

THE 20-TH CENTURY AMERICAN HYMN AND NEGRO-SPIRITUALS

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1.1. Introduction

When I choosed a theme of 20-th century I thought a lot about my philosophical views and believes and I decided to research in an exquisite area as a dynamic culture with ancient roots and contemporanity, a musical current wich formed my arthistical personality and value system.

So, there were several structures like diathonic system and chromatic structures, also involving happenings, alleatorism, minimalism and other interactive art forms.

The cult of hymn and notion of freedom had a major issue during these century. Historical changes at personal level, development of spiritual consciousness of human kind showed me there is need for love and believes and expression the beauty of it. Hymn can be the tool, the ability to express, to have the determination and courage choosing to be alive and communicate. At individual level that should be the most controversate probleme of the 20-th century: "Dare love or not dare to love"? - that is the question

1.2. The spirit of singing

The basic purpose of sing with understanding is to contribute to more meaningful congregational singing of hymns. It seeks to address the needs of those who lead in corporate worship -- clergy and musicians -- and also attempts to bring others, , to a greater appreciation of their hymnals and the fascinating heritage of church song.. Along with increased understanding, it is hoped that will contribute to help persons "sing with the spirit: with true inspiration and enthusiasm, whether they may worship and serve.

1.3. Terms of hymnology

Hymnology is a technical term which refers to the systematic study of the history and use of hymns. Although most religious traditions have a body of congregational song. Hymnological research first began in Great Britain in the 19th century.

Four people in particular are associated with early hymnological research: James Montgomery (1771-1854), John Mason Neale (1818-1866), David Sedgwick, (1814-1879) and John Julian (1839-1913).

James Montgomery wrote a preface to his Christian Psalmist (1825).

In the 20th century there has been an explosion of hymnic activity accompanied by important hymnological work. W.H. Frere (1863-1938) wrote the historical introduction to the Historical Edition of Hymns Ancient and Modern (1909); Maruice Frost (1888-1961) expanded Frere's work with the publication in 1962 of the Historical Companion to Hymns Ancient and Modern.

Hymnology in the United States has been greatly influenced by the British standard.

[From Sing with Understanding, by Harry Eskew and Hugh McElrath (Nashville: Church Street Press, 2nd edition, 1995.)

1.4. Hymnody

"HYMNODY" refers to the activities of writing and/or singing hymns. Various traditions, types of hymns and styles of singing hymns are generally designated using the term, "hymnody." For example:

Lutheran hymnody

Greek hymnody

Latin hymnody

American folk hymnody
Gospel hymnody
Welsh hymnody
Vedic hymnody

The term, "hymnody" should not be confused with the term, "hymnology," which refers to the systematic study of the history and use of hymns and is a subdivision of the discipline of musicology.

2.1. Hymn structure

The HYMN is a distinct literary form:

- Form
- Rhyme Scheme
- Metrical Pattern
- Poetic Devices

2.1.1. The form of a hymn:

The structure of any HYMN (unless it is FREE VERSE), is divided into distinct STANZAS. (STANZA refers to the consistent organization of lines (verses) into a complete unit of poetry). VERSE is a single line of poetry within a STANZA. Example:

Drop, drop slow tears,
And bathe those beauteous feet,
Which brought from heav'n
The news and Prince of Peace.

Cease not, wet eyes,
His mercies to entreat;
To cry for vengeance
Sin doth never cease.

In your deep floods
Drown all my faults and fears;
Nor let this eye
See sin, but through my tears.
-- Phinease Fletcher, 1623

2.1.2. Rhyme scheme

Rhyme scheme refers to the hymnic patterns of the individual lines of poetry (verses) within a single stanza. Consider the following rhyme schemes:

O for a thousand tongues to sing
my great Redeemer's praise,
the glories of my God and King,
the triumphs of his grace!

My gracious master and my God,
assist me to proclaim,
to spread through all the earth abroad
the honors of thy name.

Jesus! the name that charms our fears,
that bids our sorrows cease;
'tis music in the sinner ears;
'tis life, and health, and peace.

-- Charles Wesley, 1739

The rhyme scheme is:

A B A B

A B A B

A B A B

2.1.3. Metrical pattern

Just as in music, metered poetry has a distinct rhythm based on strong and weak accents. These accents (beats) are associated with the individual SYLLABLES in the line of poetry and generally follow the natural accents of common pronunciation. These accents are then grouped into larger units called FEET. For example:

O for a **thous**-and tongues to sing
my great **Re-deem**-er's praise,
the **glo**-ries of my God and King,
the tri-umphs of his grace!
-- Charles Wesley, 1739

Poetry Number of syllables per line:

Number of metrical feet per line: 8 6 8 6 4 3 4 3

The bold type indicates ACCENTS, or syllables which are stress stronger than others. It is natural to say **thou**-sand, not thou-**sand**.

The groupings of accents from strong beat to strong beat form a larger unit called a metrical foot. In the above example there are four metrical feet

The METER of the hymn is synonymous with the NUMBER OF SYLLABLES PER LINE OF POETRY. For example, the METER of the above hymn text (O for a thousand tongues to sing) is 8.6.8.6. This meter was an extremely 'common' during the 17th and 18th century.

Consequently, it is referred to as, COMMON METER. Often used meters include:

COMMON METER 8.6.8.6 (CM)

SHORT METER 6.6.8.6 (SM)

LONG METER 8.8.8.8 (LM)

COMMON METER DOUBLE 8.6.8.6.8.6.8.6 (CMD)

LONG METER DOUBLE 8.8.8.8.8.8.8.8 (LMD)

Another important issue involved with METER has to do with the organization of METRICAL FEET. A FOOT starts either on a strong (accented) or weak (unaccented) beat.

A 2-beat foot beginning on a weak beat is referred to as, IAMBIC (see "O for a thousand tongues to sing"). A 2-beat-foot beginning on a strong beat is called TROCHAIC.

IAMBIC PENTAMETER = 5 metrical feet per line of poetry, each foot begins on a weak (unstressed) beat.

TROCHAIC TETRAMETER = 4 metrical feet per line of poetry, each foot begins on a STRONG (stressed) beat.

2.1.4. Poetic devices

Hymns make use of certain POETIC DEVICES that are common in classical poetry. Consider the following hymn:

O for a thousand tongues to sing
my great Redeemer's praise,
the glories of my God and King,
the triumphs of his grace!

My gracious master and my God,
assist me to proclaim,
to spread through all the earth abroad
the honors of thy name.

Jesus! the name that charms our fears,
that bids our sorrows cease;
'tis music in the sinner ears;
'tis life, and health, and peace.

-- Charles Wesley, 1739

In addition to being one of the greatest religious leaders of his day, Charles Wesley was also one of the great poets. Demonstrated within his hymn are a variety of 'devices' for expression, including:

HYPERBOLE: A figure making use of exaggeration (O for a thousand tongues to sing).

ANADIPLOSIS: Using words or ideas ending one stanza as the start of the next stanza (see end of stanza one leading to the beginning of stanza two; the end of stanza two leading to stanza three).

ALLITERATION: The repetition of the same first sound in consecutive words: (thousand tongues; sorrows cease)

ANAPHORA: The repetition of the same word at the beginning of successive lines

PARADOX: A Statement that is contradictory (Make me a captive, Lord, and then I shall be free -- George Matheson, 1890)

ANTHITHESIS: Sharply contrasting ideas set in juxtaposition

PERSONIFICATION: The representation of a thing or abstraction as a person or by physical form (Rock of ages, cleft for me, Augustus Toplady)

SIMILE: Comparing unlike objects in one respect ("Peter is like a rock")

METAPHOR: Using a word or phrase denoting one kind of idea in place of another ("Peter is a rock")

TAUTOLOGY: The repetition of the same thought in a slightly different way (I am tired, I am weak, I am worn,)

CLIMAX: Arranging ideas in an ascending order of intensity (Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all. -- Isaac Watts).

2.2. The gospel hymn

Gospel hymnody is one of the most important, truly AMERICAN musical creations. Having its roots in American folk and popular music of the early 1800's, gospel hymnody achieved a fully developed and independent identity by the 1890's and continues to exert a major

influence on congregational song.

The earliest influences on the development of gospel hymnody (before about 1860) were:

1. Folk and Camp Meeting hymnody of the early 1800's.
2. Shaped-note hymnodies of the early to mid-1800's
3. Sunday School Songs of the mid-1800's.
4. 19th century American popular secular music.
5. The overall 19th century American aesthetic ideal of Romanticism.

1. Leaning on the Everlasting Arms - (music by A. J. Showalter 1887; text by E. A Hoffman, 1887)

2. Rise Up, O Men of God -(music by W. H. Walter, 1894; text by W. P. Merrill, 1911)

Comparing the two hymns, one can observe the following musical characteristics for the gospel hymn, Leaning on the Everlasting Arms:

- There is a refrain (chorus).
- The dotted eighth/sixteenth rhythm is pervasive.
- The harmonic movement is simple, depending mainly on primary chords (I, IV, and V(7)).
- The chords are mostly in root position. For chords in inversion, the one-six-four is mainly used.
- There are static repeated chords.
- There is an obbligato part for tenors and basses in the refrain.
- The verse section of the stanza is a parallel period (see Form in Tonal Music by Douglass Green for an explanation).

Here are the musical characteristics for Rise Up, O Men of God:

- There is no refrain (chorus).
- Rhythmic values consist mainly of quarter notes with some passing eighth notes.
- The harmonic movement is more complex, using some chromatic chords.
- The primary theme of Leaning on the Everlasting Arms is simple JOY -- joy in the knowledge of feeling "safe and secure" from whatever adversity life may present. This JOY emanates from a "fellowship" with Jesus. Consequently, there is no fear -- only "peace of mind." The text is simple, straight forward and easy to understand. There is no subtle underlying theological baggage -- just simple JOY. "Praise God, for I feel safe in the arms of Jesus." If there is an underlying theological message, it has to do with the "pilgrim way" and walking in "the path."*

The message of Rise Up, O Men of God is much more theologically charged. If the music is more complex, then the theology is EXTREMELY complex. Here we will sidestep the problem of inclusive language and just look at the text in terms of its inherent meaning. This hymn as much as any espouses the tenets of Liberal Theology. Here are its main points:

So, here we have the differences between a gospel hymn and other hymns:

Gospel Hymns Ordinary Hymns

Musically (harmonically) simple Musically (harmonically) complicated

Often rhythmically complex Usually rhythmically simple

Textually simple Textually complicated

Little or no espoused theology Theologically charged

Today, "gospel hymn" (music) means MANY things, covers many different styles of music, and is very difficult to simply categorize. However, two constants do seem to be consistent: 1. Musically, gospel hymnody has always utilized the current popular musical styles of the day. In late 19th century America that meant: (a) the style of the 19th century "parlor song" such as those of Steven foster and others. (b) the style of popular ballads such as, "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" and "When Johnny Comes Marching Home."

Today gospel hymnody means (a) utilizing electronic media such as audio amplifiers, electronic instruments such as guitars and keyboards, and ESPECIALLY drums.

2. Theologically, gospel hymnody evolved within the milieu of 19th century American Evangelicalism and Revivalism. Evangelicalism was not just a religious phenomenon, but pervaded all aspects of American society throughout the 19th century (see Evangelicalism as a Social Movement) . Evangelicalism evolved into Fundamentalism after about 1920 and throughout the 20th century (and continuing today) Fundamentalism and gospel hymnody have always gone hand-in-hand. Indeed, gospel music is the popular religious music and hymnody of Christian Fundamentalism.

2.3. The american gospel song

The hymnic counterpart of American Evangelicalism as it grew out of revivalist activities in the northern urban areas (New York, Boston -- later Chicago) was the Gospel Song. United States, 1800-1835.

The gospel song is the first truly American hymnic development and has these origins: (1) Sunday School songs, (2) Camp Meeting songs, (3) popular American secular vocal and instrumental music, particularly "parlor songs" (like those of Steven Foster), (4) Concert Band music (like that of John Philip Sousa and his predecessors), and (5) the aesthetic of mid-19th century American Romanticism, particularly of the more sentimental variety.

2.4. Specifics of the 19th and early 20th century Gospel Song:

Gospel songs appealed to common and ordinary people because they were simple both textually and musically and were fun to sing in large crowds. After 1900, with the rise of ragtime and other popular musical styles (jazz, blues, etc.), the music of many gospel songs tended to become more rhythmical in character. The texts of gospel songs are characterized by an absence of the elements of adoration or worship. The main emphasis is on personal experience with an exhortation to fellow human beings to turn from a life of sin and sorrow. Many texts were extremely trite:

My mother's hand is on my brow,
Her gentle voice is pleading now;
Accross the years so marred with sin
What memories of love steal in!

O mother when I think of thee,
'Tis but a step to Calvary;
Thy gentle hand upon my brow
Is leading me to Jesus now.

-- Fred P. Morris, 1910

Other texts of a higher quality could be compared favorably to the great hymn texts of the past:

To God be the glory, great things he had done!
So loved he the world that he have us his Son,
Who yielded his life an atonement for sin,
And opened the life gate that all may go in.

Praise the Lord, Praise the Lord, Let the earth hear his voice!
Praise the Lord, Praise the Lord, Let the people rejoice!
O come to the Father through Jesus the Son,
And give him the glory, great things he hath done!

-- Fanny J. Crosby, 1875.

The intention of gospel hymnody is synonymous with Evangelicalism: to present the gospel simply and to exhort people to make a public confession of faith toward the goal of accepting Jesus Christ as personal savior. Complex theology, liturgical and poetic symbolism, and emotional depth is not the intention of gospel hymnody. 1. communicate and express the gospel in a text language and a music language that are richly understandable by the culture for which they are intended.

Offer a worthy "sacrifice of praise" for the individual and for the corporate body in the worship experience. It should be "our best" -- our best performance of the most meaningful text and music that is shared by all. It should be offered in love, humility, gratitude and grace, without arrogance or shame in comparing it to the offering of other persons in the same culture or in other cultures.

1. Afro-American gospel music after 1930
2. White "mainline" gospel music after 1930
3. Southern Gospel Music in the 7 Shaped-note Singing School tradition after 1930 ("Stamps/Baxter" gospel songs)
4. Bluegrass Gospel Music after about 1940
5. Mid-20th century Gospel Songs (1950's) - Singspiration
6. Early "contemporary-Christian"(CCM) gospel music (late 1960 - 1980)
7. Fully Developed CCM gospel music and "praise-and-worship music" (PWM) (1980 - present)
8. Fully Developed Southern Gospel and Quartet Music (the Stamps/Baxter tradition 1960 - present)

After about 1980, these three streams came together and continue to intermingle and influence each other. Nevertheless, Southern Gospel continues to value and teach its tradition .

Bluegrass Gospel is essentially an outgrowth of the 7 Shaped-note tradition of Southern Gospel. With the success of professional Bluegrass musicians of the 1940's and '50's (Bill Monroe, Lester Flatt and Earl Scruggs, Jim and Jesse, etc.), After about 1980, white mainline Gospel Music evolved into Contemporary-Christian Music, which has evolved hymnically after about 1990 into Praise-and-Worship Music.

Today, Gospel Music means MANY things, covers many different styles of music, and is very difficult to simply categorize. However, one constant does seem to be pervasive. Theologically, Gospel Music evolved of 19th century American Evangelicalism and Revivalism. Evangelicalism was not just a religious phenomenon century. Evangelicalism evolved into Fundamentalism after about 1920 and throughout the 20th century (and continuing today) Fundamentalism and Gospel Music have always gone hand-in-hand.

Indeed, Gospel Music is the popular religious music and hymnody of Christian Fundamentalism.

3.1. The american gospel hymnody (song)

Gospel Hymnody is one of the most important, truly AMERICAN musical creations. Having its roots in American folk and popular music of the early 1800's, it achieved a fully developed and independent identity by the 1890's and continues to exert a major influence on congregational song throughout the world today as well as all of Western popular music. Here is a summary of the early influences on the development of Gospel Hymnody in the 19th century:

1. Folk and Camp Meeting Hymnody of the early 1800's
2. Shaped-note hymnody of the early to mid-1800's
3. Sunday School Songs of the mid-1800's
4. 19th century American popular secular music, particularly:
the songs of Steven Foster and other Parlor Songs from the mid- to late 1800's
the rhythms and textures of popular Band Music from the mid- to late 1800's (see Bands in America)
5. The overall 19th century American aesthetic ideal of Romanticism.

Here are some categories or types of gospel hymns which show how gospel music evolved from the mid-1800's to the present.

mid-19th century Sunday School songs

late-19th century Gospel Songs

late 19th century Shaped-note Gospel Songs

early 20th century Gospel Songs

early 20th century Afro-American Gospel Songs

Afro-American Gospel Music after 1930

Shaped-note Gospel Songs after about 1930 ("Southern gospel" or "Stamps/Baxter" gospel songs)

Bluegrass Gospel Music after about 1940

mid-20th century Gospel Songs (1950's) – Singspiration

early "contemporary-Christian"(CCM) gospel music (late 1960 - 1980)

fully developed CCM gospel music and "praise-and-worship music" (PWM) (1980 - present)

fully developed Southern Gospel and Quartet Music (the Stamps/Baxter tradition 1960 - present)

After about 1930 gospel music as a distinct genre evolved into three separate streams and each stream needs to be studied separately:

1. Afro-American gospel music
2. White "mainline" gospel music, which for the most part became identified with Southern Baptists, who (along with Billy Graham) were the leaders of Evangelicalism and Revivalism in the non-Pentecostal tradition in America before about 1975.
3. Southern Gospel Music in the 7 Shaped-note Singing School traditi

3.2. Afro-american spirituals

The origins of Afro-American (negro) spirituals are probably rooted in the complex interaction of rural white and black religious music in early frontier America. Research has indicated that the camp-meeting experiences in particular presented opportunities for people of all social and ethnic backgrounds to interact, worship, and sing together. Consequently, a new type of religious "ballad" evolved where (often) the words of English hymns were interpreted in slave dialect and combined with musical elements from black cultural experience (work songs, laments, etc.) to produce what eventually came to be known as the

“negro spiritual.”

The first negro spiritual to be published (appear in print) was “Go Down Moses” (1861). In 1871 the Jubilee Singers from Fisk University in Nashville, TN began to perform concert arrangements of spirituals to great acclaim throughout America and Europe. The interest in this music grew during the last quarter of the 19th century and by 1901, John Work, Jr. (a student and then later a professor at Fisk)

4.1. Gospel hymnody in the 20-th century

The term, "gospel hymn" is defined as any congregational song which is set in a popular musical style, especially when there is a clearly defined "classical" or traditional style already in place. In a broad sense all Christian hymnody is "gospel" hymnody because through the history of the Christian church congregational song has always been set in a popular musical style.

In the late 20th century, the dichotomy between "popular" and "classical" is particularly strong because of the universal presence of American popular culture. Most popular music generally uses drums and/or guitars and electronic instruments including electronic amplification. Consequently, the majority of recent gospel music utilizes the same kind of performance practice. Traditional hymnody, on the other hand, is identified with classical music in the style of classical composers such as Bach, Mendelssohn, Beethoven, etc., and generally does not use percussion (drums) or electronic instruments/amplifiers.

The roots of American gospel hymnody is explored elsewhere. Here we will look at 20th century gospel hymnody as especially what has become known in the late 20th century as "contemporary Christian music" and "praise and worship music."

The immediate ancestors of current (late 20th century) praise and worship music were: the popular folk and rock music of the 1960's, 70's, and 80's; popular choruses used by church youth groups; folk Masses in the liturgical tradition; popular youth musicals of the 1970's and 1980's; most importantly, the contemporary Christian music (CCM) of the 1970's and 1980's

"Contemporary Christian music" (CCM) as it has become known after about 1980 is synonymous with "gospel music." However, a distinction needs to be made between CONCERT GOSPEL and CONGREGATIONAL GOSPEL. Some CCM is congregational but most is not.

5.1. Conclusion

We debated several issues in four /4/ chapters and examined on surface some of the main periods of gospel music. The negro spirituale, hymn music has a historical value also, and never the less an existense of the gospel songs wich transpassed not only time and embraced new form but also blossomed again and again in different kind of culture, religion, colour and expresing without frontier, feelings, religious thoughts and make the best way being a bridge beetwen human kind.

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