

THE HEDGEHOG REVIEW

♪ Bad Hymns

“All Are Welcome”

by Marty Haugen

*Let us build a house where love can dwell.
And all can safely live,
A place where saints and children tell
How hearts learn to forgive.
Built of hopes and dreams and visions,
Rock of faith and vault of grace;
Here the love of Christ shall end divisions;
All are welcome.*

■ The hymn is all about us. We're supposed to make the church a kind of heaven where “all divisions end.” The burden is on us. We are to make it happen.

Bad hymns often use flowery language about the good we're supposed to do. It covers up the inherent legalism of the message: Make the church “nice.”

The mantra, “All are welcome,” distorts the gospel by implying that God is indifferent to evil, bad behavior, and social norms that protect kids. The mantra often masks an anything-goes morality: If all are welcome, then the church MUST bless gay unions, polygamous unions – because to welcome is to approve whatever kind of union people say is natural to them.

The real gospel: Love the sinner but not the sin.

“Breath of God”

by Sundberg/Helgen

*You made us your image, your arm and your echo.
You bless us with your gifts,
Your love that won't let go.
We lift up our voices, instruments play along.
We join in your vision, your work and your song.*

■ First, a huge error about the image of God. It was lost in the fall and restored only in Christ.

Second, God's love here is sloppy agape. What's missing is any sense of God as HOLY love which destroys sin – and any confession of our total sinfulness. We do not join in God's vision, work, and song. We are captive to self-seeking and self-love.

Good Hymns ♪

“My Hope is Built on Nothing Less”

LBW 294

*My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness
No merit of my own I claim,
But wholly lean on Jesus' name.
On Christ the solid rock, I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand.*

■ This hymn is all about Christ and what he has done to redeem us from sin and death. It conveys the true dynamic of his cross: He takes our sin on him and gives us in exchange his perfect righteousness.

“O, for a Thousand Tongues to Sing”

LBW 559

*Oh, for a thousand tongues to sing
My great Redeemer's praise,
The glories of my God and King,
The triumphs of his grace.*

■ This hymn is also all about Christ and what he does: He breaks the power of sin. He sets the prisoner free. His blood can make the foulest clean.

The hymn speaks the truth about our situation: We are captive to sin. We are the foulest.

Bad hymns often go wrong by flattering sinners. Good hymns relieve the burden of false expectations by speaking truthfully about our situation. We are rebellious sinners in need of redemption.

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Send Us Your Hymns

Do you have any hymns you would like us to review? Good or bad? Traditional or contemporary? Send them to us by email, fax, or snail-mail at our addresses, which are found on page 2.