

Hymns & Songs of Warfare

The combined imagery of the songs we sing creates a kind of inner construct or lens through which we see the world. If the background music and imagery of our lives is predominantly hostile, fearful, aggressive, or dominating, if it sends us into the world primarily as warriors, then we will find ourselves encountering the world, including other people, in a certain way.

Brian McLaren

<https://www.redletterchristians.org/onward-christian-peacemakers/>

- What is your view on images of battle and warfare in hymns and songs ?
- Do you agree with Brian McLaren's concerns, expressed above ?
- How do you react to hymns like '[Onward Christian Soldiers](#)' ?
- 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 the opposite view to your own ?

For Further Reading, Reflection & Discussion

David Wright, 'Peace & War in Hymns' (2005)

<https://hymnsocietygbi.org.uk/2005/10/treasure-no-71-peace-and-war-in-hymns/>

- Do you agree with Wright when he suggests that 'Militaristic images in hymns are clearly lawful: they are not forbidden. But are they Expedient? Helpful? Beneficial? Appropriate? Do they 'do good'? It is hard to see how the answer could be 'yes' to any of these five questions.'? Do you think this is a helpful way of posing the question ?
- How do you react to Wright's "Ten Reasons for Ceasing to Use Military Analogies in Hymns" ? Do you agree with them ? Why (not) ?

Taking Action

- How would you formulate a congregational position on hymns and songs containing militaristic imagery ?
- How would you justify your position ?