

## ABSTRACT

The Public Invitation and *Gospel Hymns Nos. 1 to 6*

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Perhaps the most distinctive characteristic of traditional evangelical worship is the widespread practice of the “invitation” near the close of the worship service. A significant element of that invitation is the accompanying hymn, one that emphasizes the need for conversion and spiritual renewal.

This thesis addresses the origin and early evolution of the public invitation, and more specifically, the hymns that have been used by evangelicals for this part of their worship. Hymns from *Gospel Hymns Nos. 1 to 6*, the most popular hymnal among evangelicals in the nineteenth century, are analyzed and discussed along five primary categories: 1) metaphors and imagery, 2) scriptural allusions, 3) overarching themes, 4) hymn forms, and 5) fundamental theological themes.

Finally, hymns of three recently published Baptist hymnals, those belonging to what is presently the largest evangelical group, are evaluated and compared along similar lines to determine the nature of the contemporary hymn of invitation.

The Public Invitation and *Gospel Hymns Nos. 1 to 6*

by

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## ABBREVIATIONS

GH *Gospel Hymns*

GH1-6 *Gospel Hymns Nos. 1 to 6*

TBH *The Baptist Hymnal* (1991)

BH *Baptist Hymnal* (2008)

CGH *Celebrating Grace Hymnal* (2010)

MH Multiple hymnals



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Finally, I praise God, from whom all of life's blessings flow.

Emily R. Snider

## PREFACE

Perhaps the most distinctive characteristic of traditional evangelical worship is the widespread practice of the “invitation” near the close of the worship service. As the sermon comes to a conclusion, the preacher extends an invitation, inviting any person to come forward to profess publicly his or her decision of faith, or a rededication to faith. A significant element of that invitation is the accompanying hymn,<sup>1</sup> one that customarily emphasizes the need for conversion and spiritual renewal. While this practice has never been reflected among all evangelicals, especially contemporary ones, it can still be found in various forms among many congregations today.

### Scope

This thesis addresses the origin and early evolution of the invitation, and more specifically, the hymns which have been used by evangelicals and revivalists for this part of their worship. How does one determine what constitutes a hymn of “invitation”? While the invitation itself has been a mainstay in much of evangelical, revivalistic worship since the Second Great Awakening, there has remained diversity in the songs used for this portion of the service. To clarify, it is not the purpose of this paper to ascertain which songs were sung during nineteenth-century invitations. Given the free and often undocumented nature of evangelical

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<sup>1</sup> I prefer to see “hymn” and “congregational song” as interchangeable terms. However, gospel hymns also fit a more strict definition of “hymn” as multi-stanza poetry set to a strophic tune.

worship, this kind of information would be only anecdotal at best. Most of these groups did not keep records of worship orders nor did they often utilize printed orders of service.<sup>2</sup> In addition, many revival services allowed for spontaneity in worship; the preacher or song leader could decide to alter the direction of a service based on his or her perception of the Holy Spirit's guidance. Many of these practices continued in twentieth-century evangelical worship. One simply cannot know this kind of historical information with certainty given our sources.

To analyze the invitation hymns sung by evangelicals then, one must turn to the hymnals used. As perhaps the most popular hymnal among evangelicals in the late nineteenth century, *Gospel Hymns* is a good source. According to H. Wiley Hitchcock, "the book not only symbolizes the gospel-hymn movement of the later nineteenth century, but virtually embodies it between two covers."<sup>3</sup> In addition, several hymns from the collection continue to be sung in evangelical services today. Since *Gospel Hymns* contains some hymns that either 1) are not gospel hymns, or 2) do not fit the "invitation" genre in content, the scope of this research will be narrowed. Hymns evaluated will be limited to those written between 1820 and 1890, those which most readily fit the gospel hymn genre. In addition, the collection's own topical index will be used to determine those hymns which are "invitation" in nature. These topical headings, as they appear in the *Gospel Hymns* index, include: Christ Seeking, Christ Sought by the Sinner, Confession, Invitation,

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<sup>2</sup> A practice that is still common in evangelical worship today, particularly among Baptists.

<sup>3</sup> H. Wiley Hitchcock, "Introduction" to the 1972 reprint of *Gospel Hymns Nos. 1 to 6 Complete*. Ira Sankey, James McGranahan, and George C. Stebbins, *Gospel Hymns Nos. 1 to 6 Complete* (New York: Biglow & Main Co.; Cincinnati: John Church Co., 1895; rpt. New York: Da Capo Press, 1972), "Introduction."

Repentance, Salvation, and Warning. The hymns listed under these headings are the ones most closely associated with the invitational focus of conversion and salvation.

One should not assume that every hymn listed under the previously mentioned categories was automatically or frequently used as a hymn of invitation. However, given the content of the hymns' texts and the purpose of the invitation, it is probable that song leaders would have selected hymns from the categories listed above.

Finally, while the music of invitation hymns is obviously important in their selection and use, this study will be concerned principally with the texts of the hymns.

## Methodology

The primary focus of the thesis is on the hymns themselves. Hymns are evaluated and discussed along five primary categories:<sup>4</sup>

1. metaphors and imagery
2. scriptural allusions
3. overarching themes
4. hymn forms
5. fundamental theological themes.

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<sup>4</sup> See Sandra S. Sizer, *Gospel Hymns and Social Religion: The Rhetoric of Nineteenth-Century Revivalism* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1978). Sizer has provided the dominant categories within which to study and discuss gospel hymns, especially with regard to their use of metaphors. However, she has no discussion of their theological content, nor does she have any mention of hymns used specifically for the invitation.

Finally, the three most recently published Baptist hymnals are surveyed for their use of “invitation hymns.”<sup>5</sup> Since the mid-nineteenth century, the preacher and music leader have made up the integral leadership of Baptist worship services. Until recent times, the Baptist preacher (especially among Southern Baptists) has usually been expected to preach an evangelistic sermon that concludes with the traditional, revivalistic invitation.<sup>6</sup> Again, hymns surveyed are limited to those under the theme of invitation, conversion, and salvation. Since observations of congregational worship are not feasible, and since even the casual observer would notice the diversity and free nature of worship and congregational singing among Baptists, the group’s hymnals are analyzed in order to survey the modern invitational hymns sung by Baptists in America. Are there new metaphors, themes, and theological perspectives that are being explored?

## Overview

Chapter one deals with the development of the invitation in American revivalism and evangelicalism. This survey concludes with a description of its use in the Dwight L. Moody revivals, where Ira D. Sankey (a compiler of *Gospel Hymns*) served as song leader. Chapters two through seven address the texts of *Gospel Hymns* in terms of the categories discussed above, making observations based on the analysis of those hymns. Finally, in chapter eight, recently published Baptist

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<sup>5</sup> These hymnals include: Wesley L. Forbis, ed., *The Baptist Hymnal* (Nashville: Convention Press, 1991); Mike Harland, ed., *Baptist Hymnal* (Nashville: LifeWay Worship, 2008); John E. Simons, et. al., ed., *Celebrating Grace Hymnal* (Macon, GA: Celebrating Grace, Inc., 2010).

<sup>6</sup> Brian Brewer, “Hymns of Invitation in the Baptist Tradition: A Historical and Theological Comparison of American and Southern Baptist Hymns,” *The Hymn: A Journal of Congregational Song* 51, no. 3 (July 2000): 28-35.

hymnals are evaluated to determine the nature of the contemporary hymn of invitation.

## CHAPTER ONE

### The Public Invitation: A Historical Introduction and Survey

The evangelistic zeal of Baptists and other evangelicals is arguably one of their most defining characteristics.<sup>1</sup> Encouraging personal conversion, often described as the “born again” experience, is fundamental to the ministry life of evangelicals.<sup>2</sup> This is nowhere more pronounced than in their worship services. Near the close of the service, an invitation is offered by the preacher for any person to profess publicly a decision of faith or a recommitment to faith. While this practice is dying in some evangelical circles, even among Baptists for whom it has been a mainstay for over a century, for others it is still a key element of each Sunday service.

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<sup>1</sup> Not all Baptists self-describe as “evangelical.” Due to the diversity found among, autonomy of, and separatism of local Baptist congregations, there is no clear consensus among the group regarding this identification. However, most Baptists in America have been identified with the larger body of “evangelical,” even though some throughout history have repudiated the label. For further study on this question, see David W. Bebbington, *Baptists Through the Centuries: A History of a Global People* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2010); James Leo Garrett, Jr., E. Glenn Hinson, and James E. Tull, *Are Southern Baptists “Evangelicals”?* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1983); and Steve W. Lemke, “The Future of Southern Baptists as Evangelicals,” Conference lecture, Maintaining Baptist Distinctives Conference from Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, Cordova, TN, April 2005, <http://www.nobts.edu/Faculty/ItoR/LemkeSW/Personal/SBCfuture.pdf> (accessed June 29, 2012).

<sup>2</sup> Historical theologians Mark Noll and David Bebbington define “evangelical” by four hallmarks: conversionism, biblicism, crucicentrism, and activism. By “conversionism” they mean evangelicals believe that salvation and Christian identity require a personal conversion to Jesus Christ by repentance and faith. By “biblicism” they mean evangelicals believe the Bible is God’s Word written and authoritative for faith and life. By “crucicentrism” they mean evangelicals believe in salvation through the cross of Jesus Christ and engage in cross-centered devotion and piety. By “activism” they mean evangelicals believe in world transformation through evangelism, missions, and social activism. These hallmarks all presuppose a Protestant foundation of belief in scripture alone, faith alone, and the priesthood of every believer. Summarized by Roger Olson, e-mail message to writer, September 20, 2011. See also Mark A. Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism: The Age of Edwards, Whitefield, and the Wesleys* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2003).



Given the evangelical affinity for the Bible as the primary authority, or even sole authority as some would argue, for faith and practice, it is ironic that one cannot find clear instructions for the public invitation in Scripture. The average member of an evangelical congregation might assume that the practice spans all of church history, or at least from the sixteenth-century Reformation to the present. However, no scriptural mandate is given, and many historians suggest that it was not until the revivals of the eighteenth century that one can speak of the use of a formal and evangelical invitation in America.<sup>3</sup>

#### *The Eighteenth Century's Contributions to the Rise of the Public Invitation*

The First Great Awakening of the eighteenth century gave rise to several significant and influential preachers and theologians. Not since the magisterial reforms of Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli had the Protestant Church experienced such widespread developments. Preachers like Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield, and John Wesley all achieved fame in their own lifetimes. In the revivals of these preachers, one can find the beginnings of the invitation in America.

#### *Jonathan Edwards*

Although Jonathan Edwards's (1703-1758) life was comparatively short, his influence is still felt today throughout the evangelical realm. Edwards's

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<sup>3</sup> Brian Brewer, "Hymns of Invitation in the Baptist Tradition: A Historical and Theological Comparison of American and Southern Baptist Hymns," *The Hymn: A Journal of Congregational Song* 51, no. 3 (July 2000): 29.

contributions to theology, evangelism, and the Great Awakening laid the groundwork for what became the public invitation.<sup>4</sup>

Edwards was bothered by the indifference toward spiritual matters he witnessed in his Puritan, New England society. Although Puritans were known to be non-emotional in their faith, falling decidedly on the intellectual approach to God, Edwards viewed his community's present state as lifeless and in need of reviving. However, Edwards was also a staunch Calvinist. He spent much energy in refuting Arminianism, as well as any doctrine that might undermine God's sovereignty or promote the human will to do good. But the true Christian, he believed, could not rest on the promise of heaven due to her inclusion in the "elect." Affections, emotive signs of the Spirit's work in one's life, are essential to religion.<sup>5</sup> What was needed, Edwards surmised, was a more radical conversion experience.<sup>6</sup> Although it was likely not Edwards's intent, he forged a new doctrine of Calvinism that has been called "personalized Calvinism" or "evangelical Calvinism."<sup>7</sup> Edwards's evangelical Calvinism called for a personal decision on the part of the believer. However, his view did not make any concessions to the primary Arminian position; while Edwards's Calvinism and Arminianism both call for responses on the part of the person, Edwards insisted that only the Holy Spirit can act as the agent who guides

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<sup>4</sup> William Oscar Thompson, Jr., "The Public Invitation as a Method of Evangelism: Its Origin and Development" (PhD diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1979), 34.

<sup>5</sup> John E. Smith, Harry S. Stout, and Kenneth P. Minkema, eds., *A Jonathan Edwards Reader* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), xix.

<sup>6</sup> Sidney E. Mead, "Denominationalism: The Shape of Protestantism in America," *Church History* 23 No. 4 (December 1954): 307.

<sup>7</sup> Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Modern Age*, vol. 6 of *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2007), 139.

one into this type of action. Thus, no one is able to come to this decision on his or her own. Edwards insisted that God, in his sovereignty, might use certain means (like revivalistic preaching) to put an individual in a position where God's Spirit could guide the person to a conversion experience.

The significance of this theological nuance that undergirds Edwards's revivalism cannot be overestimated. Edwards preached with conviction. This passion often led listeners to emotional religious experiences, experiences that Edwards believed were vital to the spiritual health of believers. Edwards often appealed to fear and grief in services, urging the denunciation of specific sins. People would respond, sometimes immediately. It is reported that in one intense service, people began interrupting his preaching, "My God! What can we do to be saved?!"<sup>8</sup> He was not able to finish the sermon because of the congregation's desire for counseling and spiritual guidance.

However, while Edwards was a staunch advocate of the revivalistic approach which became prevalent during the First Great Awakening, the public invitation was not a part of his methodology. He did not call those seeking faith to the front at the close of a service. Instead, he requested that they meet with him privately for spiritual counsel.<sup>9</sup> At times, the numbers were so great that he was not able to meet with each one individually, so he also encouraged them to meet in small groups, learning from one another through prayer, singing, and meditation.<sup>10</sup> However,

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<sup>8</sup> Joseph Tracy, *The Great Awakening: A History of the Revival of Religion in the Time of Edwards and Whitefield* (Boston: Tappan and Dennet, 1842), 217.

<sup>9</sup> R. Alan Streett, *The Effective Invitation* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1984), 89.

<sup>10</sup> Thompson, "The Public Invitation," 38.

there is no record that Edwards ever called people forward for decision after preaching a sermon.<sup>11</sup> In fact, historical records suggest that many in Edwards's day scorned such a public and calculating call. In 1741, the Reverend Eleazer Wheelock of Lebanon, Connecticut, a fellow New Englander and contemporary of Edwards, led a service that grew so intense and emotional that he called "the distressed...to gather themselves together in the body of the seats below," nearer to the front so that he could "counsel...[and] exhort them."<sup>12</sup> However, the compiler of the record continues by noting that this exception should not have occurred:

But he ought not to have done it . . . And he should have known, that people thrown into such an uproar that he could not preach to them, were not capable of receiving benefit from private, personal directions...He should have sent his hearers home, to engage in solitary, serious thought, in reading the Bible and in prayer.<sup>13</sup>

He went on to claim that few who participated in Wheelock's method actually received comfort, since "in the mode [Wheelock] exemplified, false conversions were fearfully multiplied."<sup>14</sup>

Edwards, likewise, never supported such an uncritical acceptance of emotionalism in worship. It could occur, he admitted, that one could have true emotionalism without true conversion. While religious affections are essential, they must be tested.<sup>15</sup> Edwards's *Treatise Concerning Religious Affections* (1746) set an important standard in both heralding emotions as a vital part of religious

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>12</sup> Tracy, *Great Awakening*, 167.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 167-168.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 168.

<sup>15</sup> Smith, et al., *Jonathan Edwards*, xix.

experience, but also providing signs through which affections could be tested as true or false. By insisting on individual or small group counseling as a part of the revival experience, Edwards could guide the seeker to a true conversion. Thus his methods did call for a physical response on the part of listeners, but he did not initiate the public liturgical responses that became normative in later revival practices. Nevertheless, Edwards's contributions to the development of a public invitation are significant: a theology that emphasized personal faith and conversion, an emphasis on emotions as vital to spiritual renewal, preaching that expected listeners to respond, and preaching that compelled listeners to seek guidance from the preacher.<sup>16</sup> All of these factors played key roles in the later revivalism that promoted the formal public invitation.

### *George Whitefield*

George Whitefield (1714-1770) travelled throughout the American colonies and Great Britain as an itinerant preacher and evangelist. He was a contemporary and friend of both Edwards and the Wesleys. Whitefield was not an innovative theologian and so is often remembered in the shadow of both Edwards and John Wesley. However, Whitefield's preaching epitomized the style that became standard during the First Great Awakening. As a famous preacher known throughout the American colonies and Great Britain, Whitefield achieved a level of

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<sup>16</sup> Thompson, "The Public Invitation," 44.

fame among his contemporaries that was unsurpassed, even by figures like George Washington and Benjamin Franklin.<sup>17</sup>

George Whitefield's conversion experience was the impetus to his preaching career. Although he took religion and faith seriously, it was not until his participation in the Holy Club, of which the Wesley brothers served as both founders and leaders, during his tenure as a student at Oxford that he experienced what he believed was a genuine conversion. Through his studies with the Holy Club, Whitefield had the realization that he "must be born again," an understanding that impassioned him spiritually. Urging the "born again" experience became the overarching catalyst to both his public and private calling:

... Mr. Charles Wesley, he put a book into my hands, called, *The Life of God in the Soul of Man*, whereby God shewed [sic] me, that I must be born again, or be damned. I know the place: it may be superstitious, perhaps, but whenever I go to Oxford, I cannot help running to that place where Jesus Christ first revealed himself to me, and gave me the new birth. ... read a little further, and the cheat was discovered ... it is a vital union with the Son of God, Christ formed in the heart ... and from that moment God has been carrying on his blessed work in my soul.<sup>18</sup>

Soon after this experience, people began flocking to hear Whitefield preach. Due to his extraordinary pulpit ability, he became a national figure within a year.<sup>19</sup> "The people grow," he expressed, "too fond of me."<sup>20</sup> The crowds of London were

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<sup>17</sup> Benjamin Franklin even enabled this level of fame by regularly publishing Whitefield's sermons and journals. Although Franklin was a Deist, he enthusiastically supported Whitefield's evangelistic ministry and preaching. See Walter Isaacson, *Benjamin Franklin: An American Life* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2003), 110-113.

<sup>18</sup> Samuel Drew and Joseph Smith, eds., *Sermons on Important Subjects by the Rev. George Whitefield, with a Memoir by the Author* (London: Henry Fisher, Son, and P. Jackson, 1828), 755.

<sup>19</sup> Thompson, "The Public Invitation," 45.

<sup>20</sup> Arnold A. Dallimore, *George Whitefield: God's Anointed Servant in the Great Revival of the Eighteenth Century* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1990), 25.

attracted to his preaching of a “new birth.” However, many clergymen grew jealous of Whitefield’s popularity. Consequently, the Church of England closed their doors to his preaching.<sup>21</sup> So Whitefield took to “field preaching,” a practice that would become common for the revivalists of the First Great Awakening. Against the state church’s dominion and authority, Whitefield insisted that “any place is consecrated where Christ is present.”<sup>22</sup> Whitefield saw himself as simply obeying the scriptural commandment to preach the gospel to all the world found in Mark 16:15; his license came from God, rather than the ecclesial hierarchy. How else could the minister “go forth, and seek after the children of God that are dispersed in this naughty world”?<sup>23</sup> His early field preaching experiences were surprising nevertheless, even for Whitefield himself:

After dinner, therefore, I went upon a mount, and spake to as many People as came unto me. They were upwards to Two Hundred. Blessed be God, *I have now broke the ice: I believe I was never more acceptable to my Master than when I was standing to teach those Hearers in the open Fields.*<sup>24</sup>

John and Charles Wesley, friends of Whitefield from Oxford’s Holy Club, had sailed to the colony of Georgia in 1735 as missionaries, with Charles also acting as secretary to Governor Oglethorpe. John issued Whitefield an invitation to join them in 1738. Whitefield accepted the offer, believing that he was not ready for the

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<sup>21</sup> Thompson, “The Public Invitation,” 45.

<sup>22</sup> Drew, et al., *Sermons on Important Subjects*, 651.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 650.

<sup>24</sup> Steward C. Henry, *George Whitefield: Wayfaring Witness* (New York: Abington Press, 1957), 48.

responsibilities of ministry in England and that a period of ministry in Georgia would provide him with some much needed experience.<sup>25</sup>

Even before Whitefield reached America, he had garnered fame there. Back in England, people were being turned away from his services for lack of room.<sup>26</sup> This was due to his phenomenal skill as an orator and preacher. One commentator describes his preaching style:

[It was] natural and clear, animated and pathetic, which sometimes the intensity of pathos rendered truly sublime. He poured them forth in a voice of wonderful flexibility, compass and power, and accompanied with the most graceful, impressive and appropriate action. In look, attitude, gesture, intonation,—in all that constitutes the *manner* of an orator, the world probably never saw his superior, perhaps, never his equal.<sup>27</sup>

Whitefield's preaching left an indelible mark upon colonial America and England. Some have suggested that Whitefield introduced an altogether new form of preaching to the Great Awakening revivals. Instead of doctrine, stated and developed, he preached the Bible in dramatic, narrative forms. He would often include singing, weeping, and theatrical gestures as part of his delivery.<sup>28</sup> Although he is remembered for the dramatic preaching that attracted thousands to his revivals, his methods of evangelism and the theology that provided the impetus echoed that of Edwards. Like Edwards, Whitefield was an evangelical Calvinist. He agreed that a response was necessary on the part of the person; having a "born

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<sup>25</sup> Dallimore, *George Whitefield*, 26.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> Tracy, *Great Awakening*, 45.

<sup>28</sup> Thompson, "The Public Invitation," 47.



again” experience was crucial.<sup>29</sup> And as a Calvinist, he agreed that it is the Holy Spirit that guides one to this experience. The climate of revivalism in which he preached as well as the passionate urging of a real conversion experience made the use of an evangelistic invitation necessary for Whitefield. Many of Whitefield’s sermons closed with an invitation to repent and be converted:

You young people, I charge you to consider; God help you to repent and be converted, who woo’s and invites you. You middle-aged people, O that you would repent and be converted. You old gray-headed people, Lord make you repent and be converted, that you may thereby prove that your sins are blotted out . . . O God bless his work on you, that you may blossom and bring forth fruits unto God. Amen and Amen.<sup>30</sup>

There is no evidence that Whitefield gave an invitation where he initiated the public response of people coming forward. Like Edwards, he urged listeners to make appointments to meet with him privately.<sup>31</sup> However, it appears that he did desire a physical response to his preaching the gospel. He would even get frustrated when he noted little response following a service:

At Portsmouth . . . I began to question whether I had been speaking to rational or brute creatures. Seeing no immediate effects of the word preached, I was a little dejected; but God, to comfort my heart, sent one young man, crying out in great anguish of spirit, “What shall I do to be saved?”<sup>32</sup>

Whitefield’s preaching style and emphasis on “new birth” conversion was a primary catalyst for the First Great Awakening revivals. His emphasis on

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<sup>29</sup> Dallimore, *George Whitefield*, 17.

<sup>30</sup> Drew, et al., *Sermons on Important Subjects*, 670.

<sup>31</sup> Streett, *The Effective Invitation*, 90.

<sup>32</sup> Tracy, *Great Awakening*, 94.

regeneration and his desire to see immediate effects on his listener were important impulses towards the rise of the public invitation.

### *John Wesley*

What Jonathan Edwards was to America, John Wesley (1703-1791) was to England. Both were born in the same year and both contributed greatly to the shaping and development of theology among the revivalists and evangelicals of their respective countries and beyond.

Although Wesley was raised in a family with deep faith convictions, his “heartwarming conversion” occurred in England in 1738. Referred to as the “Aldersgate Experience,” in the Methodist tradition it stands as the equivalent of Paul’s conversion experience on the Damascus road.<sup>33</sup> While visiting a Moravian meeting in Aldersgate Street, London, in which he heard a reading of Martin Luther’s preface to the *Epistle to the Romans*, he wrote the now famous lines, “I felt my heart strangely warmed,” a feeling that eventually revolutionized and shaped his subsequent ministry.<sup>34</sup> He sensed that all needed this heartwarming experience, to have Christ not simply in the head or intellect, but also in the heart.

John was ordained in the Anglican Church, but he soon realized that his new, revivalistic ministry was not welcome in the Church of England. Although he was raised and ordained in the tradition, Anglican clergy began locking their church doors when they heard John Wesley was coming to preach. Wesley began

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<sup>33</sup> Albert C. Outler, ed., *John Wesley* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 51.

<sup>34</sup> Frederick Dreyer, *The Genesis of Methodism* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1999), 27.

emphasizing the personal side of faith, this heartfelt conversion that could radically alter one's daily life. Like his friend, George Whitefield, Wesley believed that the "new birth" was a necessary component of one's justification and salvation.<sup>35</sup> In addition, this new birth experience was available to all; Wesley consistently preached "free salvation by faith [in] the blood of Christ."<sup>36</sup> This democratic message did not attract his fellow clergymen who increasingly ostracized Wesley from their fellowship. Later, Wesley's followers realized that they could not continue practicing their faith within the Church of England and that an official break was necessary.

Although Wesley was ordained into a high-church liturgical environment, he employed the revivalistic methods common among other preachers of the Great Awakening. His preaching evoked intense emotion, even physical signs of response like weeping, trembling, and fainting. Wesley welcomed these responses, receiving them as proofs of the divine presence.<sup>37</sup> Nearly all of Wesley's sermons concluded with a passionate appeal for a decision of faith such as the following:

If you have not already experienced this inward work of God, be your continual prayer, 'Lord, add this to all thy blessings: let me be "born again." . . . Only give me this: to be "born of the Spirit"! To be received among the children of God. Let me be born, "not of corruptible seed, but incorruptible, by the Word of God . . ." And then let me daily "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!"<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> John Wesley, "The New Birth," in *John Wesley's Sermons: An Anthology*, ed. Albert C. Outler and Richard P. Heitzenrater (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991), 336.

<sup>36</sup> Thompson, "The Public Invitation," 74.

<sup>37</sup> Tracy, *Great Awakening*, 224.

<sup>38</sup> Wesley, "The New Birth," 345.

There is no evidence that Wesley invited people forward in a service to profess publicly this decision. However, he did employ unique methods to encourage the decision of conversion. There were instances in which Wesley spoke directly to an individual in a service:

I asked him abruptly, "Sir, are you a sinner?" He replied, with a deep and broken voice, "Sinner enough," and continued staring upwards, till his wife and a servant or two, who were all in tears, put him into his chaise and carried him home.<sup>39</sup>

Wesley employed other unique means, methods that played a significant role in the development of the public invitation. Like both Edwards and Whitefield, Wesley ended most of his sermons with an appeal for listeners to be converted. However, Wesley, more than his contemporary counterparts, employed other specific methods which can be directly linked to the rise of the public invitation. First, Wesley employed exhorters or personal workers to be on the lookout for anxious souls during the church service. He organized these workers into leaders who could exhort and teach, but could not preach.<sup>40</sup> These exhorters encouraged prospects to make decisions of faith. A second method was to call upon seekers to attend a mid-week prayer service, as a sign of their interest in the faith.<sup>41</sup> A third method, and precursor to the public invitation, was Wesley's invitation for seekers to step forward publicly in a service in order to present themselves for church

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<sup>39</sup> John Wesley, *The Journal of the Rev. John Wesley* (London: J. Kershaw, 1827), 362.

<sup>40</sup> Thompson, "The Public Invitation," 76.

<sup>41</sup> Streett, *The Effective Invitation*, 92.

membership.<sup>42</sup> Finally, Wesley employed a “mourner’s bench” or “anxious seat.”<sup>43</sup> This practice predates Charles Finney’s use of the mourner’s bench by more than fifty years.<sup>44</sup> The mourner’s bench was located in the front and was reserved for those seeking spiritual counsel and prayer. John’s brother, Charles, referred to the practice, “Oh, that blessed anxious seat,” the first traceable use of the phrase in church history.<sup>45</sup>

When Wesley died, there were 240 Methodist societies, with 541 itinerant preachers, and 134,549 society members in good standing.<sup>46</sup> Wesley had already begun moving toward public responses as a norm for his services. His early followers went even further, as they adapted their methodology to meet the evolving needs of their congregations. In early Methodism, the “altar call” became a means of dealing with those seeking spiritual help.<sup>47</sup> Thus, at least among Methodists at the turn of the century, a public invitation was often employed as a means to urge seekers to conversion and faith.

### *The Nineteenth Century and the Public Invitation*

The nineteenth century ushered in a new wave of revivals. By the end of the eighteenth century, the urgency and impetus of the First Great Awakening had

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> C. E. Autrey, *Basic Evangelism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), 130.

<sup>44</sup> Streett, *The Effective Invitation*, 92.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Thompson, “The Public Invitation,” 76.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

declined. After a period of intensity, there was a drought of interest in the church. However, new evangelists stepped in to revive the spiritual hearts and minds of people. This Second Great Awakening differed from the First. It was largely confined to America, and there, was most popular in the frontier. Second, it was a religiously ecumenical endeavor. Leaders from nearly all Protestant denominations in America at the time participated, sometimes even collaborating with one another. Third, most of the leaders expressed an Arminian form of soteriology or, at the least, a modified Calvinistic one. While this orientation was certainly not new, it was the first time it had been widely promoted by prominent ministers in America. Finally, a near obsession among some revivalists of the period with the Second Advent of Jesus, which they believed would herald a new millennial age, left an indelible mark on the theology and practice of the Second Great Awakening.

While the movement produced several significant leaders, Charles Finney emerged as the quintessential revival figure. Remembered as “The Father of Modern Revivalism,”<sup>48</sup> Finney was an innovative revivalist and helped popularize the practice of the public invitation.

### *Charles Finney*

Charles Finney (1792-1875) was brought up in a religious family of Congregationalists. However, soon after his conversion, while preparing for the ordination examination of the Presbyterian Church, Finney expressed his

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<sup>48</sup> Barry Hankins, *The Second Great Awakening and the Transcendentalists* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2004), 187.

reservations with the Calvinism he was raised to believe. His pastor-teachers did not satisfy his questions, so Finney took to his own study of the Bible:

Often . . . I would go to my room and spend a long time on my knees a great deal during those days of conflict, beseeching the Lord to teach me his own mind on these points . . . My views took on a positive type but slowly. At first I found myself to receive his peculiar views; and then gradually formed views of my own in opposition to them, which appeared to me to be unequivocally taught in the Bible.<sup>49</sup>

Although Finney had expressed his reservations with his pastor, Finney was still permitted to take the ordination examination, which he passed. He was admitted to the Presbytery in 1823.<sup>50</sup>

Surprisingly, Finney did not read the Westminster Confession of Faith, the creed which formed the doctrinal basis of his denomination until after he was licensed to preach. When he finally came to read the confession, one based upon the Calvinistic system with which he was so uncomfortable, he expressed his distaste:

When I came to read the confession of faith, and saw the passages that were quoted to sustain these peculiar positions, I was absolute ashamed of it. I could not feel any respect for a document that would undertake to impose on mankind such dogmas as those, sustained, for the most part, by passages of Scripture that were totally irrelevant; and not in a single instance sustained by passages which, in a court of law, would have considered at all conclusive.<sup>51</sup>

Finney's independent approach to problems and theological issues helped foster his innovative approach to preaching and evangelism that would become a hallmark of his efforts in the Second Great Awakening revivals.

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<sup>49</sup> Charles G. Finney, *Memoirs of Rev. Charles G. Finney* (New York: A. S. Barnes & Co., 1876), 54.

<sup>50</sup> Thompson, "The Public Invitation," 166.

<sup>51</sup> Finney, *Memoirs*, 60.

As an evangelistic preacher, Charles Finney was successful. This was perhaps due in part to his career as a trial lawyer before his conversion.<sup>52</sup> He was able to produce powerful sermons delivered in a conversational style that often convinced people of their need for conversion. He employed “New Measures” that, although not without considerable controversy, proved successful in leading Finney to national fame.<sup>53</sup>

The chief impetus behind Finney’s “new measures” was his affirmation of an Arminian view of human nature and soteriology. While every human is a sinner, each of us is responsible solely for our own sin. Furthermore, each person has the power and liberty of choice in the matter of who they will serve and how they will live.<sup>54</sup> Finney detested the idea that original sin made one completely incapable of moving God-ward. Any holiness or spiritual maturity found among humans must be voluntary, or it is not true holiness.<sup>55</sup> He began preaching this idea and in 1834 published it explicitly in his collection *Sermons on Various Subjects*. The sermon titles reflect his theological orientation: “Sinners Bound to Change Their Own Hearts” and “How to Change Your Heart.”<sup>56</sup> Since the sinner plays a vital role in his or her conversion, Finney believed he should make every effort to move the person toward this decision of faith.

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<sup>52</sup> Streett, *The Effective Invitation*, 95.

<sup>53</sup> Hankins, *The Second Great Awakening*, 16.

<sup>54</sup> Charles E. Hambrick-Stowe, *Charles G. Finney and the Spirit of American Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996), 79-80.

<sup>55</sup> Charles G. Finney, *Lectures on Revivals of Religion* (New York: Leavitt, Lord & Co., 1835), 383.

<sup>56</sup> Hambrick-Stowe, *Charles G. Finney*, 79.



What “new measures” did Finney employ? These methods included advance advertisement for revival meetings, the anxious bench where those who were agonizing over the state of their souls could sit to reflect on their spiritual condition, praying for people by name in public services, holding protracted meetings and services, and permitting women to pray publicly in the presence of men.<sup>57</sup> Of all the “new measures,” the anxious seat in conjunction with the protracted meeting proved to be the most influential with regard to the public invitation.

By “anxious seat,” Finney meant “the appointment of some particular seat in the place of meeting, where the anxious may come and be addressed particularly, and be made subjects of prayer, and sometimes conversed with individually.”<sup>58</sup> Finney saw this as an initial step of the sinner’s making a “new heart”; if she admits her spiritual troubles publicly, she is moving toward conversion.<sup>59</sup> While Finney insisted that the “protracted meeting” was nothing new, his frequent use of long services served to encourage further responses from the people. “Our business should always be made to yield to God’s business,” was Finney’s defense of a protracted meeting.<sup>60</sup> In his later ministry, Finney went a step further, abandoning the use of the anxious seat and simply inviting seeking sinners to the front to discuss their spiritual state and need for salvation.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Hankins, *Charles G. Finney*, 16.

<sup>58</sup> Finney, *Lectures on Revivals*, 247.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> Finney, *Lectures on Revivals*, 243.

<sup>61</sup> Streett, *The Effective Invitation*, 96.

Finney maintained that these measures were needed to induce people to step out from among the masses and confess their sins.<sup>62</sup> Finney pushed all of his “new measures,” along with their supporting theology, into widespread use. He almost single-handedly decided the course of the Second Great Awakening revivals and fostered the subsequent use of the public invitation as a frequently employed method of evangelism.

### *Dwight L. Moody*

What Finney was to the Second Great Awakening, D. L. Moody (1837-1899) was to late nineteenth-century evangelism. The turn of the century brought evangelicalism to a high in America; this was due in large part to the efforts of Moody. The public invitation played a significant role in the ministry of Moody and subsequent twentieth-century evangelicals who followed his path.

Moody’s theology was simple and modest. He remarked to reporters who asked about his theological creed, “My creed is in print . . . in the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah,”<sup>63</sup> the crux of which says, “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquities of us all.” In fact, one commentator reported that “Mr. Moody’s practice is to give theology in very small doses and religion in as large quantities as the patient can bear.”<sup>64</sup> Moody rarely affirmed more doctrine than what he saw as the core of the gospel: that Christ was sent to redeem humans from their sins, and that through Him

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<sup>62</sup> Thompson, “The Public Invitation,” 115.

<sup>63</sup> William R. Moody, *The Life of D. L. Moody* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co, 1900), 227.

<sup>64</sup> Edgar Johnson Goodspeed, *A Full History of the Wonderful Career of Moody and Sankey* (London: John O. Robinson, 1876), 403.

[Christ] is the only way by which the world can be saved.<sup>65</sup> Rather than viewing his evangelistic methods as a result of his theology, one can trace the catalyst behind Moody's approach to an event, one that shaped his subsequent ministry and the history of the public invitation.<sup>66</sup> Moody recounts the event that occurred in 1871 himself:

I had been for five nights preaching upon the life of Christ. I took him from the cradle and followed him up to the point in the judgment hall, and on that occasion I consider I made as great a blunder as ever I made in my life. If I could recall my act I would give this right hand. It was upon that memorable night in October, and the Court House bell was sounding an alarm of fire but I paid no attention to it. You know we were accustomed to hear the fire bell often, and it didn't disturb us much when it sounded. I finished the sermon upon "What shall I do with Jesus?" and I said to the audience, "Now, I want you to take the question with you, think over it, and next Sunday I want you to come back and tell me what you are going to do with it." What a mistake! It seems now as if Satan was in my mind when I said this. Since then I never have dared given an audience a week to think of their salvation. If they were lost they might rise up in judgment against me. "Now is the accepted time." We went down stairs to the other meeting, and I remember what Mr. Sankey was singing, and how his voice rang when he came to that pleading verse:

Today the Saviour calls:  
For refuge fly,  
The storm of justice falls,  
And death is nigh.

After the meeting we went home. I remember going down La Salle street with a young man who is probably in the hall tonight, and saw the glare of the flames. I said to the young man: "This means ruin to Chicago." About one o'clock Farwell Hall went; soon the church in which I had preached went down, and everything was scattered. I never saw that audience again.<sup>67</sup>

Moody's son, William, recounted that from that time on, Moody "laid great stress on the after-meeting, which took place at the close of an evangelistic address, in which

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 127.

<sup>67</sup> Goodspeed, *Career of Moody and Sankey*, 586.

he tried to bring individual souls to an immediate decision” of faith.<sup>68</sup> William believed this practice was the most “original feature” of his father’s work.

Moody saw the use of an “inquiry room,” the name given to these after-meetings, as a thoroughly biblical approach to evangelism. Christ himself encouraged questioning and inquiry after delivering a message to the people, he defended.<sup>69</sup> Moody believed that every sermon should intend to bring penitent sinners to a decision of faith. However, one could not be sure of the congregation’s understanding if a time of questioning and personal conversation were not included in the process:

“Personal dealing is of the most vital importance,” said Mr. Moody in discussing the inquiry-room and its uses. “No one can tell how many souls have been lost through lack of following up the preaching of the Gospel by personal work. It is deplorable how few church members are qualified to deal with inquirers. And yet that is the work in which they ought to aid the pastor most efficiently. People are not usually converted under the preaching of the minister. It is in the inquiry meeting that they are most likely to be brought to Christ.”<sup>70</sup>

Although Moody preached to the masses, he saw services as consisting of individuals. The individual’s soul was his primary concern. Moody’s method for delivering the invitation varied. Most often, at the conclusion of the service, Moody would ask for all who wanted to be saved to stand.<sup>71</sup> Other times, Moody would ask for a verbal response, “I will.” There are also accounts that he asked seekers to

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<sup>68</sup> Moody, *The Life of D. L. Moody*, 488.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 489.

<sup>70</sup> Moody, *Life of D. L. Moody*, 488.

<sup>71</sup> Streett, *The Effective Invitation*, 98.

move to the front row or to come forward and shake his hand.<sup>72</sup> No matter the method, if no one answered the initial appeal, Moody would ask again, more fervently, “No one! What! No sinner in this vast assembly who wants to become a Christian!”<sup>73</sup> At times, Moody would move through the aisles, motioning for more people to stand.<sup>74</sup> Seekers answered the bolder appeals. When Moody deemed that the appropriate number of people had stood, the benediction was given and the rest of the congregation was dismissed. Upon arrival to the inquiry room, each seeker was greeted by his or her own Moody-trained counselor.<sup>75</sup>

Although Moody was the force and preacher behind his evangelistic services, one cannot ignore the crucial role his song leader, Ira Sankey, played in impressing the hearts of multitudes through song. Moody felt that devotionally stirring music was a necessity of public worship, an important aid to preaching. Truth may be expressed in speech or in song and, Moody admitted, it is often made greatly attractive when presented in song.<sup>76</sup> Many viewed Moody and Sankey as a team; Moody would “preach” the gospel, and Sankey would “sing” the gospel.<sup>77</sup> It was their combined effort that aided their effectiveness. Of Sankey, one critic remarked:

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<sup>72</sup> Thompson, “The Public Invitation,” 132-133.

<sup>73</sup> Rufus Wheelwright Clark, *The Work of God in Great Britain: Under Messrs. Moody and Sankey, 1873 to 1875* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1875), 295.

<sup>74</sup> Streett, *The Effective Invitation*, 98.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Clark, *The Work of God in Great Britain*, 48.

<sup>77</sup> Ira D. Sankey, *My Life and the Story of the Gospel Hymns* (Philadelphia: The Sunday School Times Company, 1906), 50.

Possessed of a voice of great volume and richness, he expresses with skill and pathos the Gospel message, in words very simple, but replete with love and tenderness, and always with marked effect upon his audience . . . But the secret of Mr. Sankey's power lies, not in his gift of song, but in the spirit of which the song is only the expression . . . Like his colleague, he likewise has a message to lost men from God the Father; and the Spirit of God in him finds a willing and effective instrument in his gift of song, to proclaim in stirring notes the mighty love of God in Christ Jesus.<sup>78</sup>  
Sankey's singing led individuals to sense their need for conversion.

Numerous accounts exist in which people share how they were convicted as a result of the song-messages of Sankey:

'It was a few evenings ago,' said a youth in the Young Men's Meeting in Roby chapel, 'when Mr. Sankey was singing in the Free Trade Hall, "Jesus of Nazareth passeth by," that I was made to feel my need of a Saviour . . . and I took to my heart there and then.'

'I was in great darkness and trouble for some days,' said a poor woman, 'and when Mr. Sankey was singing these words, "And Jesus bids me come," my bonds were broken in a moment, and now I am safe in his arms.'<sup>79</sup>

Eventually, the practice of Sankey's singing a solo or leading a congregational song immediately following the "earnest gospel address" became common.<sup>80</sup> In fact, Sankey is the first to report the use of a hymn as an invitation.<sup>81</sup> In some instances, people were immediately moved after hearing the song. Many were stirred by the new hymns, many of which they had never heard before. In his autobiography, Sankey reports many examples in which seekers were moved to accept the

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 48-49.

<sup>79</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, 49.

<sup>80</sup> Sankey, *My Life*, 56.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 144. No other use of equating a "hymn" with the "invitation" was found among other evangelists.

invitation due to the singing of gospel hymns.<sup>82</sup> In rare cases, when Moody could not lead the service due to sickness, Sankey even led the service himself. Sankey was convinced that his singing could convey the gospel truth powerfully.<sup>83</sup> Moody apparently agreed. Sankey commended Moody for his unique and successful use of the “service of praise,” Sankey’s term for the song service.<sup>84</sup>

The significance of Sankey’s use of gospel hymns is evident in the popularity of his collection, *Gospel Hymns*. The evangelistic preaching style of Moody, accompanied by the emotionally stirring song leading of Sankey, solidified the popular practice of the public invitation for decades. In addition, as a result of the teamwork of Moody and Sankey, the song leader’s role in aiding the delivery of an invitation was affirmed as the most effective method among revivalists in the late nineteenth century. Sankey’s use of a “hymn of invitation” was an effective and powerful means of outreach. It is to these invitation hymns that we now turn.

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<sup>82</sup> See *ibid.*, 125, 141, 144, etc.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

## CHAPTER TWO

### *Gospel Hymns Nos. 1 to 6 and the Hymn of Invitation: An Overview*

Most of the hymns Sankey sang as a part of the Moody revivals belong to the larger genre of “gospel hymn” or “gospel song.” Many attempts have been made to define “gospel hymn” to differentiate it from more standard or classic hymn forms. This task is challenging since “gospel hymn” can designate not only a genre of hymnody, but a musical style, a movement, and a performance tradition.<sup>1</sup>

As a genre of hymnody, one must analyze its origin. Gospel songs arose largely in nineteenth-century revivalistic settings: camp meetings, the Sunday School movement, and professional evangelism campaigns like those of Moody and Sankey. These settings reflect the change in theology, change in musical style and practices, and the emphasis on evangelism that was a catalyst to nineteenth-century revivalism. They also give some clues as to what typifies a “gospel hymn.” Church music historian Donald Hustad suggests that this collection could be called “experience hymns” since they deal with basic ideas of the gospel such as sin, grace, and redemption, which affect the human experience.<sup>2</sup> In addition, many take the form of a personal testimony or witness. Textually, the content is more simple than that of a standard hymn; it is limited in theological scope, less challenging to the

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<sup>1</sup> Esther Heidi Rothenbusch, “The Role of *Gospel Hymns Nos. 1 to 6* (1875-1894) in American Revivalism” (PhD diss., The University of Michigan, 1991), 10.

<sup>2</sup> Donald P. Hustad, *Jubilate II: Church Music in Worship and Renewal* (Carol Stream: Hope Publishing, 1993), 233.



intellect and imagination, and often repetitive.<sup>3</sup> This description applies to most of the hymnody written by revivalists in the nineteenth century. However, the term “gospel hymn” did not gain wide acceptance until Sankey and his associates published *Gospel Hymns and Sacred Songs* in 1875.<sup>4</sup> The term was later addressed in the 1920 American supplement to *Grove’s Dictionary of Music and Musicians*:

‘GOSPEL HYMNS.’ The title of a series of evangelistic hymn-books with tunes published in 1875-91. Their remarkable vogue caused the name to be popularly applied to all hymns and tunes of a similar type.<sup>5</sup>

*Grove’s* entry notes that the term was first used in reference to P. Bliss’s *Gospel Songs*, a collection compiled and published in 1874, a year before Sankey’s *Gospel Hymns* was published. Bliss’s collection was significantly influential on Sankey, providing him with the bulk of his repertory during his ministry with Moody.<sup>6</sup> However, it was *Gospel Hymns* that eventually “embodied [the genre] between two covers.”<sup>7</sup>

### *Overview of Study*

While there are certain common characteristics of gospel hymns, the genre, including the collection in *Gospel Hymns Nos. 1 to 6* (GH1-6), is diverse in both texts

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Rothenbusch, “The Role of *Gospel Hymns*,” 4.

<sup>5</sup> *Grove’s Dictionary of Music and Musicians: American Supplement* (New York: MacMillan Company, 1920), s.v. “Gospel Hymn.”

<sup>6</sup> Rothenbusch, “The Role of *Gospel Hymns*,” 7.

<sup>7</sup> H. Wiley Hitchcock, “Introduction” to the 1972 reprint of *Gospel Hymns Nos. 1 to 6 Complete*. Ira Sankey, James McGranahan, and George C. Stebbins, *Gospel Hymns Nos. 1 to 6 Complete* (New York: Biglow & Main Co.; Cincinnati: John Church Co., 1895; rpt. New York: Da Capo Press, 1972), “Introduction.”

and tunes.<sup>8</sup> The preface of GH1-6 classifies its contents into two main groups: “In addition to the large number of Gospel Hymns and Sacred Songs . . . there will also be found over 125 of the most useful and popular Standard Hymns and Tunes of the Church.”<sup>9</sup> Compilers included whatever they found useful for the purposes of their revivals. This study looks at texts of GH1-6 which fit the “invitation” form in content, songs that might have been used as the “hymn of invitation” in the revivals of Moody and Sankey, as well as others who followed their methods. Evaluated hymns fall under certain headings in the *Gospel Hymns* index, those most closely associated with the process of conversion and salvation: Christ Seeking, Christ Sought by the Sinner, Confession, Invitation, Repentance, Salvation, and Warning. Hymns are analyzed along five primary categories:

1. Metaphors and Imagery
2. Scriptural Allusions
3. Overarching Themes
4. Hymn Forms
5. Fundamental Theological Themes

The major work on gospel hymn texts as presented in *Gospel Hymns Nos. 1 to 6* is by literary scholar Sandra Sizer (1978). Sizer treated the content of gospel hymn texts from the standpoint of rhetorical criticism. She conducted a systematic comparison of GH1-6 and four earlier hymnals in order to trace the continuation

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<sup>8</sup> As stated in the preface, this study will be concerned principally with the texts of invitation hymns, although the music of invitation hymns is obviously important in their selection and use.

<sup>9</sup> Ira D. Sankey, James McGranahan and Geo. C. Stebbins, *Gospel Hymns Nos. 1 to 6 Complete without Duplicates* (Cincinnati: The John Church Co., and New York: The Biglow & Main Co., 1895), 2.

and evolution of earlier themes and metaphors in gospel hymns. Susan Tamke (1978) conducted a similar study of British Victorian hymnody from a strictly literary and historical standpoint. Both works are particularly valuable for their provision of a sociological, literary, and historical evaluation of hymns from the nineteenth century. Hymns comprise a body of popular literature, one that has effected an immediate impact and long-range influence on their given cultures and societies. Both Sizer and Tamke legitimize the scholarly work performed in this area. This thesis seeks to offer examples of hymn texts that are invitational in nature as well as analyses of texts according to the categories noted above. In addition, unlike Sizer's and Tamke's studies, this thesis will address the theology presented in the texts, since theology affected the practice of pastors and evangelists who utilized gospel hymns as a public invitation in their services.

Table 1 provides a list of all the hymns evaluated.

TABLE 1  
Hymns Evaluated in *Gospel Hymns Nos. 1 to 6*

Hymn Number	Title
5	'Tis the Promise of God
8	Where are the Nine?
9	Jesus of Nazareth
10	Calling Now
12	The Gate Ajar
13	Once for All
23	Bless Me Now!
28	Tell Me the Old, Old Story
30	I Love to Tell the Story
35	Grace, 'Tis a Charming Sound
38	White as Snow
44	A Sinner Forgiven

*Table 1 continued*

Hymn Number	Title
46	Wishing, Hoping, Knowing
49	Fully Persuaded
51	Light After Darkness
52	No Other Name
55	O Come to the Saviour
59	Come, Sing the Gospel's Joyful Sound
66	Only a Step to Jesus
72	Call Them In!
73	I Bring My Sins to Thee
74	Song of Salvation
77	Just a Word for Jesus
78	We're Marching to Canaan
83	Fresh from the Throne
85	I Stood Outside the Gate
89	Seeking to Save
93	In the Silent Midnight
100	The Mistakes of My Life
101	Come, for the Feast
104	The Valley of Blessing
109	Jesus is Mighty to Save
111	Expostulation
115	Out of the Ark
117	What Shall I Do?
121	Long in Darkness
122	Jesus Calls Thee!
125	The Gospel Bells
127	Ye Must Be Born Again
128	Cut It Down!
130	Why Do You Wait?
131	Is Jesus Able to Redeem?
139	Fierce and Wild
140	Saved by the Blood
142	Christ for Me
145	Fix Your Eyes Upon Jesus
148	The Gospel Trumpet's Sounding
157	Mine!
159	It is Finished!
163	How Sweet the Word
165	The Prize is Set Before Us
167	Good News
171	There is Joy Among the Angels
176	The Pearl of Greatest Price
178	Ho, Every One that Thirsteth

*Table 1 continued*

Hymn Number	Title
184	Are You Coming Home?
185	Where is Thy Refuge
187	He that Believeth
190	The Gospel of Thy Grace
195	Nothing but the Blood
197	Come, Prodigal, Come!
210	My Soul Will Overcome
213	Say, Are You Ready?
222	I Hear the Words
224	I Am Coming
226	Take Me as I Am
227	Doers of the Word
231	I Never Knew You!
236	Who is on the Lord's Side?
239	We Take the Guilty Sinner's Name
243	Not What These Hands
245	Come Believing!
246	Sound the Alarm!
249	Tell Me More About Jesus
257	Once More, My Soul
262	I Am the Door
264	Along the River of Time
267	Come, Thou Weary
273	Behold, a Fountain
274	Come, with Thy Sins
276	O Wonderful Words
280	Jesus, My Saviour
281	Out of My Bondage
283	Who Came Down?
284	We Have Heard the Joyful Sound
286	Wherever We May Go
290	Are You Ready?
292	Shine On, Star of Beauty
299	Not Far from the Kingdom
308	Jesus is Tenderly Calling
309	Some One Will Enter
310	O Wondrous Name
322	O Who is This?
324	Softly and Tenderly
325	O Wand'ring Souls
332	There's a Stranger at the Door
333	I Looked to Jesus
335	Take Me as I Am

*Table 1 continued*

Hymn Number	Title
336	Soul of Mine
337	In the Land of Strangers
339	O, Hear My Cry
343	Look Unto Me
347	Our Life is Like
348	O, To Have No Christ
353	Come Unto Me
369	Like Wand'ring Sheep
373	O What Will You Do?
377	God Loved a World
379	At the Feast of Belshazzar
382	I Was Once Far Away
385	A Guilty Soul
387	Whoever Receiveth the Crucified One
388	Come, Come to Jesus
391	Have Our Hearts Grown
398	Christ, Walk Carefully
402	Choose I Must
409	The Spirit and the Bride
410	While Jesus Whispers
413	Christ has for Sin
415	Beneath the Glorious Fountain
419	Why Do You Linger?
421	Jesus Saves
427	'Tis a True Saying
428	While We Pray
447	Sin No More
456	Out on the Mountain
479	Turn Thee, O Lost One
481	Hear the Blessed Invitation
502	Young Men in Christ
505	O Tender Beseechings
506	Troubled Heart, Thy God is Calling
509	O Come to the Merciful Savior
510	I Am Not Skilled
513	Out on the Desert, Seeking
513	Out on the Desert
522	Behold, How Plain
528	The Living God
532	"Stretch Forth Thy Hand"
547	O List to the Watchman
548	O Hear the Joyful
549	Tho' Your Sins Be as Scarlet

*Table 1 continued*

Hymn Number	Title
551	Neither Do I Condemn
558	In Thy Great Lovingkindness
568	Have You Any Room for Jesus?
569	Almost Persuaded
570	The Ninety and Nine
582	Yield Not to Temptation
585	Pass Me Not
586	My Jesus, I Love Thee
587	Come, Every Soul!
588	I Hear the Saviour Say
595	I Hear They Welcome Voice
595	I Hear Thy Welcome
597	I Need Thee Every Hour
603	Eternity!
612	O, Tender and Sweet
615	Stand Up, Stand Up
616	The Morning Light is Breaking
618	Whosoever Will
620	Jesus Christ is Passing
623	God Loved the World
626	The Whole World Was Lost
627	Come Home!
629	The Great Physician
630	Today the Saviour
635	There is Life for a Look
636	Come to the Saviour
641	Nothing But Leaves
642	Yet There is Room
644	O Word of Words
648	Knocking, Knocking
649	I Heard the Voice of Jesus
650	Repeat the Story O'er
654	My Hope is Built on Nothing Less
656	O Do Not Let the Word
656	Why Not Tonight?
657	She Only Touched the Hem
658	I am Coming to the Cross
662	Sowing the Seed
667	Would We Be Joyful in the Lord?
668	"Come Now!" Saith the Lord
682	Just as I Am
686	Once I Was Dead in Sin
734	Mercy's Free

## CHAPTER THREE

### *Gospel Hymns Nos. 1 to 6 and the Hymn of Invitation: Metaphors and Imagery*

Gospel hymns are often built around one or more metaphors.<sup>10</sup> The following stanza provides an example:

Not now, my child, —a little more rough tossing,  
A little longer on the billows' foam;  
A few more journeying in the desert darkness,  
And then, the sunshine of thy Father's home! (GH 628.1)<sup>11</sup>

In this stanza, Sizer locates seven distinct metaphors: 1) the human being as a child, 2) the world as a stormy sea, 3) life as a journey, 4) world as desert, 5) darkness of the world, 6) light of heaven, and 7) heaven as home.<sup>12</sup> While not all hymns are as compact and complex as this one, which contains metaphorical imagery in each phrase, it is common for gospel hymns to exhibit similar metaphorical features, or be based upon one dominant metaphor that recurs throughout the hymn. This literary device is certainly not limited to gospel hymns. It is a common feature in biblical literature. For example, Jesus is frequently referred to as “shepherd” or “king.” Hymns from the previously mentioned index categories of GH1-6 are analyzed in an attempt locate the most frequently used metaphors found in the hymns of invitation. Examples are offered as illustrations of the use of a specific

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<sup>10</sup> Sandra A. Sizer, *Gospel Hymns and Social Religion: The Rhetoric of Nineteenth-Century Revivalism* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1978), 161.

<sup>11</sup> This reference system will be used throughout when referring to hymns in GH1-6: “GH,” for *Gospel Hymns*; hymn number; stanza number.

<sup>12</sup> Sizer, *Gospel Hymns*, 161-162.



metaphor. What types of metaphors provide the imagery common among invitational hymns? Are certain images employed frequently in this set, which suggests that one or more particular metaphor(s) was well-suited for the public invitation?

In addition to utilizing metaphors and imagery, many gospel hymns refer to specific passages of Scripture. Some invitation hymns were based on entire passages while others explicitly quoted verses and phrases from the Bible. This survey will highlight those hymns based upon a larger passage or story from the Bible, rather than illuminating every quoted verse or phrase. These are the biblical images employed in the hymns of invitation, the stories from Scripture gospel hymnwriters found useful for their evangelistic purpose. While such hymns may include one or more of the metaphors listed below, they will be treated separately because of their foundation in specific biblical passages.

### *Knocking*

A frequently employed metaphor in the hymns surveyed is that of Jesus knocking on the door of one's heart. The recurrent image is that of Jesus seeking the lost and weary one by knocking on his or her heart's door or gate. This idea alludes to Revelation 3:20, where Jesus says to the church in Laodicea, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come to him and will dine with him, and he with me." The metaphor is highly developed in the hymns:

Seeking Jesus? Jesus seeks thee—wants thee as thou art  
He is knocking, ever knocking at thy heart. (GH 267.2)

In the silent midnight watches, List—thy bosom's door!  
How it knocketh, knocketh, knocketh, knocketh evermore!  
Say not 'tis thy pulses beating, 'tis thy heart of sin;  
'Tis thy Saviour knocks, and crieth, "Rise, and let me in!" (GH 93.1)

Knocking, knocking, who is there? Waiting, waiting, oh, how fair!  
'Tis a Pilgrim, strange and kingly, never such was seen before;  
Ah! my soul, for such a wonder wilt thou not undo the door? (GH 648.1)

In each of these hymns, Christ comes to seek the one he desires. The person may or may not let the Savior into his or her heart. "Knocking, Knocking" (GH 648) includes the notion that the seeking Christ who knocks is an unknown "Pilgrim," perhaps a traveler who is looking for rest along a journey.

Other knocking hymns include the image but in a less hopeful context. For instance, the following hymn refers to the act of Christ's knocking in past tense. He once knocked, but it is now too late, since he was not welcomed in:

Now the righteous are reigning with Abraham there;  
But for these is appointed an endless despair;  
It is vain that they call: He once knocked at their gate,  
But they welcomed him not, so now this is their fate:  
"I have never known you," "I have never known you,"  
"I have never, I have never, I have never known you." (GH 231.3)

The next text, too, refers to knocking when the door was firmly shut. However, this time, the sinner is knocking, but to no avail. An implied Jesus responds, "I know you not."

Someone will knock when the door is shut by and by, by and by,  
Hear a voice saying, "I know you not," Shall you? shall I?  
Someone will call and shall not be heard,  
Vainly will strive when the door is barred,  
Someone will fail of the saint's reward: Shall you? shall I? (GH 309.3)

Knocking, then, was an image employed primarily to portray the idea that Christ is seeking sinners. However, it could also serve as a warning. One could knock on Christ's "door," and he could refuse if the appropriate time had passed.

*Thirsty to Satisfied*

Christ brings peace, light, and satisfies the thirsty with living water. This idea is not entirely original. In John's Gospel, Jesus is seen as the source of "living water" to the thirsty (John 7:37-38). However, in *Gospel Hymns*, this image comes to the forefront as Christ is compared to a water source, replenishment for those in need.

Beside the well at noontime, I hear a sad one say:  
"I want that living water, Give me to drink I pray;  
The well is deep, pilgrim, But deeper is my need,  
Ho, every one that thirsteth, The living water buy!  
Ye blessed ones that hunger, Take, eat, and never die. (GH 178.1)

I heard the voice of Jesus say,  
"Behold, I freely give  
The living water—thirsty one,  
Stoop down, and drink, and live." (GH 649.3)

Hear the blessed invitation, Come, come, come;  
To the fountain of salvation, Come, come come;  
Healing streams are flowing still;  
Welcome, "whosoever will;"  
Let him take, let him take,  
Let him take the water of life freely;  
Let him take, let him take,  
Let him take the water of life freely. (GH 481.1)

Whoever will, whoever will, Whoever will may come today;  
Whoever will may come today, And drink of the water of life. (GH  
325.REFRAIN)

The next texts allude to Revelation 22, where a river is described as flowing from God and the Lamb, bringing life to everyone and everything in its path, again emphasizing God's bringing prosperity with water.

Fresh from the throne of glory bright in its crystal gleam,  
Bursts out the living fountain, swells on the living stream;  
Blessed River, Let me ever feast my eyes on thee,  
Blessed River, Let me ever feast my eyes on thee. (GH 83.1)

Beneath the glorious throne above, the crystal fountain springing,  
A river full of life and love, is joy and gladness bringing.  
O glorious fountain now flowing so free,  
O fountain of cleansing opened wide to me. (GH 415.1)

Often, the fountain image is not one of water, but of cleansing blood. The sinner cleansed by the blood becomes "white as snow," a reference to passages such as Psalm 51:7 and Isaiah 1:18.

Behold a Fountain deep and wide, Behold its onward flow;  
'Twas opened in the Saviour's side, And cleanseth "white as snow,  
And cleanseth white as snow."  
Come to this Fountain, 'Tis flowing to day;  
And all who will may freely come, And wash their sins away. (GH 273.1)

What can wash away my stain? Nothing but the blood of Jesus;  
What can make me whole again? Nothing but the blood of Jesus.  
Oh, precious is the flow that makes me white as snow;  
No other fount I know, nothing but the blood of Jesus. (GH 195.1)

Come where the fountain flows—River of life—  
Healing for all thy woes, Doubting and strife;  
Millions have been supplied, No one was ever denied;  
Come to the crimson tide, Come, sinner, come. (GH 101.2)

I bring my sins to Thee, the sins I cannot count,  
That all may cleansed be in Thy once opened Fount;  
I bring them Saviour, all to Thee,  
The burden is too great for me,  
The burden is too great for me. (GH 73.1)

Come with thy sins to the fountain, Come with thy burden of grief;  
Bury them deep in its waters, There thou wilt find a relief.  
Haste thee away, why wilt thou stay?  
Risk not thy soul on a moment's delay;  
Jesus is waiting to save thee, Mercy is pleading today. (GH 274.1)

Imagery of cleansing blood and washing one “white as snow” may be less common in the hymns of modern evangelicals today.<sup>13</sup> But for gospel hymnwriters and their singers, the concept was familiar and standard.

### *Death's Warning*

A common thread among gospel songs for the invitation is a sense of warning or urgency. The revivalists and evangelists often employed dramatic means in order to convey to their congregations the pressing matters of salvation and the seriousness of coming to Christ. Hymnwriters often conveyed similar ideas. Whether Jesus is knocking, providing light, or giving thirst to the weary, hymns of invitation channel a sense of urgency.

One way the gospel hymnwriters conveyed the urgency of an immediate response was by speaking of Jesus as a passerby. Jesus looks upon the singer. He or she is instructed to be alert so Jesus will not “pass you by,” an expressed or implied possibility if the singer ignores him for too long.

Jesus Christ is passing by, Sinner, lift to Him thine eye;  
As the precious moments flee, Cry, be merciful to me! (GH 620.1)

What means this eager, anxious throng, which moves with busy haste along?  
These wondrous gatherings day by day?

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<sup>13</sup> Although “washing white as snow” is a biblical allusion, some argue against the use of such imagery. Should one encourage others to be washed “white” as snow in modern society? Some contemporary hymnwriters answer, “probably not.” Others, however, warn that such criticism results from reading a poetic text too literally, not making allowances for metaphoric language. See Brian Wren, *Praying Twice: The Music and Words of Congregational Song* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), 179.

What means this strange commotion pray?  
In accents hush'd the throng reply: "Jesus of Nazareth passeth by." (GH 9.1)

Pass me not, O gentle Saviour, hear my humble cry;  
While on others Thou art smiling, Do not pass me by. (GH 585.1)

Another means of emphasizing urgency was by admonishing all to remain ready and waiting, since no one knows the day or hour of the Lord's return. Our lives on earth are seen as a period of waiting, a time of preparation for that culminating, heavenly event. These hymns serve as reminders of the future and admonitions to live life accordingly.

Are you ready, are you ready for the coming of the Lord?  
Are you living as He bids you in His word?  
Are you walking in the light? Is your hope of heaven bright?  
Could you welcome Him tonight? Are you ready?  
Therefore be ye also ready, be ye also ready,  
for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh. (GH 290.1)

Christian, walk carefully, danger is near;  
On in thy journey with trembling and fear.  
Snares from without and temptations within,  
Seek to entice thee once more into sin. (GH 398.1)

Sound the alarm! let the watchman cry—  
"Up! for the day of the Lord is nigh;  
Who will escape from the wrath to come?  
Who have a place in the soul's bright home?"  
Sound the alarm, watchman, sound the alarm!  
For the Lord will come with a conq'ring arm;  
And the hosts of sin, as their ranks advance,  
Shall wither and fall at his glance. (GH 246.1)

In some instances, death is a personified character to be feared. References to the "Death angel" are frequently employed, a powerful someone who brings angst to the nonbeliever. Death appears knocking, just as Jesus did in the hymns noted above. Here, the seeker is encouraged to let Jesus in and to be wary of Death, who will ceaselessly try to enter.

Death comes down with reckless footsteps, to the hall and hut;  
Think you death will tarry knocking, when the door is shut?  
Jesus waiteth, waiteth, waiteth; but the door is fast;  
Grieved, away the Saviour goeth, Death breaks in at last. (GH 93.2)

Should the Death angel knock at thy chamber,  
In the still watch of tonight,  
Say, will your spirit pass into torment,  
Or to the land of delight?  
Say, are you ready, O are you ready?  
If the Death angel should call;  
Say, are you ready? O are you ready?  
Mercy stands waiting for all. (GH 213.1)

One obvious means of stressing the seriousness of believing Christ was to remind people of their mortality, the fact that life is short and unpredictable. Thus, we really should be using our lives to prepare for eternity. One would not want to risk being so close to receiving Christ (as at a revival), only to be turned away for all eternity.

Oh, the clanging bells of Time!  
Night and day they never cease;  
We are wearied with their chime,  
For they do not bring us peace;  
and we hush our breath to hear,  
And we strain our eyes to see  
If thy shores are drawing near,  
Eternity! Eternity! (GH 603.1)

“Almost persuaded,” Harvest is past!  
“Almost persuaded,” Doom comes at last!  
“Almost” can not avail; “Almost is but to fail!  
Sad, sad, that bitter wail—“Almost, but lost!” (GH 569.3)

Along the River of Time we glide, Along the River, along the River,  
A thousand dangers its currents hide,  
A thousand dangers, a thousand dangers,  
And near our course the rocks we see, Oh, dreadful thought!  
A wreck to be floating, floating, out on the sea of eternity! (GH 264.2)

### *Trusting the "Old Story"*

Gospel hymns, as compared to many other genres of hymnody, are known for their personal reflection, their testimonial nature. Several gospel hymnwriters referred to their testimony as their "story." Sometimes the gospel message is referred to as "story," while some take the analogy a step further, designating Jesus himself as the culmination of this story. Encouraging others to trust the gospel story, to make this story one's personal testimony, and to tell others the story is the affirmation in hymns of invitation.

I looked to Jesus there on high, from death upraised to glory;  
I trusted in His power to save, believed the old, old story.  
"I looked to Him, to Him I looked," 'tis true, His "Whosoever;"  
"He looked on me, on me He looked, and we were one forever." (GH 333.3)

I love to tell the story of unseen things above,  
Of Jesus and His glory, of Jesus and His love!  
I love to tell the story! Because I know it's true;  
It satisfies my longings, as nothing else would do.  
I love to tell the story! 'Twill be my theme in glory,  
To tell the old, old, story of Jesus and His love. (GH 30.1)

Repeat the story o'er and o'er, of grace so full and free;  
I love to hear it more and more, since grace has rescued me.  
The half was never told, of grace divine, so wonderful,  
The half was never told. (GH 650.1)

'Tis known on earth, in heaven too, 'tis sweet to me because 'tis true;  
The "old, old story" is ever new; tell me more about Jesus.  
"Tell me more about Jesus!" "Tell me more about Jesus!"  
Him would I know who loved me so; "Tell me more about Jesus!" (GH 249.1)

Jesus saves! O blessed story, full of love and peace divine,  
Bursting from the realms of glory, echoing thro' this world of time.  
Jesus saves! O glory! glory! Shout the tidings o'er and o'er;  
Tell to all the earth the story, Jesus saves for evermore. (GH 421.1)

'Tis a true and faithful saying, Jesus died for sinful men;  
Tho' we've told the story often, we must tell it o'er again.



O glad and glorious gospel! With joy we now proclaim  
A full and free salvation, through faith in Jesus' name. (GH 427.1)

My only song and story is—Jesus died for me;  
My only hope of glory, the cross of Calvary.  
No other name is given, no other way is known,  
'Tis Jesus Christ the First and Last, He saves, and He alone. (GH 52.3)

The gospel “story” resonated deeply with the personal faith testimonies of gospel hymnwriters and singers. It became a popular metaphor through which to communicate and proclaim the gospel’s invitation.

### *Weary to Rest*

Jesus’s taking the sinner from a state of weariness to rest and peace is a common theme of the invitation hymn. In most of these texts, living in the world leads one’s soul to a state of fatigue and exhaustion; it is a burden weighing one down. To this weary one, Jesus comes to bring rest, an echo of Jesus’ invitation in Matthew 11:28.

Ho! all ye heavy-laden, come!  
Here’s pardon, comfort, rest, and home,  
Ye wanderers from a Father’s face,  
Return, accept his proffered grace,  
Ye tempted ones, there’s refuge nigh,  
“Jesus of Nazareth passeth by.” (GH 9.5)

Here abiding, in Thee hiding, Seeks my weary soul to rest,  
Till the dawning of the morning, When I wake among the blest.  
I am coming, I am coming, Coming, Saviour to be blessed;  
I am coming, I am coming, Coming, Lord, to Thee for rest. (GH 224.3)

Come, come to Jesus! He waits to lighten thee,  
O burdened! trustingly Come, come to Jesus! (GH 388.3)

Then all who are longing for pleasure,  
Ye weary, and all who are worn;  
Come find in the Lord a sure treasure,  
That from you shall never be torn.

Come now saith the Lord, let us reason,  
Come now and your purpose declare;  
Is it pleasures of sin for a season, or pleasures the glorified share? (GH 668.4)

“Come unto Me,” It is the Saviour’s voice,  
The Lord of life, who bids thy heart rejoice;  
O weary heart, with heavy cares oppressed,  
“Come unto Me,” and I will give you rest.  
“Come unto me,” “Come unto me,”  
“Come unto me, and I will give you rest,”  
I will give you rest, I will give you rest. (GH 353.1)

Nineteenth-century America had created a dichotomy between the secular and the sacred, between “commerce and morality.”<sup>14</sup> This meant that the “world,” the secular, was seen as degenerative of one’s soul. The decadence of the worldly sphere weighs down the spirit. Several hymns provide the image of a rough, hard world. For instance, in this text, Jesus the Shepherd must tread over the “wild, bare mountains” of this world in order to bring the lost one back to safety:

There were ninety and nine that safely lay in the shelter of the fold,  
But one was out on the hills away, Far off from the gates of gold—  
Away on the mountains wild and bare,  
Away from the tender Shepherd’s care,  
Away from the tender Shepherd’s care. (GH 570.1)

This stanza from “Come; [sic] for the Feast is Spread,” clearly delineates between the barren “earth”—our lives in the world—and what Jesus has to offer:

Come to the Better Land,  
Pilgrim, make haste!  
Earth is a foreign strand—  
Wilderness waste!  
Here are the harps of gold,  
Here are the joys untold—  
Crowns for the young and old;  
Come, pilgrim, come. (GH 101.4)

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<sup>14</sup> June Hadden Hobbs, *“I Sing for I Cannot be Silent”: The Feminization of American Hymnody, 1870-1920* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1997), 80.

Victorian hymnists often followed their society's tendency to separate the spiritual from the material, the secular from the sacred.

*Darkness to Light*

Along similar lines of thought, Christ is viewed as the light who illuminates the darkness. Of course, this idea is borrowed from Scripture. In John 8, Jesus says, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life." In many gospel hymns, the world is viewed as the sphere of darkness whereas Christ dominates the sphere of light. The message in invitation hymns is for one to move from the sphere of darkness to Christ's light.

I heard the voice of Jesus say,  
"I am this dark world's light;  
Look unto me, thy morn shall rise  
And all thy day be bright." (GH 649.5)

I wandered on in the darkness  
Not a ray of light could I see;  
And the thought filled my heart with sadness,  
There's no hope for a sinner like me.  
No longer in darkness I'm walking,  
For the light is now shining on me;  
And now unto others I'm telling  
How He saved a poor sinner like me. (GH 382.2, 6)

The whole world was lost in the darkness of sin,  
The Light of the world is Jesus;  
Like sunshine at noonday his glory shone in,  
The Light of the world is Jesus.  
Come to the Light, 'tis shining for thee;  
Sweetly the Light has dawned upon me.  
Once I was blind, but now I can see;  
The Light of the world is Jesus. (GH 626.1)

Long in darkness we have waited,  
For the shining of the Light;  
Long have felt the things we hated,  
Sink us still in deeper night.

Blessed Jesus, loving Saviour!  
Tender, faithful, strong and true,  
Break the fetters that have bound us,  
Make us in Thyself anew. (GH 121.1)

### *World as a Storm*

For many gospel hymnwriters, the dualistic lines of thought between the spiritual and the secular mentioned above pervaded nearly every aspect of the faith. Boundaries were, for many, clearly marked. The world is presented as wild and untamed. No matter how hard one may try to subdue these forces, one is encouraged to replace self-reliance with reliance on God, for only God can calm the storm. Of course, this notion has a biblical basis; each Synoptic Gospel includes the miracle of Jesus calming the storm. However, while this idea is explicit in Scripture, it was also part of the Victorian cultural milieu; nineteenth-century sermons, poems, and essays all included the notion that life is like a voyage through a storm.<sup>15</sup> The sea is most often the background for this storm, again echoing the gospel narrative. When the storm is at sea, one is reminded that Jesus is the only proper pilot of the ship. Jesus can guide the boat safely to shore; all other attempts will fail.

This image was well-suited to the evangelists' invitation to respond.<sup>16</sup> Congregants are encouraged to come to Jesus to calm the storm and reminded that their own efforts to do so will be to no avail.

O! what shall I do to be saved from the sorrows that burden my soul?  
Like the waves in the storm when the winds are at war,

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<sup>15</sup> Hobbs, *I Sing for I Cannot Be Silent*, 108.

<sup>16</sup> For a more thorough discussion of this particular metaphor, see Richard J. Mouw, "Some Poor Sailor, Tempest Tossed": Nautical Rescue Themes in Evangelical Hymnody" in *Wonderful Words of Life: Hymns in American Protestant History and Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2004), 234-250.

Chilling floods of distress o'er me roll  
What shall I do? What shall I do? O! what shall I do to be saved? (GH 117.1)

Fierce and wild the storm is raging round a helpless bark,  
On to doom 'tis swiftly driving, o'er the waters dark!  
Joy, O joy, behold the Saviour,  
Joy, O joy, the message hear,  
"I'll stand by until the morning, I've come to save you, do not fear." (GH 139.1)

Oh, to have no Christ, no Saviour! No Rock, no Refuge nigh!  
When the dark days 'round thee gather, when the storms sweep o'er the sky!  
Oh, to have no Christ, no Saviour! How lonely life must be!  
Like a sailor, lost and driven, on a wide and shoreless sea.  
Oh, to have no hope in Jesus! No friend, no light in Jesus!  
Oh, to have no hope in Jesus! How dark this world must be! (GH 348.1, 2, chorus)

In the next text, life is still presented as a storm at sea. However, Jesus is the one who saves with the "life-boat" (life-preserver). One may have to leave the safety of the ship in order to follow Jesus safely to the shore:

Light in the darkness, sailor, day is at hand!  
See o'er the foaming billows fair heaven's land,  
Drear was the voyage, sailor, now almost o'er,  
Safe within the life-boat, sailor, pull for the shore. (GH 51.1)

In the second stanza of the same hymn by Philip Bliss, Jesus is also a lighthouse, the "bright and morning star" that will guide the life-boat:

Trust in the life-boat, sailor, all else will fail,  
Strong the surges dash and fiercer the gale,  
Heed not the stormy winds, though loudly they roar;  
Watch the "bright and morning star," and pull for the shore. (GH 51.2)

Instead of a lighthouse, the next hymn portrays Jesus as the harbor bell, guiding safely to shore:

Our life is like as stormy sea swept by the gales of sin and grief,  
While on the windward and the lee hang heavy clouds of unbelief;  
But o'er the deep a call we hear, like harbor bells' inviting voice;  
It tells the lost that hope is near, and bids the trembling soul rejoice.

This way, this way, O heart oppress'd, so long by storm and tempest driv'n;  
This way, this way, lo, here is rest, rings out the harbor bells of heaven. (GH  
347.1)

The storm theme continues in Edward Mote's popular hymn, "The Solid Rock"  
where Jesus is the "anchor" who holds one steady when the ship is sinking:

When darkness veils His lovely face I rest on His unchanging grace;  
In ev'ry high and stormy gale, my anchor holds within the veil. (GH 654.2)

The one who responds and answers the invitation can pray with confidence that  
Jesus will calm his or her storm, replacing it with peace and rest:

Be Thou near me, keep and cheer me, thro' life's dark and stormy way;  
Turn my sadness into gladness, turn my darkness into day.  
I am coming, I am coming, coming, Saviour to be blessed;  
I am coming, I am coming, coming, Lord, to Thee for rest. (GH 224.4)

The image of life as storm, and especially a storm at sea, was a suitable one  
for gospel hymnwriters. Its basis in Scripture and its familiarity to nineteenth-  
century Americans for whom sea-travel was commonplace led to its frequent use in  
*Gospel Hymns Nos. 1 to 6*.

### *World as Battle Ground*

The dualism present in the image above is featured here as well. Instead of  
the world as a storm, the world is presented as an ongoing battle, one in which the  
person answering Christ's call is continually on the defense against the misguided  
and misguiding ways of the world, a force led by an implied or explicit evil one(s),  
the enemy. Those who sing the hymn are encouraged to follow Christ in this battle,  
trusting him for the final victory. This was a particularly attractive message to those

who sought to promote a “muscular Christianity.”<sup>17</sup> In the late nineteenth century, church membership had become increasingly dominated by the female sex. Thus, some hymnwriters encouraged the “masculine” following of a “muscular” Christ through militaristic imagery.

Stand up!—stand up for Jesus! Ye soldiers of the cross;  
Lift high his royal banner, it must not suffer loss:  
From vict’ry unto vict’ry his army shall he lead,  
till ev’ry foe is vanquished, and Christ is Lord indeed. (GH 615.1)

We’re marching to Canaan with banner and song,  
We’re soldiers enlisted to fight ‘gainst the wrong;  
But, lest in the conflict our strength should divide,  
We ask, Who among us is on the Lord’s side?  
Oh, who is there among us, the true and the tried,  
Who’ll stand by his colors—who’s on the Lord’s side? (GH 78.1)

Who is on the Lord’s side? Who will serve the King?  
Who will be His helpers, other lives to bring?  
Who will leave the world’s side? Who will face the foe?  
Who is on the Lord’s side? Who for Him will go?  
Who is on the Lord’s side? Who will serve the King?  
Who will be His helpers, other lives to bring?  
By Thy grand redemption, by Thy grace divine,  
We are on the Lord’s side; Saviour, we are Thine. (GH 236.1)

The morning light is breaking; the darkness disappears!  
The sons of earth are waking to penitential tears;  
Each breeze that sweeps the ocean brings tidings from afar,  
Of nations in commotion, prepared for Zion’s war. (GH 615.1)

Sing above the battle strife, Jesus saves! Jesus saves!  
By His death and endless life, Jesus saves! Jesus saves!  
Sing it softly thro’ the gloom, when the heart for mercy craves;  
Sing in triumph o’er the tomb, Jesus saves! Jesus saves! (GH 284.3)

Tho’ I am now on hostile ground, Christ for me! Christ for me!  
And sin beset me all around, Christ for me! Christ for me!

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<sup>17</sup> Joseph F. Kett, *Rites of Passage: Adolescence in America 1790 to the Present* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1977), 189.

Let earth her fiercest battles wage, And foes against my soul engage,  
Strong in His strength I scorn their rage, Christ for me! Christ for me! (GH  
142.4)

And when at last the work is done, the battle fought, the victory won;  
Still, still my cry shall be alone, Oh, take me as I am. (GH 226.5)

Spiritual warfare is a common Christian theme. In Romans, Paul commends Christians, who are “more than conquerors” in Christ (Romans 8:37). The writer of Ephesians encourages the believer to put on the full armor of God, that he or she might stand against every scheme of the devil (Ephesians 6:11). Military images had been employed by hymnwriters before the days of gospel hymns. Charles Wesley had ordered the “soldiers of Christ” of his Holy Club into action. And one must not forget the context in which many gospel hymns were written—America’s Civil War. In gospel hymns, several militaristic features are common: 1) Christ as military leader and Christian as a soldier; 2) military wear—armor, sword, etc.; 3) conviction of a righteous cause; and 4) aggressive action, like a “march” toward heavenly images, such as Canaan.<sup>18</sup> Gospel hymnwriters employed these techniques to encourage their congregants to follow the Lord into the battle of this world.

### *Coming Home*

“Coming home” was an image favored by gospel hymnwriters in describing the one who turns to faith in Jesus. On one hand, this description echoes what occurs in the Parable of the Prodigal Son, a favorite parable of Victorian hymnists.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Lionel Adey, *Class & Idol in the English Hymn* (British Columbia: The University of British Columbia Press, 1988), 207.

<sup>19</sup> Hobbs, *I Sing for I Cannot Be Silent*, 74.



From another perspective, this image intentionally reflects views on public and private spheres in Victorian society. If the public “world” is a realm of tempting, sinister devices, one that calls Christ-followers into battle or to take precautions against a raging storm, where is the “safe” place? Obviously, as is evident above, that safe place is found in Jesus. But where is Jesus? According to hymns promoting this image, Jesus is found in the private sphere, that of the home.

Why was the home envisioned as a sacred space? The industrialism of nineteenth-century America led to a more domesticated family life. Industrialization and material progress led to increasing urbanization. With society evolving, Christians (and non-Christians, to be sure) became startled by the rapid change. By 1880, over one-half of the population lived in the “city,” a town with a population of over 8,000.<sup>20</sup> A typical family became a father who would work outside the home, and mother and children (fewer than there had been in the days of agricultural work) in the domestic realm. It was this domestic sphere that Americans made increasingly sacred.<sup>21</sup> When the workplace no longer shared space with the home, the Victorian mind began to associate industrial progress with the evil “world.” The home became the place of safety, the link to a more moral and good past, sequestered from the immorality and decadence of society’s workplaces which was leading to the perversion of society itself. It is through this lens that gospel hymns which invite sinners to “come home” should be read. Continuing the

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<sup>20</sup> Harvey Green, *The Light of the Home: An Intimate View of the Lives of Women in Victorian America* (New York: Pantheon, 1983), 7.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 180.

dualism that is apparent in themes above, Jesus is to be found in the sanctified home, not the corrupt and secular world.

Are you coming home, ye guilty, who bear the load of sin;  
Outside you've long been standing, come now and venture in;  
Will you heed the Saviour's promise, and dare to trust him quite;  
'Come unto me," saith Jesus, are you coming home tonight?  
Are you coming home tonight? Are you coming home tonight?  
Are you coming home to Jesus, out of darkness into light?  
To your loving, heavenly Father, are you coming home tonight? (GH 184.3)

Softly and tenderly Jesus is calling, calling for you and for me;  
See on the portals He's waiting and watching, watching for you and for me.  
Come home, come home, ye who are weary, come home;  
Earnestly, tenderly, Jesus is calling, calling, O sinner, come home! (GH 324.1)

Today the Saviour calls; ye wand'ers, come;  
O ye benighted souls, why longer roam?  
Come home, come home, the Saviour calls, come home. (GH 630.1)

While we pray, and while we plead, while you see your soul's deep need,  
While your Father calls you home, will you not, my brother, come?  
Why not now? Why not come to Jesus now? (GH 428.1)

Out of the fear and dread of the tomb, Jesus, I come, Jesus, I come;  
Into the joy and light of Thy home, Jesus, I come to Thee;  
Out of the depths of ruin untold, into the peace of Thy sheltering fold,  
Ever Thy glorious face to behold, Jesus, I come to Thee. (GH 281.4)

O come to the merciful Saviour who calls you,  
O come to the Lord who forgives and forgets;  
Tho' dark be the fortune on earth that befalls you,  
A bright home awaits you whose sun never sets.  
Come home, come home, in darkness no longer to roam,  
'Tis Jesus who tenderly calls you today,  
Oh brother, my brother, come home. (GH 590.1)

More "coming home" hymns will be included under the heading, "Parable of the Prodigal Son." Those hymns include the admonition to come home, but within the context of a clear allusion to the parable story. As is evidenced by their sheer

number, this metaphor and corresponding gospel narrative was a favorite among gospel hymnwriters.

### *A Feminine Christ*

Because the true faith was to be found in the home rather than the secular and public sphere, many gospel hymnwriters wrote of a Jesus who would be more likely found there. After women and children were domesticated toward the end of the nineteenth century, gender associations of “work” and “home” were established. While Christ certainly maintained masculine characteristics (see “World as Battle Ground,” above), hymnwriters also portrayed Christ as caretaker, mother, and martyr, all qualities associated with the feminine ideology of the day.<sup>22</sup> Just as women and mothers sensitively, sacrificially, and humbly took care of family and home, so was Christ the meek and tender Savior who loves humankind, sacrificing and suffering for all without complaining. Evangelical hymnwriters did not go as far as their Unitarian and Congregationalist counterparts in referring to a “mother” God or God’s “maternal” love,<sup>23</sup> but they certainly offered hymns that placed Christ squarely in the woman’s sphere. Churchgoers were encouraged to imitate this form of Christ-following, becoming “more like Jesus” by acting lowly, meek, gentle, good, self-sacrificing, and tender, all cardinal virtues of feminine identity.<sup>24</sup>

Oh, “Mercy!” loud I cried, “Now give me rest from sin!”  
“I will,” a voice replied, and Mercy let me in;

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<sup>22</sup> Mary G. De Jong, “I Want to Be Like Jesus: The Self-Defining Power of Evangelical Hymnody,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 54 (Fall 1986): 473.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> Amanda Porterfield, *Feminine Spirituality in America: From Sarah Edwards to Martha Graham* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1980), 68.

She bound my bleeding wounds, and soothed my heart opprest;  
She washed away my guilt and gave me peace and rest. (GH 85.2)

I heard the voice of Jesus say, "Come unto me and rest;  
Lay down, thou weary one, lay down thy head upon my breast." (GH 649.1)  
I need Thee ev'ry hour, most gracious Lord;  
No tender voice like Thine can peace afford.  
I need Thee, Oh! I need Thee; ev'ry hour I need Thee;  
O bless me now, my Saviour! I come to Thee. (GH 597.1)

Think once again, He's with us today;  
Heed now His blest commands and obey;  
Hear now His accents tenderly say,  
"Will you, my children, come?" (GH 636.3)

Jesus, gracious One, calleth now to thee, "Come, O sinner, come!"  
Calls so tenderly, calls so lovingly, "Now, O sinner, come."  
Words of peace and blessing, Christ's own love confessing;  
Hear the sweet voice of Jesus, full, full of love;  
Calling tenderly, calling lovingly, "Come, O sinner, come." (GH 122.1)

Jesus is tenderly calling thee home—calling today, calling today;  
Why from the sunshine of love wilt thou roam farther and farther away?  
Calling today, calling today; Jesus is calling, is tenderly calling today. (GH 308.1)

O tender beseeching of Jesus! How sweetly they fall on the ear!  
O gospel of grace and of kindness, God's love and compassion bro't near!  
Is the Spirit of Jesus now striving? His warning, my brother, obey;  
Resist not His gracious beseeching, O grieve not the Saviour away. (GH 505.1)

Oh, what will you do with Jesus? The call comes low and sweet;  
As tenderly He bids you your burdens lay at His feet;  
Oh, soul so sad and weary, that sweet voice speaks to thee;  
Then what will you do with Jesus? Oh, what shall the answer be? (GH 373.1)

Softly and tenderly Jesus is calling, calling for you and for me;  
See on the portals He's waiting and watching, watching for you and for me.  
Come home, Come home, Ye who are weary, come home;  
Earnestly, tenderly, Jesus is calling, calling, O sinner, come home! (GH 324.1)

The great Physician now is near, the sympathizing Jesus:  
He speaks the drooping heart to cheer, oh, hear the voice of Jesus.

“Sweetest note in seraph song, sweetest name on mortal tongue,  
Sweetest carol ever sung, Jesus, blessed Jesus.” (GH 629.1)

Reminding congregants of Christ’s endearing love and tender spirit became an accepted technique for invitations, where seekers were encouraged to “come home” to a maternal Christ.

*Christ the Bosom Friend*

The gospel hymnists sought to encourage a close bond between the believer and Christ. The metaphor of friendship was often employed. Christ was presented as a close “friend,” the sinners’ companion who sympathetically and tenderly supports, guides, protects, and listens. Even if the world is unable to listen or understand one’s troubles, these hymns imply, “tell it to Jesus”; he will provide relief. Because the invitation was intended to lead nonbelievers to Christ, this metaphor was very apropos.

O soul! why shouldst thou wander from such a loving friend?  
Cling closer to him stay with him to the end;  
Alas I am so helpless, full of sin  
For I am ever wandering and coming back again.  
Come to me, weary, heavy, laden, come to me. (GH 644.2)

Open now to Him your heart; Let Him in!  
If you wait He will depart; Let Him in!  
Let Him in; He is your Friend; and your soul He will defend,  
He will keep you to the end; Let Him in! (GH 332.2)

Oh, to have No Christ, no Saviour! No Rock no Refuge nigh!  
When the dark days’ round thee gather, when the storms sweep o’er the sky!  
Oh, to have no hope in Jesus! No Friend, no Light in Jesus!  
Oh, to have no hope in Jesus! How dark this world must be! (GH 348.1)

## *State of the Harvest*

Both the Hebrew Bible and New Testament encourage planting seeds that will produce a fruitful harvest.<sup>25</sup> Gospel hymnwriters encouraged fruitful planting of the gospel's "seeds" and warned against those who might thwart that harvest. Whatever the specific crop, the one who follows Christ is aiding a fruitful outcome; the one who rejects should fear punishment for his or her folly.

Are you waiting, are you waiting for the coming of the King?  
Have you bundles of the golden grain to bring?  
Can you lay at Jesus' feet any gather'd sheaves of wheat,  
There your blessed Lord to greet? Are you ready?  
Therefore be ye also ready, be ye also ready,  
For in such an hour, such an hour as ye think not,  
the Son of man cometh. (GH 290.2)

The following hymn's stanzas alternate between a focus on justice and mercy. The questionable crop is a tree. Justice says to cut it down, but Mercy says, "One year more . . . for mercy spare the tree!" Eventually Justice gives the final word, serving as an admonition for the one who is considering rejecting Christ's invitation once again:

Still it stands, still it stands, a fair, but fruitless tree!  
The Master, seeking fruit thereon has come—but, griev'd at finding none,  
Now speaks to Justice—Mercy flown—cut it down, cut it down. (GH 128.5)

Similarly, this hymn warns the one who meets the Master holding "nothing but leaves." There is a soft allusion to Jesus's judgment on the barren fig tree, found in the gospels of Matthew and Mark. When he saw a fig tree with only leaves and no

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<sup>25</sup> This website produces a helpful, concordance listing of passages that refer to planting seeds for harvest: OpenBible.info, "Planting Seeds for the Harvest," Good News Publishers, [http://www.openbible.info/topics/planting\\_seeds\\_for\\_the\\_harvest](http://www.openbible.info/topics/planting_seeds_for_the_harvest) (accessed February 24, 2012).

fruit, he cursed it. The judgment for people who fail to live fruit-filled lives is clear in the next hymn.

Ah, who shall thus the Master meet, and bring but withered leaves?  
Ah, who shall, at the Saviour's feet, before the awful judgment-seat,  
Lay down for, golden sheaves, nothing but leaves? Nothing but leaves? (GH 641.4)

“What Shall the Harvest Be?” places the question within the context of Jesus’ Parable of the Sower, found in the three Synoptic Gospels. Just as the seed that fell on good earth produced a great harvest, so “sure will the harvest be” when it is faithfully sown, says the hymnwriter:

Sown in the darkness or sown in the light,  
Sown in the darkness or sown in the light,  
Sown in our weakness or sown in our might,  
Sown in our weakness or sown in our might,  
Gather'd in time or eternity,  
Sure, ah, sure will the harvest, harvest be. (GH 662.chorus)

Evident in this chapter, gospel writers employed a variety of metaphors and imagery to convey their evangelistic message. Some of them are florid and complex. Others are simple and straightforward. Most are tied to biblical themes and messages. The next chapter will reveal more direct allusions to Scripture, held as the normative source behind evangelical faith.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### *Gospel Hymns Nos. 1 to 6 and the Hymn of Invitation: Scriptural Allusions*

As evangelicals, attention to Scripture was given priority in gospel hymnwriting. In particular, the parables, miracles, and sayings of Jesus were emphasized. Since, during the invitation, one was encouraged to follow Jesus, to trust him as Savior, and to let him come into one's heart, the hymnwriters' emphasizing the ministry and life of Christ is not surprising. While there are references to passages outside the Gospels, the vast majority of hymns appropriate for the invitation refer to passages of Jesus. These passages, as the bases of hymns suitable for the invitation, likely served as the foundation for many sermons and hymns for this purpose.

#### *Sinful Woman Washes Jesus's Feet*

The sinful woman's washing and anointing of Jesus's feet appears in the Gospels of both John and Luke. Hymnwriters used this story to emphasize the grace and forgiveness that Christ longs to bestow upon sinners.

The stanzas of this hymn retell the story. The final stanza reminds singers of Jesus's forgiveness:

In the sky, after tempest, as shineth the bow,—  
In the glance of the sunbeam, as melteth the snow  
He looked on that lost one: "her sins were forgiven,"  
And the sinner went forth in the beauty of heaven. (GH 44.4)



### *Finding a Treasure*

The Parable of the Lost Coin appears in Luke 15:8-10. In it, a woman searches desperately for a lost coin, and rejoices when she finds it. The parable was often interpreted as holding that we are the coin or treasure and that the seeker or finder is Jesus.

Patiently the owner seeks with earnest care,  
in the dust and darkness her treasure rare.  
Seeking to save, seeking to save,  
Lost one, 'tis Jesus seeking to save. (GH 89.2)

Similarly, John Mason alluded to Matthew's Parable of the Costly Pearl (Matthew 13:45-46) in his hymn, "The Pearl of Greatest Price." This is found among the kingdom parables, short statements that metaphorically describe God's kingdom. In this parable, the Christian who comes across God's Kingdom is the one who has reason to rejoice. Rather than seeing Christ as the seeker who celebrates over finding a sinner, the sinner is presented as the one seeking Christ, who is the costly pearl and is rejoiced over when found.

I've found the pearl of greatest price!  
My heart doth sing for joy;  
And sing I must, for Christ is mine!  
Christ shall my song employ. (GH 176.1)

### *Woman Touches Jesus for Healing*

Jesus's miracle of the woman who received healing by touching his garment appears in each of the Synoptic Gospels. Evangelists liked this passage because of the ease with which one could turn to Christ for salvific healing. The woman was exemplary, they preached. Just as the woman turned to Christ, so too should sinners

turn to him for the healing of their souls. This hymn tells the story, concluding with Jesus's affirmation of her healed state.

She turn'd with "Daughter, be of good comfort,  
Thy faith hath made thee whole;"  
And peace that passeth all understanding with gladness filled her soul.  
Oh, touch the hem of His garment and thou, too, shalt be free;  
His saving pow'r this very hour shall give new life to thee. (GH 657.3)

### *Cleansing of Lepers*

Jesus's cleansing of lepers is another miracle recorded in the Synoptic Gospels. Like the miracle of Jesus healing the hemorrhaging woman, referring to the miracle was meant to embolden the hearts of the believing and non-believing alike toward the saving power of Jesus.

Lord, now indeed I find Thy pow'r, and that alone,  
Can change the leper's spots, and melt the heart of stone.  
Jesus paid it all, all to Him I owe;  
Sin had left a crimson stain: He washed it white as snow. (GH 588.2)

Philip Bliss's hymn "Where are the Nine?" recounts the story of Jesus's cleansing of ten lepers, found in the Gospel of Luke. Although all ten lepers were healed by Jesus, only one came back to praise him for it. This hymn recounts the story, putting the onus of responsibility on present-day singers in the final stanza:

Jesus on trial today we can see, thousands deridingly ask, "Who is He?"  
How they're rejecting Him, your Lord and mine!  
Bring in the witnesses—Where are the nine?  
Where are the nine? Where are the nine?  
Were there not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? (GH 8.4)

### *Jesus Heals a Crippled Hand*

Each of the Synoptic Gospels recounts the miracle of Jesus healing the man's crippled hand on the Sabbath. Like many other miracle stories that appear in gospel hymns, this one, too, was meant to serve as an example, encouraging others to turn to Christ for spiritual healing in light of the physical healing that occurred in the passage. Just as the man in the gospel narrative stretched out his hand for healing, so should the seeker "stretch forth [his] hand" to receive salvation.

"Stretch forth thy hand," thy palsied hand, fear not,  
it is thy Lord's command;  
Seek not from Him to hide thy sin, confess,  
and ask to be made clean.  
"Stretch forth thy hand," on Christ believe,  
"Stretch forth thy hand," the pow'r receive;  
He offers grace so full and free,  
"Stretch forth thy hand," He speaks to thee. (GH 532.1)

### *Noah's Ark*

While there is only one hymn from those surveyed based on the Noah narrative in Genesis, Kate Harrington's "Out of the Ark" deserves recognition. In her invitational hymn, all are encouraged to "come to the ark" for salvation. The message is Christocentric; Christ and his gospel message are represented by the ark.<sup>1</sup> Still today, the hymn says, the gospel's messengers are imploring others to come and receive salvation. After a warning of what results from ignoring the call based on the Noah narrative, today's lost are encouraged to obey:

O sinners, the heralds of mercy implore,  
They cry like the patriarch, "Come;"

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Peter 3:20-21 represents this kind of Christocentric interpretation of an Old Testament passage, one in which the Noah narrative represents a foreshadowing type of baptism into Christ. The writer compares the saving power of baptism with the salvation found through the Ark.

The Ark of salvation is moored to your shore,  
Oh, enter while yet there is room!  
The storm-cloud of Justice rolls dark over head,  
And when by its fury you're tossed,  
Alas, of your perishing souls 'twill be said,  
"They heard—they refused—and were lost!"  
Then come, come, oh, come; there's refuge alone in the Ark,  
Receive ye the message and know there is room  
For all who will come to the Ark. (GH 115.3)

This hymn, with its basis in the earth's flood from the Noah narrative, also alludes to the world as a storm, a popular metaphor among nineteenth-century hymns.

### *Jesus the Great Physician*

The Gospels refer twice to Jesus as a physician. In Mark 2:17, Jesus is presented as a spiritual healer when he reminded his opponents that "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners." In Luke 4:23, Jesus refers to his reputation as a physical healer when, after giving his first sermon in his hometown, he challenges the crowd, "Surely you will quote this proverb to me: Physician, heal yourself! Do here in your hometown what we have heard that you did in Capernaum." The Gospels' emphasis on Jesus's healing miracles make it difficult to understand Jesus apart from his role as a miraculous "physician." Gospel hymnwriters highlighted this role by referring to Jesus as a physician in their hymns. In the invitation, congregants would have been encouraged to seek spiritual healing from Jesus, the "Great Physician."

The great Physician now is near, the sympathizing Jesus:  
He speaks the drooping heart to cheer, Oh, hear the voice of Jesus.  
"Sweetest note in seraph song, sweetest name on mortal tongue,  
Sweetest carol ever sung, Jesus, blessed Jesus." (GH 629.1)

The following hymn refers to three instances, all found consecutively in the Gospel of John, of Jesus's helping and healing work in order to emphasize his role as a physician. Stanza one refers to Jesus's providing living water to the thirsty Samaritan woman at the well (John 4). Stanza two highlights the healing of a paralyzed man at the pool of Bethesda (John 5). Stanza three recalls Jesus's feeding of five thousand, a crowd who followed him because they had witnessed the miracles he performed "on those who were sick" (John 6). By highlighting these miracles, Jesus's role as physician is emphasized. Singers and hearers of the hymn are encouraged to enter the healing stories themselves, turning to the Physician who makes people whole.

'Tis He, the great Physician, can cure the sin-sick soul;  
"Rise up and walk," He bids thee,  
"Thy faith hath made thee whole." (GH 178.chorus)

### *The Shepherd and the Lost Sheep*

One of the most well-known images is that of Jesus as a shepherd to his flock. The gospels of Matthew and Luke include the parable of the shepherd and the lost sheep. As interpreted by the gospel hymnwriters, Jesus is the shepherd who goes after the one that is lost. John's gospel portrays Jesus as the "good shepherd...who lays down his life for the sheep" (John 10:11). Both of these messages are encompassed in the hymns of invitation, where Jesus is the loving shepherd who seeks and saves his sheep.

Tenderly the Shepherd, o'er the mountains cold,  
Goes to bring his lost one back to the fold.  
Seeking to save, seeking to save,  
Lost one, 'tis Jesus seeking to save. (GH 89.1)

“Lord, Thou hast here Thy ninety and nine:  
Are they not enough for Thee?”  
But the Shepherd made answer;  
“This of mine has wandered away from me,  
And, although the road be rough and steep  
I go to the desert to find my sheep.” (GH 570.2)

Out on the mountain, sad and forsaken,  
Lost in its mazes, no light can'st thou see;  
Yet in His mercy, full of compassion,  
Lo! the Good Shepherd is calling to thee.  
Calling to thee, calling to thee; Jesus is calling, “Come unto Me;”  
Calling to thee, calling to thee, hear the Good Shepherd calling to thee. (GH 456.1)

Turn thee, O lost one, care-worn and weary,  
Lo! the good Shepherd is calling today;  
Seeking to save thee, waiting to cleanse thee,  
Haste to receive Him, no longer delay.  
Tenderly calling, patiently calling,  
Hear the good Shepherd calling to thee;  
Tenderly calling, patiently calling,  
Lovingly saying, “Come unto Me!” (GH 479.1)

“Call them in”—the poor, the wretched, Sin-stained wand'ers from the fold;  
Peace and pardon freely offer; Can you weigh their worth with gold?  
“Call them in”—the weak, the weary, Laden with the doom of sin;  
Bid them come and rest in Jesus; He is waiting—“Call them in.” (GH 72.1)

Like wand'ring sheep o'er mountains cold, since all have gone astray;  
To “Life” and peace within the fold, how may I find the way?  
I am the way, the truth, and the life;  
No man cometh unto the Father but by Me” (GH 369.1)

Sin no more, but closely keep near the hand that guards the sheep;  
Shun the snares that lured before, trembling, go, and sin no more  
Sin no more, thy soul is free, Christ has died to ransom thee;  
Sing the message o'er and o'er Christ forgives thee, sin no more. (GH 447.2)

Souls of men, why will ye scatter like a crowd of frighten'd sheep?  
Foolish hearts! why will ye wander from a love so true and deep?  
Was there ever kinder Shepherd, half so gentle, half so sweet,  
As the Saviour who would have us come and gather round His feet? (GH 336.1)

Away in the dark and the danger, far out in the night and the cold;  
There Jesus is waiting to lead you so tenderly into His fold.  
How few there are entering in! How few there are entering in!  
How many are coming and going!—How few there are entering in! (GH  
299.3)

Fanny Crosby's hymn delivers the message from the perspective of the lost  
sheep looking for the shepherd:

O hear my cry, be gracious now to me, Come, Great Deliv'rer, come;  
My soul bowed down is longing now for Thee, Come, Great Deliv'rer, come;  
I've wandered far away o'er mountains cold,  
I've wandered far away from home;  
O take me now, and bring me to Thy fold, Come, Great Deliv'rer come. (GH  
339.1)

As a metaphor identified with Christ in Scripture, gospel hymnwriters  
frequently utilized the image of Jesus as shepherd. During the invitation,  
congregants were encouraged to return to his loving arms, to stay within the fold of  
the faithful.

#### *Invitation to the Great Feast*

The Parable of the Great Feast or the Wedding Banquet is found in both  
Matthew (Matthew 22:1-14) and Luke (Luke 14:15-24). While this parable has been  
understood according to several interpretations, gospel hymns emphasized the  
parable's use of an invitation. When read along these lines, Christ is the one giving  
the invitation, one of salvation and spiritual renewal. The invitation is sent out to  
all: the Jew and Gentile, the greatest and the least. No one should reject the call; no  
one should remain lonely when he or she is invited to the feast.

Come, for the feast is spread; hark to the call!  
Come to the Living Bread, broken for all;  
Come to His house of wine, low on His breast recline,  
All that He hath is thine; Come, sinner, come. (GH 101.1)

The Gospel bells invite us to a feast prepared for all;  
Do not slight the invitation, nor reject the gracious call.  
“I am the bread of life; eat of Me, thou hungry soul,  
Tho’ your sins be red as crimson, they shall be as white as wool.”  
Gospel bells, how they ring; over land from sea to sea;  
Gospel bells freely bring blessed new to you and me. (GH 125.2)

The bridal hall is filling for the feast:  
Pass in! pass in! and be the Bridegroom’s guest:  
Room, room, still room! Oh, enter, enter now! (GH 642.3)

While this hymn is based on the parable, the second stanza also alludes to the Parable of the Prodigal Son. All are welcome to the feast where the Father lovingly waits to greet them.

“Call them in”—the Jew, the Gentile; bid the stranger to the feast;  
“Call them in”—the rich, the noble, from the highest to the least:  
Forth the Father runs to meet them, He hath all their sorrows seen;  
Robe, and ring, and royal sandals, wait the lost ones—“Call them in.” (GH 72.2)

### *Costly Discipleship*

A common theme throughout Jesus’ teachings in the Gospels is the cost of becoming a Christ-follower. Theologians throughout the Church’s history have emphasized the cost of discipleship. The call to self-sacrificial obedience is core to the gospel message; there are no “part-time” disciples. This is apparent in Matthew 16:26 where Jesus says, “For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their life?” Believers and seekers are encouraged to “store up for [them]selves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal” (Matthew 6:20). Fanny Crosby’s hymn highlights this message:

Say, where is thy refuge, poor sinner, and what is thy prospect today?  
Why toil for the wealth that will perish, the treasures that rust and decay?



Oh! think of thy soul, that forever must live on eternity's shore,  
When thou, in the dust art forgotten, when pleasure can charm thee no more.  
'Twill profit thee nothing, but fearful the cost,  
to gain the whole world if thy soul should be lost! (GH 185.1)

Rather than seeking the pleasures of this world, we should seek the pleasures that only the Lord can provide.

Come souls that are longing for pleasure, our Saviour has pleasure to give;  
Come find in His love the rare treasure, that makes ev'ry true pleasure live.  
Come now saith the Lord, let us reason, come now and your purpose declare;  
Is it pleasures of sin for a season, or pleasures the glorified share? (GH 668.1)

### *The Narrow Gate*

Matthew and Luke's Gospels both make clear that the way to Christ is narrow and straight. Luke states that many will try to enter into the narrow door unsuccessfully. Matthew claims that the reverse, a wide gate, will only lead to destruction. Writers of gospel hymns employed the biblical imagery in the invitation, encouraging congregants to follow the "narrow and straight" way which leads to Christ.

Why do you linger, why do you stay in the broad road,  
That most dangerous way—  
While right before you, narrow and strait,  
Is the bright pathway to heav'n's pearly gate?  
Narrow and strait, narrow and strait,  
Is the bright pathway to heav'n's pearly gate. (GH 419.1)

One must choose to live a life that will gain entrance through the gate, or risk being rejected.

Choose I must, and soon  
Must choose holiness, or heaven lose;  
While what heaven loves I hate,  
Shut for me is heaven's gate. (GH 402.1)

Quoting Matthew 7:23, this hymn warns the one who may be rejected due to unworthy living.

Someone will knock when the door is shut by and by, by and by,  
Hear a voice saying, "I know you not," Shall you? shall I?  
Someone will call and shall not be heard,  
Vainly will strive when the door is barred,  
Someone will fail of the saint's reward: Shall you? shall I? (GH 309.3)

### *The Adulterous Woman*

The story of the adulterous woman is found in John 8. In the passage, the scribes and Pharisees bring an adulterer before Jesus for judgment. The usual punishment is death by stoning. However, Jesus demands grace by decreeing that only those without sin are free to cast the first stone. Eventually, no one remains and Jesus tells the woman, "Go and sin no more."

"Neither do I condemn thee,"—O words of wondrous grace;  
Thy sins were borne upon the cross, believe, and go in peace.  
"Neither do I condemn thee," O sing it o'er and o'er;  
"Neither do I condemn thee, go and sin no more." (GH 551.1)

The following hymn highlights the story, with allusions to Romans 3, emphasizing the point that all people are sinners in need of God's grace.

A guilty soul, by Pharisees of old, was brought accused, alone,  
But Jesus said, "Let him without a sin, be first to cast a stone."  
"There is none righteous, no, not one, all, all have sinned,"  
There is none righteous, for all have sinned,  
And come short of the glory, the glory of God. (GH 385.1)

### *Nicodemus Told, "You Must Be Born Again"*

Evangelicals have often been known for their "born again" Christianity. Usually, what is meant by this phrase in evangelical circles is that a believer must

have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ to receive salvation.<sup>2</sup> The biblical foundation of this concept is found chiefly in John's Gospel, where it is used by Jesus while speaking to Nicodemus, a member of the Pharisees and a "ruler of the Jews." Nicodemus admits that, because of Jesus's many signs and miracles, he has become known as a great teacher from God. However, Jesus answers, one cannot see the kingdom of God unless one is "born again." Gospel hymnwriters encouraged obedience to Jesus's decree that one be "born again."

Young men in Christ the King, your grateful tribute bring,  
Of love and praise, united in His royal name,  
With loyal hearts His words proclaim,  
Throughout the world to all Young Men,  
"Ye must be born again." (GH 502.3)

A learned Master, Ruler of the Jews, God's kingdom could not gain,  
With all the lore and culture of the age, he "must be born again."  
"There is none righteous, no, not one, all, all have sinned,"  
There is none righteous, for all have sinned,  
and come short of the glory of God. (GH 385.2)

A ruler once came to Jesus by night,  
to ask Him the way to salvation and light;  
The Master made answer in words true and plain,  
"Ye must be born again."  
I verily, verily, say unto thee,  
Ye must be born again. (GH 127.1)

### *The Prodigal Son*

A favorite among gospel hymnists,<sup>3</sup> the Parable of the Prodigal Son is an oft-used allusion in hymns of invitation. The story appears in chapter fifteen of Luke's

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<sup>2</sup> Robert M. Price, *Beyond Born Again: Toward Evangelical Maturity* (Rockville, MA: Wildside Press, 2008), 53.

<sup>3</sup> Mary G. De Jong, "I Want to Be Like Jesus: The Self-Defining Power of Evangelical Hymnody," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 54 (Fall 1986): 467.

Gospel. Hymnwriters were attracted to the image of “coming home” for reasons noted above, but they also appreciated the invitational nature of the parable itself. The father (understood as Father-God or Jesus by the hymnists) lovingly and graciously welcomes the son home, in spite of his sin and waywardness. This was a most appropriate message for the public invitation.

Lovingly the Father sends the news around:  
“He once dead now liveth—once lost is found.  
Seeking to save, seeking to save, lost one, ‘tis Jesus seeking to save. (GH 89.3)

This loving Saviour stands patiently;  
Tho’ oft rejected, calls again for thee.  
Calling now for thee, prodigal, calling now for thee;  
Thou hast wandered far away, but He’s calling now for thee. (GH 10.1)

Come home! Come home! You are weary at heart,  
For the way has been dark, and so lonely and wild;  
O prodigal child! Come home! oh come home! (GH 627.1)

O soul in the far away country, aweary, and famished, and sad,  
There’s rest in the home of thy Father, His welcome will make thy heart glad.  
Come, come, prodigal, come, and wander no longer afar from home;  
Come, come, prodigal come, a welcome awaits in thy Father’s home. (GH 197.1)

In the land of strangers, whither thou art gone,  
Hear a far voice calling, “My son! my son!”  
“Welcome! wand’rer, welcome! Welcome back to home!  
Thou hast wandered far away: Come home! come home!” (GH 337.1)

Is Jesus waiting to relieve a wanderer like me,  
Who chose the Father’s house to leave? O wanderer, “come and see.”  
The blood that Jesus shed of old, was shed for you and me:  
And there is room within the fold—O “come to Him and see.” (GH 131.3)

### *Jesus Invites Children*

Each of the Synoptic Gospels references Jesus’s admonition to “permit the little children to come to me.” Perhaps the invitational gesture with which Jesus

invites children made this passage an appropriate one for the public invitation. In addition, the Gospels claim that only those who “receive the kingdom of God like a child” will enter into it. Gospel hymnists preferred images of Christ that were closely related to human roles and relationships.<sup>4</sup> By emphasizing the relational role, humans as children whom Christ loves, gospel hymnwriters promoted Christ as the gracious One seeking the lost.

“Suffer the children!” Oh, hear His voice,  
Let ev’ry heart leap forth and rejoice,  
And let us freely make Him our choices;  
Do not delay, but come.  
Joyful, joyful will the meeting be, when from sin our hearts are pure and free.  
And we shall gather, Savior, with Thee, in our eternal home. (GH 636.2)

I’ve been told of a heaven on high, which the children of Jesus shall see;  
But if there a place in the sky made ready and furnished for me?  
Yes, yes, yes, for me;  
Our Lord from above in His infinite love,  
On the cross died to save you and me. (GH 74.3)

Now one with Christ, I find my peace in Him to be abiding,  
And in His love for all my need, in childlike faith confiding.  
“I looked to Him, to Him I looked,” ‘Tis true, His “Whosoever;”  
“He looked on me, on me He looked, and we were one forever.” (GH 333.3)

Little children I see standing close by their King,  
And He smiles as their song of salvation they sing:  
Hallelujah, ‘tis done! I believe on the Son;  
I am saved by the blood of the crucified One. (GH 5.4)

These blessings we by faith receive, by simple childlike trust;  
In Christ, ‘tis God’s delight to give; He promised, and He must.  
There is pardon, peace and pow’r, and purity and paradise;  
With all of these in Christ for me, let joyful songs of praise to Him arise! (GH 667.5)

O come then to Jesus whose arms are extended  
To fold His dear children in closest embrace;  
O come, and your exile shall shortly be ended,

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 462.

And Jesus will show you the light of His face.  
Come home, come home, in darkness no longer to roam,  
'Tis Jesus who tenderly calls today, O brother, my brother, come home. (GH 509.2)

Another hymn references Jesus's healing in Mark 9, in which the father of the one healed requests of Jesus, "Help my unbelief." That one is encouraged to rest with "child-like trust" in the gospel promise found in John 3:16.

"Lord, help my unbelief!" Give me the peace of faith,  
To rest with child-like trust on what Thy gospel saith,  
That "Whosoever will believe, shall everlasting life receive!" (GH 190.5)

### *The Rich, Young Ruler*

The Synoptic Gospels all include the story of the rich, young ruler. In it the young man asks Jesus what is required for eternal life. At first, Jesus advises the man to obey the commandments. When the young man responds that he already keeps the commandments, Jesus adds, "Go and sell all your possessions and give to the poor . . . and come, follow me." The young man went away grieving, for he owned much and was not willing to do as Jesus asked.

The story corresponded well to the needs of a public invitation, where those present were encouraged to seek eternal life. Congregants were warned *not* to respond as the rich, young ruler did. Instead, seekers should fulfill the costly demands of Christ-following.

"Good Master," pray can aught be lacking yet? Thy laws I do obey;  
"Go sell and give, then come and follow me" but sad he turned away.  
"There is none righteous, no, not one, all, all have sinned,"  
There is none righteous, for all have sinned,  
And come short of the glory, the glory of God. (GH 385.3)

### *The Penitent Thief*

The penitent thief is the unnamed character mentioned in the Gospel of Luke who was crucified alongside Jesus and asked Jesus to remember him in his kingdom, unlike his companion, the impenitent thief. The penitent thief recognized that Jesus was being treated unjustly. For his belief, Jesus promised him, “Today, you will be with me in Paradise” (Luke 23:43). The following hymn encourages congregants to play the role of the penitent thief, believing in Christ and taking hope in his promise.

The dying thief, in full belief, on Jesus fixed his eyes;  
His only plea, “Remember me, O Lord, in paradise.”  
From the cross the Saviour cries, come with Me to paradise;  
Look to Me, believe and live, accept the life I freely give. (GH 163.2)

### *“It is Finished”*

Because the invitation was meant to provide an opportunity for those in need of Christ’s salvation, many hymns focused on the atoning work of the life and ministry of Jesus. The following hymn highlights Christ’s work on the cross and humanity’s inability to save ourselves, emphasizing Christ’s final words, “It is finished!”

Nothing, either great or small—nothing, sinner, no;  
Jesus died and paid it all, long, long ago.  
“It is finished!” yes, indeed, finished ev’ry jot;  
Sinner, this is all you need, tell me, is it not? (GH 159.1)

### *Belshazzar’s Feast*

The Book of Daniel describes “Belshazzar’s Feast.” In this story, the sacred vessels of Solomon’s Temple in Jerusalem, which had been brought to Babylon by King Nebuchadnezzar, were profaned by the son of King Nebuchadnezzar,

Belshazzar, at a feast. During this drunken feast, and while Belshazzar and his company were using the holy vessels, some disembodied fingers of a human hand wrote on the palace wall, “*mene, mene, tekel, and parsin.*” The King’s advisors attempted to interpret the message, but to no avail. The King sent for Daniel, an exiled Israelite, who accurately interpreted the message and warned the King, “God has numbered the days of your kingdom and brought it to an end.” That very night, King Belshazzar was killed and his kingdom was taken over by Darius, a Mede.

Knowles Shaw based a hymn on this story. In it, congregants are brought into the narrative and warned of the ill fate that will result if they follow King Belshazzar’s disobedience. Daniel is the proper role model. All of our deeds, the hymn warns, are recorded “on the wall” and we should desire to be “found trusting.”

So our deeds are recorded—there’s a Hand that’s writing now:  
Sinner, give your heart to Jesus,—to His royal mandates bow;  
For the day is approaching—it must come to one and all,  
When the sinner’s condemnation will be written on the wall!  
‘Tis the hand of God on the wall!  
Shall the record be “found wanting!” or shall it be “Found trusting!”  
While that hand is writing on the wall? (GH 379.4)

Gospel hymnists employed a variety of metaphors, images, and biblical passages to convey their message. As evidenced above, some of these images were subtle and implied, while others were explicit and direct. A careful reading reveals that there is no simple analysis and description, since gospel hymns employ such a variety of techniques. Perhaps a rethinking of the stereotypes of gospel hymnody is needed.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### *Gospel Hymns Nos. 1 to 6 and the Hymn of Invitation: Overarching Themes*

As is demonstrated above, gospel hymnists employed a variety of imagery and metaphors to convey the human need for Jesus the Savior, the primary end of the public invitation. However, a close reading reveals that in spite of numerous metaphorical images, many of these hymns convey a few overarching themes. For instance, Jesus's quenching one's thirst, bringing light to one's darkness, and providing rest to the weary all present Jesus as a caring provider, one who is able to give what no one or nothing else can. In order to avoid an overly literal interpretation of metaphors, one that tempts us to pass over these overarching readings, we must provide some generalizing descriptions. After all, gospel hymns continue to be sung frequently among evangelicals because of the way they speak to a universal human condition, not simply an 1850s situation. What were the gospel hymnwriters attempting to say about God, Jesus, and salvation with their hymns? What were the primary themes which underlay the hymns of invitation? Based on the preceding analysis, hymns have been evaluated and categorized according to a broader schematic structure, one that lies above a simple literal interpretation to understand the hymns' ultimate claims. A quantitative presentation of this analysis on all the hymns in this survey is provided to conclude the section.

### *Jesus as Loving Provider*

Perhaps as an enticement to seekers in their evangelistic services, gospel hymnists often presented Jesus as a loving caretaker, one who could provide like no other. Several categories of hymns present Jesus as one who ultimately provides satisfaction in life, healing, and safe refuge. Corresponding to the analysis provided in the previous two chapters, these categories include thirsty to satisfied, trusting the “old story,” weary to rest, darkness to light, coming home, a feminine Christ, Christ the bosom friend, the woman touching Jesus for healing, cleansing of lepers, Jesus healing a crippled hand, and Jesus the great physician. As evidenced by the number included under this theme, it was a fundamental message in many invitational hymns.

### *Picturing Grace and Salvation*

As hymns designed to promote salvation among congregants, many offer an overarching picture of what God’s grace and salvation looks like. Hymnwriters relied on a variety of images and biblical passages to convey this fundamental theme including the prodigal son, the sinful woman washing Jesus’s feet, costly discipleship, the adulterous woman, being “born again,” the penitent thief, and “It is Finished” at the cross. These hymns offer general descriptions of Jesus as Savior and the glory of salvation.

### *Jesus as Seeker*

In spite of the variety of soteriological perspectives found among evangelicals (see Chapter eight, “Fundamental Theological Themes”), many hymns promote the idea of Jesus seeking after the sinner in order to win him or her over.

Hymns employing the knocking metaphor, warning against death, and those based on several scriptural passages including The Lost Coin, The Shepherd and the Lost Sheep, The Great Feast, and Jesus Inviting Children all convey this idea. In the public invitation setting, this theme was an appropriate one when delivering the message of Christ's salvation.

#### *God or Jesus as Conqueror*

Against the machinations of this world (in a literal or spiritual sense), another ultimate message was that Christ conquers all. Whether the opposing force is a storm, a battle, sin, or some other source of hardship in one's life, Christ is the hope conquering all negativity in order to bring peace and victory. This is especially true in hymns that present the world as a storm or as a battle ground. This is a slightly nuanced version of the theme of Jesus as a provider. Jesus as "conqueror" presents a proactive, kingly image, one which reminds singers that Jesus is all-powerful. This message is one of comfort and hope to those who, without faith in Jesus, would, one presumes, have neither.

#### *Warnings*

In the public invitation, many preachers sought followers by warning what life is or could be like apart from faith in Christ. Gospel hymnists employed similar warnings. Not only were listeners and singers encouraged to have faith in Christ, but they were also admonished to live the godly life, one that exemplified this faith. Hymns based on images and passages like the state of the harvest; the narrow gate;

the rich young ruler; Noah's Ark; and Belshazzar's feast all employ a warning in their attempts to win converts.

All the invitational hymns surveyed have been read and evaluated according to the five overarching themes offered above (table 2).<sup>1</sup>

TABLE 2  
Relative Frequency of Hymn Themes

Theme	Total Number	Percentage
Jesus as Loving Provider	54	29
Picturing Grace and Salvation	53	28
Jesus as Seeker	32	17
God or Jesus as Conqueror	22	12
Warnings	26	14

Note: Due to rounding, percentages do not always equal 100%.

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<sup>1</sup> Obviously, some hymns promote multiple themes. When this is the case, I have endeavored to discern the *primary* theme of the hymn text. To be sure, there is some subjectivity in this process. Here, the chorus or refrain and first stanza received priority when determining the main theme.

## CHAPTER SIX

### *Gospel Hymns Nos. 1 to 6 and the Hymn of Invitation: Hymn Forms*

In providing a detailed analysis of hymns appropriate for the public invitation, one must look not only at what the hymnists say, but also how they say it. This “how” is an important aspect when considering what was said to congregants in the evangelical setting, how it might have been received, how it was intended to be received, and what impact it might have had. This study will concentrate on the hymns’ lines of communication, asking to whom the hymn is addressed and what kind of address is made. Some hymns are addressed to a specific audience, either Christian or sinner.<sup>2</sup> Others have no audience in mind, but are exhortations, affirmations, or descriptions (as when describing grace and salvation.) Still others take on the voice of God or Jesus to the sinner or Christian. As in the case of themes, some hymns mix various lines of communication within a single hymn. When this is the case, I have relied on the chorus or refrain because of its repetitive use, or the first stanza because of its prominence as the determinant. Lines of communication further designate the purpose and method of the hymn of invitation.

#### *Exhortations from the Evangelist*

As hymns appropriate for the public invitation, this form comprises the majority of the hymns surveyed. During this time of a service, evangelists were trying their best to move congregants toward a decision of faith. This type of

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<sup>2</sup> “Sinner,” here, referring to the usual term used by gospel hymnists for the non-Christian.

persuasion was especially evident in their hymns. This form exemplifies the quintessential invitation hymn, and most often takes the mode of a straightforward invitation, a warning, or a promotion of Christ as seeker. The following hymns provide a sample:

Come, thou weary, Jesus calls thee to His wounded side;  
“Come to Me,” saith He, “and ever safe abide.” (GH 267.1)  
In the silent midnight watches, list—thy bosom’s door!  
How it knocketh, knocketh, knocketh, knocketh evermore!  
Say not ‘tis thy pulses beating, ‘tis thy heart of sin;  
‘Tis thy Saviour knocks, and crieth, “Rise, and let me in!” (GH 93.1)

Jesus Christ is passing by, sinner, lift to Him thine eye;  
As the precious moments flee, cry, be merciful to me! (GH 620.1)

Are you coming home, ye wand’rers, whom Jesus died to win,  
All footsore, lame and weary, your garments stain’d with sin;  
Will you seek the blood of Jesus to wash your garments white;  
Will you trust His precious promise, are you coming home tonight? (GH 184.1)

Once again the gospel message from the Saviour you have heard;  
Will you heed the invitation? Will you turn and seek the Lord?  
Come believing! Come believing! Come to Jesus! look and live! (GH 245.1)

Come, come to Jesus! He waits to welcome thee;  
O wand’rer, eagerly Come, come to Jesus! (GH 388.1)

At times, evangelists wanted to spur believers toward faithful action. This might be through encouraging godly living or the promotion of evangelistic activity. The public invitation was not solely intended for a nonbeliever in need of faith; the Christian’s repentance and renewal was also desired. The exhortation to the believer also included an entreaty for personal testimonies, a regular element of evangelical worship.

Now just a word for Jesus; your dearest friend so true,  
Come, cheer our hearts and tell us what He has done for you.

Now just a word for Jesus—'Twill help us on our way;  
One little word for Jesus, O speak, or sing, or pray. (GH 77.1)

Stand up!—stand up for Jesus! Ye soldiers of the cross;  
Lift high his royal banner, it must not suffer loss:  
From vict'ry unto vict'ry His army shall he lead,  
Till ev'ry foe is vanquished, and Christ is Lord indeed. (GH 615.1)

'Tis known on earth, in heaven too, 'Tis sweet to me because 'tis true;  
The "old, old story" is ever new; Tell me more about Jesus.  
"Tell me more about Jesus!" "Tell me more about Jesus!"  
Him would I know who loved me so; "Tell me more about Jesus!" (GH 249.1)

We're marching to Canaan with banner and song,  
We're soldiers enlisted to fight 'gainst the wrong;  
But, lest in the conflict our strength should divide, we ask,  
Who among us is on the Lord's side?  
Oh, who is there among us, the true and the tried,  
Who'll stand by his colors—who's on the Lord's side? (GH 78.1)

Sound the alarm! let the watchman cry!—  
"Up! for the day of the Lord is nigh;  
Who will escape from the wrath to come?  
Who have a place in the soul's bright home?"  
Sound the alarm, watchman, sound the alarm!  
For the Lord will come with a conq'ring arm;  
And the hosts of sin, as their ranks advance,  
Shall wither and fall at His glance. (GH 246.1)

Yield not to temptation, for yielding is sin,  
Each vict'ry will help you some other to win;  
Fight manfully onward, dark passions subdued.  
Look ever to Jesus, He'll carry you through.  
Ask the Saviour to help you, comfort, strengthen, and keep you;  
He is willing to aid you, He will carry you through. (GH 582.1)

### *Descriptions*

The next form is that of a description. Descriptions have no particular audience in mind. They may take the form of a statement, an affirmation, a story, or a testimony. Here, the hymn would not explicitly instruct the believer or non-believer towards action, but simply describe an experience, a gospel truth (such as

salvation or grace), or a biblical passage. This form, especially that of testimony, is a particularly defining feature of the gospel hymn genre.

Here, the analysis has been split into two forms. The first is that of a general statement or affirmation. This is most often an expression of God's grace, salvation, or forgiveness. In the context of the public invitation, such descriptions were intended to woo or convince nonbelievers toward belief and faith. The following hymns represent a sample of this form. "The Gospel Bells" describes the gospel's application to all people, affirming John 3:16.

The Gospel bells are ringing, over land, from sea to sea;  
Blessed news of free salvation do they offer you and me.  
"For God so loved the world that His only Son He gave,  
Whoso'er believeth in Him everlasting life shall have." (GH 125.1)

"There is Joy" describes the joy that occurs in heaven when any receive salvation.

There is joy among the angels, singing round the throne above,  
When repentant tears are flowing, while the risen Lord is showing  
All the riches of His love, all the riches of His love, all the riches of His love  
There is joy, oh, there is joy, Joy that never can be told,  
When a soul that long has wander'd, comes within the Saviour's fold. (GH 171.1)

"We Take the Guilty Sinner's Name" affirms much of Paul's theology in Romans regarding faith, works, sinfulness, and grace. This hymn would have proclaimed such a theology to all hearers.

No works of law have we to boast, by nature ruined, guilty, lost:  
condemned already, but Thy hand provided what Thou didst demand.

We take the guilty sinner's name, the guilty sinner's Saviour claim;  
We take the guilty sinner's name, the guilty sinner's Saviour claim. (GH 239.1)

"Thou Shalt Be Saved" provides a clear picture of salvation, again quoting verses from Romans.



Behold how plain the truth is made; since Christ the ransom price has paid,  
And all our sins on Him were laid, we must in Him be saved.  
If thou shalt confess with thy mouth, confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus,  
And believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead,  
Thou shalt be saved, thou shalt be saved. (GH 522.1)

The second type of description is that of a story or personal testimony. The hymn may tell a narrative, perhaps based on scripture. Most often, however, this type is in the form of a personal testimony, usually a description of one's salvation experience. This form especially distinguishes the gospel hymn when compared to other, standard hymns.<sup>3</sup> Philip Bliss, renowned gospel hymnwriter, wrote many such testimonies:

Oh, mercy surprising, He saves even me!  
"Thy portion forever," He says, "will I be,"  
On His word I'm resting—assurance divine—  
I'm "hoping" no longer—I know He is mine! (GH 46.3)

Repeat the story o'er and o'er, of grace so full and free;  
I love to hear it more and more, since grace has rescued me.  
The half was never told, the half was never told;  
Of grace divine, so wonderful, the half was never told. (GH 650.1)

'Tis the promise of God, full salvation to give  
Unto him who on Jesus, his Son, will believe.  
Hallelujah, 'tis done! I believe on the Son;  
I am saved by the blood of the crucified One. (GH 5.1)

Others, too, proclaimed Christ's salvation through personal testimonies. The following hymns provide a sample:

Grace! 'tis a charming sound, harmonious to the ear;  
Heaven with the echo shall resound; and all the earth shall hear.  
Saved by grace alone, this is all my plea;  
Jesus died for all mankind, and Jesus died for me. (GH 35.1)

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<sup>3</sup> Sandra A. Sizer, *Gospel Hymns and Social Religion: The Rhetoric of Nineteenth-Century Revivalism* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1978), 173.

All glory to Jesus be given, that life and salvation are free;  
And all may be wash'd and forgiven, and Jesus can save even me.  
Yes, Jesus is mighty to save, and all His salvation may know  
On His bosom I lean, and His blood makes me clean,  
For His blood can wash whiter than snow. (GH 109.1)

Some would describe God's grace and salvation through a narrative, albeit one that was less personal in nature. After describing the loving shepherd who left the ninety-nine to look for the one that was lost, this hymn concludes with a description of rejoicing on that occasion.

But all thro' the mountains, thunder-riven,  
and up from the rocky steep,  
There rose a glad cry to the gate of heaven,  
"Rejoice! I have found my sheep!"  
And the angels echoed around the throne,  
"Rejoice, for the Lord brings back His own!" (GH 5701.)

The following hymn alludes to the story of the sinful woman washing Jesus's feet to describe God's love and forgiveness:

To the hall of the feast came the sinful and fair;  
She heard in the city that Jesus was there;  
Unheeding the splendor that blazed on the board,  
She silently knelt at the feet of the Lord. (GH 44.1)

#### *Proclamation to God or Jesus*

Another popular form consists of a proclamation made to God from the sinner or the Christian. These hymns most often take the mode of the repentant sinner coming to Jesus. Using this mode of address, hymnwriters saw singing as a vehicle towards belief. The sinner may not have faith yet; but through singing an affirmation of faith, he or she might be convinced to follow Jesus as Lord.

Fully persuaded, Lord, I believe!  
Fully persuaded, Thy Spirit give;

I will obey Thy call; low at Thy feet I fall;  
Now I surrender all, Christ to receive. (GH 49.1)

Sad and weary, lone and dreary, Lord, I would Thy call obey;  
Thee believing, Christ receiving, I would come to Thee today.  
I am coming, I am coming, coming, Saviour to be blessed;  
I am coming, I am coming, coming, Lord, to Thee for rest. (GH 224.1)

I am coming to the cross; I am poor, and weak, and blind;  
I am counting all but dross, I shall full salvation find. (GH 658.1)

I hear Thy welcome voice that calls me, Lord, to Thee  
For cleansing in Thy precious blood that flow'd on Calvary.  
I am coming Lord! Coming now to Thee!  
Wash me, cleanse me, in the blood that flow'd on Calvary. (GH 595.1)

Just as I am, without one plea, but that Thy blood was shed for me,  
And that Thou bidd'st me come to Thee, O Lamb of God! I come, I come! (GH 682.1)

Pass me not, O gentle Saviour, hear my humble cry;  
While on others Thou art smiling, do not pass me by.  
Saviour, Saviour, hear my humble cry,  
While on others Thou art calling, do not pass me by. (GH 585.1)

I am coming to the cross; I am poor, and weak, and blind;  
I am counting all but dross, I shall full salvation find.  
I am trusting, Lord, in Thee, blest Lamb of Calvary;  
Humbly at Thy cross I bow, Save me, Jesus, save me now. (GH 658.1)

Once more, my soul, thy Saviour, thro' the Word, is offered full and free;  
And now, O Lord, I must, I must decide; shall I accept of Thee?  
I will! I will! I will, God helping me, I will, I will be Thine!  
Thy precious blood was shed to purchase me—I will be wholly Thine! (GH 257.1)

Jesus, my Lord, to Thee I cry; unless Thou help me I must die:  
Oh, bring Thy free salvation nigh, and take me as I am.  
And take me as I am. And take me as I am.  
My only plea—Christ died for me! Oh, take me as I am. (GH 335.1)

A few hymns appear to be from the Christian to God. These hymns pray for guidance and encouragement toward a godly life, or express personal love and praise to the Savior.

I need Thee ev'ry hour, most gracious Lord;  
No tender voice like Thine can peace afford.  
I need Thee, oh! I need Thee; ev'ry hour I need Thee;  
O bless me now, my Saviour! I Come to Thee. (GH 597.1)

My Jesus, I love Thee, I know Thou art mine,  
For Thee all the follies of sin I resign;  
My gracious Redeemer, my Saviour art Thou,  
If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus, 'tis now. (GH 586.1)

Never did I so adore Jesus Christ, thy Son, before;  
Now the time! and this the place! Gracious Father, who Thy grace.  
Bless me now, bless me now, Heavenly Father, bless me now. (GH 23.4)

Fresh from the throne of glory bright in its crystal gleam,  
Bursts out the living fountain, swells on the living stream;  
Blessed River, let me ever feast my eyes on thee. (GH 83.1)

Shine on, O Star of beauty, Thou Christ enthroned above;  
Reflecting in Thy brightness, our Father's look of love.  
Shine on, shine on, shine on, Thou bright and beautiful Star, shine on. (GH 292.1)

#### *Exhortations from God or Jesus*

The final primary form found among gospel hymns of invitation was to have God address the congregant. In most of these hymns, the purpose of exhortation was the same as that of the evangelist: salvation and repentance. Posing as the voice of God, however, delivered more intensity to the hymn. In the minds of evangelists, this perspective would have encouraged decision-making, creating a sense of urgency. It also had the potential for making the hymn more personal for the recipient, fostering the feeling that Christ was speaking directly to the individual. These hymns most often quote or allude to Scripture in their attempts to be the voice of God to the people.

In the following hymns, the perspective is that of Christ talking to the sinner, often encouraging faith and salvation.

In the land of strangers, whither thou art gone,  
 Hear a far voice calling, "My son! my son!"  
 "Welcome! wand'rer, welcome! Welcome back to home!  
 Thou hast wandered far away: Come home! come home!" (GH 337.1)

"Look unto Me," and not within, no help is there for thee;  
 For pardon peace and all thy need, look only unto Me.  
 "Look unto Me, and be ye saved,  
 all ye ends, all ye ends of the earth,  
 For I am God, there is none else,  
 Look unto Me, and be ye saved." (GH 343.4)

I am the way, the truth, and the life;  
 No man cometh unto the Father but by Me. (GH 369.chorus)

"Neither do I condemn thee,"—O words of wondrous grace;  
 Thy sins were borne upon the cross, believe, and go in peace,  
 "Neither do I condemn thee," O sing it o'er and o'er;  
 "Neither do I condemn thee, go and sin no more." (GH 551.1)

All of the hymns surveyed have been analyzed to determine their hymn forms. A quantitative evaluation is provided in table 3.

TABLE 3  
 Relative Frequency of Hymn Forms

Form	Total Number	Percentage
Exhortations from evangelist		
a. To sinners	85	45
b. To Christians	21	11
Descriptions		
a. Statements, affirmations	22	12
b. Stories, testimonies	32	17
Proclamations to God or Jesus		
a. From repentant sinner	17	9
b. From Christian	6	3
Exhortations from God or Jesus	4	2

Note: Due to rounding, percentages do not always equal 100%.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### *Gospel Hymns Nos. 1 to 6 and the Hymn of Invitation: Fundamental Theological Themes*

While gospel hymns have been frequently analyzed by hymnologists,<sup>1</sup> little research exists on the theology espoused in Sankey's collection. This is due in part to the nature of past studies. Both Sizer and Tamke offered literary analyses of gospel hymns; Rothenbusch concentrated especially on musical forms and evaluating GH1-6 within a larger social narrative and context. While numerous articles and books exist on gospel hymns, few are as extensive as those noted above, and even fewer discuss the details of the hymns' theology.

This challenge is also due to the nature of a hymn itself. Hymns are no substitutes for the treatises and volumes written for students of systematic theology. Instead, hymns provide memorable, epigram-like expressions of theological doctrine that can sometimes be hard to analyze concretely. As the theological textbook of the lay person, hymns effectively form the beliefs of worshipping Christians. A theological evaluation of gospel hymns is further made difficult because of the very nature of gospel hymns. While nearly all hymn texts are categorized as popular literature, gospel hymns took "popularity" to the extreme. Most texts are subjective, reflect personal experiences, and are limited in theological

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<sup>1</sup> In particular, see the works of Sizer, Tamke, and Rothenbusch noted in the bibliography.

scope.<sup>2</sup> In a sense, gospel hymns might be compared to parables: they work well to convey one or two particular ideas, but can fall apart if carried beyond their intended message or if understood too literally. Most of their writers never intended to teach congregants doctrinal beliefs through their works. They were less challenging to the intellect and imagination so that the common person could be included in the worship experience, hopefully turning to faith in the process.

A theological analysis of GH1-6 is complicated, too, by the plurality of theological views included. The GH1-6 series was not published by a denomination. Instead, the evangelical movement promoted by Moody, Sankey, and others crossed denominational lines. Churches from various denominations frequently sang hymns from the collection since it did not belong to a particular group or viewpoint. Compilers likely did not exclude hymns based on theological nuance, since they were appealing to a diverse audience.

All of these factors make a theological study of the hymns challenging. One can only speak generally regarding theological viewpoints espoused in the hymns of GH1-6, since there may and likely will be exceptions. However, some summary observations can be made on five fundamental theological themes found in the hymns surveyed. Because the focus is on the public invitation, each of these themes is connected either directly or indirectly to that act and purpose. The theological doctrines evaluated include:

1. Soteriology
2. Christian Atonement

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<sup>2</sup> Donald P. Hustad, *Jubilate II: Church Music in Worship and Renewal* (Carol Stream: Hope Publishing, 1993), 233-234.

3. Missiology
4. Eschatology
5. Christology

### *Soteriology*

Since the goal of the public invitation was to move sinners toward faith and to move backsliding Christians toward renewal, invitation hymns often became expressions of Christian soteriology, or doctrines of salvation. The Christian consensus has always claimed that salvation is both a gift and a task. Orthodox Christians agree that salvation is primarily a gift in which the initiative is God's, and yet there is work for the human to do even if only to accept the gift.<sup>3</sup> Within this Christian consensus, however, diversity still exists. Namely, Christians throughout the history of the Church have disagreed on the extent of God's initiative and grace versus the human role and choice. On one hand, monergism includes any belief that God is the sole sovereign agent in salvation and that even the human task itself is somehow a result of God's initiative. On the other hand, synergism maintains that salvation is a cooperative event or process in which God acts as the superior partner and the human is the inferior, yet necessary partner.<sup>4</sup> The monergist view is most often associated with Calvinism, although it existed long before John Calvin in various forms in the early church, particularly in Augustine. The synergist view is associated with Arminianism, but also existed before Jacob Arminius and is

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<sup>3</sup> Roger E. Olson, *The Mosaic of Christian Belief: Twenty Centuries of Unity & Diversity* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2002), 267.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 277.



especially found in several Greek church fathers and even Roman Catholic thinkers. One primary difference between these two views has to do with the theological view of a fallen humanity. According to the Calvinist view, the fallen human is completely depraved, unable to do anything at all to move God-ward; faith is made possible by God alone. However, Arminianism affirms the doctrine of prevenient grace. Prevenient grace, Arminians believe, does not save, but comes before salvation. It is a universal grace that gives humans the will to follow the Holy Spirit's call to salvation. Humans are still completely helpless regarding salvation; redemption is all because of God and his salvific grace. However, prevenient grace enables humans to accept the pardoning grace of God.

During the nineteenth century, the pendulum was swinging toward synergism or Arminian lines of thought. However, there was still flexibility among various pastors and evangelists. Unlike the First Great Awakening, the Second Awakening did not produce theological thinkers of similar depth. In addition, the Second Awakening was far more emotionally rather than intellectually-based, sometimes even taking the form of anti-intellectualism. Evangelists like Finney and Moody desired minimal doctrine requirements for belief. Some espoused a modified form of Calvinism, one that emphasized the necessity of evangelism to all peoples, since only God is sovereign in determining the saved elect. Others, like Finney, promoted Arminianism, believing an inclusion of the human role in salvation to be the most biblically sound and logical view. Others still promoted the hard line monergist view which said that every facet of salvation whatsoever is left up to God, but this was a dwindling view in the nineteenth century. Gospel hymns,

too, reflect the theological diversity of the day regarding soteriology. However, the majority of them clearly promote salvation's ordo from a synergist point of view. This is the one most closely associated with the purpose and function of the public invitation. Evangelists were pushing nonbelievers toward faith, moving Christians toward repentance and renewal. It stands to reason that hymns for this purpose would assume the human role and choice in response to God's initiative.

Several hymns that focus on Christ's seeking the sinner assume the sinner's choice in accepting the Savior. Jesus may initiate, but it is clearly the human who has a choice to let Jesus in, to turn to him, or to accept him as Savior. In the following hymns, the synergist view is espoused, with the human role of choice playing a crucial role in the salvation process. This list is not comprehensive, as there are other hymns that promote similar, if not the same, ideas.

Wilt thou still refuse His offer? Wilt thou say Him nay?  
Wilt thou let Him, grieved, rejected, go away? (GH 267.4)

Then 'tis time to stand entreating Christ to let thee in;  
At the gate of heaven beating, wailing for thy sin?  
Nay! alas, thou guilty creature! Hast thou, then, forgot?  
Jesus waited long to know thee, now He knows thee not! (GH 93.3)

But if you still this call refuse,  
and all His wondrous love abuse,  
Soon will He sadly from you turn,  
Your bitter prayer for pardon spurn.  
"Too late! too late!" will be the cry—  
"Jesus of Nazareth has passed by." (GH 9.6)

Knocking, knocking, who is there? Waiting, waiting, oh, how fair!  
'Tis a Pilgrim, strange and kingly, Never such was seen before;  
Ah! my soul, for such a wonder wilt thou not undo the door? (GH 648.1)

Fully persuaded—Lord, hear my cry!  
Fully persuaded—Pass me not by;

Just as I am I come, I will no longer roam,  
O make my heart Thy home; save, or I die! (GH 49.2)

“Over the line,” hear the sweet refrain,  
Angles are chanting the heavenly strain:  
“Over the line,”—I will not remain, I’ll cross it and go to Jesus. (GH 612.refrain)

“Almost persuaded,” harvest is past!  
“Almost persuaded,” doom comes at last!  
“Almost” cannot avail; “Almost” is but to fail!  
Sad, sad, that bitter wail—“Almost—but lost!” (GH 569.3)

Jesus for your choice is waiting; tarry not: at once decide!  
While the Spirit now is striving, yield, and seek the Saviour’s side. (GH 245.3)

Have you any room for Jesus, He who bore your load of sin;  
As He knocks and asks admission, sinner will you let Him in? (GH 568.1)

Is the Spirit of Jesus now striving? His warning, my brother, obey;  
Resist not His gracious beseeching, O grieve not the Saviour away. (GH 505.chorus)

You have wandered far away; do not risk another day;  
Do not turn from God your face, but today, accept His grace.  
Why not now? why not now? Why not come to Jesus now? (GH 428.2)

Once more, my soul, thy Saviour, thro’ the Word, is offered full and free;  
And now, O Lord, I must, I must decide; Shall I accept of Thee? (GH 257.1)

The next hymn appears to espouse the Arminian doctrine of prevenient grace. As the hymn puts it, Jesus adds “grace to welcomed grace” and “confirms the blessed work within.”

‘Tis Jesus who confirms the blessed work within,  
By adding grace to welcomed grace, where reigned the power of sin,  
I am coming Lord! Coming now to Thee!  
Wash me, cleanse me, in the blood that flow’d on Calvary. (GH 595.4)

While the majority of hymns surveyed promote synergist ways of thinking of Christian salvation, some clearly espouse the monergist view. According to this view, as especially expressed in Calvinism, the salvation of any person lies solely in

the hands of God. Nothing a person does or thinks has any meritorious weight on the status of the salvation of his or her soul. The following stanzas provide the Calvinistic lines of thought found in this survey. In nearly every instance, the emphasis is on God's all-sovereign work to save the sinner; the human is incapable of doing anything to receive this salvation.

Jesus, my Lord, to Thee I cry, unless Thou help me I must die;  
Oh, bring Thy free salvation nigh, and take me as I am.  
If Thou hast work for me to do, inspire my will, my heart renew;  
And work both in, and by me too, and take me as I am. (GH 226.1, 4)

No faith we bring, 'tis Christ alone, 'tis what He is—what He has done;  
He is for us as given by God, it was for us He shed His blood. (GH 239.2)

Weary, working, burdened one, wherefore toil you so?  
Cease your doing; all was done long, long ago. (GH 159.3)

Nothing have we, but our weakness, naught but sorrow, sin and care;  
All within, is loathsome vileness, all without is dark despair. (GH 121.3)

Did Christ, when I was sin pursuing, pity me, pity me?  
And did He snatch my soul from ruin, can it be, can it be? (GH 734.2)

Not what these hands have done, can save this guilty soul;  
Not what this toiling flesh has borne, can make my spirit whole.  
Not what I feel or do, can give me peace with God;  
Not all my pray'rs, or sigh, or tears, can save my awful load. (GH 243.1, 2)

No preparation can I make, my best resolves I only break,  
Yet save me for Thine own name's sake, and take me as I am.  
Behold me, Saviour, at Thy feet, deal with me as Thou seest meet;  
Thy work begin, Thy work complete, and take me as I am. (GH 335.3, 4)

What! "lay my sins on Jesus?" God's well-beloved Son!  
No! 'tis a truth most precious, that God e'en that has done.  
What? "bring our guilt to Jesus?" to wash away our stains;  
The act is passed that freed us, and naught to do remains. (GH 38.1, 3)

Another point of contention between the two soteriological systems of Calvinism and Arminianism, the systems in which nineteenth-century hymnwriters

would have found themselves, is the issue of who is affected by God's saving work in Christ. Calvinism affirms limited atonement which says that Christ's atoning work of salvation is designed only for the elect, a limited number of people who are predestined unto salvation by God. The efficacious benefits of salvation are, therefore, not given to all of humanity, but only to the believing elect.

Arminianism, by contrast, affirms unlimited atonement. This doctrine recognizes Jesus' saving work as a benefit for all humankind without exception. Jesus died on the cross on behalf of all people, not just the elect. This means that salvation is available to all; every human has the opportunity to accept Jesus as Savior through faith.

While these doctrines appear as secondary purposes behind the following hymns, their influence is clear. Corresponding to the hymns surveyed above, there are many more hymns promoting the Arminian view of unlimited atonement than there are that promote limited atonement.

The following hymns express the Arminian doctrine of unlimited atonement:

I looked to Jesus on the cross, for me I saw Him dying;  
God's word believed that all my sins were there upon Him lying.  
"I looked to Him, to Him I looked," 'Tis true, His "Whosoever;"  
"He looked on me, on me He looked, and we were one forever." (GH 333.2)

Oh, boundless mercy, free, free to all!  
Stay, child of error, heed the tender call. (GH 10.2)

Lo! the Spirit and the Bride say, Come, come, come;  
And let him that heareth now say, Come, come, come;  
And let him that is athirst come, and "Whosoever will;  
Let him take the water of life freely." (GH 481.4)

Yea, whosoever will may come, your longings Christ can fill;  
The stream is free to you and me, and whosoever will. (GH 409.4)

“Whosoever will,” the promise secure,  
“Whosoever will,” forever must endure;  
“Whosoever will,” ‘tis life forevermore:  
“Whosoever will, may come.” (GH 618.3)

God loved the world of sinners lost and ruined by the fall;  
Salvation full, at highest cost, He offers free to all. (GH 623.1)

Saved by grace alone, This is all my plea;  
Jesus died for all mankind, and Jesus died for me. (GH 35.refrain)

The next hymn implies unlimited atonement, since it extends the invitation to an unspecified, “you,” assumedly anyone and everyone who may hear or sing it.

Yes, there is pardon for you, yes, there is pardon for you;  
For Jesus has died to redeem you, and offers full pardon to you. (GH 55.chorus)

By contrast, only three hymns appeared to espouse the Calvinist doctrine of limited atonement. The following hymn implies that the “gate” of mercy through which one may see the cross is only open to those who will receive salvation.

That gate ajar stands free for all who seek through it salvation;  
The rich and poor, the great and small, of every tribe and nation. (GH 12.2)

The next hymn implies limited atonement, since it appears that the efficaciousness of Christ’s salvation is only applied to those who receive and believe in Christ as Savior.

Whoever receiveth the Crucified One,  
Whoever believeth on God’s only Son,  
A free and a perfect salvation shall have:  
For He is abundantly able to save. (GH 387.1)

Finally, this hymn espouses limited atonement by its referral to the saved were also those “chosen.”

Beseeching that all for His coming unshaken may ever remain,  
And stand with the sav’d and the chosen, with Him in His glorious reign. (GH 505.5)

As is evidenced above, GH1-6 provides a plurality of theological voices. However, regarding soteriology, the synergist or Arminian view is the most prevalent.

### *Christian Atonement*

Christians have long wondered at and debated the issue of atonement: How do Jesus's life, death, and resurrection save people? Neither the Bible nor the ecumenical church councils ever defined it clearly. Instead, theologians throughout the centuries have promoted various models, metaphors, and images in attempts to state better what happened (happens) through the Christ-event to bring people salvation.<sup>5</sup> Seldom have theologians promoted one view as exclusively orthodox. Instead, taken together, various views affirm both the objective and subjective nature of atonement: Jesus Christ objectively provides salvation for all humans by his life, death and resurrection; God subjectively acted through Christ on the cross to reconcile himself to humanity and to make possible the forgiveness and transformation of individual sinners.<sup>6</sup> In his chapter, "Salvation," theologian Roger Olson names and defines five primary models of atonement that have been espoused and accepted by Christians throughout the centuries. While it is beyond the scope of this paper to identify each one, explanations will be provided below as they pertain to the theology found in GH1-6.

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<sup>5</sup> Paul S. Fiddes, *Past Event and Present Salvation: The Christian Idea of Atonement* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989), 5.

<sup>6</sup> Olson, *Mosaic*, 251.

As stated above, hymns are no substitutes for theological treatises of systematically-espoused doctrine. This is especially true for GH1-6. Gospel hymnwriters wrote to move people toward faith, salvation, and spiritual renewal. Rarely, if ever, did they write with the expressed desire to teach singers about some intellectually-embraced doctrine of the Christian faith. Here, the analysis will depend on snippets of hymn texts, ideas expressed, and notions assumed through allusions to ascertain what kind of atonement models gospel hymnwriters most often utilized to express the Christian doctrine of atonement.

While many theologians recognize at least seven theories of atonement,<sup>7</sup> the hymns surveyed focus on only five. The main theories espoused here are ransom, satisfaction, moral example, Christus Victor, and penal substitution. After a brief explanation for each model, the hymns promoting that theory are provided.

### *Ransom Theory*

One of the first major models of atonement systematically espoused was the ransom theory, promoted by the early church father Origen (185-254 C.E.). Essentially, this theory claimed that Adam and Eve sold humanity to the Devil at the time of the Fall (Genesis 3). Legally then, Satan “owned” humanity so that justice would require God to pay the Devil a ransom in order to free them. The classical version promoted by the Cappadocian Father, Gregory of Nyssa, went on to say that

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<sup>7</sup> These include 1) substitutionary (and, as a sub-category, penal substitution), 2) recapitulation, 3) ransom, 4) Christus Victor, 5) satisfaction, 6) moral influence, and 7) governmental. Olson, however, recognizes only five of these as primary and normative for Christian faith. See Olson, *Mosaic*, 256-261.



God deceitfully tricked Satan into exchanging humanity for Jesus, God's son, since Satan did not know that Christ could not be held captive by the bonds of death.<sup>8</sup>

The ransom theory was based, in part, on literal interpretations and developments of Mark 10:45 and 1 Timothy 2:6. Mark says, "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many." Similarly, 1 Timothy states that Christ, "gave himself as a ransom for all, the testimony given at the proper time." Although the ransom model dominated the Church's theology for a thousand years, medieval developments diminished its popularity. It has very few proponents in the modern Church because of the way it presents God's character; God is simultaneously the one dealing fairly with Satan while also trying to trick him in the exchange deal.<sup>9</sup>

Gospel hymnwriters referred to this theory. Seldom were the details of the model espoused. However, the idea of God rescuing humanity from the clenching hold of the devil through a "ransom" is a common feature. Humanity then becomes the "ransomed" group, having been paid for by God in the exchange.

When from my dying bed my ransomed soul shall rise,  
Then "Jesus paid it all" shall rend the vaulted skies. (GH 588.4)

Beseeching in love for our Saviour, unworthy we pray in His stead;  
Believe in the word of forgiveness, accept of the ransom He made.  
Beseeching His blood-bought, His ransom'd, your bodies to Him gladly yield,  
That, in you, and thro' you, and by you, His grace may be fully revealed.  
(505.2, 3)

The Master is calling thee, sinner, in tones of compassion and love,  
To feel that sweet rapture of pardon, and lay up thy treasure above:

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<sup>8</sup> Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 811.

<sup>9</sup> Olson, *Mosaic*, 257.

Oh! kneel at the cross where He suffered, to ransom thy soul from the grave;  
The arm of His mercy will hold thee, the arm that is mighty to save. (GH  
185.2)

Behold how plain the truth is made; since Christ the ransom price has paid,  
And all our sins on Him were laid, we must in Him be saved. (GH 522.1)

Oh, who is this that cometh from Edom's crimson plain,  
With wounded side; with garments dyed? Oh, tell me now Thy name.  
"I that saw thy soul's distress, a ransom gave;  
I that speak in righteousness, might to save!" (GH 322.1)

Sin no more, thy soul is free, Christ has died to ransom thee;  
Now the power of sin is o'er, Jesus bids thee sin no more. (447.1)

Who was lifted on the tree? Jesus Christ our Saviour;  
There to ransom you and me? Jesus Christ our Saviour. (GH 283.2)

O ye who would enter that glorious rest,  
And sing with the ransom'd the song of the blest,  
The life everlasting if ye would obtain,  
"Ye must be born again." (GH 127.3)

### *Satisfaction Theory*

In the twelfth century, Anselm of Canterbury developed an alternative model that came to be known as the satisfaction theory. Human sin created a debt to God that humans could not pay. According to Anselm, God's honor had been slighted by humanity's sin and therefore satisfaction had to be made. In order for this transaction to take place, God had to initiate it; no creature is capable of paying a debt so large. However, the debt had to be paid by a human; it would not make sense for God to pay a debt owed to himself. As Anselm described it, this satisfaction had to be paid by someone who was both God and human in order to be effectual. The satisfaction theory provided not only a model of atonement, but also

one that answered the “Why?” of the incarnation.<sup>10</sup> Christ, being both God and sinless human, provided humanity with the means of paying a debt to God that they could not pay. It was enough to serve as the satisfaction necessary for God’s wounded honor, freeing God to shower humanity once again with his love, reconciling us to God.

While the ransom theory promoted an exchange between God and Satan, with Christ as the mediator and means of atonement, this theory sees the exchange as one between God and Christ, with the cross providing the means of atonement. It should be noted that humanity is not the bargaining partner in this transaction; God the Son paid our debt freely and in obedience to his father. Although Anselm’s theory was popular in the Medieval Church and echoes themes found in the New Testament of a debt paid by Christ, the model is not often espoused in the modern Church because of its connections to feudal political theories.<sup>11</sup>

Gospel hymnwriters referred frequently to this model when they promoted ideas of Christ “purchasing our pardon” or “paying our debt.”<sup>12</sup> Here, I have also included hymns that promote the idea of Christ sacrificing himself to God. While the exact theory is not detailed in Scripture, gospel writers were likely attracted to the

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<sup>10</sup> Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 816.

<sup>11</sup> Olson, *Mosaic*, 258. Today, the idea of Christ paying our debt is most popularly espoused in the penal substitution model, a model based on Anselm’s satisfaction theory discussed below.

<sup>12</sup> As will be explained below, this model is so closely related to the penal substitution view of atonement that it is often difficult to discern any difference in the hymns surveyed. Here, I have included hymns that emphasize the fact that Christ has paid our debt to God. Hymns categorized as promoting the penal substitution view will focus on the fact that Christ has assuaged God’s wrath and has taken the punishment that sinful humanity deserved.

biblical theme, especially found in the Pauline letters, of Christ paying the debt of humanity.

Christ is my peace; He died for me, for me He shed His blood;  
And as my wond'rous sacrifice, offered Himself to God. (GH 176.4)

Young men in Christ the Lord, own Him your Saviour God,  
His name adore; for by His wond'rous sacrifice,  
He paid the great redemption price, that all might have eternal life,  
That come to God thro' Him. (GH 502.1)

I hear the words of Jesus, they speak of peace with God;  
I see the Lamb, Christ Jesus, who bore my heavy load;  
I trust the blood of Jesus, from sin it sets me free,  
I love the name of Jesus, who gave Himself for me. (GH 222.1)

Nothing, either great or small—nothing, sinner, no;  
Jesus died and paid it all, long, long ago. (GH 159.1)

Jesus, my Saviour, on Calvary's tree,  
Paid the great debt, and my soul He set free;  
Oh, it was wonderful—how could it be? Dying for me! (GH 280.1)

I love Thee, because Thou hast first loved me,  
And purchased my pardon on Calvary's tree;  
I love Thee for wearing the thorns on Thy brow;  
If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus, 'tis now. (GH 586.2)

Jesus, Thou has bought us, not with gold or gem,  
But with Thine own life-blood, for Thy diadem;  
With thy blessing filling all who come to Thee,  
Thou hast made us willing, Thou hast made us free. (GH 236.3)

Hear ye the glad good news from heav'n?  
Life to a death-doomed race is given!  
Christ on the cross for you and me purchased a pardon full and free. (GH 187.1)

### *Moral Influence Theory*

At about the same time Anselm of Canterbury was developing his satisfaction theory, medieval theologian Peter Abelard (1079-1142) attempted to provide

another alternative to both the ransom and satisfaction theories. Abelard desired a theory that highlighted God's love and included humanity in the reconciliation process. He saw Christ's life, death, and resurrection as having the power to foster love in humanity.<sup>13</sup> The love generated in the Christ-event renews the bond of love that God made with humanity at the beginning of creation. Thus, the redemption of humanity is still accomplished by God through Christ, yet the reconciliation process is completed as human nature is repaired through this powerful revelation of love. This great act of love causes a change in the hearts and lives of sinners so that they are drawn to God. Unlike other theories of atonement that focus primarily on the cross of Christ, Abelard emphasized the entire life and ministry of Christ as part of human redemption. Overall, this theory highlights God's love which overrules all else, including any supposed need for justice. This is a more subjective view of atonement, since it is the individual Christian who seeks wholeness and reconciliation, empowered by God's love. The life and death of Christ inspire us to accept and pursue God's love, encouraging godly living and spiritual discipline in our lives.

Many modern theologians consider this to be the most liberal of all major views of atonement due to its subjectivity; Christ's death does not accomplish something definitively for all of humanity, but rather encourages reconciliation.<sup>14</sup> However even conservative evangelicals have sung this model in their hymnody; the

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<sup>13</sup> Fiddes, *Past Event and Present Salvation*, 141.

<sup>14</sup> Olson, *Mosaic*, 263.

great hymn by Isaac Watts, “When I Survey the Wondrous Cross” aptly expresses Abelard’s model.<sup>15</sup>

Allusions to this model appear in the hymns surveyed when Christ is seen encouraging believers toward salvation by bringing light to the world, as Christians respond to God’s great expression of love in Christ, and as believers are spurred toward godly living by following Christ’s example.

I heard the voice of Jesus say, “I am this dark world’s light;  
Look unto me, thy morn shall rise, and all thy day be bright.”  
I looked to Jesus, and I found in Him my Star, my Sun;  
And in this light of life I’ll walk ‘till trav’ling days are done. (GH 649.5, 6)

The whole world was lost in the darkness of sin,  
The Light of the world is Jesus;  
Like sunshine at noonday His glory shone in,  
The Light of the world is Jesus.  
Come to the Light, ‘tis shining for thee;  
Sweetly the Light has dawn’d upon me,  
Once I was blind, but now I can see:  
The Light of the world is Jesus. (GH 626.1)

Love bring the glorious fullness in,  
And to His saints makes known the blessed rest from inbred sin,  
Thro’ faith in Christ alone.  
Oh, ‘twas love, ‘twas wondrous love! The love of God to me;  
It brought my Saviour from above, to die on Calvary. (GH 623.3)

Jesus comes! He fills my soul! Perfected in Him I am;  
I am every whit made whole; glory, glory to the Lamb. (GH 658.5)

“Lord, I would Thy mercy see; Lord, reveal The love to me;  
Let it penetrate my soul, all my heart and life control.” (GH 620.3)

‘Tis Jesus calls me on to perfect faith and love,  
to perfect hope, and peace, and trust, for earth and heav’n above.  
‘Tis Jesus who confirms the blessed work within,  
By adding grace to welcomed grace, where reigned the power of sin. (GH 595.3, 4)

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 259.

Shine on, O Star unchanging, and guide our pilgrim way,  
Until we see the dawning of heav'n's eternal day. (GH 292.3)

Then come to the Saviour, whose mercy grows brighter  
The longer you look at the depths of His love;  
O fear not, 'tis Jesus, and life's cares grow lighter  
While thinking of home and the glory above. (GH 509.3)

### *Christus Victor Theory*

A fourth understanding of the atonement is a dramatic expression of the biblical theme of Jesus's death and resurrection conquering all evil. While both the New Testament church and early church fathers envisioned the concept of Christ as a victor over Satan, it was Reformation theologian Martin Luther who systematically espoused this model and popularized it among Protestants. While other models like ransom, satisfaction, and penal substitution focus almost exclusively on the death of Jesus, the Christus Victor view, like the moral example understanding, connects Christ's life, death, and resurrection together as a part of the redemption event.<sup>16</sup> In fact, this view highlights Christ's resurrection more than any other view, since it is in fact necessary for this victory to occur.

According to this view, the very heart of Christ's atoning work for humanity is his victorious invasion and conquest of Satan's territory. However, this view sees the atoning victory as encompassing much more than victory over a person, the Devil. In fact, Christ's life, death, and resurrection brings victory over all that could be considered evil in our world or any other, including sin, suffering, bondage, and

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<sup>16</sup> Gregory A. Boyd, "Christus Victor View," in *The Nature of the Atonement: Four Views*, ed. James Beilby and Paul R. Eddy (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 46.

separation from God. In Christ, God completely reconciles the world to himself by defeating anything and everything that may have been against him.

While some theologians criticize this model, claiming that it falls short of answering the question, “Why did Christ *have* to die?” other theologians suggest that it best encapsulates the gospel message of what Christ did for us on the cross and what he continues to do in and through us in the world.<sup>17</sup> These theologians tend to see other models as a stretch from what the Bible actually suggests happened at the Christ-event.

Gospel hymnwriters affirmed this model when they expressed Christ’s all-encompassing victory over Satan, death, and sin, when Christ is exalted as the sovereign king, and in their affirmations that the believer achieves freedom from all bondage in Christ. This idea is also present when Christians are encouraged to live with confidence while performing the work of the gospel, knowing that Christ has won the victory.

I live—and yet, not I, but Christ that lives in me;  
Who from the law of sin and death hath made me free. (GH 686.4)

Stand up!—stand up for Jesus! Ye soldiers of the cross;  
Lift high his royal banner, it must not suffer loss:  
From vict’ry unto vict’ry His army shall he lead,  
Till ev’ry foe is vanquished and Christ is Lord indeed. (GH 615.1)

Fierce may be the conflict, strong may be the foe,  
But the King’s own army, none can overthrow;  
Round His standard ranging, vict’ry is secure,  
For His truth unchanging makes the triumph sure. (GH 236.4)

Oh, how sweet the touch of power comes,—and is salvation’s hour;  
Jesus gives from guilty release, “Faith hath saved thee, go in peace!” (GH 620.4)

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 47.



He came from the throne of His glory, and left the bright mansions above,  
The world to redeem from its bondage; so great His compassion and love.  
(GH 276.2)

Out of my bondage, sorrow and night, Jesus, I come, Jesus, I come;  
Into Thy freedom, gladness and light, Jesus, I come to Thee;  
Out of my sickness into Thy health, out of my want and into Thy wealth,  
Out of my sin and into Thyself, Jesus, I come to Thee. (GH 281.1)

Of victory now o'er Satan's power let all the ransomed sing,  
And triumph in the dying hour through Christ the Lord our King. (GH 623.5)

'Tis Jesus gives me life within, and nerves me for the fray;  
He spoiled the hosts of death and sin, and took their pow'r away.  
My soul will overcome by the blood of the lamb. (GH 210.2)

O bleeding Lamb, my Saviour, how couldst Thou bear this shame?  
With mercy fraught, Thine arm has brought salvation in Thy name!  
"I the victory have won, conquered the grave:  
Now the year of joy has come, mighty to save!" (GH 322.3)

This mighty Christ, so strong and true, has come from God, His work to do;  
He comes with power the soul to save, to give the vict'ry o'er the grave. (GH 528.2)

Of grace to break the pow'r of sin, He gives a full supply;  
The Holy Ghost, the heart within, from sin doth purify. (GH 667.3)

The gospel trumpet's sounding the year of jubilee,  
And grace is all abounding, to set the bondmen free.  
Forsake your wretched service, your master's claims are o'er;  
Avail yourselves of freedom, be Satan's slaves no more (GH 148.1, 2)

### *Penal Substitution Theory*

The fifth prominent model, the penal substitution theory, rose to prominence during the Protestant Reformation as a modified version of Anselm's satisfaction theory. It was systematically espoused by John Calvin as the primary theory of atonement<sup>18</sup> and has since been promoted by many Protestants, but especially those

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<sup>18</sup> Olson, *Mosaic*, 260.

who ascribe to Calvinism. According to this view, on the cross Christ took the punishment that humanity deserved, appeasing God's rightful wrath against sin. God's moral order as expressed throughout the Bible, especially in the Old Testament's system of sacrifice and in the Apostle Paul's strong emphasis on Christ taking on our curse, guilt, and punishment, demands that sin be paid for by a blood sacrifice. Christ, therefore, satisfied the demands of justice by enduring our punishment for us on the cross. According to this view, not only is humanity's punishment transferred to Christ on the cross, but Christ's righteousness is therefore imputed to us by God, making us right before him.

The differences between this model and Anselm's are subtle. While Anselm's theory focuses on a satisfaction paid to the damaged honor of God, this theory emphasizes capital punishment as the only right retribution for disobeying God.<sup>19</sup> In addition, Calvin's explanation of this model highlighted God's just wrath toward sin and disobedience. Jesus took all this onto himself so that we could be reconciled to God. Western theologians, especially, often promote this view as the most biblical and logical of all major atonement models. Its influence in Protestant Christianity is unparalleled. It is no surprise, then, that writers of gospel hymns espoused this model.

Hymns in GH1-6 promote this view when they speak of Christ taking on our punishment, receiving what humanity deserved, and assuaging the wrath of God.

Oh, why was He there as the bearer of sin,  
If on Jesus thy guilt was not laid?  
Oh why from His side flowed the sin-cleansing blood,  
If His dying thy debt has not paid? (GH 635.2)

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

Still He waits for thee, pleading patiently, "Come, O come to Me!"  
"Heavy-laden one, I thy grief have borne, come and rest in Me."  
Words with love o'erflowing, life and bliss bestowing. (GH 122.2)

List to His message, think of His mercy!  
Sinless, yet bearing thy sins on the tree;  
Perfect remission, life everlasting Thro' His atonement, He offers to thee. (GH 479.3)

No works of law have we to boast, by nature ruined, guilty, lost;  
Condemned already, but Thy hand provided what Thou didst demand.  
No faith we bring, 'tis Christ alone, 'tis what He is—what He has done;  
He is for us as given by God, it was for us He shed His blood. (GH 239.1, 2)

Behold how plain the truth is made, since Christ the ransom price has paid,  
And all our sins on Him were laid, we must in Him be saved.  
The death of Christ upon the tree was for the judgment due to thee;  
He died that thou mightiest ransom'd be and live by faith in Him. (GH 522.1, 2)

Behold the bleeding Saviour upon the cruel tree,—  
The Just condemned, forsaken—He dies for you and me;  
The "Son of God" beloved, for us a curse was made;  
That we might have redemption, the awful price he paid. (GH 377.2)

Good news from heav'n, good news for thee,  
There flows a pardon, full and free,  
To guilty sinners, thro' the blood of the incarnate Son of God;  
He paid the debt that thou didst owe, He suffered death for thee below,  
He bore the wrath divine for thee, He groan'd and bled on Calvary. (GH 167.1)

Hear ye the glad good news from heav'n?  
Life to a death-doomed race is given!  
Christ on the cross for you and me purchased a pardon full and free. (GH 187.1)

Free from the law, oh, happy condition,  
Jesus hath bled, and there is remission,  
Curs'd by the law and bruised by the fall,  
Grace hath redeemed us once for all. (GH 13.1)

Sin no more, His blood hath bought, think on what His love hath wrought;  
Think of what for thee He bore, weeping go, and sin no more. (GH 447.3)

He has made a full atonement, now His saving work is done;  
He has satisfied the Father, who accepts us in His Son. (GH 427.2)

Helpless I am and full of guilt, but yet for me Thy blood was spilt;  
And Thou canst make me what thou wilt, and take me as I am. (GH 226.2)

I hear the words of Jesus, they speak of peace with God;  
I see the Lamb, Christ Jesus, who bore my heavy load;  
I trust the blood of Jesus, from sin it sets me free,  
I love the name of Jesus, who gave Himself for me. (GH 222.1)

What! "lay my sins on Jesus?" God's well-beloved Son!  
No! 'tis a truth most precious, that God e'en that has done.  
Yes, 'tis a truth most precious, to all who do believe,  
God laid our sins on Jesus, who did the load receive. (GH 38.1, 2)

In keeping with the general consensus of the Christian Church, gospel hymns do not promote only one view of the atonement. Various models are necessary to encapsulate the powerful, transformative essence of the Christ-event for human redemption.

### *Missiology*

As some scholars see it, evangelicals care about nothing more than evangelizing the world.<sup>20</sup> Protestant mission efforts flourished in the nineteenth century, the time during which the hymns surveyed were written. What came to be known as the "Modern Protestant Missionary Movement" began a few decades earlier. Most agree that it officially launched with missionary William Carey's publication, *Enquiry into the Obligation of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion*

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<sup>20</sup> Douglas A. Sweeney, *The American Evangelical Story: A History of the Movement* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 79.

of *Heathens* in 1792.<sup>21</sup> In the nineteenth century, missionary efforts among evangelicals blossomed both at home and abroad, as conservative Christians sought to fulfill the gospel's call to spread God's word "to the ends of the earth."<sup>22</sup>

As might be expected, gospel hymns frequently encourage this kind of missional activity. While these hymns do not invite the sinner to faith, as in a typical invitation, they do remind believers of their obligation to invite others to belief, sharing the gospel with all those in need.

Young men in Christ, arise, the world before you lies,  
Enslaved in sin; make haste to swell the mission band,  
Prepared to go at His command, to save lost men in every land,  
At any sacrifice. (GH 502.5)

"Call them in"—the broken-hearted, cowering 'neath the brand of shame;  
Speak Love's message low and tender, 'twas for sinners Jesus came:  
See, the shadows lengthen round us, soon the day-dawn will begin;  
Can you leave them lost and lonely? Christ is coming—"Call them in." (GH 72.4)

"Look unto Me, and be ye saved," O hear the blest command,  
Salvation full! salvation free! Proclaim thro' ev'ry land. (GH 343.1)

O sinners, the heralds of mercy implore, they cry like the patriarch, "Come;"  
The Ark of salvation is moored to your shore,  
Oh, enter while yet there is room!  
The storm-cloud of Justice rolls dark over head,  
And when by its fury you're tossed,  
Alas, of your perishing souls 'twill be said,  
"They heard—they refused—and were lost!" (GH 115.3)

"Whosoever heareth," shout, shout the sound!  
Send the blessed tidings all the world around;  
Spread the joyful news wherever man is found:  
"Whosoever will, may come."  
"Whosoever will, whosoever will,"

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<sup>21</sup> Charles R. Taber, *To Understand the World, To Save the World: The Interface Between Missiology and the Social Sciences* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2000), 23.

<sup>22</sup> Acts 1:8

Send the proclamation over vale and hill;  
'Tis a loving Father calls the wand'rer home:  
"Whoever will, may come." (GH 618.1, refrain)

Come, sing the gospel's joyful sound, salvation full and free;  
Proclaim to all the world around, the year of jubilee!  
Salvation, salvation, the grace of God doth bring;  
Salvation, salvation, thro' Christ our Lord and King. (GH 59.1)

Jesus saves! O glory! glory! Shout the tidings o'er and o'er;  
Tell to all the earth the story, Jesus saves forevermore. (GH 421.chorus)

We have heard the joyful sound: Jesus saves! Jesus saves!  
Spread the tidings all around: Jesus saves! Jesus saves!  
Bear the news to ev'ry land, climb the steps and cross the waves;  
Onward!—'tis our Lord's command: Jesus saves! Jesus saves! (GH 284.1)

The power to win a soul to God, the Spirit, too imparts;  
And He, the gift of Christ our Lord, dwells now in all our hearts. (GH 667.4)

Sound the alarm on the mountain's brow!  
Plead with the lost by the wayside now;  
Warn them to come and the truth embrace;  
Urge them to come and be saved by grace.  
Sound the alarm, watchman, sound the alarm!  
For the Lord will come with a conq'ring arm;  
And the hosts of sin, as their ranks advance,  
Shall wither and fall at His glance. (GH 246.3)

Evangelicals throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have long debated the priorities of missional activity.<sup>23</sup> Some have claimed that the Bible mandates that gospel evangelism has precedence. This means that missional efforts should focus on proclaiming the good news of the gospel to all peoples; other needs or circumstances should only be addressed after the gospel has been verbalized. Efforts of those like D. L. Moody, who focused on evangelism to the masses, providing preaching, Bible studies, and Sunday School to the poor, are often

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<sup>23</sup> C. Gordon Olson, *What in the World is God Doing? The Essentials of Global Missions: An Introductory Guide*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (Cedar Knolls, NJ: Global Gospel Publishers, 2003), 337.

associated with this view.<sup>24</sup> On the other hand, some evangelicals have been concerned with the “whole person” and social action as a vital part of missions and evangelism. They say that a starving person cannot listen to the gospel.<sup>25</sup> This was especially espoused in the efforts and theology of Walter Rauschenbusch, a Baptist minister and theologian. While both views have been and continue to be present in evangelical life, the hymns surveyed focus exclusively on the former view, that practiced by D. L. Moody.

### *Eschatology*

Eschatology, or the “study of the last” things, is the aspect of theology that has to do with the end of life and the end of the world. While eschatological doctrines have long been debated, with Christians espousing particular views like premillennialism, postmillennialism, and amillennialism (all varying views of the meaning of Christ’s thousand-year reign in Revelation 20), this section will focus on the fundamental tension in this field of theology, namely, that between future and realized eschatology. Orthodox Christianity has affirmed a consensus—that Christ will return, manifesting the kingdom of God in a new heaven and a new earth sometime in the future; and that the kingdom of God is already at work within human history, especially in the Christ-event. The consensus is expressed in a phrase that frequently appears in theological discussions of eschatology, the

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<sup>24</sup> Sweeney, *American Evangelical Story*, 162.

<sup>25</sup> Gordon, *What in the World*, 337.

kingdom is “already but not yet.”<sup>26</sup> Those who lean toward realized eschatology emphasize the resurrection of Christ and the coming of the Holy Spirit as the manifestation of God’s kingdom on earth, within human history, transforming our individual lives and society. Others who promote future eschatology focus on the fact that the fulfillment of God’s reign is yet to come and are less optimistic about prospects for personal or universal transformation and progress. To be clear, the Bible supports both of these views, which suggests that they should be held in tension. History shows, however, that many Christians have emphasized one form over, or even to the neglect of, the other.<sup>27</sup>

These differences are not just theoretical; on the contrary, they have significant practical implications. Whereas a strong realized eschatology gives one reason and motivation to work for social change, confident that God has empowered such work and transformation for our world, the one who focuses on the future fulfillment of God’s kingdom will be less motivated to work toward such endeavors. As the name suggests, those who espouse a largely future fulfillment tend to look forward to the life hereafter, heaven, and the passing of this world into the newly created one. In the nineteenth-century theological milieu in which gospel hymnwriters wrote, both ideas were present. Nineteenth-century liberal theologians were increasingly proposing an ethical kingdom of God that is

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<sup>26</sup> Jerry L. Walls, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 13.

<sup>27</sup> See Olson, *Mosaic*, 335-344.



progressively realized within human history.<sup>28</sup> While evangelicals largely kept their distance from liberal theologians in the nineteenth century, they were certainly influenced by their ideas, especially when they promoted the efforts of the social gospel movement. However, evangelicals largely reacted against such developments, reaffirming eschatology in its future forms.<sup>29</sup> For many conservative evangelicals in the nineteenth century, of which gospel hymnwriters were a part, the ultimate question was a choice between heaven and hell, a decision that would affect primarily, if not exclusively, one's future in the afterlife.

Naturally, an emphasis on future eschatology would be expected from hymns for the public invitation, where a response is elicited and sinners are encouraged to turn to faith in Christ so that their souls may be saved for all eternity. This view is often expressed when the hymn encourages the sinner to consider his or her eternity (as opposed to daily life) when making a decision of faith, when salvation is described as an experience with future benefits, or when heaven is emphasized as the ultimate end of life. Of course, many evangelicals taught that salvation in Christ would benefit the lives of individual believers; much of the imagery in chapters above alludes to benefits like rest, peace, satisfaction, and friendship. However, it is also clear that evangelists fundamentally desired the salvation of people's souls for eternity. Many of the hymns surveyed promote this future form of eschatology.

I envy not the rich their joys, Christ for me! Christ for me!  
I covet not earth's glitt'ring toys, Christ for me! Christ for me!

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<sup>28</sup> John Webster, Kathryn Tanner, and Iain Torrance, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 307.

<sup>29</sup> Brian Hebblethwaite, *The Christian Hope*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1985), 188.

Earth can no lasting bliss bestow, "Fading" is stamped on all below;  
Mine is a joy no end can know, Christ for me! Christ for me! (GH 142.2)

Come then, and join this holy band, and on to glory go,  
To dwell in that celestial land, where joys immortal flow. (GH 587.4)  
Come to the Better Land, Pilgrim, make haste!  
Earth is a foreign strand—wilderness waste!  
Here are the harps of gold, here are the joys untold—  
Crowns for the young and old; come, pilgrim, come. (GH 101.4)

Joyful, joyful will the meeting be, when from sin our hearts are pure and free;  
And we shall gather, Saviour, with Thee, in our eternal home. (GH  
636.chorus)

Why do you linger, why do you stay  
In the broad road, that most dangerous way—  
While right before you, narrow and strait,  
Is the bright pathway to heav'n's pearly gate?  
Narrow and strait is the bright pathway to heav'n's pearly gate. (GH 419.1)

Choose I must, and soon must choose holiness, or heaven lose;  
While what heaven loves I hate, shut for me is heaven's gate. (GH 402.1)

Come, gracious Lord, and in thy love conduct us o'er life's stormy wave;  
O guide us to the home above, the blissful home beyond the grave;  
There safe from rock, and storm, and flood,  
Our song of praise shall never cease,  
To Him who bought us with His blood, and brought us to the port of peace.  
(GH 347.4)

Are you ready, are you ready for the coming of the Lord?  
Are you living as He bids you in His word?  
Are you walking in the light? Is your hope of heaven bright?  
Could you welcome Him tonight? Are you ready? (GH 290.1)

Many redeemed ones now are ascending into the mansions of light;  
Jesus is pleading, patiently leading, O let Him save you tonight.  
Say, are you ready, O are you ready? If the Death angel should call;  
Say, are you ready? O are you ready? Mercy stands waiting for all. (GH 213.3)

O come to the merciful Saviour who calls you,  
O come to the Lord who forgives and forgets;  
Tho' dark be the fortune on earth that befalls you,  
A bright home awaits you whose sun never sets. (GH 509.1)

On the other hand, the following hymn clearly highlights the orthodox consensus: the Savior brings life here and now, but we also await the day when it will come in fullness.

Rest, peace, and life, the flow'rs of deathless bloom,  
The Saviour gives us, not beyond the tomb—  
But here, and now, on earth, some glimpse is giv'n  
Of joys which wait us thro' the gates of heav'n. (GH 353.4)

### *Christology*

Traditional perspectives of Christology include two kinds: a “low” Christology that focuses on Jesus’s humanity, and a “high” Christology that emphasizes Christ’s divinity. Both perspectives are a necessary part of orthodox Christology. As is evident in the many hymns noted above, GH1-6 includes examples of both. Jesus is both the divine, sovereign Lord of all, God-in-flesh who performs miracles and brings salvation to humankind, as well as the intimate friend and companion, the one on whom any may call in time of need, the ultimate human to be emulated. This balance is not surprising. Evangelicals have traditionally espoused orthodox doctrine, and this is a necessary doctrine if one is to claim authentic Christian faith.

What is most striking about the theology of Jesus espoused in the gospel hymns surveyed, and indeed, the gospel hymn genre in general, is their almost exclusive focus on Jesus, to the exclusion of other members of the Trinity. In fact, one would be hard pressed to gain any understanding of a trinitarian God based on singing these hymns.

Again, it must be noted that espousing orthodox doctrine was rarely the primary purpose of writing gospel hymns, especially those associated with a public invitation or response of faith. If the intended audience of these hymns was the faithless sinner or the believer in need of spiritual renewal, it would only make sense that teaching theology would not be the fundamental focus in such a circumstance, when a more simple decision of faith was desired. In hymns appropriate for the public invitation, this focus on Jesus seems fitting. Scripture, too, makes plain the fact that our salvation was accomplished through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Atonement theories nearly all focus on Jesus's efforts in gaining humanity's salvation.

However, if evangelicals in the nineteenth century were trinitarian, why were the vast majority of their hymns so decidedly focused on one person, Jesus? Mary G. De Jong notes that this emphasis on Jesus is a result of the evangelical view that Jesus is the source of completeness not only for humanity as a whole but also for each individual person.<sup>30</sup> Whatever a person is lacking or needs can be found in Jesus. This perspective is evident in hymns like "I Am Coming," where the singer can only come to Jesus for rest, peace, and gladness (GH 224); "I Hear Thy Welcome Voice," where Jesus provides the ability to live out perfect faith and love (GH 595); and "Pass Me Not," where the singer declares that he or she has no one else in heaven or on earth but Jesus, the "Spring of my comfort" (GH 585). As is evident from the evaluation of the hymns' themes, the vast majority focus on some aspect of

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<sup>30</sup> Mary G. De Jong, "I Want to Be Like Jesus: The Self-Defining Power of Evangelical Hymnody," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 54 (Fall 1986): 461.

Jesus, often one that is directly or indirectly related to humanity (see table 2). Some of the most common metaphors have to do with a relational Christ. He is a friend, companion, mother, brother, master, shepherd, and husband—mostly images based on human roles and relationships. The hymnal was second to the Bible in influence over the hearts and minds of nineteenth-century evangelicals. These anthropomorphic metaphors of Jesus tended to be accepted as definitive since they were espoused in beloved hymns.<sup>31</sup> Singers were encouraged to identify with and model themselves on the Christ they found in the hymns. While modern theologians might criticize this kind of “Jesus-olatry” as the result of folk religion,<sup>32</sup> none can deny the powerful influence this kind of Christology had in shaping nineteenth-century evangelical spirituality and devotion.

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 462.

<sup>32</sup> Roger Olson defines folk religion as those “unreflective religious beliefs based largely, if not exclusively, on feelings, traditional folk ways, clichés, and devotional literature [like hymns]. . . It is unreflective and even resists critical reflection.” The Roger E. Olson blog, entry posted August 4, 2011, <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/rogereolson/2011/08/a-bigger-problem-than-heresy-folk-religion/> (accessed May 20, 2012). See also Roger E. Olson, *Questions to All Your Answers: The Journey from Folk Religion to Examined Faith* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 14-18.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### *Gospel Hymns Nos. 1 to 6 and the Hymn of Invitation: A Comparison with Modern Baptist Hymnals*

In its final section, this survey offers a comparison of the invitation hymns surveyed in GH1-6 with modern hymns from three recently published Baptist hymnals. These hymnals were selected as representative of one of the largest evangelical denominations in America, the Baptists, and more specifically, Southern Baptists.<sup>1</sup> The hymns chosen for the comparison are those that compilers have assigned as hymns of response for “invitation,” “acceptance,” “salvation,” and other headers appropriate for the invitational time of the evangelical service. Since the comparison is with “modern” hymns, only texts written and published since 1960 will be included. Nineteen sixty was chosen as the date due to the meeting of the Second Vatican Council during that decade. One of the first issues considered by the council was the Catholic liturgy. As a result of the council’s conversations, Catholic liturgy aimed to achieve greater lay participation through the celebration of the Mass in the vernacular and by enlivening congregational singing. What followed was an explosion in hymnwriting, one that quickly affected Catholics and Protestants alike. While evangelicals have typically distanced themselves from all things Catholic, the Catholic introduction of modern forms of hymnody quickly spread throughout the Church. While it cannot be argued that all the modern hymns

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<sup>1</sup> *The Baptist Hymnal* (1991) and *Baptist Hymnal* (2008) are both official hymnals of the Southern Baptist Convention. *Celebrating Grace Hymnal* (2010) is Baptist in origin and ecumenical in intent.

surveyed have their roots directly in Vatican II, it can certainly be assumed that the council's objectives have at least indirectly affected much of modern church music and practice. For this reason, 1960 was chosen as an appropriate beginning date for the "modern" or "contemporary" hymn.

The comparison is an interesting one due to the dwindling practice of the "altar call" or formal public invitation among evangelicals, and Baptists in particular. While a public invitation for any to receive salvation is still a steady ritual among many Baptists, notably Southern Baptists, some include only a general time of response to the service of preaching, which may or may not include a formal invitation.<sup>2</sup> In addition, evangelicals are divided on how "seeker friendly" their worship services should be, an issue that affects their practice of the public invitation since the seeker service assumes that many attendees are not "saved." Those who follow a seeker model are more likely to initiate a time for those who wish to "accept Christ" in their service, even if it does not look exactly like the traditional, nineteenth-century altar call. Just as was typical for nineteenth-century evangelical worship, these services often focus on personal salvation and the centrality of Jesus Christ.<sup>3</sup> Seeker-sensitive evangelicals insist that God is most glorified (worshiped) in evangelistic growth, which represents the kingdom's expansion into secular culture.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Randall Balmer, *Encyclopedia of Evangelicalism* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 12.

<sup>3</sup> Robert H. Krapohl and Charles H. Lippy, *The Evangelicals: A Historical, Thematic, and Biographical Guide* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999), 172.

<sup>4</sup> Roger E. Olson, *A-Z of Evangelical Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 285.

By contrast, other evangelicals insist that proper worship consists of Christians glorifying God “through historically rooted Christian rituals and in confessionally disciplined leadership that provides clear boundaries around the worshiping community.”<sup>5</sup> In these congregations, worship services seldom end with a public invitation for individuals to receive Christ unless the minister deems that his or her sermon specifically calls for such a response. Instead, it is assumed that those gathered to worship are already Christ-followers. A time of response for the believer’s renewal and commitment to spiritual discipline is often offered, rather than a public invitation to receive salvation in these services.

All evangelicals today are no doubt descendants of the nineteenth-century singers and hymnwriters on which this survey is based. The issue of the public invitation is challenging for modern evangelicals due to the changing landscape of worship in evangelical life. As is evident from chapter one, the public invitation of the nineteenth century was most often located in services of special revival, camp meetings, and other parachurch evangelistic efforts. However, in the twentieth century to the present day, such worship practices have made inroads, even becoming mainstay rituals, in the central Sunday services of Christian worship. The diversity found among evangelicals today primarily results from their division on the appropriateness of evangelistic practice as an anchor for evangelical worship.

After providing a list of all the hymns surveyed that meet the above criteria in each of the three modern hymnals, observations will be made based on a comparison of those hymns with the ones surveyed from GH1-6.

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.



*The Hymns Surveyed*

*The Baptist Hymnal* (1991) is an official hymnal of the Southern Baptist Convention. The hymns surveyed include those that hymnal editors have designated as belonging to the header, “The People of God” and include the categories of sin, salvation, conviction and submission, confession and repentance, invitation and acceptance, dedication, and commitment. From the hymnal’s ninety-six hymns included under these categories, twenty of them fit the “modern” designation as given above.<sup>6</sup> Table 4 provides a list of the hymns evaluated in *The Baptist Hymnal* (TBH).

TABLE 4  
Hymns Evaluated in *The Baptist Hymnal* (1991)

Hymn Number	Title
268	The Love of Christ Who Died for Me
273	Freely, Freely
287	Take My Life, Lead Me Lord
296	Jesus is Lord of all
299	Eternal God, May We Be Free
300	Without Him
313	Come, Let Us Reason
319	Jesus Calls You Now
324	Have You Been to Calvary
476	Be Strong in the Lord
477	Jesus’ Hands were Kind Hands
478	Seek Ye First
479	Children of God
482	All to Thee
488	I’m Just a Child
491	Make Room Within My Heart, O God
496	Burn in Me, Fire of God
498	O God, We Ask for Strength
499	Open Our Eyes, Lord
501	Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us with Your Love

<sup>6</sup> Modern hymns comprise 21% of the hymns found in these categories.

*Baptist Hymnal* (2008) is an official hymnal of the Southern Baptist Convention. The hymns surveyed are among those that hymnal editors have headed “We Respond to God’s Love” and include the categories of invitation and acceptance; prayer and petition; surrender, repentance, and commitment; our salvation; renewal and revival; and faith, trust, and hope. From the hymnal’s fifty-five hymns found in these categories, twenty-three fit the “modern” designation as described above.<sup>7</sup> Table 5 provides a list of the hymns evaluated in *Baptist Hymnal* (BH).

TABLE 5  
Hymns evaluated in *Baptist Hymnal* (2008)

Hymn Number	Title
411	Come Just as You Are
426	Open Our Eyes, Lord
427	Be the Centre
430	If My People Will Pray
432	Speak, O Lord
440	Here I Am, Lord
441	The Potter’s Hand
442	I Give All to You
444	Surrender
445	Yes, Lord, Yes
470	Without Him
491	Shine, Jesus, Shine
492	All Who Are Thirsty
497	Out of Ashes
498	I Will Call Upon the Lord
504	Be Strong in the Lord
505	Bow the Knee
506	In Christ Alone
507	Who Can Satisfy My Soul Like You?
510	Firm Foundation
518	My Life Is in You, Lord
519	Because We Believe
522	In His Time

<sup>7</sup> Modern hymns comprise 42% of the hymns found in these categories.

*Celebrating Grace Hymnal* (2010) is Baptist in origin, but ecumenical in intent. Published by Celebrating Grace, Inc., an independent publisher with Baptist roots, the production staff sought to provide a solid hymnal for evangelical worship, particularly for Baptists of all stripes, but also for any other faith traditions who value traditional, evangelical hymn singing.<sup>8</sup> The hymns surveyed include those hymnal editors have labeled “God’s People: The Church at Worship” and include the categories of calling and commitment. Of the hymnal’s forty-two hymns found in these categories, fourteen of them fit the “modern” designation as given above.<sup>9</sup> Table 6 provides a list of the hymns evaluated in *Celebrating Grace Hymnal* (CGH).

TABLE 6  
Hymns Evaluated in *Celebrating Grace Hymnal* (2010)

Hymn Number	Title
473	Will You Come and Follow Me
476	You Walk Along Our Shoreline
477	We are Called to Be God’s People
478	God is Calling Through the Whisper
481	Go to the World
482	Here I Am, Lord
484	The Love of Jesus Calls Us
488	Come, All Christians, Be Committed
489	The Potter’s Hand
494	Take My Life, Lead Me Lord
495	Step by Step
502	Lord, I Lay My Life Before You
506	When the Morning Stars Together
508	We, O God, Unite Our Voices

<sup>8</sup> See the website for Celebrating Grace Hymnal for further descriptions of this new hymnal: <http://www.celebrating-grace.com/hymnal-overview> (accessed June 29, 2012).

<sup>9</sup> Modern hymns comprise 33% of the hymns found in these categories.

Table 7 provides a list of those hymns surveyed appearing in at least two of the three hymnals surveyed under the categories provided above.<sup>10</sup>

TABLE 7  
Hymns Surveyed Appearing in At Least Two Hymnals

Hymn Title
Take My Life, Lead Me Lord (TBH and CGH)
Without Him (TBH and BH)
Be Strong in the Lord (TBH and BH)
Open Our Eyes, Lord (TBH and BH)
Here I Am, Lord (BH and CGH)
The Potter's Hand (BH and CGH)

The abbreviated nomenclature will continue to be used when referencing the hymns. When a hymn appears in multiple hymnals, "MH" will be used as the referencing label (MH; stanza number).

### *Metaphors and Imagery*

As with the hymns of GH1-6, in many modern hymns Jesus is presented as the loving provider and companion who brings peace, rest, hope, satisfaction, light, and life to all who come to him.

Without Him, I could do nothing, without Him, I'd surely fail;  
Without Him, I would be drifting like a ship without a sail.  
Without Him, I could be dying, without Him, I'd be enslaved;  
Without Him, life would be hopeless, but with Jesus, thank God, I'm saved.  
(MH; 1, 2)

Only Jesus is the answer for the happiness we seek;  
He alone can lift life's burden, and give strength unto the weak. (TBH 482.3)

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<sup>10</sup> To be clear, this means that only those hymns surveyed under the appropriate categories will be listed. There are other hymns that belong to this category from the hymnals surveyed, meaning they do appear in two or more of these hymnals, but they do not fall under the appropriate categories. Like the survey of GH1-6, I am depending upon the hymnal editors' indexes and headers rather than a blanket survey of all hymn texts.

Jesus, be my vision, be my path, be my guide, Jesus.  
Be the fire in my heart, be the wind in these sails,  
Be the reason that I live, Jesus. (BH 427.3)

Shine, Jesus, shine, fill this land with the Father's glory;  
Blaze, Spirit, blaze, set our hearts on fire.  
Flow, river, flow, flood the nations with grace and mercy;  
Send forth Your Word, Lord, and let there be light. (BH 491.chorus)

All who are thirsty, and all who are weak,  
Come to the fountain; Dip your heart in the stream of life.  
Let the pain and sorrow be washed away  
In the waves of his mercy as deep cries to deep. (BH 492.verse)

Out of ashes prayers are lifted from the weary mourner's call.  
Broken hearts are being mended; Jesus' stripes can heal them all. (BH 497.1)

Who can satisfy my soul like You?  
Who on earth could comfort me and love me like You do?  
Who could ever be more faithful, true?  
I will trust in You,  
I will trust in You, my God. (BH 507.1)

My life is in You, Lord; My strength is in You, Lord;  
My hope is in You, Lord; in You; it's in You. (BH 518.verse)

Savior, keep me ever near You as I travel down this road.  
Let me always lean on You, Lord, for the strength to bear the load.  
Lord, remind me, on this journey I will never be alone.  
You will guide me and protect me, for You claim me as Your own. (CGH  
502.4)

Life everlasting, and strength for today;  
Taste the Living Water, and never thirst again. (BH 411.bridge)

What is most striking in this comparison is the absence of several common metaphors found in GH1-6. The metaphors of knocking, coming home, warning and urgency, the "old story," and the world as a battle ground or storm are virtually absent. For instance, only a few hymns employ a sense of urgency, a common thread among gospel songs for the invitation.

It was there on Calvary, God's dear Son lay down His life for you.  
Where's there's time, don't delay; place your faith in Christ Jesus.  
Turn your eyes now to Calvary. (TBH 324.chorus)

Jesus, O Jesus, Do you know Him today? Do not turn Him away.  
O Jesus, Jesus, Without Him, how lost I would be. (TBH 300.chorus)

Likewise, the idea of life as a stormy sea was only present in two hymns:

We, O God, unite our voices, raised in thankful harmony.  
You, unchanging, safe have brought us through the ever-changing sea.  
Days of calm and days of conflict, nights of darkness prove Your grace.  
Hands beneath us, arms around us, and, above, Your shining face. (CGH  
508.1)

You walk along our shoreline where land meets unknown sea.  
We hear Your voice of power, "Now come and follow me."  
And if you still will follow through storm and wave and shoal,  
then I will make you fishers but of the human soul." (CGH 476.1)

It seems that modern hymnwriters have lessened their use of poetic metaphors and imagery. Some may consider the metaphors utilized in GH1-6 as outdated for contemporary singers. For instance, the lack of sea references points to a society that is generally much more familiar with travel by land or air, rather than water. Sea references may today seem irrelevant. Knocking, although present in Scripture and used often in GH1-6, may perhaps belong more in a society that was accustomed to greater lengths of neighborly hospitality than our own. And as for coming "home?" For many postmodern people, "home" certainly does not carry the same safe, sentimental connotations it did in the nineteenth century. Whatever the reason, modern hymns of response, when compared with those of GH1-6, are expressed much more generally, simply, or explicitly. For instance, this hymn of devotion represents the kinds of simple or direct ideas many modern choruses contain.

Open our eyes, Lord, we want to see Jesus,  
to reach out and touch Him, and say that we love Him. (MH; 1)

Others, too, express ideas similar to those found in GH1-6, but much more directly,  
without the use of expressive metaphors or images.

Take my life, lead me, Lord, take my life, lead me, Lord,  
make my life useful to Thee. (MH; 1)

O God, You are my God, and I will ever praise You.  
O God, You are my God, and I will ever praise You.  
I will seek you in the morning and I will learn to walk in Your ways;  
and step by step You'll lead me, and I will follow You all of my days. (CGH  
495)

In my walk you can see me trying.  
In my walk you can see me trying.  
In my walk you can see me trying, step by step all the way. (TBH 479.1)

We believe in God the Father.  
We believe in Christ, the Son.  
We believe in the Holy Spirit.  
We are the Church and we stand as one. (BH 519.1)

Bow the knee; trust the heart of your Father  
when the answer goes beyond what you can see.  
Bow the knee; lift your eyes toward heaven  
and believe the One who holds eternity.  
And when you don't understand the purpose of His plan,  
In the presence of the King, bow the knee. (BH 505)

I'll say yes, Lord, yes to Your will and to Your way.  
I'll say yes, Lord, yes; I will trust You and obey.  
When Your Spirit speaks to me,  
With my whole heart I'll agree,  
And my answer will be yes, Lord, yes. (BH 445.1)

Come just as you are; Hear the Spirit call.  
Come just as you are; Come and see, come, receive;  
Come and live forever. (BH 411.1)

I'm just a child and I haven't got much,  
But whatever I have I give it to You. (TBH 488.1)

Even the hymns surveyed that follow traditional, multi-stanza hymnic forms offer few new metaphors or images. Like the simple hymns noted above, these hymns provide content much more directly and with fewer descriptive expressions.

Come, all Christians, be committed to the service of the Lord.  
Make your lives for Him more fitted, tune your hearts with one accord.  
Come into His courts with gladness, each your sacred vows renew,  
turn away from sin and sadness, be transformed with life anew. (CGH 488.1)

The love of Jesus calls us our joyous praise to sing;  
our deeply felt thanksgivings we now together bring,  
for all God's many blessings, unasked yet still received,  
and for the generations who faithfully believed. (CGH 484.1)

We are called to be God's people, showing by our lives His grace,  
one in heart and one in spirit, sign of hope for all the race.  
Let us show how He has changed us and remade us as His own;  
let us share our life together as we shall around His throne. (CGH 477.1)

Jesu, Jesu, fill us with Your love,  
Show us how to serve the neighbors we have from You.  
Kneels at the feet of His friends,  
Silently washes their feet,  
Master who acts as a slave to them. (TBH 501.1, refrain)

O God, we ask for minds which think before we say or do,  
To always speak and act with care, to always live for You. (TBH 498.4)

Eternal God, may we be free from false pretense and foolish pride;  
Help us Your perfect will to see, and cast unworthy thoughts aside. (TBH 299.1)

The love of Christ who died for me is more than mind can know;  
His mercy measureless and free to meet the debt I owe. (TBH 268.1)

Speak, O Lord, as we come to You to receive the food of Your Holy Word.  
Take Your truth, plant it deep in us; Shape and fashion us in Your likeness,  
That the light of Christ might be seen today  
In our acts of love and our deeds of faith.  
Speak, O Lord, and fulfill in us all Your purposes for Your glory. (BH 432.1)



Overall, modern hymns in the surveyed categories appear to be much more direct and concise in what they have to say, often avoiding flowery expressions for more simple and concrete terms and ideas.

### *Scriptural Allusions*

As evangelicals, Baptists continue to give significant attention to Scripture, quoting and alluding to it frequently in their hymns. While the Scripture quoted or alluded to in modern hymns differs from that presented in GH1-6, frequent espousal of Scripture is no less apparent.

What follows are those modern hymns that quote or are based primarily on specific passages of Scripture. In addition to the hymnal reference, the Scripture reference is included.

If My people, which are called by My name,  
Shall humble themselves and pray;  
If My people, which are called by My name,  
Shall seek My face and turn from their wicked ways;  
Then will I hear from heaven,  
Then will I hear and will forgive their sin,  
And heal their land. (BH 430; 2 Chronicles 7:14)

Here I am, Lord. Is it I, Lord?  
I have heard You calling in the night.  
I will go, Lord, if you lead me.  
I will hold Your people in my heart. (MH; refrain; Isaiah 6:8)

I will call upon the Lord who is worthy to be praised.  
So shall I be saved from my enemies.  
The Lord liveth, and blessed be the Rock,  
And let the God of my salvation be exalted. (BH 498; Psalm 18:3; 2 Samuel 22:47)

Be strong in the Lord, and be of good courage;  
Your mighty defender is always the same.  
Mount up with wings, as the eagle ascending;  
Vict'ry is sure when you call on His name.

Be strong, be strong, be strong in the Lord;  
And be of good courage, for He is your guide.  
Be strong, be strong, be strong in the Lord;  
And rejoice, for the vict'ry is yours. (MH; Deuteronomy 31:6; Ephesians 6:10)

In His time, in His time;  
He makes all things beautiful in His time.  
Lord, please show me ev'ry day as You're teaching me Your way  
That You do just what You say in Your time. (BH 522.1; Ecclesiastes 3:11)

"Come, let us reason together," that's what God says.  
"Come, let us reason together," says the Lord.  
"Tho' your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow;  
Tho' they be red as crimson, they shall be as wool." (TBH 313; Isaiah 1:18)

Seek ye first the kingdom of God,  
And His righteousness,  
And all these things shall be added unto you  
—Allelu, alleluia! (TBH 478.1; Matthew 6:33)

You walk along our shoreline where land meets unknown sea.  
We hear Your voice of power, "Now come and follow me."  
And if you still will follow through storm and wave and shoal,  
then I will make you fishers but of the human soul." (CGH 476.1; Matthew  
4:18-22)

Go to the world! Go as the ones I send,  
for I am with you 'til the age shall end,  
when all the hosts of glory cry "Amen."  
Alleluia. Alleluia. (CGH 481.4; Matthew 28:19-20)

Take me, mold me, use me, fill me.  
I give my life to the Potter's hand.  
Call me, guide me, lead me, walk beside me.  
I give my life to the Potter's hand. (MH; refrain; Isaiah 64.8)

### *Overarching Themes*

As may already be apparent, the overarching themes of the modern hymns surveyed differ significantly from those found in GH1-6. As noted above, few metaphors and images are employed; many hymns present their content much more directly and concretely. In addition, as may also be evident, the content of

these hymns moves far from the public invitation's primary call for sinners to receive or accept salvation. The modern hymns surveyed cover a much wider array of subjects and ideas. In fact, few of the hymns surveyed fit the apparent nineteenth-century standards for the "hymn of invitation" (in spite of GH1-6's own variety in textual content). For these reasons, not only are the primary themes of modern hymns significantly different from those of GH1-6 (see chapter 5), but it is also difficult to discern and label overarching themes, given the diversity in content. However, based on close readings of each of the hymns, they have been categorized under five primary headings. Compared to the thematic evaluation of GH1-6 in Chapter 5, this classification is much more general, corresponding to the diversity and divergence of the modern hymn.

#### *Aspirations for Godly Living*

Several of the hymns surveyed either express the desire to live godly lives or respond with a commitment to live a devoted life. Hymns like the ones noted below express the believer's desire to grow closer to God and follow Christ, and represent hymns that follow this overarching theme.

Open our eyes, Lord, and help us to listen,  
Open our eyes, Lord, we want to see Jesus. (BH 426.2)

Speak, O Lord, and renew our minds;  
Help us grasp the heights of Your plans for us.  
Truths unchanged from the dawn of time  
That will echo down thro' eternity.  
And by grace we'll stand on Your promises,  
And by faith we'll walk as you walk with us.  
Speak, O Lord, till Your church is built  
And the earth is filled with Your glory. (BH 432.3)

Renew our lives that they may be alive and vibrant to Your call,  
With ears to hear and eyes to see new ways to crown You Lord of all. (TBH  
299.4)

Make room within my heart, O God, that You may form in me  
The image You have shown in Christ, my very life to be.

Inspire my thought, O lofty One, to reach the highest plane,  
That I may know the mind of Christ, and Him as greatest gain. (TBH 491.1)

O God, You are my God, and I will ever praise You.  
O God, You are my God, and I will ever praise You.  
I will seek you in the morning and I will learn to walk in Your ways;  
and step by step You'll lead me, and I will follow You all of my days. (CGH  
495)

### *General Commitment to God*

Some of the hymns surveyed encourage general commitments to God. As  
hymns of response, these are not commitments to receive salvation, but are more  
general pledges to follow Christ with one's life. The following hymns represent  
those belonging to this overarching theme.

Here I am, Lord. Is it I, Lord?  
I have heard You calling in the night.  
I will go, Lord, if you lead me.  
I will hold Your people in my heart. (MH .refrain; Isaiah 6:8)

Take me, mold me, use me, fill me.  
I give my life to the Potter's hand.  
Call me, guide me, lead me, walk beside me.  
I give my life to the Potter's hand. (MH .refrain; Isaiah 64:8)

Take my life, lead me, Lord, take my life, lead me, Lord,  
make my life useful to Thee. (MH .1)

I'm just a child and I haven't got much,  
But whatever I have I give it to You. (TBH 488.1)

### *Commitment to Active Service*

The modern hymns surveyed more often include commitments to active service. As will be noted below, this may be due to a changing theology, especially where missiology and eschatology is concerned. Several hymns provide pledges of service to God's kingdom in their daily lives on this earth. The following hymns represent such a theme.

O God, we ask for voice to speak with language kind and true,  
To never speak a hurtful word and always speak for You. (TBH 498.2)

Jesu, Jesu, fill us with Your love,  
Show us how to serve the neighbors we have from You.  
These are the ones we should serve, these are the ones we should love;  
All these are neighbors to us and You. (TBH 501.3, refrain)

Will you let the blinded see if I but call Your name?  
Will you set the prisoners free and never be the same?  
Will you kiss the leper clean and do such as this unseen,  
and admit to what I mean in you and you in me? (CGH 473.3)

We are called to be God's prophets, speaking for the truth and right,  
standing firm for godly justice, bringing evil into light.  
Let us see the courage needed, our high calling to fulfill,  
that we all may know the blessing of the doing of God's will. (CGH 477.3)

Go to the world! Go struggle, bless, and pray;  
the nights of tears give way to joyous day.  
As servant church, you follow Christ's own way.  
Alleluia. Alleluia. (CGH 481.3)

The love of Jesus calls us in swiftly changing days,  
to be God co-creators in new and wondrous ways;  
that God with men and women may so transform the earth,  
that love and peace and justice may give God's kingdom birth. (CGH 484.4)

### *Response of Praise*

A response of general praise or worship to God is common among modern hymns. In these hymns, the believer responds by glorifying and worshipping God.

I will call upon the Lord who is worthy to be praised.  
So shall I be saved from my enemies.  
The Lord liveth, and blessed be the Rock,  
And let the God of my salvation be exalted. (BH 498)

There is a Fountain, who is a King,  
Victorious Warrior and Lord of everything.  
My Rock, my Shelter, my very own;  
Blessed Redeemer who reigns upon the throne! (BH 507.chorus)

When the morning stars together their Creator's glory sang,  
and the angel host all shouted till with joy the heavens rang,  
then Your wisdom and Your greatness their exultant music told,  
all the beauty and the splendor that Your mighty works unfold. (CGH 506.1)

### *Formal Invitation*

Finally, some hymns do appear to present a formal invitation to receive salvation. These hymns explicitly encourage the sinner to faith.

Jesus, O Jesus! Do you know Him today? Do not turn Him away.  
O Jesus, O Jesus! Without Him, how lost I would be. (MH .chorus)

Will you surrender you all to Him now?  
Follow His will and obey.  
Crown Him as Sov'reign, before His throne bow;  
Give Him your heart today. (TBH 296.3)

He will change your life, let Him in.  
He will change your life, let Him in.  
He will change your life, let Him in.  
O come, let Him in. (TBH 319.3)

It was there on Calvary, God's dear Son lay down His life for you.  
Where's there's time, don't delay; place your faith in Christ Jesus.  
Turn your eyes now to Calvary. (TBH 324.chorus)

I have heard the voice of Jesus calling clearly, "Follow Me";  
No one else could ever promise life eternal and so free.  
All to thee, I give my all to Thee,  
All to Thee, Thine only will I be;  
All to Thee, O Christ of Calvary,  
My prayer shall ever be, my all to Thee. (TBH 482.1)

All the modern hymns surveyed have been read and evaluated according to the five overarching themes described above (Table 8).

TABLE 8  
Relative Frequency of Hymn Themes in the Modern Hymns Surveyed

Theme	Total Number	Percentage
Aspirations for Godly Living	13	25
General Commitment to God	9	18
Commitment to Active Service	11	22
Response of Praise	9	18
Formal Invitation	9	18

Note: Due to rounding, percentages do not always equal 100%.

### *Hymn Forms*

The categories of hymn forms used in analyzing GH1-6 (see chapter six) are also appropriate forms for analyzing modern hymns, especially when observing comparisons between the two bodies of literature. While noting the lines of communication does not provide information on specific content, it does give clues as to the basic nature and purpose of a given hymn. A quantitative presentation of the forms of all modern hymns surveyed is provided in Table 9.

This comparison is particularly noteworthy because the primary lines of communication used in the modern hymns surveyed have obviously diverged significantly from those presented in GH1-6.<sup>11</sup> In GH1-6, the form that appeared most often was the exhortation from the evangelist to the sinner (45%); the least-employed form was the exhortation from God or Jesus (2%). For the modern hymns of response, those categories and their corresponding percentages are quite

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<sup>11</sup> Please see Table 3 on page 88 for a quantitative presentation of the hymn forms surveyed in GH1-6.

TABLE 9  
Relative Frequency of Hymn Forms in the Modern Hymns Surveyed

Form	Total Number	Percentage
Exhortations from evangelist		
a. To sinners	7	14
b. To Christians	5	10
Descriptions		
a. Statements, affirmations	9	18
b. Stories, testimonies	3	9
Proclamations to God or Jesus		
a. From repentant sinner	1	2
b. From Christian	22	43
Exhortations from God or Jesus	4	8

Note: Due to rounding, percentages do not always equal 100%.

different. Here, the form most often employed was the proclamation to God or Jesus from the Christian (43%); the least-employed form was the proclamation to God or Jesus from the repentant sinner (2%). This comparison of the hymns' forms reflects the diversity found in the modern hymns. In addition, the use of so many hymns from the believer's perspective to God further emphasizes the divergent nature of the modern evangelical hymn of response when compared to the nineteenth-century hymn of invitation. Here, where the content often consists of the believer's desire to devote him or herself to Christ or to godly living, there is also the corresponding line of communication: a Christian proclaiming this commitment directly to God.

#### *Fundamental Theological Themes*

What is most striking about a theological comparison between the hymns of invitation in GH1-6 and the modern hymn of response in the hymnals surveyed is the lack of notable theological concerns and doctrinal depth in many of the modern



hymns surveyed. The challenges of a theological analysis of gospel hymns were noted in chapter seven. One might naturally assume, given the theological progression of the twentieth century, that modern hymns would offer more sophisticated theological depth. However, a theological analysis and comparison of the modern hymns surveyed has its own challenges, although the reasons behind such difficulties appear to differ somewhat from those associated with nineteenth-century gospel hymns.

First, and most apparently, the sheer number of modern hymns of response published in the three Baptist hymnals surveyed is significantly less than the number of invitation hymns included in GH1-6. This means that there are fewer hymns to analyze, resulting in the presentation of fewer theological themes.

Second, it should be noted and might be apparent—given the diverse subject content of the hymns surveyed—that modern hymnal collections do deal with a wide array of theological concerns, but perhaps not in hymns found under the categories listed. In a hymnal which includes over six hundred hymns, only a small portion is found under the headers surveyed. This means that there are hundreds of other hymns that have not been analyzed. It is assumed that they provide the theological and doctrinal depth that is traditionally present in a hymnal, especially one officially published by a denomination in the late twentieth or early twenty-first century.

However, there could be other reasons behind the apparent lack of theological concerns in the hymns surveyed. One of these has been noted above: the practice of the seeker-service. While there is great diversity found among

churches with these services, they usually employ simple, modern music that is meant to be accessible to the non-churched.<sup>12</sup> In some ways, this is not drastically different from the nineteenth-century revival service, in which the public invitation became a mainstay. The point is not to teach doctrine or deliver deep theological truths during worship, but rather to win souls to Christ. Thus, many evangelicals who support seeker services would be accepting of hymns that promote little theological depth.

Many evangelical theologians have decried the pervasiveness of folk religion among members of their own congregations and denominations. Folk religion is often intellectually unreflective and even resists reflection, promoting a type of anti-intellectualism that pervades many evangelical congregations.<sup>13</sup> In many congregations where such sentiments are held, congregational singing often consists of texts that are simple, direct, and very general (such as broad and personal praise to God). They may even reject hymns that are intellectually and theologically complex.

Finally, the pervasive impact of the praise and worship movement among evangelicals has certainly affected the theological content of the group's congregational songs.<sup>14</sup> Also associated with both the seeker service and, for some, folk religion, the praise and worship movement emerged in the 1960s and 1970s

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<sup>12</sup> Krapohl and Lippy, *The Evangelicals*, 172.

<sup>13</sup> The Roger E. Olson blog, entry posted August 4, 2011, <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/rogereolson/2011/08/a-bigger-problem-than-heresy-folk-religion/> (accessed May 20, 2012). See also Roger E. Olson, *Questions to All Your Answers: The Journey from Folk Religion to Examined Faith* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 14-18.

<sup>14</sup> Krapohl and Lippy, *The Evangelicals*, 174.

and promoted several concerns including “the immediacy of God’s Spirit, a desire for intimacy, and a persuasion that music and informality must connect with people of a post-Christian culture.”<sup>15</sup> Again, theological doctrine was (is) not emphasized so much as the basic worship of God, often espoused through personal and intimate language and forms.

By contrast, some evangelicals value and prefer modern hymnody with theological and intellectual depth. There are hymns representing this style among the hymns surveyed. While generalizations are difficult regarding evangelicals, and especially Baptists, these evangelicals might be proponents of a worship style that is confessionally based and decidedly Christian.<sup>16</sup>

Hymns promoting both sides of the evangelical spectrum of worship described in this chapter’s introduction are included among those surveyed. While there are fewer theological themes espoused in the modern hymns surveyed, there are certainly noteworthy topics, especially in a comparison with the nineteenth-century’s GH1-6.

### *Soteriology*

Among the hymns surveyed, no clear consensus supports either monergism or synergism regarding soteriology. The issue of Calvinism and Arminianism has never been resolved among Baptists; their theology has never been fully Calvinist or

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<sup>15</sup> Robert E. Webber, *Worship Old & New*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 130.

<sup>16</sup> Labeled “traditionalists” by Roger Olson. See Olson, *A-Z*, 285.

Arminian.<sup>17</sup> While some hymns like the ones below appear to promote the synergist model, particularly those that are invitational in nature and elicit a response, no clear stance is evident.<sup>18</sup>

He will change your life, let Him in.  
He will change your life, let Him in.  
He will change your life, let Him in.  
O come, let Him in. (TBH 319.3)

It was there on Calvary, God's dear Son lay down His life for you.  
While there's time, don't delay; place your faith in Christ Jesus.  
Turn your eyes now to Calvary. (TBH 324.refrain)

### *Christian Atonement*

Only a few of the hymns surveyed appear to reflect a particular doctrine of Christian atonement. Hymns espousing two models, the Christus Victor and penal substitution theories, were evident.

The Christus Victor model of atonement has always been a favorite among evangelicals. This is likely due to its biblical themes of Christ's victory over death and sin.

Be strong in the Lord, and be of good courage;  
Your mighty commander will vanquish the foe.  
Fear not the battle, for the vict'ry is always His;  
He will protect you wherever you go. (MH .3)

There in the ground His body lay; light of the world by darkness slain.  
Then bursting forth in glorious day, up from the grave He rose again!  
And as He stands in victory sin's curse has lost its grip on me;  
For I am His and He is mind, bought with the precious blood of Christ! (BH 506.3)

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<sup>17</sup> David L. Allen and Steve W. Lemke, *Whosoever Will: A Biblical-Theological Critique of Five-Point Calvinism* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2010), 49.

<sup>18</sup> As with the hymns in GH1-6, it stands to reason that if a hymn asks the sinner to make a choice of faith, that the person truly has the ability and responsibility to make that decision.

The penal substitution model has been frequently accepted by evangelicals, sometimes to exclusion of all other models.<sup>19</sup> It is explicitly expressed in some of the hymns surveyed.

In Christ alone who took on flesh; fullness of God in helpless babe.  
this gift of love and righteousness scorned by the ones He came to save;  
'Til on that cross as Jesus died the wrath of God was satisfied;  
For every sin on Him was laid; here in the death of Christ I live. (BH 506.2)

The love of Christ who died for me is more than mind can know;  
His mercy measureless and free to meet the debt I owe.  
He came my sinful cause to plead, he laid his glories by,  
For me a homeless life to lead, a shameful death to die. (TBH 268.1, 2)

### *Missiology*

As noted in chapter seven, evangelicals, and Baptists in particular, care a great deal about missions. To this day, Baptists have some of the largest denominational missions organizations in the world. They are often known for their mission efforts. In chapter seven, the current debate on the proper priorities of missions was briefly explained, that between gospel or biblical evangelism and a social gospel of “whole person” service and aid. While the hymns surveyed in GH1-6 focused exclusively on the former, that of verbalizing the gospel to all people, the modern hymns surveyed offer a more balanced view, including hymns that present both approaches to missions.

The following hymns emphasize the need for verbal missions, sharing the gospel story explicitly with other people.

Savior, let me share the message with the people all around  
that Your mercy will not fail them; that, with You, peace can be found.

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<sup>19</sup> Olson, A-Z, 149.

Fill my heart with true compassion for each lost and lonely soul;  
help me lead them to Your love, Lord, where each life can be made whole.  
(CGH 502.2)

Go to the world! Go into all the earth.  
Go preach the cross where Christ renews life's worth,  
baptizing as the sign of our rebirth.  
Alleluia. Alleluia. (CGH 481.1)

Come in praise and adoration, all who on Christ's name believe.  
Worship Him with consecration, grace and love you will receive.  
For His grace give Him the glory, for the Spirit and the Word,  
and repeat the gospel story till the world His name has heard. (CGH 488.4)

Other hymns present a view associated with the social gospel: missions  
includes seeking justice and peace, giving aid to the poor and needy, and serving the  
felt needs of others.

We are called to be God's prophets, speaking for the truth and right,  
standing firm for godly justice, bringing evil into light.  
Let us see the courage needed, our high calling to fulfill,  
that we all may know the blessing of the doing of God's will. (CGH 477.3)

We cast our net, O Jesus; we cry the kingdom's name;  
we work for love and justice; we learn to hope through pain.  
You call us, Lord, to gather God's daughters and God's sons,  
to let Your judgment heal us so that all may be one. (CGH 476.3)

Will you let the blinded see if I but call Your name?  
Will you set the prisoners free and never be the same?  
Will you kiss the leper clean and do such as this unseen,  
and admit to what I mean in you and you in me? (CGH 473.3)

Jesu, Jesu, fill us with Your love,  
Show us how to serve the neighbors we have from You.  
Kneels at the feet of His friends,  
Silently washes their feet,  
Master who acts as a slave to them. (TBH 501.1, refrain)

## *Eschatology*

As described in chapter seven, evangelicals, indeed most Christians, have diverged in their descriptions of God's kingdom. The Bible says plainly that Christ has ushered in God's kingdom, and yet we see signs of its absence all around. The kingdom is thus described as "already but not yet."<sup>20</sup> Christians have often found emphasizing the duality of a future and realized eschatology difficult. While the hymns surveyed in GH1-6 presented a nearly exclusive future eschatology, modern hymns present a balanced form: Yes, Jesus brings eternal life and that is a fundamental part of the Christian hope; yet we also hope in the ways God brings transformation to our world and our lives in the here and now on earth. A realized eschatology is closely associated with social efforts in missions. If one is concerned with this world and believes that God is as well, he or she will more likely be involved in the transformation and renewing work God is doing.

The following hymns describe a future eschatology, especially that which is focused on the gift of eternal life in the hereafter:

No one else could ever promise life eternal and so free.  
All to thee, I give my all to Thee,  
All to Thee, Thine only will I be;  
All to Thee, O Christ of Calvary,  
My prayer shall ever be, my all to Thee. (TBH 482.1)

While the Spirit's clear voice can be heard softly pleading,  
Give your life to Jesus now:  
Trusting faith is the way to have life everlasting,  
And He calls from Calvary. (TBH 324.3)

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<sup>20</sup> Jerry L. Walls, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 13.

The following hymns express a realized eschatology, the belief that God is working to bring his kingdom to earth and that we should join him in that effort:

The love of Jesus calls us in swiftly changing days,  
to be God co-creators in new and wondrous ways;  
that God with men and women may so transform the earth,  
that love and peace and justice may give God's kingdom birth. (CGH 484.4)

Go to the world! Go struggle, bless, and pray;  
the nights of tears give way to joyous day.  
As servant church, you follow Christ's own way.  
Alleluia. Alleluia. (CGH 481.3)

God is calling through the voices of our neighbors' urgent prayers;  
through their longing for redemption and for rescue from despair.  
Place of hurt or face of needing; strident cry or silent pleading;  
God is calling—can you hear? God is calling—can you hear? (CGH 478.2)

Will you love the "you" you hide if I but call your name?  
Will you quell the fear inside and never be the same?  
Will you use the faith you've found to reshape the world around,  
through My sight and touch and sound in you and you in Me? (CGH 473.4)

### *A Trinitarian Christology*

What is perhaps most theologically significant about the modern hymns surveyed as compared to those in GH1-6 is their presentation of a trinitarian Christology. Christ is still most often the person of the Godhead featured in the hymns, which is understandable regarding hymns of salvation, faith, and acceptance. However, this emphasis on Christ is often presented in the context of a trinitarian presentation of God. Some hymns are explicit in their expression of the Trinity. Other hymns simply mention other members of the Godhead. Still others simply refer to God, rather than constantly referring to the name of Jesus. While some theological critics would certainly like to see a more accurate glimpse of the triune God in their hymnody, these modern hymns arguably include enough to avoid what



has been described as the “Jesus-olatry” found among some evangelicals and their hymns.

The following hymns clearly offer a more trinitarian perspective of God.

We believe in God the Father.  
We believe in Christ, the Son.  
We believe in the Holy Spirit.  
We are the Church and we stand as one. (BH 519.1)

Direct my will, O King of kings, subject it to Your own,  
That ev’ry impulse, action, word, may make Your kingdom known.  
Effect my prayer, great Trinity, Eternal Three in One;  
Combine each part of me to praise the Father, Spirit, Son. (TBH 491.2)

God is calling through the whisper of the Spirit’s deepest sighs;  
through the thrill of sudden beauties that can catch us by surprise.  
Flash of lightning, crash of thunder; hush of stillness, rush of wonder;  
God is calling—can you hear? God is calling—can you hear? (CGH 478.1)

O God our Father, we confess an unconcern for those in need;  
Break through our sinful selfishness, and reign as Lord of word and deed.  
(TBH 299.3)

Bow the knee; trust the heart of your Father  
when the answer goes beyond what you can see.  
Bow the knee; lift your eyes toward heaven  
and believe the One who holds eternity.  
And when you don’t understand the purpose of His plan,  
In the presence of the King, bow the knee. (BH 505)

Are there parallels between modern hymns of invitation and the ones among nineteenth-century gospel hymnody? It appears that much of Baptist hymnody today follows the same theological stream and emphases as the nineteenth-century gospel writers, however the results are different. Gone are the ornate metaphors and images, complex ones on which entire hymns were often based. Modern hymns have been simplified. While the primary source for the content continues to be the Bible, the modern use of Scripture is usually more limited in scope. The forms and

primary themes have been altered significantly. In general, the themes of the nineteenth century centered more on Jesus and his provision, while those of the late twentieth century focused on the believer's aspiration toward godliness and devotion. Both have Jesus at the center, but the resulting emphasis differs. The forms between the two bodies differs dramatically, as the lines of communication in modern hymnody have moved away from the evangelistic call for the sinner to turn to Jesus to the mode of the Christian's proclamation to God.

Aside from the possible reasons previously mentioned, a few other observations should be made. No minister or theologian today would deny the increasing biblical illiteracy found among Christians of all faith traditions in America, including evangelicals, for whom the Bible is officially the norm for faith and practice. This is likely the chief impetus behind the loss of many metaphors and allusions tied to Scripture. If the biblical quote is lost on the singer, the hymn may lose its effectiveness. This assumes that modern hymnwriters have the biblical knowledge to incorporate various passages of the Bible which may not be the case, since the Bible is no longer a part of our vernacular.

Regarding the loss of more complex or descriptive metaphors and imagery, one must remember the period during which gospel hymns were written. The late nineteenth century represented the peak of the Victorian era of the English-speaking world. The kind of romanticism that shaped their cultural milieu is absent in our own period. Hymnody, a form of poetic literature, reflects these changes in culture. In addition, the frequent use of the modern "praise chorus" and its corresponding brevity in textual content further simplifies the use of metaphors and

other poetic composition techniques. While it is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss the changing form of the hymn, it should be noted that those modern hymns that continue to follow the standard form of a hymn, a multi-stanza text set to a strophic tune, often employ more complex compositional techniques like that of the metaphor, explore theological themes more deeply, and typically display more varied lines of communication. This is not meant to carry a negative connotation on either form; it is simply the nature of the writing style.

Both the changes in theme and form reflect a movement away from the straightforward public invitation that was often issued in the nineteenth century. While the practice is still common among many evangelical congregations, the focus has moved more toward the call for believers' renewal rather than an explicit invitation for sinners to be saved. There is also found among some contemporary Baptists the concern of issuing an "altar call." They perceive some confusion among congregants regarding the importance of coming forward publically. After all, it is not "walking the aisle" that "saves you." However, a consistent insistence on this act from each individual could erroneously teach that belief. At the least, some altering of liturgical wording and identifying terminology is necessary, many concur.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> The Baptist Messenger blog, entry posted April 4, 2011, <http://baptistmessenger.com/a-theological-perspective-on-the-%E2%80%98invitationaltar-call%E2%80%99/> (accessed June 29, 2012). See also Patrick McIntyre, *The Graham Formula: Why Most Decisions for Christ are Ineffective* (Mammoth Spring, AR: White Harvest Publishing, 2005).

## CHAPTER NINE

### *Gospel Hymns Nos. 1 to 6 and the Hymn of Invitation: Conclusion*

Evangelicals have long been known for their singing in worship. The hymns of the evangelical Protestant tradition are among the most widely used in worship throughout American history, and today, even around the world. In weekly worship, revivals, youth services, camp meetings; at conferences, conventions, universities; among intimate family circles, the hymns of evangelical traditions have been shared and rehearsed as a sacred part of the lives and worship of generations since the First Great Awakening.<sup>1</sup>

Among evangelicals, hymn singing has constituted a primary ritual in worship. Often seen as a vehicle for the Spirit's movement, a means of generating the desire for a "new birth" that has so often been emphasized among this group, and the key to developing the revivalistic and missional ideals of the evangelical movement, hymnody has become a distinctively significant ritual. Evangelical worship has mostly consisted of singing, preaching, Bible reading, and praying, with the congregation's emphasis on its singing. It may be difficult for non-evangelical Christians to understand the place occupied by hymn-singing among evangelicals.<sup>2</sup> However, for evangelicals, hymns provide expressions of some of their most

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<sup>1</sup> Philip V. Bohlman, Edith L. Blumhofer, and Maria M. Chow, eds., *Music in American Religious Experience* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 123.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Howard, *Evangelical is Not Enough: Worship of God in Liturgy and Sacrament* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1984), 18.

powerful and characteristic beliefs, institutions, rituals, and spirituality.<sup>3</sup> As books of experiential and practical theology, hymnals provide clear understandings of evangelical faith, perhaps more so than does preaching, teaching literature, and other didactic forms.<sup>4</sup>

As explained here, these hymns do not only help form the basis for popular theology. They are an integral part of one of the most distinctive rituals of nineteenth-century evangelicalism: the public invitation. Perhaps most striking is the diversity found among these texts. Numerous metaphors and images, biblical allusions that cross the entire canon of Scripture, and theological perspectives representing the wide spectrum that has comprised evangelical doctrine are all evident within their stanzas. Rather than view this diversity as some schizophrenic, eclectic mingling of contradictory doctrines, folk religion elements, or a focus on the individual, as some have done,<sup>5</sup> I prefer to see the diversity itself as indicative of what is—or what is not—core to evangelicalism. Theologians today may lament the lack of deep, intellectual theologizing exercised in evangelical circles which, they claim, is evident in their hymnody. They may even pass over hymns, seeing them as simple poetic and musical expressions, preferring theological works, confessional statements, or sermons when studying the group's core beliefs. However, these

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<sup>3</sup> Bohlman, et. al., *Religious Experience*, 124.

<sup>4</sup> Ministers, theologians, and seminarians may be uncomfortable with this statement. While hymns are no substitute for the theological treatises of systematic theology, they do describe and prescribe the much of the theology and faith practice of the average church-goer, especially among evangelicals. The next chapter further explains the normative and formative substance of these hymns.

<sup>5</sup> See Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 34-36.

observers, some of them even participants in evangelical faith, altogether fail to understand evangelicalism; their chidings actually attempt to move evangelicalism away from its origins and core beliefs.

Theologically, this hymn analysis, albeit limited, of both GH1-6 and modern hymnals reveals some of the most basic beliefs among evangelicals: the new birth, expressed through personal testimonies of conversion and a constant desire for spiritual renewal; Christology, articulated especially through devotion to Jesus and a personal desire to be like him; salvation, especially evident through numerous expressions of the atonement; and missions, not only verbal sharing of the gospel, but also social service and aid. Absent are the time-honored expressions of metaphysical doctrines about God, Christ, and salvation such as those found in the ecumenical creeds. It is not that such doctrines are unimportant to evangelicals; the confessional statements of various evangelical groups and denominations reveal that the opposite is true. However, as a group, the emphases of their hymns reveal a union, consensus, and inclusivity that belies the fractious stereotype they often garner in the Church and the world. Rather than ascribe this diversity to the individualism, folkism, and anti-intellectualism that no doubt do exist to some degree, one should instead attempt to understand positively what this says about evangelicals. Evangelicals have carried on the efforts of pietism, spiritual experience, church member involvement, and devotion in ways seldom paralleled by other groups.<sup>6</sup> Rather than viewing their theological diversity as folkish ignorance or neglect of theological depth and study, perhaps some should be willing

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<sup>6</sup> Olson, *A-Z*, 10.

to celebrate the evangelical propensity toward more fundamental and practical values like Christ-centered piety, Christian living, and service.

What is the unique offering of evangelical faith to the rest of Christianity? Their hymn texts provide a telling insight. The hymns of evangelicals tell us about their worship and beliefs. This is especially true for the ritual of the public invitation. This survey provides a better understanding of the belief, practice, and evolution of that important ritual. Hopefully, it also points to the rich heritage of hymnody that evangelicals ought to celebrate. Rather than comparing the gospel songs and modern hymns with similar characteristics to standard hymns and those celebrated among other denominations and faith traditions, often negatively pointing to what they may lack in comparison, evangelicals should commend their hymnody for what it uniquely offers worshipping Christians of all faith traditions and how it has distinctively shaped evangelical worship and spirituality. Hymnody is a primary expression of evangelical faith. When placed at the center of analysis, hymns reveal the meanings and significations of evangelical liturgy and faith in ways that other liturgical forms do not.<sup>7</sup> Hymn-singing and the study necessary to understand it are essential to understanding what continues to be America's largest Protestant religious group.

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<sup>7</sup> Bohlman, *Religious Experience*, 152.

## APPENDIX

### Hymns Surveyed from GH1-6 Which Appear in Recently Published Baptist Hymnals

Hymn	Appearance
I Love to Tell the Story	BH, CGH
Nothing But the Blood	TBH, BH, CGH
We Have Heard the Joyful Sound	TBH, BH, CGH
Jesus is Tenderly Calling	TBH, BH
Softly and Tenderly	TBH, BH, CGH
Pass Me Not	TBH
My Jesus, I Love Thee	TBH, CGH
Jesus Paid It All	TBH, BH, CGH
I Need Thee Every Hour	TBH, BH, CGH
Stand Up, Stand Up	TBH, BH, CGH
My Hope is Built on Nothing Less	TBH, BH, CGH
Just As I Am	TBH, BH, CGH



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