This work traces the importance of gospel hymnody in shaping popular theology and influencing American culture. In particular, it analyzes how gospel hymns were created, defined, and performed, how they helped produce interdenominational cooperation among conservative evangelicals during the early twentieth century, and how they became part of larger American culture. In worship services, mass revival meetings, and home gatherings, music was a central feature. Increasingly though, the music used in these contexts was standardized and became a point of connection between disparate Protestant groups. This was largely achieved through the mass marketing of gospel hymns in the publications and broadcasts controlled by interdenominational institutions, such as the Moody Bible Institute. Through these channels, gospel hymnody became a point for interdenominational cooperation among conservative evangelicals. Understanding how gospel hymns were being utilized by the interdenominational evangelicals also helps delineate the parameters of evangelical culture and its relationship to broader American culture. In various evangelical denominations, debates over gospel
hymns both inside and outside the church building provided a means for negotiating theological, social, and cultural boundaries. Through creating, defining, and performing music in specific ways, evangelicals placed themselves within the mainstream of American middle class culture and distinct from both an emerging separatist fundamentalism and an increasingly secular liberalism.
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INTRODUCTION:

IN THE SWEET BYE AND BYE

Long-haired preachers come out every night,
Try to tell you what's wrong and what's right;
But when asked about something to eat
They will answer with voices so sweet:

Chorus:
You will eat, bye and bye,
In that glorious land above the sky (way up high);
Work and pray, live on hay,
You'll get pie in the sky when you die (that's a lie).

And the starvation army they play,
And they sing and they clap and they pray
Till they got all your coin on the drum
Then they'll tell you when you're on the bum.

Holy Rollers and Jumpers come out,
And they holler, they jump and they shout
Give your money to Jesus they say,
He will cure all diseases today.

If you fight hard for children and wife --
Try to get something good in this life --
You're a sinner and bad man, they tell,
When you die you will sure go to hell.

Workingmen of all countries unite,
Side by side we for freedom shall fight;
When the world and its wealth we have gained
To the grafters we'll sing this refrain:

Final Chorus:
You will eat, bye and bye,
When you've learned how to cook and to fry;
Chop some wood, 'twill do you good,
And you'll eat in that sweet bye and bye (that's no lie).
Written by union organizer and songwriter Joe Hill, this parody of the gospel hymn “In the Sweet Bye and Bye” (1868) was first published in 1911 in the Industrial Workers of the World’s *Little Red Songbook*. It was known by several titles, including “Pie in the Sky,” “Long Haired Preachers” and “The Preacher and the Slave,” and its biting success lay in the mass popularity of the song it imitated. Not only did such a satire reveal the ubiquitous nature of gospel hymns by the early twentieth century, but it also provides insight on the character of evangelical revivalism at the time. While the song’s theme is heaven (a common theme for hymns of all sorts), it is the evangelistic use of gospel hymns and the gospel message that was the focus of attack. Rather than providing urban workers practical relief from their social ills, the “preachers,” “starvation army,” and “holy rollers” could only urge repentance and salvation “in the sweet bye and bye.” Indeed, by the time of Joe Hill’s song, the intertwined social and evangelistic purpose of nineteenth century religious work had splintered, setting the impulse toward progressive social reform against the conversionary basis of revivalism. It was in the utilization and appropriation of popular cultural forms, in this case, gospel hymns, that this division became particularly apparent, revealing not only theological, but social and cultural fissures as well.

One of the earliest and most significant works on the social and cultural context of gospel hymnody is Sandra Sizer [Frankiel]’s *Gospel Hymns and Social Religion; The Rhetoric of Nineteenth-Century Revivalism* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1978). Sizer’s nuanced analysis of hymn lyrics from the most popular songbook of the nineteenth century, Ira Sankey’s *Gospel Hymns and Sacred
Songs, established the template for much of the work on evangelical hymnody that followed. In the past five years, there has been a growing scholarship on the importance of hymnody in American Protestantism led by the work of Stephen Marini and followed by Edith Blumhofer, Richard Mouw, and Mark Noll among others. With the exception of Marini, whose expansive and detailed studies look at religious music in a variety of cultural contexts, the corpus of this scholarship focuses on the development of eighteenth and nineteenth century hymns and gospel songs in the historical context of American evangelicalism. The general focus is on the language of the hymns and its relation to the individualized, sentimental, and salvation-centered ethos of nineteenth century evangelicalism. While each of the works by these scholars have contributed significantly to the historical understanding of the relationship between evangelical hymns, popular religion, and American culture, very few of them venture past the so-called “golden age” of evangelical hymnody and into the murkier waters of twentieth-century evangelicalism. In comparison to the vast proliferation of hymns and hymnwriters of the nineteenth century, there were only a handful of successful hymnists through the early and mid twentieth century, as the dominance of Protestant evangelicalism in American culture was fracturing. Yet it was during the twentieth century that evangelical hymnody, particularly the revivalistic gospel hymns, became a unifying

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force for conservative evangelicals and fundamentalists and became a part of
denominational worship in even the most confessional and isolated churches.

This work will build upon the structure established by the previous
scholarship, particularly regarding the development of nineteenth-century gospel
hymnody and will follow it into the mid twentieth century. It draws especially upon
an argument posited by Stephen Marini regarding the significance of hymnological
changes preceding the Great Awakening in revealing “deeper theological,
sociological, and cultural tensions” that reflected “the Evangelical and Liberal
positions that shaped Protestant thought in the new nation.” 2 In many ways, the
gospel hymns of the nineteenth century were imbued with a similar cultural and
theological weight at the turn of the twentieth century. Gospel hymnody became
indicative of middle-class evangelical revivalism and the growing popularity and
resulting divisions surrounding gospel hymns in worship signaled increasing social,
cultural, and theological anxieties. The Americanization of ethnic and immigrant
congregations, the growing influence of theological liberalism, and the effort of
evangelicals to maintain cultural respectability were all evident not only in the
hymnody itself, but more significantly in efforts to define gospel hymns in various
contexts.

The first chapter of this work traces the development of the musical form
and style known as the “gospel hymn.” It analyzes not only aspects of the rhetoric
and melody of gospel hymns, but also how they were utilized and understood in
relation to developments in American evangelicalism throughout the nineteenth

2 Stephen A. Marini, “Rehearsal for Revival: Sacred Singing and the Great Awakening in
America,” Sacred Sound: Music in Religious Thought and Practice, ed. Joyce Irwin (Chico, CA:
Scholars Press, 1983), 87.
century. How gospel hymnody emerged as the characteristic form of evangelistic revivalism is particularly relevant within this discussion. Chapters two and three follow the progression and dissemination of the revivalistic gospel hymn form through the work of Moody Bible Institute. Established to train workers for preaching the gospel in word and song, the Institute, through its curriculum and organs, worked to standardize a gospel hymn form and style, designating it as the means for religious communion and social reform. As evangelical unity disintegrated and conservative revivalists lost their respectability, Moody Bible Institute served as the point of connection between nascent fundamentalists while maintaining its cultural relevance. By continuing to utilize gospel hymnody in this effort, the Institute retained its evangelistic use and promoted it as evidence of fundamentalist respectability through engagement with new forms of mass media.

The movement of evangelistic revivalism from the broader public forum to the sacred spaces of denominational worship during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries revealed the social, cultural, and theological distinctions between evangelicals. Through a closer examination of this process in four evangelical denominations, these distinctions become more evident. In chapter four, a quintessentially populist and revivalistic American denomination, the Methodist Episcopal Church, is discussed. The progression of the Methodist Church from an anti-liturgical worship style toward a more aesthetic liturgical form parallels its transition from fringe church to established denomination and from revivalism to progressivism. Similarly, the discussion surrounding this shift in worship, particularly regarding the proper musical styles, utilized the rhetoric of
respectability and civilization. In conjunction with the Methodist Church, chapter five addresses another mainline evangelical denomination, the Reformed Church in America. Unlike the Methodist Church, the Reformed Church was a characteristically established and formal denomination, steeped in liturgical tradition and social dominance. Revivalistic forms entered the sanctuaries of elite Reformed congregations by the mid nineteenth century with little interference from the churches’ governing General Synod as the evangelistic style became more mainstream and emotionally circumscribed. It was the espousal of primarily schismatic, rural Dutch immigrants that forced the eastern congregations to address the issue of evangelistic worship. In addition, the variations in worship style and theological sympathies between the congregations of the Reformed churches provide evidence of regional, social, and cultural distinctions both in the Netherlands as well as in America.

While the entrance of evangelical revivalism into mainline denominations revealed theological and social fissures in American evangelicalism, the adoption of this style into the worship of culturally and theologically separatist churches illustrates not only the expansive reach of evangelicalism, but also the selective acculturation of such denominations. Chapter six analyzes the ethnically orthodox counterpart of the Reformed Church in America; the Christian Reformed Church. Well-versed in their confessional heritage and highly suspicious of culturally established and respectable churches, the members of the Christian Reformed Church held a vigorous debate over their level of engagement with American “Methodism” (Arminianism). The influence of evangelical revivalism and the
gospel hymns on Christian Reformed worship was a particularly heated part of this debate, since the songs traditionally approved for worship were the Biblical psalms. Through the deliberation over evangelical and fundamentalist forms, the Christian Reformed Church revealed its process of Americanization as well as its refashioning of Reformed orthodoxy. In similar fashion, the Americanization of the Mennonite Church is analyzed in chapter seven. Ethnically distinct, the Mennonite Church did not boast the strong doctrinal tradition of the immigrant Christian Reformed Church and instead appropriated the forms of evangelical revivalism in developing a theological interpretation of the church’s Anabaptist heritage. As such, Mennonites of the twentieth century created their own fundamentalist interpretation of social activism and isolation couched in terms of sixteenth century practice. This melding of evangelical forms with Anabaptist theology was particularly evident in the use of gospel hymns in worship, which blended the popular music of revivalism with a language fitted to the Mennonite tradition. Through the construction of a fundamental Mennonite theology and worship style that combined both American evangelicalism and reinvented historic practices of the church, the acculturation of the Mennonite Church informed the emergence of American fundamentalism as much as it was informed by evangelicalism.

In each of these contexts, gospel hymns served to stimulate individual conversion and foster religious community, within specific denominations as well as within American fundamentalism at large. At the same time, gospel hymnody signaled larger social and cultural shifts within American evangelicalism along with the anxieties that accompanied such changes in various evangelical churches.
CHAPTER ONE:

“SING IT AGAIN, WITH FEELING”

A lawyer from the West sank so low as to become a tramp in the streets of New York. He was fifty-four years old and a homeless, penniless wretch. As he stumbled by the Florence Mission one night the windows were open and he stopped a moment to listen to the singing. They sang:

“Once again the Gospel message
From the Saviour you have heard;
Will you heed the invitation?
Will you turn and seek the Lord?”

It came like the voice of God to him. His early training had been Christian, and he thought he would go in. He did so, and as he took his seat they were singing the second verse:

“Many summers you have wasted,
Ripened harvests you have seen;
Winter snows by spring have melted,
Yet you linger in your sin.”

He realized that his was a truthful picture of his own life, and listened to the third verse, ending:

“While the Spirit now is striving,
Yield, and seek the Saviour’s side.”

Deeply convicted, he jumped to his feet and said, “I will yield, I will seek the Saviour’s side.” He was converted, and attended the meetings regularly. He secured good employment, wrote to his family, and becoming reconciled to his wife and children, he returned West to the old home, where he lived as an earnest Christian.3

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In nineteenth century America, music was seen as a powerful force for change. Whether as a means for cultural uplift or spiritual conversion, music played a critical role in exploiting and directing both individual and communal passion. For Protestant Christians hoping to solve the social ills and moral degeneration that accompanied increasing industrialization and urbanization, music, properly taught and channeled, appeared to provide the answer. Throughout the nineteenth century, social reformers, educators, and evangelists all sought to harness the emotive power of “good” music for the advancement of moral and civic society. In these educational efforts, little distinction was made between “sacred” and “secular” forms, utilizing whatever appealed most to the masses and building upon it by adding simple didactic lyrics. This interweaving of musical forms and purposes began to unravel by the middle of the century, as the social focus of evangelism began to change and the effort to claim spiritual power for a specific musical style signaled emerging social and theological divisions.

The term “gospel hymn” is somewhat difficult to define, but there are some specific parameters that can be established. Gospel hymnody is considered an American musical form that emerged out of the camp meetings of the Second Great Awakening as well as the songs and religious poetry written for Sunday schools and religious periodicals. The characteristic music of gospel hymns is upbeat, rhythmic, and simple, often accompanied by a chorus or refrain and is almost always married to a particular text. Like most hymns, the lyrics of gospel hymns cover a wide range of biblical themes, but they tend to focus on the New Testament “gospel” message—the atoning work of Jesus Christ and the promise of heaven. The
structure of most gospel hymns is metaphoric, as Sandra Sizer [Frankiel] has so convincingly described, establishing a set of contrasting elements or “polar values like light/darkness, strength/weakness, sweetness/bitterness, hope/fear, home/wandering, and so on.” A dualism is established in such gospel hymns by contrasting the sinfulness of the world with the glory and peace of heaven or Jesus.⁴ One example of this structure is the hymn “Jesus, I Come” by William T. Sleeper (1887):

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.

Out of my shameful failure and loss,
Jesus I come, Jesus, I come;
Into the glorious gain of Thy cross,
Jesus, I come to Thee.
Out of earth’s sorrows into Thy balm,
Out of life’s storms and into Thy calm,
Out of distress to jubilant psalm,
Jesus, I come to Thee.

The implications of gospel hymn imagery are difficult to ascertain with any certainty, as evidenced by various historians’ interpretations. While Sizer provides examples that reveal what she views as a restraint of passion and position of passivity characteristic of nineteenth century evangelicalism, Richard Mouw uses

the same hymns to demonstrate a call to active engagement with society. Gospel hymns reflect both interpretations, as well as several theological elements that made up the spectrum of nineteenth century evangelicalism. In addition, these rhetorical interpretations could shift based on the historical, cultural, or social context. Hymns that encourage a posture of passivity also reinforce the sovereignty of God, such as Adelaide Pollard’s “Have Thine Own Way, Lord” (1907):

Have thine own way Lord! Have thine own way!  
Thou art the potter, I am the clay.  
Mold me and make me after thy will,  
While I am waiting, yielded and still.

Have thine own way Lord! Have thine own way!  
Search me and try me, Savior today!  
Wash me just now, Lord, wash me just now,  
As in thy presence humbly I bow.

Have thine own way Lord! Have thine own way!  
Wounded and weary, help me I pray!  
Power, all power, surely is thine!  
Touch me and heal me, Savior divine!

Have thine own way Lord! Have thine own way!  
Hold o’er my being absolute sway.  
Fill with thy Spirit till all shall see  
Christ only, always, living in me!

Similarly, the more active expression of Joseph Gilmore’s “He Leadeth Me” (1862):

He leadeth me, O blessed thought!  
O words with heav’nly comfort fraud!  
Whate’er I do, wher’er I be  
Still ‘tis God’s hand that leadeth me.

---

Refrain
He leadeth me, He leadeth me,
By His own hand He leadeth me;
His faithful follower I would be,
For by His hand He leadeth me.

Sometimes mid scenes of deepest gloom,
Sometimes where Eden’s bowers bloom,
By waters still, o’er troubled sea,
Still ‘tis God’s hand that leadeth me.

Lord, I would place my hand in Thine
Nor ever murmur more repine;
Content, whatever lot I see,
Since ‘tis my God that leadeth me.

And when my task on earth is done,
When by Thy grace the vict’ry’s won,
E’en death’s cold wave I will not flee,
Since God through Jordan leadeth me.

There were, along with expressions of human sinfulness as that of victims, gospel hymns that continued to express apparently Calvinistic views of humans as actively arrogant rebels. The last two verses of Sleeper’s “Jesus, I Come” (1887) seem to reveal this state:

Out of unrest and arrogant pride,
Jesus, I come, Jesus, I come;
Into Thy blessed will to abide,
Jesus, I come to Thee;
Out of myself to dwell in Thy love,
Out of despair into raptures above,
Upward for aye on wings like a dove,
Jesus, I come to Thee.

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.
Or Thomas Raffles’ “Lord, Like the Publican I Stand” (1831):

Lord, like the publican I stand,
And lift my heart to Thee;
Thy pardoning grace, O God, command,
Be merciful to me.

I smite upon my anxious breast,
O’erwhelmed with agony;
O save my soul by sin oppressed,
Be merciful to me.

My guilt, my shame, I all confess,
I have no hope nor plea
But Jesus’ blood and righteousness;
Be merciful to me.

Here at Thy cross I still would wait,
Nor from its shelter flee,
But Thou, O God, in mercy great,
Be merciful to me.

In addition, Edith Blumhofer has shown that the preoccupation with “language of
refuge, hiding, and fellowship” of nineteenth century gospel hymnwriters such as
Fanny Crosby was “abundant” in earlier hymnody, particularly the hymns of
pietists, Methodists, and Anglicans.6 The hymns of Lutheran Paul Gerhardt (1607-
1676) and German Reformed pietist Gerhard Tersteegen (1697-1769), whose hymns
were translated by John Wesley, along with the works of Charles Wesley (1707-
1788) all provide clear examples of early devotional hymnody. Tersteegen’s “Thou
Hidden Love of God” (1729, translated by John Wesley, 1738) illustrates the
language of the individual seeker finding refuge in God’s love and mercy:

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Thou hidden love of God, whose height,
Whose depth unfathomed no one knows,
I see from far thy beauteous light,
And inly sigh for thy repose;
My heart is pained, nor can it be
At rest, till it finds rest in thee.

‘Tis mercy all that thou hast brought
my mind to seek its peace in thee;
Yet while I seek, but find thee not,
No peace my wandering soul shall see.
O when shall all my wanderings end,
And all my steps to thee-ward tend?

Is there a thing beneath the sun
That strives with thee my heart to share?
Ah, tear it thence and reign alone,
The Lord of every motion there;
Then shall my heart from earth be free,
When it hath found repose in thee.

Each moment draw from earth away
My heart that lowly waits thy call;
Speak to my inmost soul and say,
“I am thy love, thy God, thy all!”
To feel thy power, to hear thy voice,
To taste thy love, be all my choice.

Charles Wesley’s “Jesus, Lover of My Soul” (1740) similarly utilizes many of the
same images of an escape from this world and finding refuge in an intimate
relationship with Christ:

Jesus, lover of my soul,
Let me to thy bosom fly,
While the nearer waters roll,
While the tempest still is high.
Hide me, O my Savior, hide,
Till the storm of life is past;
Safe into the haven guide;
O receive my soul at last.

Other refuge have I none,
Hangs my helpless soul on thee;
Leave, ah! Leave me not alone,
Still support and comfort me!
All my trust on thee is stayed,
All my help from thee I bring;
Cover my defenseless head
With the shadow of thy wing.

Wilt Thou not regard my call?
Wilt Thou not accept my prayer?
Lo! I sink, I faint, I fall—
Lo! On Thee I cast my care;
Reach me out Thy gracious hand!
While I of Thy strength receive,
Hoping against hope I stand,
Dying, and behold, I live.

Thou, O Christ, art all I want,
More than all in Thee I find;
Raise the fallen, cheer the faint,
Heal the sick, and lead the blind.
Just and holy is Thy Name,
I am all unrighteousness;
False and full of sin I am;
Thou art full of truth and grace.

Plenteous grace with Thee is found,
Grace to cover all my sin;
Let the healing streams abound;
Make and keep me pure within.
Thou of life the fountain art,
Freely let me take of Thee;
Spring Thou up within my heart;
Rise to all eternity.

Similar in tone to the earlier work of the Methodists and pietists is the gospel hymn

“Pass Me Not, O Gentle Savior” (1868) by Fanny J. Crosby:

Pass me not, O gentle Savior,
Hear my humble cry;
While on others thou art calling,
Do not pass me by.

Refrain:
Savior, Savior, hear my humble cry;
While on others thou art calling,
Do not pass me by.
Let me at thy throne of mercy
Find a sweet relief,
Kneeling there in deep contrition;
Help my unbelief.

Trusting only in thy merit,
Would I seek thy face;
Heal my wounded, broken spirit,
Save me by thy grace.

Thou art the spring of all my comfort,
More than life to me,
Whom have I on earth beside thee?
Whom in heaven but thee?

In many cases, gospel hymnwriters were drawing upon imagery and language that was familiar from earlier evangelical hymnody and theology. While gospel hymns more often reflected an individualized, pietistic emphasis and focused on the heavenly reward, several of them also suggested Calvinistic determinism and sinful guilt indicative of the dual strands in American evangelicalism.

As other historians have shown, gospel hymns of the nineteenth century followed in a long tradition of American evangelical hymnody. The early evangelical movement of the eighteenth century relied on a more interdenominational hymnody to stir the emotions of congregants and instigate a revival in congregational singing. It was through the singing of hymns that “ordinary believers had begun to find their voice” and revival leaders such as Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield, and John and Charles Wesley could emphasize “not just intellectual recognition of Christian dogma or formal

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acknowledgement of the church, but the experience of repentance and faith in Jesus Christ.”

Adopting the work of contemporary hymnwriters such as Isaac Watts and the Wesleys, revivalists used hymn-singing for practically all gatherings, intending to “strike at once at the heart” and “electrify” the crowd. While hymns covered a broad range of theological and doctrinal subjects, songs that emphasized broader evangelical themes such as the suffering, love, and redemption of Christ proved the most durable and pliable. One of the most enduring, based on the hymn project of Stephen Marini, was Watts’ “Come we that love the Lord.” Part of that popularity was no doubt due to the simple, joyful expression of praise found in Watts’ words that resonated with Protestant Christians in various circumstances. But along with the lyrical expression of praise for the Lord’s saving grace, Watts’ hymn was used in various musical settings, including a peppy verse and chorus format by gospel hymn composer Robert Lowry during the nineteenth century. To Watts’ call to praise; “Come, we that love the Lord / And let our joys be known / Join in a song with sweet accord/ And thus surround the throne” (Isaac Watts, 1707) Lowry added the heavenly-minded chorus; “We’re marching to Zion/ Beautiful, beautiful Zion/ We’re marching upward to Zion / The beautiful city of God” (Lowry, 1867). The most popular lyrics by Watts and Wesley were also utilized in the camp-meetings of the Second Great Awakening, set to more contemporary and improvisatorial music. One example of this was the setting of Watts’ “Alas! And Did My Savior Bleed?” to

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9 Quoted in Noll, “The Defining Role of Hymns in Early Evangelicalism,” p. 5
a popular folk tune and chorus in the popular compilation *The Revivalist* by Joseph Hillman.\(^{11}\) To the verses of Watts was added the chorus “Jesus died for you, Jesus died for me.”\(^{12}\) Gospel hymnist Ralph E. Hudson adapted this same hymn for Ira Sankey’s *Gospel Hymns and Sacred Songs, Nos. 1-6*, adding a new gospel tune and chorus to the familiar verses;

```
Alas! And did my Savior bleed,
And did my Sovereign die?
Would He devote that sacred head
For such a worm as I?

Chorus:
At the cross, at the cross,
Where I first saw the light,
And the burden of my heart rolled away (rolled away)
It was there by faith
I received my sight,
And now I am happy all the day.
```

Although the weight of human sinfulness and divine sacrifice remains in the verse, the chorus lifts “the burden of [the] heart” by bringing the hymn back to the joy of salvation. It was partially due to such adaptations in the language and music of eighteenth century evangelical hymns that they continued to maintain their interdenominational appeal. Through such revisions, the hymns of Charles Wesley and Isaac Watts remained popular in nineteenth and twentieth century gospel hymnbooks and were utilized during the camp meetings of the Second Great Awakening, the prayer meetings of the 1857 revival and the mass meetings of Moody and Sankey. It was the popular, simple, repetitive revival music that was a


uniting feature of the interdenominational organizations established by evangelicals in the wake of the Second Great Awakening. The fitting of gospel hymns to the Sunday schools, the YMCA meetings, the temperance movement, and the mission field created not only a shared means of evangelical expression—what Sizer termed a “community of feeling”—but also a liturgical uniformity common to evangelical gatherings.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, a number of American hymnwriters emerged, composing simple gospel hymns for singing and Sunday schools with the intent to teach and improve singing in worship and among evangelicals at large. Drawn primarily from Northern evangelical churches, composers such as Thomas Hastings, George F. Root, William Bradbury, George C. Stebbins, Philip P. Bliss, William Doane, James McGranahan, and Fanny Crosby were musically trained and part of a cadre of singing school and Sunday school composers and publishers orbiting the East and extending into the Midwest, particularly Chicago. These musicians benefited from the training of Lowell Mason and his musical program designed to cultivate a higher morality by “improving the affections….ennobling, purifying and elevating the whole man.”13 In order to accomplish the education of the ordinary citizen, Mason taught music as a science, emphasizing the practice and sound of music over the words and notes. Mason was critical of the unorganized shape note singing schools popular in rural New England for this reason, and he worked to systematize simple but progressive music lessons for every level. His publications included a variety of songbooks from The Boston Handel and Haydn

13 I am borrowing much of the following history on Lowell Mason and his protégés from Blumhofer’s Her Heart Can See; The Life and Hymns of Fanny J. Crosby (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), p. 126-197; quoted on p. 126.
Society Collection of Church Music (1827) to Church Psalmody (1831), the Juvenile Psalmist (1832), and Sabbath-school Songs (1833), and the immensely popular Carmina Sacra (1841). Mason’s compilations were sequential, geared toward the untrained singer and used widely in church singing schools, public schools and teacher training. The music was simple, often adapted from recognizable tunes or musical forms of the time, upbeat, looking forward to the progress of the country and the millennium, and catchy, capturing interest and drawing listeners in. The goal was to reach children, young people, and adults with no interest in music and teach them the rudiments of a form that would contribute not only to their individual growth, but also to the nation’s moral advancement. Music employed in this way was inseparable from both personal piety and moral reform, and in the name of such efforts, there was little distinction between sacred and secular forms. It was Mason’s musical education program that nurtured a generation of gospel hymnwriters and provided the template for popular hymnody during the nineteenth century.

As Edith Blumhofer explains, the circle of successful gospel hymnwriters of the mid and late nineteenth century had no qualms about mixing popular music and forms to achieve the advancement of music both in Protestant churches and American society at large. Just as Lowell Mason had worked across various educational venues in order to improve musical knowledge, his educational cohorts Thomas Hastings, William Bradbury, William Kirkpatrick, George Root, and Fanny Crosby “borrowed freely for use in the church the forms and methods that ‘worked’ in their secular endeavors” blending forms such as “glees (unaccompanied part
singing), cantatas, hymns, choruses, oratorios, and other music.”
Bradbury and Root became musical itinerant preachers during the 1850s, preaching the gospel of social and moral reform through conversion to simple, scientific methods. The two music teachers traveled through towns in the East, Midwest, and South, working with local churches and pastors in conducting short training sessions and music conventions that offered singing instruction “on choir and congregational singing and chanting, glee singing, chorus singing, style, and expression.”
Beginning with simple choruses and progressing through solos and quartets, the conferences blended popular secular and sacred styles and culminated in large choral productions written, composed, and published by Root and Bradbury. Such concerts served to demonstrate the Masonic method of musical education and reinforce its moral potential. The ability of general musical knowledge to “ennoble,” “purify” and “elevate” the citizenry was on display in these musical performances, serving as testament to the cultural uplift of the nation. Inculcating morality and virtue rather than inspiring individual conversion was the primary goal reflected in the efforts of the circle of songwriters who dominated the production of all forms of popular music. From popular war ballads and parlor songs to sacred cantatas and Sunday school hymns, Bradbury, Root, Kirkpatrick and Crosby intertwined the music of evangelical Protestantism and that of American society at large.

While Bradbury focused more heavily on bringing original music to children through the burgeoning Sunday school movement, Root and Crosby collaborated

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14 Blumhofer, 151.
15 Blumhofer, 155.
throughout the 1850s to compose secular popular music for the entertainment and education of the broader American public. Their cantatas *The Flower Queen* (1852) and *The Pilgrim Fathers* (1855) were “moral tales” that championed “humility and service” along with sustained faith. Their most famous ballads, such as “Hazel Dell,” “Rosalie the Prairie Flower,” and “There’s Music in the Air” were representative of the “genteel tradition of the day” and were performed by singing groups across the country, from minstrel troupes to high school choirs. Root and William Bradbury also composed a number of Union songs for soldiers during the Civil War, with Root garnering the most fame for “Just Before the Battle, Mother,” “Tramp! Tramp! Tramp!” and the immensely popular “The Battle Cry of Freedom.” While literary critics attacked Root’s work as “wartime doggerel,” the stories surrounding the stirring influence of music on the morale of Union troops became legendary;

By a happy accident, the glee club which came down from Chicago a few days afterward, brought with them the brand-new song, “We’ll Rally ‘Round the Flag, Boys,” and it ran through the camp like wildfire. The effect was little short of miraculous. It put as much spirit and cheer into the camp as a splendid victory Day and night you could hear it by every camp fire and in every tent. Never shall I forget how those men rolled out the line: “And although he may be poor, he shall never be a slave.” I do not know whether Mr. Root ever knew what good work his song did for us there, but I hope so.

The apparently obvious spiritual effect of Root’s music upon the advance of the Union cause was further supported by the remembrance of a Confederate major;

I shall never forget the first time that I heard “Rally ‘Round the Flag.” ‘Twas a nasty night during the “Seven Days Fight,” and, if I remember rightly, it was raining. I was on picket when, just before taps, some fellow on the other side struck up that song and others joined in the chorus until it seemed to me the whole Yankee Army was singing. Tom B—, who was with me, sung out: “Good heavens, cap, what are those fellows made of, anyway? Here we’ve licked ‘em six days running, and now on the eve of the
seventh, they’re singing ‘Rally ‘Round the Flag.’” I am not naturally superstitious, but I tell you that song sounded to me like the “knell of doom,” and my heart went down into my boots; and though I’ve tried to do my duty, it has been an uphill fight with me ever since that night.16

Whether literal or not, such accounts served to reiterate the power of music generally in advancing the cause of national morality and Christian civilization. The interconnectedness of these purposes was even more evident when Root’s marching tune for “Tramp, Tramp, Tramp” was put to the words of C. Herbert Woolston for what became a popular Sunday School song:

Jesus calls the children dear,
“Come to me and never fear,
For I love the little children of the world;
I will take you by the hand,
Lead you to the better land,
For I love the little children of the world.”

Refrain
Jesus loves the little children,
All the children of the world.
Red and yellow, black and white,
All are precious in His sight,
Jesus loves the little children of the world.

Jesus is the Shepherd true,
And He’ll always stand by you,
For He loves the little children of the world;
He’s a Savior great and strong,
And He’ll shield you from the wrong,
For He loves the little children of the world.

I am coming, Lord, to Thee,
And your soldier I will be,
For You love the little children of the world;
And Your cross I’ll always bear,
And for You I’ll do and dare,
For You love the little children of the world.

The seamless blending of patriotism, morality, and music with Protestant evangelicalism became particularly evident in Sunday schools. As a primary means of instruction for the nation’s youth, Sunday schools became training camps in national duty and evangelical reform expressed communally in the singing of hymns. While early Sunday school organizations were structured as didactic institutions geared toward the elimination of ignorance and vice amongst the republican citizenry, Sunday schools of the mid to late nineteenth century more specifically connected the attainment of virtue and morality with the advance of Protestant evangelicalism. It was with the formation of the American Sunday School Union in 1824 that many denominational and localized Sunday schools were brought into the broader fold of American evangelicalism and its efforts toward reform. Determined to “plant a Sunday-school wherever there is a population,” the Union’s goal was to present “fundamental principles….the essential truths of Protestant Christianity held in common by all Evangelical denominations.”17 Churches who joined the Union were linked to a wider effort to bring not just moral but evangelical values to the churched and unchurched across the nation with “no sacrifice of principle; no compromise of duty; no interference with the internal management of smaller organizations.” What was required of member churches was that they deemphasize their specific doctrinal or cultural distinctions; that “all discordant elements be banished” and “union with Christ and each other form the basis of the American Sunday-School Union.”18

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18 Edwin Wilbur Rice, p. 80.
In the evangelistic work of the Sunday schools, the musical efforts of Lowell Mason, Thomas Hastings, George Root, William Bradbury, and Fanny Crosby were key. Mason and his circle’s promotion of general music education as a way of imbuing higher values and advancing Protestant Christian civilization was interwoven with the purposes of the American Sunday School Union. Utilizing the proper methods of “scientific” instruction and songs that were “suited to children,” Sunday schools strove to “take hold of the feelings of children” while not allowing those feelings to “degenerate into slang, flippant, bordering only on the profane.”

The Pestalozzian educational philosophy that emphasized childhood development and learning through experience rather than memorization was espoused in the Sunday schools through Mason’s protégés and supported by Congregationalist theologian Horace Bushnell. In *Christian Nurture*, Bushnell praised the ability of hymns to teach children fundamental Christian values through progressive practice. Rather than beginning with “dogmatic catechisms” that would “[train] the child to be a sectarian before he is a Christian,” parents and educators needed to “interpret the truth to the child’s feeling through living example,” through “the simplest Christian hymns.”

Bushnell suggested “organizing a discipleship in hosannas….that they [our children] will sing Christ into their very hearts, and be inwardly imbued and quickened by him.” Through the combination of various songs celebrating Christ’s love with Scriptural lessons, children would gain “everything that belongs to a penitent, adoring, tender, faithfully kept, patiently

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19 John S. Hart, *Thoughts on Sabbath Schools*, p. 93; quoted in Rice, p. 151-152.
enduring, bravely steadfast, gloriously trustful character.”\textsuperscript{21} Based on “confidence in the love of God and in the moral educability of children,” the Sunday Schools were geared toward training generations of Christian workers in positive evangelism evidenced in the practice of Christ-like behavior.\textsuperscript{22} The numerous “auxiliary” training agencies of the Sunday school were testament to the various goals of nineteenth century evangelicalism; juvenile missionary societies, juvenile temperance societies (the Cold Water Army, the Band of Hope), church guilds and bands (YMCA, YWCA, Bible-reading and Prayer Alliances, Chautauqua Circles), and the Young People’s Society of Christian Endeavor.\textsuperscript{23} While these social organizations were geared more toward guiding the practices of the young people involved, they were considered the “church gymnasia,” the equivalent of “exercising one’s self unto godliness….which shall afterwards manifest itself in good to others also.”\textsuperscript{24} This godliness was most often manifest in Union conferences and Fourth of July celebrations, where well-dressed and well-behaved Sunday schoolers exhibited the proper expression of citizenship through the mass programs across the nation, bringing various educational and cultural events, such as speeches by the great orators of the day, musical performances, and theater to remote areas. The Young People’s Society of Christian Endeavor was founded in 1881 by the Rev. F. E. Clark in order “to make religion child religion, a natural, rational, permanent part of the child’s life; to make the Lord Jesus Christ appear the children’s friend, and his active, acknowledged service something to be entered into and enjoyed by all young persons as heartily, zealously, and constantly as their studies and their games,” as quoted in Trumbull, p. 296; Chautauqua Circles were dedicated to religious, moral and educational improvement.


\textsuperscript{22} Blumhofer, p. 183.

\textsuperscript{23} The Chautauqua Institution began in 1874 as a summer training program for Sunday school teachers at Lake Chautauqua, New York and evolved into mass gatherings dedicated to the moral, educational, and religious improvement of the nation. Chautauqua eventually began outreach programs across the nation, bringing various educational and cultural events, such as speeches by the great orators of the day, musical performances, and theater to remote areas. The Young People’s Society of Christian Endeavor was founded in 1881 by the Rev. F. E. Clark in order “to make religion child religion, a natural, rational, permanent part of the child’s life; to make the Lord Jesus Christ appear the children’s friend, and his active, acknowledged service something to be entered into and enjoyed by all young persons as heartily, zealously, and constantly as their studies and their games,” as quoted in Trumbull, p. 296; Chautauqua Circles were dedicated to religious, moral and educational improvement.

singing of hymns. It was at the 1831 Independence Day celebration of the Boston Sabbath School Union that Lowell Mason directed a juvenile choir in singing the newly arranged hymn, “My Country, ‘Tis of Thee:”

Our father’s God, to Thee
Author of liberty
To Thee we sing;
Long may our land be bright
With freedom’s holy light;
Protect us by thy might
Great God, our King.

From the temperance songs sung by the “Cold Water Army;”

Our country’s God! In thee we trust
The cause is holy good and just
And in thy strength thy children must
Renew their pledge to thee.

Lead on, lead on, ye youthful band!
With joyful heart and willing hand,
Spread temperance banners through the land,
On this glad jubilee.

to the antislavery hymn of the Belknap Street Sabbath School in Boston;

Dwells there a child upon this land,
Who joins not with the festive band?
Who strikes no note of jubilee,
On this bright day of Liberty?

Yes, the poor SLAVE, in silence pines,
And weeps, and moans—for on him shines
From FREEDOM’S SUN, no Heaven-born ray,
No moral light, no mental day.

the “exercise” of social responsibility and moral reform was practiced on a grand scale, with an army that promised to ensure the progress and stability of the nation in the years to come.25

25 These examples are taken from Heather D. Curtis, “Children of the Heavenly King: Hymns in the Religious and Social Experience of Children, 1780-1850,” Sing Them Over to Me
In the effort toward cultural uplift and national progress, the public school and Sunday school movements were complementary. Equating proper citizenship and morality with the social and religious values of evangelical Protestantism, advocates of the free education movement believed in the capacity of all people to learn by accessing not only the mind, but also the heart. For this purpose, music became a cornerstone of any educational program, and musicians and music passed freely between the “public” and “religious” schools. The distinction between “high” and “low” music was similarly downplayed, emphasizing progressive development in practical musical training rather than the attainment of “professional” musicianship. Thus many Sunday school songwriters and teachers were also actively involved in producing secular music, both popular and educational, in a variety of forms. As Sunday schools grew in scope and popularity through the midcentury, the demand for fresh songs that reflected various educational levels and reform efforts expanded, drawing more secular songwriters into the religious market. William Bradbury in particular became a key figure in advancing the musical potential of Sunday Schools by the 1860s, advocating their usefulness in bringing middle-class morality and evangelicalism to churches of all denominations as well as the population at large. Well known for his musical conferences and work with George Root, Bradbury was also celebrated for his thousand voice children’s choirs directed at the Broadway Tabernacle in New York City where he often used “secular” piano accompaniment. Working closely with popular

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songwriter Fanny Crosby as well as other trained musicians and publishers such as William Doane and Robert Lowry, Bradbury compiled and published some of the best selling Sunday School songbooks in the country, including *The Jubilee* (1858), *Golden Chain of Sabbath School Melodies* (1861), *Golden Shower of Sunday School Melodies* (1862), *The Golden Censer* (1864), *Fresh Laurels* (1867) and *Bright Jewels* (1869), published after his death by Doane and Lowry. It was in the compilations of Bradbury, (and later, Doane and Lowry) that the characteristic musical form of the “gospel hymn” began to emerge. Merging the simple, upbeat choral style of Mason with the repetitive choruses of the camp-meeting revivals, Bradbury arranged music and married it to texts that conveyed the positive child-centered message of nineteenth-century Sunday Schools. Nowhere was this style more evident than in one of the most beloved Sunday School songs, “Jesus Loves Me” (1862), for which Bradbury composed lively music and a chorus to accompany lyrics taken from a sentimental novel’s death scene;

Jesus loves me! This I know,  
For the Bible tells me so.  
Little ones to Him belong;  
They are weak but He is strong.

Refrain  
Yes, Jesus loves me!  
Yes, Jesus loves me!  
Yes, Jesus loves me!  
The Bible tells me so.

Jesus loves me! He will stay  
Close beside me all the way;  
Thou hast bled and died for me,  
I will henceforth live for Thee.
Jesus loves me! Loves me still,
Though I’m very weak and ill,
That I might from sin be free
Bled and died upon the tree.

Fanny Crosby’s lyrics worked particularly well with Bradbury’s syncopated tunes and her experience with popular sentimental ballads provided the moral basis for her Sunday school songs. A number of Crosby’s contributions were temperance songs, warning of the religious and social effects of drink, while others celebrated the nation’s Protestant Christian heritage and its continuity in the “precepts” and prayers of the Sunday school;

When across the ocean wide where heaving waters flow
Came the Mayflower o’er the tide with our fathers long ago,
When they neared the rocky strand and their chorus rent the air,
Children in that pilgrim band clasped their little hands in prayer.

When our country’s banner bright told her deeds of noble worth,
Children hailed its radiant light, hailed the land that gave them birth;
Children now rejoice to hear all their youthful hearts can know
And the precepts still revere of their fathers long ago.27

When Bradbury died in 1868, Crosby along with businessman William Doane and Baptist pastor Robert Lowry continued writing and publishing music geared to contemporary interest and taste. These included Bright Jewels (1869), a tribute to Bradbury that included some of his unpublished works, Pure Gold (1871), Royal Diadem (1873), and Brightest and Best (1875). While published for Sunday schools, Doane and Lowry’s compilations were also used as hymnals in other extra-denominational meetings, with songs that were sung both in the Sunday school as well as a growing number of evangelical gatherings. It was the gospel hymns from

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27 Blumhofer, p.186.
these songbooks that became more widely known and utilized in a variety of worship contexts.

By the 1870s, veteran songwriters such as Root, Doane, Lowry, and Crosby were joined in their efforts by younger musicians, many of whom had grown up in the Sunday schools and were musically trained in the Mason-Bradbury style. Philip P. Bliss, James McGranahan, and George Stebbins all benefited from study at music institutes and normal academies established in the wake of the musical education movement. Bliss and McGranahan both worked with George Root and received instruction in Bradbury’s methods, Bliss at a musical convention and McGranahan at the Normal Music School in Geneseo, New York established by Bradbury. They, along with scores of other gospel hymnwriters from 1870 to 1900, continued to develop the gospel hymn form in the mode of Bradbury but for a broader evangelical audience. In addition, these musicians tended to focus on utilizing their musical talents more exclusively in the service of the Lord—“to reap for the Master.” While earlier composers such as Root, Crosby, and Kirkpatrick worked toward the improvement of all music education through the use of various forms and styles, later gospel hymnwriters (including an aged Crosby) who followed Bradbury worked almost completely within the sphere of evangelical work. With the advent of mass evangelicalism and growing numbers of evangelical institutes and organizations, it was more viable for musicians to devote their entire career to religious work, whether through songwriting, publishing, performing, or leading. At the same time, it seemed that many of the newer generation of gospel hymnwriters saw music, gospel music in particular, as a means to personal salvation.
rather than as an agent of social reform. Pioneers of musical education such as Mason, Hastings, Bradbury and Root were musicians who viewed music as a civilizing force in and of itself. Whether specifically Christian or not, music, properly used, had the potential to advance Christian morality and values within society. In this context, all music was a force for social reform, to be taught in towns and cities throughout the nation. While social reform continued to be an important aspect of American evangelicalism and the work of evangelical movements such as the Sunday school, the adoption of Sunday school music—specifically the gospel hymns—for revival campaigns of the late nineteenth century made that form more intimately connected to the evangelistic goal of individual conversion and public piety.

This goal became more evident in the wake of the revival of 1857-1858 and the Civil War, when it seemed to some that Christian civilization had triumphed and direct social reform was no longer an imperative. Historian Kathryn Long has provided persuasive evidence of this shift that fused the Calvinistic “public theology of revivalism” with a more individualistic pietism; “the Calvinistic goal of a righteous republic achieved through pietistic means.” The result was what Long terms “revivalism without social reform.” The so-called “businessmen’s revival” of 1857-1858 was distinguished by its noontime prayer meetings and interdenominational character and was situated within a providential cycle of national revivals. Unlike earlier evangelical revivals, the 1857 awakening was celebrated for its lack of unrestrained emotional outbursts or controversial

theological disputes. Rather, this revival was one of prayer, hymn singing, and personal conversion that would effect social change through direct supernatural intervention. By 1865, public piety exhibited in revival prayer meetings was interpreted in the context of Northern victory in the Civil War as evidence of America’s status as “a redeemer nation destined to bless the whole world with Christian civilization.” The “more socially conservative view of revivalism” that emerged from the 1857-1858 revival stressed “voluntaristic lay piety” rather than ethically-based communal social reform and existed alongside the latter in evangelical reform organizations. This new revivalism was more fully realized in the evangelistic campaigns of Dwight L. Moody. As a young Sunday school worker in Chicago, Moody participated in the prayer meetings of 1858 and initiated lunch-hour prayer meetings at the Chicago YMCA in 1861. As a revivalist, Moody preached the “simple gospel message” to the urban masses, avoiding denominational or theological points and emphasizing restrained, pietistic conduct. In all these areas of revival work, Moody recognized both the reforming and evangelistic potential of music as it had been used in the evangelical organizations he was affiliated with. Through the work of gospel singer and songwriter Ira D. Sankey, Moody’s revivals utilized the gospel hymn form of the Sunday school for more specifically evangelistic means.

Although in many evangelical accounts, D. L. Moody is credited with harnessing the power of song for the service of the gospel, it is more accurate to say that he drew upon and popularized one aspect of Protestant music in the nineteenth

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29 Long, p. 125.
30 Long, p. 128.
century. By the 1860s, Moody had established a popular Sunday school program in Chicago that had developed into a “large, independent evangelical congregation,” and by 1871, he had enlisted the help of fellow YMCA worker Ira D. Sankey in directing music for his tabernacle services, prayer meetings, and Sunday school.31

As the story goes, when Moody met Sankey at a YMCA convention, he immediately asked the singer to assist him in his work in Chicago because his “keen intellect foresaw the great future.” Moody was to have said;

In the family and church, in the factory and street, the great truths of the Gospel are heard in song. Singing does at least as much as preaching to impress the Word of God upon people’s minds. Ever since God first called me, the importance of praise expressed in song has grown upon me.”32

While Moody was the first to enlist a fulltime songleader in a revival setting, the effort to channel the emotional and spiritual power of music was not out of line with the more formalized practice of music exercised in the conventions of Bradbury and Root as well as the educational programs of the public and Sunday schools. The organized, properly behaved singers of earlier musical jubilees and concerts became the emotionally touched but well-ordered masses at a Moody-Sankey revival meeting. The simple, upbeat music of Sunday school hymns, which had been used to bring music to all citizens in the name of moral and social reform, was utilized by Sankey to inspire individual conversion and “shared devotional piety” that would

31 Blumhofer, p. 237.
32 “Sankey, Prince of Gospel Singers,” The Christian Herald, September 2, 1908, p. 683, Ira D. Sankey Collection, Moody Bible Institute.; Moody is quoted somewhat differently in J. H. Hall, Biography of Gospel Song and Hymn Writers (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1914), p. 198-199: “I feel sure the great majority of people do like singing. It helps to build up an audience—even if you do preach a dry sermon. If you have singing that reaches the heart, it will fill the church every time. There is more said in the Bible about praise than prayer, and music and song have not only accompanied all Scripture revivals, but are essential in deepening spiritual life. Singing does at least as much as preaching to impress the word of God on people’s minds. Ever since God first called me, the importance of praise expressed in song has grown upon me.”
result in moral and social reform. This emphasis on personal salvation as the catalyst to national reform was central to Moody’s revivals and evident in his musings, where he claimed he had never known a man or woman who was “a consistent member of the Christian church” who “had come to want.” Moody characterized urban citizens who were in need as “living in rebellion to God; they have turned their backs on God,” in fact, he asserted “there would not be a drunkard walking the streets,” or “a harlot walking the streets if it were not for unbelief.”

Like the more evangelistic focus of Moody’s revivals, the spiritual potential of gospel hymns distinguished them from other forms of music and marked them for a higher purpose;

The solace they [Sankey’s gospel hymns] have brought in sorrow, the inspiration in moments of despondency, the strength in the hour of weakness, proves that they are, after all, not to be judged by the strict canons of musical and literary art. In their own field they are a law unto themselves. Many a man who can coolly dissect poetry and music of far higher technical excellence and can lay his finger unerringly upon the flaws, would hesitate to subject these hymns to critical analysis, for behind the words may lie a world of tender memory and profound emotion. The familiar cadence may recall the quiet Sundays of childhood and the menacing or pleading voice of the preacher, the aspirations of youth and its lofty resolves, and the solemn farewells of death. These images may come thronging back, more vivid than any invoked by the organ-notes of Milton.

Testimonials reinforced the potential of gospel hymns to enact social reform through individual conversion and divine intervention. Sankey’s most famous song, the “Ninety and Nine,” (1874) inspired a long list of stories recounting hard-bitten drinkers and carousers who had been moved to conversion and a subsequent life.

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change after hearing the hymn. In his own account of the “story” of gospel songs, Sankey told of a woman “of the most abandoned sort” who was hardened “by many years of drunkenness and sin.” Despite the words of her friends and neighbors, nothing could make an impression on the woman. Then an old cook, busy with her work, began to sing the “Ninety and Nine:”

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.

“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,  
I go to the desert to find My sheep.”

But none of the ransomed ever knew  
How deep were the water crossed;  
Nor how dark was the night that the Lord passed through,  
Ere he found His sheep that was lost.  
Out in the desert He heard its cry,  
Sick and helpless and ready to die;  
Sick and helpless and ready to die.

“Lord whence are those blood drops all the way  
That mark out the mountain’s track?”  
“They were shed for one who had gone astray  
Ere the Shepherd could bring him back.”  
“Lord, whence are Thy hands so rent and torn?”  
“They are pierced tonight by many a thorn;  
They are pierced tonight by many a thorn.”
And all through the mountains, thunder riven
And up from the rocky steep,
There arose 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!
Rejoice, for the Lord brings back His own!”

The woman “so hardened a moment before burst into tears and falling on her knees began to pray to the Good Shepherd to receive her.” Similarly, a young man who had left his family “to rid himself of all home restraint” heard the words of the “Ninety and Nine,” fell on his knees, and returned home.35 Such accounts served to secure the place of gospel hymns within the more pietistic revivalism of the late nineteenth century.

Engaging the efforts of various Sunday school and gospel music veterans such as Fanny Crosby, Philip P. Bliss, James McGranahan, and George Stebbins, Sankey broadened the reach of gospel hymns through Moody’s evangelical revivals while at the same time focusing the transformative power of music specifically within the gospel hymn form. When Sankey and Moody began their revival campaign in Great Britain during 1873, Sankey brought with him the hymnal Hallowed Songs (1865) compiled by “Methodist singing evangelist” Philip Phillips and published by Bradbury publishing veterans Theodore Perkins and Sylvester, which included works from Watts, Wesley, Doddridge, and Newton along with early gospel hymns from Fanny Crosby.36 In addition to the hymnal for congregational singing, Sankey brought a selection of gospel hymns, several

36 Quoted in Blumhofer, p. 241-242.
composed by the same cadre of gospel songwriters, that he used as solos. The demand for Sankey’s solos led him to publish a selection of twenty-three of the most popular songs as “Sacred Songs and Solos, sung by Ira D. Sankey at the meetings of Mr. Moody of Chicago.” The first publication sold out in a day, and revival attendees arrived with their own copies of the gospel hymns they called “Sankeys.” In the United States, Sankey combined his work with a collection by gospel songwriter and songleader Philip Bliss to produce *Gospel Hymns and Sacred Songs* (1875), the songbook intended for use in Moody’s American revivals. From Brooklyn to Philadelphia to Manhattan and into the Midwest, Moody and Sankey drew record crowds during the American revivals of 1875-1876 and garnered record sales from the newly published songbook. By 1876, *Gospel Hymns and Sacred Songs* had sold five million copies and gone through twenty translations, promoting “the ‘new idea’ of singing the gospel.”37 The Moody-Sankey revivals swept through the country until the end of the nineteenth century, establishing gospel hymns as the characteristic form of the revival meeting, and gospel hymnbooks as the “people’s hymnal.”

Planned and supported by both prominent businessmen and Protestant church leaders such as soap magnate Samuel Colgate, merchant John Wanamaker, and Baptist evangelist A.J. Gordon, Moody-Sankey revival meetings expanded on the organizational structure of the 1857 revival. Volunteer workers and singers were gleaned from local Protestant congregations of all denominations and the majority of those attending were also evangelical congregants who had been

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37 Blumhofer, p. 248.
anticipating the revival. Like the well-prepared singers of a Mason or Root and Bradbury music convention, Sankey trained mass volunteer choirs prior to the meetings and used them to “set the tone” by leading mass singing and “the invitation to decision” at the end of the service. Similarly, in the tradition of previous musicians and musical educators, Sankey was not above using secular modes of performing in order to teach the audience a song. For instance, Sankey tended to speak and articulate the words of hymn rather than sing them, varying the tempo and volume of his voice and accompaniment in an effort to convey the lyrical message. He was also known to roll the ends of phrases and pause between song lines, likely in an effort to make sure the audience was following along. Such techniques were not typical in churches, but they were often used in secular settings, such as vaudeville performances and music halls. Sankey also used instrumental accompaniment, and while this was usually the more traditionally acceptable reed organ, he (like Bradbury) was not against using the secular piano. On a vacation trip to the Holy Land in 1898, Sankey visited the American Mission in Cairo, Egypt and was asked to sing for the crowd. He states “although I had come for rest, I would gladly sing if they had a small organ or piano on which I might accompany myself.” While Sankey employed popular methods and styles that continued the broad-based tradition of music education, he did so primarily to impress the gospel message of the lyrics upon his pupils rather than the reforming benefits of the music

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38 Blumhofer, p. 246-247.
40 Gentry, p. 90.
itself. In the same way, Sankey traveled with other gospel singers around the country and the world on musical tours, where he sang and spoke in services of “Sacred Song and Story” and taught the converting power of properly directed gospel music. The same musical style and forms were utilized, and belief in the transforming qualities of music remained, but the focus had shifted. There was a growing distinction between sacred and secular—the goal of achieving social reform through musical means remained, but the means of reaching such a goal was increasingly centered on divine rather than human intervention. Similarly, secular methods of performing were still utilized in an effort to bring music to the masses, but the gospel hymn form was distinguished as being more transformative, both spiritually and morally.

Through the revivals of the late nineteenth century, Moody and Sankey increased not only the mass popularity of gospel hymns but connected them specifically to the conversionary work of evangelism. The simple, repetitive, contemporary music and positive, broadly evangelical lyrics that had been useful in the developmental education of the Sunday school now became a tool for uniting Protestant evangelicals and bringing the gospel message to the unconverted sinner. The lasting effect of the Moody-Sankey partnership in evangelical revivalism was evident in those who followed. While successive song leaders such as Charles Alexander, Homer Rodeheaver, and George Beverly Shea played more of an entertainer’s role than Sankey, they continued to rely on gospel hymns and the gospel hymn form to provide an evangelistic aesthetic in the revival meeting. For

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revivalists of the twentieth century, it was the gospel hymn alone that provided the spiritual soundtrack for conversion.
CHAPTER TWO: 
BRINGING IN THE SHEAVES 

In 1886, the year of the Haymarket riot in Chicago, Dwight L. Moody established the Bible Institute for Home and Foreign Missions of the Chicago Evangelization Society dedicated to training Christian workers for city missions. At its establishment he proclaimed:

Either these people are to be evangelized or the leaven of communism and infidelity will assume such enormous proportions that it will break out in a reign of terror such as this country has never known. It don’t take a prophet or a son of a prophet to see these things. You can hear the muttering of the coming convulsion even now, if you open your ears and eyes.

For Moody, “the only way to convert this dangerous element into peaceful helpful citizens was through the transforming power of Christ.”43 His new educational Institute was a part of this evangelizing—practical training in the Word of God, providing basic biblical theology for those who would go out and preach to the masses. Through Moody’s Bible training, any man with spiritual conviction could become a Christian worker. Moody called the graduates “gapmen,” intended to stand in the gap between middle and lower class, between owner and worker, between order and disorder, between sin and salvation. They were men trained in the gospel, who would “go into the shops and meet these bareheaded infidels and

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By exposing urban workers to the biblical message of salvation, in sermon and song, Christian workers would bring the transforming power of the Holy Spirit to individuals and American society. Working in tandem with Moody’s socially conservative revivalism, the Bible institute taught young evangelists that social reform was to come through divine intervention; through the conversion of individual sinners who would then be convicted of their sin and turn from being “disruptive infidels” to “peaceful citizens.” A key component in this endeavor, as in Moody’s revivals, was music. Music was utilized and taught throughout the nineteenth century in an effort to bring about social reform. “Good” music in and of itself was believed to be a civilizing force and thus should be brought to all communities. Moody drew upon this notion, enlisting musician Ira Sankey as the song leader in his evangelistic work and popularizing a particular form of nineteenth century music—the gospel hymn. By using gospel hymns exclusively in Moody’s revivals, Sankey elevated the spiritual and moral potential of that musical form and connected it to the conversionary emphasis of revival work. At the same time, there remained within evangelicalism an intertwining of broader musical education and the potential for cultural uplift, and these dual roles were evident in the music program of Moody’s Bible Institute.

The Chicago Evangelization Society officially opened classes for men and women in 1889 based on Moody’s outline for studies;

First, I shall aim to have given a sufficient knowledge of the English Bible; so far as may be, a practical mastery of it. Second, I would have workers trained in everything that will give them access practically to the souls of the people, especially the neglected classes. Third, I would give a great

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44 Record of Christian Work, 5 (February, 1886): 6, quoted in Findlay, 328.
prominence to the study of music, both vocal and instrumental. I believe music is one of the most powerful agents for good or for evil.  

In order to direct music toward “good,” Moody appointed two veteran musicians who had experience in various fields of music as the first directors of the music program. H. H. McGranahan, music director at the Institute from 1889-1893, was the nephew of famous gospel hymn writer and teacher James McGranahan and had studied music at George Root’s Summer Normal School and the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston. Prior to his appointment at the Institute, McGranahan taught in both the New York and Philadelphia Church Choral Union, working with representatives of a variety of denominations along with the prominent business leaders who managed the Unions. Daniel Brink Towner became music director in 1893 and remained at the Institute until his death in 1919. His father, J. G. Towner, worked with George Root and William Bradbury and was a music singer and teacher in Rome, Pennsylvania. As a teenager, Towner traveled in musical conventions and concerts through Pennsylvania, New York, and Ohio singing “popular bass solos of the day” such as “Rocked in the Cradle of the Deep,” “The Old Sexton,” “Down by the Sea,” and “The King and the Miller.” He then studied music with several well-known music teachers of the era including John Howard in New York, George Root in Chicago, and George Webb in Boston and soon began teaching in his own right at musical institutes and conventions. Towner’s composing career began with the writing of sentimental songs and by the

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1870s he had shifted toward work in “church” music and gospel hymnody. In 1885, Towner was recruited to work in the evangelistic campaigns of Moody and lead the music at Moody’s College Students’ Conference at Mount Hermon and Northfield, Massachusetts. Under the direction of McGranahan and Towner, the Chicago Bible Institute developed a music program that echoed the broad course of study they had received at the music institutes established by Lowell Mason devotees Root and Bradbury. This included understanding and applying music at a practical level, whether socially or evangelistically, and doing so through the study of a variety of musical forms.

While the goal of the Institute’s Music Course through the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was to prepare young people for religious work in the mode of Ira Sankey, its method of study relied on the developmental exercises of nineteenth-century European music teachers Joseph Concone and Mathilde Marchesi, along with American George Root. These methods were based a program of developmental or “inductive” education expounded by Swiss educational reformer Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746-1827) and applied specifically to music by American Lowell Mason for the purpose of cultural uplift. The program established by music directors McGranahan and Towner adopted these methods wholeheartedly, providing theoretical, aesthetic, and practical training to complement students’ Bible training. In addition, techniques of performance that stressed proper manners, “mentality” and ethics continued the tradition of musical social reform advocated by Mason and his cohorts as well as the articulation and diction employed by Sankey. At the same time, this training was not focused

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47 Hall, p. 295-296.
primarily on providing the students with a general knowledge of music that would improve them as moral citizens. Rather, all of the Institute’s musical education was geared toward training in gospel hymns and evangelical work—the vocal, instrumental, performance, and composition skills were to be used to bring the gospel message to society. Social reform and cultural uplift was thus a byproduct of individual conversion induced by the simple gospel in word and song. The practical application of students’ learning was to go into the city and witness to those who were suffering due to unbelief; their success was measured in the number of souls saved. This purpose became particularly evident during World War I and through the 1920s, as the Institute began to stress the success of its student body and graduates in practical evangelistic work.

At the outset, the Institute claimed that “it [was] not the aim of the Institute to do the work of theological seminaries or conservatories of music, but rather to aid and supplement these,” through progressive education and practical work. In the case of musical education, this meant training young people for the purpose of using music in evangelical work. The description of the Music Course from the Institute’s Catalogue explained;

…Music is such an important factor in church, mission, and evangelistic work that all classes of Christian workers find it helpful to have some knowledge of it. The Musical Course is framed to meet this need, and to equip men and women with a practical music education, such as will qualify them for pastor’s assistants, evangelistic singers, choir leaders, organists and teachers.

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Training for this purpose included instrumental studies, vocal studies, normal training (music teaching), harmony and composition, and “special lectures” which included “lectures on church music and kindred subjects; the origin of Gospel hymns; short sketches of the original Gospel hymn writers, etc.” given by the head of the department.\textsuperscript{50} Along with providing an understanding of the intellectual and aesthetic basis of the music, the music program included courses in hymn playing and evangelistic playing, suggesting the best ways of reading music, transposing, and improvising in order to accompany congregational singing. This practical work in piano and organ also required that students commit hymns to memory and perform them before the instructor and class, who would provide the student with critical feedback.\textsuperscript{51} In conjunction with the progressive teaching of hymn and evangelistic playing, other coursework in instrumental playing focused on classical musical forms. The piano and organ course included study of “Opus 91, Moszkowski Finger Dexterity….Etudes of Czerny and the usual two and three part Inventions of Bach” since;

Opus 91, Moritz Moszkowski not only includes all phases of finger dexterity, scale passages, octave passages, arpeggio passages, but also includes ingenuity of melody, rhythm and harmony in such a way as to invite practice. Those wishing to specialize in accompanying will find these studies particularly helpful.\textsuperscript{52}

In addition, the course allowed for those students who were more technically advanced “to study works from Beethoven, Chopin, McDowell, and other standard composers,” and be “given the advantage of playing in the term piano recital of the

\textsuperscript{50} Bulletin, Vol. 3, No. 3 (March, 1917); pamphlet.
\textsuperscript{51} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{52} Bulletin, Vol. 3, No. 3 (March, 1917); pamphlet.
regular music students of The Moody Bible Institute.\textsuperscript{53} The same developmental teaching process applied to the study of the pipe organ, which included a prerequisite necessitating that those entering the course have a fundamental knowledge of piano. Studies were centered first on the standard Nilson Pedal Studies for technique, then “the studying and playing of hymns” followed by “selections suitable for church service” taken mainly from another organ training standard, Clarence Eddy’s Church and Concert Organist, Volume I. Finally, “where technique permits, the great organ fugues and sonatas of Bach and Mendelssohn may be given.”\textsuperscript{54} The progressive and rigorous instrumental education offered by Moody Bible Institute extended to vocalists as well, since;

…One of the paramount reasons for which The Moody Bible Institute was founded was an intelligent rendering of Gospel Hymns, and many students come to better equip themselves for this particular line of service. The demands made upon the Evangelistic singer are becoming more and more exacting, and competent instructors are provided to meet this situation.\textsuperscript{55}

In order to meet the vocal demands of evangelism, the Institute gave special attention to what was termed “the fundamentals” of intelligent interpretation and rendering of a gospel hymn. This included “the proper abdominal and intercostal effort necessary to absolute breath control,” “the correct placement of the voice, thus securing an even and desirable quality of tone throughout its entire compass,” “the development of mental as well as physical command in singing, which is of great importance in securing effective results,” and “the true interpretation of both words and music, which also includes clear and liquid articulation, intelligent

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{54} Ibid.
Such exercises culminated in weekly recitals with the intent of helping students develop “poise free from undesirable mannerisms.” The course also included “Suggestions in Mentality and poise” along with “Suggestions in the Ethics of Temperament and its influence on Christian Work.” A course in “Voice Culture” taught students the “fundamental of vocal technique, physical and psychological elements in tone production, tone placement, etc.” In addition, a vocal clinic was required for all students, where teacher and pupil discussed “special difficulties” through sample lessons. The voice course concluded with “lectures and round table discussions concerning problems of a gospel singer, use and care of the voice, place of art in gospel solo work, giving the message in solo, chorus and congregational singing, so that it will ‘grip.’ Straight work vs. fads, organization of choirs, etc.”

The theoretical development of musical study at the Institute was evident through classes in notation, conducting, normal training, harmony, and composition. The intent of the notation class was “to give the student a working knowledge of the fundamentals of music, such as: Keys, Key Relationship, Syncopation, Modulation, Enharmonic Change, Analysis of Scales and a comprehensive study of Intervals.” Once again, developmental progression was critical, requiring knowledge of solfeggio, or shape-note singing as a prerequisite for the Sight Reading Classes. In conducting, students were given practical experience in chorus leading through “prompting parts where difficult rhythm occurs” for the sake of “securing to them greater freedom and more definite control.” The classes in harmony and

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56 Bulletin, March, 1918.
57 Bulletin, March, 1918.
58 Bulletin, Vol. 3, No. 3 (March, 1917); pamphlet.
composition were particularly attuned to modern music trends. In the study of harmony, students were introduced to “chords, fundamental and inverted forms, Transposition, Chords of the Seventh on the Dominant and Supertonic, Resolution, Progressions of chord forms in both Major and Minor Keys, Dominant Ninth, Passing Tones and the remaining secondary and diminished seventh chords.” In composition, which was listed as “Preparatory for Gospel Hymn Writing,” students were exposed to “a more extended study of diminished seventh chords, chromatically altered chords, appoggiaturas, suspensions, duet form, embellishments, sequences, pedal point and other less familiar progressions,” all stylistic characteristics of nineteenth-century gospel hymn music. In keeping with the contemporary nature of gospel hymns, the composition class advertised “originality is encouraged and the writing of four-part hymns is a feature.”

While the techniques and methods of Moody’s music program were those of any secular normal or public school, they were specifically applied to the development of the gospel hymn style for evangelistic purposes.

At Moody Bible Institute, the program of developmental music education utilized originally for both moral and social uplift was being directed more toward a revivalistic goal. During this same period, reformers in Chicago were employing similar educational techniques in what Derek Vaillant terms “musical progressivism.” In his work, *Sounds of Reform*, Vaillant describes the efforts of

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Chicago progressives such as Jane Addams and Eleanor Smith to use music as a way “to promote social and cultural linkages and ‘American’ ideals in order to invigorate public culture and promote civic engagement.”\textsuperscript{61} Believing in “the civilizing and ennobling influence of good music,” Addams organized free vocal and piano music lessons early on at Hull House as well as free Sunday afternoon concerts that offered selections from European classical works. By 1893, the Hull House Music School was established with music educator Eleanor Smith as the director. Smith organized the music program based on the progressive techniques of educational development also evident in the Moody program. Hull House’s program required practical voice training in conjunction with piano study along with a variety of technical skills to understand the “structural elements of music.” The range of “good” music was skewed more heavily toward European masters, but Smith also included “folk songs from the homelands of the school’s German, Russian, Irish, and Scotch students.” At the conclusion of the program, students would reveal their development (musically and socially) at a recital where they performed works arranged by Smith alongside classical pieces such as Schumann’s “Evening Star,” Brahms’s “Sleeping Beauty,” and “the first movement of Mozart’s Sonata in C Major.”\textsuperscript{62} Similar to the view of earlier music educators, musical progressives such as Addams and Smith saw music generally as a means of social and cultural uplift, drawing upon a separate but related educational purpose than that of Moody Bible Institute. These similar and often interconnected goals for music education would move further apart by the early twentieth century.

\textsuperscript{61} Vaillant, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{62} Vaillant, p. 100-107.
In 1919, George S. Schuler became the director of the Music Course at Moody Bible Institute. A student of the Chicago Musical College, the Cosmopolitan School of Music, and Moody Bible Institute, Schuler trained under gospel musicians Charles H. Gabriel, E. O. Excell, and Daniel Brink Towner and was schooled in the evangelistic music form and style characteristic of the Institute.63 Coming to the helm at a time when mass evangelism was waning with the growth of new media and fundamentalist-modernist controversies were dividing evangelicals, Schuler continued to shape the music program in the mold of nineteenth-century educators while separating its aims more clearly from their more socially-minded objectives. This was accomplished in part through publicized accounts of the successful evangelistic work of Moody students and graduates as they worked in society. One such report in the Institute’s Bulletin recounted the work of the “American Four” Quartet during World War I, comprised of Moody graduates J. B. Overmyer, W. R. Cole, G. A. McLeod and T. J. Hinkin. The four men organized the quartet as students and “filled engagements” in a number of Chicago churches as a part of their practical training. After graduating in August of 1917, the quartet went to work as singers in the army camps, assisting evangelist Mel Trotter and Moody music professor and gospel singer Homer A. Hammontree. According to the story, the boys thought they would be “obliged” to sing popular songs to the troops, “but found the soldiers better pleased with gospel songs and anxious to hear the gospel.” Professor Hammontree, included his own eyewitness account of the week’s work at Camp Wheeler:

We are leaving—after the most wonderful week of my life. It is too much to tell; only this, it is far beyond anything I had dreamed of. We have had such a wonderful time here that it makes me weep before God to think of it. We had 306 decisions the day before yesterday and 316 yesterday. The fellows are so anxious to know Jesus that one has only to tell them how.64

Instead of providing soldiers with courage and a sense of morality from the singing of popular songs or war ballads, the “American Quartet” was only able to lift the spirits of military men by singing gospel songs. The power of good music, whether specifically sacred or secular, no longer originated in its ability to unite Americans for the right cause. Rather, the power of music was found specifically in gospel hymns’ ability to convict men of their individual sinfulness, and the success of the Moody graduates was in the number of personal “decisions” made for Christ. The same emphasis on numbering individual conversions was evident in a 1921 account of the evangelizing work of Moody students in the women’s section of the Cook County jail:

We found the girls in a very hilarious mood, one of them playing the most wild ragtime music, but by the time we were ready to open our meeting they had quieted down to some extent. We opened by singing “Come Home,” followed by “Safe in the Arms of Jesus.” After a song selected by the girls a duet, “My Prayer” was sung and then we lifted our voices to God in prayer, the girls seemingly very quiet and reverent. The message was then given and the girls were very attentive and some of them weeping before it closed. When the appeal was given there was no immediate response, but later five indicated their desire to be prayed for. After prayer we asked the girls previously converted if they would not gather around the piano and sing softly while we were closing our meeting. Without hesitation they complied, thus enabling us to deal very personably with those who remained in the back part of the room. One of them accepted Christ; two backsliders were reclaimed; and the rest seemed untouched. We were greatly encouraged by the change manifest in some of those who had recently accepted Christ, and

praise God for the way He has revealed His power in Cook County Jail, and for the many definite answers to prayer.⁶⁵

Along with the record of personal convictions, this report also distinguished the effect of popular “secular” music as opposed to “sacred” gospel hymns. The “wild ragtime music” put the women in a “very hilarious mood;” a wild, unruly state. But once the singing of gospel music began, the misbehaving women were “quiet and reverent,” “attentive” and “weeping.” It was opening with sacred gospel hymns that put the criminals in a proper state to receive the gospel message and change their ways.

By 1925, Moody Bible Institute had become the flagship institution of fundamentalism, providing nondenominational Bible training and emphasizing evangelistic Christian work at home and in foreign missions. According to historian Joel Carpenter, Bible institutes such as Moody were “the most important terminals in the fundamentalist network” and of the fifty or so of such schools in existence, Moody “set the pace.”⁶⁶ Through its practical evangelistic training as well as its “proliferation of services” such as the Moody Bible Institute Colportage Association, which published and distributed books (many written by their staff); the extension department which “organize[d] Bible conferences and revival meetings off site,” and “provide[d] churches with guest preachers;” and “communications links” such as the magazine Moody Bible Institute Monthly and the radio station WMBI, Moody promoted its brand of moderate fundamentalism across the country. As Carpenter states, for many pastors and congregants “who

were weary of the theological tensions they felt with their denominational neighbors and wary of the perspectives emanating from their denominational agencies,” institutes such as Moody “often became denominational surrogates.” 67 It was Moody president, Dr. James Gray (1904-1934), who played a large role in dictating the fundamentalist perspective disseminated by Moody Bible Institute during the early twentieth century. A supporter of both conservative intellectualism and the nascent fundamentalist movement, Gray produced critiques of liberal theology and “social and political progressivism” even as he encouraged civil dialogue between the variants of mainline Protestantism. Yet as the argument between liberal Protestants and fundamentalists became more abrasive during the 1920s, “Gray made the Moody Bible Institute and its monthly magazine major champions of the fundamentalist cause.”68 While producing sharp attacks of liberals and modernism, Gray continued to urge the use of “reason…calm logic and…statements of fact” during the most heated exchanges of the evolutionary debate.69 It was Gray’s moderate fundamentalism and desire to maintain intellectual respectability that characterized the agenda of Moody during his tenure. Particularly during the 1920s and early 1930s, the Institute promoted a positive, evangelistic, mission-based agenda and balanced it with a dedication to academic rigor.

In order to maintain an evangelistic focus and distinguish Moody’s practical training from liberal social concerns, Schuler had strengthened the practical work of music students and bolstered the music faculty. The Music Department of 1925 reported a staff of nine music teachers, four in instrumental, three in voice, and two

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67 Carpenter, p. 17.
68 Carpenter, p. 40-41.
69 Quoted in Carpenter, p. 42.
in music theory, “the largest number and the strongest personnel in the history of the Institute.” Based on the courses of instrumental, vocal and theoretical study established by H. H. McGranahan and D. B. Towner, whose “method of teaching is for thoroughness and achievement second to that in no conservatory in the country,” the classes continued to include subjects in Notation, Harmony, Sight Reading, Composition, Normal Training and Choir Conducting while adding private lessons in instrument and voice. Along with the progressive teaching, the Institute’s Music Department hearkened back to “the great composers of the Sankey, McGranahan, Excell and Towner period,” bemoaning the present day writers who “have commercialized their work to its discredit.” Unlike those who were besmirching the spiritual legacy of gospel hymn writers, Moody Bible Institute was training musicians in their revival work;

As one becomes acquainted with the provisions for training in the art and expression of gospel song at the Institute, the reason for this opulence of service is made clear. The succession of the Moody Bible Institute conviction that the gospel in song and sermon must go hand in hand persists to the present. The “Moody and Sankey” model for team work in evangelism is still honored for the potential Moodys and Sankeys who train here.

In the practice of Moody-Sankey revivalism, the Institute was the musical supply station for many of the churches and Sunday Schools in and around Chicago, as well as for missions and street meetings. Advertisements for the services of Moody music students such as the “W-M-B-I Singers” and the “Gospel Messenger Quartet” provided evidence of the sacrifice of service by Moody students; “…both of these quartets are available for week-end engagements with churches within a limited

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radius of Chicago. Pastors, churches and young peoples’ societies desiring their services should write to the Extension department.” Standing proudly in the tradition of evangelistic gospel music, the Bulletin proclaimed the success of these well-trained Moody music graduates in spreading the “old-time religion:”

One of the recent graduates of the Institute is a director of music in a large Methodist church in Elgin, Ill., another is a voice teacher in a Kentucky college; a third is associated with a leading evangelist in Iowa, a fourth has charge of the music work in a normal school in North Carolina, etc. Many students report conversions resulting from the gospel in song, 49 in one place, 71 in another, 63 in another. Excerpts are given in the report from music students who have gone as missionaries to Africa, China, India, and elsewhere, all of whom testify to the use they have been able to make of the musical instruction received in the Institute, and thank God for it.

To those concerned about the liberal direction of American Protestantism and culture, the Institute positioned itself firmly on the side of pietistic evangelical revivalism and fundamentalism.

At the end of the 1920s, the fundamentalist movement appeared to be in disarray, with the ignominy of the Scopes trial still fresh in many minds. Declared “an event now passed” by liberal Protestants and an ideology deemed unappealing to “the best brains and the good sense of the modern community,” fundamentalism had indeed “lost influence and respect.” As one of the most prominent fundamentalist educational institutions, Moody Bible Institute maintained its singular dedication to positive evangelism and worked to regain cultural and intellectual respect for the movement. This effort was evident in the course and faculty descriptions by 1928 and program changes in 1930. Consistently, the description of the music course highlighted the history of the department, from its

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74 Quoted in Carpenter, p. 13-14.
establishment by Moody himself, through the pedigreed directors of the program, and finally giving account of the versatility of the faculty. Often, the evangelizing work of the faculty was emphasized, but so too was their musical training. In the 1928 Bulletin, the emphasis on music in conjunction with evangelizing was evident, stressing not only the “fine capabilities” of the staff, but also how they “enhance the worth of the Moody Bible Institute as a place of training in all branches of music that build into the needs of gospel work.” In May of 1930, the Institute developed a separate music program dedicated solely to musical studies. Prior to this, the Music Course was connected to Bible study, since biblical knowledge was seen as integral to biblically-based musical teaching, leading, and performing. The new music program was offered with free access to Biblical study, although it was no longer required. The Institute justified this shift stating “it is not a question as to what the Institute offers less than may be secured at other music schools, but, how much is offered at the Moody Bible Institute beyond what is available at other schools.” Not only was Moody’s academic offering equal to that of secular colleges and conservatories, but its spiritual focus in the study and training of musicians made the Institute’s evangelistic program superior.

Resting on the practical spiritual work and evangelical community created by its program, Moody Bible Institute asserted its ability to equal and to supercede other institutions of higher learning through its music program. Institute President James Gray clearly established this standard in his speech introducing what he termed “Our New Adventure in Music;”

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Music will continue to be taught in the General Course, but students possessing the talent and the desire to perfect themselves as instrumentalists, conductors, choir directors, composers and soloists in the ministry of music in evangelical churches, will not be obligated, as heretofore was sometimes the case, to supplement their Institute training with advanced work in a conservatory or the music department of a university.77

According to Gray, the “spiritual and social values” that were a part of “Institute life” along with the free private musical instruction offered by the Institute led students to ask for a music course that did not require additional training in an outside, secular conservatory. It was made clear that the opportunity for additional private instruction was made possible due to “Christian people” who supported the Institute in its work confident in the fact that “only regenerated men and women are acceptable as students—such as are expected to dedicate their lives and all that they have and are to the service of the gospel in the winning of souls either at home or abroad.”78 While evangelical service was strongly emphasized by 1930, the Institute’s music program retained the more secular skills and techniques that had been a part of the development of public and religious musical education. Thus, the administration and faculty at Moody had to convince their fundamentalist supporters (and possibly themselves) of the necessity of keeping up and even expanding such practices while giving up a specific program of Biblical study. They did so by asserting that the Institute’s music course needed to address the increased musical standards of the age for the purpose of appealing to various churches and combating the influence of newer technologies;

We are living in a period of higher musical standards than was the case in the earlier years of the Institute. Music is now taught very generally in our public schools, and the phonograph and radio are carrying some of the best

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of it even into the smallest villages and towns. Churches, therefore, expect not only more from players and singers, but more also from their choir directors and congregational leaders.\textsuperscript{79}

Since the average churchgoer was being exposed to better standards of music, there was a greater demand for better standards in congregational singing as well. As the most important musical aspect of the worship service, congregational singing needed to be taught by leaders with a solid knowledge of music theory and technique. Thus, the Institute asserted that music needed to be studied not only by those destined to become music leaders in the church, but also those called to be pastors. In support of this point, President Gray borrowed a quote from the journal \textit{Progress in Church Music}; \textquote{\textquote{the whole congregation should not only be inspired to sing, but professionally taught \textit{how} to sing, and carefully led into familiarity with a reasonably large repertoire of worthy hymns.}}\textsuperscript{80} Although the faculty of Moody asserted the high expectations of a more musically educated public, they also decried the current state of music at evangelistic meetings. Once again evoking the "mighty power of gospel music in the revivals of the Wesleys and Moody and Sankey" the Institute’s leadership bemoaned the current “deterioration” of gospel music. Even though the Institute’s musical ideal, Ira Sankey, was never musically trained as a songwriter or choir leader, he cultivated the work of other singing evangelists, many of who were also noted composers and conductors. Men such as Philip P. Bliss, James McGranahan, and George Stebbins worked closely with Sankey, developing the gospel hymn style and evangelical revivalism for almost half a century. For the Institute, these musical men perpetuated Sankey’s work and

\textsuperscript{79} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{80} \textit{Bulletin}, “Music Course Number,” Vol. IX, No. 9 (May, 1930), p. 3-5.
were “men of reverence and dignity in the handling of the baton, whose lives and testimony were potent factors in their campaigns.”81 According to President Gray, in the wake of the great success of Sankey, Bliss, McGranahan, and Stebbins a large number of hymnwriters, singers, conductors, and publishers emerged who attempted to copy the profitable musical style. For Gray, “it was a case of smaller men copying a master and, as is not unusual, making that sometimes ridiculous which he made an art:”

The Moody Bible Institute, since the days when Dr. D. B. Towner was the director of its Music instruction, has set its face against such extravagances, and is not without hope that its advanced Music Course may do much to restore the lost balance to a noble calling without lessening its soul-winning power. Of course, the personality of a leader is reflected in the character and quality of the songs he sings, and which he asks his congregation to sing, and therefore as he himself becomes better trained in the art of music, his spiritual life will express itself in songs which are more worthy, and hold a larger content of the life-giving Word. 82

By drawing a straight line from the musical revival tradition of the Wesleys to Sankey to Towner, Gray placed Moody’s music program within the cycle of American revivalism and established it as the standard of Christian musical training.

Appealing to conservative Christians who were interested in serious musical study but desirous of a biblically fundamental environment, Moody’s Music Course promised such a setting and proved the academic strength of fundamentalist institutions. An important aspect of this effort after 1930 was the Institute’s “two-fold position” regarding music education. Distinguishing its program of “Christian Education” from the more general “Religious Education,” the Institute emphasized what it saw as the “definite and stronger designation,” since religion was “man-

81 Ibid.

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made,” whereas Christianity was “God-made.” By choosing the title “Christian Education,” the Institute was asserting that its course in Christian education was “biblical throughout.”83 This Christian Education program was combined with the Music Course in order to train Christian music teachers for work in schools as well as churches. Such a program offered new vocational avenues for the Institute and its students. One great value of this dual Music and Christian Education course was that it could meet the needs of smaller churches. Often limited by budgets, rural and small-town churches could not afford to hire both a Director of Church Music and Director of Religious Education. The Institute believed their new Music and Christian Education course could solve this monetary issue by training students for a combined directorate entirely within the Institute walls. Students who followed this course were assured that “they thus can qualify themselves for very essential service to churches and pastors, and lay a foundation for a promising life work, bringing joy and spiritual fruitfulness in the present time, and eternal blessing in the time to come.”84 This program also extended the work of the Institute by bringing Christian workers into smaller rural churches they might not otherwise reach.

To recapture the level of earlier musical greats and to address the increasing musical knowledge of the age, the Institute stressed the professional level of their music staff, the theoretical training of their course, and the musical accomplishments of their graduates. In conjunction with this increased emphasis on professional musical training, the Bulletin regularly included an extensive explanation of each faculty member in the Music Department discussing their

83 Ibid.

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training, their practical work, and their professional efforts. The Music Course enforced its new standards with the introduction of entrance requirements. The requirement stated that in order to enroll in the Music Course, students needed to have high-school training or the equivalent along with “a proper grounding in the fundamentals of music.” What constituted equivalency and proper grounding in music was to be determined by the Music Faculty of the Institute, who were the arbiters of professional music standards. Assurances were given that music courses offered in the General Course of study would provide students with proper grounding in the musical fundamentals necessary for entrance to the Music Course. The coursework was explained in the context of conservatory work and once again, the thrust was that music students were receiving modern training from Christian musicians to be used in practical evangelistic work;

The texts used in the study of voice, piano, pipe organ, and also of theory, are standard texts, and are taught by men who have had the benefit of conservatory and master instruction—each an artist in his particular field. There are arranged also frequent recitals which compare favorably, as to repertoire and effective execution, with other conservatories. To this is added a feature of utmost consequence, namely, that its broad and thorough musical training is directed by a faculty of men and women with a true Christian experience, and in an inspiringly spiritual atmosphere. Students of the Music Course of the Institute have also the advantage of opportunity for Bible study and preparation for various forms of Christian service outside of its sphere of music, and this without cost. This inside information is worthy of consideration by all prospective music students who are considering Christian service at home or abroad.

And lest anyone misunderstand the standard of the Institute’s music program, the Bulletin stated it bluntly: “perhaps the general public holds the idea that the MUSIC COURSE at the Moody Bible Institute deals only with elements entering into the

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effective use of gospel songs and church hymns, but as a matter of fact its instruction covers music in theory and practice to an extent comparable with musical conservatories of high standing.”87 As a fundamentalist institution, Moody argued that its music program was just as rigorous as that of any secular conservatory, but it surpassed those institutions through its Christian atmosphere, evangelistic focus and expense (monetarily and spiritually) to students.

The technical strength of the Institute’s music program was reinforced through continual updates on successful alumnae. While reports on former students prior to the new program typically highlighted their Christian service and conversion successes, the later reports emphasized the high profile work of graduates. The “distinguished work” accomplished by graduates Ernest O. Sellers (hymnwriter), Joseph B. Trowbridge (director of the BIOLA music department), I. E. Reynolds (musical director of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary), Charles M. Dennis (dean of the Conservatory of Music at College of the Pacific, San Jose, CA) was explained in detail by the Bulletin. The “notable song leaders” to come out of Moody were also frequently highlighted, such as Charles M. Alexander (songleader for evangelists Reuben A. Torrey and J. Wilbur Chapman), Homer A Hammontree (worked with evangelist Mel Trotter), Arthur W. McKee (worked with evangelist Gipsy Smith), and composer Ira B. Wilson (worked for the Lorenz music publishing house). By emphasizing the great accomplishments of these Moody graduates, students, their parents, and donors could see both the academic nature and Christian focus of musical pursuits. Rather than being “an art

87 Bulletin; Vol. X, No. 6 (February, 1931), p.3-4.
of doubtful practicality” or “a means of passing time pleasantly,” the study of music was a field of training worth note;

The mission of the Moody Bible Institute has included the promotion of the Redeemer’s praise in sacred song and skillful use of piano and pipe organ for these many years. World-renowned gospel singers have here found training for their consecrated talents. Directors of Christian Education have been prepared for a broader and more versatile ministry in the Church School. Pastors have found their usefulness greatly extended through the knowledge of chorus directing, hymnology, voice, harmony, and other subjects offered in the Music Course.88

Several testimonies from graduates paid tribute to the value of musical study at the Institute and its application in a variety of Christian pursuits. Harlin J. Roper, former Moody student was involved in directing the “Sunrise Service” for KRLD, the Dallas Times-Herald radio station. The Rev. Lewis R. Cocreham, pastor of the First Baptist Church, Devine, Texas, and 1927 graduate of the Institute wrote in to say how he promoted and directed a cantata in his church at Christmas time. Quoted in the Bulletin, Cocreham expressed appreciation for the Institute’s music course, “I still use the musical training I received at the Institute and thank God for it. Do not let your preacher students hold the idea that they can get too much music in their schooling. I have use for every bit of mine—even the harmony, sight reading, and normal training.”89 Rev. Albert Simpson Reitz, a Moody graduate of 1918, was described as someone who traveled widely in evangelistic work and “won a wide recognition as a writer of gospel hymns.” In 1931, as pastor of the First Baptist Church, of Inglewood, California, Reitz declared;

The minister who knows enough about music to confer with his choir leader in an intelligent manner…will find it a real help in dealing with that important phase of his work….the majority of ministers must deal directly

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89 Ibid.
with every department of their work, and the music is one of the most important, and often the most difficult. …When I became the pastor of my present church five years ago, there was practically no choir at all. Now we have one of the finest in Inglewood, and visitors seldom fail to mention the fact as they leave the services.90

The testimony of well-known and successful graduates was particularly important to the Music Department’s reputation. Homer Hammontree, famous songleader to evangelist Mel Trotter and former Moody student and faculty member often recounted his indebtedness to the Music program of the Institute;

How I thank God for the Moody Bible Institute, where I was able to get a thorough course in Bible study, along with my training as a gospel singer. It was where I learned HOW to study God’s Word, and all these years I have tried to keep up systematic study in connection with the busy life of an evangelist. Since leaving school I have taken several of the Correspondence School courses offered by the Institute. I find that in order to “keep on keeping on,” year after year, as a gospel singer, I need constantly to study music and to continue feeding my heart and mind on the Word of God. How we gospel singers need to study to show ourselves approved unto God, workmen who need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth!

When I first entered this work, some twenty years ago, I thought all that was necessary was for me to know how to sing a solo and to direct a choir. I was honest in this belief, but had only been out in the work a little time when I began to realize how weak I was as a Christian worker; weak in my own Christian life, and, oh, so weak when I tried to help others in spiritual things! After years of evangelistic work, I am more and more convinced that where many of us gospel singers fail in being our best for our Lord is that we do not know God’s Word as we should. After all, nothing can take the place of God’s Word.”91

Such personal accounts reiterated the purpose of general music education as delineated in the nineteenth century by Lowell Mason and his protégés, but at Moody, the focus had shifted to emphasize the necessity of general Christian music education where the true reforming and aesthetic potential of music was gained only in the context of Biblical study. In this way, Moody’s Music Course strove to

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90 Bulletin; Vol. X, No. 6 (February, 1931), p.3-4.
maintain the balance between a more secular, academically competitive program with the practical, evangelistic gospel music training it had popularized.

By 1935, the music program at Moody boasted a long list of successful Christian songleaders, composers, and publishers along with hundreds of teachers, choir leaders, music directors, and pastors in almost every evangelical denomination across the nation. Yet the focus of the Institute and its music program shifted once again under the presidency of Dr. Will H. Houghton, who succeeded Gray in 1934. Houghton, like many other fundamentalists who found themselves outside the mainstream during the 1930s, chose to focus on what distinguished them from American culture rather than engage with it. While Gray began to separate Moody’s training from that of secular institutions, he still strove to establish Moody as a legitimate institution of higher learning, particularly in its conservatory-like music program. Under Houghton’s leadership, the Institute’s training was no longer measured against secular academic standards. Rather, it centered on upholding strict behavioral codes and rejecting the worldliness of mainline Protestant churches as well as the permissiveness of American culture at large. According to Houghton, many Protestant Christians allowed profanity, adultery, and drinking among congregants, and were seemingly unable to distinguish sinful from proper behavior. “Instead of speaking of sin” or practicing “ostracism,” pastors “talk of social relationships, and instead of sending for the revivalist they call in the psychologist.”92 At Moody, newly implemented codes of student behavior and dress served to teach young people how to effectively separate themselves from secular culture and live “with eternity’s values in view.” Instead of applying their

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92 Carpenter, p. 59.
faith in civic or ethical work, Moody students and graduates labored in “spiritual matters;” “prayer, Bible study, fellowship with other believers, and efforts to convert others.” 93 Through the standards and training of the Institute,

While the rigor of the Music Course at Moody remained and the staff was essentially unchanged, the Bulletin revealed the shifting nature of Moody’s musical studies. Rather than highlighting the academic standards alongside the evangelistic goals of the program, the course description of 1935 emphasized how music fit into the supervised daily practices of students;

…[Moody is] a school where the Bible is studied under competent instructors, both of this and other lands, and training is given in methods of practical Christian work, and where students are taught vocal and instrumental music, to fit them for Gospel service. Every student is required each day, while studying, to do personal Christian work in missions, tents, homes and elsewhere, under competent supervision.” 94

Not only was the value of the music course explained for those going into a musical field of gospel work, but also for the spiritual life of the larger body of students at the Institute. Musical study at the Institute provided students with the opportunity to aid in the pious development of their peers, since music permeated the “lives as well as…the training of students.” All Institute classes were opened with song and prayer led by the students;

…the morning devotional period, the missionary prayer bands, the evening fellowship meetings, the Saturday chapel services, as well as other student gatherings, are brightened and elevated as the students join together in singing gospel songs….there is much opportunity for practical music experience among the students as they lead and participate in these services. 95

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93 Carpenter, p. 63.
95 Ibid.
The Institute in these years stressed that its music course had always held “the training of gospel musicians as of major importance.” Although the courses remained the same, the technical progression of the coursework was no longer explained nor was the necessity of advanced musical development. Instead, the courses were described more in line with general music classes, offered not only for the development of professional gospel musicians, but also “choir members, songleaders, choir directors, and accompanists” who would be able to “find classes meeting individual needs and desires.”96 Such training would not only provide gospel singers and chorus directors with a strong Biblical background, but would also offer pastors and evangelists the ability to properly choose their own music. As explained in the Institute’s Bulletin of classes, “the instruction in music is designed to equip men and women as gospel singer, choir directors, pianists, church organists, and composers of gospel music; also to aid pastors and directors of religious education in the planning and conduct of the song service in public worship.” 97 The importance of gospel music for those engaged in worldwide ministries was also emphasized, and mission students were encouraged to take music courses in order to effectively use gospel hymns in foreign cultures. Such emphases recalled the various purposes of gospel hymnody during the nineteenth century. In the tradition of music education and the later “musical progressives,” the early gospel hymns of the Sunday schools were intended to induce right civic and moral behavior. In evangelical revivalism, gospel hymns became the evangelistic musical form that could induce personal piety. Now, the two emphases

97 Catalogue, 1939-1940; Vol. XVIII, No. 4 (June, 1939), p. 49-52.
were merging in Moody’s training with all the civic, moral, and religious power of music focused in one form.

The conversionary power of gospel music, correctly used, was reemphasized as well in the Institute’s musical program. Accounts of students’ practical evangelistic work was once again highlighted, asserting that it was “the eager and spirited singing of a group of young people…that attracts many to a street meeting who would not otherwise pause to listen. In missions and jails hardened hearts are reached by the gospel in song, where often only indifference greets the spoken message.” This work was done by students organized for song in the form of “men’s and women’s quartets and trios, working as gospel teams, making as much use as is desirable of folding organs, horns, and stringed instruments.” They were dispersed by the Institute throughout the Chicago area and used their vacation periods to “branch out into wider fields of service.” Within the Institute, students were encouraged to exercise training “in voice and ensemble work” through the seventy voice Auditorium Choir. Taught with “skilled leadership,” and a place where “the principles taught in the classroom find invaluable expression,” the Auditorium Choir served the Institute “by rendering inspiring numbers on many public occasions, and also by concert work in various city churches.” In all this musical work, the Institute stressed that it was “both in teaching and expression…of a definitely gospel nature. All the experience that inevitably comes from Practical Work assignments, from radio work, or choir engagements in the Institute or city churches, builds and appreciation of the great and glorious ministry of song in

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winning souls to Christ.” Boosting the “gospel nature” of the Institute’s music course were the narratives of salvation through music, which more often took place in a religious rather than urban setting:

Not long ago an Institute student was invited to sing in a Chicago church. After the number “It’s Real” the student gave her testimony. But she was disappointed, for she felt she hadn’t done as well as possible. At the close of the service she was approached by an official of the church. “You sang that song just for me,” he began. “I’ve been a church member all my life, but I’ve never known what it means to be really saved….I believe I do now. I’m going home to pray it out tonight.”

Another story told of a student who was called to the home of a dying man. The student “sang a requested number, then asked if he might pray. At the close of the prayer he noticed the man appeared to be moved, and he began: ‘Jesus paid it all, All to Him I owe; Sin had left a crimson stain; He washed it white as snow.’ The man accepted Christ as Savior first. Then his wife. Finally his daughter. And all through the power of the Gospel in music.” Here again, the practical musical work took place in a home where the student was called to evangelize. Rather than going into the streets of Chicago to minister, students were also told how their musical message could reach out from the Institute into the city environment:

A student sat at the piano in one of the Institute buildings one day not long ago. As she played Gospel songs a shabbily dressed old man passing by on the street paused, looked in and after a bit sat down. At the end of half an hour the student picked up her books to depart. The old man came slowly forward. “You’ll never know what this has meant to me,” he said shakily.

In this story, the student was not even required to leave the security of the Institute; the message emanated outward from its walls. The fundamentalist community

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101 Ibid.
could remain separate from the world, faithfully practicing the gospel in word and
song and their example would reach out into the world to affect change. This was
reiterated through the recounting of the numbers converted as a result of the
evangelistic efforts, most of which took place within the buildings of the Institute;

In one year alone Institute students sang more than 12,000 solos, duets and
quartets on practical work assignments. They conducted 1,500 choirs, led
singing on 7,162 occasions, played instruments 14,000 times and
participated in more than 2,000 radio broadcasts. And with marked results. We’ve seen student musicians in action in some instances already, but how
about radio? Step up to WMBI studios in the tower of the new Administration Building and see these students, trained in the Institute
Music department, present the Gospel in music. And think of it—a potential audience of 5 million! No wonder letters flood the radio offices telling of
conversions through listening to this message. One listener wrote in effect,
‘When you sang “Speak, My Lord” the Lord spoke to me and I’ve been
happy ever since.’ Others explain that they would have turned off the radio
had it not been for the Gospel music. As a result they listened long enough
to hear a Gospel message and thus were saved.\(^\text{102}\)

Encouraging the promotion of “the ministry of song in Christian churches, and in
evangelistic meetings,” the Institute emphasized that music was “a recognized
essential in gospel work and in the life of the churches. From its beginning, the
Institute has regarded the training of gospel musicians as of major importance.” The
“essentials of music” at that time included the same vocal, instrumental, and
theoretical classes that had characterized the Music Course almost from its
inception. These were classes such as choir class, church music, composition,
conducting, elements of music, ensemble, general chorus, harmony, hymnology,
normal training, notation, organ, piano, piano sight playing, sight reading, and

No. 3 (May, 1940), p.8-9.
With little change in the actual classes, it was the Institute’s focus that appeared to be shifting.

Through the influence and training of Moody Bible Institute, gospel hymnody became characteristic not only of evangelical revivalism, but also the distinguishing musical style of fundamentalism. Drawing students from almost every evangelical Protestant denomination, the Institute set the standard for musical education, composition, and performance in various religious fields, striving to produce a positive, upbeat evangelism. Even as they began to evince a separatist mentality, the Institute continued to focus its music education on progressive and integrated study in the mode of Lowell Mason while stressing its conversionary purpose through the gospel hymn style. It was this musical style that became one of the most effective means for the Institute to transmit its brand of fundamentalism throughout evangelical circles as well as regain cultural respectability in broader American society.

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CHAPTER THREE:
ABOVE THE CLEAR BLUE SKY

In October of 1925, a terrific storm hit the city of Chicago. The fledgling radio station WGES was attempting to broadcast live from the Illinois Products Exposition Center. Left without musical talent due to the storm, the program director decided to ask two young men playing their cornets at a display booth if they would be willing to step in. The young men, students at the Moody Bible Institute, agreed to help out and performed a selection of gospel music over the WGES airwaves. Impressed with the students’ ability and the popularity of their musical broadcast, the management of WGES offered Moody a weekly hour of programming. Less than a year later, the Institute garnered its own studio and call letters. On Wednesday, July 28, 1926, WMBI, the station of Moody Bible Institute, went on the air for the first time.

The development of recreational radio in the early 1920s provided a vast public forum for anyone with a message to convey. Since the cost of operating transmitters was low and the availability of federal licenses was high in the years from 1922 to 1925, many organizations and individuals jumped on the broadcasting bandwagon. This included large numbers of fundamentalists, both local preachers and growing institutions. After the first church service broadcast on January 2, 1921, radio appeared to be a promising missionary enterprise for many Christians.
By 1922, organizations such as the Bible Institute of Los Angeles (KJS), the YMCA of Denver (KOA), First Presbyterian Church of Seattle (KTW), Trinity Methodist Church of El Paso (WDAH), Church of the Covenant of Washington, D.C. (WDM), Broad Street Baptist Church of Columbus, Ohio (WMAN), Unity School of Christianity in Kansas City (WOZ), Glad Tidings Tabernacle of San Francisco (KDZX), and the First Baptist Church of San Francisco (KQW) all held radio licenses. Three years after the first broadcast service in 1921, churches or religious organizations held one out of fourteen radio station licenses, and by the mid 1920s, they operated 60 out of the 600 radio stations in the United States.

For many of these early religious broadcasters, liberal and conservative, the new technology provided an audience for their doctrinal views and form of worship. Both corporate and personal, radio broadcasts provided listeners with the feeling of participation in the larger movement as well as the impression of being spoken to directly. While promoting a growing animosity between liberal and fundamentalist Protestants, radio broadcasting also allowed fundamentalism a place in modern culture that helped sustain and legitimize the movement. Listener support for conservative programming was what kept fundamentalism in the mass media, despite the fact that major networks and stronger liberal Protestant organizations

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worked to limit fundamentalist broadcasts. Ultimately, radio consolidated fundamentalism among the general population and provided fundamentalist institutions with a cultural voice, something that they were increasingly being denied throughout the 1920s and 1930s.

In 1926, the National Broadcasting Company was established, and commercial sponsors began to dictate programming content. Due to the popularity of religious programming and the importance of morality in broadcasting, NBC executives decided that they should devote part of their schedule to religious programming, particularly to the three main faiths; Catholicism, Judaism, and Protestantism. The network provided blocks of free time for designated programs of each major faith, and chose not to sell time to any other religious broadcasts. The organization chosen to handle the Protestant programming was the Federal Council of Churches, a group made up of primarily liberal, mainline Protestant denominations, whose New York Federation office was nearby the NBC studios. NBC also created an Advisory Council to oversee its programming and to set the parameters for program content. General Secretary of the Federal Council, Charles S. Mcfarland, was invited by NBC executives to sit on the board of the Advisory Council and worked with the network to "determine clearly the attitude of the Protestant Churches to radio activities" and address "the broader and larger problems of national non-sectarian services for the country as a whole." 

Mcfarland eventually became chairman both of the FCC's National Religious Radio

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Committee and of NBC's religious activities in general.\textsuperscript{107} The partnership between the FCC and the NBC allowed a more liberal and antifundamentalist message to become the standard for Protestant broadcasting on the network. NBC's most prestigious religious program, "National Radio Pulpit," became a soapbox for preachers such as Dr. S. Parkes Cadman, the Reverend Ralph Sockman, and Harry Emerson Fosdick to promote what was considered a more tolerant form of Protestantism in contrast to the extremism of fundamentalism.

The establishment of the Federal Radio Commission in the Radio Act of 1927 and the Federal Communications Commission in 1934 intensified the struggle between mainline and fundamentalist Protestants for airtime. The FRC, which had the ability to grant and renew broadcasting licenses and determine frequencies, set the criterion for programming as that which was in the "public interest, convenience, and/or necessity."\textsuperscript{108} While the FRC determined that religious programs served this public interest, they were not specific about the parameters of what constituted "religious" programming. Instead, it was the national broadcasters, and the Federal Council of Churches, who dictated specific guidelines for religious programs. In 1928, NBC's Advisory Council, headed by the Federal Council, wrote up the "'five fundamental principles of religious broadcasting,' to 'assure the radio public of a constructive ministry of religion, unencumbered [by] sectarian considerations and free of all divisiveness.'" The five points stated that NBC would only work with "the central of national agencies of great religious faiths....as distinguished from


individual churches or small group movements," that "the religious message broadcast should be non-sectarian and non-denominational in appeal...should be of the widest appeal—presenting the broad claims of religion....should interpret religion at its highest and best so that as an educational factor it will bring the individual listener to realize his responsibility to the organizational Church" and "should only be broadcast by the recognized outstanding leaders of the several faiths." In addition to these guidelines, the Federal Council announced that it would be examining the content of local services broadcast from stations around the country to ensure they were not promoting sectarian and divisive doctrines. 109 Such restrictions and threats by the Federal Council only served to reinforce fundamentalist notions that they were intentionally being forced off the airwaves.

Early fundamentalist broadcasts became renown both for their great popular success as well as their defiance of the new regulations on religious programming. To massively popular preachers of early radio such as Aimee Semple McPherson or “Fighting Bob” Schuler, these constraints were yet another aspect of the battle between the gospel truth and the heresies of modernism that threatened to take over the hearts and minds of Americans. McPherson, who began broadcasting services from her own station KFSG in 1923, became famous for her combative responses to government regulation. When ordered in 1927 by Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover to restrict her station’s frequency, McPherson responded by telegram:

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PLEASE ORDER YOUR MINIONS OF SATAN TO LEAVE MY
STATION ALONE STOP YOU CANNOT EXPECT THE ALMIGHTY TO
ABIDE BY YOUR WAVE LENGTH NONSENSE STOP WHEN I OFFER
MY PRAYERS TO HIM I MUST FIT INTO HIS WAVE RECEPTION
STOP OPEN THIS STATION AT ONCE.  

Despite such statements, McPherson’s station was able to continue renewing its license, largely due to the monetary support received from her legions of devoted fans. But it was the defiant stance of “extremists” such as McPherson that seemed to justify restrictions on religious broadcasting enacted by the networks and increasingly adopted by the federal government. While McPherson was able to escape such regulation, many local fundamentalist broadcasts were not so lucky. They could not afford to purchase the new technology required to broadcast at the newly regulated frequencies, or to pay the price for religious broadcasting time on the networks. Even the hugely popular programming of evangelist Paul Radar in Chicago fell victim to the cost of network broadcasting in 1930. By 1933, FRC regulations had reduced the number of all radio stations by half and the number of religious stations dropped from sixty-three in 1927 to thirty in 1933.  

It was primarily fundamentalist institutions such as the Bible Institute of Los Angeles and Moody Bible Institute that were better suited to survive the rise of network and government regulation through listener support. In the end, what ultimately caused so many fundamentalist broadcasters to go off air by the 1930s was what did in many radio broadcasters in general—the cost of updated radio technology required for the new frequencies.

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The reality of early radio regulation was that the Federal Council did not have the means to evaluate or restrict the vast number of local religious programs. In addition, newer networks, such as the Columbia Broadcasting System (1927) and the Mutual Broadcasting System (1934), were willing to pick up any program that had funding, and this included several local religious shows. Historian Tona Hangen has persuasively argued that in this conflict over religious broadcasting, the five points delineated by the Federal Council "suggested not a firm hold on the audience but their deep fear of losing it."112 The Federal Council's General Secretary, Samuel Calvert, voiced this fear in 1929, when he claimed that "sectarian" groups such as the Moody Bible Institute and the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod had been "bombarding the national broadcasting companies for time on the air." In his opinion, these conservative broadcasters were dooming all religious programming, stating "there are battles to be fought, but I think we must fight them through some other channel other than the radio or else none of our religious groups will be able to use the air."113 The continued strength of stations such as Moody Bible Institute’s WMBI presented the Federal Council with evidence of fundamentalism's grassroots appeal. While liberal Protestants were able to monopolize religious programming offered by the networks, fundamentalist programming thrived off the donations of listeners around the country. In the end, the alliance between NBC and the Federal Council of Churches ensured free airtime for liberal Protestantism and increased animosity between liberal and fundamentalist

112 Hangen, 26.
Protestants. But it also helped to develop grassroots support for fundamentalist programming.

The most obvious evidence of the popularity of fundamentalist programming was listener response. Stations received thousands of letters and pledges of support from listeners across the country. Some stations encouraged listeners to send in their own stories that testified the “gospel message” of the broadcasting. During a listener “Letter Week” initiated by WMBI in 1929, the Moody Bible Institute reported receiving up to nine hundred letters in one day, prompting the station to extend the campaign to two weeks and a final count of 5,370 messages. Letters were received from thirty-eight states and four Canadian provinces (Ontario, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Alberta), giving testimony to the vast grassroots support for the radio station. Listener letters such as these inferred that the fundamentalist broadcasts had a greater purpose beyond mere entertainment. They were being used to transform communities, according to the broadcasters, “a Wisconsin high school uses W-M-B-I song services for its daily assembly. A pastor is seeking to spiritualize his church members by urging them to listen in. A city judge appreciates ‘the true gospel when so much heresy is abroad.’” In addition, these fundamentalist broadcasts allowed the home bound and remote to participate in the religious community, “I am a light keeper, stationed at the north end of Lake Michigan. We much appreciate those songs and sermons up here, as it is very lonesome. We live twenty-five miles from Manistique, our nearest city….As you sang 'In God’s Sometime,' I seemed to catch anew just what Christ should mean to

\[115\] Ibid.
Letters such as these revealed the close, personal connection that listeners experienced with fundamentalist broadcasters. The simple, folksy sermons and catchy gospel hymns recalled nineteenth century street meetings and mass revivals and drew listeners into a communal experience with not only the broadcaster, but also with a growing number of radio fundamentalists.

Unlike more localized broadcasts that could not keep up with the restrictions on religious programming, Moody Bible Institute was one of the few fundamentalist stations able to maintain its signal and keep up with the more sophisticated technology required through listener support and business connections. Broadcast continuously from Chicago since 1926, WMBI survived the rise of network broadcasting and government regulation that ruined many other fundamentalist broadcasts to become the nation's oldest listener-supported station.\footnote{117} Even in the midst of the struggle to keep its own signal, WMBI provided on-air religious programming almost three times as often during the year of 1928 as the Greater New York Federation of Churches, an organization who was receiving free broadcasting slots from NBC.\footnote{118} Between 1927 and 1929, WMBI was one of several stations required to appear in Washington, D. C. for hearings to decide which stations would keep their licenses and what the strength of their frequency would be. Supported by powerful Chicago businessmen such as Henry Parsons Crowell, and defended by a bevy of attorneys, the station of Moody Bible Institute was well prepared to appear before the Federal Radio Commission. In order to

\footnote{117} Erickson, 133.
defend the nature of WMBI’s programming as educational and in the public interest rather than “sectarian,” the introductory paragraph of Moody's exhibit book to the Federal Radio Commission stated,

WMBI is a Radio Station devoted to a broad interdenominational Christian Service, not to the promotion of any particular sect or denomination. WMBI is the Voice of a great Christian Educational Institution, consecrated to the teaching of the Evangelical truths of the Bible. WMBI programs, being interdenominational in scope and appeal, have utilized the service of speakers, singers, and musicians of more than sixty different Christian denominations. WMBI programs are intended especially to minister to the spiritual needs and aspirations of the Protestant constituency of the Country, and offer their helpful messages to the entire population in a spirit of Christian kindliness. WMBI programs are designed to give spiritual inspiration to all ages and races; to stimulate by spoken word and sacred music the upbuilding of character, respect for law, loyalty to our Flag and devotion to our Country. WMBI renders a purely altruistic service, not accepting paid advertising of any kind, or selling any time whatsoever.119

Emphasis was placed on the interdenominational ministry of WMBI in helping to structure home life and build "Christian citizenship." Before the FRC, president of the Institute, Dr. James Gray connected this building of character to the entire work of the Institute from its inception;

That is the whole argument—the making of better citizens. It is said that men who can get their government in touch with God are the greatest asset of a nation. D.L. Moody was such a man, and the men and women now connected with the Moody Bible Institute are such men and women. They are getting their government in touch with God, and that is what the large student body is being trained to do.120

Gray argued that in contrast to the unstructured, separatist productions of fundamentalists such as Aimee Semple McPherson, the focus of the Institute was and had always been on positive evangelism, devoid of sectarian or denominational difference and devoted to the development of respectful Christian citizens. The

Institute made an effort to prove the academic respectability of fundamentalism by abiding by new regulations while establishing how their programming fit within government and cultural standards.

Within Moody’s defense of its educational and moral mission lay a critique of sectarians within the fundamentalist movement. The conflicts over religious radio revealed not only the growing animosity between liberal and fundamentalist Protestants, but also the disparity between fundamentalists. Moody Bible Institute in particular had worked to establish itself as an academic standard-bearer for fundamentalist ideology, and it was often openly critical of those who only served to reinforce an anti-intellectual, backwoods mentality. In fact, when the Federal Radio Commission began cutting off many of the more radical fundamentalist broadcasts for being merely "propaganda stations" the Institute wholeheartedly supported the decision.  

Rather than viewing the increased government regulation as unfairly targeting fundamentalism, Moody Bible Institute applauded the FRC's decisions, stating "stations that have a definitely religious mission have not been crowded off the air where their ministry has justified their continuance."

While the Institute worked to establish and maintain a place in the new cultural landscape, its own constituency questioned the spiritual threat posed by radio. Fundamentalists wary of becoming too immersed in worldly pursuits challenged Moody’s eager adoption of mass media. Christians from around the country wrote the Institute with concerns similar to that of a North Dakota man, who asked in 1926, "is radio of God or of the Devil?" In an attempt to address these

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121 Getz, p. 288.
concerns, President James Gray, himself a skeptic of radio broadcasting, answered, "we think it is of God but that the Devil, as usual, is trying to pre-empt the use of it." Even after the station had been successfully broadcasting for four years, letters came in stating "the radio, like the motion picture industry and organized worldly amusements, is an instrument of Satan" and that "Christian people have no right to become in the least degree identified with this institution as such." The Institute continued to defend their decision, claiming that while radio could indeed be misused for Satan's cause, it was up to Christians to redeem the waves by "broadcasting the gospel of Christ" to "the sick, the aged, and infirm;...others in isolated districts, at sea, and in hospitals." Standing between a legacy of cultural dominance and the development of an oppositional culture that was “in but not of” the world, the Institute embodied the contradictory relationship of fundamentalism to mainstream culture. Those at Moody remained optimistic about the evangelistic use of the popular medium while simultaneously distinguishing their programming from that of secular entertainers, liberal Protestants, and sectarian fundamentalists.

The programming of WMBI was geared toward developing a community of believers across denominational boundaries and promoting a positive, respectable form of fundamentalism. The broadcasting schedule from 1926 included a variety of programs featuring Biblical exposition, inspirational messages, radio classes, and Sunday School lessons. Programming was geared toward all interests, featuring the “Know Your Bible (K.Y.B.) Club” for children, "Back Yard Talks" and messages

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124 "Radio Department," *Moody Bible Institute Monthly*, 31:161 (November, 1930); in Gangler, p. 3.
to the "Early Birds" presented by John L. Meredith of the Family Altar League. In order to cultivate a personal feel to the broadcasts, hosts were often referred to in familial terms, such as “Aunt Theresa” or “Uncle John.” Moody continued to establish itself as the keeper of the “old-time” religion and the center of academic fundamentalism through educational programming that provided guidance in understanding Biblical truths. This was accomplished through programs such as the “K.Y.B. Club,” which encouraged children to memorize Bible verses, and “The Question Hour”, which answered listeners’ questions regarding various religious subjects. On September 21, 1926, WMBI inaugurated the "Radio Bible School,” allowing listeners from across the country to participate in the experience of a Moody education. Moody Bible Institute was a pioneer in this type of Bible teaching, and it provided them the opportunity to educate those who would not or could not go to an institute of higher learning. For one dollar a course, listeners could enroll in classes via the radio. They were mailed copies of lesson outlines, and examinations were taken by correspondence. At the completion of each course, students were sent certificates of their achievement, and were given credit that could be transferred to a program in Moody’s regular Day or Evening schools.\textsuperscript{125} Courses were taught by Moody instructors, and included "Word Studies in the Epistles," "Personal Evangelism," "Christ in the Tabernacle," and a series of Missionary Courses. When the courses began in 1926, students were enrolled from thirty-eight cities in six states; in 1931, the enrollment had increased to encompass fifty-eight

cities. These radio courses created a greater number of “alumni” with a sense of connection to the school.

The Institute’s radio programming was geared not only to bring fundamental Biblical truths to American evangelicals, but also to new immigrants from varying traditions. Recognizing "the possibilities of ministering to the spiritual good of multitudes of people whose devotions are habitually uttered or heard in other than the 'American Language,'” WMBI provided a variety of worship services in several languages. Already well acquainted with ministering to immigrants, the Institute utilized their own staff as well as religious men from denominations they were already working with to conduct the radio services. The ministry was offered early in the station’s programming, beginning in 1927 with a Scandinavian service led by Rev. Gustav Edwards in Chicago, and adding a German and Yiddish service as well as a Jewish Sabbath service in 1928. By 1931, the station had added a “Holland Service” led by Dr. H. Kuiper, “Gospel Services” in Spanish, Italian, and Greek, a “Lithuanian Service,” and a “Dano-Norwegian Service.” These services brought the Moody style of worship to immigrants while at the same time drawing them into the Moody community of American fundamentalists.

Educational programming was important in the schedule of WMBI to help establish the Institute as the center of academic fundamentalism and a reliable arbiter of Biblical truth. Even more important though was programming that evoked the experience of evangelical religion. From the outset, WMBI strove to

draw those from various denominations and regions in to the evangelical experience and worked to help them identify with the fundamentalist community of Moody through revival enthusiasm. In the fall of 1926, WMBI broadcast a street meeting over the airwaves, hoping to bring listeners in to the revival atmosphere. The station received letters from listeners who were amazed at the quality of the broadcast, stating that it "took them back to the old days when they participated in these street meetings." On June 6 and 7, 1930, WMBI held a "radio rally," welcoming radio listeners to come see their favorite announcers and be a part of the broadcast. An estimated four thousand visitors from eighteen states and Canada came to participate in what the Chicago Herald and Examiner called "'something new in the annals of broadcasting.'" Planned by the Institute, the rally began with a half-hour song service and welcome by Dr. Gray, and proceeded to introduce the crowd to the WMBI "voices" as well as to the academic activities of the Institute. The rest of the time was an intertwining of musical performance with testimonies of the rally-goers. At four o'clock each day, the students conducted a gospel street meeting for the visitors, which was broadcast over WMBI. These broadcasts allowed participants in Chicago and listeners around the country to unite in a celebration of fundamental Biblical truths and a hope for evangelical revival. It also cultivated ties between fundamentalists of different denominations and the Institute as well as the personal connection listeners sensed with WMBI personalities.

Through the various programs, personalities, and rallies of WMBI, the Institute

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129 MBI Monthly, June, 1927, p. 513.  
131 Ibid.
drew on and developed a collective religious memory for listeners that was indelibly linked to the style of Moody Bible Institute.

The revival aesthetic that dominated Moody’s fundamentalism was predicated on gospel music. Pedagogical sermons and classes were important in developing personal faith and Biblical understanding, but it was music that touched listeners’ hearts and drew them into the community of believers. In addition, while the cultural elite often criticized the intellectual depth of fundamentalism, the gospel hymns associated with fundamentalist revival and worship managed to garner approval and even acclaim. It was the music and musicians of the Institute that was the primary focus of WMBI’s programming and ultimately, its cultural legitimacy.

Like radio broadcasting in general, the role of music in WMBI’s gospel broadcasting was significant. From the outset, music provided the bulk of programming for both network and local radio stations, particularly in the evenings. While the style of music varied according to the audience, local talent, and network affiliation, music in general became more important as the number of broadcasting hours increased in larger cities. In 1925, almost three-fourths of network programming was dedicated to music and by 1932, musical programming continued comprised almost two-thirds of the total broadcasting hours.\textsuperscript{132} The majority of musical programming during the 1920s was slotted for concert music. This programming, dedicated to bringing "high" culture to the masses, was considered

\textsuperscript{132} From William Albig, \textit{Modern Public Opinion} (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1956), Table 20, page 447, reprinted in Sterling and Kittross, 73, 120. The statistics from 1925 are based on a week of programming in the month of February from five major network stations; three in New York, one in Chicago, and one in Kansas City. The statistics from 1932 are based on a similar one-week period in February and come from nine network radio stations; four in New York, four in Chicago, and one in Kansas City.
educational and included broadcasts of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Chicago Civic Opera, National Symphony Orchestra, and The New York Philharmonic. By the 1930s, musical variety shows (shows built around singers or orchestras) outnumbered concert music programs, but broadcasts of concert music and music appreciation continued to make up an important percentage of network broadcasting well into the middle of the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{133} For musicians and conductors, performances over the radio became avenues for publicity, and local stations often helped develop talent that crossed over to the major networks. Several musicians got their big break performing on regional shows such as WLS's \textit{Barn Dance} in Chicago, or filling time on small local stations, as Lawrence Welk did in Yankton, South Dakota.\textsuperscript{134} Through radio, local musical talent and regional folk styles were brought into the mainstream of American culture. In this way, radio helped preserve and broaden localized forms that would have either remained isolated or might have died out.

Each of the programs in WMBI's 1926 broadcasting log was designated as featuring a "musical program in connection" or being accompanied by "gospel music, both vocal and instrumental." Out of the approximately eighteen hours broadcast in a week, almost a third were dedicated entirely to musical request programs or specific musical performances, and only one hour program listed no music whatsoever.\textsuperscript{135} Several programs were dedicated to the playing of music, and the music was used to attract a number of different listeners. There were programs highlighting "old-time favorites," programs of classical music and

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{133} Sterling and Kittross, p. 118.
\item \textsuperscript{134} \textit{Ibid}, p. 72.
\item \textsuperscript{135} \textit{Bulletin}, Vol. VI, No. 3 (November, 1926), p. 3.
\end{itemize}
performance, and programs introducing gospel songs to children and young people.

Even programming that was not specifically musical in nature included musical numbers to supplement the spoken word. Hours were devoted to playing the works of several nineteenth-century gospel hymn writers, such as Charles H. Gabriel, Ira D. Sankey, P. Philip Bliss, E.O. Excell, and Charles Alexander.\textsuperscript{136} In addition, many of those involved in early Christian radio in various parts of the United States had connections to Moody Bible Institute, particularly its music department. An average of 20 to 25 radio programs produced by Moody were nationally syndicated every year since the postwar era, and several of its programs introduced future leaders of evangelicalism to the listening public. "Songs in the Night," for instance, first brought Billy Graham to listeners, and the show "Miracles and Melodies" introduced young George Beverly Shea.\textsuperscript{137}

In conjunction with the Institute’s monthly journal, published works, and curriculum, the radio station introduced Moody’s musical form and style to evangelicals across the nation. Radio brought the cadence and melody of a nineteenth century mass revival into the homes of listeners from across the continent. It preserved and expanded the reach of “old-time religion,” the worship form and style popularized by revivalists such as Moody and Sankey and taught by the Moody Bible Institute. The standard of musical expression established through revivalism and preserved by the Institute was rooted in nineteenth-century gospel hymnody, emphasizing a simple gospel message through repetition and an upbeat, rhythmic melody. Gospel hymns had been a staple of Sunday schools, revivals, and

\textsuperscript{136} MBI Monthly, March, 1927, p. 366.
\textsuperscript{137} Erickson, p. 133.
homes for decades and they held a strong grassroots appeal for those living far from
the cities and highbrow culture. Like all music, the aesthetic appeal of gospel
hymns allowed individuals to identify with a religious community not only in a
corporate setting, but also in personal worship. By properly coordinating lively
gospel hymns with an evangelistic message, an open spiritual community could be
created. The musical style determined to be most conducive to developing a
Christian spirit was one that relied on education and restraint. In both a revival and
church service, the aesthetic appeal of the music was important, but the main focus
was on the ability of the songs to reinforce the evangelistic appeal. This could only
be done by properly controlling and focusing the emotive aspects of music. Through
their strict emphasis on musical training and the proper use and performance of
music, Moody Bible Institute worked to make gospel hymnody a legitimate form of
musical style and direct it toward positive spiritual ends. The method that emerged
was predicated on preparation and moderation rather than spontaneity. In the effort
to develop a respectable, culturally relevant fundamentalism, it was this focused
style that was most successful.

The first element in creating the proper musical aesthetic was to employ
people who were trained musicians as well as true Christians. Training insured that
those imparting the musical message not only had knowledge of church music, but
that they also exhibited musical "taste." Musical taste was, according to Moody
faculty member and radio director Wendell Loveless, "evident in selection of music
"whose words fit the occasion" and "whose tempo, musical structure, and general
spirit, tastefully blend with the spoken message.” Those involved in gospel music
had to understand and appreciate the value of the gospel music forms, and could not
given to being "a fadist, or extremist, or ultra musical modernist." This restraint
in adapting new musical forms extended particularly to harmony and rhythm. Many
of the most familiar gospel hymns such as “Wonderful Words of Life” and
“Bringing in the Sheaves” employed syncopation, but they needed to be performed
with moderation. Using “an overdose in syncopation” was not in good taste for
gospel music, and distorted the spiritual focus of the hymns. There was a
distinction between secular jazz and sacred rhythm that needed to be understood by
religious musicians so they could properly perform gospel hymns. The hymns also
had to avoid sounding “hillbilly,” which was deemed “undesirable.”
Like jazz, “hillbilly” or country music was seen as lower class and secular, unfit for a true
spiritual experience. The improvisation of these styles opened the door to
unrestrained human passions rather than directing them toward a higher end.

Counteracting characterizations of fundamentalism as backwoods and gospel
hymnody as simplistic, the Institute classified its musical style as “tasteful” and
sacred. A clear distinction was made between gospel songs and secular forms of
music, and the necessity for training emphasized the complexity of the gospel music
style. The importance of practice and training also separated gospel hymnody in
the Moody style from the music of more emotive fundamentalists. Quick to adapt
secular styles, the worship music of groups such as pentecostals was characterized
as unrestrained and open to negative passions. Although some of the same gospel

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139 Ibid, p. 73.
140 Ibid.
hymns were used in pentecostal worship, it was the improper way in which they were used that led worshippers down the wrong spiritual path. Constant and thorough rehearsal of even the most familiar hymns and gospel songs would help in maintaining the proper harmony, tempo, and spirit for a truly religious experience.

In order to present a more culturally acceptable fundamentalism, it was important for Moody to establish gospel hymnody as a respectable musical form distinct from the separatist elements of fundamentalism. At the same time, it was also necessary to present the simple, positive fundamentalist music as separate from the more staid, stylized forms of elite, liberal Protestantism. While improvised, unrestrained music was often associated with the emotional excesses of pentecostal worship, the highbrow musical performances of mainline Protestant denominations were characterized as emotionally stagnant. Music with a somber tone and doleful message did not make for a spiritual experience. Moody instructors warned musicians "not mistake the funeral type of music for spirituality, nor the dull, drab execution of a hymn for high-level piety."\(^{141}\) The Calvinistic focus of high church hymns on sin and depravity was seen by Moody fundamentalists as missing the mark. Without salvation and grace, the true evangelistic message of the Bible was absent, and the convicting power of hymnody was lost. In establishing its musical style, the Institute negotiated between the excesses of emotionalism and the deficiencies of elitism. Discipline had to be combined with a rhythmic beat and a hopeful message in order to harness the spiritual potential of gospel hymns.

According to Moody instructors, a bright tempo was important in developing the positive message of gospel hymnody. There needed to be a positive, upbeat, yet

\(^{141}\)Ibid.
cultured aspect to gospel hymns, making an effort to maintain taste while simultaneously executing it with “sparkle and brightness.” The hymns had to be performed at the correct tempo, neither dragging nor rushing, but finding the happy medium. This dynamic tempo was to be found in both the song's time signature as well as in the "message the song is intended to convey." Gospel favorites such as “Wonderful Grace of Jesus,” “Faith is the Victory,” and “Praise Him! Praise Him!” were broadcast often and reiterated a positive, evangelistic message. Listeners confirmed this effort:

I particularly enjoy the way in which you teach and sing religion; the talks are kind and helpful not the ranting and scolding variety that one often inadvertently tunes in from some so-called religious stations. You make religion a happy state not a mournful and dreaded one.

The joyful salvation message along with the upbeat gospel tunes that dominated the programming of WMBI provided a folksy but less combative form of fundamentalism.

The music faculty and students of Moody honed their talents and further extended the reach of Moody's musical standard through WMBI. It was important to those at Moody that "the Institute students are trained in the art of singing, but more they are concerned for the heart of it. In consequence a rapture and spiritual elevation attend the services of praise, whether the particular number be a solo, duet, or an anthem by the Institute choir under direction of a member of the Institute Faculty.”

As a part of Moody's Practical Christian Work assignments in the

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community, students were significantly involved in musical work on the streets and over the airwaves. The music faculty organized students into a radio orchestra and choir in addition to the various ensembles of voices and instrumentation that performed over the radio. In many instances, these students and faculty became involved in engagements around the Chicago area and the Midwest. The popular Chicago radio evangelist Paul Radar employed primarily Moody students, faculty, and graduates to choose and perform the music for his broadcasts. This included pianist Merrill Dunlop as well as choir director Talmadge Bittikofer. Reports by the Institute claimed students' musical ministry within one year at 12,000 solos, duets and quartets, 1,500 choirs directed, 7,162 leaders in song, 14,000 instrumental performances and 2,000 radio broadcasts. The Institute heavily promoted the saving potential of the students' musical ministry, reiterating the importance of an education in music. Like a carnival Barker, the Bulletin persuaded its readers of the vast benefits of musical training at the Institute as well as the salvific potential of the melodic message:

Step up to WMBI studios in the tower of the new Administration Building and see these students, trained in the Institute Music department, present the Gospel in music. And think of it—a potential audience of 5 million! No wonder letters flood the radio offices telling of conversions through listening to this message. One listener wrote in effect, ‘When you sang “Speak, My Lord” the Lord spoke to me and I’ve been happy ever since.’ Others explain that they would have turned off the radio had it not been for the Gospel music. As a result they listened long enough to hear a Gospel message and thus were saved.

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146 MBI Monthly, May, 1927, p. 466.
149 Ibid.
Student groups such as these were offered "valuable opportunities" as "talented singers and instrumentalists to participate in the radio ministry" of WMBI. They were also advertised in the Bulletin as "available for week-end engagements with churches within a limited radius of Chicago." Advertisements similar to that of the Announcers Trio were commonplace in the organs of the Institute, heralding the musical talent and popularity of the Institute's protégés and promoting their recordings:

It was not guessed as the three W-M-B-I announcers were one by one secured for their responsible tasks that they would in the course of time make themselves a permanent 'institution.' But such has this group of men become—an institution whose inspiring gospel songs are welcomed over the air in countless homes and, also, that has so appealed to the interest of different neighborhoods that invitations are constantly received to appear before churches for sacred concerts, and to sing at funerals, and even at weddings.

In the realm of musical performance, the Institute’s music and musicians were also receiving wider cultural acclaim. Musicians from the Institute not only performed around the country, but also received airtime from network stations and record deals. One such case was that of the twenty-voice "Moody Singers," who sang weekly from July 7, 1935 to April 19, 1936 over the NBC network. More often, it was musical groups such as the ladies’ quartet, the "W-M-B-I Singers," or the "Gospel Messenger Quartet" composed of young men from Moody, who traveled the area providing "programs of song and testimony.” The Announcer’s Trio was recorded by the Victor record company, providing not only wider recognition for the musical group, but also raising funds for the Institute:

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.... Records of some of the more popular numbers that have gone out over the air have been made by the Announcer’s Trio for the Victor Talking Machine Company. The songs that are available at this time are ‘How Firm a Foundation’ and ‘He Will Never Cast You Out’ (Victor record number, 21624), and ‘Precious Hiding Place’ and ‘Wonderful Story of Love’ (Victor record, number 21628). These are double-face records and may be ordered from the Bible Institute Colportage Association, 843 N. Wells Street, Chicago, or they may be had at any Victor distributing agency.\(^\text{154}\)

Ultimately, it was the musical performances broadcast by fundamentalist institutions such as Moody Bible Institute that garnered the respect of the media and record companies. Whereas the doctrinal message of fundamentalism was often dismissed, the musical style and training of gospel musicians was legitimated in American culture at large. The clear and precise transmission and performances of WMBI was in keeping with the high standards of the Institute and highbrow culture. Even the Chicago Tribune praised the musical quality of WMBI at its inauguration; "The tone of this new station is remarkably pure. Piano, instrumental, vocal, and voice tones seem to be transmitted with the last degree of technical perfection. The musical program was high class in every sense of the word."\(^\text{155}\)

Yet this recognition of musical quality and ability, while important to the cultural status of gospel hymnody and fundamentalism, had to be tempered by Christian humility. The music along with the talent used to perform it "should not become an end in itself." Like the promise and danger of radio, "musical talents, when yielded to the Lord, may be tremendously used of Him. But music, even in Christian service,

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when used for personally selfish ends, may be a dangerous snare and stumbling-block."

While Moody musical performances received elite acclaim, the vast number of listeners identified with the familiar simplicity of the gospel hymns. The music was a crucial component in developing a personal connection with listeners thousands of miles away. Many listeners wrote in to the station to praise the song selection, which was often compared to the music played on secular stations. The staff of WMBI utilized these letters to emphasize the spiritual work of the gospel hymns even across the airwaves. In regular reports from the Institute Bulletin and Moody Monthly, the Radio Department recounts letters “telling of souls saved, burdens lifted and strength renewed” through their programming, particularly the musical renderings. Typical of the letters printed was this from Saskatchewan, Canada “'My husband and I, rather isolated, find pleasure in a radio. As age overtakes us, and we sit at our radio and tune in, the stations jump out in rapid succession—jazz, waltz, 'whoopee,' and jazz again. And it is a joy to us that out of the melee comes a song of reverence, the story of Christ, and music of strength and power. It helps the loneliness, strengthens faith, and cements the companionship of our years.'”

Another letter recounts the saving potential of the radio music, and it reads like an account of a revival passerby:

A woman wrote us that for a long time she had been worried until she had reached the point of ending her life. She was without faith or hope. On a certain day when every thing seemed darkest and she was planning death, her boy turned on the radio in an adjoining room, and cried, ‘Mama, come and hear this man talk!’ She paid no attention at first, but as the boy

156 Loveless, p. 73.
157 From ‘“Songs in the Night’” The Moody Bible Institute of Chicago, Radio Department (n.d.). Moody Bible Institute Archives, Box 96.
continued urging, she went in to the other room and heard the words of the hymn, ‘Standing on the Promises of God My Saviour.’ She writes: ‘It changed my whole outlook in a moment, and I am rejoicing in a new-found faith. I shall ever be deeply grateful to God and to W-M-B-I for that program.’

These listeners were drawn together and strengthened in their faith through the Biblical message and gospel songs properly presented in the revival style. It made no difference whether they were physically present at a service or listening at home, listeners had the sense they were a participating in a community of like-minded believers.

Radio provided fundamentalism a place in the new mass media as well as a continued presence in American culture. Although networks and the federal government circumscribed broadcasts and newer technologies increased operation costs, fundamentalist programming maintained its place on the dial. It was stations such as Moody Bible Institute’s WMBI that discovered and cultivated grassroots support for their message. Emphasizing the fundamental Biblical truths of Christ’s loving sacrifice and humanity’s salvation, the message of Moody was that personal faith properly directed could help bring about evangelical revival. In contrast to the sporadic, emotive worship of the pentecostal movement, the worship of Moody’s fundamentalism drew upon the planned revivalism of its founder. Proper Biblical training included learning how to craft a church service or revival meeting to get across a singular message. Speaking ability, organizational skills, and musical knowledge were all necessary components in directing an audience toward a communal spiritual experience. Through the radio ministry of WMBI, the Institute presented a more respectable, positive face for fundamentalism. They

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mediated between the anti-intellectual and highbrow extremes, offering an intellectual yet folksy Biblicism, appreciated by fundamentalists of several denominations as well as the cultural elite. Within this presentation of a nonsectarian fundamentalism, it was the music that had the greatest impact. The gospel hymn style advanced by Moody Bible Institute was the component of their ministry that first received wider acclaim in the media. It was the gospel hymn style that also resonated with listeners of several denominations, recalling the spiritual communion of old-time revivalism. Ultimately, it was the gospel hymn style that brought the positive revivalistic Biblicism of Moody Bible Institute into denominations most skeptical of American evangelicalism and fundamentalism.
CHAPTER FOUR:
O FOR A THOUSAND TONGUES TO SING

Gospel hymnody has been a plough digging up the hardened surfaces of pavemented minds. Its very obviousness has been its strength. Where delicacy or dignity can make no impress, gospel hymnody stands up triumphing. In an age when religion must win mass approval in order to survive, in an age when religion must at least win a majority vote from the electorate, gospel hymnody is inevitable.\textsuperscript{159}

The simplicity and catchiness of gospel hymns made them widely popular and adaptable to a variety of uses, but the association of the gospel hymn form with evangelical revivalism made its introduction into denominational worship a point of both cultural and theological dispute during the twentieth century. Standards of cultural taste and refinement that influenced established American denominations during the nineteenth century led to criticism of gospel hymnody on aesthetic grounds. The rhetoric employed in such critiques and the resulting worship forms reveal the fracturing of evangelicalism along the lines of social reform and conversionary revivalism. In addition, these divisions reflect the changing social and cultural position of evangelical denominations from the nineteenth into the twentieth century.

While most mainline denominations had embraced the goals of late nineteenth century evangelical revivalism and gospel hymnody, not all were inheritors of its tradition. Typically orthodox Calvinist churches such as the

Reformed Church of America and the Presbyterian Church had historically emphasized “divine sovereignty over human ability” and “were leery of any ‘means’ that smacked of human contrivance to bring [revivals] about.” These churches placed great importance on formal worship and confessional church order, and for much of their history sang metrical psalms in unison—since these were the only songs provided by God in the Bible. American Baptist and Methodist churches were more Arminian in doctrine and populist in worship. They emphasized individual conversion and regeneration and “were open to the use of ‘new measures’ in revivalism.” As a result, these churches had a longer tradition of hymn singing and adaptation to popular forms of music. The Methodist Episcopal Church in particular boasted a long tradition of pietistic revivalism and popular hymnody. From its American inception, the church possessed a hymnal compiled by John Wesley, but conference and revival songs took the more formal hymnody of Wesley “in new and uncontrolled directions.” Popular tunes accompanied “an explosion of exuberant folk singing” at eighteenth-century Methodist camp meetings that “agitated” the people and brought “the power of God…down.” In order to “open a channel for the expression of feeling,” camp songs adapted familiar hymn lyrics, set them to popular folk tunes, and added choruses. According to historian Nathan Hatch, these spontaneous, popular songs “spread of their own momentum, without blessing or censure from Methodist authorities,” removing “elitist

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162 Quoted in Hatch, p. 151.
163 Quoted in Tyson, p. 27
constraints on music by accepting spontaneous song, exuberant shouting, and unrestrained music enthusiasm as natural to a vibrant spiritual community.”\textsuperscript{164}

By the nineteenth century, the Methodist church was moving toward reestablishing “respectability” in the denomination through the development of central agencies and “higher intellectual standards.” Appealing to the growing constituency of the church, leaders such as Nathan Bangs strove to temper the emotional excesses of Methodist revivalism and refine the popular “ditties” that “possessed little of the spirit and poetry and therefore added nothing to true intellectual taste.”\textsuperscript{165} The shift of the Methodist church toward social and cultural respectability and refinement was associated with its increased spirituality. As historian Richard Bushman points out, by the mid nineteenth century, mainline theologians such as Horace Bushnell blended notions of gentility and piety, of “worldly and divine beauty,” making “refined taste” one of the Christian virtues that came with salvation.\textsuperscript{166} Such a view sometimes led to the assumption that churches critical of the trappings of refinement were actually less Christian. The understanding was that if “refinement [grew] out of Christianity” then “a lack of refinement stunted Christian love.”\textsuperscript{167} For Bangs and his ilk, refinement was a Christian virtue that accompanied salvation and Methodist worship needed to express such beauty and virtue;

Religion is always represented as clothed in mildness and in benignity, how then can she assume the dress, which she certainly wears in the Methodist Church, where your ears are stunned by the cries, the jumping of those poor

\textsuperscript{164} Hatch, p. 151.
\textsuperscript{167} Bushman, p. 326.
credulous creatures around you. If the modes of worship are unpleasant even to the limited good sense of man how much more disgusting must they appear in the eye of all wise Deity.\textsuperscript{168}

At the same time, many Methodists viewed the refinement of popular religion as contrary to its piety. For circuit preachers such as Peter Cartwright, gaining taste and respectability meant the loss of the pure faith. As he lamented in his \textit{Autobiography} of 1856;

\begin{quote}
\ldots O, how have things changed for the worse in this educational age of the world! I do declare there was little or no necessity for preachers to say anything against fashionable and superfluous dressing in those primitive times of early Methodism; the very wicked themselves knew it was wrong, and spoke out against it in the members of the Church. The moment we saw members begin to trim in dress after the fashionable world, we all knew they would not hold out.\textsuperscript{169}
\end{quote}

With a legacy of both formalism and simplicity, the Methodist Episcopal Church exemplified the tension in many mainline churches that erupted over “increased respectability and centralization,” revealing “fault lines of class, education, and social status.”\textsuperscript{170} Nowhere were these lines more evident than in battles over the propriety of popular revival forms such as gospel hymnody in worship.

By the late nineteenth century, the businessmen’s revival of 1857-1858 and the carefully organized revivals of D. L. Moody established revivalism as a legitimate and even respectable aspect of American evangelicalism.\textsuperscript{171} Encouraging emotive spiritual awakenings especially among the middle class, revivals of the mid-nineteenth century were taken as a sign of the advance of Protestant Christian

\textsuperscript{168} Quoted in Bushman, p. 325.
\textsuperscript{169} Peter Cartwright, \textit{Autobiography of Peter Cartwright}; quoted in Bushman, p. 319.
\textsuperscript{170} Hatch, p. 205.
civilization in America. The evangelical revival spirit was accompanied by an interest in social reform, wherein the morals and values of the nation would be established on the pure gospel message. As an increasingly respectable denomination, the Methodist church shared with other mainline churches an American evangelical theology and openness to interdenominational evangelistic revivalism. In addition, involvement in a growing number of evangelical organizations such as the YMCA, Christian Endeavor, the Women’s Christian Temperance Union, and the American Sunday School Union was required of mainline northern evangelicals who were dedicated to civilizing the nation through spiritual and moral uplift. As a part of those dictating evangelical culture and its civilizing goals, these denominations utilized these organizations for the dissemination of both the gospel message as well as the proper behavior that would follow its acceptance. For all these gatherings, the common liturgical bond was forged by popular gospel hymns, which were readily available in a variety of new songbooks compiled especially for or by each organization. By the late nineteenth century, the mass popularity of gospel hymnody led to its encroachment into denominational worship services through songbooks such as Ira Sankey’s ubiquitous *Gospel Hymns and Sacred Songs*, as well as a variety of lesser-known compilations such as “Devotional Melodies,” “Zion’s Songsters,” “Winnowed Hymns,” “Hallowed Songs.”  

The use of these independent hymnals disrupted uniformity in denominational worship, leading to complaints “that a person going to a Methodist Episcopal Church is no longer certain what book to take with him,

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because he cannot be sure what he will find in use.”173 Without an established means of regulation, denominational leaders in the Methodist Church found themselves attempting to curb the flow of Sunday school and revival hymns after the songbooks had already found their way into public worship services. One way to accomplish this was by revising denominational hymnals to incorporate the specific “spirit,” “doctrine” and “usages” of the church alongside “all that is excellent and attractive in the compilations of Moody and Sankey and their tuneful brethren.”174 A typical example of this was the effort to revise the Methodist Episcopal hymnal in 1876, where the desire for maintaining a more formal Methodist hymnody confronted the need to contain but not restrain the equalizing force of evangelical revivalism and its gospel songs, which were similarly rooted in Methodist tradition.

The general respectability of evangelical revivalism combined with its connectedness to the Church’s populist history led Methodist leaders to step lightly in criticizing the artistic merit of its accompaniment. At the same time, denominational leaders used the hymnal as a means of circumscribing the influx of gospel hymns. When the Church worked on revising its hymnal, the committee continued to champion the ability of evangelical hymns to unite Protestants of all kinds. It was recognized that “the standard Hymn Book, next to the Bible, furnishes the greater part of the people with their religious and devotional reading,” and thus the edification of the “common people” was an important consideration in

compiling a new hymnal. The hymnal was to be educational, “to meet the intellectual and moral necessities of all classes, from the elite of metropolitan society, to the emancipates of the rice swamps and cotton plantations.” This was accomplished by assembling what was termed an “ecumenical and representative” committee composed of “two or three” locally and nationally known poets and composers, along with “college presidents, professors, presiding elders, pastors, and one lawyer” who were viewed as “representatives of distinct classes of culture, position, and experiences.” These academic professionals were to be the arbiters of “good” music, music that would prove intellectually and morally beneficial for all classes and cultures of Methodism. While the new Methodist hymnal of 1879 included the most hymns from Charles Wesley, it included fewer of Wesley’s hymns than the previous hymnal along with several selections from well-known American evangelical hymnwriters and educators William Bradbury and William Howard Doane. Not only were the revisions touted as “the homogeneous outcome of heterogeneous classes in society and of heterogeneous divisions in the church,” but the great denominational and generational variety of the hymnwriters also provided evidence of “the broadly catholic and really Christian character of the book.” Within a decade, this “broadly catholic” spirit toward gospel hymns in worship was waning and the effort to segregate the “stately” hymns appropriate for worship from the “intensity” of revival hymns grew.

175 Buckley, p. 311.  
The Protestant impulse toward cultural sophistication during the early and mid nineteenth century led to what historian Lawrence Levine termed a “sacralization of culture” that by the end of the century became intertwined with evangelical liberalism. Equating aesthetic taste with the realization of divine creational intent, the theology of refinement fed into the notion of sacred art as “an art that remains spiritually pure and never becomes secondary to the performer or to the audience; an art that is uncompromising in its devotion to cultural perfection.”¹⁸⁰ This belief in “spiritually pure” cultural forms led to greater distinction between high and low art along with the effort “to depreciate popular musical genres,” including the revivalistic gospel hymn. As composer Charles Ives noted at the completion of his Second Symphony (1901-1902), which incorporated popular American styles;

Some of the themes in this symphony suggest Gospel Hymns and Steve Foster…some nice people, whenever they hear the words “Gospel Hymns” or “Stephen Foster,” say “Mercy Me!”, and a little high-brow smile creeps over their brow—“Can’t you get something better than that in a symphony?”… “Imagine…in a symphony, hearing suggestions of street tunes like ‘Marching through Georgia’ or a Moody and Sankey hymn!”¹⁸¹ This effort to attain the divine aesthetic in culture merged with religious liberalism through the identification of “the progress of civilization” with the “progress of the Kingdom of God” and “the immanence of God in nature and human nature.”¹⁸² The idealism of this “New Theology” provided the basis for finding God revealed “in

¹⁸⁰ Lawrence W. Levine, Highbrow Lowbrow; The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), p. 120.
¹⁸¹ Quoted in Levine, p. 141.
many places besides the Holy Writ,” such as natural science and emotive culture.\textsuperscript{183} In addition, this same ideological framework established “a strong dualism between the material world, known through science and logic, and the spiritual world, known by intuition and sensitivity.”\textsuperscript{184} Such theology opened liberal evangelicals to the idea of sacred art and the vaunting of cultural forms believed to reach a higher spiritual realm. The desire to prove what was sacred led liberals to critique cultural forms based on their social respectability while couching their arguments in the language of unchanging, eternal standards.\textsuperscript{185} More conservative evangelicals similarly reinforced notions of social and cultural respectability, but they continued to do so through revivalistic means. As the New Theology drew liberals toward equating the “best” culture with God’s revelation and the elevation of society with the progression of His kingdom, conservatives focused on addressing temporal social concerns with evangelism. Cultural forms became merely a means to a conversionary end rather than an expression of the divine in and of themselves, and socially conservative revivalists such as D. L. Moody were willing to adopt any form that could be used as a vehicle for conveying the gospel message. For Moody and evangelical conservatives who followed, the musical form established as the most effective to this evangelistic end was the American vernacular music of gospel hymnody.

By the end of the nineteenth century, a clear division was evident within the Methodist Episcopal Church regarding the merit of gospel hymns in worship. While all voices agreed that there needed to be a change in worship music, the

\textsuperscript{183} Hutchinson, p. 9.
\textsuperscript{184} Marsden, p. 26.
\textsuperscript{185} Levine, p. 228-229.
debate centered on either the regenerative or aesthetic value of the hymns chosen. This divergence tended to fall along the lines of conservative and liberal evangelicalism, with those advocating the appropriation of gospel hymnody doing so on the basis of its potential for individual conviction and those opposing its use doing so on the basis of its poor cultural quality and lack of corporate uplift. The argument for bringing gospel hymnody more fully into the worship service centered on its evangelistic spirit;

What Bliss and Sankey and Doane and O’Kane have done has not only made the conquest of the hearts of our people, but has gone out to conquer all lands; and that in the American Gospel hymn are deep spiritual possibilities no one need question who remembers with what power the simple words of “I need Thee every hour” speak…186

With the power of gospel hymns to reach “the hearts of our people,” traditional denominational hymns needed to adopt the more “singable” tunes of the popular hymns in order to measure up;

Until we can set more of our Hymnal to choruses and take away much of its stateliness and cathedral solemnity, we need not complain of those who turn to music that pleases the ear and reaches the heart.187

Rather than reserving the evangelistic revival style for gatherings of interdenominational organizations, the individualistic element in the church wanted “the hymns that are sung at the church services” to also be “used in the Sunday school, Epworth League, and revival meetings.”188 For those intent on social salvation of American society through cultural uplift, the increased utilization of gospel hymnody in public worship only served to denigrate the Protestant message.

188 W. R. Goodwin, p. 634.
The use of popular sentimental music played to the lowest element of mass culture rather than bringing the masses up to the highest level of traditional sacred music and spirituality;

Of this exalted poetry and music little is known by the average congregation, these being set aside for miserable jingle and doggerel. Thus we have a generation of Methodists as unfamiliar with our standard hymnology as Samson with the snare of Delilah, and robust, spiritual godliness suffers accordingly!  

If the “stately” hymns of the church were combined with the “intensity” of revival hymns, it would “put the hymnal on the level of chorus books,” which “was something we do not want.” The *Epworth Hymnal*, published in 1885, was just such an “attempt at compiling a hymnal and choruses” that was harshly criticized by more socially-minded evangelicals. Its increased number of “jingling, senseless” choruses and elimination of some of the “grand old hymns” only served to “degrade” the stateliness of worship.  

For those fighting to raise the aesthetic standards of worship, Sunday schools, where children were trained for worship and where gospel songbooks reigned, illustrated the degenerative effect of pedestrian music in a sacred setting. The rowdy behavior of children in the Sunday schools and their lack of reverence during worship was attributed to the spirit of “the fashionable lighter songs that have replaced those formerly in use.” For those who argued against the use of gospel hymnody on the basis of social and cultural uplift, the learned behavior of

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worship needed to be properly conveyed in the Sunday school through the use of traditional hymnody. Contrary to those who believed the hymnals needed to provide music with greater popular appeal, those supporting the highest level of sacred music in worship believed that the ear could (and should) be trained to appreciate such taste;

Our hymn book has hundreds of most ‘singable tunes,’” and we ought to teach them to children and thus create a taste for good, stately Church music. Get the children’s ears and hearts filled with good music, and there will be no room for the ditties they now learn to sing in the Sunday school. Let them learn to sing out of our hymnal, and then they can help with glad voices to increase the volume of song in the Church service. 193

By teaching children and young people “to sing the best Church hymns” in Sunday school, “our congregations will sing, whether led by a chorus choir, a precentor, or a quartette.” 194

At the turn of the twentieth century, the Methodist Episcopal Church was struggling to keep the populist revival style and respectable worship style separate, publishing a hymnbook unifying the northern and southern branches on the basis of the best of formal Methodist hymnody. The debate between cultivating a higher musical aesthetic in worship and embracing more popular musical styles continued through the beginning of the twentieth century and was reflected in the new Methodist hymnal of 1905.  A publication for use by the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, The Methodist Hymnal of 1905 was one of the first cooperative projects between the two denominations since their split in 1844 over the issue of slavery. The effort of the joint commission was to improve the literary quality of the hymnal, giving due prominence to hymns of the

193 C.R. Rice, p. 971-972.
194 Jesse Lyman Hurlbut, Methodist Review (January, 1899), p. 113-114.
Wesleys while also including “the choicest work of the other hymn writers of the eighteenth century, namely, Doddridge, Watts, Cowper, Newton [and] Montgomery” as well as other “ancient and modern treasuries of religious poetry.”

By including only “the choicest work,” the commission hoped to improve the quality of worship music;

…that it [the hymnal] may everywhere supplant those unauthorized publications which often teach what organized Methodism does not hold, and which, by excluding the nobler music of the earlier and later days, prevent the growth of a true musical taste.

While striving to maintain the best of the Methodist hymnody, the committee also hoped the new hymnal would encourage appreciation of “better” music throughout Methodism and “stimulate and direct the devotional feeling of millions of Christian men and women for the next generation.”

In the wake of the joint hymnal’s publication, the committee members took great pains to explain the literary and musical level of the hymns chosen, and urge pastors to practice reading the hymns to the congregation in order to improve their knowledge of the words. While the committee debated including an optional supplement of gospel songs in the hymnal, they agreed to choose only a few of the best and most popular songs and include them within the worship hymnal such as; “He Leadeth Me,” “What a Friend We Have in Jesus,” “Close to Thee,” “True-hearted, Whole-hearted,” and “Every Day and Hour.” The hymnal included approximately twenty-five to thirty gospel hymns, with the greatest number by

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195 The Methodist Hymnal (New York, Cincinnati: The Methodist Book Concern; Eaton & Mains; Jennings & Graham; Smith & Lamar; September, 1905; reprint October, November, December, 1905; April, 1906; October, 1908; June, 1914; March, 1917), p. vi.


Fanny Crosby, and one or two others by various authors such as Ira Sankey and George Stebbins. Evidently, the compromise regarding gospel songs “cost the Commission a great deal of vexation of spirit” and was “liable not entirely to suit anybody.” This assessment by one of the musical editors of the hymnal, Professor Karl Harrington of Wesleyan University, was based on the idea that “those that want freshness and novelty” would be unhappy with “the old ‘stagers’ that have been used” and “those who think their [the gospel hymns’] place is somewhere else than in the standard church Hymnal their presence may prove a thorn in the flesh for many years.” Indeed, complaints about the incursion of gospel hymns into worship continued throughout the early twentieth century and the hymnal committees were considered at least partially to blame. Along with the “mercenary spirit of publishing houses,” the musical leaders and hymn committees of the denomination were attacked for “furnish[ing] the revival music of our day, which is first sung by enthused masses and then finds its way into the homes, churches, and, finally, the hymnals.” By allowing the revivalistic musical style with its accompanying “choir, quartet, or organ” into church worship, “the musical taste is corrupted” and “the very desire…for singing in the church is destroyed.”

Ministers were similarly chastised for failing to utilize the “best and most worthy” hymns found in the Hymnal, instead resorting to “songs whose words are trifling or vapidly repetitious, and whose music suggests immediately the dance hall or the

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200 Ibid.
Negro minstrel show.”\footnote{Prof. Karl P. Harrington, “An Octet on Voice and Verse; The Need of a Musical Revival in the Church,” \textit{Methodist Review} (May, 1925), p. 378.} Such assessments reveal the growing class and race-based arguments of evangelicals in an attempt to regain cultural respectability. As historically populist American denominations of the nineteenth century such as the Methodist Church became more established, the move toward garnering middle-class respectability and the highest aesthetic experience led some in the church to express concern with the aesthetic depth of popular gospel music through the twentieth century. In the Southern Baptist Convention, William Denham, a student of the Southern Theological Seminary in 1916, concluded his thesis on “The Gospel Song Movement” with a dire evaluation of the genuine spirituality and cultural respectability of gospel hymns;

> We are passing through a critical time in our religious history, when there is an increasing tendency to ignore the deeper needs of our religious selves, and to cater to the superficial and emotional. Wise and systematic control of the singing of our people would go far toward remedying this condition, and it is with the prayer that such control may result that I bring to a close this discussion of “The Gospel Song Movement.”\footnote{William Ernest Denham, “The Gospel Song Movement” (Th.D diss, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1916), 71-72; quoted in \textit{Close Harmony: A History of Southern Gospel} by James R. Goff Jr. (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press: 2002), p. 39-40.}

Denham’s assessment was reinforced by Wake Forest College professor, Dr. H. M. Poteat, who criticized the repetitive choruses in gospel hymns such as “Love Lifted Me,” “Brighten the Corner,” and “There is Power in the Blood” for providing “pep” which was merely “a poor, specious counterfeit of that deep religious enthusiasm aroused by the hearty singing of a real hymn.”\footnote{Arthur L. Stevenson, \textit{The Story of Southern Hymnology} (Salem, Va.: Arthur L. Stevenson, 1931), p. 89-90; quoted in Goff, p. 40-41.} By the late 1930s, even the populist Pentecostal churches were also critiquing the spiritual effectiveness and
aesthetic quality of gospel music in worship, as evidenced by the musings of an Assemblies of God minister in New York:

    We have noticed in many Pentecostal meetings that sacred songs are now put to ragtime music, and that people work themselves into a frenzy playing and singing in the effort to please their listeners….Singing and playing Gospel songs and music is a part of the worship of a holy God, just as much as is preaching or praying. We should therefore enter into His Courts, whether it is to sing or play, with holy reference and with Godly fear….Jazzy music and singing is merely a substitute, and instead of appealing to deep spirituality, it caters to the natural man, and bespeaks two things. First, that the person who thus entertains has largely lost the deep touch of God they once possessed. Second, that their audience, who applauds, have [sic] drifted in the same direction.204

By the 1920s, the simplistic, grassroots revival style evinced in the gospel hymns became a cultural liability rather than a mark of cultural prominence. Denounced as “hymnological trash,” gospel hymns were variously blamed for the decline of musical taste, congregational singing, and behavioral mores during worship, and these criticisms were increasingly couched in the language of “civilized” society.

    The adaptation of secular vernacular music for religious use in the form of gospel hymns became a focal point for cultural criticism and evidence of the boundary set between sacred and secular, civilized and uncivilized. While gospel hymns since the mid-nineteenth century had utilized popular musical styles in the service of religious lyrics, earlier assessments viewed such songs as “redeeming” such music from its baser purposes and employing it for the purpose of evangelizing the masses. By the 1920s, there were increasing attacks on the appropriation of such styles based on the idea that the use of popular music brought a secular and uncivilized spirit into worship, a spirit that was particularly detrimental to children and young people. The undisciplined nature of Sunday schools was evidence of the

gospel hymn influence on the worshipfulness of children, and continued use of such hymns in services only encouraged “a lack of reverence on the part of Protestant children for the church.”205 It was “the staid old hymnal” that “serv[ed] as an anchor which prevents drifting” since the composers of such traditional hymnody expressed “their religious emotions in music.” But when, during evening services in particular, “the Gospel Song Book comes into play” with “such songs as ‘And he walks with me, and he talks with me, and he tells me I am his own’….the young people are hardly thinking of crosses and crowns as they sing such songs.”206 Without strong leadership to direct the congregation in understanding the more difficult music of the hymnal, many churches resorted to “a few familiar and worn-out favorites” and “the so-called Gospel Song Book, with its doggerel verse and jazz music.”207 The fear of such music and the “spirit” it bred led to the call for more musical control to give worship “more dignity, impressiveness, and awesomeness than it now has.”208 In the pursuit of sacred music in worship, the ideology of cultural hierarchy was evident in the language of evangelicals. The assertion that gospel hymns recalled “minstrel shows,” “jazz music,” or “ragtime” and encouraged wild behavior in young people intimated the “lowbrow” nature of the music. Taken “from phrenological terms ‘highbrowed’ and ‘lowbrowed,’” such ethnic references assumed the more “highly intellectual” and “aesthetically refined” nature of the “highbrowed” western and northern Europeans as opposed to the “uncultivated.”

“unenlightened,” and animalistic nature of the “lowbrowed” southern and eastern Europeans and “alien” races. Based on such science, many advocates of a higher aesthetic in church music asserted that the best forms could only derive from the traditional hymnody of the Europeans.

In order to achieve a high aesthetic level in worship music, leaders of the Methodist General Conference advocated the singing of “traditional” hymns and sacred music in Sunday schools, the use of “properly trained leaders, artistically competent and spiritually-minded” to organize and lead choirs and improved congregational singing, and required musical training for those entering the ministry. All of this was to be overseen by the establishment of a Methodist Commission on Music in 1925, which also provided lists of denominationally approved music to be used for “church, school, and community singing.” The ultimate goal of this musical ministry was for the Methodist Church to “set an inspiring example before all Christendom” by “mak[ing] an almost limitless contribution to civic and national culture.” One way to do this was to incorporate modern musical styles that would uplift all elements of society, and this was suggested by a number of leaders in the church.

Striving to provide a high Christian standard for American society at large, some in the Methodist church championed folk music of the masses, immigrant songs, labor songs, rural songs, and “songs of discontent” as the more substantial expression of popular emotion. These advocates drew upon aspects of musical romanticism that emphasized the “primitivism” of works expressing “the elemental

209 Levine, p. 221-222.
211 Ibid, p. 381.
emotion of life, the fundamental tasks” over the imitated sentimentalism of mass-produced gospel hymns.212 In this sense, the song of the laborer, the farmer, and the immigrant was “vibrant with action, burning with the passion for complete justice, tender with sympathy, violent with indignation and resentment.”213 Only the simplicity of rural church life was seen as a valid forum for gospel hymns such as “Bringing in the Sheaves” and “There Shall be Showers of Blessing,” which “must be more universally sung among the country people” in order to enhance the “spiritual element” within them.214 In this context, the vernacular hymns reflected the experience of the country folk and were incorporated into the progressive development of a higher aesthetic among a group without cultural discernment. Similarly, the analysis of urban laborers was that they had no appropriate music to connect with their experience and religious fervor, “relying upon ragtime even for the expression of their religious emotions” and “copying…the cheap trash that fills our so-called religious song books.”215 Despite the poor musical parodies produced by the workers’ movement, the lyrics were judged superior “over their compeers that are called religious, for they deal not with the glorified selfishness of extreme religious individualism, but with the majestic passion for brotherhood.”216 It was important for the church to make an effort to harness this passion and improve the status of the worker;

It is for us to open the doors of privilege to the downmost group. Here lies the challenge—to create a discontent at the top and in the middle of society, a discontent with the restricted life of our brother, a discontent that shall be powerful because it is intelligent, that shall be creative and not destructive, that shall join hands with the discontent of the men at the bottom to establish social and economic justice as the basis for the richer development of life, to make way for the conservative program of the Christian social order by securing to labor the title to all it produces.\textsuperscript{217}

Such assessments, which placed greater emphasis on the musical potential for social reform over individual conversion, revealed the prominence of liberal evangelicalism within the Methodist Episcopal Church. In musical critiques, the “dual role” of liberalism was clearly evident—the effort to expand the reach of Protestant Christianity, but doing so only through the best American Protestant civilization had to offer.\textsuperscript{218}

While certain agrarian gospel hymns were acceptable for uniting the Christian spirit of less-educated farm folk, the general sentiment of gospel hymnody that focused on individual conversion was viewed as less intellectual or spiritually genuine than “the majestic passion for brotherhood” evinced in labor songs. Only by channeling this communal feeling through the best sacred music could the church secure “social and economic justice” and establish “the conservative program of the Christian social order.” This move toward adopting the highest cultural forms in the expression of worship was furthered in the 1930s, as the Methodist Episcopal Church moved toward a higher aesthetic in its services. Churches built in the gothic tradition, “ecclesiastical chancels,” “vested choirs and clergy,” and the “minister as


\textsuperscript{218} The “dual role” of the liberal “as spiritual expansionist and social critic” as well as a more thorough explanation of liberals’ “receptivity to the so-called secular culture” including “insights from the arts and sciences” can be found in William R. Hutchison’s \textit{The Modernist Impulse in American Protestantism} (Durham: Duke University Press, 1992), especially p. 145-159.
artist” were all expressions of the denominational move toward ritualistic and aesthetic worship. Distancing the church from the tactics and techniques associated with revivalism and fundamentalism, more liberal Methodists were sure “that an evangelism with stately choral and liturgical worship can be assured a more responsive appeal to-day than can the old hip-hurrah and often vulgar methods of the past.” The youth in particular would be better served by replacing “desultory ‘Sunday School Opening Exercises’” and “old jazzy song books” with “Church School Worship Services” and “more musically cultural hymnals.” The conservative evangelicals in the denomination asserted the historic place of non-liturgical evangelistic worship in the Methodist Church and charged the liberals with “revert[ing] to the tools of a religion deeply antithetical to their own” in search of “a spirit of devotion.” They asserted that the church of Wesley was established “to preach the gospel in its simplicity and power to the throngs who never entered the churches,” and moving the church toward ritualism and high church formality would “leave the common people to the Salvation Army and the independent groups” rather than bringing them into a congregation of believers. The growing disparity within the denomination regarding liturgy, aesthetics, and the proper social or individual evangelistic emphasis in worship reflected the differentiation between more liberal and more conservative or fundamentalist evangelicals. Impulses that had been combined in nineteenth century evangelicalism were being separated and

220 Prof. Fred Winslow Adams, p. 192.
222 Rev. Richard N. Merrill, p. 201.
distinguished, and worship music and liturgy became emblematic of those
distinctions.

For mainline denominations, particularly those with a non-liturgical
tradition, exerting control over worship style proved difficult, since many of them
had remained open to all aspects of evangelical revivalism during the nineteenth
century. In general, denominational authorities in these churches continued
publishing hymnals and books of liturgy or order in the same mode they had
previously, including token additions of the new popular styles but allowing
congregations to adapt or supplement their worship with whatever outside
publications they saw fit. As a result, many denominations were losing track of any
distinctive worship practices other than evangelism. When the revival style of the
nineteenth century became passé, presumably packaged and produced for the
lowest common denominator of society, the focus shifted to the forms gaining
credence in broader American culture. Drawing upon evangelism through social
reform, churches looking to advance Protestant Christian civilization adapted to
musical forms considered more sophisticated and genuinely emotive than the gospel
hymns. The mainline churches that leaned more toward liberal evangelicalism
strove to distance themselves from the “sawdust trail” revivalism and its simple
music, which by the 1920s had become associated with the backwoods,
individualistic bent of fundamentalism. For those intent on evangelism in the mode
of the social gospel, it was imperative that the church provide the highest standard
for cultural uplift rather than pandering to the tastes of mass popularity. Critiques of
gospel hymnody based largely on cultural mores thus became more common and
often reflected the fragmenting of twentieth-century evangelicalism into various conservative and liberal elements. In addition, these culturally-based evaluations were usually indicative of a denomination’s place in established American Protestantism or its effort to secure such a place. Despite the disputes over proper worship style and denominational establishment, the emotive revivalism and mass appeal of gospel hymnody caused it to become a permanent fixture of American evangelicalism and fundamentalism and, as such, to find a place in most denominational hymnals. Drawing upon a heritage of both social reform as well as individual salvation, evangelical revivalism as represented in gospel hymnody, while disparaged by “respectable” elites had nonetheless “[won] a majority vote from the electorate.”

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Debates over worship music during the nineteenth and twentieth century—revivalistic gospel hymns in particular—demonstrate both doctrinal and social distinctions that accompanied the progressive establishment of historically populist denominations such as the Methodist Episcopal Church. Established “formalist” churches such as the Dutch Reformed Church exemplified the respectability to which the populist churches aspired but struggled with expanding their membership while maintaining strict control over doctrinal orthodoxy and worship style. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the Reformed Church had softened its orthodoxy to fit the more “Arminian cast of American Calvinism” and loosened its formalism in an effort to encourage a more active evangelism.\(^{224}\) As the denomination worked to extend its influence beyond the East Coast, it welcomed an influx of Dutch immigrants who, while confessionally similar to the established American church, were vastly different culturally and socially. The negotiation over worship style within the denomination exposed these differences and revealed the divergent theological sympathies of the various Reformed churches.

The Dutch Reformed Church in America was established as the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church in the colony of New Amsterdam in 1628 and remained

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after it fell to the English in 1664. Although the Dutch no longer governed the territory, the denomination continued to spread into eastern New York and west into New Jersey and maintained the use of the Dutch language in their worship services. By 1792, the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church declared its independence from the Hervormde Kerk (Reformed Church) in the Netherlands and had established itself as a bulwark of American Protestantism. Leaders such as Theodorus Frelinghuysen, who had been a significant force during the Great Awakening, and John H. Livingston, who established theological education for the Dutch church in America (New Brunswick Theological Seminary, 1784), helped position the church alongside Congregationalists, Methodists, Baptists, and Presbyterians as a dominant evangelical force.225 Livingston also modified the liturgy of the Dutch Reformed church, including the church order of Dort, to conform to American mores.226 This adaptation led to secession from the church in 1822, when ministers such as Solomon Froeligh charged the denomination with straying from Reformed doctrinal standards, particularly in the Hopkinsian denial of original sin.227 These ministers and their congregants left the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church and formed the True Reformed Dutch Church, eventually joining with the later Christian Reformed Church as Classis Hackensack. In the wake of this secession as well as controversies over training ministers in America, the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church lost members and a measure of influence to other populist evangelical

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denominations. This stagnation was offset by an influx of immigrants who had seceded from the Reformed Church in the Netherlands and settled in western states such as Michigan and Iowa beginning in 1846 and continuing through the latter part of the nineteenth century. These Dutch immigrants not only increased the membership of the established Reformed Protestant Dutch Church, they also increased the influence of pietism and class division within the denomination.

The band of immigrants who first arrived in 1846 was primarily composed of secessionists from the state-controlled Reformed Church of the Netherlands. Influenced by European pietism, the Dutch secession movement focused on “human inability and worthlessness and on Christ’s death as the only source of salvation” that “entailed the vital, personal realization of such doctrines through heartfelt experience” and required “ongoing intimacy with God through rigorous introspection and daily ‘spiritual exercises’; to ‘practice godliness,’ rejecting ‘the things of the flesh and the world’ and obeying ‘precisely’ the law of God as recorded in Scripture.”

This pietism merged with “the orthodox theology of the Established Church,” which steadily lost influence to a “more liberalized theology” in the years prior to the French Revolution and seemed to dissolve with the centralization of the church following the Revolution. The apparent weakening of orthodoxy in the state church during the early nineteenth century combined with a loss of local control and economic decline to increase secessionist activity, particularly among “hired hands,” “poorer farmers,” and “small tradesmen.” By the 1840s, agricultural depression from the potato blight and the disillusion of idealistic

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secessionists with the success of the movement led to a rationale for emigration. As historian James Bratt states;

As the Weberian model would have it, the Seceders saw the moral, spiritual, and material as interdependent. Their apologias for emigration underscored the point. The “deplorable” material conditions of the Netherlands, they declared, at once constituted divine punishment of a faithless nation and made it impossible for faithful Christians to obey “the expressed will of God,” namely, to provide for their families, contribute to charity, and aid “promotion of God’s Kingdom.” Economic stagnation had also led to “idleness,” which “excited man’s inward corruption” so that a “stream of social and civil pollution is flowing in the midst of us,” endangering the moral well-being of the pious. Hence they sought “resort to a country where the work awaits the man, and not man the work” and where “God’s beautiful creation is still ready to receive men” with the promise of wholesome environment, self-sufficiency, and religious opportunity. 229

Led by secessionist pastors Albertus Van Raalte and Hendrik P. Scholte, parties of lower and middle class Dutch immigrated to the United States in 1846, establishing the ethnic centers and orthodox standards for later immigrants.

When the seceding immigrants decided to settle in the United States, they had only a minimal understanding of the context of the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church, but many (including Albertus Van Raalte) viewed the American church as a fellow standard-bearer of Reformed orthodoxy, since it had severed ties with the Hervormde Kerk prior to its liberal corruption and was free of state interference. In addition, Van Raalte had received “considerable moral and financial support” from the RPDC. 230 The Dr. Rev. Thomas De Witt and Rev. Isaac N. Wyckoff of the Reformed Church in New York published information regarding the secessionists and their desire to emigrate in the denominational periodical, Christian Intelligencer, and both pastors established mission societies to raise funds for their

229 Bratt, p. 10.
emigration, the “Protestant Evangelical Holland Emigrant Society” (Wyckoff) and “The Netherlands Society for the Protection of Emigrants from Holland” (De Witt). The Dutch immigrants, particularly Van Raalte and his group, received assistance in making their way through New York by these societies. As they made their way West, the immigrants were guided by leaders of the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church who kept in touch with Van Raalte as he established a “Kolonie” along the Black River in Michigan. In addition to financing the settlement of the immigrants, the Reformed Church’s “blend of orthodoxy and pronounced piety” was appealing to Van Raalte and other settlers who were a part of the more experiential branch of the Secession (Geldersche). This sense of fraternity led Van Raalte toward instigating a union with the American denomination in the hopes of “sav[ing] the Kolonie from poverty, isolation, and backwardness.” In June of 1849, the RPDC Board of Domestic Missions sent Wyckoff to the Michigan colony. He stayed for almost a week and reported back to the Board on the possibility of bringing the six organized congregations of Classis Holland into the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church. In the report, Wyckoff mentioned the hesitancy of the Secessionist Churches to join the denomination, stating:

At the classical meeting it was soon made known that the brethren were a little afraid of entering into ecclesiastical connection with us although they believe in the union of brethren and sigh for Christian sympathy and association. They have so felt the galling chains of ecclesiastical domination and have seen with sorrow how exact organization according to human rules leads to formality on the one hand and to the oppression of tender consciences on the other that they hardly know what to say. I protested, of course, that it was the farthest from our thoughts to bring them in bondage to men or to exercise an ecclesiastical tyranny over them. And I stated that they would be most perfectly free at any time they found an ecclesiastical

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231 Ibid.
232 Bratt, p. 39.
connection opposed to their religious prosperity or enjoyment to bid us a fraternal adieu and be by themselves again.\textsuperscript{233}

Despite their fears, ministers and elders of Classis Holland met to provide a report to the RPDC that addressed the possibility of union, emphasizing the Seceders’ commitment to the doctrinal standards of the Canons of Dort, the Belgic Confession, and the Heidelberg Catechism as well as the Dortian Church Order. They expressed their “need of the communion of saints” particularly “those churches which have the same formulas of faith, the same liturgy and form of government, and which advocate the truth of God against all error.” The conclusion for Classis Holland was that they had “never considered ourselves to be other than a part of the Dutch Reformed Church, and desire on this account to live in communion with those churches and send our delegates to their ecclesiastical assemblies.”\textsuperscript{234} In May of 1850, the Particular Synod of Albany approved the overture of Classis Holland to join, and a month later, the General Synod of the RPDC recommended the admission of the nine congregations, six ministers, and over nine hundred members of Classis Holland into the denomination.\textsuperscript{235} The union was made, but a number of the immigrants found it unsatisfactory. They were suspicious of the established Reformed Church, with its urban middle-class membership and acceptance of Arminian evangelicalism, which appeared to be the equivalent of the liberalized state church of the Netherlands. They asserted the lack


\textsuperscript{235} \textit{Acts and Proceedings of the General Synod of the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church in North America, ... 1850,} p. 68-69.
of Reformed orthodoxy in the RPDC, and pointed to denomination’s use of evangelical hymnody and non-catechismal preaching as evidence of such laxity. In 1857, these dissenters left the RPDC and formed their own denomination, the “True Dutch Reformed Church,” which later became the Christian Reformed Church (CRC). The immigrants who had seceded from the Reformed Church of the Netherlands based on its departure from Reformed standards were now divided from each other in an attempt to preserve those standards. Both groups became involved in a struggle to maintain the distinct principles of the Reformed faith within the context of American evangelicalism.

The schism among the immigrants largely reflected “differences in the settlers’ provincial origins and religious affinities” in the Netherlands. Those who remained with the American Reformed Church tended to hail from the central and southern “Gelderland” region of the Netherlands and had emphasized greater local congregational authority and a more pietistic, experiential religion during the secession, whereas those who separated to form the CRC were largely of the “Northern” school that stressed centralized synodical authority and doctrinal orthodoxy.236 While these distinctions were not rigid, the generalities held true in the following decades as Dutch immigrants from the national Hervormde Kerk joined the western RCA in large numbers and immigrants from the Seceders’ Church of the Netherlands joined the CRC. This ethnic religious background aligned Van Raalte and the Geldersche group of secessionists more clearly with the “revivalist-reform” and “moralistic” tendencies of American evangelicalism evident in the Reformed Church of the nineteenth century, and made them more “willing to

236 Bratt, p. 39,7.
submerge strict ‘Reformed-ness’ in general Protestantism in order to spread that faith over the entire nation.”237 Yet as the evangelical movement fractured, it was primarily the immigrant churches of the western RCA that maintained a commitment to evangelistic revivalism and the Reformed confessions in upholding a general orthodoxy that included “divine revelation, scriptural authority, substitutionary atonement, and the resurrection.”238

During the early nineteenth century, the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church reflected what historian Kathryn Long has described as the “formalist” tradition in American evangelical revivalism; represented by denominations composed primarily of eastern urban elites. Unlike “antiformalists” such as the Methodists and Baptists, formal churches had historically “valued order in worship, theological precision, and an educated ministry” and viewed revival “as an agent for community renewal, as an essential element in the transformation of society and the nation” rather than an instrument for individual conversion. While the Methodists by and large represented the ecstatic and populist impulse of revivalism, the Reformed represented its emotionally restrained and socially controlling bent. In this tradition, the Reformed Church stood with other formal churches such as the Congregationalist, Presbyterian, and “low-church” Episcopalian “at the center of propriety and cultural power during the early decades of the nineteenth century.”239

Long asserts that by the middle of the century, the “two streams [of revivalism] had begun to converge,” as more formal denominations began “to appropriate aspects of

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237 Ibid, p. 44.
238 Bratt, p. 46.
the methodology and style of the populists” and more democratic churches were “embracing the more orderly religious ethos that went with middle-class respectability,” encouraging the “trend in American evangelicalism…toward national integration.”240 The revival of 1857-1858 provided evidence of this integration, “touching….every major Protestant denomination” and effecting a “shift in the public role of revivals in American life.”241 Initiated by former businessman Jeremiah Lanphier in an upper room of the Fulton Street Reformed Protestant Dutch Church in New York City, the 1857 revival reflected the restrained emotionalism of the formal churches along with the individualistic pietism of the antiformal churches.

A central force in this “businessmen’s awakening,” the Reformed Church as a denomination exhibited a more active evangelism and ecumenicalism than it had it past revivals, becoming actively involved in several evangelical organizations such as the American Bible Tract Society, the YMCA, the Anti-Saloon League and the Sunday School movement, and changing its title in 1867 from the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church to the Reformed Church in America (RCA). Yet the interest in individual conversion within the Church continued to remain intertwined with a dedication to communal moral reform. While the role of revivals had shifted “toward conversionist piety and away from specific moral reforms,” the evangelistic efforts of the Reformed Church during the mid to late nineteenth century reflected both impulses; participation in more conversion-based organizations as well as liberal support for foreign missions and domestic efforts to promote the “better

240 Long, p. 6-7.
element” of society and advance Christian civilization. These dual strains of evangelism became more distinguishable as characteristic of “liberal” and “conservative” evangelicalism, evident in the disparate worship styles in the Reformed Church by the twentieth century. The use of gospel hymnody, as the characteristic form of a more socially conservative revivalism, was central to such distinctions, which often reflected lines of class, region, and ethnicity within the denomination.

The transition from psalm to hymn singing in the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church moved slowly, beginning with the translation of the Dutch Psalter into English in 1763. Stirred by the Great Awakening, Dutch Reformed dominies advocated transitioning the denomination to the English language along with utilizing pipe organs and English psalms to encourage spiritual growth in the church. In an attempt to “accommodate those who preferred the old style of worship even as they made way for the new,” the Collegiate consistory appointed Philadelphia lawyer and musician Francis Hopkinson to translate the psalter into English while retaining the familiar Genevan tunes of the Dutch psalter. 242 The resulting psalter, entitled The Psalms of David with the Ten Commandments, Creed, Lord’s Prayer, etc., in metre. Also the Catechism, Confession of Faith, Liturgy, etc., translated from Dutch, for the use of the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church in the City of New York included few if any lyrics translated from the Dutch but rather borrowed texts almost entirely from the English New Version of the Psalms of

David by William Tate and Nicholas Brady and set them to Genevan tunes. This Collegiate Psalter did not sell well among Reformed congregants and by 1787, the provisional synod of the RPDC appointed a provisional committee headed by Reverend Dr. John H. Livingston to prepare a new “and better version of the Psalms of David than the congregations as yet possess in the English language.” The committee was instructed to utilize the work of previous psalters to accomplish this goal, and they did so by borrowing over half of the psalm settings for the new songbook from Isaac Watts’ works. This revealed a shift from using translations of the psalms in worship to Watts’ “imitation” of the psalms, moving into the realm of “human” songs. Synod also desired “some well-composed spiritual hymns be connected as a supplement with this new Psalm-Book” and directed the committee to “print such hymns in connection with the Psalms.” The resulting songbook included 272 Psalm versifications and 128 hymn texts and was approved in 1792 as a part of the Explanatory Articles that adopted the confessions and orders of the Reformed Church of the Netherlands to an American context. According to the new synodical standards, the Livingston psalter included “the only hymns to be used in English-language worship.”

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244 Acts and Proceedings, 1788, 182; in Boonstra, p. 8.

Most congregations adopted the new English *Psalms and Hymns*, and due to the increasing use of popular hymns in worship that coincided with the educational efforts of musician Lowell Mason, a supplement of *Additional Hymns* was added to the 1831 edition of the *Psalms and Hymns*. This addition along with another hymnal revision by the Synod of 1845 resulted in a compilation of 1,112 hymns and metrical psalm settings that leaned more heavily on evangelical hymnody.  

Not only were many of the newly included hymns pietistic in tone, there were also a number of sentimental and moral hymns such as one of the seven texts for the “Death of a Child;”

> Alas! How chang’d that lovely flow’r,  
> Which bloom’d and cheer’d my heart!  
> Fair fleeting comfort of an hour,  
> How soon we’re call’d to part!  

Along with the shift in tone, the 1848 revision changed the categorical organization of the hymnal from confessional groupings including “Heidelberg Catechism” or “Lord’s Supper” to broader subject headings such as “Perfection of God,” “The Gospel,” “Christian Character,” and “National.”

In 1868, the Reformed Synod commissioned the development of a new hymnal for the growing denomination, and in 1869 *Hymns of the Church* compiled by John B. Thompson was approved. Both the ordering and section headings of the new hymnal along with the tune harmonizations and “Amens” were “taken wholesale” from the popular Anglican hymnal, *Hymns, Ancient and Modern for use*

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246 Brumm, “Congregational Song in the Reformed Church: Praise, Subversion, Appreciation, and Glimmers of Understanding,” p. 120.  
in the services of the Church (1861). While the hymns were fairly representative of many American evangelical hymnbooks, including a majority of Watts (16.7%) and Wesley (7.6%), several by English hymnwriters Philip Doddridge, James Montgomery, Augustus Toplady, and William Cowper and several selections from popular American hymnwriters Lowell Mason and William Bradbury, Hymns of the Church included more specifically Anglican elements, such as chant settings, “fast-day” hymns and “evening” hymns.\(^{248}\) In the wake of this synodically-approved publication, many congregations asked the synod of 1870 “to revise some of the tunes” and by 1871, the classes of Poughkeepsie, Hudson, and North Long Island sent an overture to the General Synod asking for local rather than synodical control in choosing worship hymnals, a prerogative many congregations already felt they had.\(^{249}\) Unable to come to a satisfactory decision, the 1876 synodical committee on hymnody “recommended that the constitutional requirement regarding hymns in worship be dropped,” and Synod tabled the motion for good.\(^{250}\) Stepping away from the production of denominational hymnals, the Reformed Synod decided instead to approve the use of various other hymnals in worship or jointly publish with other denominations, such as the Presbyterian and German Reformed Churches. Still, the concern of some Reformed churches regarding the aesthetic quality of music in the denomination prompted the 1885 Synod to attempt mediation by asserting that in church music, “the wants of the great heart of God’s people are


\(^{250}\) Ibid.
to be regarded, rather than the critical taste of the cultivated few,” urging;

…The simpler melodies and harmonies which the people love, or will love, are most to be desired. The plea is not for musical mediocrity; still less for inferiority and triviality; but for simplicity and seriousness, sweetness and strength, both of melody and of harmony, which should be the essential characteristics of the music of our Church Hymnals.251

By 1898, many congregations were using the popular, pietistic gospel hymnals not only for Sunday Schools but also for prayer and worship services. While Synod had only approved three hymnals by 1898 for use in these circumstances, they found around fifty-eight different unapproved gospel hymnbooks being used with songs “faulty in teaching, morbid, sentimental” and “trivial and rollicking” tunes.252 The continued use of such popular songs led the Synod of 1899 to lament that “the diversity of usage is deplorable.”253 Still, Synod continued to approve most outside hymnals requested by congregations throughout the twentieth century and made only minimal attempts to regulate the usage or text of the songs and hymnals in worship.

While both evangelical hymns and liturgical forms of worship characterized the eastern Reformed Church in America by the late-nineteenth century, most of the new Dutch members of the western RCA worshipped in the more orthodox style they had been familiar with in the Netherlands. In this way, they were indistinguishable from the newly formed CRC—both retained psalm singing, strictly catechismal preaching, and the Dutch language in their services. As the immigrant congregations of the RCA became more Americanized, they more fully

embraced the biblical simplicity of evangelicalism than the established RCA churches. The older RCA, as a mainline Protestant denomination in the East, revealed more of a tendency toward social progressivism. Many of the American RCA churches were middle to upper class institutions, supportive of culturally uplifting programs, and their worship reflected the highest level of Christian civilization. The immigrant churches, led by farmers and small businessmen, embraced the work of evangelism through individual conversion, and their worship reflected the gospel message of outreach. As a result, tensions emerged between the established and immigrant branches of the RCA during the late nineteenth century that continued into the twentieth. At the same time, despite the differences among the RCA churches regarding social involvement and worship style, the denominational commitment to evangelism, whether through pietistic or social means, remained a strong unifying force during the twentieth century. These social, ethnic, and doctrinal distinctions were apparent in the development of immigrant RCA churches in West Michigan such as First and Third Reformed of Holland in comparison to the development of eastern-establishment RCA churches in West Michigan such as Central Reformed in Grand Rapids and Hope Reformed in Holland.

The First Reformed (Pillar) Church in Holland, pastored by Albertus Van Raalte, continued to prosper even after the loss of members to the True Reformed Church, and the church slowly moved toward adopting the worship styles of American evangelicalism. In 1856, the voorzanger (songleader) of Pillar Church, Frederick J. Van Lente, wanted to form a choir in order to provide musical
education and improve church singing. The consistory refused to approve Van Lente’s request based on the Calvinistic prohibition of choirs as an embellishment in worship that detracted from congregational singing. Van Lente responded by forming a singing school unattached to the church that became popular among the young people and grew large enough to acquire a building for practice. Despite the dedication to psalm singing by older congregants, the young people joined in Van Lente’s grassroots movement that brought hymn singing into the immigrant church. Evangelical revivalism also touched Pillar Church during 1866, when a Methodist lay preacher came to Holland and moved many members of the church. While Van Raalte and the consistory of Pillar would not allow the preacher to use the church’s sanctuary to conduct his revivals, they did provide him use of other church buildings. Van Raalte himself displayed openness to the Arminian pietism of the revival, exclaiming; “Twenty years I have worked among this people; but where were the fruits? And now, God sends a Methodist to mow where we had sown; and such a Methodist!” Van Raalte’s acceptance and even encouragement of such developments in the church was problematic for his more wary congregation. Even though many who opposed the evangelical organizations and hymns of the Reformed Church had left in the 1857 secession, there were those still within the church who believed union with the RCA would not entail change in worship or practice. Led by retiring elder Benjamin H. Ploeg, the opposition to Van

Raalte’s conciliatory position toward the RCA moved outside Pillar Church and into the public square in a series of letters in the Dutch newspaper, *De Hollander.*

The “foul, insane fury against Hymns” began in the spring of 1860, when Ploeg expressed his view on the errors of the eastern RCA in a congregational meeting at Pillar Church.\(^ {256}\) The incident received news coverage, and the floodgates opened as letters poured in from western RCA members on the eastern churches’ acceptance of Sunday Schools and hymns as well as church governance in accordance with the church order of Dort. Ploeg himself continued to write in to *De Hollander,* defending his outburst and his position on the enforcement of the eastern traditions in the western congregations. Responding to J. Bijlsma in Grand Rapids, who agreed that American evangelical hymns were not of high musical quality, but asserted that the move toward hymnody in the immigrant churches was not due to ecclesiastical dominance by the eastern denomination but rather the “yearning here [in the West] for something that was rejected formerly,” Ploeg countered;

> You certainly do know that the entire host of hymns is a synodical, ecclesiastical product, carries the stamp of ecclesiastical approval, and recommended officially to parochial and Sabbath schools….as well as a deluge of all kinds of tracts or Sabbath school booklets….of all kinds of confessions.\(^ {257}\)

Van Raalte’s son-in-law, Pieter J. Oggel of Pella, Iowa took up the line of discussion and responded to both Ploeg and Bijlsma’s points regarding the RCA’s adoption of hymns and the quality of American evangelical hymnody. Oggel focused on delineating the inferiority of hymns forced on the secessionists in the

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\(^ {256}\) Letter from A.C. Van Raalte to Philip Phelps dated 31 Aug 1860, Joint Archives of Hope College and Van Raalte Institute.

\(^ {257}\) B.H. Ploeg, “To J. Bijlsma, in Grand Rapids,” *De Hollander,* Wednesday, June 13, 1860 (translation by Nella Kennedy, April 2006); Joint Archives.
Netherlands from the evangelical hymns of the RCA as well as the congregational freedom of the American churches:

If the hymns of our church were the same as those of the church in the Netherlands, I would keep silent….I would not like to bow my neck under a yoke by which I would be compelled to have hymns such as those to be sung. But people are not so foolish that they would accuse us of having accepted here that which was rejected in the Netherlands….I find my life in them [hymns]….they touch the core of the spiritual life and speak the language of the poor sinner’s heart. I find there that precious “nothing but Christ and his righteousness” so comfortingly expressed:

Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to the cross I cling,….
I declare here openly that I recognize those hymns as the sound expression of the doctrine of our church.258

The debate continued in the pages of the Dutch newspapers throughout the next several months. While some of the banter became personal, the crux of the discussion centered around the ability of maintaining Reformed orthodoxy on the basis of the secession of 1834 within the RCA. Ploeg and his ilk were wary of the promises of Wyckoff and Van Raalte about the ecclesiastical freedom provided in union with the RCA. This autonomy was understood by those concerned to provide the immigrant congregations with the opportunity to remain a separate, “free” entity; confessionally similar to the eastern churches but culturally distinct without interference from the denominational leadership. Western immigrant churches could maintain their orthodox practices rooted in the Church Order of Dort and shed by the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church in America during the eighteenth century; the singing of psalms, the institution of Reformed schools, the use of the Dutch language, and not be swayed by the American evangelical practices of the denomination that were approved by the Synod of the RCA. The introduction of

258 P.J. Oggel, *De Hollander*, Wednesday, July 25, 1860 (translation by Henry ten Hoor; revision by Nella Kennedy, March 2006); Joint Archives of Hope College and Van Raalte Institute.
eastern-trained, English-speaking pastors and teachers, Sunday School materials, and synodically-approved evangelical hymnals almost ten years after the union with the denomination appeared to confirm the suspicions of rural immigrants wary of ecclesiastical domination by the eastern urban RCA. Discussion in 1860 of the Holland churches being incorporated into the older RCA Classis Michigan rather than remaining a separate, immigrant classis (Classis Holland) intensified this fear of ecclesiastical dictatorship and elite domination.

The hymn controversy in the western RCA churches exposed not only doctrinal distinctions between the Dutch immigrants, it also revealed the social and cultural aspirations associated with Americanization. For Van Raalte and many of the RCA church leaders, arguing over doctrinal orthodoxy distracted from important general Christian truths and interfered with the moral leadership of the church. Like the schismatics of the Christian Reformed Church, those in the RCA who harped on doctrinal points were dismissed as sectarians. Pillar Church’s battle was played out in the media, and the publicity of the hymn dispute led Pillar’s consistory to discuss censure. Ultimately, Benjamin Ploeg and a number of other families stopped attending services.259 The issues the dissenters raised, though, did not leave, and it was Dominie Van Raalte who felt pressure to keep the church progressing rather than allowing it to degenerate into “ignorance.” In his communications with New York pastor Philip Phelps, Van Raalte commented on the controversy surrounding hymns in particular and Ploeg’s part in the debate. Van Raalte characterized Ploeg regionally and socially as “the Low Hollander” in his letter to Phelps and accused

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259 Minutes of the Consistory, First Reformed Church (Holland, Michigan); 16 Sept, 1860, Article 6; 18 Jan, 1861, Article 4.
him of stirring up a “tempest” intentionally. The assumption that those of a lower social and intellectual status were drawn to dissent is evident in Van Raalte’s explanation regarding the attempt of his son-in-law, Pieter Oggel, to refute Ploeg and the backlash it caused:

This writing of rebuke did work like fire in the powder. Ploeg did answer and promises to take up the hymns of the church and Sabbath School to prove they are Arminian, etc. Fire and water is now joining to aid Ploeg in fighting Oggel. I see how difficult it will be to battle with ignorance, sectarian spirits, and leaders full of ill-will, who know how to make use of the ignorance and prejudices of the simple-minded but suspicious people.  

Van Raalte’s assessment of the dissent and those who led it reflected his ecumenical religious outlook as well as his own sense of social standing. Viewing himself as a progressive leader dedicated to the broad spirit of advancing Christianity, Van Raalte believed that he had focused the opposition as the one who facilitated union with the RCA. He concluded “by my struggling against ignorance, prejudices, avarice, selfishness, and bringing them where they did not want to be too many are wounded and feel sour against me.”

Despite Van Raalte’s personal insecurities and high-mindedness, the issue of worship style in the RCA, especially regarding the use of evangelical hymns, was not restricted to Pillar Reformed in Holland but encompassed many of the immigrant churches in West Michigan. Reporting on a meeting of Classis in September of 1860, Van Raalte revealed the extent of the controversy, where “a committee of Domines….and 4 Elders are appointed to write a pastoral letter to the churches to cure or enlighten them on the subject of Hymns.”

By the spring of 1861, Van Raalte could recount to a meeting of classis

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260 Letter from A.C. Van Raalte to Philip Phelps, dated 14 Aug 1860, Joint Archives.
261 Ibid.
262 Letter from A.C. Van Raalte to Philip Phelps, dated 24 Sept 1860, Joint Archives.
his happiness at the secession of Ploeg and ten other members of Pillar, stating that
in their absence “the disquieting turbulence that had upset many has ceased.”263

Four years later, Van Raalte suggested that the growing congregation divide based
on geography to form a new Dutch-speaking church. When the consistory and
congregation of Pillar Church agreed, Van Raalte promptly resigned his position as
pastor. As one who saw the adoption of American evangelicalism as necessary to
the survival and advancement of the immigrant Reformed church, it seems that Van
Raalte believed he had done enough to “enlighten” the dissenters.264

The divisiveness in Pillar Church over the adoption of Sunday Schools and
hymns signaled that the controversy over American evangelicalism and conflict
with the eastern practices of the RCA did not leave with the 1857 secession. Many
of these worship disputes continued to reveal not only doctrinal differences, but also
cultural and social suspicion between the primarily rural, lower to middle class
western immigrants and the largely urban, middle to upper class easterners as well
as distinctions between the immigrants themselves. As late as 1888, Synod was
trying to deal with the hymn issue in the western churches, reporting “our Holland
brethren are looking anxiously for a book adapted to the peculiar emergencies of
their people in passing over from the Dutch Psalmody to the English service now
being so generally introduced among them.”265 Many congregants in the immigrant
churches remained suspicious about what appeared to be an effort by the eastern
RCA elites to dictate their style of worship and acculturation. The new pastors in the

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263 Classis of Holland Minutes, April 1861.
immigrant community had received their training out East, the professors at Hope College were educated out East, and the more socially-based theology of the established eastern church seemed to be overriding the provincial practices of the immigrant churches. These concerns among western churches resulted in a continued loss of membership and yet another secession by the late nineteenth century. In this case, evidence of practicing Freemasons in the denomination, including those in ministerial positions, galvanized large numbers of members in the western RCA. Lodge membership had been a significant issue for churches of various denominations in the Netherlands and Europe generally. The anti-Christian rituals and oaths of secrecy connected with Masonry led the Reformed churches of the Netherlands to prohibit lodge members from being members of the church. In nineteenth-century America there was anti-Masonic sentiment, but many Christians viewed the social and political benefits of masonry as compatible with their religious beliefs. This included the socially prominent members and ministers of the eastern RCA. When the immigrant churches of the western classes became aware of the denomination’s laxity regarding Freemasonry, they asked the General Synod of 1868 to clarify its position on secret societies. The Synod refused to take a definite stance against the membership of Freemasons because it saw the issue as one of individual conscience, but this frustrated the western churches who believed the issue was essential to the doctrinal soundness of the denomination. The issue reemerged in 1874, when First Reformed Church in Holland became aware of two members who were Freemasons. Division was avoided due to the intervention of the church’s former pastor, Dominie Van Raalte. Although Van Raalte had
historically been opposed to Masonry in the church, he was more dedicated to church unity, arguing that lodge membership should not be the only reason for excommunication. He told the consistory of Pillar, “there must be sins which flow forth from Masonic membership, for example, transgression of the Ethical (Moral) Law.”

A tense resolution was reached, but immigrant RCA members in Holland were still perturbed by the growing number of masons and secret societies in the community and the laxity of the East in dealing with the issue.

The Masonic controversy reached a climax in 1877 when Hope College halted its theological training due to financial difficulties. Synod appointed eastern pastor and Mason, Reverend Henry Mandeville, as provisional president to help resolve the funding problems. Many of the Dutch RCA members believed that Mandeville, as a Mason, had intentionally suspended theological training at the college, thus exposing the error of the eastern churches in ignoring the problem of secret societies. The consistories of many of the Holland Reformed churches met to discuss whether they could remain a part of the RCA. First Reformed Church was seriously considering secession, and the consistory of Third Reformed Church supported the position that ministers of the denomination could not be lodge members. Classis Holland then petitioned the General Synod of 1880 and urged them once again to clarify the denomination’s position on secret societies. Synod debated the issue, but concluded by reiterating that the decision was one best left to local consistories. Classis Holland disapproved of Synod’s decision, and the churches divided over whether to remain in the RCA. By 1882, four congregations,

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266 “Special Consistory Meeting with the Classical Committee,” 13 October, 1873, First Reformed Church, Holland, Michigan. Joint Archives and Van Raalte Institute, Pillar Christian Reformed Church, Box 1.
including Pillar Church, had seceded and several churches had lost a significant number of their members to the CRC. In addition, the General Synod’s decision regarding Masonry led the Gereformeerde Kerk in the Netherlands, which had been in union with the RCA since 1850, to withdraw its support of the denomination and instead support the CRC. Social distinctions such as these were interpreted doctrinally by the immigrant congregations and contributed to the uneasy relationship between the eastern and western churches of the RCA.

While some of the western immigrant churches joined Pillar in its resistance to the worship practices and social allowances of the eastern RCA, there were those who were eager to adopt the denominational forms as early as the late nineteenth century. There were western immigrant congregations who more quickly adopted American worship practices, although they moved more toward pietistic evangelical practices rather than the more reformist evangelicalism that tended to characterize the eastern-based churches. Third Reformed Church in Holland, comprised of rising business leaders in the community, was one of these churches. Organized in 1867 to contain the growth of First Reformed and extend the influence of the Dutch Reformed citizenry, Third Reformed became a pillar of American evangelicalism under the direction of elder and businessman Isaac Cappon and the New Brunswick educated minister Henry Utterwick. Utterwick, along with Van Raalte, supported the motion of Classis Holland to approve the use of hymns in worship in 1874, which, according to the Holland City News, caused an “explosion” of singing

267 Elton Bruins and Robert Swierenga estimate that “the Particular Synod of Chicago, which represented the Classes of Michigan, Illinois, Holland, Grand River, and Wisconsin” lost “at least one-tenth of the membership” as a result of the Masonic controversy, with Classis Holland alone losing “1,622 persons between 1880 and 1884.” Family Quarrels, p. 131-132.
societies within both Reformed and Christian Reformed churches. One of these singing school choirs, led by Pillar songleader Frederick J. Van Lente, sang at the dedication of Third Reformed, and the congregation organized a choir even before they had a building. Although it was the local Methodist Church that held the first organizational meeting of the Holland Temperance Association in 1875, it was Cappon and Holland attorney Arend Visscher, members of Third Reformed, along with professor (and later president) of Hope College, Charles Scott, who drafted the articles of association and lobbied for temperance legislation in the city.

Reverend Utterwick, like Van Raalte, was also open to the spiritual benefits of evangelical revivalism, holding evening revival meetings for six weeks in the wake of a revival on the campus of Hope College in 1876. At the same time, Utterwick faced stiff opposition in switching the church services at Third over to English. While he conducted evening services in English, Utterwick was not able to convince the church to eliminate its afternoon Dutch service and in the end, he was forced to stop holding catechism classes in English as well. By 1879, the opposition to English and the division in the church over the Masonic controversy caused the more progressive Utterwick to resign as pastor of Third Reformed and accept a call at Second Congregational Church in Grand Rapids. Despite such resistance, by 1896, Third became the first immigrant church in Holland to hold all-English services.

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269 Bruins, *The Americanization of a Congregation*, p. 27.
The immigrant churches in western Michigan struggled through the nineteenth century to adapt to American culture and an Americanized denomination without losing their Reformed distinctives and ethnic ties. Even immigration congregations bent on adapting, such as Third Reformed in Holland and Second Reformed in Grand Rapids, continued to practice psalm-singing and catechismal preaching through the nineteenth century, and most immigrant churches in Holland did not switch over to English services until the beginning of the twentieth century—many did not do so until after World War I. West Michigan churches established in the older, eastern RCA tradition, such as Second (Hope) Reformed in Holland, founded in 1863 by Easterners who moved West to serve as professors of Hope Academy and College, and First Reformed in Grand Rapids, organized in 1840 by Easterners as a mission church, struggled to survive through the nineteenth century because the mass of immigrants avoided them in favor of the familiar practices of the Dutch-speaking churches. Despite the fact that these congregations were small, each church established a music program when they were organized, hiring a chorister and musicians for worship. By the turn of the twentieth century, though, both Hope and First Reformed were attracting large numbers of young people leaving the immigrant churches of their parents. Hope Reformed was large enough to organize its first choir in 1899 and First Reformed had grown to the point that it was able to get off denominational subsidies by 1880 and construct a building. The fact that these churches were English-speaking and reflected both American evangelical and progressive culture in their worship style, message, and outreach made them an attractive alternative to the first generation children. In
addition, as the immigrant population became more established in the communities of West Michigan and more successful, many adopted a more progressive evangelical practices and theology by the end of World War I, and were beginning to become indistinguishable from the English-speaking eastern churches. So much so, in fact, that by 1918 the older, eastern-based First Reformed Church of Grand Rapids and the newer, immigrant-established Second Reformed Church of Grand Rapids merged to become Central Reformed Church.

In the early years of the twentieth century, prior to their union, both First and Second Reformed focused on providing a high standard of music in their services and also reflected the American evangelical spirit. Each church employed paid musicians—an organist, choir leader, and a quartet of singers—who set the musical standard for the volunteer musicians of the church and were overseen by the consistory. The form of worship was similar in both First and Second Reformed, with the congregation singing two or three hymns from the church hymnal during each service and members of the paid quartette or the church choir singing one or two “anthems.” Along with the effort to establish formal services by utilizing a highly trained musical team to lead in worship, both congregations also engaged in the simpler forms of evangelical revivalism. First and Second Reformed joined in Union Gospel Services with First Methodist Episcopal of Grand Rapids, encouraging churched and unchurched to “Hear, and Sing with the Big Chorus.”

In addition, each church’s consistory approved the use of a revivalist hymnal for

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271 First Reformed Church Bulletins, 1912-1917; Second Reformed Church Bulletins, 1912-1917, Joint Archives, Central Reformed Church Box 1 and 2.
272 Advertisement Card in Consistory Minutes of First Reformed Church, Joint Archives, Central Reformed Church, Box 1.
evening services and prayer meetings; First agreed on using revivalist J. Wilbur Chapman’s *Songs of Praise* in 1904 and Second settled on gospel hymn writer George Stebbins’s *Northfield Hymnal* in 1905. By 1907, the consistory of Second Reformed, like First Reformed, was inviting speakers from the Anti-Saloon League to their pulpit, encouraging congregants to recognize their Christian duty in rescuing individuals from their sinfulness. While the immigrant church continued to preach sermons on the Lord’s Days of the Heidelberg Catechism and conduct catechism classes among the youth, there were also messages on “The Unity of Believers,” and “Characteristics of Revival” along with church announcements encouraging involvement in the Bob Jones Chorus, Red Cross work, and Food Conservation as recommended by Herbert Hoover.

Like Second Reformed of Grand Rapids, Third Reformed Church in Holland was still holding catechism classes for children and offering biblically-based messages such as “Sufficient Grace,” The Ploughman,” and “God’s Husbandry” targeted to a rural audience at the turn of the twentieth century. In 1915, Third Reformed also began holding evening song services, using the book *Great Revival Hymns* published by popular songleader Homer Rodeheaver. There continued to be a strong ministry of music in the church, supervised by a consistorial music committee, that included a choir and various quartettes, duos, and soloists. In contrast to First and Second Reformed, who chose to cultivate a highly trained

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273 “Consistory Minutes,” Second Reformed Church, 21 Mar, 1905, Central Reformed Church, Box 2; “Consistory Minutes,” First Reformed Church, 12 Sept 1904. Joint Archives, Box 1.

274 “Consistory Minutes,” Second Reformed Church, 8 Apr, 1907. Joint Archives, Central Reformed Church, Box 2.

275 Bulletins, 1912-1917, Second Reformed Church, Joint Archives, Box 2.

276 Bulletins, 24 Jan and 21 Mar, 1915. Third Reformed Church, Holland, Michigan. Joint Archives of Hope College and Van Raalte Institute, Third Reformed Church, Box 6.
group of musical performers to lead worship, the musicians at Third Reformed were volunteer members of the congregation. The choir leader at Third Reformed throughout the early and mid-twentieth century was Mr. John VanderSluis, who utilized music as a way of propagating the gospel message, interspersing classical selections for the choir with hymn favorites such as “Rock of Ages” and “Since I Found My Savior.” While churches such as First and Second Reformed established their musical reputation based on a high level of classical training and performance, Third Reformed emerged as the center of evangelical revival music. VanderSluis and the musicians at Third often received the call to lead mass choirs for Sunday School rallies, meetings of the YMCA, and to accompany evangelistic speakers, such as E. O. Sellers from Moody Bible Institute and Mel Trotter from the Grand Rapids Rescue Mission. The musical distinction between the more revivalistic rural churches and the more progressive established churches was particularly evident in two musical services offered in honor of great composers. While Hope Reformed Church of Holland held a service in remembrance of Ludwig von Beethoven’s death, Third Reformed chose to conduct a service in honor of American gospel hymn writer Fanny Crosby in 1915, the year of her death.  

First and Third Reformed, in the years prior to and during World War I, tended to reflect the evangelical revival influence in the RCA, an influence attractive to young people as well as some of the more pietistic immigrants. Hope Reformed in Holland, on the other hand, revealed the liturgical worship style of the RCA with an emphasis on cultural uplift and social progressivism. The formality

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277 Bulletins, Feb 21; Mar, Apr 1915, Dec, 1917, Third Reformed Church, Joint Archives, Box 6.
and respectability of Hope was evident in their worship music, including organ voluntaries from Bach and Dvorak and choir anthems by Franck (O Lord Most Holy) and Gounod (Hymn to St. Cecilia). Congregational singing still dominated the services at Hope Reformed during the war period, with three typical evangelical hymns and the “Gloria Patri” sung at each service. The messages at Hope Reformed tended to reflect issues of the time rather than Reformed orthodoxy, with themes such as “Militarism vs Christianity” and “Moral Equivalent of War” with no doctrinal standard to supplement such sermons. As the academic church for Hope College professors, Hope Reformed services offered evidence of the best Christian civilization had to offer for the betterment of the community. The social and moral emphasis evident in the aesthetic of worship was more in line both with the general trend in RCA denominational worship as well as in mission work, as the RCA became involved in ecumenical social organizations promoting general Christian principles in society, most notably as a founding member of the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America in 1906.

The progressive bent of the RCA during the early twentieth century led the church to view America as the vanguard of Christian civilization. This patriotism was apparent in the western churches as well, drawing both on social progressivism as well as the immigrant desire for respectability and advancement. If America was the “city on a hill,” exhibiting “principles of religious and economic freedom which Jesus Christ taught,” then through their work in church, society, and at home, citizens were contributing to the progression of Christian values domestically and

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278 Bulletins, 1914-1919; Second (Hope) Reformed Church, Holland, Michigan. Joint Archives of Hope College and Van Raalte Institute, Second (Hope) Reformed Church, Holland, Michigan, Box 7.
Third Reformed Church revealed this strong Christian patriotism internationally.\textsuperscript{279} During the early twentieth century, displaying the American flag prominently in the sanctuary after President McKinley’s death in 1901 and during World War I. In bulletin announcements, congregants were encouraged to possess “an enthusiasm for [their] nation” and the “desire to see America standing on the mountain-top of Christian civilization.”\textsuperscript{280} During the years of America involvement in World War I, the bulletins included a roll call of young men and women who had enlisted in the war effort, characterizing them as “Our Representatives in the Fight for Democracy.” Members were urged to purchase Liberty Bonds and by 1918, each service concluded with the congregation singing “America.” It was imperative for immigrant RCA churches such as Third Reformed in Holland to connect their “assimilation into the grand new American race” to the progression of Christian civilization ordained by God, to which the separatist ethnic identity of the Christian Reformed Dutch provided a foil. While the members of the CRC “refused to become fully American in language or mind” by remaining “huddled in their ethnic enclaves, blinded by their ‘foreign importations’ (i.e., Neo-Calvinism), they could not see that Providence had made America the most Calvinistic of all nations.”\textsuperscript{281} The immigrants of the RCA, on the other hand, were enlightened enough to know that “everything that under God has made and preserved America to be the land of the free.”\textsuperscript{282} It was the effort to preserve the standards of Christian civilization

\textsuperscript{279} Quoted in Bratt, p. 85.
\textsuperscript{280} Bulletin, 2 Jul, 1916, Third Reformed Church, Joint Archives, Box 6.
\textsuperscript{281} Bratt, p. 86-87.
\textsuperscript{282} Quoted in Bratt, p. 87.
through the 1920s and 1930s that once again exposed the cultural and social distinctions among the RCA churches.

By the 1920s, special musical performances were a regular feature of worship at Hope Reformed, replacing a great part of the congregational singing. The various choirs and quartettes of Central Reformed Church in Grand Rapids were often guests at Hope Reformed, as were traveling groups from mission schools. One such group was the “Cotton Blossom Singers,” a troupe of African-American girls from the Piney Woods mission school in Mississippi. These performances were intended to tweak the congregation’s social conscience; “we shall enjoy the rich melodious voices of these girls and women, and drop a free-will offering in the plate to help this mission school in its endeavor to educate poor children of the ‘black belt.’” The next week, the congregation was congratulated on its giving spirit, reporting that the offering for the Cotton Blossom Singers totaled $69.20, which was “twenty dollars better than any collection received during the company’s trip.” In 1926, the church hired Mrs. H.L. Dunwoody of New York, a sister of one of the members and a musician who had “studied voice with the best masters.” High culture and classical music became the focus of worship services, with an entire service devoted to the music of Dvorak, “Tschaikowksy,” and “Moussorgsky,” and a musical service dedicated to Beethoven’s work. These cultural celebrations were accompanied by Rev Thomas Davisson’s messages on “The Ministry of Music,” “Dante: The Dreamer of the Unseen,” and “The Ministry of Beauty.”

283 Bulletins, 19 Jul and 26 Jul, 1925, Hope Reformed Church. Joint Archives, Box 7.  
284 Bulletin, Jan 9, 1927, Hope Reformed Church. Joint Archives, Box 7.  
285 Bulletins, 13 Mar, 27 Mar, 1927; Hope Reformed Church. Joint Archives, Box 7.
By the late 1920s and early 1930s, Hope Reformed Church in Holland was fully involved in the effort to uplift society. This progressive ideal was apparent in the church’s role in paying for the installment of the Skinner Organ in Hope Memorial Chapel at Hope College. For this, the congregation was asked to “contribute liberally” in order to “show their appreciation for what Hope is trying to do for the uplift of Holland and Western Michigan in the religious and esthetic life.”\textsuperscript{286} Along with encouraging positive cultural development, the church was dedicated to preventing the spread of negative influences in the community. To this end, entire evening services were devoted to the message of the Anti-Saloon League, including a joint debate on the Volstead Act accompanied by a musical message in the anthems “Peace, Perfect Peace,” “Listen to the Lambs,” and “O Holy Father,” by the College Girls’ Glee Club.\textsuperscript{287} There were also several insistent announcements relating “facts about prohibition” and urging members to register and vote, warning “communists and bolshevists are always at the polls, while ‘respectability’ so-called stays home hugging itself in smug self-complacency.”\textsuperscript{288} The church was so intent on its social responsibility that it went so far as to show a moving picture in its auditorium on a Sunday evening entitled, “Alcohol and the Human Body.”\textsuperscript{289} Evening services were cancelled for the months of July and August beginning in the summer of 1929 and parishioners were encouraged to attend the outdoor vesper services held at the Greek amphitheater in Castle Park, Grand Rapids and overseen by the mainline Protestant churches of the city. In

\textsuperscript{286} Bulletin, 23 Jun, 1929, Hope Reformed Church. Joint Archives, Box 7.
\textsuperscript{287} Bulletin, 20 Mar, 1927, Hope Reformed Church. Joint Archives, Box 7.
\textsuperscript{288} Bulletins, 1 Jul, 5 Aug, 1928, Hope Reformed Church. Joint Archives, Box 7.
\textsuperscript{289} Bulletin, 13 Jan, 1929, Hope Reformed Church, Joint Archives, Box 7.
conjunction with its effort toward high cultural development, Hope Reformed reprinted in its bulletin a critique of the new medium of radio by the former dean of Yale Divinity School. This analysis contended that radio diminished the civilizing influence of religion on society;

The obvious fact is that the sophistry of getting one’s religion by loudspeaker while sitting in an easy chair at home is like the sophistry, so popular with some, of contending that one finds God sufficiently in the trees, birds and fairways, without troubling to seek Him in formal worship. With the church nearly empty, its physical and financial support gone, its congregations lost to nature and the armchairs, its competition the next station on the dial, religion with all its refining influences would soon be dead, too.290

Although the church promoted the use of moving pictures in promoting the Christian refining influence, they were more critical of the unregulated radio. For Hope Reformed, congregational worship had the power to uplift and refine those experiencing it, a power that could not be reproduced through the new medium of radio. It was the responsibility of the church itself to provide that uplifting experience in worship, through word and song.

While Hope Reformed Church exhibited a commitment to a more clearly distinguished liberalism, the immigrant-based Third Reformed Church of Holland revealed alignment with the conversionist revivalism of the fundamentalist movement. The church choir was reported to be engaging in practical evangelistic work;

Members of the choir are devoting some of their time on Sunday afternoon in bringing cheer to the “shut-ins” and sick. Two groups of singers entered various homes last Sunday and sang familiar hymns and their leaders spoke words of comfort and cheer. Surely a noble mission. The sick appreciated it as well as the singers. Let our motto be “Help Somebody Today.”291

In addition to this religious work, Pastor James Martin delivered a sermon series in 1922 that addressed issues “agitating the church under the present attack of modernism….compelling us to ask whether we still can hold to the old faith of our fathers.” The questions Rev. Martin addressed included:

Can Modern Civilization Accept the Miracles of the Bible?

Is it Necessary to Believe in the Virgin Birth of Jesus?

Is the Bible Still the Inspired Book, or Has Modern Scholarship Made it Untrustworthy?

Did Christ Die for the Sin of the World? If Not, What Did He Die For?

Does that First Century Promise, that Christ Will Come Again, Hold Good for the Twentieth Century?292

The purpose of the series was to prove that Third Reformed Church and American churches as a whole could, indeed “hold to the old faith of our fathers” in the face of the modernist threat. Along with the efforts of the congregation, visitors to the church reflected its fundamentalist sympathies, including evening services led by the League of Evangelical Students and a performance by Moody Bible Institute’s “WMBI Announcers Trio.”293 As the liberal churches of the RCA denounced the “sophistry” of the radio, Third Reformed welcomed the efforts of Moody’s radio workers and boasted their own “Men’s Chorus” broadcast over Grand Rapids WOOD in 1932. While Third Reformed continued to contribute to denominational boards and supported new Reformed congregations established in the city, their fundamentalist leanings were apparent as a youth conference site was developed on

292 Bulletin, 1 Oct, 1922, Third Reformed Church, Joint Archives, Box 6.
Holland’s Black Lake, and a Boy Scout troop was organized in the church. By the 1930s, Third Reformed Church’s congregants, hard-hit by the depression, became even more legalistic in their worship and theology, insisting that Pastor Martin “preach the points of the Heidelberg Catechism,” teach catechism classes only using books approved by consistorial committees, and “read the ‘long’ form at communion,” prompting Martin’s resignation in 1934.

Situated in a larger, more established and diverse city, the immigrant congregation of Second Reformed Church in Grand Rapids found that by the end of the Great War, its English-speaking, middle-class constituency differed little from that of the older First Reformed Church. When the old and new RCA churches of Grand Rapids merged in 1918 to form Central Reformed Church, they maintained the evangelistic tendencies of the earlier years, but also developed a more progressive outlook and formal style to create “the Dutch flagship of the American mainline” in the city.

Grand Rapids native and Princeton seminary graduate John A. Dykstra was called as the new pastor of Central Reformed, and during his tenure church membership doubled. Three months after becoming pastor of the church, Dykstra proposed making the winter evening services “of an evangelistic character,” particularly allowing testimonies, in order to “induce people to come to the sanctuary and become a blessing to the church.”

A year later, Dykstra seemed to draw upon holiness and dispensational aspects of the nascent

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295 Bruins, *Americanization of a Congregation*, p. 71-72.;
297 “Consistory Minutes,” Central Reformed Church, 24 Nov, 1919. Joint Archives of Hope College and Van Raalte Institute; Central Reformed Church, Box 7.
fundamentalist movement, discussing “the spiritual condition of the church” with the consistory and suggesting he preach “a series of four sermons on the Holy Spirit at the morning services and a series of seven sermons on Revelation at the evening services” to address this issue.\(^{298}\) By the 1920s, the church was organizing revivals, using its evening services for an “evangelistic campaign” and printing flyers for the meeting that proclaimed: “BIG CHORUS, ABLE LEADER, SPECIAL MUSIC.”\(^{299}\) In an effort to expand its musical ministry and education, the church hired Mr. Temple J. Barcafer in 1925 as a full-time song leader. For the next five years, Barcafer worked to cultivate musical appreciation and skill through the development of choir camps held at the YMCA as well as the formation of Junior and Young People’s choirs in the church.\(^{300}\)

The revivalistic focus of worship at Central Reformed had shifted by 1932, as the church moved toward a higher aesthetic in its services. This dedication to greater cultural emphasis became apparent when Central Reformed appointed Charles Vogan, the first Ph.D in musicology from the University of Michigan, as its “minister of music.” Vogan expanded the choir camps founded by Barcafer to include dramatic operetta performances such as *Cinderella, Red Riding Hood,* and *Hansel and Gretel* and helped Central’s Children’s Choir become culturally renown. Under Vogan, the choir was the first in the nation to perform the French oratorio, *Children at Bethlehem* by Gabriel Pierné, and the first in Grand Rapids to perform *The Daughter of Jairus* by Rheinberger. In addition, the choir presented a series of

\(^{298}\) “Consistory Minutes,” Central Reformed Church, 7 Sept 1920. Joint Archives, Box 7.


\(^{300}\) *Ibid,* p. 141.
oratorios and cantatas for each season along with a yearly Christmas pageant. Highbrow literary clubs and dramatic guilds along with the “positive-thinking” preaching of Reverend Dykstra supplemented the professional standard of music and drama that characterized Central Reformed by the 1930s and 1940s. At the same time, the church still maintained evening song services, providing a forum for the entire congregation to participate in the singing of the gospel tunes. In each of the Reformed churches, there continued to be a dedication to evangelical forms utilizing the simple songs of American gospel hymnody particularly in regard to informal and mass gatherings related to evangelical work.

While not hard and fast, the regional, social, and cultural distinctions between the established elites of the East and the immigrant farmers of the West influenced the divergence of these two branches of the RCA. Although the immigrants’ ethnic background in experiential pietism and desire for cultural respectability made them more sympathetic to union with the American Reformed church, that same background predisposed them to the populist pietism and Calvinistic bent of American fundamentalism. General characterizations of the eastern and western churches were established within the RCA, and proved a shibboleth for denominational disputes. When the General Synod attempted ecumenical union between the flagging RCA and other denominations, such as the Reformed Church in the United States (German Reformed) in 1891 and the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. in 1920 the mergers were quashed. The failure of

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301 Barbara R. Davidson, "The Ministry of Music of Central Reformed Church, 1918-1995.” Unpublished manuscript; referenced in Ballast, p. 143-144.
these efforts was blamed on the western churches, churches whose membership (and voting power) was growing. When the union with the Presbyterian Church was defeated, Synod clearly stated the understood dual perspective within the RCA at the time;

The opinion of the great majority in the East is that the Reformed Church in America could do more effective work for the Kingdom if allied with a denomination having a national appeal….the opinion of the majority in the West is that the Reformed Church in America, as it is, has a distinctive contribution to make to the Kingdom.\textsuperscript{303}

By 1929, a number of the western congregations were also sending overtures to the General Synod asking the denomination to sever its ties with the Federal Council of Churches due to the “‘prominence of certain non-evangelical leaders’” and “‘Modernistic tendencies revealed in both the preaching of official spokesmen and their writings.’” Synod decided that the “good work of the Council” in doing “things that can be accomplished only by united efforts of the churches” overrode these concerns, although they recommended that the Council “be notified of our earnest desire for a strong evangelical emphasis.”\textsuperscript{304}

Overtures asking Synod to discontinue the denomination’s membership in the FCC due to its modernist and liberal doctrinal positions continued throughout the 1930s and 1940s. The western concern over maintaining Reformed doctrine was also evident in an incident in 1923 when New Brunswick Theological Seminary proposed hiring a Congregational minister, Dr. Edward Strong Worcester, as professor of theology. Worcester accepted the position but stated that he had reservations regarding the doctrinal


\textsuperscript{304} Mildred W. Schuppert, A Digest and Index of the Minutes of the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America 1906-1957, (Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans, 1982), 100.
standards of the RCA. While the eastern members of the New Brunswick Board of Superintendents accepted Worcester’s reservations as a matter of individual conscience, the western members saw the hiring of Worcester as evidence of modernism in the Seminary and a dilution of the principles of the Reformed faith.\textsuperscript{305} Still, after the controversies and secessions of the nineteenth century, the RCA did not experience further schisms during the twentieth century, avoiding even the ubiquitous fundamentalist-modernist division, despite the apparent tensions between the western and eastern RCA in this regard.

From the singing of gospel hymns to the performances of French oratorios, the worship music of the Reformed Church in America exhibited a variance of styles and purposes that reflected the social and theological perspective of its various regions, churches, and congregants. As the Church developed through the twentieth century, its establishment progressed more in line with the emerging liberal theology while simultaneously negotiating the growing fundamentalist sympathies of its more recently immigrated and primarily rural western congregations. Transitioning from being part of a fringe secessionist movement in the Netherlands to members of a culturally established and socially prominent denomination in America, the Dutch immigrants who joined the Reformed Church found themselves immediately confronted with assimilation. Although the denomination had become lax in enforcing doctrinal orthodoxy and uniform worship, it provided the new churches with highly respected and well-educated ministers and teachers trained in the established institutions of the denomination and

steeped in upper class social and cultural norms. While many of the business-minded immigrants welcomed the opportunity to engage with the dominant culture and thus freely advance fundamental Christian principles, apprehensions about elite domination remained within the formerly separatist group, particularly among those lower to middle class farmers and tradesmen who held fast to their experiential pietism and simple worship. As the gulf between ecumenical social action and conversionist revivalism grew, so too did the variations in worship practice, revealing the level of assimilation into culture, attainment of social respectability, and adoption of a liberal or conservative evangelical theology.
CHAPTER SIX:

BY THE SEA OF CRYSTAL

It was all so very simple in the old days. But somewhere complications crept in and church music began to suffer. The Americanization process had a good deal to do with it, the taking over of the best, but more often the worst, of our middle-class American culture. By the early 1900’s most of our church people sang hymns, though not in church. A copy or two of Gospel Hymns, no. 1 to 6 was found on almost every reed organ or piano, and the favorite pastime for young people as well as for many of the older ones was to “gather round” and sing hymns. With the advent of radio and evangelistic campaigns, new hymns with swinging rhythms became popular. Such hymns as “Since Jesus Came into My Heart” and “Love Lifted Me” were sung with gusto. Billy Sunday, Homer Rodeheaver, Bob Jones, Gypsy Smith, and many others introduced new hymn books with each campaign. With much of radio still taboo, our people became easy victims of the evangelistic radio stations that beamed forth “messages” and frothy gospel songs all day long. No doubt many people were benefited spiritually by these hymns, but the daily exposure to them created and developed a taste for this style of evangelistic song. No wonder that our Psalm tunes sounded drab in comparison. No wonder that there was a clamor for these peppy hymns in Sunday school and young people’s meetings.306

The Christian Reformed Church was a denomination that had separated from two parent denominations, the Reformed Church of the Netherlands and the Reformed Church in America, within twenty-five years in order to maintain Reformed orthodoxy.307 While wary of the pervasive influence of “modernism”

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306 Seymour Swets, Fifty Years of Music at Calvin College (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1973), p.28.
upon the church, the members of the Christian Reformed Church were also vigilant against those who weakened the faith from within. This was a church dedicated to its own “fundamentals” and willing to purge itself of those unwilling to uphold its distinctive brand of Calvinism and reject the free will doctrine of Arminianism, a doctrine clearly evident in American evangelicalism. These Dutch Calvinists were eager to find success and build a new community in the American landscape, yet they were also highly suspicious of the Protestantism they encountered in the new country. The perception among the immigrants was that the American environment diluted Reformed orthodoxy, as expressed by a concerned letter writer to the Dutch Reformed periodical, De Gereformeerde Amerikaan:

My greatest objection to America has always been the fear that our generation would be estranged from the Reformed principles and pass over into a shallow Methodism. The great and mighty stream in this land is certainly more Methodistic than Reformed. I shall not easily forget what an elder in the congregation said to me when I had been here but a short time. “The Reformed faith is a plant which will not thrive here.” As far as my experience goes, that statement has thus far been established.\(^{308}\)

The effort to maintain Reformed orthodoxy and biblicism in the face of a “Methodistic” American evangelicalism was particularly evident in the battle over church music. Having fought the dilution of Reformed orthodoxy through the singing of hymns in the state church of the Netherlands, those who established the Christian Reformed Church were keenly aware of the influence of Arminian doctrine in American gospel hymnody, and did all they could to maintain the Calvinist practice of Psalm singing in worship. As a result, the denomination intentionally separated from broader American culture, and the singing of psalms,

along with the use of Dutch in services, became symbolic of Reformed orthodoxy. Despite these efforts, within thirty years both English services and the use of hymns in worship were approved by the denominational synod. Reformed orthodoxy did remain a mark of the Christian Reformed Church, and the conflicts over Americanization and interdenominationalism helped maintain an awareness of distinctively Reformed doctrines and practices. While the inevitable Americanization of the denomination introduced aspects of evangelicalism and fundamentalism into the church, it also resulted in the maintenance and promulgation of Reformed orthodoxy. Through the debates over liberal and evangelical influence, particularly in the case of church music, the Christian Reformed Church was able to legitimate its own Reformed perspective over and against both modernism and fundamentalism.

The connection between church music and Reformed orthodoxy was established by seceding Dutch Reformed congregations prior to their encounter with American evangelicalism. In the Netherlands, the laity initiated the 1834 secession (afscheiding) from the Dutch Reformed Church by opposing the forced interdenominationalism of the state church under William I, which included the introduction of hymn singing. While resistance to the state church manifested itself in several areas, many of the laity expressed their dissatisfaction with the hymns (the Evangelische Gezangen) included in the 1807 version of the Psalter, leading church authorities to require the singing of at least one hymn in every worship service. In response, orthodox congregants covered their heads when singing the

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309 Bertus Frederick Polman, *Church Music and Liturgy in the Christian Reformed Church of North America*, Ph.D thesis, University of Minnesota (December, 1980), 45. Polman provides an
required hymns, and when publicly admonished by church leaders and local authorities, they walked out of the service. One of the orthodox pastors, Gezelle Meerburg, decided it was best to eliminate hymns from public worship. By 1835, Meerburg was deposed from the church for, among other issues, petitioning “to be set free from the duty of giving out hymns.” In other areas, congregations avoided conflict with Classical Boards by keeping hymns in worship services, but allowing objectors to maintain silence during the singing. One of the more independent-minded objectors, the Reverend L.G.C. Ledeboer of Benthuizen, not only refused to use the hymns, but also preached against the use of them and, on one Sunday morning, buried a copy of the hymns along with the synodical regulations in his garden.\textsuperscript{310}

The formal act of secession in the fall of 1834 established secession not from Reformed “doctrine, government, liturgy, or Church,” but rather from the “unreformed church boards” run by the State. By 1836, the National Synod reported around four thousand seceders from the established Church who met as the Free Reformed Church.\textsuperscript{311} The members and pastors of this Seceders’ Church immigrated to the United States in 1847, aided by Rev. Isaac Wyckoff, a pastor from the Reformed Church in America and Dr. Thomas De Witt, who established the Protestant Evangelical Dutch Emigrants’ Society in New York City. The Dutch immigrants settled in areas of Iowa and Michigan, with those in Michigan under the leadership of A.C. Van Raalte forming Classis Holland and uniting with Wyckoff

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\textsuperscript{311} Ibid, p. 87.
and the Reformed Church in America, a denomination that had been established in 1623 and was thoroughly Americanized. While the Seceders shared creedal and institutional sympathies with this older denomination, the lack of Reformed orthodoxy in the RCA, particularly in regard to the adoption of liberal (Arminian) theology, non-catechismal preaching, and the use of hymns in worship overrode their sympathies with the denomination. Since 1789, the Reformed Church of America had used an English songbook, *The Psalms of David and Spiritual Songs* (revised by John H. Livingston), for its worship services, and by 1831 the 135 hymns of the 1789 version had expanded to 445. Along with a worship hymnal, the RCA adopted separate hymnals for Sunday Schools and prayer meetings in 1843.\(^{312}\)

To many of the seceding laity and pastorate, the RCA resembled the interdenominational State church they had broken with just ten years prior. In 1857, four congregations from Classis Holland broke from the RCA to form the Holland Reformed Church, later the Christian Reformed Church. The letter of secession sent by these congregations listed as its first reason for secession “the collection of 800 hymns, introduced contrary to the Church Order.”\(^{313}\)

Despite the strong stance of the Christian Reformed Church against hymnody as contrary to Reformed orthodoxy, its Synod ultimately allowed hymns into the church in two particular cases by the end of the nineteenth century. A significant factor in this allowance and the general move toward cultural engagement by the denomination was the neo-Calvinist doctrine of Abraham Kuyper. Kuyper led a second orthodox secession from the Dutch Reformed Church.

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\(^{312}\) Polman, p. 50.

\(^{313}\) *Classis Holland Minutes, 1848-1858* (Grand Rapids, 1943), 242; translated from the Dutch and quoted in Polman, p. 50 and John Kromminga, p. 34.
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in 1886 (Doleantie) that joined with the Christian Reformed Church in 1892 and formed the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederlands. Kuyper’s theology placed greater emphasis on the doctrine of common grace—God’s grace extended to all mankind and evident in all human endeavors—and the concept of a comprehensive biblical worldview that Christians (particularly Calvinist Christians, who had the best understanding of this worldview) were called to implement. The influence of Kuyperian Calvinism shaped the doctrine of the American Christian Reformed Church into the twentieth century. Since much of the denomination still spoke Dutch and maintained ties to the Netherlands, there was great interest in the Secession and the surge of publications expounding Kuyper’s theology. There was also a great wave of immigration from the Netherlands between 1880 and 1900, and many of those coming from the Gereformeerde Kerk joined the CRC, increasing the membership of the denomination as well as the influence of Kuyperian Calvinism. The rise of Kuyper’s theology in the CRC provided the church with a basis for engagement, but the balance between being in the world and of it, of transforming culture or being transformed by it was difficult to maintain. It was the effort to achieve this balance, to both engage and change American culture without losing the distinctive principles that informed the Calvinist worldview, that became the basis of debate over music and worship.

The first approved instance of hymnody in the Christian Reformed Church was the admission of German-speaking Reformed congregations from Illinois, Iowa, and Minnesota into the Christian Reformed Church as Classis Ostfriesland in 1896. These congregations used a German Psalter (Neue Bereimung Psalmen,
1793) that included 355 hymns (from *Einige Gesängen*). In 1883, Synod allowed the churches in Classis Ostfriesland to keep the German hymns “for the present” and reaffirmed this decision in 1884, despite those who felt allowing hymns in any church would open the door for the broader use of hymnody in the denomination. In 1890, Synod was once again faced with the decision of allowing congregations who joined the denomination to retain their hymnody, but in this case, the hymns were English. Congregations from the True Reformed Protestant Dutch Church in New Jersey who had seceded from the RCA in 1822 petitioned for union with the Christian Reformed Church and joined as Classis Hackensack in 1890. These congregations used the 1887 edition of the Psalter published by the United Presbyterian Church with an appendix of 197 English hymns “suited to the catechism” that had been adopted from the RCA songbook, *The Psalms of David and Spiritual Songs*. Synod decided that “the use of the 52 hymns for the Heidelberg Catechism shall be permitted to them, but these hymns should not be introduced in Dutch or German speaking congregations.” In both cases, Synod concluded that the traditional use of hymns in these congregations was “out of practical necessity” due to a lack of good psalmody, and that the hymns used were “in accord with Biblical truths.” While the hymns of Classis Ostfriesland remained confined to German-speaking congregations, the English hymns of Classis Hackensack had a greater impact, since they were the first hymns approved for the use of all Christian Reformed congregations in the *Psalter* of 1914. The allowances

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314 Polman, p.54.
315 *Acts of Synod, 1883, 1884*, p. 10, 8; translated and quoted in Polman, p. 54.
316 *Acts of Synod*, 1890, p. 14; translated and quoted in Polman, p. 56.
317 *Acts of Synod*, 1890, p. 45; translated and quoted in Polman, p. 56.
made by the Synod in these early cases were based on the fact that the hymns were in keeping with a Reformed reading of the Bible. It was these early decisions to establish a Reformed-based hymnody that set the stage for a battle over “the hymn question” and uniformity in worship that continued for over fifty years and served to redefine Reformed orthodoxy within the denomination.

The decision to allow hymns in worship, even in these limited cases, was protested from the outset. Those who argued for psalm singing in the church claimed that the Psalms were the only songs inspired by God, and the only specific songs found in the Bible. They viewed hymns as popular songs, overly sentimental and simplistic, musically and lyrically deficient. Objections were lodged by classes to the Synods of 1890 and 1898, and in 1906, Synod appointed a committee to address “uniformity in church music.”318 The issue for the objecting congregations was that Synod’s stance on hymn singing was contradictory and weakened essential points of Reformed orthodoxy. The committee recommended working with Classis Hackensack “to annul the concession of 1890,”319 and the Synod of 1908 reiterated “that the Church Order enjoins all our churches to confine themselves in congregational worship, to the use of the Psalter, the few “spiritual songs” mentioned in Art. 69 being a matter of concession,” reinforcing its prior decisions in 1884 and 1890 to permit hymns in Classis Ostfriesland and Classis Hackensack but no others. In addition, the Synod of 1908 appointed a committee “to confer with these two Classes about ways and means of releasing Synod from these concessions” in the hope that psalm-singing would become the norm for “public

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praise” in the Christian Reformed Church and there would develop “uniformity in Psalm singing in the service of song in our Sabbath schools and Young People’s Societies.”

The goal of Synod by the late nineteenth century was to establish a consistent style of Reformed worship based in the biblical and Calvinistic practice of Psalm singing over and against the democratized worship style and non-doctrinal message of gospel hymns and American evangelicalism that had great appeal among the youth of the denomination.

The effort to delineate a Reformed use of hymnody alongside psalm singing was advocated by Henry Beets, editor of the denomination’s first English periodical, *The Banner* and professor at Calvin College. Beets was a member of the 1908 synodical committee that worked to develop a uniform singing style in the denomination. He was also appointed by the Synod of 1902 as a delegate to the Joint Commission on a Uniform Version of the Psalms in Meter. This commission was appointed to create a new joint Psalter for psalm-singing churches and included representatives from nine Reformed and Presbyterian denominations, including the Reformed Church of America. Beets’ reports to Synod in 1906 and 1910 regarding the new versifications of the psalms by the commission were positive, and he stated that the new psalter would be an improvement over previous psalters and very much in line with the Reformed creeds. As editor of *The Banner*, Beets used his platform to encourage church members to adopt hymns, while at the same time retaining their unique psalm-singing heritage:

> In the Psalm singing churches an increasing number of people is [sic] beginning to see that they are needlessly depriving themselves and their children of very precious song by their veto against hymns, condemning the

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good with the bad. And the hymnsingers, we are very glad to notice are commencing to realize their folly in withholding the very splendid legacy of Old Testament songs from the churches by excluding the Psalms from their hymnals.  

Beets even included a tribute to American gospel hymn writer Ira Sankey in *The Banner* at the time of his death in 1908. The article provided a glowing report of Sankey’s life and work, including his most famous hymns “The Ninety and Nine” and “When the Mists Have Rolled Away” as well as his song books “said to have had a circulation of more than 50,000,000.” While Beets recognized that “not every one of [Sankey’s] hymns could stand the close test of Reformed tenets,” he still believed that “many are entirely sound and full of blessed Bible truth.” Ultimately, he concluded that “through these songs as well as through personal work Mr. Sankey, we believe, has been able to lead many to the Savior—his own Alpha and Omega.” For Beets, the evangelistic character of the gospel hymns was understood as being in line with Reformed Biblicism if not in strict accordance with its creeds.

Despite Beets’ favorable assessment of the character of the new Psalter, Synod decided to allow the use of the joint Psalter without giving final approval to it. This lack of Synodical approval for the joint Psalter caused Classis Zeeland to petition for the use of an alternate Psalter (published privately by Henry Vander Werp in 1911), *The Psalms, New Metrical Version, with Tunes New and Old*, that retained the Genevan or “Holland” tunes. In response, Synod appointed yet another committee in 1914 to study Vander Werp’s Psalter as well as the Joint

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Commission’s Psalter, which included only two of the Genevan tunes familiar to the members of the CRC. The committee recommended the English-language Psalter of the Joint Commission, which Synod finally approved in 1914 as the denomination’s official Psalter, adding the catechism hymns used by Classis Hackensack as an appendix. Instead of the psalm versifications set to the Genevan tunes, the new English Psalter of 1914 utilized a majority of its tunes from American gospel hymns and British hymns of the nineteenth century, including composers such as William Bradbury, John B. Dykes, Charles H. Gabriel, and Lowell Mason.

Along with the new English Psalter that brought American gospel hymn tunes to the Christian Reformed Church, the establishment of singing schools (zangvereniging) provided church members with a repertoire of American evangelical hymns. The first singing school at Spring Street Church was recorded in 1874, and by 1895, twenty-nine singing schools were reported to Synod. In most cases, these schools were organized and paid for by young people in the church. A trained musician would come to the church and hold rehearsals during the weekdays, and the members would give concerts year-round, avoiding Sundays. While some of the singing schools worked on learning Dutch Psalms in the Genevan rhythms (which was encouraged by the Synod of 1912), most sang Dutch and English hymns. The song books in common use in these schools were Dutch hymnals (Gezangen and Gezangen des Geloofs) and American gospel hymnals,

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323 Polman, p. 60-66.
324 Christian Reformed Yearbook (1895), from Polman, p. 78.
particularly Sankey’s *Gospel Hymns No. 1 to 6*.\(^{325}\) Ironically, this gospel hymn singing led Spring Street Church—the church that had initiated the singing school movement in the denomination—to ban the use of its building for the local singing society in 1880.\(^{326}\) Some of the schools were beginning to sing in church services by the turn of the twentieth century, and by the end of World War I, so many had evolved into church choirs that Synod was forced to clarify its ruling on choirs in public worship. The first decision made by Synod regarding choirs was in 1904, and stated that choirs should only be used in church worship to lead congregational singing. By and large, congregations incorporated church choirs on an individual basis, and these choirs often not only accompanied the congregation, but also sang anthems.

During the early part of the twentieth century through the First World War, the Christian Reformed Church continued to become more engaged with American evangelicalism, increasing the threat of “worldliness” and interdenominationalism. By the late nineteenth century, Synod had already begun to deal with defining the parameters of Reformed worship, particularly in regard to hymnody and church choirs, and as war erupted, the process of Americanization intensified. This was particularly evident in the increased use of English within the denomination, which in previous decades had been seen as evidence of a loss of orthodoxy. While most CRC churches did not face the situation of those in Iowa, where a proclamation by the governor forced the Dutch and German-speaking Classes of Orange City and Ostfriesland to quickly utilize English in their schools and services or face the

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\(^{325}\) “Rapport van de Commissie inzake Uniformiteit in het Kerkgezang,” *De Wachter*, 41 (May 21, 1908), 3; translated in Polman, p. 79.

justice of the mob, many congregations chose to show their nationalism by providing English services in addition to the Dutch services. After the war, a minority of Christian Reformed churches offered only Dutch-speaking worship services. At the same time, the war significantly curtailed immigration, reducing the connection to the Christian Reformed strain in the Netherlands and further Americanizing the New World churches. The growing Americanization of the denomination also manifested itself in a desire to bring orthodox Reformed principles to American religious culture more broadly. Interested in providing spiritual assistance to the soldiers overseas and in increasing their knowledge of American churches, the CRC joined with the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America by 1916. Despite the objections of those in the denomination who feared the influence of the liberal churches in the Federal Council, the church remained within the organization until 1943, when it joined the newly organized National Association of Evangelicals.327 The increasing involvement of the Christian Reformed Church in American culture and society did cause Synod to make explicit recommendations in 1928 regarding excessive involvement in “worldly” activities such as theater and movie attendance, dancing, and card playing. At the same time, the denomination was even more committed to defining its Reformed orthodoxy has it had done previously. Now it did so over and against an emerging fundamentalism as well as an increasingly liberal modernism. The influence of these American movements touched the Christian Reformed Church soon after World War I.

Three cases brought before Synod in the 1920s clearly illustrate both the influence of American cultural movements as well as the continued effort of the denomination to maintain its doctrinal uniqueness. The “Maranatha Case” provided clear evidence of the influence of fundamentalism within the Christian Reformed Church. Reverend Harry Bultema, pastor of First Christian Reformed Church in Muskegon, Michigan had been preaching fundamentalist theology from his pulpit, and in 1917, he published his premillennial dispensational views in a book entitled, Maranatha: eene studie over de onvervulde profetie. In the wake of this publication, Classes Zeeland, Holland, Sioux Center, and Orange City requested that the Synod of 1918 “condemn the erroneous statements” forwarded by Rev. Bultema. The synodical committee found the points of dispute “not the millennium itself, the second resurrection, nor the return of the Jews to Palestine, but the unity of the Church in all dispensations and the Kingship of Christ.”

Bultema was called to provide Synod with Scriptural evidence against the Christian Reformed creeds that his views contradicted, but he refused. In the absence of such evidence, the Synod of 1918 proceeded to cite evidence from his book “which clearly stated that the Church did not exist until after the coming of Christ, and that Christ was King, not of the Church, but only of Israel,” statements which were shown to contradict the church creeds and Reformed doctrine. Bultema was presented with Synod’s findings and still he refused to retract his statements regarding premillennial dispensationalism. The Synod of 1918 condemned Bultema for his

328 Acts of Synod, 1918, p.78.
329 Concerning the unity of the Church; Heidelberg Catechism, Lord’s Day XXI, Answer 54; Belgic Confession, Art. XXXVII. Concerning the Kingship of Christ; Heidelberg Catechism, Lord’s Day XII, Answer 31; Belgic Confession, Art. XXXVII. Acts of Synod, 1918, p. 76f.
fundamentalism, and a committee of three was sent to the consistory of his
congregation to assist them in disciplinary action. The consistory defended their
pastor and his views, and so the Synod of 1920 proceeded to depose Bultema as a
minister of the Christian Reformed Church. As a result, the First Christian
Reformed Church of Muskegon left the denomination and formed the Berean Bible
Church.330

A second doctrinal incident revealed the influence of modernism and
involved the teaching of higher criticism at the denominational seminary at Calvin
College. In 1920, Synod dealt with complaints that had been lodged against Ralph
Janssen, Professor of Old Testament at Calvin Seminary. Four professors from the
Seminary had expressed disapproval of Janssen’s use of higher criticism in his
teaching, and the Board of Trustees of Calvin College and Seminary (the
“Curatorium”) investigated their complaints in 1919. The Curatorium decided that
Janssen’s explanation of his position was satisfactory and advised him “to avoid
anything which might give rise to misunderstanding and shall express himself so
clearly in his teaching that all misunderstanding will be prevented.”331 This
decision did not satisfy the professors, so they lodged a complaint with Synod. The
Synod of 1920 came to a similar conclusion as the Curatorium, finding Janssen in
line with Reformed teachings overall and suggesting he be more careful in his
“emphasis on the human factor and natural means.”332 Despite this decision, the
Synod of 1922 “received thirteen protests and communications on this matter” two

331 Acts of Synod, 1920, p. 79.
332 John Kromminga, The Christian Reformed Church, p. 76.
of which “cited voluminous evidence of his errors from his ‘Student Notes.’”

Synod called Janssen to explain his views “according to the Formula of Subscription,” but when he failed to appear, Synod was forced to make a judgment based on the information provided by the protesters. This led Synod to depose Janssen from Calvin Seminary based on the “unreformed” character of his “Students’ and Individual Notes” and his “insubordination” that “made it impossible for Synod in its investigation to go back of the Student Notes.”

They noted the use of higher criticism by Janssen and areas where he “seems to take an Evolutionistic standpoint” as well as “an Ethical standpoint,” subjectifying special revelation in Scripture. In the wake of Synod’s decision, sixteen individuals and consistories lodged protests to the Synod of 1924. These members did not provide a defense of Janssen’s teachings, but rather objected to the disciplinary procedure of deposition. The Synod of 1924 remained firm in its support of the decision made in 1922.

A third challenge to the denomination arose from those who believed the Americanization of the church was leading the CRC away from Reformed orthodoxy to an evangelical overemphasis on common grace. During the 1920s, two pastors, Rev. Herman Hoekstra and Rev. H. Danhof were actively speaking and writing against the doctrine of common grace, and charging the denomination of falling into worldliness. In 1924, Synod was petitioned by Classes Hackensack, Sioux Center, Hudson, and Muskegon to initiate an investigation into the denial of the doctrine of common grace and the denomination’s position on this doctrine.

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333 The two protests were from the Consistory of Broadway Avenue, Grand Rapids and Classis Zeeland, Acts of Synod, 1922, p. 89-116.
334 Acts of Synod, 1922, p. 278.
Synod officially recognized “the existence of a grace of God shown to all men, the restraint of sin by the general work of the Holy Spirit, and the ability of unregenerate men to do acts of so-called civic righteousness” in conjunction with Scripture and the Reformed confessions. Seven protests were lodged against Synod’s decision, and Hoeksema and Danhof publicly defended their views against Synod. Classes Grand Rapids East and Grand Rapids West initiated disciplinary action against Hoeksema, Danhof, and Rev. G.M. Ophoff for refusing to abide by the declaration of Synod. These three pastors and their churches seceded from the denomination, forming the Protestant Reformed Church and taking with them the largest number of seceders in the history of the Christian Reformed Church to that point. In this case, Synod defined Reformed orthodoxy in the context of cultural engagement. While the dissenters argued that the acceptance of the doctrine of common grace was leaning toward Arminianism and human responsibility, Synod emphasized the need to balance the doctrine of common grace with that of special grace—the necessity of ministering not only to the “elect,” but to all the unconverted. In each of these cases, adherence to the tenets of Reformed orthodoxy defined the church’s role both within American culture as well as separate from it.

It was in the wake of such controversies and the perceived aggressive tactics to permeate their denomination that the Christian Reformed Church became even more acutely aware of both modern liberalism and fundamentalism in their midst. The challenge of secular American culture combined with the rise of fundamentalism to test the distinctive Reformed principles of the Christian Reformed Church. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, the church experienced

explicit arguments over the loss of Reformed orthodoxy and denominationalism as a result of fundamentalism generally and the Bible institutes specifically. Like many mainline denominations, some in the Christian Reformed Church saw fundamentalism as anti-intellectual, and this anti-intellectualism threatened the doctrinal rigor of the denomination. At the same time, many in the church were attracted to the Biblicism and evangelistic bent of fundamentalism. The singular-minded focus on Biblical truth found in fundamentalism resonated with a people eager to identify with American culture but wary of its modern, secular tendencies. As the denomination grew, the adoption of American evangelicalism, in doctrine and worship, was hotly debated. At the same time, it was through the reach of evangelicalism that the distinctive Reformed doctrines and practices could influence American culture and combat the influence of both nondenominational fundamentalism as well as liberal modernism. Once again, it was the character of Reformed worship, particularly in regard to music, where these issues became transparent.

In an effort to confront the challenges of both modernism and fundamentalism in Christian Reformed worship styles, the Synod of 1916 began to encourage greater congregational participation and denominational unity through the development of a uniform worship style for liturgy and hymnody based on Reformed principles. While a common liturgy was never approved, the struggle to establish a shared hymnody dragged on for decades. In 1918, a synodical committee that included respected pastor and future Banner editor Henry J. Kuiper was appointed to begin a study of worship within the bounds of Reformed
Like Henry Beets before him, Kuiper advocated a hymnody that was in line with biblical standards as well as the Reformed creeds, songs that would complement rather than replace the Calvinistic psalmody. Kuiper argued that by restricting congregational singing to the psalms alone, the Church Order was not allowing churches to “sing about the cross of Christ; nor about the birth, the resurrection, the promised return of Christ, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the sacraments of Baptism and Communion.” Even the doctrines of the church could not be fully developed in song, since “the doctrines of election, sovereign grace, atonement, faith, and many others are not found in our Psalter in their full development and New Testament richness.” The best way to achieve a uniform, denominationally specific hymnody was for Synod to approve a Reformed hymnal for use in worship. Without such action, congregants would continue to use hymns of all sorts, including the “frothy” gospel hymns, without discretion or awareness of their doctrinal dangers. Kuiper insisted that the harm inflicted by “hymns of the wrong kind” was “already being done” through “the unrestricted use of hymns in our homes and church meetings of various kinds” as well as in “Sunday schools,

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336 Henry J. Kuiper is acknowledged by many historians of the Christian Reformed Church as an influential figure in various efforts toward denominational unity. In his biography of Kuiper, Henry J. Kuiper; Shaping the Christian Reformed Church, 1907-1962 (Grand Rapids: Reformed Church Press, 2007), James A. DeJong asserts that Kuiper’s ministry, synodical work, and editorship of The Banner reflected and contributed to the cohesiveness of the Christian Reformed Church during this period. To support this, DeJong quotes the work of James Schaap (Our Family Album: The Unfinished Story of the Christian Reformed Church (Grand Rapids: CRC Publications, 1998), James D Bratt (Dutch Calvinism in Modern America: A History of a Conservative Subculture (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), and John H. Kromminga (“1962 In Retrospect,” 1963 Yearbook of the Christian Reformed Church (Grand Rapids: Christian Reformed Publishing House, 1964), who stated that “no man in our time has left a deeper imprint on the Christian Reformed Church than Henry J. Kuiper” (Kromminga, 338; quoted in DeJong, xiv).

societies, Christian schools, mission meetings, and other gatherings.” As editor of *The New Christian Hymnal* (1929), Kuiper worked to compile a variety of hymns that were theologically sound, which was “the first requisite of Christian hymns and hymnals” but “received rather scant attention in our day of widespread doctrinal indifference” and were useful in both church worship and church meetings. This proved to be a challenge, since “very many of the more recent kind of ‘evangelical’ hymns are mere sentiment without thought and, regards the music, too sensational to foster genuine Christian feeling.” Despite this, Kuiper found “wheat among the chaff” and included a number of popular gospel hymns to appeal to all congregants, not just the “cultured.”

Hymnody was also advocated for its ability to provide an “evangelical tone” in Christian Reformed services that was missing but necessary to the growth and development of the church. Adding hymns would provide “emotional satisfaction” and “satisfy the hunger for a more evangelical strain in our services, the absence of which has in many cases created a feeling of dissatisfaction which eventually led to a departure to other churches.”

Harry Bruinsma, a professor at Duke University and director of music at “a large orthodox Southern Baptist Church in Durham, North Carolina” reiterated the necessity for an evangelical musical influence in the CRC based on his experience in the South. He believed that the emphasis on service through music at Baptist and Methodist churches as well as the musical education offered in the public schools and at the denominational colleges attracted

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young people to the southern evangelical churches. It was “the encouragement of
church choirs and instrumental ensembles in the Christian Reformed Churches” that
would “result in a reawakening of interest and enthusiasm on the part of many
young people who now find little to attract them in the program of the church,” and
this could best be accomplished by instituting “a well-organized music system in
the Christian schools.” By providing “a clearly defined music course, with a
definite objective, taught by instructors who have been well trained in the proper
methods at Calvin College, and supervised by a competent musician with Christian
as well as musical ideals,” the denomination could “provide an emotional and
spiritual outlet” for “our artistically gifted young people….who until this time have
either been suppressed or have spent their talent in other directions.” 341 In fact,
Calvin College students had been utilizing the evangelizing potential of gospel
hymnody since the “clamor” for musical training led to the introduction of singing
classes in 1908.342 Like the students of Moody Bible Institute and other
fundamentalist Bible institutes who were required to use their musical skills in
practical evangelical training, Calvin students were using their musical talents to
win lost souls to the Gospel message;

We hereby give a third interesting picture, (courtesy of “Calvin Annual”), of
the young people of Calvin College who love the great cause of missions.
The Band was organized Sept. 29, 1919, for the purpose of bringing the
Gospel to the wandering and down-trodden in Grand Rapids. This large and
growing city affords ample opportunity for just this kind of work. Regularly
meetings are held in the Kent County Jail, the Soliders’ Home, and various
districts in and around the Valley City. Mission societies are supplied with

341 Henry A. Bruinsma, “Voices in the Church: A Voice From the South on Music in the
Church,” The Banner 74 (November 23, 1939), p. 1094.
342 Seymour Swets, Fifty Years of Music at Calvin College (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans,
speakers and open-air meetings on the street corners are also held, including Gospel talks and musical numbers. 343

In addition, a traveling quartet of students toured Michigan with CRC missionaries J. DeKorne and Dr. Lee Huizenga and continued to perform in Christian Reformed churches in Chicago, Pella and Sioux County, Iowa, Minnesota, and South Dakota. Professor John Swets believed these students were “doing something distinctly new in the history of Calvin and something that the School may be proud of ever afterwards.” 344

Arguments against the introduction of hymns criticized precisely the emotionalism and evangelicalism others believed was “sorely needed.” Gospel songs were dismissed as a “passing fad” rather than as an eternal expression of worship. Evidence of this was the business-centered focus and cultural popularity of gospel hymnody:

The use of psalms is for the best interest of our church, present and future….Spiritual experiences, given us in the psalms, have echoed in every Christian heart, from the beginning of times, while many hymns merely express a passing mood, or popular religious thought. It is a sad fact that at present hymn books are compiled and published for the sake of money alone, some of which have obtained dangerous popularity…. 345

There was also concern that adopting hymns would usher in another evangelical form of worship, particularly the use of performance singers and instrumentalists evident in the use of choirs, quartets and soloists. While many recognized that choirs were not unbiblical, there was a sense that local evangelical churches were attempting to attract people through show, “trying to outrival one another’s choir,

bidding for the services of soloists and singers” and “making the choir the chief attraction of the service.” This sentiment was shared by letter writer Bernard Bennink who argued that a church choir was contradictory to a Reformed concept of worship in which God speaks to his people “through his ambassador, the ordained minister” or “his people, the congregation speaks to him in prayer and thanksgiving, in song and offering.” A choir was outside the scope of worship because it was entertainment that honored “the singing of a select few” over “the artless singing of the congregation as a whole.” Bennink asserted that the issue of church choirs was “not a gradual, but an essential difference” that the church must be wary of. The “American Christian Churches” served as a warning, and this included “one of our downtown churches” which employed not only a choir, but also a “minister of music.” Thus, the use of choirs led to a desire to promote the artistic form rather than worship, utilizing professional singers and musical directors “to….draw the crowd.” Bennink advised the church to discourage choirs and work to improve congregational singing for the glory of God, while issuing a final caution; “our song service may show the marks of culture and refinement, as it becomes an intelligent Reformed people, but do not make the church building a music hall on the Sabbath day, or try to draw a crowd by musical entertainment.”

In 1928, the ongoing debate over church music intensified as the denomination began developing its first Psalter Hymnal and clarified its position on church choirs. Henry J. Kuiper, editor of The Banner and the recently completed New Christian Hymnal, along with Seymour Swets, director of music at Calvin

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College, were appointed to the synodical committee commissioned to study the question of using hymns in worship. The Synod of 1928 instructed the committee to “study this matter thoroughly from every point of view, and to investigate whether or not a sufficient number of hymns suitable for our public worship is obtainable.” If the committee did find a “sufficient number of suitable hymns,” they were to submit the hymns to the Synod of 1930 as well as publish their report with the text of the hymns for the denomination to consider six months prior to the meeting of Synod. This “Report on the Hymn Question and the Text of Approved Hymns, to Be Presented to the Synod of 1930 of the Christian Reformed Church” presented 197 hymns out of its study of about four thousand as suitable for worship, both scriptural and Reformed. It was noted that about one-third of these hymns were written during the nineteenth century, in the more recent American gospel hymn tradition. The committee advised that Synod “continue and bring to completion the work of preparing a collection of church songs in the English language, taking every possible care that songs of such a collection shall be sound in content and suitable for use in our public worship.” They recommended adopting hymns by reiterating Kuiper’s argument that the congregation should be able to express in singing “the blessings of redemption as revealed in Christ and the praise of the Triune God of salvation as brought to light in the New Testament revelation.”

Since the New Testament provided “no collection of songs, as was given to the Church of the Old Testament,” it became the task of the New Testament Church to secure such songs “for which it was qualified by the outpouring of the Holy

Spirit.”349 The synodical committee on hymns referenced Dutch Reformed history in support of this, citing “the example of the fathers of the sixteenth century, who although bent on psalmsinging in public worship, did not allow themselves to be carried away thereby as to oppose the use of ‘Eenige Gezangen,’” a compilation of hymns that were a part of the Dutch psalmboeken or kerkboeken and sanctioned in Article 69 of the Church Order.350 There was also reference made to the position of Abraham Kuyper, who noted that the historic Reformed church had “never defended as a principle that the Church in its praise of God must only use words which were inspired by God,” but that the use of hymns was left to the freedom of the churches.351 At the same time, the report warned against replacing the singing of psalms in worship with the singing of hymns. To protect against this, the suggestion was made that Synod add a clause to Article 69 that “would prescribe the barring of all hymns which have not been approved and accepted for church use by Synod” and place a limit on the number of hymns introduced “that it may never become greater than the number of psalms.” They also encouraged Synod to enact “that in all ordinary services the singing must be partly psalmsinging, or….that one half should be psalmsinging,” “that the use of hymns shall not be mandatory,” and that there should be the publication of both a Psalter Hymnal as well as a Psalter for use in churches.352

The Synod of 1930 approved the introduction of hymns, and instructed the committee to select from the hymns it deemed appropriate and “suggest possible

349 Ibid.
352 Ibid.
ways of revising our present Psalter and to include versifications for some of the most familiar choral tunes of the Dutch Psalter.” The committee presented 138 hymns and tunes in another report, “Report to the Synod of 1932 on Hymns,” that was sent to all consistory members in the denomination from the 197 originally proposed in 1930. These hymns expanded on the supplement to the 1914 Psalter that included versifications of the Ten Commandments, the Lord’s Prayer, the Twelve Articles of Faith, the Songs of Mary, Zacharias and Simeon, the Morning and Evening Hymns, and the Hymn of Prayer before the sermon. These committee-approved hymns became the basis of the 141 hymns found in the 1934 Psalter Hymnal, which also included 327 Psalms that were primarily from the 1914 Psalter. The Christian Reformed Church had adopted American gospel hymnody in its worship and thus shared in the music of American evangelicalism. At the same time, it did so through an exhaustive process of researching, writing, and debating the finer points of Reformed doctrine.

The issue of church choirs in worship was less essential to Synod than that of the doctrinal soundness of the music. Since 1904, Synod had taken the position that choirs were not unbiblical and therefore, while it discouraged the use of church choirs, the final decision was left to local congregations. This resulted in a widening variation of worship styles, and by 1926, Classis Grand Rapids West made an overture to Synod asking that “Synod revise the decision of the Synod of 1904 in re choir singing in our public worship, and take a definite stand on this question, either by prohibiting it altogether (except as an aid to congregational singing) or

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354 Polman, p. 114-115.
leaving the matter entirely to the local congregation.”355 The Synod of 1926 reiterated the 1904 decision, adding that local consistories should be the final arbiters in allowing church choirs. They reasoned that choir singing “has been the custom in some churches for many years” and that “it belongs to the province of the local consistories.”356 Still, the issue was not resolved, and in 1928, two classes, Classis Pella and Classis Grand Rapids West, both made overtures to Synod in regard to church choirs. Synod stood by the decision of 1926, claiming

1. Your committee believes that one Synod should not revoke the decision of a previous Synod unless a specific instance occurs which proves that the decision was harmful to the churches, or proof is offered that the decision is contrary to the Scripture or Doctrinal Standards of the church or to the Church Order. Neither the Standing Committee nor Classis Pella have offered these conditions necessary to revoke the decision of 1926.

5. Your committee furthermore reminds the Synod that the decision of 1926 compels no church to introduce a choir. On the contrary, the introduction of choirs was discouraged. 357

Twenty delegates opposed the 1928 decision, but only to assert that the matter should not be left to the decision of local consistories, since the denomination needed to have a uniform order of worship. A committee was appointed to report to the Synod of 1930 on the issue of church choirs, particularly “whether there is a place in our public worship for a choir (singing alone) according to our Reformed principles.” They came to the conclusion that based on the principles of Scripture, choirs were neither required nor forbidden in public worship. Therefore, they declared the question as belonging to the “adiaphora” or the wisdom of local

churches, but added that there should be careful supervision of the choir by the consistory to ensure that their singing was “to the glory of God,” “to edify the church”, and “never…to curtail congregational singing, nor for mere entertainment.” The committee believed that worship included the “upbuilding or edification” of the congregation and that choirs could function in this regard. They concluded:

May not a choir, properly controlled by the consistory, as stated above, sing Scriptural words of God for the edification of the people? And again, may not the choir, with the consent and at the request of the people, sing from the hearts of the people, praise and prayer to God in the words of the Scriptures, as we find them in the Psalms and other places? Especially for such edification choirs may be helpful, though they cannot be regarded as indispensable. 358

By 1930, the denomination had wrestled for almost two decades with the adoption of church choirs. This American evangelical form was ultimately allowed by Synod, but only after the use of choirs in worship was analyzed within a biblical and creedal framework. The influence of American evangelicalism came most forcefully to the Christian Reformed Church in the form of musical worship, but as with the use of church choirs, it was also redefined within a Reformed context.

Maintaining doctrinal rigor in worship was important to many in the CRC and discussions concerning the Reformed nature of church music highlighted this awareness. At the same time, the quality of the “popular” forms and techniques associated with American evangelical church music received criticism. There was not only an effort to distinguish the distinctly Reformed nature of music used in worship, but also the higher quality of the songs, both musically and spiritually.

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Synodical committee member and Calvin College music professor Seymour Swets weighed in on what constituted “suitable” music for church worship and “some of the principles involved.” Based on biblical passages in both the Old and New Testaments, Swets deduces the “rather clear-cut ideals of choral and instrumental performance” which reveal a willingness “to submit to rigid organization, regular and intense rehearsals in order to achieve impressive results.” As the apostolic church developed, so too did the forms of music in worship, and still “these forms agree in elevated character, distinction, dignity, conformity to aesthetic laws and sincerity as utterances of genuine piety.” Swets argued that “good church music” was ultimately not an issue of aesthetics, “not art for art’s sake but art for God’s sake,” despite the current demands for more artistic quality in church music. These demands were particularly vehement in relation to the young people of the church, who some musical leaders claimed were leaving the denomination “due to the poor quality of the music” in the worship services. Yet the ideal for church music needed to be devotion rather than aestheticism, not “a mere vague feeling of ecstasy but a conscious relationship to God involving certain definite spiritual conditions,” conditions that could be deepened by music, but “apart from sacred words” could not be caused by them. For Swets, the fundamental problem of church music was resolving the “sensations of delight, which follow the perception of beauty in sound….with conscious devotional impulses so as to reinforce the longings of worship.” It was this problem that St. Augustine and Calvin were concerned with, leading them to restrain the use of particular forms of music in worship. With the

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360 Ibid.
denomination’s “present interest in hymns and psalms” and the increasing use of choirs, Swets felt it important to “set high standards” and keep in mind Calvin’s “fundamental conception of worship-music” that “there should be no element in our worship which is not to the praise of Jehovah.”

Swets proceeded to establish the “criteria” for suitable church music, discussing the opinion of “those who say that without words there is no sacred music” as well as those who agreed with Henry Ward Beecher that “all good music is sacred if it be heard sacredly.” Both sentiments were too limited for Swets, as was the belief that all music composed “for religious purposes” or given a religious title was sacred. In opposition to such ideas, Swets used the example of revival hymns, composed expressly for religious purposes but “childlike in melodic construction, cheap in rhythm and impoverished in harmony” producing “surges of emotionalism” that “often pass away as quickly as they were produced.” Rather than being “pretty,” church hymn tunes should be “rugged,” possessing “sturdiness, manliness and a vigorous forward sweep” such as the tunes “St. Anne” and “Lyons.” The best arbiter of a good hymn tune was its usage within the Christian church. The most widely used tunes were often those of the best musical and religious quality, where art served a devotional purpose. These were the guidelines for determining suitable church music, where “clergy, congregation, organists and singers submit their artistic attainments” to the glorification of God. Similarly, tempo was not an indicator of sacredness, despite “some in our own membership

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361 Ibid.
364 Ibid.
who must sing…so slowly as to make it impossible for even the most robust member of the congregation to sing a line without breaking it up two or three times in order to stop for breath.” Tempo needed to be determined by the “character and purpose of each piece, whether it be a hymn, anthem or voluntary.” Ultimately, Swets asserted that all these factors—the words, the “attitude of the listeners,” the purpose of the composer, the title, and the tempo—needed to be taken together in order to determine the suitability of a piece. These were the “principles of worship music,” principles that would establish the quality of CRC church music over and against that of the more emotive and simplistic gospel hymns. 365

The greater substance of Reformed hymnody in comparison to evangelical gospel hymnody was reiterated by longtime organist, Adrian Hartog. Hartog asserted that congregants did not have an appreciation or understanding of music and underestimated its importance to worship. He emphasized the necessity of respect for congregational song, asserting that the truths of Scripture were more easily remembered when put to song just as “heresies….sung as hymns strike a deep root into human hearts.”366 Because of this, it was the duty of “each individual worshipper” to pay close attention to “both words and music” of congregational song.367 Hartog provided examples of the best congregational hymns from the Psalter Hymnal, such as “O God our Help in ages past” (P.H.186) sung to the tune Lafayette or St. Anne. According to Hartog, this was a song written in the plural form and the music is in chorale form, with enough “body” to support many voices.

367 Adrian C. Hartog, “Interpretation of Congregational Song,” The Banner 71 (February 7, 1936), p. 140.
In contrast, a song such as “God be merciful to me” (P.H.102) sung to the tune
Refuge was inadequate for congregational singing because it was a personal plea and a the tune was less “substantial.” Hartog believed even these individualistic songs could be salvaged by providing music better suited to a large group, such as the tune “Ajalon” (P.H.100). Psalm tunes and chorales, particularly those written in unison, or the plain song (Palestrina, P.H.361) were recommended as the best for congregational use. While the more rhythmic gospel hymns were not “totally condemn[ed]” by Hartog, they did not “even begin to measure up to the psalm tune or chorale” and were “not generally…our best worship music.”  

368 Hartog, “Interpretation of Congregational Song,” The Banner 71 (February 7, 1936), p.141.

369 Mr. John Miller, “Church Music,” The Banner 74 (September 21, 1939), p. 879.

The introduction of evangelical, interdenominational aspects of worship through gospel hymns and church choirs, as measured as these introductions were, led to the call for music education. While pastors and professors analyzed and delineated the finer points of Reformed doctrine in relation to hymnody, it was more important that the general congregation have a full understanding of the nature of music in the context of the Reformed faith. It was thought that families had lost the importance of music in religious education, lost the time “when most of our families gathered about the organ or piano to sing psalms and hymns” which “filled the mind and the free time with noble, rather than frivolous thoughts.” Musical education could develop discernment among congregants, specifically among the covenant youth through “the abundant use of music at home” along with “good musical
education, ever striving to obtain the ideal of music in our church services.”

Religious musical training, either instrumental or vocal would “raise the cultural level of our people; build up church orchestras; choruses and congregational singing; provide a wholesome hobby that will afford endless pleasure throughout life; and forge another link of attachment to the religious life of the church.” Not only would musical education improve the overall quality and understanding of Reformed worship, but it would also help congregants appreciate the greater depth and quality of this worship over and against that of evangelistic revivalism.

Emphasis was placed on the necessity for musical education in church as well as in the Christian Reformed schools. It was noted that “in spite of [music’s] great value it is conspicuously absent from the curricula of most of our Christian schools.” The concern was that Christian Reformed children were not being trained in proper musical appreciation, and that this lack of knowledge deprived them of an integral understanding of proper Reformed worship. These children became adults in the church who were undeveloped in music, since “they [were] not taught that medium through which one can express his finest and most delicate feelings.” Educators in the Christian Reformed schools emphasized the necessity of a “good” curriculum for music and teachers who were not professional musicians, but rather strong Reformed Christians. Christian School Magazine even included a warning against “these ‘wonderful’ singers” who had well-established

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371 Mr. John Miller, “Church Music,” The Banner 74 (September 21, 1939), p. 879.
373 Ibid.
reputations; “…there will be a tendency on the part of such a person to use his class as an audience before whom he can display his wonderful ability, instead of limiting himself to real teaching.” 374 Instead, the moderately musical teacher, with a good curriculum that focused on “the great composers,” “the most beautiful folk songs of every nation,” “art songs,” and “snatches from operas and oratorios” would suffice to introduce children to true music. In addition to establishing the music to study, students “must be taught how to use their voices correctly, what evils to avoid, and above all...to appreciate,—to love good music.” In this way, all aspects would be developed “the ear, and the heart...as well as the voice” and the church would be edified more fully through musical worship “for frankly we are shamefully weak in this respect.” 375

The argument was made that music should be studied generally because of its potential for practical enjoyment as well as its higher significance for the glorification of God. Music had the ability “to lift up, comfort, and soothe our fellow human beings” if “led in the right direction.” Thus, Christian Reformed educators asserted that it was the denomination’s “solemn duty to instill a sympathetic attitude towards music in the minds of our children in their early youth, so that when they are grown up they will naturally take the right attitude towards it.” 376 This “right attitude” included an appreciation for proper music. Recognizing that “in our days of victrola and especially the radio, music as it were, forced upon us,” advocates lobbied for music education in order to teach discernment, to instill a

375 ibid.
love for “that which is pure, beautiful, and noble in music” and to “shun the cheap, jazzy class of music.” This included the study of hymns as well as other popular sentimental songs. The common grace argument was made that “the greatness and goodness of God” could be revealed through non-religious forms of music, and that these more secular songs could in fact teach other important practical skills. Music was intended to develop “a sympathetic soul and one capable of discriminating real values.”

Chicago Christian School, under the leadership of Mark Fakkema, developed one of the earliest music programs in the Christian Reformed school system. As an educator in Chicago, Fakkema was acutely aware of the challenge posed by fundamentalist institutions such as Moody Bible Institute to Reformed confessionalism. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, Fakkema was an outspoken advocate for maintaining Reformed orthodoxy in denominational higher education, including through musical instruction. He explained the purpose of music education in Reformed language, asserting that the fundamental objective of music, as of all subjects, was to restore the intent of God’s creation, and that all subject areas worked together to do this. Thorough study of all areas of creation would stimulate “God consciousness,” defined as “glorifying God at the very moment that we teach the subject.” In addition to bringing about “God consciousness,” the study of all areas of creation, including music, provided a way of directing practical life toward

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“God glorifying ends or purposes.” In the case of music, Fakkema delineated objectives such as:

(a) To develop the musical talent which God has given to the several pupils “so that the man of God may be perfect” also in this respect.
(b) To create the proper cheerful, as well as Christian, atmosphere in our class rooms by daily singing songs and doing so every morning as the art of music requires.
(c) To aid in giving music its rightful place in the home of the pupils’ parents as well as in their own homes in the future.
(d) To aid in the worship of God in His House, so that we may truly “make a joyful noise unto the Lord.”
(e) So that we may as a people of God in some measure prepare to do now what we throughout eternity will do “over there.”

By 1938, Fakkema was Secretary of the National Union of Christian Schools, and instructor at the newly established Reformed Bible Institute. In an effort to promote the Institute as an alternative to Moody and other fundamentalist institutions, Fakkema again drew upon the dedication to Reformed orthodoxy evident in the denomination. He utilized the rhetoric of warfare not only in relation to “modernism,” but also against a “less organized” and “less formidable” army of “undenominational superficial evangelism with its premillenarian-dispensational bias” established “under the shadow of the wall” that was “[radiating] their heresy within the walls of our circle.” The day and night school, correspondence courses, radio broadcasts, and summer Bible conferences of the various Bible institutes reached across denominations, and attracted many in the Christian Reformed Church. According to Fakkema, thousands of “our people” were being drawn into these ministries because “few people, if any, are greater Bible readers

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380 Ibid.
381 Ibid.
382 Mark Fakkema (Secretary of the National Union of Christian Schools, and instructor in the Reformed Bible Institute), “A Missing Link,” The Banner 73 (March 24, 1938), p. 278.
and Bible students than those who come from Reformed circles” and as a result, “now that we have Americanized, [we] are easy marks for Bible school propaganda.”383 The fear was that the Bible institutes would attract the covenant youth and they would be “lost” to unsound doctrine. Fakkema confronted the denomination with this danger by asking, “how many young people who for any length of time have come under the spell of the average Bible institute having Arminian leanings has returned with undiminished zeal for Calvinism?”384 Playing on the concerns for Reformed orthodoxy, Fakkema made his case for the work of the Reformed Bible Institute (conducted under the auspices of the Helping Hand Mission of Chicago, which was established around 1935) to complete the Reformed educational system; to provide the “missing link.” The goal of the RBI was to provide similar programs of study as fundamentalist Bible institutes but from a Reformed perspective. In reaction to those who argued that Moody offered practical training for evangelism and furthered the spread of the gospel message, Fakkema pointed out the contrast between an “un-Reformed missionary” and a “Reformed missionary:”

An un-Reformed missionary is actively engaged in a soul-winning program with the glory of God as a hoped for consequence; whereas the Reformed missionary is actively engaged in a God-glorifying program with the conversion of sinners as a hoped for consequence…. The un-Reformed missionary is inclined to look upon the glory of God as an outcome of his activity; whereas the Reformed missionary regards the adding of souls as outcome. Whereas the latter honors the doctrine of sovereign election, the former pays respect to the idea of the free will of man.385

384 Ibid.
Fakkema asserted that Moody’s broad creedal sympathies and narrow educational focus was problematic for true Reformed Christians. While emphasizing mission work, fundamentalist Bible institutes ignored other areas of “kingdom work,” such as “Christian day instruction, Christian labor organization, Christian industry, Christian politics, Christian leadership in all spheres of life.”\(^{386}\) The undenominational, upbeat evangelism of institutions such as Moody was intended to be a more non-threatening form of fundamentalism, but for the Christian Reformed Church it was no less threatening than modernism.

Providing an orthodox Reformed alternative to both modernism and fundamentalism prompted the denomination’s involvement in mass media as well. As early as 1931, Christian Reformed educators in Chicago broadcast lessons over Moody Bible Institute’s radio station, WBMI. Invited to speak as a part of the weekly Sunday School broadcast, teachers from the Reformed Bible Institute spoke on topics such as “Education in the Home” and “How to Prepare One’s Self for the Teaching of the Bible Lesson.”\(^{387}\) In addition, WBMI began broadcasting “Holland services” that were led by several Christian Reformed pastors in the Chicago area. Reports were made regarding the listener response, particularly highlighting the impact of these broadcasts on those from other denominations. One such report included an excerpt from “a minister of the ‘Church of Christ’” who was so moved by the lessons that he requested more information about the “organization” and “its work…which I consider ‘among the most important in the world.’”\(^{388}\)

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\(^{386}\) Ibid, p. 477.


\(^{388}\) Ibid.
be utilized to spread Reformed principles to others, but it could also be used in missionary work. It was suggested that the denomination invest in compact radios to give to Indian students at the missionary school in Rehoboth. Students would take these radios home “with the assurance that each evening at sunset there would be fifteen minutes of singing by the children, praying and a heart-to-heart talk by one of our missionaries” and could thus minister to “the grizzled old father and his wife.”

Justification for the denomination joining the radio craze focused both on combating the secular influences of the popular media as well as the doctrinal errors propagated by the variety of religious broadcasts. The argument paralleled that of Moody leaders in that it hoped to offer a Christian alternative to secular programming as well as the divisive fundamentalist programming. Yet Moody strove to do this by putting forth a positive, nondenominational, broadly conservative religious message. The Christian Reformed members who argued for an alternative station did so on the basis of propagating Reformed orthodoxy and what were perceived to be the unique principles of the Reformed faith. In order to be a transformative influence in regard to the radio, adults in the Christian Reformed Church were counseled to be “the parental ‘watchman on Zion’s walls’” to “cultivate their taste for good music and instruct their children in this matter” and “set their face like flint against Sunday programs which desecrate the Sabbath day.”

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write in to comment “favorably or unfavorably” on radio programming as well as supporting the development of a Christian Reformed station. This involvement in broadcasting was considered part of the Christian task;

It is not sufficient for our ministers to be more zealous in using the catechism class to combat the heresies of the modernist, the sectarian and the other unsafe religious teachers who make propaganda for their views over the radio. Let us make use of the radio to propagate the true gospel of Jesus Christ. We believe that our Reformed doctrine is the purest interpretation of this gospel. We believe that our Calvinistic world and life view is the only hope of the modern world in its intellectual bewilderment and moral confusion. We also believe that Christians are the light of the world as well as the salt of the earth and that it is our high calling to let the light of our principles shine in the world round about us.391

It was imperative that the true doctrine of Calvinism was spread through the radio, not merely “devotional” programming or “the simple gospel message.” While this basic Christianity was not bad, those promoting Christian Reformed radio broadcasting emphasized the distinctive principles of the denomination that needed to be propagated. Early efforts were made in the Holland services and Christian education broadcasts over WMBI as well as a monthly question hour broadcast by Dr. Clarence Bouma over WOOD in Grand Rapids. Yet, without widespread support (particularly monetary support) from the denomination and churches, these Christian Reformed broadcasts were forced to use “raw material,” singers and speakers “inexperienced for this particular kind of Christian service because they appear before the microphone only occasionally.” As a result, the broadcasts were not widely popular and did not develop “one group of trained singers and one or a few speakers whose names gradually become household

391 Ibid. 
In order to compete with the message of the “undenominationals,” the Christian Reformed Church needed to dedicate money and training to a radio ministry. To not do so would be to lose a “golden opportunit[y] for Christian service,” particularly in the city where the denomination was so ubiquitous. By utilizing “a little more practical psychology to our radio work,” selecting “the best singers we have in our local churches, in whom musical excellence is combined with the deepest spiritual fervor, and pay[ing] them for their services,” the ministry of the denomination would be furthered, since “the radio station is one of the high hills where the Church of God cannot be hid and from which it should let its light shine out into the world.”

The music of the radio was a particular area of criticism for church members. The concern on this account was that church organists and musicians were imitating the music performed over the radio in worship. The improvisational nature (or sound) of gospel songs performed over the radio led to the addition of “’grace notes’ which produce a slurring effect,” is “unmusical and for cheap effect,” and “destroys the dignity of a hymn.” The onus was on the organist to not “’play up’ to the people” to the popular radio style as well as on the congregation to be “attentive and quiet.” With the proper attitude and reverence, “some of this music which seems sometimes so dull and colorless to some of us will have a surprisingly delightful message for us for it will tell us of the glory of God and bring us as his

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chosen people in closer contact with the Giver of this wonderful token of his lovingkindness and mercy.”

In 1939, the Christian Reformed Synod approved a denominational radio program, and the result of Synod’s radio committee was a program entitled “Back to God,” broadcast over the Chicago station WJJD. The show was intended to fill the void left by current Christian programming, including local Christian Reformed programs, that focused on bringing the simple gospel message to “sick and shut-ins.” Instead, the “Back to God” half hour was “designed to bring the gospel according to its Reformed interpretation to as many people in this great country, and if possible to our neighbor-countries.” The synodical report emphasized not only the missionary potential of the program, but also the projected audience, the “forgotten” upper class:

We believe that our Church is eminently fitted and equipped for work among the upper class in our nation and therefore face a challenge as never before to bring it the words of life. Our emphasis on sound biblical preaching by an educated ministry should be a powerful asset in seeking to touch this forgotten class.

After a one-year trial run on WJJD in order to develop the best radio personality and musicians, Synod hoped to get the “Back to God” program on a larger chain network so it could be broadcast across the country. This denominational radio work was encouraged by the fact that “we are obeying the spirit of our Lord’s command to proclaim from the housetops that which we hear in the ear” and that Biblically, “those who proclaim divine truth should speak in those places where they can reach

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395 Ibid.
the ears of *the largest possible number of people*.”\(^{398}\) It was also asserted that a Calvinistic worldview had provided the basis of the nation and was the only answer to the threat of modernism. There were “serious weaknesses…in Fundamentalism which impair its testimony against Modernism,” specifically “its theology is not sufficiently *theological*, that is, God-centered.” It was only Calvinism that could “do justice to the precious truth….that the leaven of the gospel of Jesus Christ must penetrate to every level of the life of Christian people, as individuals and as groups.”\(^{399}\) Those in the denomination were thus encouraged to contribute spiritually, monetarily, and with their talents in support of denominational radio work.

It was also important to provide the best and most far-reaching broadcast; “the Church should not come a whit behind the shrewd advertiser who pays for his advertisement in proportion to the number of interested readers which it will reach.”\(^{400}\) Securing the best broadcasting equipment with better sound effects, such as “a church auditorium or even church parlors properly equipped for broadcasting” would produce a better quality broadcast of worship and help draw in more listeners from the denomination as well as others. This would help the CRC’s Calvinist message to compete with the fundamentalist broadcasts, since “the Moody Bible Institute is greatly responsible for the far-reaching wave of Schofieldism in our country and many of our own Christian Reformed folk are becoming tainted by listening to the high powered methods they employ in advertising their views over

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\(^{400}\) Ibid, p. 316.
the ether.”\(^{401}\) The singers and speakers involved in broadcasting also needed to be aware of utilizing the best techniques for getting the message across to “a critical public.” A denominational radio pastor needed to be someone who could “explain our doctrinal standards in such a manner that they can be understood by all, one whose “bedside” manner is such that he can supply the shut-in with that special type of uplift that is needful to lead him out of his despondency, and who is well versed in missionary methods in order that he can fluently bring the gospel to the outsider.”\(^{402}\) Music performed over the radio by denominational musicians needed to compete with not only the “jazz and fast music” of the time, but also with the finer church music of “our Roman Catholic brethren and our Lutheran neighbors” who were “far ahead of us” in musical broadcasting. The musicians needed to organize into quartets, Glee clubs, and choirs, presenting “the best in church music” and led by “a competent teacher who understands both the presentation of good talent and what the radio technique requires.” This was necessary in order to counteract the typical Christian Reformed singing where “we blast away at sacred hymns in the same way we sing popular tunes, thereby cheapening their significance in worship.”\(^{403}\)

By the mid-twentieth century, the worship and evangelistic efforts of the Christian Reformed Church clearly reflected the influence of American evangelicalism and fundamentalism, particularly in the realm of music. While doctrinal differences in preaching and teaching resulted in expulsion from the

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\(^{402}\) Ibid.

\(^{403}\) Wieringa, Jr., “Brief on the Christian Reformed Radio Hour,” *The Banner* 75 (June 14, 1940), p. 569.
church, the introduction of gospel hymnody in the late nineteenth century along with the development of evangelical styles became an integral part of the CRC’s worship and evangelistic efforts. Influenced by the world and life view of Kuyperian Calvinism and inundated with an interdenominational evangelicalism, the immigrant church began to “Americanize” its music and worship. Decades later, Calvin music professor Seymour Swets bemoaned the advent of Americanization in the denomination’s music, but the introduction of gospel hymnody and other aspects of American evangelicalism also encouraged a rededication to distinctive Reformed principles within the CRC. As fundamentalists worked to develop an intellectual yet popular response to liberal modernism through a nondenominational evangelism, the Christian Reformed Church paralleled those efforts in the form of specifically denominational musical education, a denominational Bible institute, and a denominational radio broadcast. Armed with doctrinal rigor and a “spiritual superiority complex,” the CRC dealt with “the angst over being culturally assimilated and compromised” by promoting its worldview as the only comprehensive Christian response to modernism.  

So while the “frothy gospel songs” and American evangelical forms of worship became a part of the Christian Reformed Church, a distinctive psalmody remained along with recognition of the pre-eminence of the Reformed tradition.

404 DeJong, p. xvii.
Fellowship unites. Unity makes strong. The spoken word and the sacred hymn are the two chief parts in the fellowship of a Christian worship service. For the first we look to the pulpit, for the other to the pew. In the hymns it sings a church has one of the most effective means of knitting together more closely its scattered membership…

Separatist and rural denominations such as the Christian Reformed and Mennonite Church were less invested in the dominant middle-class culture of American evangelicalism and were more measured in their adoption of evangelical forms and practices. Yet the socially conservative impulse evident in late nineteenth-century revivalism resonated with the theological duality of such isolated denominations as the reach of evangelical organizations extended into their far-flung communities. Through Sunday schools, mass revivals, published tracts and gospel hymn books, denominations interested in retaining the distinctive aspects of their culture or doctrine were forced to confront the influence of American evangelicalism. At the same time, these outsider denominations were involved in utilizing evangelical forms for their own transition into greater involvement in American society as well as the maintenance of their distinctive practices. Members of the culturally separated Mennonite Church hoped to preserve and “revive” the practices of the denomination and encourage the youth of the church to remain

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within the community by adapting some of the evangelical forms such as the
Sunday school and singing schools for the promulgation of the German language
and the teaching of German Anabaptist hymns. Although the church was indeed
skeptical regarding aspects of American evangelicalism and revivalism, particularly
the advancement of Christian civilization through the state, the focus on both a
personal, individual conversion as well as the connection to a wider Christian
community based on literal Biblicism resonated with the Mennonite tradition and
pietistic influences.

The “Old” Mennonite Church was, by the nineteenth century, the largest
body of Mennonites in North America and was distinguished from various
schismatic groups of “New” Mennonites such as the Reformed Mennonites of
Lancaster County, Pennsylvania (founded in 1812) and the General Conference
Mennonite Church of the Eastern District (founded in 1847 in Franconia,
Pennsylvania). Rooted in sixteenth-century Anabaptist tradition, the Mennonite
Church eschewed theology as a “hindrance to real Christian piety” and emphasized
practical Biblicism in an effort to directly apply the ethics and practices of the New
Testament. As a result of their effort to live as the New Testament church, the
Mennonites were measured in their relationship to the surrounding culture,
emphasizing nonconformity and the rejection of state domination. Due to their rural
quietism, Mennonites harbored suspicions about the efficacy of American
evangelism, preferring to live as examples of biblical Christianity and the visible
church. Yet divisions between Old and New Mennonites over adoption of

407 Harold S. Bender, Conrad Grebel (Goshen, Ind.: Mennonite Historical Society, 1950)
nineteenth-century middle class standards along with Church involvement during the Civil War led to the articulation of a more specifically American Mennonitism that engaged with the broader culture. Without a systematic theology of its own to direct such engagement, the Mennonite Church worked to develop a theological perspective that drew from American evangelical currents while remaining embedded in the distinctive Anabaptist ethical tradition. This included a greater emphasis on individual conversion and public piety as well as increased social activism.

From 1860-1900, the Mennonite Church experienced what was termed a “quickening of religious life” that established evangelical tendencies in the denomination along with increased involvement in interdenominational organizations and missions. This religious “awakening,” as it came to be known, drew upon progressive impulses that were directed toward adapting and preserving Mennonite practice in the American context. Beginning in the antebellum period, innovations such as developing a stronger ecclesiastical structure, increasing activism in social and political issues such as temperance and slavery, and agitating for greater educational opportunities were encouraged by Franconia Mennonites John Oberholtzer and Abraham Hunsicker, “fuel[ing] tensions concerning both authority within the church and interaction with the broader culture.” These “New” Mennonites left the “Old” church, establishing catechismal training for members, doctrinal preaching, and pulpit exchanges with other denominations that attracted younger congregants.408 As explained by Nathan Yoder, such innovations were

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couched in Anabaptist Biblicism but were appropriated from nineteenth-century evangelicalism and the Second Great Awakening, particularly in its eschewing of traditional practices and authority. The controversy surrounding these progressive innovations revealed the tensions in the Mennonite Church regarding its relevance in the American democratic context;

Two models of church order were here contending for the future of this Mennonite community. The newer one had rationality, democracy, and clarity on its side, as well as a different definition of piety. The traditional one represented the submission of the individual initiative, even when it might be more enlightened, to the authority of the larger brotherhood.  

These tensions continued throughout the nineteenth century, informing the leaders of the later awakening as well as the fundamentalist movement.

The Virginia Mennonites of the Shenandoah Valley similarly provided some of the progressive impulses that preceded the awakening, participating in services with other denominations and utilizing English in addition to German. One of the leaders of the Virginia movement was Joseph Funk of Mountain Valley (later renamed Singer’s Glen), who believed that encouraging new trends in church music and congregational singing would help promote a spiritual revival based on the Great Commission. For Joseph Funk, the somber music of Anabaptist worship had a deadening effect on the church;

Hundreds of Christian congregations assemble weekly, oftentimes without having one member capable of conducting this part of Divine worship to acceptance. The service of SONG is often presented to Heaven as a sacrifice, “Maimed, and blind, and halt.”

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410 *Southern Musical Advocate and Singer’s Friend* 1 (July 1859): 2; quoted in Goff, p. 43.
Advocating spiritual revival through musical education and improved congregational singing, Joseph Funk was willing to adopt new and popular techniques to teach all Christians the worth of song and to encourage participation in worship. In order to accomplish this, Funk established the first American Mennonite printing company and began publishing both German and English songbooks in the early nineteenth century, issuing his most popular *A Compilation of Genuine Church Music*, also known by the fourth edition as the *Harmonia Sacra*, in 1832.411 The songs in Funk’s compilation included a preponderance of mainly English eighteenth century hymnwriters—the majority by Isaac Watts and Charles Wesley, as well as ten or more by James Montgomery, Philip Doddridge, John Newton, and Anne Steele—all who made up the canon of hymnody shared by American evangelicals by this time.412 Beginning in the 1830s and continuing until the Civil War, Funk and his sons traveled throughout Virginia, establishing singing schools based on a new seven shape-note style published in the Funk songbooks. In conjunction with his musical teaching, Funk began a periodical, *The Southern Musical Advocate and Singer’s Friend*, in July 1859, promoting “musical and religious revolution.” Funk’s publications echoed the evangelistic ideal of American evangelicalism, stating “the different denominations” should “lay aside their disputes about external things of minor importance and unite together to promote


412 In “The Defining Role of Hymns in Early Evangelicalism” *Wonderful Words of Life; Hymns in American Protestant History and Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), p. 3-16, Mark A. Noll delineates and analyzes hymns can be defined as broadly evangelical by the eighteenth century and how these hymns were able to cross denominational and cultural boundaries in America.
the redemption of Christ, by the spread of His glorious Gospel and the extension of His Kingdom from shore to shore.”413 By the turn of the century, Funk’s evangelistic vision of musical and religious revolution for the church was realized through the harmonized singing of twentieth century Mennonite churches along with the embrace of revivalistic gospel hymnody that provided a framework for both interdenominational evangelism as well as traditionally Anabaptist themes.

It was primarily two men, John M. Brenneman and John F. Funk, both of whom were acquainted with practices and educational opportunities outside the denomination, who led the awakening in the Midwest. Brenneman traveled extensively, was well-versed in English, and encouraged the introduction of new styles in church practice. But it was Funk who played the greatest role in introducing evangelical forms and music to the church. In 1857, Funk moved from Pennsylvania to Chicago, where he became involved in the lumber business, was converted after attending noontime revival meetings, and joined the Young Men’s Christian Association. There he began work in the Chicago Sunday school movement alongside Dwight L. Moody. Funk initiated the awakening in the Mennonite Church by pushing for evangelical Sunday schools and evangelistic work in the denomination for the purpose of propagating traditional Anabaptist practices. He did so by utilizing the techniques of mass communication; in 1864 he began publishing the first Mennonite paper, Herald of Truth (which became the Gospel Herald in 1908) and in 1867 established the Mennonite Publishing Company in Elkhart, Indiana. These organs functioned “as quasi-official church

agencies,” providing Funk an arena for promoting causes he believed necessary to the vitality of the church.\textsuperscript{414} Arguments for the establishment of Sunday schools, advertisements for Ira Sankey’s \textit{Gospel Hymns}, and articles from evangelists at Moody Bible Institute were common features in Funk’s journal. Funk promoted evangelical revivalism as a necessary part of maintaining and promoting the Mennonite Church through evangelism, and as head of the Mennonite Publishing Company, he published Sunday school lessons and gospel hymnbooks to aid in this endeavor.

Through their work, Funk and Brenneman articulated a “pietistic progressivism” based in D.L. Moody’s form of evangelical revivalism that “aimed at saving individuals rather than reforming society.”\textsuperscript{415} This conservative sense of social responsibility expounded on the duality of Anabaptist separatism, distinguishing spiritual responsibility to “the church and individual conscience” from earthly responsibility “directed by secular forces such as the state.”\textsuperscript{416} At the same time that Funk and Brenneman were advocating a revitalization of the Anabaptist heritage, they were introducing methods external to the tradition in order to do so. This included spiritual revival by Mennonite itinerants as well as progressive education in order to retain “scattered members and members’ children lost to the church.”\textsuperscript{417} Such efforts produced arguments concerning the Biblicism of

\textsuperscript{415} Yoder, p. 66.
\textsuperscript{416} \textit{Ibid}, p. 60.
evangelical methods as well as their ability to effectively maintain Mennonite ethical practices.

While Funk and other progressives advocated the evangelistic vision of Sunday schools as a way of bringing the Mennonite Church and its tradition into the broader evangelical fold while passing on distinctive Mennonite practices to the youth, many of the “older people” and more conservative members saw Sunday schools as indicative of the biblical errors of American evangelicalism, reinforcing the necessity of remaining separate. As one 1870 letter to the *Herald of Truth* explained;

> We object to it because persons not members of our church are allowed to teach publicly in our churches which is unscriptural. We object to it because such Sabbath schools are in fashion amongst the highest, the proudest, and the dressiest classes of our country, and following them we follow after something in high repute by the world, and friendship with the world is enmity with God….We object to it because we think it is carried on in a way that must in course of time bring our church to a level of the highest and dressiest churches of our country. We object to it because the Mennonite Church was to be a people of God, separate from the world, having close communion. Whereas the present Sunday school system is a mixture with other societies and the world, we consider it our duty to oppose it as an evil, which in our opinion has a demoralizing effect on our church.  

Despite some members’ misgivings, by 1890 almost all Mennonite congregations had approved the establishment of denominational Sunday schools—primarily to counteract the influence of evangelical Union Sunday Schools—and held mass gatherings at Sunday school conferences. These conferences became “general rallies for all of a new generation’s activism and ‘progressivism,’” encouraging the spread of revival campaigns.  

While Funk and Brenneman’s brother Daniel had

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419 Schlabach, p. 33.
attempted a series of revivals in Pennsylvania through the 1870s, it was during the growth of the Sunday school movement that revivalism became sustainable among Mennonites. Funk’s associate editor John S. Coffman was the preacher who began the revival movement in 1881 at Bowne, Michigan that by 1899 had spread throughout Mennonite and Amish Mennonite congregations. Coffman gained renown for blending evangelical revivalism with Mennonite doctrine, softening “invitations to salvation” with reconciliation and “a delicate sense of how to be a true brother in a peoplehood church.”

Thus, the introduction of evangelical revivalism into the Mennonite Church familiarized congregants with aspects of the broader movement, such as the Sunday school movement and evangelistic revival meetings but tempered the message of American evangelicalism with Anabaptist ethical and cultural practices. These methods characteristic of the Mennonite awakening were combined with the hymnody of American evangelicalism that had been introduced by the singing schools and songbooks of Joseph Funk.

The influence of evangelical hymnody on the Mennonite Church continued in the wake of Joseph and John Funk’s evangelistic efforts and was further aided by the publication of the first English Mennonite hymnals during the late nineteenth century—the height of gospel hymn popularity. By the 1880s, many congregations were singing in harmony, using a variation of gospel hymnbooks for Sunday school and young people’s meetings as well as evening services (the most common being Ira Sankey’s *Gospel Hymns 1-6*, which was published in both German and English) and standard Mennonite hymnals (which also included several gospel hymns) in Sunday morning worship. In 1883, the Mennonite Church published its own

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420 Schlabach, p. 33.
Sunday school songbook, *Bible School Hymns and Sacred Songs for Sunday Schools*, which was a combination of “selections from the grand old chorals” and “music of a modern type.”421 By 1890, the denomination came out with a new worship hymnal, *Hymns and Tunes* that was intended “to bring about a closer union in the singing between the Sunday school and the Church,” and included several hymns by American composers and educators Lowell Mason, William Bradbury, and Thomas Hastings.422 The General Conference of the Mennonite Church in 1898 appointed a committee composed of representatives from both the Ohio and Virginia conferences and asked them to work on a hymnal that might unify the various districts and congregations. In 1902, the *Church and Sunday School Hymnal* was completed and published in a variety of forms; octavo, shaped note, and word, by committee chairman J.S. Shoemaker. In the wake of congregations’ continued purchase of gospel hymnbooks published by Chicago-based companies Hope Publishing and Rodeheaver House, the denomination published the *Church and Sunday School Hymnal* in 1908 which included 412 texts and 349 tunes, 40% of which were gospel hymns and choruses. By 1911, a supplement of 120 hymns was added to the hymnal, the majority of which were gospel hymns by Philip P. Bliss, George Stebbins, Ira Sankey, and James McGranahan.423 This hymnal remained the most popular among Mennonite congregations throughout the twentieth century, and was still in print in 1999. A compilation of 271 gospel hymns for Sunday

school use entitled *Life Songs* was published by the Mennonite Publishing Company in 1916 and followed up in 1938 with *Life Songs No. 2* with an additional 72 songs.

The generation of young people who were trained in the Sunday schools of the awakening, singing the gospel hymns and learning the lessons of evangelical revivalism “carried it forward and built the new Mennonite church” bringing the denomination more fully into American evangelical culture from 1890 to 1914. These English-speaking Mennonites were well-versed in the language of evangelicalism, promoting vigorous gospel activism and individual pietism. At times, this language (particularly evident in Funk’s *Herald of Truth*) overwhelmed the humility and pacifism of Mennonite tradition, utilizing instead the militaristic and nationalistic phrases of American evangelism. While there were continued references to Mennonite ethical distinctives such as nonresistance and nonconformity, the awakening introduced a new theological “plan of salvation” that focused on personal acknowledgement of sin and claiming Christ as Savior. Mennonite “workers” prepared themselves for “active Christian service” through advanced education at evangelical institutions such as Moody Bible Institute and

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424 Mennonite church historian Harold S. Bender (“The Anabaptist Vision,” *Church History* 13 (1944): 3-24) established the dominant historical interpretation regarding the effect of the awakening on Mennonite theology and practice. Bender’s premise was that the awakening led to the recovery of the essence of historical Anabaptism—an “Anabaptist vision” that united the church over and against any particular cultural forms. This ideological essence included discipleship; a new voluntary church dedicated not only to separation and persecution, but also mutual aid between Christians; and nonresistance. Bender’s work was followed by successive works such as Guy F. Hershberger (editor, *The Recovery of the Anabaptist Vision*. Scottdale, Pa: Herald Press, 1957), William Ward Dean (“John F. Funk and the Mennonite Awakening” Ph.D dissertation, University of Iowa, June, 1965), J.C. Wenger and others who added to Bender’s interpretation, viewing the awakening as a means of acculturation for the Church, hastening the transition from German to English and the adoption of American evangelical forms, leading the Church to greater participation in the fundamentalist movement as well as American culture more broadly.

425 Schlabach, 47-53. I have provided a broad overview of a much more nuanced and complete analysis of the blending of evangelical language with traditional Mennonite discourse provided by Schlabach.
practical mission work at the Mennonite Chicago Home Mission. By 1894, the demand for training in evangelistic work and practical education among young Mennonites led to the establishment of the Elkhart Institute of Science, Industry and the Arts (moved and renamed Goshen College and Biblical Seminary in 1903). Based on the Bible institute mold, the Elkhart Institute focused on practical Bible training rather than theological education and was a signal of the “spirit of progress.” At the same time, the Institute moved toward garnering middle-class respectability as an academic institution. Under President Noah Byers (1898-1913), Elkhart Institute was accredited as a liberal arts college and hired faculty with advanced degrees. While supported by the newly organized General Conference of the Church, Goshen College received harsh criticism from church members concerned that higher education counteracted the communal authority and simplicity of Mennonite practice, a critique that culminated in a debate over the use of musical instruments at the college. Despite such attacks, the denomination continued to provide oversight to the college as an institution of the Church countering the work of broadly evangelical Bible institutes. Armed with a new discourse and greater training, leaders of the early twentieth century Mennonite Church such as Daniel Kauffman (Manual of Bible Doctrines, 1898, 1914, 1928) championed aspects of American evangelicalism and fundamentalism, but they did so as an outgrowth of Mennonite practice.

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427 Yoder, p. 164-165; 172-173; 179-181.
Drawing upon issues central to Anabaptist tradition—“literal obedience of Scripture, purity within the church, and separation from the world”—that had been reappropriated during the awakening, a number of progressive Mennonites aligned themselves with the nascent fundamentalist movement. The paradox between cultural engagement and separatism that characterized the Mennonite awakening was similarly evident in the growing fundamentalist movement. Struggling to redefine Anabaptist heritage in the context of American culture, the leaders of the awakening inspired social activism and interdenominational cooperation while simultaneously creating the “need to reassess the boundary markers between Mennonites and the world.” As explained by historian Nathan Yoder, the more conservative progressives who emerged from the awakening (termed “aggresso-conservatives by Yoder) “reconciled relevance and confrontation” through an emphasis on “nonconformity….to protect them from insidious worldliness even as they moved purposefully into more involvement with their surrounding culture.” In addition, the awakening’s emphasis on evangelical revivalism shifted the focus of congregational life to “the individual’s personal experience of God in a crisis conversion,” placing greater importance on “how the individual member then conformed to the congregation’s corporate nonconformity to the world.” As a result, conservatives established standards such as plain dress, attendance at Bible conferences, and internal denominational structures as necessary markers of the traditional faith. By codifying such progressive practices as specifically Mennonite, conservatives asserted the legitimacy of their theological interpretation

428 Ibid, p. 22.
429 Yoder, p. 243-244.
over that of the more liberal inheritors of the awakening. These interpretive tensions became more evident in conflicts during the 1920s.

The awakening had opened the denomination to the benefits of conservative Protestantism, but it had also introduced modern religious influences that threatened to lead the Church toward theological liberalism and worldliness. Kauffman in particular delineated a conservative Christian faith aligned with the emerging fundamentalist movement but retained a dedication to distinct Mennonite practices in the context of fundamentalism. Through his post as editor of the Gospel Witness from 1905-1943 (in 1908 the Gospel Herald; formerly Herald of Truth), Kauffman spoke out against the threat of higher criticism and evolutionary theory to Protestant Christianity. At the same time, he helped establish central denominational organizations such as the general conference and worked to ordain modest dress and lifestyle as “tests of obedience to the church” rather than signs of grace. By the 1920s, conservatives more stringent about fundamentalism compiled an eighteen-point statement of belief that was adopted by the general conference in 1921 as “a report of a ‘Committee on Fundamentals’” and pushed the church to close Goshen College in 1923-1924 due to the liberalism of its faculty and recently elected president, Daniel Kauffman. The closing of the denominational college revealed the “challenge of reconciling educational and ecclesiastical expectations” that was already evident in the quick succession of “four presidents and three academic deans” from 1917-1922.431 The election of conservative leader Daniel Kauffman as president in 1922 was not enough to serve the interests of the militant constituency, whose intent was to fashion Mennonite education “in the image of the official,

431 Yoder, p. 358.
conservative church—not the other way around.” Despite Kauffman’s own fundamentalist sympathies, his attempt to blend fundamentalism with traditional Mennonite principles and his lack of “premillenial crusading” made him a target of more rigorous conservatives within the Church who couched their arguments in the language of traditional Mennonite practice. In 1929, one of these militant leaders, George R. Brunk, Sr. began a new journal based more substantially on American fundamentalism, aptly titled *The Sword and Trumpet*. The language of the broader fundamentalist movement found a place within the Mennonite Church in its reaction against the worldliness and secularism of American culture, dominating the denomination through the next generation. By the 1930s, elements of fundamentalist thought remained within the Mennonite Church, but these were balanced in the context of Mennonite practice. As Kauffman himself asserted in 1937, “the Mennonite Church is firmly committed to the Fundamentalist faith,” but maintained fundamental practices “which many so-called Fundamentalists reject.”

In effect, Mennonites, by observing nonconformity, nonresistance, and other specifically biblical practices, were more “fundamental” than the American Fundamentalists.

These “fundamental” Mennonite doctrines of nonconformity and nonresistance emphasized by the conservative inheritors of the awakening were expressed in worship through evangelical gospel hymnody. The language of the revival hymns resonated not only with the pietistic evangelistic impulse of

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American evangelicals, but also the separatist impulse that became a focus for Mennonite fundamentalists. Still, the implementation of gospel hymns in nineteenth-century Mennonite worship caused some consternation for those progressives who perceived a complete loss of the Anabaptist tradition in such music. John F. Funk, who was involved in advertising many of the gospel hymnbooks used in Sunday schools and worship, exhibited concern regarding the biblical themes and unrefined music of the hymns;

…Just now there seems to be an alarming mania among songwriters to work up Golden Gates—Beautiful rivers—Golden plains—Beautiful Trees and Flowers—and Evergreen Hills—into some sort of poetic furniture, which music-men varnish up by adding a chorus in which are strangely mixed up “Sweet by-and-by”—“Happy Home”—“Beautiful Hereafter”—and “Over There.” Some of these songs contain pretty ideas, but unfortunately, so many of them are unscriptural, and we think, are unworthy of the place they claim, i.e. the Sunday School. The light, diddling, fiddling dance music to which they are not unfrequently adapted does not very much commend them to the service of the sanctuary…

Even later Mennonite historians such as Harold S. Bender saw the effect of gospel hymns as “both wholesome and harmful, depending on the form it has taken and the extent of use.” In particular, the “heightened emotional emphasis” and “subjective religious experience” of such hymns was seen as negatively influencing the “piety and even theology” of the Church, leading to “a progressive detachment from the historic heritage and anchorage of Anabaptist-Mennonite background” in twentieth-century church life. Despite such jeremiads, Mennonites’ embrace of gospel hymnody was in many ways one of the clearest examples of the Church’s selective

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acculturation, adopting the popular rhythms and rhetoric of evangelical revivalism to the historic Anabaptist experience. The solemn music of Mennonite worship in early nineteenth-century America was derived from either the *Ausbund* hymnal (1564), the ancient hymnal of the Swiss Mennonites that included Anabaptist hymns emphasizing the glory of martyrdom, or the chorales of German Reformed hymnals, such as *Ambrosii Lobwasser’s Neu-Vermehrtes Gesangbuch* (1753). Singing of the hymns during worship was typically done plainly; a capella (without instrumental accompaniment) and in unison. While the Anabaptist hymnody was much different in its performance as well as its style from the upbeat, accompanied harmonies and choruses of evangelical gospel hymnody, the lyrical message was quite similar. The focus of Anabaptist hymnwriters, many of who were martyrs, centered on God’s protection through worldly persecution, the saving work of Christ, and the heavenly reward. For instance, the seventh hymn of the *Ausbund* by martyr Michael Sattler begins with a personal assurance from Christ, reminding the faithful of their recompense;

If one ill treat you for my sake,
And daily you to shame awake,
Be joyful, your reward is nigh,
Prepared for you in Heaven on high.

Of such a man fear not the will,
The body only he can kill;
A faithful God the rather fear,
Who can condemn to darkness drear.

O Christ, help thou thy little flock,
Who faithful follow thee, their Rock;
By thine own death redeem each one,
And crown the work that thou hast done.

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Similarly, hymn thirty-seven in the *Ausbund*, written by Anabaptist Peter Riedemann calls upon the spiritual protection and strength of the Lord in following His Word;

O Lord, let sin nor guilt
   Upon us bring a blot,
Nor terrors of the flesh
   Assail us in our lot,
But in thy work through life
   May we, what’er betides,
   Ne’er falter in the strife.

   In anguish and distress,
Give us the bread of heaven,
   And in the pain of death
Let peace to us be given.
Thou Father, full of love,
   Who makest rich the poor,
   O strengthen from above.

Help us the field to hold,
   Our strength thy holy word,
And in our time of need
   Protect us by thy sword,
That, heroes of thine own,
   We in eternity
   May wear the heavenly crown.\(^{438}\)

This “dualism between ‘the world’ and heaven” evident in sixteenth century Anabaptist hymns was echoed in many nineteenth century American gospel hymns, making them easily adaptable to the two kingdom identity of the Mennonite Church.\(^{439}\) As historian Sandra Sizer [Frankiel]’s rhetorical analysis emphasizes, the dualism of gospel hymns was supported with a thematic focus on human

\(^{438}\) These translations of hymns from the *Ausbund* are found in *Baptist Hymn Writers and Their Hymns* by Henry S. Burrage, D.D. (Portland, Maine: Brown Thurston & Company, 1888), p. 5, 21.

affliction, wherein “burdens, toil, struggle, and strife are the common lot;” a theme also evident in Anabaptist hymnody and understood in the context of persecution and separatism. The hymns in both cases end with the promise of “a happy ending to the journey.”

Contrasts between the worldly burden and the heavenly reward are apparent the gospel hymn “After” arranged and composed by George Stebbins;

After the daily crosses, a glorious crown of life.

Contrasts between the worldly burden and the heavenly reward are apparent the gospel hymn “After” arranged and composed by George Stebbins;

After the daily crosses, a glorious crown of life.

After the toil and trouble, there cometh a day of rest;
After weary conflict, peace on the Saviour’s breast;
After the care and sorrow, the glory of light and love;
After the wilderness journey, the Father’s bright home above.

After the night of darkness, the shadows all flee away;
After the day of sadness, hope sheds her brightest ray;
After the strife and struggle, the victory is won;
After the work is over, the Master’s own word, “Well done.”

After the hours of chastening, the spirit made pure and bright;
After the earth’s dark shadow, clear in the light of Light;
After the guiding counsel, communion full and sweet;
After the willing service, all laid at the Saviour’s feet.

After the pain and sickness, the tears are all wiped away;
After the flow’rs are gathered, no more of earth’s decay;
After the deep heart sorrow, an end of every strife;
After the daily crosses, a glorious crown of life.

In the well-known gospel hymn “It is Well With My Soul,” (1876) by Horatio Spafford and Philip Bliss, the burdens of earthly life are related along with the release provided by Christ’s sacrifice;

When peace, like a river, attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea billows roll;
Whatever my lot, Thou has taught me to say.
It is well, it is well, with my soul.

\[\text{440} \quad \text{Sizer, p. 29.}
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\[\text{441} \quad \text{Ira D. Sankey, James McGranahan and Geo. C. Stebbins, Gospel Hymns Nos. 1 to 6 Complete (Chicago: Bigelow & Main; Cincinnati: John Church Company, 1894), No. 446, p. 461.}\]
Refrain
It is well, with my soul,
It is well, with my soul,
It is well, it is well, with my soul.

Though Satan should buffet, tho’ trials should come,
Let this blessed assurance control,
That Christ has regarded my helpless estate,
And hath shed His own blood for my soul.

My sin—oh, the bliss of this glorious thought—
My sin—not in part but the whole,
Is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!

And, Lord, haste the day when the faith shall be sight,
The clouds be roll’d back as a scroll,
The trump shall resound, and the Lord shall descend,
“Even so”—it is well with my soul.442

While the gospel hymns exhibited rhetoric that fit the prayer, testimony, and exhortation of evangelical revivalism, its language was also well suited to Mennonite understanding by the twentieth century. Highlighting spiritual struggle, strength through Christ, and eternal victory, gospel hymnody echoed themes from sixteenth-century Anabaptist hymns. These themes easily aligned with the doctrines of nonconformity and nonresistance stressed by Mennonite fundamentalists. What Sizer termed “passivity and passion” in the rhetoric of gospel hymns worked in the context of Moody’s middle-class “revivalism without social reform,” but also in the context of separatism. The emphasis of the awakening and later Mennonite fundamentalists rested on the paradox of engagement with and separation from the world; gospel hymns portrayed such a dualism.

Like the Christian Reformed Church, the Mennonite Church fashioned its own form of “fundamentalism” that drew from and highlighted practices associated

442 Sankey, Gospel Hymns Nos. 1 to 6 Complete, No. 573, p. 582.
with Anabaptist tradition. Although the Mennonites lacked the doctrinal heritage of
the CRC, they utilized evangelistic revival forms and language in an effort to
recover a more socially active church history. As they did so, there emerged a
paradoxical emphasis on engagement with the world and separation from it, an
emphasis rooted in the varied interpretations of Anabaptist practice and indicative of
the broader fundamentalist movement. This dual impulse was discernable in the
gospel hymns of evangelical revivalism, a musical form readily adopted by
Mennonite congregations, and indicative of both their heritage and American
acculturation.
CONCLUSION:

“LORD, I LIFT YOUR NAME ON HIGH”

What then have church music and hymnody been about in twentieth-century American life? The answer is the highest art of the past and present and most banal materials one can imagine, the most difficult music played and sung by highly trained musicians and the most familiar texts and music sung by anonymous congregations. Church music and hymnody have been about all sorts of things, and the ferment at century’s end points to the complexity.\textsuperscript{443}

The conflict over church music and gospel hymnody in evangelical denominations during the twentieth century was indeed complex. As a vital component of a socially conservative revivalism and a more evangelistic fundamentalism, gospel hymnody provided the grassroots aesthetic for an interdenominational community from the nineteenth through the mid twentieth century. Used to ignite individual conversion, the simple Biblical message and popular melodies of the gospel hymns made evangelistic meetings more accessible and appealing to visitors, children, and young people by countering the more formal style of conventional worship. At the same time, popular gospel hymnody reflected larger trends within American evangelicalism. Wrestling with the implications of bringing gospel hymnody and, by association, a more populist revival spirit into worship, mainstream, established churches such as the Methodist Episcopal and Reformed Church of America redirected their sense of aesthetic and liturgical

worship during the early years of the twentieth century. At the same time, smaller, ethnically homogenous and culturally isolated churches such as the Christian Reformed Church and the Mennonite Church used musical debates to refocus their distinctive theology and redefine their cultural identity in an American context. For all these churches, hymnological change brought to light their engagement with American culture as well as their embrace of American evangelicalism. Worship music became an indicator of a church’s social position as much as its theology, its evangelistic focus as well as its level of cultural engagement.

The resolution of the tensions surrounding gospel hymnody occurred by the middle of the twentieth century, when virtually all denominational hymnals included gospel hymns (the “best” ones) as part of the canon of historic hymns and conservative evangelicalism began to regain a measure of established respectability. Thus, a new debate emerged over more modern forms; a development emblematic of the continual social and cultural shifts within American evangelism and the emergence of new tensions within it.

The later decades of the twentieth century brought an explosion of popular Christian music in a mass of forms. Many of these forms were influenced by gospel hymnody, which had become a ubiquitous form of popular music and provided the basis for a more revivalist religion as well as newer forms of popular music. Intertwining with southern folk music, African American rhythm and blues, and rock and roll, the music of gospel hymnody expanded its reach in both secular and sacred mediums. At the same time, fundamentalism had achieved a level of cultural prominence, fueled by the work of “the fundamentalist-led evangelical
coalition” and evident in the omnipresent influence of gospel hymnody.\textsuperscript{444} Although fundamentalists now had a place in broader American culture, they continued to maintain their dualistic perspective and distinct identity in relation to the “worldly” mainstream culture they were now a part of. This resulted in the creation of a parallel “Christian” culture that was most evident in the music industry. While the complexity of this musical explosion and the accompanying social, cultural, and theological friction cannot be fully addressed here, there are interesting aspects of it to consider, if only in passing.

A component of the new shifts within American fundamentalism and apparent in hymnological change was the rise of evangelist Billy Graham and the new evangelical movement. Hearkening back to the spirit of Moody’s conversionary revivalism, Graham’s postwar revivals were mass gatherings characterized by inspirational singing and centered on the call to repentance and conversion accompanied by the strains of gospel hymns such as “Just As I Am.” Graham made full use of music to induce spiritual conviction, retaining the “old-time” gospel hymns so central to the conversionary work of evangelical revivalism, while introducing southern folk styles and African American gospel music to a national audience as well. Graham’s musical cadre included fellow WMBI alumnus, gospel singer George Beverly Shea and songleader Cliff Barrows, along with various contemporary singers and songwriters such as Bill and Gloria Gaither and Andrae Crouch. These musicians used traditional gospel hymnody and drew upon its impulses in adopting a wide variety of musical forms for the purpose of individual conversion. In this vein, the Graham crusades embraced new religious

\textsuperscript{444} Carpenter, p. 212.
expressions evident in growing evangelical youth movements such as Campus Crusade, InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, Young Life, and Fellowship of Christian Athletes as well as the musical forms of the countercultural Jesus Movement. As a result, Graham’s revivals nurtured the nascent contemporary Christian music industry, welcoming musicians who “redeemed” secular music such as popular folk, country, and rock by incorporating biblically-based lyrics to harness the spiritual power of the music.

Billy Graham’s Moodyesque harnessing of contemporary, emotive, and populist forms in the service of pietistic conversion elicited criticism from strict fundamentalists, but few others. For Graham to include gospel rock band Ocean’s “Put Your Hand in the Hand (of the Man from Galilee)” in his urban revivals or encourage the “Pentecostal-leaning” practices of the “Jesus Freaks” was acceptable for the purpose of reaching the masses, as long as such practices were kept in the realm of broader public revivalism.445 With the legitimation of prominent evangelicals such as Graham, the rock and roll inspired music of the youth movement grew into an industry. Artists such as Barry McGuire, 2nd Chapter of Acts, and Keith Green had experience in the secular music industry, and like their gospel hymnwriting predecessors, they utilized those forms in the development of contemporary Christian songs. As the grassroots popularity of such music grew, a new Christian music industry emerged—this time centered in the South rather than the East or Midwest—that began to define and reproduce the parameters of this modern evangelical revival music. By the 1980s and 1990s, the “Contemporary

Christian Music” industry was booming, and a generation of evangelicals whose spiritual and cultural identity was bound up in such music began bringing these modern forms into denominational worship services.

By the end of the twentieth century, the tension over music in worship had reignited in many evangelical denominations, although the debate shifted to a genre that emerged from the contemporary Christian music scene; the “praise song.” While many gospel hymns had by this time become a part of the established canon of “good” church music, included alongside the music of European composers, it was the populist praise song that elicited the harsh criticism of musical romantics. Underlying such criticisms was evangelical tension over the growth and increasing acceptance of emotive Pentecostal practices as well as the social mores of the rebellious youth and counterculture movement of the 1960s and 70s. Adopting praise songs in worship entailed the embrace of the contemporary revival meeting and its accompanying modern technologies; electrical equipment, soundboards, projectors, as well as its musical methods; worship leaders, praise bands, and recorded background music. This style also encouraged and even required the utilization of new musical instrumentation more often used in secular forms and gauged to the acoustics of large auditoriums; electric guitars, synthesizers, and drumsets. It was argued that such accoutrements interfered with the aesthetics of the worship setting and were detrimental to the creation of a truly worshipful spirit within the congregation. Similarly, the overly simplistic, repetitive music and lyrics did not encourage an emotionally profound but properly restrained interaction with God during worship. Despite such criticisms, contemporary praise songs reflected
precisely the purpose of earlier gospel hymnody, the use of popular, simple, repetitive music to proclaim the Biblical message to a mass audience. Praise songs attempted to reclaim not only the revivalistic purpose of evangelical music, but also its focus on individual conversion. In addition, a number of praise songs highlight Biblical literalism, in some cases even sacrificing poetic flow for exact Biblical quotation. The introduction of this new grassroots revival music in the late twentieth century once again forced evangelical churches to confront their engagement with popular culture as well as their place in American society.

And so, the discussion over the adaptation of popular musical forms for the purpose of evangelism and worship continues. While evangelistic fundamentalism achieved cultural respectability through the spread of gospel hymnody, the need to constantly redefine and reassess a separate fundamentalist identity in relation to mainstream American culture remained. The emergence of a modern popular Christian music that drew upon the styles and forms of the 1960s and 70s and paralleled the development of contemporary secular music seemed to address such concerns, at least in the public marketplace. This contemporary Christian music industry produced a plethora of alternative forms for new evangelicals to utilize in mass gatherings, and concerts, and ultimately to bring into the denominational worship service, where broader issues came to light. Currently, many evangelical churches still wrestle with the adaptation of praise music and its trappings in worship. Like the earlier method of providing an evening gospel song service, many present-day congregations hold two morning services; one for “traditional” worship (ironically, that now includes gospel hymns) and another for
“contemporary” worship. Large community and “megachurches” fully utilize modern methods for drawing in the masses, including any and all forms of popular song and performance. Their “seeker-friendly” focus is often criticized for failing to provide substance or discernment, but in many ways, they clearly follow in the path of their nineteenth and early twentieth-century predecessors. Amidst repeated fears concerning the loss of orthodoxy, theological mediocrity, and aesthetic expense resulting from the adaptation of popular forms, evangelical worship and denominational commitment has proven extremely durable through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. While the particular social and cultural tensions within evangelicalism are revealed in debates over worship music, it is precisely these debates that renegotiate the parameters of American evangelicalism and allow for its continuity in the midst of change.
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