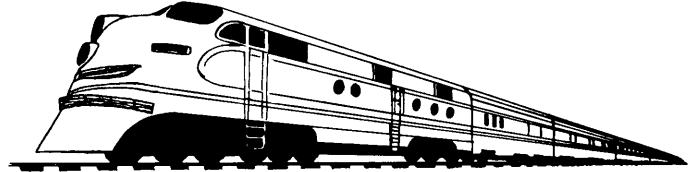


GOD OF CONCRETE

Have you ever wondered why most hymns seem to be about things long ago? Richard G. Jones, a British Methodist minister wrote *God of Concrete* because the young people in his church complained that they never sang anything about the modern world.

The author says the words are “all symbols of the exciting modern world.” What is a symbol? A good simple definition is a word, a picture or gesture which helps to explain the meaning. The symbol merely stands for what the real idea is.

Before you try to sing the hymn you should read it carefully to find all of the word symbols which help to understand the four ideas.



- (1) God is the God of power and strength.
Key words: concrete, steel, piston, wheel, pylon (do you know what this means?), steam, girder, beam, atom, mine (do you think he meant a coal mine, or something else?)
- (2) God is the God of speed.
Key words: cable, rail, freeway, mail, rocket, flight, satellite, lightning.
- (3) God is the God of truth, knowledge and science.
Key words: science, art, map, graph, chart, physics, research, Bible, church, sequence, design. Why do you suppose he put “Bible” and “church” in this list?
- (4) God is the God of love.
This is the hardest stanza to understand, because he uses events rather than picture words. How does God show His love? By making the earth so marvelous, by creating the universe, by raising Christ from the grave and death at Easter time to save the world from all its blight (better look this up in the dictionary!), and by claiming all of us as His children.

We can all be amazed by a God who can do all sorts of exciting things as listed in the first stanza. But more amazing is a God who loved the world so much that He gave His only begotten Son. (See John 3:16).

You might enjoy drawing “symbols” (pictures) of all the descriptive words in the first three stanzas. Can you think of a way to use symbols that might be found in your church to illustrate the fourth stanza?

Because this hymn was written so recently (in 1964), it is just now beginning to appear in hymnals. So far no tune has been found which everyone thinks is just right. *Unser Herrscher* (sometimes called *Neander*) was written in 1680 (three hundred years before the words) by Joachim Neander whose most famous hymn is *Praise to the Lord the Almighty, the King of Creation* which you probably have sung. He also wrote tunes for many of his hymns. During a time of religious persecution he lived in a German cave known as Neander’s Cave, from which the skull known as the Neanderthal man was taken by archeologists nearly two hundred years later.

If you would like to try singing the words to a different tune, sing them to *Dix*, *Arfon*, or *Ratisbon*. (You can find these tunes in the Metrical Index in the back of your hymnal under 77.77.77. These numbers are “symbols” that tell you that there will be six lines of words, and each line will contain seven syllables). You will find that the words take on a different quality with each tune. Which one do you think is best? How about writing a new one which will be more “modern?”

Hymnstudy by Austin C. Lovelace