

## Lecture #14 – History of Sacred Music – Part V

### I. Review and Introduction

Today we will look at the further development of sacred music in America. We will look at the music of the revivals that shaped our nation. We will finish with an overview of some of the major issues we are facing today.

“Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” – philosopher George Santayana

### II. Music in American Revivalism

#### The Great Awakening

**Jonathan Edwards** (1703-1758) was the chief voice of the Great Awakening of the 1730's-40's. He wrote in 1735 describing one of the effects of the revival: “But no part of public worship has commonly [had] such an effect on them as singing God's praises.”<sup>1</sup> His church in Northampton sang both psalms and hymns. In 1737, he described the singing at his church at the time:

*“Our public praises were then greatly enlivened; God was then served in our psalmody, in some measure, in the beauty of holiness. It has been observable that there has been scarce any part of divine worship, wherein good men amongst us have had grace so drawn forth and their hearts so lifted up in the ways of God, as in singing his praises. Our congregation excelled all that ever I knew in the external part of the duty before, generally carrying regularly and well three parts of music, and the women a part by themselves. But now they were evidently wont to sing with unusual elevation of heart and voice, which made the duty pleasant indeed.”<sup>2</sup>*

Such was the case undoubtedly throughout New England as the fires of revival warmed all aspects of the Christian life.

#### Campmeetings

The camp meeting revivals of the American frontier in the early 1800's also produced their own form of church music that was of lesser quality than a hymn and akin to a spiritual. These songs were simple in structure and message. They often featured **repetition**, such as “Give Me that Old Time Religion”. Sometimes they would **take existing hymns and add choruses or tag lines** to them, an example being “I am Bound for the Promised Land” used verses of an existing hymn by Samuel Stennett but added a simple chorus.

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<sup>1</sup>

<http://edwards.yale.edu/archive/?path=aHR0cDovL2Vkd2FyZHMueWFsZS5lZHUvY2dpLWJpbi9uZXdwaGlsby9nZXRvYmplY3QueGw/Yy4zOjQud2plby4yOTczMDA=> - Accessed 12-17-21

<sup>2</sup> <http://faculty.samford.edu/~drbains/relg304/edwards-narr.html> - accessed 10-10-22

## Musical Upgrades

Another revival was soon seen in the urban centers of America, highlighted by the ministry of **Charles G. Finney** (1792-1875). **Joshua Leavitt** (1794-1873) published *The Christian Lyre* in 1830, which included “lower quality” and even secular tunes (such as the tune of “La Marseillaise”, national anthem of France). It featured together texts and tunes, these written with the melody in a treble line and a harmony in a base line. Others, such as **Lowell Mason** (1792-1872) and **Thomas Hastings** (1784-1872), worked to improve the quality of church music by education and importing European tunes they thought to be superior to American ones.

**William Bradbury** (1816-1868) was a student of Lowell Mason that was able to combine his improved music with elements of lower quality camp meetings songs. Others such as **William H. Doane** (1832-1915) and **Robert Lowry** (1826-1899) followed him. These new songs, a mix of hymn and spiritual, came to be known as **gospel songs** or **gospel hymns**. Many of these songs were written to be used in the growing number of Sunday schools of the time. The leading writer of these gospel songs was certainly **Fanny Crosby**.

## Mass Evangelism

In the post-Civil War era, two evangelists stand out and their ministries impacted church music. **D.L. Moody** (1837-1899) is the best remembered and preached mainly in the North and in England. **Sam Jones** was a Methodist evangelist that preached mainly in the South.

Associated with D.L. Moody are writers such as **Philip P. Bliss** (1836-1876), **Daniel W. Whittle** (1840-1901), **James McGranahan** (1840-1907), **George C. Stebbins** (1846-1945), and **Daniel B. Towner** (1850-1919). Most famous though was his association with **Ira Sankey** (1840-1908). Sankey would often sing and play a reed organ during Moody’s campaigns.

What Sankey was to Moody, so was **E.O. Excell** (1851-1921) to Sam Jones. These two worked together off and on for twenty-two years. He is best remembered today for his 1909 arrangement of “Amazing Grace” that is the most widely used today.

## **III. Music in the Churches of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Centuries**

### Continued Evangelism

The mass revivals of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century continued into the 20<sup>th</sup> with many new names such as Billy Sunday (1862-1935), J. Wilbur Chapman (1859-1918), and R.A. Torrey (1856-1928). **Charles M. Alexander** (1867-1920) worked briefly with D.L. Moody but gained attention leading music for Chapman and Torrey. He was a dynamic presence on the platform and set the example for revival song leaders to follow. **Homer Rodeheaver** (1880-1955) was a similar dynamic personality as he famously led music for Billy Sunday’s campaigns. He often played trombone solos in those meetings. The writing and use of gospel songs continued to grow with such writers as **Charles H. Gabriel** (1856-1932).

## Developments (for better or worse)

As we have seen in our survey so far, not every development or influence has proven beneficial. The subject of church music has historically been full of innovation and debate, but it is nothing like we have faced in the past century. We will deal briefly with some of the topics from a historical perspective here and return to a more in-depth analysis in a future lecture.

The first we will highlight is that the music of the **Pentecostals/Charismatics** began to grow in popularity. These songs typically were written to stir an emotional or physical response in the hearer through use of heavy rhythms and repetitions.

The modern **Praise and Worship** music is by far the most dramatic development to come into realm of sacred music in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. *Sing with Understanding* is a book printed in 1995 before Praise and Worship music displaced traditional in many Baptist churches. It gives some good insight into its origin and use:

*“From the standpoint of congregational song, the charismatic focus has been upon miniature hymns characterized by brevity and simplicity; these hymns evoke both emotional and physical responses from singers. Singing is often accompanied by physical gestures, particularly uplifted or extended hands....”*

*“Praise and Worship” indicated more than a music-text style. As observed by Hustad, ‘it includes the concept of a protracted period of singing led by a ‘worship team’ – a group of microphone-holding singers, accompanied by instruments as available.’ Use of Scripture choruses varies greatly among the churches. Some sing them with the objective of increasing the emotional fervor of worship to a point of ecstasy, often climaxed by shouted hallelujahs or speaking in tongues. Others take a more restrained approach, singing choruses no more than twice, with perhaps no more excitement than when signing standard hymns or gospel songs. Often churches which have embraced ‘Praise and Worship’ music make little or no use of hymnals or traditional hymnic forms, thus neglecting the treasury of many centuries of Christian hymnody.”*

We will deal with Praise and Worship music – its history, theology and practice – next week...

Counter to this has been the rise of “**new hymnody**”. There are movements today to create fresh hymns for the church, especially among Reformed churches. However, many of these modern writers misapply the term *hymn* to their work.<sup>5</sup> They write in modern, contemporary styles akin to Praise and Worship or secular genres that is not conducive to congregational use.

Another development is the growing **complexity** of modern music theory. This does not mean that the music is taken to a higher level of quality, but that it may be out of reach for amateur musicians or singers. The chords and rhythms used by Charles Wesley or William Bradbury a usually less

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<sup>3</sup> *Sing with Understanding*, p. 313. I disagree with their use of the word *hymn* in this quote.

<sup>4</sup> *Sing with Understanding*, p. 314

<sup>5</sup> From *Sing! How Worship Transforms Your Life, Family and Church* by Keith and Kristyn Getty, p.90-91: “‘In Christ Alone’ was Keith's first hymn to be released, way back in 2001, cowritten with Stuart Townend. It grew first out of an excitement to write hymns that would help twenty-first-century Christians sing, know, and embrace the incredible truths of the Lord in fresh language, and second out of a frustration with the lack of depth in the songs that were being sung in many churches (in this sense, it was a kind of “protest” music). We envisaged a hymn that told the whole incredible story of the gospel, and settled on the title ‘In Christ Alone.’ Keith wrote most of the music, and Stuart wrote most of the (genius) lyrics.” The lyrics are hymn-like, but the music has far too complex of a rhythm to have the accessibility of a true hymn (among other issues).

complex when compared to many modern songwriters such as John W. Peterson or Bill Gaither. Many churches are relying on professional musicians to perform in their services.

Modern **technology** has also transformed the music of even the most conservative churches. Sound systems can mix or project sound in unnatural ways. The use of hymnals is falling out of practice as song lyrics are project onto large screens. The use of recorded music is commonplace especially for special music.

Something that cannot be overlooked during this time is the role **copyright laws** played in the development and distribution of music. While these worked to ensure that authors and artist received the credit (and payments) due to them, it has worked to stifle the spread of gospel music. Publishers can and will deny the rights for others to use their works.<sup>6</sup>

We will cover copyright issues in a future class.

The last major development of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is the **commercialization** of sacred music. This began in the publishing of music and songbooks in the early part of the century. As music recording came into its own during the middle part of the century, so did Christian record companies. Even major secular corporations like ABC and Time-Warner were buying and managing Christian companies like Word Records.<sup>7</sup> Even Bob Kauflin, a major proponent of praise and worship music in churches, opines: "...worship music is now a product to promote, songs are often chosen more for their identification with an artist than their theology, and songs that were written more than five years ago can be viewed as irrelevant and not worth singing."<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> When B.B. McKinney was working on the *Broadman Hymnal*, Hope Publishing told him, "We will not sell you the right to use 'Power in the Blood' at any cost." See *Glorious is thy Name: B.B. McKinney, The Man and His Music* by Robert J. Hastings, p. 70.

<sup>7</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Word\\_Records](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Word_Records) - Accessed 12-29-21

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.9marks.org/article/pitfalls-in-worship-music-today/> - Accessed 12-29-21