attribute to Jesus (John 1:3; Col.

1:16). Following these two hymns about God the Father, John presents a hymn to Jesus focusing on his worthiness through what he has accomplished (5:9–10). Revelation 5:12 presents a hymn about Jesus using similar language and structure to what was said about the Father. And then Revelation 5:13 sings a hymn to both the Father and to the Lamb. The literary artistry is beautiful and the combined effect powerfully makes the point that none of the individual hymns make on their own.

Revelation 5:9–10: The new song that is being sung by the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders is sung to Jesus and is about Jesus. The main theological theme of the song is Jesus' worthiness because of all that he has accomplished. His death purchased for God persons from every different possible background. Two things are worth noting about how Jesus' worthiness is sung about. First, there is an allusion to Exodus 19:4–6. In Exodus 19 God promised that if the children of Israel obeyed him, they would be for him a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. This promise is set against the background of the whole earth belonging to God. In Revelation 5, it is not Israel that has been obedient, but a particular Israelite—Jesus—and through his obedience God has summoned people out of every tribe, nation and tongue to be a kingdom and priests serving him. This amplifies what Mary did in Luke 1:46–55, reinforcing that the hymns of the New Testament are shaped by motifs and themes from the Old Testament Scriptures. Second, to sing of the worthiness of Jesus, this hymn employs language of what Jesus has already accomplished for believers: “You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God” as well as what God will accomplish through believers: “and they will reign on the earth.” Believers are already a kingdom of priests, but have not yet begun to reign on the earth. By using this language the song in Revelation is fulfilling the desire of 2 Thess. 1:12 among other places that Jesus be glorified in us and we in him. Nominally these last lines of the

song are about believers, but ultimately they are about glorifying Jesus because they bear witness to what Jesus has accomplished. Still, it is important to note that glorifying Jesus can and does happen through singing about the position, accomplishments, and blessings that have come to those who are in Christ.

Revelation 15:3–4: This song is introduced by the phrase, “the song of God’s servant Moses and of the Lamb.” The song of Moses refers to Exodus 15:1–18 and perhaps Deuteronomy 32:1–43. Since Revelation is not quoting either of these passages, it is more likely that this new song is a song of the Lamb of God which fulfills Moses’s song, meaning this song re-presents themes and attributes of God following the spirit of the Song of Moses. The genitive construction, “of the Lamb” is not definitive and therefore this could be a song sung to Jesus, to the Father about Jesus, or even by Jesus (since the Song of Moses is sung “by Moses”). Probably this is a song sung to the Father with reference to all that Jesus has brought about through his incarnation, life, death, resurrection, ascension, and exaltation. The song follows a chiasmic pattern: Praise of God’s works, proper response of humanity, affirmation of God’s holiness, proper response of humanity, and praise of God’s works. The chiasmic pattern emphasizes God’s holiness and uniqueness. Within this short song, God is addressed as “Lord God Almighty,” “King of the Nations,” and “Lord.”

In sum, the hymns of the New Testament are primarily songs of praise to and about God the Father and Jesus.¹¹ Often believers are front and center in the hymns of the New Testament, but only for the way that we display and magnify the Father and the Son’s faithfulness and glory. Even Romans 3:10–18 ultimately prepares the way for the reader to see the faithfulness of Jesus.

¹¹ This is what Hurtado refers to as the binitarian (in distinction to trinitarian) nature of early Christian worship. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ*, 2003; *At the Origins of Christian Worship*, 1999.

Contributions to Liturgy and Worship

The impact of the hymns in the New Testament on the subsequent liturgy and worship of the Christian Church is incalculable, given the fact that these hymns are themselves part of the Scriptures which are the fountainhead of all worship and liturgical traditions in the Christian Church. Amidst the countless contributions, four are worth mentioning.

First, the hymns of the New Testament provide the theology that is declared in the worship service through the public reading of Scripture and the preaching of the Word. An example of how this works can be found in the first two chapters of Hebrews, a letter that is itself the only full-length sermon in the New Testament.¹² In Hebrews 2:12, the author quotes Psalm 22:22: “I will declare your name to my brothers and sisters; in the assembly I will sing your praises.” The singing of praises in the assembly is the declaration of God’s name to the people in the congregation. The author of Hebrews is drawing on the reality that in the hymns of the church can be found the theological material from which to preach. This is why in the first two chapters of Hebrews there are no less than seven direct citations from the Psalms as well as two from the poetry of Isaiah and one from the Song of Moses in Deuteronomy 32. The author of Hebrews is essentially preaching out of the songbook of the Old Testament. In like manner, all NT hymns contribute to the preaching and teaching portion of the books in which they appear. For the church, this establishes a precedent that the hymns and credal statements of the New Testament themselves are texts that should be preached and read in worship. But more than that use of hymns in the New Testament also set a pattern that non-canonical hymns and credal statements have a place within the homily/preaching portions of the worship service.

Second—and this point is closely related to the first—the use of hymns in the New Testament create an expectation for God to speak through hymns during worship and liturgy.

¹² Jonathan Griffiths, *Preaching in the New Testament*, 117.

This is most clearly seen in the introduction to the *Benedictus* in Luke 1:67. There, Zechariah is described as “full of the Holy Spirit” and the hymn that follows is called a prophecy. For Luke the connection between prophecy and the Spirit in Luke 1 foreshadows Pentecost and the outpouring of the Spirit in Acts 2 (see 2:18 and also Acts 21:9). This is significant because it puts hymns and praise within the realm of inspired prophetic speech. The prophecy of Luke 1:68–79 does happen to be Scripture, but Acts 2:18 and 21:9 are not referring primarily to the prophetic utterances which became the New Testament. In other words, it is not just the hymns in the Scriptures that are prophetic, but other hymns throughout the history of the church composed by believers through the power of the Holy Spirit. These later hymns are not considered revelation from God on par with the Scriptures, but they can be prophetic revelations from God by which God manifests his presence in the worshipping congregation and speaks to the hearts and minds of his people.¹³ Such a theology of hymns fits with 1 Corinthians 14:26 where hymns are listed amidst the discussion of prophecy and therefore part of the means by which people experience God’s presence in the worship service (1 Cor. 14:23–26). It is also in line with 1 Peter 4:11 where the one who is speaking (which presumably includes composing or singing hymns), should do so as one who speaks the words of God. Certainly the Old Testament background of a passage like 1 Chronicles 25, where music and song is considered the ministry of prophecy, buttress the claim that hymns are meant to be seen as prophecy. The contribution to worship and liturgy, regardless of whether worshippers and hymn writers have been conscious of it or not, is to create the expectation that when hymns are sung, God is speaking and manifests his presence in the praise of his people.

Third, and most obviously, the hymns of the New Testament have provided a source of inspiration for hymn writers throughout church history. Some like the *Magnificat* (Luke 1:46–

¹³ A parallel can be seen in how sermons can be considered a word from God, but not the Word of God.

55), the *Benedictus* (Luke 1:68–79), the *Gloria* (Luke 2:14), the *Nunc Dimittis* (Luke 2:29–32), and the Lord’s Prayer (Matt 6:9–13) have been taken in their entirety into the worship of the church. Other NT hymns have provided the inspiration for hymns and songs throughout church history. Among the countless examples are Handel’s “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain” and the “Hallelujah Chorus,” both from the *Messiah*, which draw on hymns contained in the book of Revelation. Revelation 7:10 formed part of the inspiration for Charles Wesley’s “Ye Servants of God, Your Master Proclaim.” Philippians 2:6–11 gave rise to Caroline M. Noel’s “At the Name of Jesus, Every Knee Shall Bow.” Colossians 1:15–20 provided words and ideas to Isaac Watts’ *Ere the Blue Heavens, Were Stretched Abroad.*”

Fourth, these hymns might provide clues as to what worship in the first century looked like, although on the whole such form critical analysis is highly speculative, inconclusive and fallen out of favor.¹⁴

Notable Hymns

It is impossible to identify with any certainty which passages of Scripture should be considered hymns. Nevertheless, the following appear to contain hymnic material: Matt. 6:9–13; 21:9; Mark 11:9–10; Luke 1:46–55; 1:68–79; 2:14; 2:29–32; 11:2–4; 19:38; John 12:13; Rom. 3:10–18; 11:33–36; 1 Cor. 15:55; Eph. 5:14; Phil. 2:6–11; Col. 1:15–20; 1 Tim. 3:16; 2 Tim. 2:11–13; Jude 24–25; Rev. 4:8, 11; 5:9–10, 12, 13; 7:10, 12, 15–17; 11:15, 17–18; 15:3–4; 16:5–7; 19:1–3, 5, 6–7.

Conclusion

¹⁴ For an example of such form criticism, see Martin, *A Hymn of Christ*.

From the beginning of Matthew to the end of Revelation, the New Testament is taken up with the praise of the triune God. Along with the Old Testament it is the fountainhead of all Christian worship.

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