

Podcast 268 Lyra Fidelium, Songs of the Faithful

Let's jump in by praying:

Father, thank You for these rich truths that we have awaiting us today, and I pray that You will give us ears to hear what You are saying to us, give us hearts to understand, help us to be in tune with what Your Spirit is communicating. Help me to communicate well. In Jesus' name, Amen.

As you know, in my morning devotions I've been reading a history and a hymn every day from **Hymns for Family Worship**, and last week I was reading the history of "The Church's One Foundation." Do you know that hymn?

Scott: I don't think so.

Steve sings: "The church's one foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord."

Scott: That does sound familiar.

Steve: As I was reading the history, I realized this was part of a collection of twelve hymns, or twelve articles called "Lyra Fidelium" – L, Y, R, A, F, I, D, E, L, I, U, M. In the Latin, "Lyra" can mean lots of different things. It can be the name for the constellation, but it can also mean "song," and "Fidelium" is "of the faithful." So that's the best I could do, and I spent a good bit of time researching what that means, and I think it means "songs of the faithful."

It was written by a man named Samuel J. Stone and published first in 1866. Interestingly, the music was composed by Samuel S. Wesley, who was the grandson of Charles Wesley and named after Johann Sebastian Bach. So his name was Samuel Sebastian Wesley.

I'm going to read from the history in **Hymns for Family Worship** and add a few more comments when we get towards the end.

"When this song was published in 1866, the ideas of the Enlightenment were sparking controversy within the Church of England." Are you familiar with the Enlightenment?

Scott: Yeah.

Steve: I think it's kind of the opposite of enlightenment. For example, the new moon means there's no moon, but when you look out and they say it's a new moon, the sky is black – a perfect night for looking at stars. When I hear the word "Enlightenment," I think of "the Dark-ment."

"Beginning in the late 1600s, the Enlightenment concluded that humans can figure out the world without divine revelation. By 1835, it was suggested that intellectual authority comes from 'the reasonable man,' an intelligent, educated, unpressured person, to whom the truth is obvious. But in Romans 1, God tells us that while creation clearly displays His divine nature, for sin leads us into foolish thinking.

Romans 1:19–21 says, ‘For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For His invisible attributes, namely, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks to Him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.’ Some scholars moved from recognizing the laws which God has built into the universe—to assuming there could be no supernatural happenings outside of them, from using the scientific method to accurately observe the world—to making science the source of truth.

The next logical step was to view the Bible through their ‘scientific’ lens. Since miracles were now suspect, and most of the archaeological support of the Bible was not yet discovered, some doubted its historical veracity. Like the snake in the Garden of Eden, it was easy to ask, ‘Did God really say. . .?’ Between 1860 and 1863 Charles Darwin published his evolutionary *Origin of the Species*, seven members of the Church of England published essays advocating liberal theology, and the Anglican Bishop John Colenso, a missionary to the Zulu people in South Africa, published several commentaries in which he denied the idea of eternal punishment and the historicity of the first five books of the Bible.”

Scripture is under attack, science is on the throne, God is off the throne, and we see this same phenomenon going on today. The seeds of it started way back in the Garden of Eden as far as I’m concerned.

“Enter Samuel John Stone of Windsor, England. The son of a country pastor, he wanted to be a soldier after studying at Oxford, but he answered God’s call to ministry instead, assisting his father in the ministry in London for many years and pouring out his life for the working poor. Samuel’s doctor said he had ‘the muscles of a prize fighter and the nerves of a violin.’ Also described as quick-tempered, he once rescued a girl from three attackers in a lonely part of London’s East End. Samuel knocked one out, made one cry for mercy, and the third ran off.” You’ve got to like this guy already.

Scott: Yeah.

Steve: “When the Bishop Colenso scandal arose, Samuel turned to the Apostles’ Creed, which he knew his congregation used for their personal devotions.”

Okay, so this is a great response by a loving pastor. The Bible is under attack, the things that they hold sacred are under attack, Scripture is under attack, and they’re going right at the root of the historicity of the first five books of the Bible. We have the same thing that has been going on in America for years and years, saying that Genesis is not historical. Then God has raised up men like Henry Morris and Ken Ham to combat it.

IN the 1860s, God raised up Samuel Stone. But before I talk more about that, I'm just going to read the Apostle's Creed, assuming that most of us know it, but just to make sure. I'm going to read it in twelve sections.

"I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried. He descended into hell. The third day, He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost, the holy Catholic church, the communion of the saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, the life everlasting."

Of course, when he says "Catholic church," he means the universal church of all believers. S. J Stone, knowing that he had a poor congregation made up of the working-class citizens - and he knew that many of them read the Apostle's Creed for their private prayers. "He wanted something that was easy to understand, and affected the heart and not just the mind."

1 Corinthians 14:15: "I will sing with the Spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also." "The result was Lyra Fidelium [song of the faithful]: a collection of 12 hymns, one for each of the articles of the Apostles' Creed." Each one of those sentences that made up the twelve articles of the Apostle's Creed, he wrote a hymn for each one. There's one hymn on the forgiveness of sins, there's one hymn on the resurrection of the body, there's one hymn on the life everlasting, etc., twelve different hymns.

Each of these hymns has a summary of the key truths in the hymn and lists of Bible references, and this is what just blesses me, the abundance of Scripture.

For each verse - let's say that there are four stanzas in a verse - he'll often have one Scripture supporting each line of the stanza. I assume he assembled the Scriptures on a topic and compiled them, and then wrote a hymn so that you could sing the truths of the Scriptures. For example, "The Church's One Foundation," which is the one that we're talking about here, is number nine, based on the ninth article in the Apostle's Creed.

This song is about the communion of the saints, the universal church, and it's based on the Scripture 1 Corinthians 3:11, which says, "For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." "The church's one foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord." That's the first two lines of this hymn. Now, I am not going to sing them to you. I'm just going to read a couple of verses. "The Church's one foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord; she is His new creation by water and the Word; From heav'n He came and sought her to be His holy bride; with His own blood He bought her, and for her life He died. Elect from ev'ry nation, yet one o'er all

the earth, her charter of salvation, one Lord, one faith, one birth; One holy name she blesses, partakes one holy food, and to one hope she presses, with every grace endued.”

Those people that have sung that hymn are going to recognize our hymn today has four verses taken from these seven. Here’s one that you’ve probably never heard:

“The church shall never perish, her dear Lord to defend; to guide sustain and cherish is with her to the end; though there be those who hate her, and false sons in her pale, against or foe or traitor she ever shall prevail.

Though with a scornful wonder men see her sore oppressed, by schisms rent asunder, by heresies distressed, yet saints their watch are keeping, their cry goes up, ‘How long?’ And soon the night of weeping shall be the morn of song.

Mid toil and tribulation and tumult of her war, she waits the consummation of peace forevermore; till with the vision glorious, her longing eyes are blessed, and the great church victorious shall be the church at rest.”

I might as well finish it while I’m at it. “Yet she on earth hath union with God, the Three in One, and mystic, sweet communion with those whose rest is won; with all her sons and daughters, who by the Master’s hand led through the deathly waters repose in Eden-land.

Oh, happy ones and holy, Lord give us grace that we, like them, the meek and lowly, on high may dwell with Thee. There pass the border mountains, where in sweet veils the bride, with Thee by living fountains, forever shall abide.”

I also discovered that there are twelve different tunes for each of the twelve articles, and they’re taken from a book called **Hymns Ancient and Modern** that was published in 1861. And in the “Lyra Fidelium,” beside each hymn, there is listed the number of the hymn tune to sing with it.

Steve: You can see how if you’re singing Scripture, it’s much more prone to get into your heart and your mind and we can do what it says in 1 Corinthians 14 – we can sing with the Spirit, and sing with the understanding also.

My experience has been, over the last couple of years, there’s probably half a dozen hymns now that I know well, and those are my go-to hymns when I’m going on my walks. “Be Thou My Vision,” “O Worship the King,” “All Hail the Power of Jesus’ Name.” And the more I sing them, the more the truths of the verses kind of work their way down into my heart, for it takes time for truths to penetrate down there.

Scott: And you can tell how – I don’t know if it’s intellectually lazy or just generally lazy we are nowadays compared to back then. I forget, it was probably in the late 80’s or maybe early 90’s when Rich Mullins wrote his song “Creed,” which is basically just the entire Apostle’s Creed, or one of them, I forget which one exactly, I think it’s the Apostle’s Creed. And it’s pretty much word-for-word just sung to a tune where the

rhythm of the words doesn't quite fit. He just sort of crams the whole thing in one song. But we can't handle twelve songs. We have to have one and be done with it. We're just too lazy. We need it all crammed into one.

Steve: There's somebody famous – I think it may have been Spurgeon or somebody that said something like, “You don't have to defend the Scripture.” The idea was that Scripture is like a lion – it can defend itself. And so instead of writing a book showing why the Bible was historically accurate, S. J. Stone promotes Scripture itself and continues to teach it to his people and teach it to them from the pulpit and give them something they can use. In his preface, he says, “This can be used in private devotion, at family prayer, or in public worship.” That was his idea.

I continue to be amazed at the gifting of these early hymn writers, who composed these inspired words without computers or all of our modern technology. I'm astounded at the gifts that God gave to these people that while he's working in a pastorate and reaching out the poor in his community and being an advocate for them, he has time to compile these piles of Scripture on each of these twelve topics and then put them into a form that is a poem.

Scott: Clearly he was a gifted poet. When you listen to the rhythm and rhyme scheme of that stuff, I mean, he's really good. Like, I was just marveling at that. That all is really well-written.

Steve: One of the tunes was “Abide with Me” – “Abide with me, fast falls the eventide...” Anyway, I knew that tune, so I was able to sing through that entire hymn because I already knew the tune. So I have a lunch date set up with a man from the local Bible college here who's the head of their music department, and I want to sit down with him and say, “Can you help me? We need to put this into music. We need to restore some of these tunes and these songs so that we can sing them together and be more Scripturally literate.” And when he first wrote it, he had the Scripture right beside the stanza. So I'll read you some. So the first verse – “The church's one foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord.” And right beside it would say, “Other foundation can no man lay than is laid in Christ Jesus.” And then the second stanza says, “She is His new creation by water and the Word.” And then you hear, “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.” This is rich stuff.

Scott: Wow, he wrote out every verse? It wasn't just the reference for the verse?

Steve: The verses are printed next to the stanzas. “From heav'n He came and sought her to be His holy bride.” Okay, and right beside that it says, “Even as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it that He might sanctify and cleanse it.” And then the last part of the first verse says, “With His own blood He bought her and for her life He died.” “The church of God, which He purchased with His own blood.” So, if you're using this for your private devotions, you can sing, and your eyes can scan the verses. So he's got four verses for the first six lines of the song. Isn't that beautiful?

Scott: It's awesome.

Steve: That's our talk for today. I hope that encourages you! And I'm going to put this in the transcript and in the notes, and some blessed man – when you see it, you're going to kind of smile – but there's a whole website called "Lyra Fidelia," and I'll put the link here. If you look it up online, you can find it quickly. But you can tell this is an old website. It's even got a brown background, light brown to look like parchment, and it's an old website, and it says, "To contact me, fill out this thing and send it to me." And I've tried several times and I can't find it, and it doesn't tell who did this, but somebody did the work of finding this kind of out-of-print thing, putting it on a website, and then I'll send a link to where I've also found a PDF which I've downloaded of **Hymns Ancient and Modern**.

Steve: Yeah, this is wonderful stuff. The way we combat Enlightenment, is by proclaiming the truth, continuing to believe the truth. The gospel is the hope of salvation for all people. Amen.

Father, thank You for this Samuel J. Stone. Thank you for the tune by Samuel S. Wesley. And thank You for this journey that we've been on in understanding it, and I pray that You'll give us, as he talked about, help us to not only sing with the Spirit, but also to sing with the understanding, as it says in 1 Corinthians 14. And help us, as always, to fix our attention on Jesus Christ, because there's no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. We worship You today and bless You in Jesus' name, Amen.

This is the website:

<http://lyra-fidelium.faithweb.com/lyrafidelium.html>

I downloaded the tunes here. It is a 38 MB PDF.

<https://all-med.net/pdf/hymns-ancient-and-modern/>