

## Hymns & Songs of Nationalism

*It is the researcher's view that music does have the power to bring people together under a common language. But it cannot be denied that music's social function just as often, or even more often, is to cement an 'in-group' identity and to build confidence and spirit over against another. We can see this prominently at work on sports fields all the time. National anthems, war songs, patriotic songs all had their place in building up the psyche of powerful nations, over against the others, and if the song contains religious imagery or is a hymn of prayer, this is done even more effectively.*

Gertrud Tönsing

[http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci\\_arttext&pid=S0259-94222017000300007](http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0259-94222017000300007)

- What is your view on patriotic hymns and songs ?
- Do you agree with Gertrud Tönsing's concerns, expressed above ?
- How do you react to hymns like '[I Vow to Thee My Country](#)' ?
- Can you identify other hymns / songs expressing similar sentiments ?
- Would you choose one for a worship service ?
- Why (not) ?
- How would you respond to a congregant who took an opposite view to your own ?

### For Further Reading, Reflection & Discussion

Gordon Giles, 'Can "I Vow to Thee" Be Renovated?' (Church Times, 08.11.2013)

<https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2013/8-november/comment/opinion/can-i-vow-to-thee-be-renovated>

- Do you agree with Giles' critique of "I Vow to Thee My Country" ?
- Is the fact that some people (as Giles suggests, 'those with military connections') like to sing it reason enough to continue using it as part of congregational worship ? Why (not) ?
- How do you react to Giles' suggested rewrite of the hymn ?

### Taking Action

- Is this an issue you would make a stand on if you were in the position of leading a civic service where the hymn (or one like it) was expected ?
- How would you formulate a congregational position on hymns and songs containing strongly nationalistic sentiments ?
- How would you justify your position?