PRACTICAL APPROACH TO PROTESTANT

CHURCH MUSIC

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INTRODUCTION

In order that a discussion of church music may be more significant and helpful, the purpose underlying it ought to be made clear.

The purpose of this study is to make the Protestant church workers more efficient in their use of music in religious work by giving them a clear conception of the kind of music to be used and by suggesting detailed plans and methods by which desirable results may be secured in the use of church music. Ideal standards have their place, but here it is proposed to be matter-of-fact, practical and concrete, and to secure immediate results with the average church member and choir singer as the final criterion in every phase of the work.

The purpose is not to emphasize high ideals but to instruct and inspire all those who have leadership in the service of church music, that they may be able here to provide the greatest religious helpfulness that the use of music can bring the souls to whom they minister.

The governing conception of this treatment is practicality, and even though it may be necessary again and again to restate and reapply the philosophical and psychological principles at the foundation of successful church music, it is assumed that what is needed is not so much a discussion of general principles as the suggestion of detailed and definite methods that shall concretely suggest and illustrate the general principles, and thus clearly indicate their further application.

Many failures in the management of church music are due to a loss of
the sight of the results as the final determining factor. In 1827
Lowell Mason, in a lecture on church music, given in a leading Boston
church, said with great emphasis:

The principal reason for the present degraded state of
church music seems to be that its design is forgotten . . . It is
often given up almost exclusively into the hands of those who have
no other qualifications than mere musical talent, and who, being
destitute of any feeling of piety, are almost as unfit to conduct
the singing of the church as they would be the preaching or the
praying. 1

Stress has been laid upon musical artistic refinement and culture
in church work until the real occasion for musical effort is lost from
sight, -- that of expressing the feelings of the children of God and
by appealing to those without the church.

Church music has been treated as pure art, when it is only an
applied art. Much has been written about standards of musical art,
little about its application to church life and work. In this study
only incidental attention will be given to its artistic, philosophical
or historical phases, while its practical application to the needs and
purposes of American churches will be the main theme.

In this thesis are included several suggested musical plans for
morning services, in which the writer has endeavored to coordinate the
musical compositions on which the service is built in such a way that
each is an extension, illustration, illumination of the central thought
of the service as defined in the sermon. The whole service is thus
bound together in an organic unity.

This does not mean that there is literal correspondence between
the text of the musical composition, for instance, and the text of the

sermon, but that the music is so related to the theme of the service
that "the text of the musical numbers is in the thought of the service,
the music in its mood."²

The plan of listing in the services is as follows:

I Theme
The idea at the heart of the service.

II Anthems
Enough of the text of each is quoted to show the reason for
its being chosen, if that is not sufficiently clear from the
title.

III Hymns
When the hymn may be unfamiliar to some, or when the first
line might fail to suggest the subject of the hymn, some
further lines are quoted. (The Methodist Hymnal is used.)

² Wolfe, Dickinson, Dickinson, The Choir Loft and the Pulpit, p. 3.
CHAPTER I

CHARACTER OF SACRED MUSIC

Before proceeding to the more detailed practical discussion of the subject, it is necessary that the writer should make clear the character, method of operation, and purpose of sacred music. A wrong conception here will seriously limit and cripple musical effort in the church, or even destroy all its practical efficiency.

There are few psychological problems more obscure or perplexing than the mental character of music. The waves of sound are actually physical vibrations in which, according to their relative conductiveness, all the material particles of the body participate. Is it likely that the matter of an extremely sensitive nervous system should be affected by these vibrations? Edmund Gurney in The Power of Sound remarks on this point:

"Of all the formless impressions, sounds can give the strongest shock to the organism . . . The eye is always seeing lights and colors and rests contentedly on agreeable masses, while the ear is peculiarly affected and excited by the occasional phenomena which present distinct sound color." The difference lies in the distinctly physical character of sound.

That the effect of music is physical and not intellectual is to be inferred from the fact that difference of susceptibility to it depends on type of physical constitution. Phlegmatic, artistically

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1 Edmund Gurney, The Power of Sound, p. 84
insensitive persons are rarely musical. Musical gifts and intellectual gifts are often in inverse proportion in musical persons. Many animals are extremely susceptible to the sound of music as are children and infants. In infants and animals the lack of intellectual elements in the effect cannot be doubted.

Despite the evident lack of intellectual content in music, all literature is full of reference to its emotionality. If asked for some intellectual equivalent of this emotional state, no two persons would give the same reply. Helmholtz in his *On the Sensations of Sound* expresses this confusion well:

> When different hearers endeavor to describe the impression of instrumental music, they often adduce entirely different situations or feelings which they suppose to have been symbolized by the music.

Gurney also recognized this difficulty:

> Music is perpetually felt as strongly emotional while defying all attempts to analyze the experience or to define it even in the most general way in terms of definite emotion.

By general consent a psychological impasse would seem to have been reached.

The first proposition, that music appeals to and directly affects the nervous system, is quite generally accepted. Well over half a century ago, Gattschalk, the great American piano virtuoso, formulated the same idea in this statement:

> Music is a thing eminently sensuous. Certain combinations move us, not because they are ingenious, but because they move

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2 Helmholtz, *Sensations of Sound*, p. 43.
our nervous system in a certain way.\(^4\)

Billroth, in his little book, *Where is Music?*, carries the idea a step further:

In the extreme stimulus of the nervous system caused by music, the nerve centers associated with other senses, notably that of sight, are so moved upon that they also send a report to the brain.\(^5\)

Out of this nervous fact noted by this German writer has grown the whole theory of the correspondence of tone and color.

The effect of music on the nervous system is either depressing or exhilarating. The exhilarating or depressing effect of music is greatly modified by the pleasing or irritant quality given it by means of rhythm and discords.

Shall we follow the Herbortean school of psychology in confining the effect of music to the physical system? Bartholomew earnestly protests:

The fact is, that the physiological element is not the whole of sound experience. There is something higher in musical sounds than mere sensuous delight. The pleasure of music is not all in the ear any more than beauty is only in the eye.\(^6\)

The second proposition seems to furnish an adequate reply to the above question. Music produces the same general effect upon the nervous system through the hearing that emotions produce through the mind.

We could take the whole catalogue of emotions singly and in combination and for the nervous effect of each find an approximately corresponding musical cause. In this common term of nervous effect


\(^5\)Billroth, *Where is Music?*, p. 56.

\(^6\)Edmund Lorenz, *op. cit.*., p. 25.
lies the connection between music and the mind.

Many emotions have nervous effects so nearly the same that it is difficult to define the difference. Tears may mean pity, but they may also indicate rage. This indeterminateness of the nervous impression produced by the emotions is shared by that made by music. Hence the correspondence between them is general and not specific.

It must always be remembered that music by itself can only express the nervous impression made by an emotion, not the fact or thought that that waked the emotion. Helmholtz recognizes the true relation of music and emotion when he says:

Music does not represent feelings and situations, but only frames of mind which the hearer is unable to describe except by adducing such outward circumstances as he has himself noticed when experiencing the corresponding mental states.  

The stimulating effect of music upon the nervous organization quickens the action of the brain and prepares it for any work subsequently asked of it. In this indefiniteness of nervous impression and the eagerness of the mind to find a positive intellectual basis for the induced feeling, lies the power of associated ideas. We call certain tunes vulgar concomitants; yet, we may still perceive that they often do give a certain pleasure to children and to adults of small musical development who show no inclination to vulgarity in other ways.

There is frequently a sense of nervous dissonance among persons whose emotions have an improper intellectual basis. The person who associates exclusively elevated and dignified feelings with church music and only light, frivolous ideas with rhythmical music will feel nervous

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7 Helmholtz, op. cit., p. 52.
dissonances in the average church music due to improper coordination of nervous impressions.

Since music is based on mere nervous impressions, it can have no inherently moral value. Men who wish to introduce the artistic conception of church music into our more ambitious churches in the form of elaborate quartets, solos, and organ music, and who often strive to displace the Sunday evening service with miscellaneous programs of music and sacred concerts often urge the moral influence of music.

"The truth of the matter is that music in itself is neither religious nor irreligious, neither moral or immoral."  

So far as music itself having a moral value, its exclusive pursuit is actually demoralizing! Its fundamental appeal is physical. It increases nervous susceptibility until it becomes an irritability. But when music or any other art is recognized as subordinate to moral or religious ends, then it becomes a moral factor of great value. Good Papa Haydn, counting his paternosters on his rosary before beginning composition, may not have been so great a musician as was Wagner, who surrounded himself with all things beautiful and was clad in gorgeous raiment, but he was incomparably the truer and greater man.

\[\{\text{Lorenz, op. cit., p. 34.}\]
CHAPTER II

HOW CHURCH MUSIC ASSISTS

In the introduction was uncovered what seems to be the weakness of the usual thinking about the use of music in church work. It was found that the final purpose was clear enough -- the edification of believers and the persuasion of those without the church. It was also recognized that the use of music furthered this purpose by appealing to the sensibilities of both classes of persons.

From this study of the character of music, the writer is now prepared to reply: Music assists in religious work first, by preparing the hearer nervously and physically for the emotion to be aroused by the general ritual or address; second, by stimulating the nervous action produced by emotions already secured and so increasing their power over the volitions; third, by satisfying the nerves and the mind by a musical expression corresponding to the nervous impression made by the emotions of the mind; and fourth, by assisting in the awakening of emotions connected with natural interests and affections which shall then be transferred to and associated with spiritual ideas and objects.

The first appeal of music is to the physical being. According to its character, it exhilarates and excites or calms and depresses. That music gives pleasure every one recognizes. The mere physical sensation is delightful. Music predisposes the mind of the listener to consider favorably and accept readily general religious impressions the other exercises of the church ritual are intended to convey.
If there were no justification of the organ prelude and the opening anthem, its influence as mere music in organizing the crowd of individuals into a physical unity is sufficient to warrant its inclusion. The mere fact that they are listening to the same music, are having a common experience, creates a composite personality that becomes an induction coil intensifying the current of feeling that is to flow to the individual listener. The more powerful the opening impression, the more closely are the bonds of unity knit. The opening music, therefore, is not the insignificant matter it is usually considered to be.

The mind is impressed with the nervous effect produced by the music and responds with a vague contentless emotion that demands some definite tangible cause. An aggressively rhythmical prelude prepares the way for a stirring hymn of decision; the effect of both is heightened by an anthem full of religious fervor and vigor. By this time the nerves of the hearer have been exhilarated, his feelings of joy, courage, and aggressiveness have been aroused and are clamoring for the fitting discourse on moral reform, church work or missionary duty which will justify his activity. It remains for the speaker to fan the fire already burning in the soul, a vastly easier task than to start it.

When opportunity is given by the playing of expressive music, by a solo, or an anthem by the choir, or, better yet, by an appropriate hymn sung by the hearers themselves, the emotional result of the sermon is greatly increased and intensified. This emotionalizing of an abstract discourse, lacking in appeal to the feelings, is one of the
most effective offices of music.

Worship is the recognition of the infinite greatness and perfection of the Divine Being. In a mind given to abstract conceptions free from emotional realization, there is danger that so great an idea shall have no emotional response. Music may stimulate this flagging emotion, and hence it is advisable to open the ritual with a slow-massive prelude that will calm and depress the nerves and so prepare the mind for a feeling of awe. But this vague, oppressive sensation is not worship.

A solemn feeling is not worship. Such a feeling is a legitimate effect of elevated art. For in the enjoyment of natural scenery, we are recipients; the mind, therefore, is in a passive state. Whereas, in worship, the mind is in an active state.¹

When once the fact is clearly recognized, that musical vibrations directly produce corresponding nervous vibrations, it is possible to reach a firm basis for the application of music in church work. To confine it to purely physical, and at best psychical limitations, may seem to degrade music, but such is not the case. The physical and psychical are degraded and degrading only when they have been made so. They are helpful handmaidens of the spirit, indispensable to our highest culture, happiness and character.

¹Lorenz, op. cit., p. 45.
CHAPTER III

CHURCH MUSIC AN APPLIED ART

In pursuing the study of the character of church music, let it further be stated that, while it is still art, it is an applied art and art with a purpose. That purpose is so lofty and so urgent that it dominates the whole character, form and content of the music used. It is false pride that prevents art from being the humble handmaid of morals and religion.

The musical critic or the well-trained musician may deserve to have his opinions quoted as authoritative in the realm of pure musical art and yet have little standing as a critic or advisor in church music. This limitation is usually overlooked by both the musicians themselves and by the church workers they advise.

The work of the church includes "every creature" and its music must reach and help not only the cultivated and the artistic, but the rude and unlettered as well. There is an unconscious selfishness in many cultivated people who demand that all music must meet the requirements of their own natures.

An English writer referring to this matter of adaptation puts this matter in a nutshell:

True science is elastic. It is half-science which is rigid and hidebound and unable to bend to circumstance. If we once have a grip of the living principle, we can venture freely on its application to varying occasions.¹

¹Ibid., p. 50
If music is to have power to express or create feeling it must be the type that appeals to the congregation whose feeling is to be expressed or evoked. Becoming all things to all men in order that some may be saved, includes this adaptation to the musical need and capacity not only of the young, but of the less cultivated older people, and justifies this position.

The professional musician employed by the church often practically ignores the religious ends that are sought; while the inartistic minister is blind to the value of artistic considerations in his narrow eagerness for religious results. Without entering into a further discussion of the relative weight of these two factors, let the writer assume in the development of his subject that the religious purpose is supreme and that the artistic element yields its claims for consideration only when hard necessity marks its limits.

The range of feeling expressed by music is very wide, but it is still music and produces its nervous results. If music expresses feeling, then sacred music must express sacred feeling. The writer emphasized that all religious emotions should find expression in church music. It is often unconsciously assumed that all music used in religious work must be solemn and stately and must be restricted to prayer and praise; but to shut out the musical expression of all other religious emotions will deprive the church of a large part of its natural and divine heritage. Many of these feelings are not sublime or majestic, and solemn music does not fitly express them.

The Christian religion furnishes a wide range of emotion to be expressed. Its reverence is not an oppressive pall, but it may be cheerful
worship and rapturous adoration, glad thanksgiving and loyal consecration. Here is a wide scope of emotion that has an equal right to musical expression. The solemn dignity of a chorale does not serve this purpose, for these are not always exalted experiences. The march movement is entirely in place in giving voice to some of these religious feelings; and even movements which have in them the grace and joyousness of the waltz, but wanting its sensuousness, may occasionally have their place.

When a person has once learned the heighth and breadth of a complete religious experience, no matter how refined his taste may be, he will accept the current rhythmical religious music in its best manifestations as having great value for spiritual and religious uses. He will not discourage by narrow-minded criticism the faithful and successful workers who conscientiously, with great ability, and often with a great sacrifice of personal musical taste, are seeking to promote the cause of Christ.

The wise minister of music will not allow his artistic conscience to stifle his spiritual conscience, nor let the pride of art displace his sense of responsibility for souls. He will not ask whether this or that song is equal to the most recent Anglican standards, but will it move the people. This does not mean that he will have confused or vitiated artistic standards. Let him study and discriminate accurately as to the artistic value of the music he uses, being sure that in practical work those artistic conclusions take a subordinate place.
CHAPTER IV

CHURCH HYMNALS

Most ministers know the Bible in a vital, concrete way all too little, but they know the church hymnals even less. Yet the hymnal and its tunes are important factors in every public service.

The faith of most ministers in the editors of their particular church hymnal is greater than their faith in the divine inspiration of the Bible. If a certain tune is given to a particular hymn, there is no question of fitness raised -- it is in the hymnal, therefore, it must be right. Yet many hymnals, even those that are extremely pretentious, are compiled by musical amateurs who have little genuine musical training, or by musicians who have training of a high order, but no practical experience in the varying resources of different congregations.

A hymnal made by an expert hymnologist and an equally expert musician is not necessarily a good one for actual use. The best hymnal--that is one that serves the purpose of the hymnal best -- is made by a practical man who knows all the varied needs of the churches, assisted by hymnological and musical experts. Only in this way can the proper subordination of literary and musical art to the religious purpose be secured. Making a hymnal adapted to the resources of a great cathedral with endowed choirs, for the use of a denomination abounding in small villages and rural areas is absurd. "The hymnal is not a work of art --
it is a tool:"

There are some denominations in this country whose average of musical culture and resources is so great that they can use a hymnal of high literary and musical standard quite effectively. In such cases no criticism is offered. The writer raises the question whether a church that insists upon exclusive devotion to narrowly ecclesiastical music is likely to make any impression upon the outside world or is prepared to fulfill the Master's Great Commission. But that churches popular in character and responsible for the common people "whom God must love because he made so many of them," to paraphrase Lincoln's characteristic remark, should so forget their mission as to imitate these abstract and ecclesiastically conventional standards, is not so pardonable.

Permit the writer to join the large number of those who plead for smaller collections of hymns and tunes than those now in vogue. Over half a century ago B. B. Edwards of Andover made the same plea from the literary standpoint:

Two or three hundred of the most exquisite songs of Zion would include all the psalms and hymns which are of sterling value for the sanctuary."

In many recent hymnals a very practical compromise has been reached between the "two or three hundred" of Edwards, and the twelve hundred justified by Austin Phelps. The Carmina Sanctorum and the new Methodist Hymnal have less than seven-hundred and fifty, and The Church Hymnal of the Protestant Episcopal Church less than seven hundred.

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1 Ibid., p. 81.
2 Ibid., p. 82.
But while the number of hymns is only half what it was, the fashion of furnishing alternative tunes for every hymn has kept hymnbooks quite as cumbersome as before. To reproduce a single hymn three or four times in order to introduce as many different tunes as possible pads the hymnbook monstrously. As long as church men judge the dignity of a book by its size and base their denominational pride on the weight of their church hymnals, the purse of the American churchgoer and his manual comfort will be uselessly imposed upon.

Austin Phelps shows the architectonic element in hymnal building so clearly that his statement is quoted:

A good compilation of hymns is something more than a conglomeration of good hymns. It is a structure. The idea of proportion is omnipresent and the demands of the proportion are often as decisive in its framework as in architecture. Church song as an expression of religious life requires that a hymnbook be vital with the life of the church collectively. It must possess not only breadth of range in respect to the old and the new, but symmetry in respect of diversities of taste and culture. 3

This diversity of taste and culture brings up for consideration the question, shall our church hymnals contain gospel songs? That depends on the average culture, the character of the work it is trying to do and the size of the denomination. Where a hymnal is to supply the needs of all the church activities, a selection of the best gospel songs is not a question of principle, but one of sheer expediency to be settled by each denomination or congregation for itself.

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CHAPTER V

AMERICAN HYMN TUNES

From this consideration of the hymnal as a whole, a study of individual tunes is logical. In no other field of church activity has America done so much for religious life abroad or wielded so wide an influence.

This thesis does not purport to be a historical work and the writer does not propose to give the detailed historical facts of the development of American church music. The barest outline will suffice for this purpose. The earliest tunes used in American churches were brought by the migrating colonists from time to time. How soon the impulse to make tunes of their own is not clear, but there is reason to believe that the hymn-tune "Mear" first published in America in 1726, was the first tune composed and printed in America.¹ There were probably many others which never reached the dignity of print but which were transmitted orally. William Billings made the first notable effort to furnish American hymn tunes. They were crude, imperfect, and fugal in character. Oliver Hoden and Daniel Read soon issued their collections, also in the fugal style, of which only the simplified forms of "Coronation" and "Lisbon" survive.

When fugal music, like the polyphonic music of the later Middle Ages, lost itself in intricate absurdities, there was a strong reaction.

¹Lorenz, op. cit., p. 87.
An earnest reform movement to bring back simplicity was instituted. While Lowell Mason was a product of the movement rather than its originator, his own fertility in writing attractive, practical and appropriate psalm and hymn tunes fully entitle him to recognition as the premier among the leaders in the effort. His influence in England was quite as great as in America.

The new music was extremely popular and the books of Lowell Mason and those of his contemporaries, Webb, Emerson, Bradbury, Woodbury, and others sold by the hundred thousand. Mason's popular tune, "Bethany," closely approaches the style of the more dignified of the gospel hymns or songs. It is a most valuable and expressive tune whether used by a small or by a large audience. In America at least, it should never be divorced from "Nearer My God to Thee."

Perhaps Lowell Mason did as much for American church music by his remarkable gift of selection and adaptation as by his original work. All tunes were grist to the mill of his psalm and hymn tune books; and out of the great mass of original, selected and arranged material he supplied, the people's taste and sense of appropriateness and practicability have slowly made the selection of the several score of tunes that are the abiding heritage, not of the American church alone, but almost of the Church universal.

What Breed criticizes in Lowell Mason, that he has not "formulated any positive principle,"² is really his glory. He founded no school with pronounced limitations appealing only to a particular type of mind. He was too vital, too catholic, too practical, to hamper himself with formulas.

²David Breed, The History and Use of Hymns and Hymn Tunes, p. 75.
CHAPTER VI

AMERICAN SPIRITUALS AND GOSPEL SONGS

If a pronouncedly characteristic type of religious music is desired, why not turn to the genuinely American spirituals of the Middle and Southern states, preceding and contemporaneous with the reformation led by Lowell Mason. While the Congregationalists of New England were singing their fugue tunes, minor as well as major, the Methodists, Baptists and other aggressively missionary denominations in the Middle and Southern states were developing an entirely different type of music. Unfortunately very few of these spirituals were ever written or published, and fewer still have survived the utter transformation of conditions during the last seventy-five years. There has been an attitude of depreciation towards them by the churches. This attitude is all the more unfortunate because it is everywhere recognized that the melodies that arise among the people and are adopted by them have a vitality and genuineness lacking in more ornate or studied music. Thibaut says:

All the melodies that spring from the people, or are retained by them as favorites, are generally chaste, and simple in nature like a child's.1

The almost amusing result of this obscurity is the credit given to the negro race of the South for this class of music. The Jubilee songs, in so far as they have had their origin among the colored people, are

1 A. G. Thibaut, Purity in Music, p. 47.
the direct offspring of the white man's spiritual. Indeed many of the songs sung by them are spirituals borrowed from their white brethren, the rhythmical surging being somewhat emphasized.

Spirituals originated in the old Scotch songs and English ballads brought by the colonists. Many of them are decidedly Scotch in their absence of the seventh of the scale and the emphasis of the sixth. Some of them were brought over from England by Methodist immigrants from Asbury onward. But there is nothing Scotch or English in the rhythmical momentum of these old choruses. That is characteristically American.

These melodies were sung as unisons and suited the people among whom they were produced and sung. The gospel song is the direct outgrowth of them.

It is difficult to define the exact period when the spiritual became a gospel song, but the transition occurred between 1850 and 1865. Dodmun, Horace, Waters, Asa Hull, Hartsough, Philip Phillips, and O'Kane helped in the change.

The gospel song has inherited from the spiritual its chorus and interlinear refrain, its free rhythms, its repetitions of words in the chorus, its simplicity of melody, its harmonic progression and balance, in general its hold upon and influence over the people. The gospel song usually has one definite thought and expresses it in three or four verses instead of eight to twelve as did many spirituals. It has also lost its weird minor strains, its mingled major and minor phrases, and its characteristic use of the sixth. Whatever its rhythmical vagaries may be, it is plain diatonic music.

In many of the gospel songs the rhythm is no more pronounced than
in the average hymn tune. "I Need Thee Every Hour," "Almost Persuaded," "More Love to Thee," "Trust and Obey," "It is Well with My Soul," and "He Leadeth Me" do not strongly appeal to the motor nerves. The rhythm of many others like "Rescue the Perishing," "Every Day and Hour," "I Am Thine O Lord," "Thou Thinkest, Lord, Of Me," while a little more in evidence, is still as dignified as that of "Harwell" or "Antioch." It may be argued that the gospel songs actually accepted by the American churches for devotional use are as inoffensive in rhythm as the hymn tunes sung for the same purpose.

The gospel song is often condemned because it is so short-lived and temporary. People weary of a rapid rhythmical piece of music more quickly than they do of a slow one of equal charm. The nerve stimulus or impression is much less in the slow movement. That is to say, the very intensity of the impression made by the gospel song shortens the time of its usefulness.

Like the old spiritual the gospel song is emotional in origin and purpose. The pastor needs them in prayer meetings and special services; the evangelist, whose path can be traced by the conversions that spring up by the thousands under his work, finds them the chief means of his success; the humble worker in the slums declares he would be helpless without them; the missionary in foreign lands finds them the "open sesame" to the interest and sympathy of the benighted people among whom he works.

To look at the facts in the case is to find the church most spiritual, most aggressive, and most successful when it is using the popular sacred songs most widely and most earnestly. One finds, furthermore,
that the churches who do not use them are the least spiritual, the least aggressive, and the least successful.

To defend gospel songs in all their manifestations would be as foolish as to condemn them indiscriminately. The true attitude is to use discrimination, judging individual songs by their adaptation to the work to be done under the given circumstances among the given people.
CHAPTER VII

WHAT IS A HYMN?

The narrow etymological definition of a hymn would confine it to poems that in at least some part are directly addressed to some person of the Deity. A more practical and more useful definition is that a hymn is a sacred poem expressive of devotion, spiritual experience, or religious truth, fitted to be sung by an assembly of people in a public service.

The first element in this definition indicates that the hymn must be poetry. It must have poetical form, having meter and rhyme. If poetry is the expression of thought steeped in imagination and feeling, all the more must the hymn be the expression of religious thought transfigured with emotion. But every sacred poem is not a hymn. Some sacred poems express a religious emotion in so individual and unusual a way that they are not at all fitted to express the emotion of a congregation.

Indeed, one may lay down the rule that sacred poems containing strong figures of speech, strange conceits, or fanciful phrases, render the poem too complicated for general use as a hymn. Breed says "the true lyric does not receive its best interpretation until it is sung, so that it is not enough to say 'It may be sung,' it must be sung."¹

While the body of thought in a hymn must be distinctly religious, and therefore Scriptural, it does not follow that the forms of expression

¹David Breed, The History and Use of Hymns and Hymn Tunes, p. 96
must be scriptural as well. Breed here seems to the writer to be at fault when he says:

Nothing should be called hymn and nothing should be sung in our assemblies which is not virtually a paraphrase—and that a very faithful one—of Scripture passages, whether they are immediately connected in the Holy Word or not.²

Apply this rule to our hymn-books and what hymns would remain? A sane common sense is more trustworthy in its conclusions than the feelings of critics who are morbidly acute to possible incongruities.

² Ibid.
CHAPTER VIII

THE GOSPEL SONG

In discussing the gospel song, the writer abstained from the consideration of its words. The question now arises whether the gospel and the Sunday-school hymn shall be included under the general definition of a hymn. Breed says "as to the poetical material of these songs this much is certain—they are not hymns."¹

The writer will take the first hymn of a collection of Sunday-school and gospel songs and will quote the first verses. The writer quotes also the first verse of an accepted hymn on the same general theme, "Praise to Christ." Which is the gospel song and which the standard hymn?

To Him who for all our sins was slain,
To Him for all His dying pain
Sing we alleluias;
To Him, the Lamb, our Sacrifice,
Who gave His soul, our ransom price,
Sing we alleluias;²

Lift up the gates of praise,
That we may enter in,
And o'er Salvations walls proclaim
That Christ redeems from sin,
God's works reveal His might,
His Majesty and grace;
But not the tender Father's love
That saves a dying race.³

Judging the above two poems as examples Breed's statement is undiscriminating and therefore unjust. Why should we not accept the gospel

¹Ibid., p. 108.
²The Methodist Hymnal.
³The Methodist Hymnal
hymn? It is often "a sacred poem expressive of devotion, spiritual experience, or religious truth, fitted to be sung by a congregation in public service," is it not? The writer holds no brief for the defense of the current gospel hymn, but is pleading for a fair, discriminating, unprejudiced consideration of its merits and demerits.

In a religious journal recently a reviewer of a certain collection of popular songs found serious fault because its new hymns were not equal to the standard hymns included in the book. That is to say, the choice hymns that have survived through generations of usefulness, each of which was the sole survivor of a thousand hymns written in its day, are better than the current hymns of our own day. Of course these current hymns of our own day are not equal to the standard hymns. No one in his sober senses would claim they are; and yet here and there out of this mass of song, there emerge in the course of the years a few hymns which the world would be sorry to lose, but which would never have been written, if the weak and ephemeral hymns, among which they sprang into being, had not had their opportunity as well.
CHAPTER IX

THE SELECTION OF HYMNS

Next in importance to the minister's selection of his text comes the selection of his hymns. If he has a clear conception of the unity of the service, it will appear here more than in anything else. The sermon is simply a coordinate part of divine service, not to be the governing feature to which all things else must be subordinated.

Austin Phelps, over a half century ago, enunciated a better policy:

It aims at unity of worship, not by sameness of theme, but by resemblance of spirit. It would have a sermon preceded and followed not by a hymn on the identical subject, but by a hymn on a kindred subject.¹

In constructing the program of service for the typical non-liturgic church, it is important that there be unity of feeling rather than of logic. This gives room for the interest the unexpected supplies. There must be progress of feeling as well as of thought. The long prayer or the music after it, be it organ or choir or hymn, should be a climax of emotion. It should be allowed to subside a little during the announcements and offering in order to rise to a still higher climax in the sermon and closing hymn.

¹Phelps, Parks and Furber, Hymns and Choirs, p. 72.
CHAPTER X

CONGREGATIONAL SINGING

The ideal form of church music is congregational singing, where every voice is lifted in prayer and petition, in inspiration and encouragement and in earnest witness for divine truth. In no other exercise, not even in prayer, is there such communion, such fellowship of feeling, as in the congregational hymn when all are singing.

The German reformation had no more striking manifestation of the change of spirit and conception of the religious life than in the restoration of the congregational hymn. In Germany the reformation was a singing reformation, and the popular results were dependent upon its culture. This was recognized by Luther's enemies who said that he did more harm by his hymns than he did by his sermons.

The English reformation under the Wesleys was likewise a singing reformation. They had no new doctrine to preach, for the Wesleys were doctrinally not far from the Anglican church. It was the spiritual hymns which they produced and which were sung from one end of Great Britain to the other that gave prominence to the whole movement.

The New England revival under Jonathan Edwards is so associated in our minds that, with his severe and even harsh doctrinal preaching, it comes as a surprise to know how large a part congregational singing had in it. This is a quotation the testimony of Edwards himself to its value:
It has been observable that there has been scarce any part of divine worship wherein good men among us have had grace so drawn forth, and their hearts so lifted up in the ways of God, as in singing His praises.¹

The revival work of Moody in America and in Great Britain was accompanied by such musical manifestations. Wherever there is spiritual life moving among the general people, there is the popular congregational hymn.

It is not difficult to see why the congregational hymn should have such value. Anyone who has listened to a congregation that fully participated in the song cannot but have been impressed by its dignity and power. The fact that congregational singing brings within the active plan of the service the voice and heart and will of every worshipper makes it practically valuable in achieving the results the minister's desire. No longer has he a mob of unrelated personalities to deal with but a great organism into which the units have been welded. Then there is for the minister himself an inspiration in the congregational song. While the song is preparing the congregation for him it is also preparing him for the congregation.

But there are higher results to be obtained from the congregational song than the mere preparation of congregation and minister for the discourse. There should be in it an actual communion with God.

It is not only necessary that the minister himself have an adequate idea of the value of good congregational singing. He should pass that appreciation on to his people. To be songless is as bad as to be prayerless. Wesley insisted that his preachers should preach upon the

¹Lorenz, op. cit., p. 192.
privilege and duty of congregational singing from time to time. The minister should urge it privately as well as publicly. This is all the more necessary that the development of the critical attitude among cultivated people is leading them to underrate their vocal powers, and their pride prompts them to refrain from public singing.
CHAPTER XI

THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF HYMNS

It is generally assumed that anyone can announce a hymn and arrange for its singing, and its result is that probably the least successful work of ninety-nine out of a hundred ministers is their preparation for the song-service of the church. At this point let the writer drop a word of warning against the unintelligent omission of verses. Some ministers invariably restrict the number to be sung to three or four. One of the most painful manifestations of ministerial thoughtlessness and indifference to the congregation's share of the service is this brutal mutilation of the hymns.

A great many people deprecate the minister's reading of the hymns. On the other hand if the minister's mind and heart are profoundly awake, he cannot help but read the hymn in such a way as to impress and interest the people. Instead of reading the whole hymn at the beginning, there may be a reading of each stanza as it is sung, if the thought of the hymn will bear such separation of its parts. In the selection of tunes one should keep constantly in mind that the minister has the average singer to provide for. Binney of London in his pamphlet on The Service of Song in the House of the Lord says concerning this subject: "If indeed it be the duty of the congregation to sing, it must be its right to be furnished with such music as it can sing."1 As the writer has already elaborated, a tune should be simple, should be tuneful,

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1Binney, The Service of Song in the House of the Lord, p. 3.
should be within the compass of the average voice, and, above all, should be inducement to the musical thought and impulse of the people who are to use it.
CHAPTER XII

THE ORGANIZATION OF THE CHOIR

The quarter choir, the boy-choir, the men's choir, and the women's choir all have their value; but they are all too limited in their range of expression to serve all the musical needs of any congregation.

The ideal choir is made up of the best voices of the congregation. Twenty voices of moderate range and melodiousness can do more to lift the spirit of the worshipper than the best trained quartet in the land.

In the first place the chorus choir is a part of the congregation. It is in personal relation to the members of the congregation and to the life of the church in all its aspects and phases. The large mass of voices render possible the singing of majestic music which is beyond the limitations of the quartet choir.

In developing the chorus choir, the pastor can have a very comfortable sense of adding to the strength and culture and effectiveness of his own people. It presents, moreover, another opportunity for the development of the social life among his people, for these singers will come from different elements, coteries, and strata of his people, thus forming another bond of good will and fellowship, which are only too sorely needed in many of our congregations.

It is true that the volunteer choir is a difficult proposition. Musical people are naturally sensitive people. They are, therefore, sometimes difficult to handle, and the choir often is a thorn in the
side of the pastor. Their frequent quarrels, irregularity in attendance, their whims and notions regarding the music they sing, all serve to keep the minister in painful suspense. Some of the singers will flat, others will sharp, many are laggard in time, and all these and many other musical shortcomings and failings will add to the difficulty of the leader. The uncertainty of attendance at any given service is often a source of great anxiety and sometimes of painful mortification to the minister. But with all the shortcomings and difficulties attending the volunteer choir, it still remains the ideal choir, with the largest possibilities and the best results.

The special music of the church need not be confined to this chorus choir. Variety demands an occasional change which can best be secured by dropping out the regular choir and using some substitutes for it. An adjunct choir or choirs will be entirely feasible. This may consist of children, either boys or girls, or both, or of young people who are either not developed enough to sing regularly or who do not care to sacrifice the necessary time.

Depending on the character of the material, such an organization may be called the Adjunct Choir, or the Choir Club, or the Junior Choir, as the case may be. Of course, there must be meetings for instruction and practice under the general, if not immediate instruction, of the choir leader. The music must depend upon the general ability of the organization, but must be adapted to actual use in church service. Such supplementary resources may be used in connection with the regular choir as an extra relish, so to speak, or in the place of it from time to time, giving the regular singers a little vacation.
Back of such choirs the church must have supervisory organization. If the pastor has the strength, he may be his own music committee, and look after the musical interests of the church in person. But if he lacks the necessary information and training, as well as the time and strength, it may be well to have a music committee of one or three who can be held responsible for the general conduct of the music of the public service.

If such a committee is not itself musical, in the professional sense of the word, it will not greatly matter. It should, however, consist of persons who are tactful and considerate, fertile in resources and plans, not easily discouraged, sufficiently versed in music to know good work when they hear it, and yet imbued with a practical sense of music that will assure their cooperation with the plans of the pastor.
In concluding this study of plans for practical church music let the writer re-emphasize that church music is applied, not ideal, art. It must be influenced, not only by the emotional phases of the religious ideas associated with it, but also by the immediate purpose in view, by the character of the persons to be impressed, and by the available musical resources. It can be ideal only in its degree of adaptation to these conditioning factors.

There can be no abstract artistic standard in church music, therefore, by which it can be judged. As church music has no other office than the preparation for religious emotion, its creation and stimulation, it follows that the value and efficiency of church music will wholly depend upon the genuineness of the feelings of those rendering it.

It view of this, the writer will be pardoned if he closes the discussion of this highly important part of church work by laying stress on the need of deep and perfect sincerity in the management and rendition of all kinds of church music. The crying evil in the music of churches is its insincerity.

From all that has been said it should be clear that the minister of the pulpit and minister of the choir loft are fellow laborers. There are not two services; there is one. The service is not to be the glory of either of them or to the glory of the choir, it is to the glory of
God. If that vision is caught, if there is some willingness to accept and understand the human limitations of each, through their combined gifts, the church which they serve will come to feel the greatness of worship.
APPENDIX

Following is a suggested choice of hymns and anthems for special services:

I. Theme

A. Good Friday

Anthems

A. "Darkly Rose the Guilty Morning" — Buck
   Soprano solo, medium difficult
   Published by G. Schirmer, Inc.

Hymns

A. "Jesus We Are Far Away"
B. "Who Is on the Lord's Side"
C. "Oh, Dearest Jesus"

Anthems suggested for other Lenten services

A. "O Saviour of the World" — Matthews
   G. Schirmer, easy, SATB
B. "If With All Your Hearts" — Mendelssohn
   G. Schirmer, unison, easy
C. "This Is the Promise" — Matthews
   G. Schirmer, medium, SATB

II. Theme

A. Service on Palm Sunday

Anthem

A. "Fling Wide the Gates" — Stainer (from Crucifixion)
   G. Schirmer, medium difficult, SATB

Hymns

A. "All Glory, Laud and Honor"
B. "All Hail the Power of Jesus Name"
C. "Ten Thousand Times Ten Thousand"
III. Theme

A. A service on Passion Sunday

Anthems

A. "O My People, What Have I Done Unto Thee?"
"The Reproaches" (shortened version) -- Palestrina
Published by Gray, easy, SATB and Youth choirs

B. "O Saviour of the World" -- Palestrina
Published by Novello, easy, SATB

Hymns

A. "O Jesus We Adore Thee"
"Upon the Cross our King"
B. "There is a Green Hill Far Away"
C. "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross"

IV. Theme

A. Anticipation of the New Year
   A service held on the Sunday after Christmas

Anthem

A. "Still There is Bethlehem" -- Dickinson
   Published by Gray, easy, SATB

Hymns

A. Processional
   "Awake, Soul, Stretch Every Nerve"
B. "Standing At the Portal"
C. "March On, O Soul, with Strength"

V. Theme

A. A Watch Night Service -- New Year's Eve

Anthem

A. "The Gate of the Year" -- Woodman
   Published by G. Schirmer, medium difficult, SATB, soprano or tenor solo

Hymns

A. Processional
   "Great God We Sing That Mighty Hand By Which Supported Still We Stand"
B. "Oh God of Bethel by Whose Hand Thy People Still are Fed"
C. "Oh, God, Our Help in Ages Past"

VI. Theme
A. New Year's Sunday Service

Anthem
A. "How Burn the Stars Unchanging" -- Lockwood
   Published by Gray, medium difficult, SATB
B. "Lord, Lead Us Still" -- Brahms
   Published by Gray, easy

Hymns
A. Processional
   "As With Gladness Man of Old"
B. "Brightest and Best of the Sons of the Morning"
C. "In the Cross of Christ I Glory"

VII. Theme
A. Christmas Sunday Service

Anthem
A. "The Shepherd's Story" -- Dickinson
   Published by G. Schirmer, medium difficult, SATB, solo soprano and baritone
B. "Silent Night" -- arrangement by Wilson
   Published by Hall and McCreary, easy, SATB

Hymns
A. "O Come All Ye Faithful"
B. "Thou Didst Leave Thy Throne"
C. "Joy to the World"

Other Christmas Anthems
"O Lord, Have Mercy Upon Me" -- Pergolesi
   Published by Novello, easy, SATB
"All Hail the Virgin's Son" -- Dickinson
   Published by Gray, easy, SATB

VIII. Theme
A. Service for Labor Day Sunday

Anthem
A. "Come Unto Him" -- Gounod (Shelley)
   Published by G. Schirmer, easy, SATB
XI. Theme
A. An opening fall service

Anthems
A. "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God" -- Olds
   Published by Hall & McCreary, easy, Double chorus SATB
B. "O Come, Loud Anthems Let Us Sing" -- Hinabough
   Published by Hall & McCreary, easy, solo soprano, SATB

Hymns
A. "Holy, Holy, Holy"
B. "In Christ, There Is No East or West"
C. "The Church's One Foundation"

X. Theme
A. Service for Thanksgiving

Anthems
A. "Prayer of Thanksgiving" -- Kremser
   Old Dutch Melody
   Published by G. Schirmer, easy, SATB
B. "Now Thank We All Our God" -- Mueller
   Published by G. Schirmer, medium difficult, SATB

Hymns
A. "Come Ye Thankful People, Come"
B. "Praise to God and Thanks We Give"
C. "Let Us With A Gladsome Mind"

XI. Theme
A. A Service for Armistice Sunday

Anthem
A. "Only Through Thee, Lord" -- Guion
   Published by G. Schirmer, difficult, SATB, soprano
   or tenor solo
Hymns

A. "God of Our Father's, Known of Old"
B. "Lord, While For All Mankind We Pray"
C. "O God of Love, O King of Peace"

XII. Theme

A. Service for Children's Day

Anthem

A. "That Sweet Story of Old" -- Marsiais
   Published by G. Schirmer, easy, S. A.
B. "Dearest Jesus, Gentle, Mild" -- XV Century
   Published by Gray, easy, SATB

Hymns

A. "Rejoice Ye Pure in Heart"
B. "Fairest Lord Jesus"
C. "For the Beauty of the Earth"

XIII. Theme

A. Whitsunday -- Coming of Holy Ghost

Anthems

A. "O Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord" -- Buck
   Published by G. Schirmer, medium, SATB
B. "Come, Holy Ghost" -- Altwood
   Published by G. Schirmer, easy, SATB, soprano solo

Hymns

A. "Our Blest Redeemer, Ere He Breathed"
B. "Come, Holy Spirit, Heavenly Dove"
C. "Holy Spirit, Lord of Light"

XIV. Theme

A. Service on the Sunday after Easter

Anthems

A. "Greater Love and Triumphant Lord" -- Rogers
   Published by G. Schirmer, easy, SATB, soprano solo
B. "The Soul's Rejoicing in the Resurrection" -- George Joseph (1675), published by Gray, easy, SATB
Hymns

A. "Come Ye Faithful, Raise the Strain"
B. "Be Thou My Vision"
C. "Rise, My Soul and Stretch Thy Wings"

XV. Theme

A. Easter Day Service

Anthems

A. "Hail, Thou Glorious Easter Day" -- Nagler
   Published by Gray, difficult, SATB
B. "In Joseph's Lovely Garden" -- Dickinson
   Published by Gray, easy, SATB, soprano solo
C. "Easter Litany" -- Dickinson
   Published by Gray, medium difficult, SATB
D. "The First Easter Morn" -- Scott
   Published by G. Schirmer, easy, SATB

Hymns

A. "Jesus Christ is Risen Today"
B. "Alleluia! The Strife is O'er"
C. "Christ the Lord is Risen Today"
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