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### A Burkean Analysis of Eighteenth, Nineteenth, and Twentieth Century Christian Hymns

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## ABSTRACT

Hymns are one of the most popular forms of Christian worship, dating back to biblical times. Throughout history, hymns have been a way for people from all backgrounds and beliefs to express themselves in song. Hymnists have based their hymns on scriptures from the Bible, but have also written their hymns based on inspiration from scripture or divine revelation as well as their own earthly experience. To this day, hymns are still very present in both traditional and contemporary places of Christian worship, suggesting they are continually influential to the masses.

My analysis looks at how hymns inform Christians' theological framework, specifically how hymns shape and influence Christians' perspective of God and Jesus, as well as their faith. To do this, I analyze hymns from three centuries: the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth. Within each century I analyze four hymns using rhetorician Kenneth Burke's theory, terministic screens. This theory examines how terms shape reality for humans and filter how humans perceive and understand the world around them. More specifically, terministic screens focus on how terms select, reflect, and deflect ideas about any given phenomenon, thus creating a variety of "screens" through which humans to understand reality. In my analysis, Burke's theory enables me to examine how the hymns create different screens that inform Christians' theological framework. My analysis reveals that each century has different screens to offer and provides a variety of perspectives for Christians to adopt, whether those screens inform their reality of who God and Jesus are, what their experience on Earth can or should be,

what heaven looks like beyond this world, or how they should go about their daily lives. I hope that this analysis serves as a stepping stone for how Christians should evaluate the types of media they consume and how it informs their lives.

A Burkean Analysis of Eighteenth, Nineteenth, and Twentieth Century Christian Hymns

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Communication and Sociology

Abilene Christian University

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

By

Keely Hardeman

May 2023

This thesis, directed and approved by the committee for the thesis candidate **Keely Hardeman**, has been accepted by the Office of Graduate Programs of Abilene Christian University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

Master of Arts in Communication



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Assistant Provost for Residential Graduate Programs

Date:

May 16, 2023

Thesis Committee



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Dr. Lauren Lemley, Chair

  
Joe Cardot (May 18, 2023 13:45 CDT)

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Dr. Joe Cardot

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Picture this. You have just purchased a new car and could not be more excited about it. It is nothing like you have ever seen before, a brand-new type of car that the salesperson at the dealership talked you into. After a few days, you begin to see your car out on the road. Not your specific car, but the same model as yours and, most likely, the same year based on the resemblance. Up until now, you have never seen the car out when you are driving, but now, all of a sudden, you see the car everywhere: highways, backroads, in your neighborhood, and more.

Music is the same in that the lyrics influence our lives and what we see in the world around us. Words in and of themselves are powerful tools for communicating, and when accompanied by music, words become even more powerful. This is true when we hear a catchy song on the radio that we cannot seem to get out of our heads. It is the type of song we now recognize when a commercial ad comes on the TV or radio and the song is playing the background. The more we hear it, the more we recognize it. Music also has the power to inform us and give us a glimpse into different perspectives. The impressionability of music can change the way we think, act, and even how we construct the realities we live in. These scenarios are not specific to when you buy a new car or hear a catchy song on the radio; it happens anytime we, by choice or not, focus on something. The more we focus on something, the more likely we will see it other aspects of our lives. The same can be true in our spiritual lives.

Growing up in a traditional Church of Christ meant a few things for me. One, I sat on a pew every Sunday morning, Sunday night, and Wednesday night. Two, I sang songs every time I stepped foot in the church building. Three, the only music we sang was from an old hymnal whose cover I can still picture in the back of my head. And four, #71 “As the Deer” was *always* the youth group’s favorite.

My interest in hymnology began at a young age. Having been introduced to hymns early on, I became quite familiar with them as I grew into my teenage years. Being a part of the Church of Christ meant that I was only exposed to a certain set of hymnals. Because there is some crossover of hymns from one denomination to the next, several hymns I grew up singing in the Church of Christ are also sung in Baptist and Methodist churches; however, our hymns were sung completely a cappella and led by men based on the “traditional” Church of Christ’s interpretation of scripture. It was not until I was in college that I became curious about what these hymns were all about.

Music scholar Kenneth Osbeck once stated that “the hymnal is man’s most important aid in the worship of the Almighty.”<sup>1</sup> As I examined the gravity of what he was saying as well as the way he made the claim, I found it interesting to read his claim that the “most important” aid in worship is the hymnal. Many traditional churches still include hymns in their services today, and even if people have moved on to more progressive churches, the hymns they grew up with can have a lasting impact on their lives. Like all music, hymns are nostalgic and can trigger memories associated with a particular period in life for some. If hymns can produce those sorts of emotions, can they also such an

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1. Kenneth W. Osbeck, *101 More Hymn Stories: Inspiring, Factual Backgrounds and Experiences that Prompted the Writing of 101 Selected Favorite Hymns* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1985), 11.

impact on our lives that they inform how we view God? My curiosity has led me to ask many questions about how the rhetoric of hymns has an impact on Christians' lives and wonder why hymns are such powerful forms of worship. More specifically, I am interested in how hymns inform a theological compass within the Christian tradition and if they guide worshippers through theological lessons. Much like buying a new car and seeing it everywhere you go, I am interested to see how hymns have the potential to direct Christians' attention toward and away from certain aspects of their spiritual lives.

In this introductory chapter, I will review the history of hymns. This will provide important contextual information to frame the rest of my thesis. The rich history of Christian music explains how it has evolved and developed into the hymns that are still used in churches today. After discussing the history of hymns, I will review the relationship between music and rhetoric. Next, I will move into explaining the methodology and theoretical framework for my thesis. In this section, I will overview social constructionism and Kenneth Burke's terministic screens. Lastly, I will present a preview for the remainder of my thesis and the research question I will answer throughout my analysis chapters.

### **The History of Hymns**

The state of Christian music has changed throughout the years. With an emphasis on the language in hymns, I will briefly review the history of hymnody from the eighteenth century to the twentieth century to examine where these songs came from and how they were written. However, to begin, I will review how the journey of music and the Christian faith has evolved over time. I will start with a discussion about the biblical

representation of music and then overview the emergence of contemporary Christian music in the 1960s and explain how this genre is different from traditional hymns.

Music has played an integral role in the human experience since ancient times. For religious people and people of faith, music has especially provided a channel for humans to connect with the Divine. Biblically speaking, the first mention of music and songs was in Genesis 31 when Jacob leaves Laban.<sup>2</sup> Laban was Jacob's uncle, and upon hearing that Jacob was leaving with his wife Rachel, Laban followed after them. When he finally caught up to them, he said:

What have you done? You've deceived me, and you've carried off my daughters like captives in war. Why did you run off secretly and deceive me? Why didn't you tell me, so I could send you away with joy and singing to the music of timbrels and harps?<sup>3</sup>

In biblical times, music was a form of worship and a cultural aspect of life. Worship, in its broadest definition, is "to honor or show reverence for a divine being or supernatural power" or "to regard with great or extravagant respect, honor, or devotion."<sup>4</sup> These powerful acts of worship not only were to "show reverence" to God but also helped inform the ways people needed to live.

While most, perhaps, associate worship with music, worship originated from various acts of adoration to God. Prayer, in the Old Testament era, for instance, was one of the major forms of worship. Old Testament followers frequently worshipped God by reciting prayer of blessings, offering, protection, healing, and lamenting as a way to

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2. Don Cusic, *The Sound of Light: A History of Gospel and Christian Music* (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard Corporation, 2002), 1.

3. Genesis 31:26-7 (NIV).

4. *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, s.v. "worship," accessed April 26, 2020, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/worship>.

connect with Him. Out of this type of worship came musical versions of prayers, known as hymns. In reference to today's view of hymns, "[m]any Christians of our own day . . . regard the true hymn as a prayer offered in direct address to God."<sup>5</sup> This shows how important the relationship between prayer and musical expression was in the early years of worship. Although the New Testament does not explicitly discuss hymns or specific songs like the Old Testament does with reference to the psalms, the first "Christian" community, composed of Jesus and his followers, sang psalms.<sup>6</sup> In addition, biblical stories, such as Paul and Silas in prison, tell of the power of singing in times of trouble.<sup>7</sup> Musical worship has been a vital part of the Christian faith since the early beginnings of Christianity.

In addition to prayer, poetry was one of the more artful ways of connecting "directly to the spirit . . . [and gave] more adequate expression to the whole wealth of the world of thought and feeling."<sup>8</sup> Hymns were birthed out of religious poetry and became the earliest form of musical representation of poetry. The adaptation of poetry to a musical form produced a "freshness and power" to worship.<sup>9</sup> People were able to express themselves in both the uplifting and difficult parts of life through song and intimately express themselves in worship. In ancient biblical times, the oldest form of a hymn book came from the book of Psalms, which, in some ways, manifested itself as a book of

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5. Ruth Ellis Messenger, "Liturgical Hymns" in *Christian Hymns of the First Three Centuries*, ed. Carl F. Price (New York: The Hymn Society of America, 1942), 5.

6. Laurent Pernot, "The Rhetoric of Religion," in *New Chapters in the History of Rhetoric*, ed. Laurent Pernot (Leiden, NL: Brill, 2010), 242.

7. Cusic, *The Sound of Light*, 4; Acts 16:25 (NIV)

8. Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church* (New York: Charles Scribner and Company, 1867), 3:576.

9. Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, 3:577.

poetry.<sup>10</sup> The psalms captured the heart of musical worship in the Old Testament.

Historian Ruth Messenger explains that “the Hebrew psalms were never given up, and to this day are treasured in every branch of the faith . . . [and] formed the bulk of Christian hymnody.”<sup>11</sup> Like Christian music currently, the psalms of the Bible embodied personal expression that came from real and raw issues such as “revenge, fear, doubting, frustration, and outrage.”<sup>12</sup>

Many churches today still use hymnals in their worship services. Even with the growth of mega churches and a surge in non-denominational churches that adhere to more contemporary styles of worship music, hymns have lived on in more traditional settings. However, traditional churches are continuing to change the way they use hymns during their services. Churches are moving away from printed hymnals in pew racks to screen monitors that display the hymns in front of the congregation.<sup>13</sup> This does not change the presence of hymns in the church, however.

Even with an increased number of churches singing contemporary worship music, Christian musicians are returning to hymns for inspiration in their songs. For example, Elevation Church, a well-known and popular mega church based out of Charlotte, North Carolina, accompanied by artists Kari Jobe and Cody Carnes, released a new single in

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10. Psalms 1-50 (NIV).

11. Messenger, “Liturgical Hymns,” 5.

12. Cusic, *The Sound of Light*, 3.

13. Tom Raabe, “Hymnals Still Have a Place in Modern Churches,” *Real Clear Religion*, February 20, 2019, [https://www.realclearreligion.org/articles/2019/02/20/hymnals\\_still\\_have\\_a\\_place\\_in\\_modern\\_churches\\_110209.html](https://www.realclearreligion.org/articles/2019/02/20/hymnals_still_have_a_place_in_modern_churches_110209.html).



2020 titled “The Blessing,”<sup>14</sup> which pulls words directly from the original hymn “The Lord Bless You and Keep You.”<sup>15</sup> This song has gained significant popularity over the past year. The song premiered to the public in a live worship video in early March of 2020, and over 21 million viewers had watched as of July of 2020. Additionally, 100 churches around the world covered the song in virtual performances that have spread globally.<sup>16</sup> More recently, “The Blessing” was nominated for a Grammy award in 2021. This is an excellent example that the music industry still values the rhetoric in traditional hymns enough to reincorporate them into more modern, mainstream Christian music. Clearly, hymns and their rhetorical impact still have a place in contemporary churches.

However, there are several differences between contemporary Christian music and hymns. Contemporary Christian music did not begin until the 1960s, while hymns date back to ancient times. As I mentioned previously, music shows up in the first book of the Bible, Genesis 31. Another difference between the two is the musical composition. Hymns tend to include a four-part vocal arrangement, whereas contemporary Christian music does not always have as many parts written out explicitly. Hymns tend to also have simpler rhythms, whereas contemporary music has experimented more with syncopated rhythms.<sup>17</sup> Many other technical differences exist between hymns and contemporary

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14. Kari Jobe, Cody Carnes, Steven Furtick, and Chris Brown, “The Blessing,” Elevation Ballantyne, premiered on March 6, 2020, YouTube video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zp6aygmvmz4>.

15. Numbers 6:24-26, NIV.

16. Megan Fowler, “‘The Blessing’ Sung Around the World: 100 Virtual Choirs Spread Worship Anthem,” *Christianity Today*, July 29, 2020, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2020/july/blessing-song-virtual-choir-kari-jobe-pittsburgh-uk.html>.

17. Jonathan Aigner, “Comparing Hymns and Contemporary Songs,” *Patheos*, April 22, 2016, <https://www.patheos.com/blogs/ponderanew/2016/04/22/comparing-hymns-and-contemporary-songs/>.

Christian music, but these are some of the easiest to identify. Now that I have discussed the history of Christian music, specifically the history of hymns, I will discuss the relationship between rhetoric and music.

### **Music as Rhetoric**

The medium of music is a powerful rhetorical channel for speaking to the human experience. According to communication scholar Carl Bryan Holmberg, “just as scrutiny of a single speech can yield important insights into the broader field of rhetoric, a close scrutiny of the music of a single song can help us understand how it achieves its persuasive impact.”<sup>18</sup> Music, in all forms, has the power to evoke its listeners’ emotions and “has appealed to human ethos more than any other medium throughout the centuries.”<sup>19</sup> Therefore, musicians can, whether intentionally or not, employ strong rhetorical devices in the text and musical structure of a piece by means of their “words and grammatical structure, [which are] the basic elements of the lyrical structure, and . . . both support and maintain attitudes and values as well as create and develop them.”<sup>20</sup> The rhetorical nature of musical pieces comes from rhetors’ ability to create attitudes and values to evoke emotion and exercise persuasive power over any listener.

Historically, the relationship between rhetoric and music—specifically the lyrics within music—comes up in the fourteenth century. Most notably, Guillaume de Machaut,

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18. Carl Bryan Holmberg, “Toward the Rhetoric of Music: Dixie,” *Southern Speech Communication Journal* 51, no. 1 (1985): 74, doi:10.1080/10417948509372647.

19. Hyun-Ah Kim, “Music, Rhetoric, and the Edification of the Church in the Reformation: The Humanist Reconstruction of Modulata Recitation,” *Journal of Early Modern Christianity* 4, no. 1 (2017): 1, doi:10.1515/jemc-2017-0001.

20. James R. Irvine and Walter G. Kirkpatrick, “The Musical Form in Rhetorical Exchange: Theoretical Consideration,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 58, no. 3 (1972): 275, doi:10.1080/00335637209383124.

a fourteenth-century poet “is further recognized for his fixed poetic forms, the *forms fixes*, . . . and became the leading figure of this tradition with his courtly love poetry . . .”<sup>21</sup> Additionally, Machaut was one of the first to clearly explain lyrics in poetry and music as a “rhetorical force.”<sup>22</sup> In his musical work *Remede de Fortune*, Machaut uses memory as a rhetorical device which scholar and professor Jody Enders says is one of a few other works that “is, in fact, the conceptual birthplace of the commingling of rhetoric, poetry, and music that is paramount in lyric ontology.”<sup>23</sup> Hymns were derived by hymn-writers from the text of poems who began to take the written word and apply a melodic pattern to them. The close connection between poetry and rhetoric was, and still is, widespread, which means that there is also a connection between the lyrics within a hymn and rhetoric.

However, it was not until the Baroque period that the connection between music and rhetoric was more closely discovered by scholars and musicians alike. The Baroque period included composers who would employ “musical expression of words comparable to impassioned rhetoric or a *musica pathetica*.”<sup>24</sup> While musical scholars historically have not always tended to recognize this connection, German scholars, in particular, have found that rhetoric was one of the primary techniques employed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The Baroque period was a crucial era for music and rhetoric because

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21. Sharon S. Pearcy, “Guillaume de Machaut: Musician and Poet” (Master’s theses, Eastern Illinois University, 1999) 10.

22. Jordan Stokes, “In Search of Machaut’s Poietics: Music and Rhetoric in Le Remede de Fortune,” *The Journal of Musicology* 31, no. 4 (2014): 403, doi:10.1525/jm.2014.31.4.395.

23. Jody Enders, “Music, Delivery, and the Rhetoric of Memory in Guillaume De Machaut’s *Remede De Fortune*,” *PMLA* 107, no. 3 (May, 1992): 450, doi:10.2307/462754.

24. *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, eds. Blake Wilson, George J. Buelow, and Peter A. Hoyt, 2nd ed. (Oxford University Press, 2001), <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.43166>.

the inspiration for much of the composition then was rooted around the concept of words being put to music rather than music dictating words.<sup>25</sup> Additionally, during this era, composers used the concept of rhetoric as a tool for creating their music, predominantly in classical pieces.<sup>26</sup> Come the nineteenth century, however, musical rhetoric began to disappear because “what the late eighteenth century tended to call *rhetoric* gradually began to be subsumed under what the nineteenth century called *structure*.”<sup>27</sup> No longer was form and language a combined thought and tool used by composers; instead, with the emergence of counterpoint musical theory, musicologists focused on the split between form and language.

In American history, music as rhetoric was a pervasive tool in social movements such as the abolition of slavery and the Civil Rights movement. For example, Frederick Douglass was an abolitionist who was influenced by the spiritual “Run to Jesus,” thus showing the power of music as a rhetorical device for making a change in the world. Similarly, the protest anthem “We Shall Overcome” was a common spiritual sung by protesters during the Civil Rights Movement. Out of the Civil Rights movement came a surge in songs trying to enact change such as Bob Dylan’s “Blowin’ In the Wind,” Phil Ochs’ “I Ain’t Marchin’ Anymore,” and many more.<sup>28</sup>

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25. George J. Buelow, “Music, Rhetoric, and The Concept of The Affections: A Selective Bibliography,” *Notes* 30, no. 2 (1973): 250, doi:10.2307/895972

26. Johann Mattheson and Hans Lenneberg, “Johann Mattheson on Affect and Rhetoric in Music,” *Journal of Music Theory* 2, no. 1 (1958): 47, doi:10.2307/42930.

27. Patrick McCreless, “Music as Rhetoric,” *The Cambridge History of Western Music Theory*, ed. Thomas Christensen (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 27.

28. Elizabeth J. Kizer, “Protest Song Lyrics as Rhetoric,” *Popular Music & Society* 9, no. 1 (1983): 4, doi:10.1080/03007768308591202.

Within the realm of Christianity, music is a powerful tool for helping people connect with God. Biblically speaking, the story of David and Saul proves how powerful music was. In 1 Samuel, King Saul is searching for a servant who can relieve him from the evil torment that has overcome him. Saul demands to his attendants, “[f]ind someone who plays well and bring him to me.” So, his attendants bring him David, a gifted lyrist who, when he played, brought relief to King Saul and released him from the torment he had been experiencing.<sup>29</sup> In this biblical narrative, there is clearly a connection between the power of music and human emotion. Additionally, this narrative serves as a representation of narratives being influential by exemplifying to Christians the healing power of music.

Music is “a kind of symbolic language” that can have a lasting impact on how a Christian views and has a relationship to God.<sup>30</sup> Additionally, music, specifically in the church, historically

was to be valued not only as vehicle for sacred texts, but also as being itself a mirror of God’s beauty and thus a means of reaching the soul directly with a message about God that is inexpressible in words.<sup>31</sup>

Most Christian worldviews find that explaining God in words is impossible because God surpasses all understanding. For writers, musicians, and hymnwriters, it has always been difficult to clearly articulate and dictate words that could even come close to expressing admiration for God. However, the human experience rests on the idea that language is a primary means of understanding reality.

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29. 1 Samuel 16:17, 23 (New International Version).

30. Richard Viladesau, *Theology and The Arts: Encountering God Through Music, Art, and Rhetoric* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2000), 38.

31. Viladesau, *Theology and The Arts*, 34.

Lyrics are a critical part of a musical piece and contribute to a song's rhetorical value as rhetors use language to convey something, whether concretely or abstractly. It was not until the late twentieth century that rhetorically analyzing music and lyrical structure became more prevalent in academic research. But since then, studies have begun to examine how music, and lyrics, influence people. For example, studies have found that lyrics can have a significant impact on individuals' behavior and attitude.<sup>32</sup> Additionally, "[a] song's construction [including lyrics] can create the desired feeling of solidarity among members of a movement or a specific worldview," proving music's persuasiveness and rhetorical power.<sup>33</sup> Because my analysis is focused on the lyrics within hymns, I find the notion that lyrics, while only a part of a song, rhetorically interesting and inspiring.

### **Methodology**

In the three analysis chapters that follow, I examine hymns from the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries. Within each of these centuries, I will analyze four hymns. I dedicate Chapter II to the eighteenth century and will analyze "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name," "While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks," "Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing," and "Must Jesus Bear the Cross Alone." In Chapter III, I focus on the nineteenth century and will analyze "Blessed Assurance," "Just As I Am," "It Is Well With My Soul," and "Trust and Obey." Finally, in Chapter IV, I look at the twentieth

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32. For examples of these studies, see: Valerie N. Stratton and Annette H. Zalanowski, "Affective Impact of Music vs. Lyrics," *Empirical Studies of the Arts* 12, no. 2 (1994): 173-4, doi:10.2190/35T0-U4DT-N09Q-LQHW; and Stephen Kosokoff and Carl W. Carmichael, "The Rhetoric of Protest: Song, Speech, and Attitude Change," *Southern Journal of Communication* 35, no. 4 (1970): 300, doi:10.1080/10417947009372062.

33. R. Serge Denisoff, "Songs of Persuasion: A Sociological Analysis of Urban Propaganda Songs," *The Journal of American Folklore* 79, no. 314 (1966): 584, doi:10.2307/538223.

century by analyzing “Because He Lives,” “Lead Me to Calvary,” “This is My Father’s World,” and “He Lifted Me.”

I chose each of these hymns based on their past and present popularity and only selected hymns that are cross denominationally recognized by publication in a variety of hymnals across different denominations (i.e., Church of Christ, Methodist, Baptist, Seventh-Day Adventists, etc.). All the hymns I chose have been published in more than 40 hymnals, and some have been published in upwards of 1,000 or more hymnals according to [hymnary.org](http://hymnary.org). I used [hymnary.org](http://hymnary.org) as the database for choosing my hymns and finding all the primary information about each hymn such as the publications of each hymn in hymnals, the hymnist/hymnwriter, the date the hymn was written, and the text of each hymn for my analysis. After constructing a pool of popular hymns, I looked to the texts themselves to narrow down my selection. After comparing the musical structure and length of the hymns, I determined that I wanted to focus on hymns that were longer overall. More specifically, I chose hymns that have at least three verses. My purpose here was to work with hymns that, in terms of the length of the text, had substantial text I could pull a variety of terms from in my analysis.

Most of the hymns I chose for my analysis were written by male hymnists and hymnwriters. Originally, my objective was to analyze a balanced selection of hymns based on the gender of the hymnist; however, my primary objective was to evaluate how popular hymns, based on the criteria I mentioned previously, have a rhetorical impact on Christians. With that criteria at the forefront of my analysis, this meant that the primary gender of the hymnists I analyzed were male. Because the hymns I analyzed were from the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries, the female representation in hymn-

writing was uncommon. While female hymnwriters did exist in these centuries, hymn culture did not recognize them, thus making female written hymns not as popular as their male counterparts' hymns. This is reflected in my selection of hymns.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Conceptually, the objective of my analysis is to examine these twelve hymns for dominant themes their rhetors communicate about Christian theology. It is important to study this topic from a rhetorical perspective because it informs how the Protestant Christian community understands their religious faith and, even more so, how they interact with it in their daily lives. Additionally, language has the power to shape reality and help humans cope with those realities; therefore, religious rhetoric is particularly important. Even more so, words accompanied by music, or in this case hymns, have significant power to inform, persuade, and induce actions in people. This has especially been true since the seventeenth century as musicians began to realize they had power, exploitatively, to persuade their listeners through their works.<sup>34</sup> The Baroque period (approximately 1600-1750 CE) included composers who would employ “musical expression of words comparable to impassioned rhetoric or a *musica pathetica* [music that influences the emotions].”<sup>35</sup> The Baroque period was a crucial era for music and rhetoric because the inspiration for much of musical composition then was rooted around the concept of words being put to music rather than music dictating words.<sup>36</sup> This shift in

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34. Andrew Wilson-Dickson, “Introduction,” *The Story of Christian Music: From Gregorian Chant to Black Gospel: An Authoritative Illustrated Guide to All the Major Traditions of Music for Worship* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2003), 13.

35. “Rhetoric and Music,” 267.

36. George J. Buelow, “Music, Rhetoric, and The Concept of The Affections: A Selective Bibliography,” *Notes* 30, no. 2 (1973): 250.



the power of rhetoric is key to my analysis because much of hymnody is based on the application of music to a set of words rather than words set to music. I will reveal how rhetors crafted “screens” in each century that speak to Christians by using terministic screens as a framework.

Kenneth Burke emerged as an influential sociologist in the twentieth century. He was a “jack of all trades” whose work expanded into a variety of fields beyond sociology. He also wrote poems, short stories, novels, literary critiques, book reviews, and a chronicle of musical events. His ideas and writings reach many types of audiences, and he has become an influential figure in the realm of composition.<sup>37</sup> As someone who was interested in all channels of communication, Burke also delved into a variety of disciplines to understand and address different cultures. His work appears in psychology, theology, sociology, linguistics, politics, anthropology, rhetoric, and other disciplines.<sup>38</sup>

Burke’s approach to rhetoric focuses primarily on how rhetoric shapes the way humans view the world around them. In fact, he believed that, essentially, we are all rhetoricians who “are all using words combatively for our own purposes [and] . . . trying to swallow up and possess the souls of all by means of our symbols,” and that everything is rhetoric, as everything has the power to “evok[e] in us a feeling.”<sup>39</sup> Burke had a fundamental belief that humans are animals who use symbols as a way of creating, yet also constraining, and communicating by means of language.<sup>40</sup> More specifically, his

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37. Merle E. Brown, *Kenneth Burke - American Writers 75: University of Minnesota Pamphlets on American Writers* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1969), 5.

38. Stephen Bygrave, *Kenneth Burke: Rhetoric and Ideology* (London, UK: Routledge, 2012).

39. Brown, *Kenneth Burke - American Writers 75*, 7.

40. Margaretha Järvinen and Gale Miller, “Social Constructionism Turned Into Human Service Work,” *Qualitative Sociology Review* 11, no. 2 (April 2015): 200.

philosophical outlook on the world is rooted in social constructionism, which focuses on how language (which is social nature) constructs our understanding of reality. Therefore, Burke's approach to examining rhetoric revolves around the notion that our shared communication, or language, shapes us and how we perceive our world.

### **Social Construction**

Before discussing Burke's terministic screens specifically, I will turn to a review of the larger theoretical framework terministic screens fall within – social constructionism. Social constructionism is based around the idea that

our understanding is social in the sense that our concepts are human-made and are part of a shared language. Our understanding is constructed in the sense that our claims, interpretations, and orientations constitute “conceptual fabrics” that weave together contingent sets of beliefs and social practices. [Additionally, it] suggests that symbols, terms, and language form the building blocks, the bricks and mortar, of the structures of our collective life.<sup>41</sup>

In a psychological sense, social constructionism relies on the idea that humans understand the world through “human thought,” which is relative to the individual.<sup>42</sup> In recent decades, scholars have debated the concept of social constructionism as it relates to human psychology. The idea that social constructionism comes from observation is flawed, to some, because knowledge is not rooted in reality or observation, but rather dependent on the individual's perspective.<sup>43</sup> Because of this, socially constructed thought relies on the idea of relative truth. Social constructionism, from an epistemological

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41. Paul Stob, “‘Terministic Screens,’ Social Constructionism, and the Language of Experience: Kenneth Burke's Utilization of William James,” *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 41, no. 2 (2008): 131.

42. Vivien Burr, *Social Constructionism*, 3rd ed. (London, UK: Routledge, 2015), 222.

43. Kenneth J. Gergen, “The Social Constructionist Movement in Modern Psychology,” *American Psychologist* 40, no. 3 (1985): 267.

position, “recommends that we take a critical and skeptical attitude toward our taken-for-granted ways of understanding the world” and realize there are a variety of truths within the human experience.<sup>44</sup>

Social construction, in a rhetorical sense, manifests in several different ways. Because of the variety of ways to communicate and the vast number of communicative channels, rhetors can socially construct their audience’s reality by means of symbols, terms, and language through the most basic and daily conversations or even rhetoric from “philosophers, theologians, artistic performances, and literary works of various sorts.”<sup>45</sup> Humans are constantly obtaining “meaning and understanding [through] human activities.”<sup>46</sup> Because human understanding relies on individuals’ perceptions of social interaction, social construction is not entirely tangible or concrete.

However, social construction is relative because it relies on the notion that humans, in their own experience, base their perception of the world on their interactions with others and the language they use in those interactions. Language, as a channel of communicating with others, cannot provide a complete understanding of human interaction. Even if two individuals are communicating with each other using the same language, the knowledge each acquires through that interaction could, in fact, be vastly different.<sup>47</sup> Additionally, language does not independently constitute someone’s

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44. Burr, *Social Constructionism*, 223.

45. Andrew Lock and Thomas Strong, *Social Constructionism: Sources and Stirrings in Theory and Practice* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 6.

46. Järvinen and Miller, “Social Constructionism Turned Into Human Service Work,” 201.

47. Tom Andrews, “What is Social Constructionism?,” *Grounded Theory Review* 11, no. 1 (2012): 40.

understanding of the world around him or her.<sup>48</sup> This is important to note as I transition to a discussion of terministic screens because Burke's theory is based on the concept that terms inform our experience and help us come to an understanding about our reality. Therefore, these terms, flawed or not, still play an integral role in the way humans construct social realities.

Social construction is a broad approach to examining human interaction through language. Even if different specific approaches to social construction exist in psychology, sociology, and rhetorical theory, this broad theoretical perspective sets up the concept of humans understanding their world through language. Kenneth Burke's theory of terministic screens stems from this overarching idea of social construction – that human language, in whatever form, has a significant impact on social psychology. This is critical because it is my primary purpose for examining the rhetoric of hymns.

### **Terministic Screens**

Rhetoric has the power to shape how humans see and find meaning in the world. One way to understand and examine that power is through terministic screens.<sup>49</sup> Burke developed terministic screens around the idea that

not only does the nature of our terms affect the nature of our observations, in the sense that the terms direct the attention to one field rather than to another. Also, many of the "observations" are but implications of the particular terminology in terms of which the observations are made.<sup>50</sup>

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48. David J. Nightingale and John Cromby, "Social Constructionism as Ontology: Exposition and Example," *Theory & Psychology* 12, no. 5 (2002): 706.

49. David Blakesley, ed., "Introduction: The Rhetoric of Film and Film Studies," in *The Terministic Screen: Rhetorical Perspectives on Film* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2003), 8.

50. Kenneth Burke, "Terministic Screens," in *Language as Symbolic Action: Essays on Life, Literature, and Method* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1966), 44.

To put it simply, “[w]ords link together and form filters, or screens, that allow us to see in certain ways and blind us to the alternatives, just as a red filter allows us to see some colors and not others.”<sup>51</sup>

The world is built on experiences, and humans articulate those experiences through language. Therefore, language is directly correlated to observation. The “terms” individuals use inform their observation and, in turn, observations inform the “terms” they use. Burke’s theory touches on how society constructs and deconstructs its realities. More practically, terministic screens examine language because “reality exists within humans’ abilities to use, and at times misuse, language.”<sup>52</sup> Analyzing terministic screens requires a focus on how humans construct and use language, whether effectively or not, to shape their human perceptions and realities.

Examining terministic screens requires a rhetorical critic to ask how the terms humans use direct their attention towards and away from certain things. More specifically, the words they use within their interactions with others create terministic screens through which people view the world.<sup>53</sup> Terms are simply a lens through which people view one part of their reality while simultaneously informing *how* to view that part of reality. Under the framework of terministic screens, “language reflects, selects, and deflects as a way of shaping the symbol systems that allows us to cope with the world,” meaning language not only informs reality but, it also continually shapes how

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51. David C. Logan and Halee Fischer-Wright, “Rhetoric Unlobotomized: Transformation of Terministic Screens (Part 2 of 3 in the Rhetoric Series),” *Barbados Working Group Paper No. 06-06* (2006): 9.

52. Sarah N. Heiss, “A ‘Naturally Sweet’ Definition: An Analysis of the Sugar Association’s Definition of the Natural as a Terministic Screen,” *Health Communication* 30, no. 6 (June 2015): 537-8, doi:10.1080/10410236.2013.868967.

53. Järvinen and Miller, “Social Constructionism Turned Into Human Service Work,” 201.

humans deal with reality. A screen is “selective” because it chooses a particular terminology to follow; it is “reflective” because it mirrors back what reality is; and lastly, it is “deflective” because it directs attention away from something.<sup>54</sup>

In developing the concept of terministic screens, Burke focuses on the functionality of language and how it directs attention, therefore constructing the realities humans live in.<sup>55</sup> To clarify, if one were to understand the reflective nature of language, he or she might see how language is “a part of” the connections that make up reality. However, if one were to understand the deflective nature of language, he or she might see how it is “apart from” those said connections. Burke viewed selection, reflection, and deflection as acting together simultaneously and stated that, “even if any terminology is a reflection of reality, by its very nature as a terminology it must be a selection of reality; and to this extent it must function also as a deflection of reality.”<sup>56</sup> In Burke’s explanation of terministic screens and how they acknowledge terminology, he shows that for a term to reflect reality inherently means that it is also deflecting another and vice versa.

A terministic screen, like social construction more broadly, is relative. If terministic screens represent reflections or, inversely, deflections of reality based on the terms humans employ, there must be a sort of subjectiveness within them. When it comes to one understanding someone’s personal “screens,” or the lenses through which a person views the world, one must also take into consideration the individual’s experience.

Therefore, “when understanding people, what they do and produce . . . [one must] take[e]

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54. Colleen M. Keough, “Sexist Language: Terministic Screens and Transcendence,” (paper presentation, Annual Meeting of the Communication, Language, and Gender Conference, Athens, OH, October 15-16, 1982), 9.

55. Stob, “Terministic Screens,” 132.

56. Burke, “Terministic Screens,” 45.

account of the terms and practices that are relevant to their locations in their worlds.”<sup>57</sup> In a broader sense, rhetoric itself is polysemic in nature, meaning that one word does not have one universal meaning.<sup>58</sup> Based on a person’s individual experience, either holistically or within the context of a particular event, his or her interpretation of that experience informs the person’s language and, in turn, his or her reality. Therefore, if language is relative based on experience, so are the terms that shape the “lens” through which humans see the world. Burke himself even states that “no one’s ‘personal equations’ are quite identical with anyone else’s [and] . . . all members of our species conceive of reality somewhat roundabout, through various *media* of symbolism” (emphasis in original).<sup>59</sup> With the wide variety of media channels available today, the possibilities for interpreting experiences is endless.

Burke realizes the “mystery of language” and how one can never truly understand the original intent of a term. Burke states that he is “interested more in the *function* of language” rather than the original context and intent of any said term (emphasis added).<sup>60</sup> Thus, he focuses on how language, or terms, function in real time. Burke’s dramatic approach focuses on language as a “symbolic act.” My specific approach in this thesis will rely on dramatism as I analyze how hymns inform Christian faith and represent the theological framework individuals live within. Burke defines dramatism as “how persons

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57. Lock and Strong, *Social Constructionism*, 19.

58. Leah Ceccarelli, “Polysemy: Multiple Meanings in Rhetorical Criticism,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 84, no. 4 (1998): 395–415, doi:10.1080/00335639809384229.

59. Kenneth Burke, “Terministic Screens,” in *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* 39 (1965): 55, doi:10.5840/acpapro19653921.

60. Stob, “Terministic Screens,” 137.

explain their actions to themselves and others.”<sup>61</sup> Additionally, dramatism is more concerned with how language performs symbolically and, consequently, encourages action. Burke’s belief in the activeness of language determines that humans use it to “move an audience to identify with us” rather than simply being symbolic.<sup>62</sup>

For the purpose of my analysis, Burke’s dramatisitic approach aligns with my vision for this thesis. More specifically, the dramatisitic approach, within the context of terministic screens, lends itself to a more symbolic and active analysis. My objective in each analysis chapter is to look at how hymnists use terms to “persuade” their audience to view faith in a certain way. While the hymnwriters’ intent might not have been to persuade, the terms they employ within their hymns have the power to shape the way Christians view God and inform their theological frameworks. Additionally, because the dramatisitic approach focuses on language as a symbolic “act,” it is important for my analysis to also focus on how hymns can “move an audience” to “act” in relation to their faith.

Scholarly works dedicated to applying terministic screens discuss how media creates screens through their rhetoric. Scholars, predominantly, apply Burke’s theory of terministic screens to media such as radio and film. Studies examining radio determined that issues such as corruption were being perpetuated through their communication

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61. Michael A. Overington, “Kenneth Burke and the Method of Dramatism,” *Theory and Society* 4, no. 1 (New York: 1977): 133.

62. Catherine Fox, “Beyond the ‘Tyranny of the Real’: Revisiting Burke’s Pentad as Research Method for Professional Communication,” *Technical Communication Quarterly* 11, no. 4 (2002): 383, doi:10.1207/s15427625tcq1104\_1.



style.<sup>63</sup> Additionally, studies related to film have discovered that film has the power to influence people's reality based on how the filmmakers use both verbal and visual tactics to shape their audience's perception.<sup>64</sup> Through these studies, the scholars were able to find a variety of screens that exhibited how radio and film filter reality for consumers through both mediums.

In the fields of academia and education, a number of scholars have applied terministic screens in rhetorical studies. Specifically, these scholars examined language in relation to interpersonal communication. For example, scholars have used terministic screens to dissect how professionals communicate and determine how individuals used their own personal terms in relation to other professionals; these terms, then, propagated their own realities of their career and responsibilities. Additionally, within professional communication, terministic screens helped scholars understand the benefits of collaboration in the workplace and how terms informed the ways professionals communicated with one another.<sup>65</sup>

In scholarly works focused on examining political rhetoric, one can see how powerful terministic screens are in determining how voters have their realities shaped solely based on another's words. Studies found that authoritative and prominent individuals have a significant impact on citizens' perception and understanding of other

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63. Adriana Angel and Benjamin Bates, "Terministic Screens of Corruption: A Cluster Analysis of Colombian Radio Conversations," *The Journal of the Kenneth Burke Society* 10, no. 1 (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2014): 1-18.

64. Blakesley, "Introduction: The Rhetoric of Film and Film Studies," 8.

65. Fox, "Beyond the 'Tyranny of the Real,'" 365-388; and Andrew Mara, "Pedagogical Approaches: Using Charettes to Perform Civic Engagement in Technical Communication Classrooms and Workplaces," *Technical Communication Quarterly* 15, no. 2 (2006): 215-236, doi:10.1207/s15427625tcq1502\_5.

nations. For example, former President Donald Trump's language in his 2016 Orlando speech after the shooting at a gay night club in the city had an impact on viewer interpretation of the event and its relation to immigration in the United States. The scholars found, through the lens of Burke's terministic screens, that Trump's language suggested immigration was the root of the problem and that other countries were dangerous to the United States. In giving this speech, Trump was able to persuade his listeners into adopting his ideology about immigration to the United States. Through terministic screens, scholars have analyzed how terms filter people's understanding of other nations, their own nation, and public memory.<sup>66</sup> Whether through media, academia, education, or politics, terministic screens have the capability to help scholars examine and interpret how humans use language to shape the reality of those listening solely based on their individual terms.

### **Thesis Preview**

In a practical sense, the objective of my analysis of hymns through the lens of terministic screens is to examine how rhetors crafted terministic screens through their hymns. I will look for "screens" that resonate with Christians by exploring my twelve hymns. Hymns have powerful and hopeful language that has continued to speak for years beyond their original publication. Terministic screens provide me with the ability to examine how hymnists have constructed realities about the world. To examine the rhetorical power of hymns, this thesis will answer the question: How do hymns

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66. Amir HY Salama, "A Methodological Synergy of Dramatistic Discourse Analysis and Corpus Linguistics: From the Discourse of US Presidents to Trump's 2016 Orlando Speech," *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies* 17 (2021): 766, <http://jlls.org/index.php/jlls/article/view/2032/722>; and Xing Lu, "A Burkean Analysis of China is Not Happy: A Rhetoric of Nationalism," *Chinese Journal of Communication* 5, no. 2 (2012): 194-209, doi:10.1080/17544750.2012.664441.

rhetorically inform Christians' theological framework? To answer this question, I will focus my analysis on understanding how hymns teach theological lessons that inform Christians' daily lives.

In each of the following three analysis chapters, I begin with a brief introduction to the history of Protestant Christianity and hymns within each century - the eighteenth in Chapter II, the nineteenth in Chapter III, and the twentieth in Chapter IV. During the eighteenth century, the Evangelical movement was on the rise globally, leading hymns to expand and grow cross denominationally. During the nineteenth century, the demographics of hymn writers expanded as women were coming to the forefront of hymn writing. Additionally, the language surrounding Jesus became more friendly and personal to the individual. During the twentieth century, the Evangelical movement began to stagnate. Hymnwriters during this time not only represented women and men, but also a variety of cultural backgrounds. After detailing the historical aspects of each century and the context in which each hymnist wrote his or her hymn, I will examine the terministic screens the rhetors, or hymn writers, crafted through their hymns. My final chapter will conclude the thesis, provide a discussion of my findings, and, ultimately, address my research question.

## CHAPTER II

### EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY HYMNS

Having been colonized in the seventeenth century by British colonists, the United States of America in the eighteenth century was on the verge of a revolution to assert its independence from Great Britain. After battles across Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, and much of the northeastern territories in the northeast region of the British Colonies, the revolutionaries officially ended the American Revolution in 1783 with the Peace of Paris collection of treaties.<sup>1</sup> After the war, the United States of America began to create its own “federal government and federal culture . . . sharing power between the electorate, the states, and the national government.”<sup>2</sup>

Religiously speaking, the evangelical movement began to emerge around the year 1781, close to the time that the United States gained independence from Great Britain, and spread worldwide until 1820. As both a social and religious movement, it was pivotal in American society. This movement understood and worshipped God as relational and personable, and its reformed theology emphasized not only the relationality of God but also pushed to spread the gospel around the globe.<sup>3</sup> Hymns, however, were not the

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1. Willard M. Wallace, “American Revolution: United States History,” *Britannica*, last updated October 20, 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/event/American-Revolution>.

2. “The United States, 1600–1800 A.D.,” *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000), <http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/ht/?period=09&region=na>.

3. Thomas Kidd, “When Did Evangelical Christianity Begin?,” *The Gospel Coalition*, March 20, 2018, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/evangelical-history/evangelical-christianity-begin/>.

primary form of worship music for Protestants before the movement began. In fact, “until the mid-eighteenth century in America, Protestants primarily sang psalms or versified Scriptures rather than hymns [because] psalms and other biblical passages were perceived as God’s words transcribed by human beings while hymns were of human composure.”<sup>4</sup> It was not until the evangelical movement started that churches began to use hymns. While the movement spread, various denominations emerged, such as the “Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Reformed, and Disciples of Christ;”<sup>5</sup> however, singing hymns “was one physical activity that all evangelicals shared, and it was the one experience that bound them most closely together with each other.”<sup>6</sup>

During the eighteenth century, the hymns sung in churches were focused on the Old Testament psalms. This is mostly because the Puritans, who had settled Massachusetts, believed “firmly” in the “literal translation of psalms for singing in worship.”<sup>7</sup> Not only were the psalms featured in hymns during this time, but hymns were beginning to reflect other themes as well, such as the sinfulness of humanity and the need for a savior. Within the evangelical Anglican perspective, the idea of Christocentrism gained importance. Evangelicals’ faith relied heavily on Christ’s crucifixion and his atoning power. Not surprisingly, hymnists used this theme of Christocentrism in their

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4. June Hadden Hobbs, *I Sing for I Cannot Be Silent: The Feminization of American Hymnody, 1870–1920* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1997), 35.

5. Stephen A. Marini, “Hymnody and History: Early American Evangelical Hymns as Sacred Music,” in *Music in American Religious Experience*, eds. Philip V. Bohlman, Edith L. Blumhofer, and Maria H. Chow (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 123.

6. Richard J. Mouw, *Wonderful Words of Life: Hymns in American Protestant History and Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2004), 4.

7. Rochelle A. Stackhouse, “Isaac Watts: Composer of Psalms and Hymns,” in *Hymns and Hymnody: Historical and Theological Introductions: Volume II: From Catholic Europe to Protestant Europe*, eds. Mark A. Lamport, Benjamin K. Forrest, and Vernon M. Whaley (Cambridge, UK: Lutterworth Press, 2019), 198, doi:10.2307/j.ctv14gpj9.20.

works.<sup>8</sup> However, hymns tended to veer away from more controversial topics, including the “sharp theological differences that emerged within the [evangelical] movement.”<sup>9</sup> In fact, famous hymnwriter Isaac Watts was ridiculed for writing non-scriptural hymns with Reformed orthodoxy theology.<sup>10</sup> It was not until the late eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century that hymn writing began to evolve and become more inclusive.

Now that I have given a brief overview of what eighteenth-century America, Christianity, and Christian hymnody looked like, I will move into more specifics about each hymn that I have chosen to analyze. After outlining each respective hymn and its story, I will move into my analysis where I discuss four screens that I discovered using Burke’s theory of terministic screens. Lastly, I will conclude this chapter by answering my research question and providing some final thoughts about what I believe these four eighteenth-century hymns communicate to Christians, specifically discussing how each shape Christians’ theological framework.

### **Historical Context**

Before my analysis of eighteenth-century hymns, I will first outline the context surrounding each hymn. In each section, I will dedicate my focus to how each hymnist came to write his or her respective hymn. Each background section will end with some numerical data about the hymn’s publication record to show how prevalent it is in

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8. Karen B. Westerfield Tucker, “Evangelical Anglican Hymnists,” in *Hymns and Hymnody: Historical and Theological Introductions: Volume II: From Catholic Europe to Protestant Europe*, eds. Mark A. Lamport, Benjamin K. Forrest, and Vernon M. Whaley (Cambridge, UK: Lutterworth Press, 2019), 245, doi:10.2307/j.ctv14gpjf9.20.

9. Mouw, *Wonderful Words of Life*, 4.

10. Marini, “Hymnody and History,” 123.

modern-day hymnals. After situating each hymn within the eighteenth century and going over its history, I will move into my analysis where I will analyze the terministic screens in each hymn and address my research question.

### **“All Hail the Power of Jesus’ Name”**

Originally anonymous to the public, “All Hail the Power of Jesus’ Name” was written in 1779 by Reverend Edward Perronet. As a man whose family was active in the Anglican church, Perronet forged his own way within the Methodist community. He was so involved in the Methodist way of life that he became close to the famous John Wesley and even traveled with the Wesley family. However, after some time, Perronet split ways with the Wesley family over disagreements about Methodist policies.<sup>11</sup> In 1779, Perronet wrote the hymn “All Hail the Power of Jesus’ Name,” which has undergone a fair amount of scrutiny over time, resulting in many alterations to both the lyrics and tune of the hymn.<sup>12</sup> “All Hail the Power of Jesus’ Name” appears in 3,118 hymnals.<sup>13</sup>

### **“Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing”**

Robert Robinson, born in 1735, used his hardships and suffering to fuel his writing. When he was young, his father passed away, and eventually his mother shipped him off to school where he fell into a lifestyle of drinking and gang life. It was not until he met one of the most prominent preachers in history, George Whitefield, that he began to put his life back on track. After meeting Whitefield, Robinson sobered up and pursued

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11. Robert J. Morgan, *Then Sings My Soul: 300 of the World’s Greatest Hymns Stories* (Nashville, TN: W Publishing Group, 2011), 123.

12. “History of Hymns: ‘All Hail the Power of Jesus’ Name,’” Discipleship Ministries: The United Methodist Church, June 21, 2013, <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/history-of-hymns-all-hail-the-power-of-jesus-name>.

13. “All Hail the Power of Jesus’ Name,” Hymnary.org, accessed March 24, 2021, [https://hymnary.org/text/all\\_hail\\_the\\_power\\_of\\_jesus\\_name\\_let](https://hymnary.org/text/all_hail_the_power_of_jesus_name_let).

his own career in preaching. While preaching, he also began writing hymns.<sup>14</sup> Out of this, he wrote the still popular hymn “Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing” in 1758.<sup>15</sup>

“Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing” appears in 2,074 hymnals.<sup>16</sup>

### **“Must Jesus Bear the Cross Alone”**

Poet Thomas Shepherd, who was born in 1665 and died in 1739, is primarily responsible for the hymn “Must Jesus Bear the Cross Alone.” However, the history of the hymn is complex. The poem that originally inspired this hymn, “Must Simon Bear the Cross Alone,” was written by Shepherd when he was struggling with his membership in the Church of England and whether or not he wanted to remain at a church he did not agree with. The original poem by Shepherd about Simon Peter was first published in a collection titled *Penitential Cries* (1693) with other hymns that were authored, with Shepherd’s help, by a man named James Mason. Eventually, the poem became a hymn, but it is hard to know if Shepherd was the author of the hymn or if he simply inspired the piece.<sup>17</sup> I have classified this hymn within the eighteenth century because it was not published as a hymn until 1735 in *For Universal Obedience*.<sup>18</sup> “Must Jesus Bear the Cross Alone” has appeared in 1,103 hymnals.<sup>19</sup>

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14. Morgan, *Then Sings My Soul*, 109.

15. “History of Hymns: ‘Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing,’” Discipleship Ministries: The United Methodist Church, June 9, 2013, <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/history-of-hymns-come-thou-fount-of-every-blessing>.

16. “Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing,” Hymnary.org, accessed on March 24, 2021, [https://hymnary.org/text/come\\_thou\\_fount\\_of\\_every\\_blessing](https://hymnary.org/text/come_thou_fount_of_every_blessing).

17. “History of Hymns: ‘Must Jesus Bear the Cross Alone,’” Discipleship Ministries: The United Methodist Church, February 20, 2014, <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/history-of-hymns-must-jesus-bear-the-cross-alone-1>.

18. “History of Hymns: ‘Must Jesus Bear the Cross Alone.’”

19. “Must Jesus Bear the Cross Alone,” Hymnary.org, accessed March 24, 2021, [https://hymnary.org/text/must\\_jesus\\_bear\\_the\\_cross\\_alone](https://hymnary.org/text/must_jesus_bear_the_cross_alone).



## “While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks”

Along with British clergyman Dr. Nicholas Brady, Nahum Tate, a poet and playwright, published “While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks.” During this time, the main practice for hymn singing was for the worship leader to recite the hymn line by line and have the congregation sing it back to him; this is also known as call and response singing. The psalms were the primary text for such hymns.<sup>20</sup> Going against the grain, Brady and Tate wrote the hymn based on Luke’s account of Jesus’ birth and the nativity scene. Given Tate’s background in poetry and playwriting, his narrative writing style shines through in the hymn’s lyrics. This hymn was first published by Tate and Brady in *New Versions of the Psalms* in 1700 and has been “adopted by virtually all hymnals since its writing.”<sup>21</sup> “While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks” appears in 1,022 hymnals.<sup>22</sup>

### Analysis

In the analysis that follows, I will discuss four screens. First is “Jesus as Present,” where I focus on the presence of the term “Jesus” within eighteenth-century hymns. The second screen is “Worship as Relational,” where I discuss how these hymns encourage the worshipper to relate to God and Jesus individually and alongside his or her fellow worshippers. Third is “Expectation of Heaven,” where I discuss how these five hymnists paint a picture of what heaven is and looks like. Lastly is “Worship as Communication,” where I discuss how the terms these hymnists use encourage worshippers to use their

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20. C. Michael Hawn, “History of Hymns: ‘While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks,’” Discipleship Ministries: The United Methodist Church, November 29, 2018, <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/history-of-hymns-must-jesus-bear-the-cross-alone->.

21. “While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks,” Hymnary, accessed March 6, 2021, [https://hymnary.org/text/while\\_shepherds\\_watched\\_their\\_flocks\\_by](https://hymnary.org/text/while_shepherds_watched_their_flocks_by).

22. “While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks.”

voices for both singing and speaking. Through this analysis, I will answer my question about how hymns rhetorically inform Christians' theological framework.

### **Jesus as Present**

A recurring term within all four of the hymns from this century is "Jesus." Not only is the term "Jesus" present in all four hymns, but the hymns themselves are centered around the theme of praising Jesus. Hymnists also use similar terms, such as "Christ" and even "heavenly babe." Specifically, Perronet, Robinson, and Shepherd reference Jesus explicitly by name in the phrases "all hail the power of Jesus' name,"<sup>23</sup> "Jesus sought me when a stranger, he to rescue me from danger, bought me with his precious blood,"<sup>24</sup> "must Jesus bear the cross alone,"<sup>25</sup> and "at Jesus' pierced feet . . . and His dear name repeat."<sup>26</sup> Contrarily, other phrases written by Brady, Tate, and Perronet reference Christ through words other than the name "Jesus" in phrases such as "to you, in David's town, this day is born of David's line, a savior, who is Christ the Lord,"<sup>27</sup> and "the heavenly babe you there shall find . . . O seed of Israel's race, crown Him Lord of all."<sup>28</sup> The pure frequency and variety of ways that each hymnist chooses to mention Jesus speaks to how prevalent Christocentrism is in these hymns. Even more so, by centering the language and overall theme of the hymn to be Christocentric, each hymnist is shaping the way a worshipper constructs his or her own faith and understanding of who Jesus is and how important he is. Through the frequency of and attention to Jesus' name, the five hymnists

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23. Edward Perronet, "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name," 1780.

24. Robert Robinson, "Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing," 1758.

25. Thomas Shepherd, "Must Jesus Bear the Cross Alone," 1693.

26. Shepherd, "Must Jesus Bear the Cross Alone."

27. Nicholas Brady and Nahum Tate, "While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks," 1700.

28. Perronet, "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name."

shape worshippers' faith by placing the focus primarily on Jesus and therefore directing their focus, attention, devotion, and praise towards him. Likewise, the five hymnists shape the worshippers' understanding of Jesus by placing him at the textual forefront of the hymn, thus reflecting him as an important being worthy of worship and devotion. The five hymnists construct a reality centered around the Son of God, whether it be his history or his activeness in the worshipper's life today by telling Jesus' story in "While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks By Night" and "Must Jesus Bear the Cross Alone" or centering the overall narrative of the hymn around Jesus and praising him in "Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing" and "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name."

Unsurprisingly, because this time period within Protestant hymnody was Christocentric, all four of these popular hymns mention Jesus. Even more so, all four hymns are centered around either Jesus' birth, death, or resurrection power. These hymns clearly depict the theological thought of that era, particularly the popularity and importance Protestant Christians placed on dedicating their worship to Jesus. But how did these hymns reinforce the focality of Jesus?

Aside from the correspondence between Protestant theological thought and hymnody themes, these hymns have the power to continually shape the worshipper's reality about who Jesus is, and more importantly, how an individual should worship him. Theologically speaking, the idea of having a human savior is apparent throughout each of these hymns through phrases such as "at Jesus' pierced feet,"<sup>29</sup> "the heavenly babe you there shall find to human view displayed, all simply wrapped in swaddling clothes and in

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29. Shepherd, "Must Jesus Bear the Cross Alone."

a manger laid,”<sup>30</sup> and “bought me with his precious blood.”<sup>31</sup> This theme has always resonated with Christians; it is largely what brings people to want to know and worship Jesus the Christ. As a human, Jesus was able to come to earth through virgin birth, live a perfect life, and, ultimately, die for all of humankind so that the bridge between humankind and God could be rebuilt through Jesus’ sacrifice. The humanity of Jesus Christ can create a sort of connectedness that a faraway, divine being such as God cannot. Because of Jesus’ experience as a man who underwent the same temptations and struggles that humans do, the worshipper can see the personability of Jesus and he or she can relate to him in a more intimate way.

Additionally, the hymnists’ dependence on and dedication to depicting Jesus’ life and personability with humankind exemplifies the ongoing presence of Jesus in one’s daily life. These instances occur in phrases such as “hail him who saves you by his grace,” where Perronet uses active language to show that Jesus presently saves the worshipper through his grace. Other phrases that contribute to this argument are “Jesus sought me when a stranger wandering from the fold of God; he to rescue me from danger,” and “oh, to grace how great a debtor, daily I’m constrained to be!” where Robinson, also, uses active language to exemplify the daily interaction the straying worshipper can have with Jesus. There are, perhaps, two schools of thought one may have when it comes to knowing Jesus. One may feel that Jesus is a man who came to earth, lived, and died to save humanity, but because he is the Son of God, Jesus is not in touch with a human’s reality. Essentially, those who hold this view see Jesus as a

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30. Brady and Tate, “While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks.”

31. Robinson, “Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing.”

faraway, godly being that does not intervene in people's lives. The other thought might be that a person relies on Jesus daily and feels him partaking and walking alongside them through life. From this perspective, Jesus intervenes daily on behalf of the believer and has a relationship with him or her. This may look like relying on Jesus to make decisions and ask him for assistance as a Christian maneuvers life as a human.

Given the popularity and span of these hymns across Protestant denominations, it is apparent that they have shaped how believers think about and relate to Jesus. These terms create a screen that reflects who Jesus was and is. The screen "Jesus is Present" reflects the idea that Jesus' humanity and presence can resonate with Protestant Christians and how they view Jesus by using and selecting these terms dedicated to Jesus. Simultaneously, the hymnists deflect the idea that Jesus is an inactive or far away, divine being that does not interact with the worshipper.

### **Worship as Relational**

Another frequent occurrence within these four hymns is the presence of the self or the other through terms such as "I," "my," "me," "your," "you," and "we." In this section, I will examine how these eighteenth-century hymnists show connection and relationship between the worshipper and God or Jesus. This constant and incredibly frequent use of these personal terms places the worshipper within the hymn. Additionally, it places the self within the experience of God and Jesus and creates a connection between the two. Rather than solely focusing on God or Jesus, these hymnists also discuss the human experience to show the personability of the Christian journey and the relationship that can happen between God or Jesus and humans. The theological perspective these hymns

provide is that Christians have the ability to participate in a relationship with God or Jesus both collectively and individually.

Collectively, the hymnists employ terms that speak to how “we,” as a collective body of worshippers, should act. For example, Perronet uses the term “we” when reciting the phrase “join the everlasting song” in “All Hail the Power of Jesus’ Name” to focus on the body of worshippers rather than the individual relationship between God and the worshipper.<sup>32</sup> In contrast, in “While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks,” “Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing,” and “Must Jesus Bear the Cross Alone,” the hymnists focus more on the individual worshipper. These hymnists express the one-on-one relationship between God or Jesus and the individual by using the terms “me,” “I,” and “you.” In “While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks by Night,” Brady and Tate narrate the story of Jesus’ birth. While they are telling a story, it is a story they selected for a purpose. They write “glad tidings of great joy I bring to you and all mankind”<sup>33</sup> and “the heavenly babe you there shall find.”<sup>34</sup> They use these terms to show the connection each individual worshipper has to the birth of Jesus. Thus, the hymnists reflect the idea that the worshipper was given Jesus, from heaven, and should “watch his [own] flock” -- humankind.<sup>35</sup>

In “Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing,” Robinson writes phrases such as “tune my heart to sing thy grace,” “teach me some melodious sonnet,” and “bind my wandering

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32. Perronet, “All Hail the Power of Jesus’ Name.”

33. Brady and Tate, “While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks.”

34. Brady and Tate, “While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks.”

35. Brady and Tate, “While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks.”

heart to thee” to depict the worshipper calling out to Jesus.<sup>36</sup> The hymnist explains how an individual can connect with Jesus by requesting his help because, on his or her own, he or she cannot. Phrases such as “here I find my greatest treasure,” “hither by thy help I’ve come,” “Jesus sought me,” and “he, to rescue me from danger, bought me with his precious blood” all depict how Jesus chases after the worshipper.<sup>37</sup> As opposed to the previous phrases, Robinson depicts Jesus as rescuing and saving the worshipper. Lastly, in the phrase, “here’s my heart,” Robinson ends the hymn by visualizing an offering from the worshipper.<sup>38</sup> Through all of these phrases, whether focusing on Jesus in action or the individual worshipper in action, Robinson continually represents worship and Jesus as relational.

In “Must Jesus Bear the Cross Alone,” Shepherd connects the worshipper, or the self, to his or her individual royalty that was given to him or her by Jesus’ death. In the phrases “and there’s a cross for me” and “the consecrated cross I’ll bear ‘til death shall set me free,” Shepherd first focuses on the worshipper taking up his or her own cross, much like Jesus did.<sup>39</sup> The individual can then experience the fullness of royalty and abide with Jesus by doing this and bearing his or her own sin. The phrases that show this best are “and then go home my cross to wear, for there’s a crown for me” and “joyful, I’ll cast my golden crown,” which both depict the worshipper having his or her own crown, thus representing the royalty he or she now has.<sup>40</sup>

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36. Robinson, “Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing.”

37. Robinson, “Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing.”

38. Robinson, “Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing.”

39. Shepherd, “Must Jesus Bear the Cross Alone.”

40. Shepherd, “Must Jesus Bear the Cross Alone.”

The “Worship as Relational” screen focuses primarily on how the hymnists use their language to connect the worshipper to God and Jesus. More specifically, the hymnists choose more individualized language such as “I” to place the self, or singular worshipper, within their hymns. Additionally, the hymnists choose language such as “we” to place worshippers as a collective within the hymn. The hymnists perpetuate the idea that worship is complex because it can be both individualized and communal by doing this.

### **Expectation of Heaven**

Throughout all four hymns, the hymnists speak about the royalty of Jesus. The hymnists frequently employ this type of language to show Jesus’ majesty and sovereignty after defeating death and atoning for the sins of humankind. Through terms like “glory,”<sup>41</sup> “crown,”<sup>42</sup> “royal,”<sup>43</sup> and others, the hymnists’ language illustrates what heaven will look like. In the phrases “crown him Lord of all,”<sup>44</sup> “then go home my crown to wear, for there’s a crown for me,”<sup>45</sup> and “O precious cross! O glorious crown,”<sup>46</sup> Perronet and Shepherd reference the term “crown” in two ways: as something that should be placed or is placed on Jesus’ head and as something the worshipper wears. Perronet, Brady, Tate, and Shepherd speak of the high renown and majesty of Jesus through

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41. Brady and Tate, “While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks;” and Shepherd, “Must Jesus Bear the Cross Alone.”

42. Shepherd, “Must Jesus Bear the Cross Alone;” and Perronet, “All Hail the Power of Jesus’ Name.”

43. Perronet, “All Hail the Power of Jesus’ Name.”

44. Perronet, “All Hail the Power of Jesus’ Name.”

45. Shepherd, “Must Jesus Bear the Cross Alone.”

46. Shepherd, “Must Jesus Bear the Cross Alone.”



phrases such as “hail him,”<sup>47</sup> “to him all majesty ascribe,”<sup>48</sup> “glory shone around,”<sup>49</sup> “O glorious crown,”<sup>50</sup> “all glory be to God on high,”<sup>51</sup> and “bring forth the royal diadem.”<sup>52</sup>

Brady, Tate, Robinson, and Shepherd also provide a visual description of heaven by giving it a concrete place above earth and using descriptive language that paints a picture of how heaven looks through phrases such as, “the heavenly babe you there shall find,”<sup>53</sup> “flaming tongues above,”<sup>54</sup> and “seal it for thy courts above,”<sup>55</sup> “suddenly appeared a shining throng,”<sup>56</sup> “here I find my greatest treasure,”<sup>57</sup> and “upon the crystal pavement.”<sup>58</sup> The hymnists create a picture of the afterlife as being heavenly, made of “crystal pavement,”<sup>59</sup> and “courtly.”<sup>60</sup> The hymnists also use terms such as “glory,”<sup>61</sup> “high,”<sup>62</sup> and “above”<sup>63</sup> that depict heaven as a place higher than earth. Together, these hymns give heaven a concrete and majestic setting. The expectation here is that heaven is

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47. Perronet, “All Hail the Power of Jesus’ Name.”

48. Perronet, “All Hail the Power of Jesus’ Name.”

49. Brady and Tate, “While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks.”

50. Shepherd, “Must Jesus Bear the Cross Alone.”

51. Brady and Tate, “While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks.”

52. Perronet, “All Hail the Power of Jesus’ Name.”

53. Brady and Tate, “While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks.”

54. Robinson, “Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing.”

55. Robinson, “Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing.”

56. Brady and Tate, “While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks.”

57. Robinson, “Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing.”

58. Shepherd, “Must Jesus Bear the Cross Alone.”

59. Perronet, “All Hail the Power of Jesus’ Name.”

60. Robinson, “Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing.”

61. Shepherd, “Must Jesus Bear the Cross Alone;” and Brady and Tate, “While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks.”

62. Brady and Tate, “While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks.”

63. Robinson, “Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing.”

somewhere Christians go when their time on earth ends. Likewise, this place is also majestic in nature like a palace.

Ultimately, these eighteenth-century hymnists use language to visualize heaven and give their audience a sense of comfort and reassurance that heaven is a real, physical place. When Christians today think of heaven, they might think of a mansion in the sky or God on the throne. These eighteenth-century hymnists helped create this imagery with clear examples of the heavenly mansion in the sky.

Shepherd, Perronet, and Brady and Tate's use of terms such as "glory"<sup>64</sup> or "majesty"<sup>65</sup> speak to the renown and honorable nature of God and Jesus. Contrary to the "Jesus is Present" screen I discussed previously, this screen does not create a sense of connectedness between God and Jesus and humankind. Instead, the hymnists develop this screen by depicting Jesus, and sometimes God, as royalty based on their use of the terms "crown,"<sup>66</sup> "majesty,"<sup>67</sup> and "royal."<sup>68</sup> These distancing terms reference class structures that societies around the world are familiar with. Having a royal family in power creates a divide between those in power and those in lower "classes" who are not. The hymnists could, potentially, communicate a sense of separation between the worshipper and God by using this type of language. However, contrary to depicting Jesus and God as royalty,

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64. Shepherd, "Must Jesus Bear the Cross Alone;" and Brady and Tate, "While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks."

65. Perronet, "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name."

66. Shepherd, "Must Jesus Bear the Cross Alone."

67. Perronet, "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name."

68. Perronet, "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name."

in “Must Jesus Bear the Cross Alone,” Shepherd speaks of the worshipper’s own royalty by using more personal terms such as “my crown” or “crown for me.”<sup>69</sup>

The “Expectation of Heaven” screen reflects how eighteenth-century hymnists use rhetoric to depict heaven. Moreover, these terms also depict how Christians might view God or Jesus. Theologically, these hymns encourage the worshipper to view God and Jesus as royal beings in a far above place resembling a palace. Likewise, he or she might view God and Jesus as being distant or, contrarily, being connected through their common royalty. The same idea applies to how Christians might view heaven as a place. If they live their entire lives expecting heaven to be a majestic place they go after they pass on, their behavior and allegiance to Christianity might be affected. For example, a Christian might not feel that he or she needs to live with integrity or in fear of not going to heaven. Practically, Christians’ devotion to God and Jesus and actions towards others might not be as positive or representative of Christianity if they did not believe in heaven, a place beyond this earth. These hymns, therefore, encourage and reinforce the reality that heaven is an achievable place to go and have reunion with God and Jesus.

### **Worship as Communication**

To highlight the importance of communication, the hymnists use terms that allude to singing or speaking in all four hymns. In “While Shepherds Watched Their Flock,” Brady and Tate discuss communication from the heavens to humankind by writing phrases such as “‘fear not,’ said he for mighty dread,” “thus spoke the angel,” and “who thus address their joyful song.”<sup>70</sup> In “All Hail The Power of Jesus’ Name,” Perronet

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69. Shepherd, “Must Jesus Bear the Cross Alone.”

70. Brady and Tate, “While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks.”

speaks of a collective human response to God through phrases such as “let every tongue and every tribe responsive to his call,” “we’ll join the everlasting song,” and “hail him who saves you by his grace.”<sup>71</sup> In “Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing” and “Must Jesus Bear The Cross Alone,” Robinson and Shepherd discuss more individualized communication through the phrases “tune my heart to sing thy grace,” “call for songs of loudest praise,” “teach me some melodious sonnet sung by flaming tongues above,”<sup>72</sup> and “and His dear name repeat.”<sup>73</sup> Through these phrases, the hymnists present speaking or singing is an act of worship to God and Jesus. Even more specifically, hymns such as “All Hail the Power of Jesus’ Name” call on the worshipper to “join” or come together in singing with his or her fellow worshippers and the angels above. This rhetoric encourages the worshipper to partake in praising God and Jesus, even alongside the angels in heaven.

The theological perspective this screen provides is the importance of participating vocally in worship. Singing in worship is an act that a Christian might assume is normal in his or her practice of devotion to God and Jesus; however, the recurrences of terms like “spoke,”<sup>74</sup> and “repeat”<sup>75</sup> suggest that speaking, or communicating, is also an act of worship. The voice is a personal, and perhaps vulnerable, trait that humans carry, so for the worshipper to use it to intimately connect with God or Jesus is powerful. Whether

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71. Perronet, “All Hail the Power of Jesus’ Name.”

72. Robinson, “Come,

Thou Fount of Every Blessing.”

73. Shepherd, “Must Jesus Bear the Cross Alone.”

74. Brady and Tate, “While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks.”

75. Shepherd, “Must Jesus Bear the Cross Alone.”

individually or collectively with other worshippers, each hymnist promotes the action of vocal participation.

### **Conclusion**

Throughout these eighteenth-century hymns, the hymnists construct four prominent terministic screens. The first screen, “Jesus is Present,” outlines how the hymnists depict Jesus as a human man who came to earth to save humankind and who is a present figure in each Christian’s daily life. The second screen, “Worship as Relational,” explains how worshippers can find themselves within their own personal experience with God and Jesus. Additionally, it encourages Christians to relate to God and Jesus individually and collectively with their fellow worshippers. The third screen, “Expectation of Heaven,” presents a picture of what heaven is and what it looks like. In this screen, heaven is a concrete place that resembles a palace in the sky. The fourth, and final, screen, “Worship as Communication,” argues that Christians should participate in worship using their voices for both singing and speaking.

Together, these four screens answer my research question: how do hymns rhetorically inform Christians’ theological framework? The hymnists explains that Jesus is near and walks alongside his people in their daily lives by constructing the first screen, “Jesus is Present.” Through the text of the hymns, each hymnist communicates to the worshipper that he or she can have a relationship with Jesus actively. Theologically, this screen perpetuates the idea that Christians have a savior who is involved and present in their lives. With Christianity evolving, the historical ideas related to Jesus were ones that focused on his atoning power and saving grace, as mentioned in the introduction of this chapter. These hymns clearly reflect this ideal of Jesus and promote his companionship

and devotedness to his followers, a thought that became strong amongst Christians in America. Through the second screen, “Worship as Relational,” the hymnists reflect the idea that worship can be both individualistic with God and collectivist with other worshippers. Rather than promoting a singular view of worship and relationship with God and Jesus, the hymnists encourage the theological idea that worship is complex and can be performed alone or with others as a community. In considering the historical context of these hymns, it becomes clear that Americans were stepping out and away, both physically and mentally, from the ideals of England to their own ideals related to religion and democracy. The colonists collectively fought against Great Britain to free themselves from the reign of monarchy and their desire to be independent as a nation. One can see both the collective and individualistic acts that took place during the American Revolution and understand that these hymns also reflect such complexity.

Through the third screen, “Expectation of Heaven,” the hymnists reflect the idea that heaven is a palace where the worshipper will physically go after death, which sets up an expectation of what the afterlife looks like as well as who God and Jesus are in a royal sense. The notion that heaven is an actual place and that God and Jesus are royal beings creates a theological framework that sets heaven up as a concrete place that is achievable after death on earth. Additionally, the notion that God and Jesus are royal beings incites a more regal image of who each are. This is especially interesting when one considers the historical context of this hymn. During this time period, America was fighting against Great Britain to detach from the monarchy and their control. For this hymn to include such regal images suggests that, perhaps, the hymnists were, whether knowingly or not, engrained in the culture of the monarchy so much so that it was reflected in their art.

With America essentially trying to deflect every ideal of monarchy and regality as a new nation with its own democratic system, it is surprising to see that hymnists adopt this imagery instead. Through the fourth screen, “Worship as Communication,” the hymnists reflect the idea that, through singing or speaking, the worshipper can connect verbally to God or Jesus. Rather than being detached from God and Jesus, the worshipper can use his or her voice to not only praise them, but to also connect intimately with them. With the evangelical movement on the rise, it absolutely makes sense that these hymns would reflect a relational and communicative god, as the movement stood on the idea that the divine, whether that be Jesus or God, was relational.

My objective here was not to show how certain screens outweigh others but to explain how the hymnists use rhetoric to speak to Protestant Christians. This is especially true with the screens “Jesus is Present” and “Expectation of Heaven.” Both offer completely different messages that might seem to contradict one another. However, as the rhetors present them in these hymns, both are simply possibilities for how one might perceive Jesus or God. In the screen “Jesus as Present,” the five hymnists focus almost solely on Jesus and dedicate their thematic lyrical content to either his story or praising him through worship. Specifically, in this screen, I found that by focusing on Jesus primarily and using him as the catalyst for connection to God and the connection to others in worship, the five hymnists reflect the notion that Jesus is still active and present in a worshipper’s daily life. On the contrary, the screen “Expectation of Heaven” focuses more on the royal and majestic nature of God and Jesus. This screen reflects the idea that heaven is a place where the worshipper can go to after he or she has left this earth. In one screen, Jesus seems to be a close being who interacts in the worshippers’ lives, and in the

other, Jesus may seem like a faraway being that does not. This shows the complexity and strength of the five hymnists' texts. Through each hymn, a worshipper can see that Jesus can be both; someone who is near to the worshipper and someone royal and majestic to look forward to meeting one day in heaven. Both offer different perspectives of who Jesus, or God, is, not necessarily dichotomous perspectives of each.



## CHAPTER III

### NINETEENTH-CENTURY HYMNS

After the War of 1812, the United States defeated the British and became its own nation. The thirteen colonies were now the new territories that began what we know today as the United States of America.<sup>1</sup> Now that the U.S. was its own nation, it began to emerge as a place of power and innovation. By the end of the century, the Industrial Revolution was well underway meaning factories and mass production elevated the nation and its ability to manufacture and innovate, all the while allowing for more jobs.<sup>2</sup> However, the Industrial Revolution took a toll on public health. Populations that were mostly affected were those that consisted of workers and families who lived near factories. Health risks included “depression, anxiety, COPD and asthma” as well as “higher neuroticism, lower conscientiousness, and lower extraversion.”<sup>3</sup> In addition to a rise in industry, slavery was a current practice that many in the U.S. were enslaved under or taking advantage of. The debate over slavery finally came to a climax in the American

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1. “The United States in the 19th Century,” The United States World War One Centennial Commission, <https://www.worldwar1centennial.org/index.php/edu-home/edu-topics/584-u-s-neutrality-1914-1917/5054-the-united-states-in-the-19th-century.html>.

2. “Work in the Late 19th Century,” *Library of Congress*, <https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/united-states-history-primary-source-timeline/rise-of-industrial-america-1876-1900/work-in-late-19th-century/>.

3. Martin Obschonka, “Research: The Industrial Revolution Left Psychological Scars That Can Still Be Seen Today,” *Harvard Business Review*, March 26, 2018, <https://hbr.org/2018/03/research-the-industrial-revolution-left-psychological-scars-that-can-still-be-seen-today>.

Civil War in the latter half of the nineteenth century.<sup>4</sup> The war ended, and President Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation, relinquishing all those who were enslaved to live as a free citizen of the United States, although many slaves were not given notice of this proclamation until months and even years later, and border states still had the right to slavery.<sup>5</sup>

Come the nineteenth century, hymns were beginning to gain more popularity in churches. In fact, “hymns were probably the most popular and pervasive form of literature in nineteenth-century America.”<sup>6</sup> During this time, many were still unable to read, predominantly anyone who was not an educated, white male, but hymns were still useful tools in worship that superseded this issue. Hymnody, a previously male-dominated field, began to represent more female voices. More women were able to attend school where they learned to read and write, a fundamental skill for writing any sort of literature, including hymns. While most opportunities in American society were still limited for women in the nineteenth century, “hymns were also one of the few means open to women for the public expression of their faith.”<sup>7</sup> As the opportunities for women to write hymns increased, hymnists such as Fanny Crosby, “The Queen of Gospel Songs,” gained respect and notoriety.<sup>8</sup>

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4. “The United States in the 19th Century.”

5. “Emancipation Proclamation,” History, <https://www.history.com/topics/american-civil-war/emancipation-proclamation>.

6. Mary G. De Jong, “‘I Want to Be like Jesus’: The Self-Defining Power of Evangelical Hymnody,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 54, no. 3 (1986): 461.

7. Richard J. Mouw, *Wonderful Words of Life: Hymns in American Protestant History and Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2004), 12.

8. Robert J. Morgan, *Then Sings My Soul: 300 of the World’s Greatest Hymns Stories* (Nashville, TN: W Publishing Group, 2011), 133.

In addition to the surge in female opportunities for hymn writing, there were also new themes emerging in Christianity. At the turn of the nineteenth century, the Second Great Awakening, a Protestant Christian movement in the United States, began sparking revivals across the nation. Churches, particularly Methodist and Baptist congregations, were seeing an increase in their church attendance, and more universities and colleges were being established as well. Additionally, revivalists were challenging ideologies about temperance and women, advocating for reform and the emancipation of women in ministry.<sup>9</sup> This period partially placed focus on the “individual conversion experience.”<sup>10</sup> During the nineteenth century, as opposed to the eighteenth century, American Christians began to view Jesus more as a friend, yet still maintained a reverence for his divinity. Hymns began to include more emotional and revivalist themes, seeking after and praising the name of Jesus.<sup>11</sup> The Evangelical movement was still on the rise; however, the shift within Christianity focused more on Jesus’ power and divinity rather than themes found in the Old Testament psalms.

Psalmody, music set to the psalms, had been the previous practice in congregational singing, but come the nineteenth century, churches were beginning to move away from this type of worship.<sup>12</sup> Church music was evolving as Christians demanded more variety. Churches in major cities such as Boston, Philadelphia, and New

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9. “Second Great Awakening: Religious Movement, United States,” *Britannica*, accessed March 24, 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Second-Great-Awakening>.

10. George M. Thomas, *Revivalism and Cultural Change: Christianity, Nation Building, and the Market in the Nineteenth-Century United States* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 67.

11. Stephen Prothero, *American Jesus: How the Son of God Became a National Icon* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 2003), 74.

12. Paul T. Anderson, “Psalmody, Shape Notes, and Sankey: The Evolution of Protestant American Hymnody in the 19th Century,” *Tenor of Our Times* 9, no. 1 (2020): 95.

York even began to incorporate other instruments, such as organs, into their worship services.<sup>13</sup> Church hymnody, all in all, was taking a turn to encompass more themes, styles, and hymnists from different demographic backgrounds.

### **Historical Context**

Before moving into the analysis portion of this chapter, I will first overview the context surrounding each hymn. In each section, I will dedicate my focus to how each hymnist came to write his or her respective hymn. I will place the hymns within the context of the nineteenth century and the hymnist's personal life by outlining the background story for each text. This is important because without acknowledging the context and culture in which each hymn was created, my analysis could become "shallow" and not take into account the subjectivity of each hymn.<sup>14</sup> Each background paragraph will end with some numerical data about the hymn's publication record to show how prevalent it is in modern-day hymnals.

#### **"Blessed Assurance"**

Methodist hymn-writer, and one of the most influential female hymn-writers in history, Fanny Crosby, was born in 1820. At a mere six weeks old, Crosby became ill and, after being mistreated treated by a man pretending to be a certified doctor, also went blind.<sup>15</sup> Rather than blaming God for her condition, she used her experience and hardships with blindness to write music for the church. One of her primary contributions

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13. John Ogasapian, *Church Music in America, 1620-2000* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2007), 68-87.

14. S. T. Kimbrough, "Lyrical Theology: Theology in Hymns," *Theology Today* 63, no. 1 (April 2006): 37, <https://doi.org/10.1177/004057360606300104>.

15. "Fanny Crosby," *Christianity Today*, accessed March 25, 2021, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/history/people/poets/fanny-crosby.html>.

to hymnody came from her involvement in the genre of gospel hymnody.<sup>16</sup> During her lifetime, she wrote over 8,000 gospel songs, one of which was the hymn “Blessed Assurance,” one of her most popular hymns in the Methodist church.<sup>17</sup> Crosby wrote the hymn in partnership with Phoebe P. Knapp, a distinguished musician at the time. Knapp proposed a tune to Crosby one day in 1873, and immediately after hearing it, Crosby composed the words and created one of the most well-known hymns of all time.<sup>18</sup> The hymn still appears today in 956 hymnals.<sup>19</sup>

### **“Just As I Am, Without One Plea”**

Hymnwriter Charlotte Elliot did not have an easy life. In her early adult years, she contracted a serious illness that left her disabled. Struggling with her faith in God, a close family friend and church minister, Dr. Cesar Malan, encouraged her to pursue God even amidst the pain and suffering.<sup>20</sup> So, after examining the reality of her condition, Elliot comforted herself by writing hymns, one of which became the famous “Just As I Am, Without One Plea” which she wrote in 1836. This hymn, in particular, was a pure reflection of the life she was living. Over the years, Elliot’s hymns have comforted those

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16. “History of Hymns: ‘Blessed Assurance,’” Discipleship Ministries: The United Methodist Church, February 18, 2014, <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/history-of-hymns-blessed-assurance>.

17. “Fanny Crosby: American Hymnwriter,” *Britannica*, last updated March 20, 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Fanny-Crosby>.

18. Morgan, *Then Sings My Soul*, 325.

19. “Blessed Assurance,” Hymnary.org, accessed March 21, 2021, [https://hymnary.org/text/blessed\\_assurance\\_jesus\\_is\\_mine](https://hymnary.org/text/blessed_assurance_jesus_is_mine).

20. Morgan, *Then Sings My Soul*, 175.

experiencing pain and sorrow and remain especially popular in English and North American churches to this day.<sup>21</sup> The hymn currently appears in 1,759 hymnals.<sup>22</sup>

### **“It Is Well with My Soul”**

Previously an attorney, Horatio G. Spafford became a hymnist out of a life filled with grief. After losing his fortune in the Great Chicago Fire of 1871, Spafford’s young son died from scarlet fever at the age of four. Following this heartbreak, his four other daughters were killed in a shipwreck in 1873.<sup>23</sup> Having lost most of his family, he set out to find his wife, who had survived the shipwreck and landed on the Welsh shore. On his way, he found it difficult to sleep, so he wrote a poem, the words of which eventually became the lyrics for the famous hymn, “It Is Well With My Soul,” as he passed over the site of the shipwreck where his daughters passed away.<sup>24</sup> In 1873, Phillip P. Bliss took the words and applied to them a hymn. The hymn appears in 433 hymnals today.<sup>25</sup>

### **“Trust and Obey”**

The hymn “Trust and Obey” was a collaborative work, written by John H. Sammis and composed by Daniel B. Towner. Sammis studied theology and dedicated his life to Christian service, and Towner, the son of a vocalist and music teacher, had a

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21. “History of Hymns: ‘Just As I Am’ Comes from Writer’s Struggle with Confining Illness,” The Tabernacle Choir at Temple Square, May 31, 2013, <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/history-of-hymns-just-as-i-am-comes-from-writers-struggle-with-confining-il>.

22. “Just As I Am, Without One Plea,” Hymnary.org, accessed March 21, 2021, [https://hymnary.org/text/just\\_as\\_i\\_am\\_without\\_one\\_plea](https://hymnary.org/text/just_as_i_am_without_one_plea).

23. Morgan, *Then Sings My Soul*, 327.

24. “The Heartbreaking Story Behind ‘It Is Well with My Soul,’” The Tabernacle Choir at Temple Square, April 10, 2018, <https://www.thetabernaclechoir.org/articles/it-is-well-with-my-soul.html>.

25. “When Peace Like A River,” Hymnary.org, accessed March 21, 2021, [https://hymnary.org/text/when\\_peace\\_like\\_a\\_river\\_attendeth\\_my\\_way](https://hymnary.org/text/when_peace_like_a_river_attendeth_my_way).

strong influence on evangelical church music.<sup>26</sup> The inspiration for the hymn came when a man stood up in the middle of a church testimony meeting and said, “I am not quite sure – but I am going to trust, and I am going to obey.”<sup>27</sup> After hearing this, Sammis immediately wrote the words down and formulated a poem with the words “trust and obey” as the key focus. He then sent the poem to Towner who went on to create music for the poem. Sammis is the primary rhetorician and individual I will be focusing on as the hymn’s rhetor in my analysis. Sammis and Towner composed the hymn in 1887.<sup>28</sup> Today, the hymn appears in 405 hymnals.<sup>29</sup>

### Analysis

In my analysis, I will outline how the rhetors used these hymns, collectively, to communicate three screens that are helpful to understanding nineteenth-century American Christianity. More specifically, I will show how each screen answers my overall question: How do hymns rhetorically inform Christians’ theological framework? Through my analysis of each screen, I will discuss how the hymnists’ recurring discussion of Jesus shapes how Christians view him and how they construct their theological perspective, or understanding of what it means to be a Christian.

The first screen I discovered in my analysis is “Jesus as Comforter.” In each hymn, the hymnist dedicated his or her language primarily to describing Jesus as a

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26. Kenneth W. Osbeck, *101 More Hymn Stories: Inspiring, Factual Backgrounds and Experiences that Prompted the Writing of 101 Selected Favorite Hymns* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1985), 292.

27. “History of Hymns: ‘Trust and Obey,’” Discipleship Ministries: The United Methodist Church, June 20, 2013, <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/history-of-hymns-trust-and-obey>.

28. Morgan, *Then Sings My Soul*, 419.

29. “Trust and Obey,” Hymnary.org, accessed March 21, 2021, [https://hymnary.org/text/when\\_we\\_walk\\_with\\_the\\_lord](https://hymnary.org/text/when_we_walk_with_the_lord).

calming, accepting, and, therefore, comforting force. The second screen is “Jesus as Friend,” where I discuss how the hymnists’ language focuses on Jesus as personable and companionable. The third and final screen is “Jesus as Redeemer,” where I describe how the hymnists employ language that depicts Jesus as the Lamb of God who died for the world in atonement for humanity’s sins. Much like the eighteenth century, these hymnists focus significantly on the presence of Jesus. Rather than dedicating another screen to the presence of Jesus, I chose to dedicate each screen to *how* the hymnists characterize Jesus differently from hymnists in the eighteenth century. In the eighteenth century, the emergence of Jesus within hymnody was, arguably, more important for me to analyze because that period was newly Christo-centric. This theme has continued, but the *manner* in which the hymnists describe Jesus varies from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century.

### **Jesus as Comforter**

Through even an initial analysis of the hymn titles, it is obvious that these four hymnists depict Jesus as someone who is calming, comforting, and accepting. In the hymn “It Is Well With My Soul,” the title references the stillness of the soul. In the hymn “Blessed Assurance,” it is clear from the term “assurance” that the hymn has an accepting and comforting nature. In “Trust and Obey,” the title references the act of trusting that can instill a sense of comfort, calmness, and even acceptance. And in the hymn “Just As I Am,” Crosby’s reference to acceptance is apparent in the title. Being accepted for who we are and nothing else is, too, comforting and calming because Christians can know that, even in their times of falling short or failing, acceptance can bring relief.

I point out the titles themselves because of the clear tone and message communicated through their language, but there are, of course, many other instances



within the text of each hymn that speak about Jesus as a comforter to all. In “It Is Well With My Soul,” Spafford depicts Jesus as a helper to those who are “helpless,” as someone who does not only accept parts of us, but rather accepts the “whole,” or our entire selves. Lastly, this idea of “bear[ing] . . . no more” is Spafford’s reference to the comfort and calmness that occurs when Jesus takes on “my helpless estate.” He references Jesus as the comforter who takes these burdens, is accepting, and helps the “helpless.”<sup>30</sup>

In “Just As I Am,” Elliot describes Jesus as receiving, welcoming, and comforting by taking away the worshipper’s sin. Much like the previous hymn, Elliot exemplifies humans as helpless beings who must plead for help through the phrase “just as I am, without one plea.”<sup>31</sup> In the same vein, she exemplifies Jesus as comforting by showing that he takes Christians in by “receiv[ing]” and “welcom[ing],” “reliev[ing]” worshippers of their burdens. Additionally, in the phrase “thou bidd’st me to come to thee,” Elliot paints Jesus as a welcoming and nurturing deity to run to. This welcoming presence can provide a sense of comfort to worshippers as they feel comfortable and comforted by being welcomed into the arms of Jesus.

In “Trust and Obey,” Sammis writes that the only path to happiness is by trusting in Jesus. When happiness cannot come from anything else, but rather entirely from Jesus, this hymn argues that the human world cannot provide fulfillment and happiness as Jesus can. Additionally, the phrase, “for there’s no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey,” again touches on the trustworthiness of Jesus and the idea that happiness

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30. Horatio G. Spafford and Phillip Bliss, “It Is Well With My Soul,” 1873.

31. Charlotte Elliot, “Just As I Am,” 1836.

comes from one's reliance on him.<sup>32</sup> In the phrase "not a burden we bear, not a sorrow we share," Sammis writes about Jesus lifting and "bear[ing]" human burdens as well as taking away the "sorrow" they feel. The idea of Jesus as comforter is especially apparent in phrases like this. Lastly, in the phrase "never fear, only trust and obey," Sammis reassures that by trusting and obeying Jesus, one should not fear because Jesus is trustworthy.<sup>33</sup> This absence of fear then leads to a feeling of comfort and calmness.

In "Blessed Assurance," Crosby crafts the "Jesus as Comforter" screen in two different phrases. In the phrase, "angels descending, bring from above echoes of mercy, whispers of love," Crosby uses terms such as "mercy" and "love."<sup>34</sup> Both of these terms speak to the comforting nature of Jesus. Through his mercy and his love, Christians are assured of his power and that, with the angels, he will bring comfort to all. In the phrase, "perfect submission, all is at rest, I in my Savior am happy and blest," Crosby writes about the "rest" Jesus gives when one submits to him. The term "rest" primarily touches on this idea of comfort and calmness. In choosing to use this term, she shows that, when one submits to Jesus, he or she can find him or herself removed from the stress of life by being "happy" and "blest."

In reference to my research question, this screen continually reminds the worshipper that Jesus is comforting. The comfort lies in the rhetors' use of terms that point one towards the accepting, calming, still, and trustworthy nature of Jesus. The idea that worshippers can rely solely on Jesus to comfort, protect, and accept themselves just as they are holds substantial power to establish who Jesus is along their personal faith

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32. John H. Sammis and Daniel B. Towner, "Trust and Obey," 1887.

33. John H. Sammis and Daniel B. Towner, "Trust and Obey," 1887.

34. Fanny Crosby, "Blessed Assurance," 1873.

journey. Additionally, this terministic screen calls on worshippers to engage in a relationship with Jesus because of the safety and rest he can provide. When Christians connect these terms and lyrical phrases to their faith, they can experience a sense of clarity when it comes to acknowledging what, or more specifically, who they can run to in times of trouble.

### **Jesus as Friend**

This screen primarily focuses on Jesus' personability and friendliness. Whereas I looked to the titles and textual phrases of each hymn to understand the comforting nature of Jesus in my analysis of the last screen, here I will shift my focus by only dissecting specific textual phrases within these nineteenth-century hymns that exemplify Jesus as a friend.

In "It Is Well With My Soul," Spafford consistently uses personalized language like "my" to craft the "Jesus as Friend" screen. The friendliness of Jesus does not come from the companionship of Jesus as it does in other hymns, but, rather, it comes from the emphasis Spafford places on the self in the experience of Jesus' sacrifice. Spafford chose to place himself within the text to establish his close relationship with Jesus, thus emphasizing a more individualistic approach to the hymn. Additionally, in the phrase, "oh Lord, haste the day when my faith shall be sight," Spafford references "[his] faith" and goes on to say that when the day comes and Jesus returns, "[his]" faith in Jesus will be "sight," signifying the face-to-face reunion that the worshipper and Jesus will have one day.<sup>35</sup> This promotes the idea that after life on earth, a worshipper will see his or her earthly faith in the flesh, Jesus Christ.

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35. Spafford and Bliss, "It Is Well With My Soul."

In “Trust and Obey,” Sammis uses language that illustrates Jesus calling the worshipper to walk with him “as a friend” in the phrases “when we walk with the Lord” and “then in fellowship sweet we will sit at his feet, or we’ll walk by his side in the way.”<sup>36</sup> In “Just As I Am” and “Trust and Obey,” and specifically the phrases “o Lamb of God, I come, I come,”<sup>37</sup> “thou bidd’st me to come to thee,”<sup>38</sup> and “he abides with us still,”<sup>39</sup> Elliot and Sammis use the terms “come” and “abide” to invite the worshipper to do something or go somewhere. In this context, both choose to either reference Jesus as the one who calls out to worshippers both individually and collectively. This is especially true with the terms “I,” “me,” “we,” and “us.”

In “Blessed Assurance,” Crosby uses language that signifies a type of ownership of Jesus. In the phrases “blessed assurance, Jesus is mine,” “this is my story, this is my song, praising my Savior, all the day long,” and “I in my Savior am happy and blest,” she explicitly writes “Jesus is mine,” “my Savior,” and “I in my Savior.”<sup>40</sup> Additionally, she often uses the word “my” in association with a personalized faith journey. In contrast to “Trust and Obey,” Crosby chose to use “my” as the primary possessive to show how individualized a Christian’s faith journey can be alongside Jesus.

Through describing Jesus as a friend, all of the hymnists use language that shows how one’s relationship with Jesus can be individualized. These four hymns call the worshipper into an intimate relationship with Jesus, just as a relationship with a friend

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36. Sammis and Towner, “Trust and Obey.”

37. Elliot, “Just As I Am.”

38. Elliot, “Just As I Am.”

39. Sammis and Towner, “Trust and Obey.”

40. Crosby, “Blessed Assurance.”

would be. This also ties into the symbolic action this screen encourages. These hymnists choose to represent the worshipper by relating his or her individual experience with a friend to his or her experience with Jesus. Whether or not the hymns speak to the eventual face-to-face reunion in heaven that each Christian will have with Jesus, the communal friendship the worshipper can have with Jesus alongside his or her fellow worshippers, or the close relationship the worshipper can have because of his or her ownership of Jesus, this screen illuminates what a friendship with Jesus looks like. This theological perspective is just one of the many ways Christians can view Jesus.

### **Jesus as Redeemer**

Within this screen, the four hymnists communicate a variety of themes under the main idea of Jesus as Savior or “Redeemer.” Several terms throughout the hymns touch on the sacrificial nature of Jesus through emotional and vivid language, focusing on the idea that Jesus, innocent and free of sin, died for the sin of the world, and, in the case of these hymns, for the sin of every individual to “redeem” his people and “cleanse” them of sin. Therefore, the hymnists describe Jesus as the ultimate atoner of sins and the one who saves his people from a life of sin.

In “It Is Well With My Soul” and “Just As I Am,” Spafford and Elliot incorporate language dedicated to the death of Jesus on the cross by depicting the worshipper as taking his or her sin and, essentially, objectifying it so that it can be “nailed to the cross.”<sup>41</sup> Similarly, both hymns discuss Jesus’ death and bloodshed on the cross. This imagery depicts Jesus as the redeemer of all, whose blood was shed for, or in exchange for, “my” soul. In “Just As I Am,” Elliott develops this theme in phrases such as “and

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41. Spafford and Bliss, “It Is Well With My Soul.”

[Christ] has shed his blood for my soul,” “but that thy blood was shed for me . . . O Lamb of God,” and “to rid my soul of one dark blot, to thee, whose blood can cleanse each spot.”<sup>42</sup> Similarly, Crosby communicates this theme in “Blessed Assurance” through the line, “born of his Spirit, washed in his blood.”<sup>43</sup> The hymn “Just As I Am” repeatedly, and perhaps intentionally, also includes the phrase “Lamb of God.”<sup>44</sup> Here, Elliot compares an innocent lamb to the innocence of Jesus even to his death on the cross.

In “Trust and Obey,” Sammis uses language dedicated to Jesus’ sacrifice and the worshipper’s participation in it. Specifically, in the first phrase, Sammis focuses on Jesus repaying humanity’s “toil” by dying on the cross. Through this phrase, he shows that even in pain and suffering, Jesus still purchased Christians through his death. In the phrase “but we can never prove the delights of his love until on the altar we lay,” he depicts the worshipper partaking in Jesus’ sacrifice; however, he also notes that there is no way for Christians to ever be able to understand the love Jesus gave when he sacrificed himself on the cross.<sup>45</sup>

In “Blessed Assurance,” Crosby references the salvation that Jesus bought through his death and bloodshed. In the first half of the phrase “heir of salvation, purchase of God,” she depicts Jesus as being given a right of salvation through God and purchasing the souls of the world on his father’s behalf.<sup>46</sup> These lyrics argue that, through God, Jesus has the power to redeem his people from sin. In the second half of the phrase

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42. Elliot, “Just As I Am.”

43. Crosby, “Blessed Assurance.”

44. Elliot, “Just As I Am.”

45. Sammis and Towner, “Trust and Obey.”

46. Crosby, “Blessed Assurance.”

“born of his Spirit, washed in his blood,” and similar to the language in the previous hymn, Crosby uses vivid terms to depict Jesus as redeemer.<sup>47</sup> The act of being “washed in his blood” not only focuses on the shedding of Jesus’ blood but, also, the act of covering oneself in the blood, which is symbolized through baptism.<sup>48</sup>

Throughout each hymn, the four hymnists acknowledge Jesus’ redemptive power. Unlike the previous screens that communicated about the personability of Jesus both as a comforter and friend, this screen focuses more on Jesus’ atoning power. Even as a human man, the hymnists speak about Jesus as the ultimate sacrifice for mankind and the only way to salvation. Specifically, they depict the redeeming power of Jesus when he took on the weight of sin and left it at the cross. The imagery of taking the sin, as if it were an object, nailing it to the cross, and leaving it there symbolizes Jesus taking away humanity’s sin and leaving that burden at the cross where he died. This invites the worshipper to hand his or her sin over to Jesus because it is no longer his or hers to bear.

The hymnists also chose language that would induce an emotional response by painting Jesus as an innocent Lamb who underwent a torturous death on the cross. This vivid imagery creates a sense of sorrow that invites the worshipper to understand the magnitude of Jesus’ unfair and gruesome death. However, they also argue that, through Jesus’ death, the worshipper is redeemed, pardoned, and cleansed from a life of sin.

Lastly, the four hymnists invite the worshipper to wash him or herself in the blood of Christ. This reference to baptism calls on the worshipper to take on the death and resurrection of Jesus. Additionally, the act of baptism, which the hymnists symbolically

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47. Crosby, “Blessed Assurance.”

48. Crosby, “Blessed Assurance.”

depict through terms such as “washing,” encourages the worshipper to follow in the example of Jesus. In answer to my research question, this screen selects Jesus as the ultimate redeemer for humanity while simultaneously omitting God as the one who takes on that role. This deflection of God’s role in the redemptive process shows how important the hymnists’ felt it was to focus on Jesus in their hymns. Through this deflection, the hymnists perpetuate the idea that Jesus is the catalyst for redemption, thus putting more focus and reliance on him as opposed to God. In the eighteenth century, Christo-centrism was extremely prevalent; these nineteenth century hymnists perpetuated that theme through their focus on Jesus rather than God.

### **Conclusion**

In analyzing these four nineteenth-century hymns, I discovered how hymnists shaped Christians’ theological framework through terministic screens that communicate about Jesus as comforter, friend, and redeemer. All three screens point to the personability of Jesus, but this is truer in the first two screens, “Jesus as Comforter” and “Jesus as Friend.” Both screens paint Jesus as a companion, someone who is alive and able to work in the worshipper’s life. The hymnists do not frame Jesus as distant or uninvolved in a Christian’s daily life; rather, the hymnists depict Jesus as the ultimate comforter, the one who can create a sense of rest, peace, and relief throughout a Christian’s daily struggles. With the Evangelical movement still present in the nineteenth century, albeit evolving each day, this continued theme of Jesus being the one that can individually connect and walk alongside someone proves just how much faith and hope the Christian community had in this idea of Jesus as well as the strength it had over those responsible for writing church music like these hymnists. The hymnists also depict Jesus



as a person who can intimately connect with the worshipper as a friend. In crafting the screen “Jesus as Redeemer,” the hymnists often refer to Jesus’ personability; however, they simultaneously show Jesus as powerful and able to atone and redeem. This is an interesting occurrence in the texts of these hymns, especially when one compares it to the other two screens. This idea that Jesus can be both friend and savior, a seemingly simplistic idea portrayed in the hymns, reflects the complexity of the Evangelical movement in the nineteenth century and Christians need for a savior who was not only a companion and comforter but, as a savior powerful enough to redeem one of their sins. Considering the historical context of these hymns, the idea of Jesus being a friend, a comforter and a redeemer is especially important. With the Civil War dividing the country, slavery destroying the lives of those held captive, and the Industrial Revolution taking a physical and mental toll on many people’s lives, a savior who could help one navigate these hardships is necessary. The hymnists depict Jesus in a way that shows he can be a friend who can walk through those hardships, a savior who can comfort in the difficult moments in life, and a redeemer who can make who is broken, new again.

Terministic screens focus on how rhetors, or in this case hymnists, use terms to select, reflect, and deflect their perceptions of Jesus. The hymns “Blessed Assurance” by Fanny Crosby, “Just As I Am” by Charlotte Elliot, and “It Is Well My Soul” by Horatio G. Spafford each reflected their hymnist’s response to painful real-world experiences. Crosby experienced illness that resulted in blindness, yet as she wrote in the hymn, could still feel “happy” and “blest” because of Jesus. Elliot, much like Crosby, also experienced an illness that led to a permanent disability. However, as her hymn states, Jesus accepted her “just as [she is], without one plea.” Spafford, even though he lost his wife, children,

and fortune, wrote in his hymn that “it is well with [his] soul” and that “one day [his] faith shall be sight.” Through these three hymns, the hymnists dedicated the text to relying on Jesus, no matter the circumstance, even if it is painful or filled with suffering. Each of the hymnists reflected strong faith and reliance on Jesus continually in their works. In the hymn “Trust and Obey,” John H. Sammis chose to select an experience with a man at his and Towner’s church as the inspiration for this hymn. Through this hymn, he reflects the idea that, even in the unknown, doubtful, and sorrowful stages of life that like this man mentioned, we should choose to “trust and obey” Jesus.

Within the context of their nineteenth-century hymns, these hymnists selected to focus on Jesus, which simultaneously deflected God out of focus in the hymns. While the previous chapter about eighteenth-century hymns mentioned God within the text, these hymns almost exclusively place attention on Jesus. The hymnists reveal their personal preferences for writing about Jesus by doing this. Because almost all the hymnists in this chapter experienced a variety of trials and tribulations that led them to write their respective hymns, it is understandable that they would focus on Jesus as a comforter, friend, and redeemer. Likewise, this era of time in American Christianity, as I mentioned earlier, focused on the individual's experience with his or her faith. These hymns are reflections of those themes that perpetuate the ideals of both an individual’s and a community’s relationship with Christ.

Through each hymn, the four hymnists either focus on the individual worshipper’s experience or the communal experience within a collective body of worshippers. The majority of the hymns, “Just As I Am,” “Blessed Assurance,” and “It Is Well With My Soul” focus on the individual, whereas “Trust and Obey” focuses on the community.

Primarily, each of the screens “Jesus as Friend”, “Jesus as Comforter,” and “Jesus as Redeemer” emphasize the ways Jesus is friendly, comforting, and redeeming to the individual worshipper; however, throughout each screen “Trust and Obey” still extends those ideals of Jesus as friend, comforter, and redeemer to a collective group of worshippers.

## CHAPTER IV

### TWENTIETH-CENTURY HYMNS

In the United States in the twentieth century several big changes occurred. With the industrial revolution causing a spike in manufacturing and production in the previous century, consumerism was on the rise and “became commonplace in America in the 1920s.”<sup>1</sup> At the turn of the century, department stores and shops were emerging which fueled consumerism and allowed more people with financial means to focus on thriving, not just surviving. Additionally, the invention of the television brought product into people’s homes with ads and commercials in the 1950s. After World War II, when families were reunited, the idea of the “perfect family” was something many middle-class families wanted. Young couples were getting married and having children early on thus came the generation called the “Baby Boomers”.<sup>2</sup>

In the realm of Christianity, denominational diversity, such as the growth of the Methodist church, began to expand globally during the twentieth century, especially in Africa and Asia, through the mission work of Christian evangelicalism.<sup>3</sup> This missionary

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1. Kerryn Higgs, “A Brief History of Consumer Culture,” *The MIT Press Reader*, April 20, 2021, <https://thereader.mitpress.mit.edu/a-brief-history-of-consumer-culture/#:~:text=The%20notion%20of%20human%20beings,principal%20role%20in%20the%20world.>

2. “The Rise of American Consumerism,” *Public Broadcasting Service*, accessed November 11, 2022, <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/tupperware-consumer/>.

3. David Martin, “Evangelical Expansion in Global Society” in *Christianity Reborn: The Global Expansion of Evangelicalism in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Donald M. Lewis (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2004), 273-4.

work began to translate into churches that were now focusing more on recruiting believers and bringing them to the faith. Additionally, out of contemporary Christianity came “Christian bookstores[,] . . . megachurches[,] . . . Christian movies, rock groups, and TV talk shows and [their] T-shirts, bumper stickers, and jewelry emblazoned with religious slogans and symbols.”<sup>4</sup> Because Christianity was spreading globally and becoming more mainstream, it was much more visible and popular than in previous centuries. This only increased when the digital age expanded in the late twentieth century, making it much easier to spread Christianity online.

Christian faith focused more on the humanity of Christ, bringing him closer to the human experience, than on the “divinity of Christ.”<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, the twentieth century brought about more variety in hymns, which were still present in Christian music. Not only was there a continual rise in the number of female writers who had begun to gain notoriety in the nineteenth century, but there was also a rise in the variety of different types of writers. Hymnwriters came from different backgrounds, denominations, and faith communities.<sup>6</sup> Gospel hymns were also becoming more popular during this century because they “provided the reassuring evidence that God’s words were received by the chosen in modern times just as they had been in the Old Testament.”<sup>7</sup>

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4. Paul Boyer, “Two Centuries of Christianity in America: An Overview,” *Church History* 70, no. 3 (September 2001): 555.

5. June Hadden Hobbs, *I Sing for I Cannot Be Silent: The Feminization of American Hymnody, 1870–1920* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1997), 15.

6. David W. Music, *Christian Hymnody in Twentieth-Century Britain and America: An Annotated Bibliography* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2001), 1.

7. Hobbs, *I Sing for I Cannot Be Silent*, 14.

## Historical Context

Before moving into the analysis portion of this chapter, I will first overview the context surrounding each hymn. The following format follows the organization of my first two analysis chapters. In each section, I will dedicate my focus to how each hymnist came to write his or her respective hymn. I will place the hymns within a particular period of the twentieth century and the hymnists' personal lives by outlining the background story for each text. Each background paragraph will end with numerical data about the hymn's publication record to show how prevalent it is in modern-day hymnals.

### **“Because He Lives”**

Husband and wife, Gloria and Bill Gaither, were responsible for writing and composing the hymn “Because He Lives” in 1971. Being a small family in the 1960s was hard as the Vietnam War was going on, the Civil Rights movement left many people hurting and dead, and many young people were dropping out of school because of heightened tensions on college campuses.<sup>8</sup> The Gaithers also struggled with health issues and concerns about growing their family during such a hard time. After realizing that even Jesus himself was born into a broken world, they persevered through the difficult times and wrote the song “Because He Lives.”<sup>9</sup> Since writing this hymn, the Gaithers’

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8. Robert J. Morgan, *Then Sings My Soul: 300 of the World's Greatest Hymns Stories* (Nashville, TN: W Publishing Group, 2011), 597.

9. Morgan, *Then Sings My Soul*, 597.

hymns have continued to fill homes and churches, making them two of the most influential hymn-writers in the twentieth century.<sup>10</sup> This hymn appears in 47 hymnals.<sup>11</sup>

### **“Lead Me to Calvary”**

Jennie Hussey was born in 1874 in Henniker, New Hampshire, where she lived most of her life secluded from others in a farmhouse built and lived in by four generations by her ancestors. Her love for writing and art began at a young age. In fact, she published her first piece of writing at age thirteen.<sup>12</sup> She continued to write, even after being diagnosed with deformative arthritis later in life. Hussey was known for not complaining and prayed to the Lord that she would be able to bear her cross just as Christ bore his. This kind of spirit she embodied led her to write the hymn “Lead Me to Calvary” in 1921. In addition to writing one hundred and fifty hymns, she was also famous for writing a popular poem during the Civil War called “The War Dog.” The poem told of a loyal dog who accompanied a soldier, even after he was killed in combat. Today, there is a bronze statue in the Gettysburg National Military Park paying homage to this dog.<sup>13</sup> This hymn appears in 116 hymnals.<sup>14</sup>

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10. Kenneth W. Osbeck, *101 More Hymn Stories: Inspiring, Factual Backgrounds and Experiences that Prompted the Writing of 101 Selected Favorite Hymns* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1985), 46.

11. “Because He Lives,” Hymnary.org, accessed March 29, 2021, [https://hymnary.org/text/god\\_sent\\_his\\_son\\_they\\_called\\_him\\_jesus](https://hymnary.org/text/god_sent_his_son_they_called_him_jesus).

12. “Lead Me to Calvary,” Hymnary.org, accessed April 29, 2020, [www.hymnary.org/text/king\\_of\\_my\\_life\\_i\\_crown\\_thee\\_now](http://www.hymnary.org/text/king_of_my_life_i_crown_thee_now).

13. Morgan, *Then Sings My Soul*, 561.

14. “Lead Me to Calvary.”

### **“This Is My Father’s World”**

Although skilled in many different areas, such as sports, music, and academics, Maltie D. Babcock decided to pursue a life of ministry. Babcock graduated from Syracuse University and Auburn Theological Seminary, which sent him off to become the pastor at the First Presbyterian Church in Lockport, New York. In his free time, however, Babcock was quite the outdoorsman. Often, he would run miles outside of the city to “go out and see the Father’s world” as he would say to others. Out of his love for nature came the sixteen-stanza poem “This Is My Father’s World,” which he wrote in 1901.<sup>15</sup> He was one of the most prominent Presbyterian ministers in the twentieth century because of how well he communicated with others. Even young children were able to understand the meaning behind his writings and preaching. It was not until later that one of Babcock’s friends, Franklin Shepherd, adapted the poem to the melody of a traditional English folk song.<sup>16</sup> This hymn appears in 292 hymnals.<sup>17</sup>

### **“He Lifted Me”**

Charles H. Gabriel, who was born in 1856 and died in 1932, grew up on a farm. At the age of 16, he began his quest to become a singer and singing teacher after his father, who was also a singing teacher, died. After the Civil War, Gabriel began to take inspiration from war songs and write his own. During his lifetime, he wrote over 7,000

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15. Morgan, *Then Sings My Soul*, 497.

16. “History of Hymns: ‘This Is My Father’s World,’” *Discipleship Ministries: The United Methodist Church*, June 20, 2013, <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/history-of-hymns-this-is-my-fathers-world>.

17. “This Is My Father’s World,” *Hymnary.org*, accessed March 29, 2021, [https://hymnary.org/text/this\\_is\\_my\\_fathers\\_world\\_and\\_to\\_my](https://hymnary.org/text/this_is_my_fathers_world_and_to_my).



hymns and songs, one of which was “He Lifted Me” in 1905.<sup>18</sup> Since his death, Gabriel has been one of the most popular hymnists in Christian music because of how often his hymns appear in American hymnals.<sup>19</sup> This hymn appears in 161 hymnals.<sup>20</sup>

### **Analysis**

In my analysis, I will outline how these twentieth-century hymnists, collectively, created three screens for understanding twentieth-century American Christianity. More specifically, I will show how each screen answers my research question: How do hymns rhetorically inform Christians’ theological framework? Through my analysis of each screen, I will discuss how the hymnists’ recurring references to Jesus shape the ways twentieth-century Christians viewed him and their relationship with him.

The first screen is “Worship as Life-Giving,” where I discuss how the hymnists use Jesus’ death and resurrection as a way to show that worship is life-giving and restorative. The second screen is “Faith as Timely,” where I discuss how the hymnists use terms referencing the past, present, and future to explain how time plays a role in one’s relationship to and understanding of God and Jesus. The third, and final, screen is “Faith as Picturesque,” where I discuss how the hymnists use vivid and colorful language to depict Christians’ earthly relationship to God and Jesus.

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18. Barry Kaufman, “He Lifted Me,” *Hymns With A Message: An Inspirational Hymn of the Week*, January 25, 2015, <http://barryshymns.blogspot.com/2015/01/he-lifted-me.html#:~:text=%22From%20sinking%20sand%20He%20lifted,do%20so%20by%20his%20mother.>

19. J.H. Hall, “Charles H. Gabriel,” *Biography of Gospel Song and Hymn Writers* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1914), 350.

20. “He Lifted Me,” Hymnary.org, accessed March 29, 2021, [https://hymnary.org/text/in\\_loving\\_kindness\\_jesus\\_came](https://hymnary.org/text/in_loving_kindness_jesus_came).

## **Worship as Life-Giving**

In analyzing these texts, I found that three out of the four hymns speak about the death of Jesus and the personal pain one goes through as a follower of Jesus. Through references to both Jesus' pain and human pain, the Gaithers, Hussey, and Gabriel communicate clearly about how worshippers can process their pain through worship. However, throughout all these hymns, the hymnists speak of Jesus' resurrection and life after death.

In the hymn "Lead Me to Calvary," Hussey uses language referring to Jesus' experience on the cross, his burial, sorrow, and eventual resurrection in the phrases "lest I forget thy thorn-crowned brow," "show me the tomb where thou wast laid, tenderly mourned and wept," and "show to me now the empty tomb."<sup>21</sup> This vivid imagery illustrating Jesus' death and burial is emotionally provocative because it creates, in the mind of the worshipper, the actuality and brutality of Jesus' death and burial. Likewise, it calls on the worshipper's own emotions, whether grief or pain, in the phrases "even thy cup of grief to share"<sup>22</sup> and "I'll fight life's final war with pain."<sup>23</sup> However, Hussey and the Gaithers show that even though the death of Jesus was torturous and painful, his resurrection brings life to the worshipper. This idea of life comes from the terms and phrases in "Because He Lives" such as "because he lives, I can face tomorrow . . . [and] all fear is gone" and "death gives way to victory."<sup>24</sup> Hussey and the Gaithers communicate that Jesus' death was temporary and has an impact on the worshipper's life

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21. Jennie Evelyn Hussey, "Lead Me to Calvary," 1921.

22. Hussey, "Lead Me to Calvary."

23. Bill Gaither and Gloria Gaither, "Because He Lives," 1971.

24. Gaither and Gaither, "Because He Lives."

by using these particular phrases and terms; this impact is that, through Jesus' resurrection, Christians can now face the trials of life, the unknown, and fear.

In the hymn "He Lifted Me," Gabriel chose to focus on Jesus' death, grace, and sorrow. Similar to "Lead Me to Calvary" and "Because He Lives," Gabriel focuses on Jesus' brutal and painful death in the phrase "his brow was pierced with many a thorn, His hands by cruel nails were torn."<sup>25</sup> Contrarily, he does not explicitly refer to Jesus' resurrection. Rather, he uses phrases such as "and from the depths of sin and shame, through grace He lifted me," which infers that through Jesus' death, he extended grace to the sinful worshipper.<sup>26</sup>

The idea of worship giving life runs consistently throughout three hymns. In "Lead Me to Calvary," "Because He Lives," and "He Lifted Me," Hussey, the Gaithers, and Gabriel use the painful death of Jesus as a way to connect the actuality of Jesus' death to the worshipper's experience. However, through Jesus' resurrection there is life for the worshipper, which they discuss through words and phrases such as "live,"<sup>27</sup> "empty tomb,"<sup>28</sup> "victory,"<sup>29</sup> "tomorrow,"<sup>30</sup> "fear is gone,"<sup>31</sup> and "grace."<sup>32</sup> Each term/phrase creates a sense of hope and moving forward from a previous life of failure, death, and sin.

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25. Charles H. Gabriel, "He Lifted Me," 1905.

26. Gabriel, "He Lifted Me."

27. Gaither and Gaither, "Because He Lives."

28. Hussey, "Lead Me to Calvary."

29. Gaither and Gaither, "Because He Lives."

30. Gaither and Gaither, "Because He Lives."

31. Gaither and Gaither, "Because He Lives."

32. Gabriel, "He Lifted Me."

Theologically, each of these terms speaks to how Jesus' death was temporary and that, through his death, the worshipper can experience life, victory, hope, and joy. Not only do these hymns speak to Christ's humanity and promote the idea that he was a human who underwent a torturous death on a cross, but they also promote the idea that Jesus overcame death which is, in contrast, inhuman. The four hymnists essentially reflect and deflect Jesus' humanity within "Lead Me to Calvary," "Because He Lives," and "He Lifted Me." The hymns give the worshipper a sense of commonality with Jesus because he was human, thus reflecting his ability to understand and feel the ways humans feel; however, the hymns also give the worshipper a sense of division from Jesus because he was inhuman and able to be resurrected from the dead, thus deflecting his humanity and ability to feel as humans do.

Overall, the hymnists' work to represent Jesus as both human and inhuman is powerful, and each hymn provides a unique perspective about Jesus. Being a human is connective through the worshipper's and Jesus' mutual earthly experience. However, because Jesus is also inhuman, this might create a sense of division between the worshipper and Jesus, because of his majesty and his ability to restore and give life to the worshipper through his resurrection. The life-giving concept extends to both perspectives because his humanness connects the worshipper and challenges him or her to exemplify Jesus' experience on earth. Additionally, his inhumanity offers the worshipper life through his resurrection from the dead.

When I examine the screen "Worship as Life-Giving," I am considering how the act of worship gives the worshipper life, or restoration, through Jesus' death and eventual resurrection and his humanity. To do this, I examined the four hymnists' terminology that

points to recognizing Jesus' death, his resurrection, and God's rule over the earth. The worshipper must take into account, according to the hymnists, all three events to recognize the life-giving nature of worship and the life-giving nature of worship. To answer my overall question about how hymns rhetorically inform Christians' theological framework, I depicted how the three of the four hymns selected the story of Jesus' death as their primary narrative, to reflect and simultaneously deflect Jesus' humanity, and to deflect their sadness to God's sovereignty consistently illustrates the life that can come from singing such hymns.

### **Faith as Timely**

Throughout all four hymns, the hymnists use descriptive language, especially about time. Whether the hymn has language that speaks to the past, present, or future, this century's hymns focus more on time and how worshippers relate their faith in God and Jesus to time than the previous centuries' hymns.

In the hymns "Lead Me to Calvary" and "This Is My Father's World," the screen "Faith as Timely" is primarily constructed through Hussey and Babcock's language dedicated to the past and present. When they both use the specific term "forget" in the phrases "lest I forget"<sup>33</sup> and "o let me ne'er forget,"<sup>34</sup> they signify that something happened in the past. Hussey and Babcock call on themselves, and the worshipper, to not forget what happened when Jesus died or that the world belongs to God the Father. In the first and third phrases of "Lead Me to Calvary," "king of my life I crown thee now," and "may I be willing, Lord, to bear, Daily my cross for thee," Hussey references the present

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33. Hussey, "Lead Me to Calvary."

34. Babcock, "This Is My Father's World."

through the terms “now” and “daily.”<sup>35</sup> Hussey connects the present time and one’s relationship with Jesus to his or her sin by using these terms. In “He Lifted Me,” Gabriel also crafts the “Faith as Timely” screen through language dedicated to the past and present. In the phrase “he called me long before I heard before my sinful heart was stirred,” he describes Jesus as calling on the worshipper from “before” he or she even heard him or felt his or her heart begin to stir.<sup>36</sup> The term “before” signifies, much like the term “forget,” that the worshipper has a past, whether that be a past without Jesus or a past when he or she once remembered Jesus’ sacrifice, but has now forgotten. In the phrase “now on a higher plane, I dwell,” he references the present using the term “now.”<sup>37</sup> This term shows that because of what Jesus did “now,” or in the present time, the worshipper is now dwelling on a higher plane than before. Again, this depiction of the past and present in both phrases creates a connection to the overall screen “Faith as Timely.” This screen is dedicated to how time contributes to the act of worship. The hymnists show that worship is not solely focused on one time period within the worshipper’s life, but instead they show that worship is something that supersedes time and can reference both the past and the present through these specific examples above.

In “Because He Lives,” the Gaithers primarily discuss “Faith as Timely” in relation to the future through the phrases “because He lives, I can face tomorrow,” “because I know He holds the future,” and “and then one day, I’ll cross the river.”<sup>38</sup> Unlike the other three hymns from this century, this couple chose to emphasize what is to

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35. Hussey, “Lead Me to Calvary.”

36. Gabriel, “He Lifted Me.”

37. Gabriel, “He Lifted Me.”

38. Gaither and Gaither, “Because He Lives.”

come rather than what happened in the past or what is happening in the present. More specifically, they chose to relate the experience of Jesus' resurrection from the dead to the future and how his resurrection allows us to persevere into the future. In both phrases there is, again, a clear connection between the Gaithers' use of futuristic language and the screen "Faith as Timely."

Theologically, these hymns call attention to the timeliness of one's faith. Unlike the previous centuries, this century's hymns focus on how worship can reflect certain periods that relate to the individual's own experience. The four hymnists promote the idea that faith ebbs and flows with time and that it is something that spans over time rather than being a part of the worshipper's life solely in the past, present, or future by examining the past, present, and future in these hymns. Collectively, the hymnists highlight the longevity of faith and that, even in all phases of life, Jesus and God can be a part of their personal experiences. This idea runs consistently throughout all the examples in my analysis above. Additionally, these hymns foster a sense of hopefulness. The hymnists employ language about time while simultaneously promoting that the past and present do not dictate the future; the future, therefore, is a place the worshipper can look towards despite his or her past and present circumstances.

Now that I have described how time relates to faith, I can dissect how the hymnists' terms select, reflect, and deflect the worshipper's perception of time within his or her faith. The three hymns, "Lead Me To Calvary," "He Lifted Me," and "This Is My Father's World," focus primarily on the past and present. To answer my overall question asking how hymns rhetorically inform Christians' theological framework, I showed how the hymnists selected these types of terms to call attention to the worshipper's relation to

his or her past and present. Additionally, these words give the worshipper the verbiage to acknowledge his or her past and present and relate it to his or her respective faith journey. The same is true for the hymn “Because He Lives,” which focuses primarily on the future. In turn, the hymnists reflect and deflect the idea that the past and present are more important than the future. Inversely, the last hymn places the importance of the future above that of the past and present. The hymnist emphasizes the future and how important one’s faith is when trying to face the future by doing this. Theologically speaking, the futuristic theme the Gaithers develop in “Because He Lives” can give the worshipper a sense of hope and strength because the future is something no one is certain of. The Gaithers, through their hymn, represent Jesus’ resurrection from the dead as a way for the worshipper to continue on and rid him or herself from fear of the future.

### **Faith as Picturesque**

In this section, I will analyze how the four hymnists used vivid language to provide imagery through the hymns’ text. To clarify, the terms I found that relate to this idea of vivid imagery are descriptive and provide a sense of commonality between the earthly experience in a concrete and tangible way and the spiritual experience in a more abstract sense. Rather than combining my analysis of the text by two or three hymns, I will look at each hymn individually because each uses different descriptive terminology.

In the hymn “Lead Me to Calvary,” Hussey develops the scene “Faith as Picturesque” primarily in her language depicting Jesus’ death and burial, the angel’s clothing, and the objectification of grief. In the phrases “lest I forget thy thorn-crowned brow,” “let me like Mary, thru the gloom, Come with a gift to Thee” and “show to me now the empty tomb,” Hussey describes the death of Jesus, Mary’s visit to the tomb, and



the resurrection in descriptive language.<sup>39</sup> The imagery of thorns on Jesus' head, Mary arriving at the tomb, and, finally, the tomb being empty, provide a clear vision of what each looked like. One can easily picture thorns, a woman holding a gift, and an empty tomb, so Hussey uses this to leverage the purpose of the hymn: to lead one to Calvary, the place where Jesus died. In the phrase "angels in robes of light arrayed," she describes the angels who watched over Jesus' tomb.<sup>40</sup> While this is not as relatable as the imagery provided in the other phrases, these terms about the angel's clothing give a clear visual of what the angels looked like. Lastly, in the phrase "even thy cup of grief to share" she uses the imagery of a cup to depict the feeling of grief.<sup>41</sup> Hussey shows that grief can be held and passed from one to another by using this type of imagery and objectifying grief as a cup.

In "He Lifted Me" Gabriel primarily develops the screen "Faith as Picturesque" through language describing nature and Jesus' death on the cross. In the phrases "from sinking sand He lifted me" and "from shades of night to plains of light," he uses colorful language to help the worshipper visualize how Jesus "lifted" him or her from their old life.<sup>42</sup> The imagery of "sinking sand" helps the worshipper visualize his or her ever-deepening pit of sin. The imagery of night to light helps the worshipper visualize his or her transition from the darkness, or sin, into light, forgiveness, and life with Jesus. In the phrase "his brow was pierced with many thorn, His hands by cruel nails were torn," Gabriel depicts the death of Jesus, and more specifically, the torturous pain that Jesus

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39. Hussey, "Lead Me to Calvary."

40. Hussey, "Lead Me to Calvary."

41. Hussey, "Lead Me to Calvary."

42. Gabriel, "He Lifted Me."

went through.<sup>43</sup> The imagery of thorns being pierced into his head and nails tearing his hands visualizes Jesus' painful suffering.

In "Because He Lives," the Gaithers describe "Faith as Picturesque" primarily in their language depicting Jesus' empty grave and his transition from earth to heaven. In the phrase "an empty grave is there to prove my Savior lives," the couple helps the worshipper visualize the resurrection of Christ.<sup>44</sup> He was once dead in the tomb, but now, he is alive and out of the tomb. This imagery helps the worshipper understand the resurrection by providing a visual representation of Jesus' resurrection from the dead. In the phrase "and then one day, I'll cross the river," they use the term "river" as a relatable metaphor for moving from life on earth to eternity with God and Jesus.<sup>45</sup> In the phrase "I'll fight life's final war with pain," the Gaithers use the term "war" as a comparison to the fight for life and eventual death on earth.<sup>46</sup> In the phrase "I'll see the lights of glory and I'll know he reigns," they use the phrase "lights of glory" to depict what the return of Jesus or transition from life to death will look like.<sup>47</sup> In all of these phrases, the Gaithers use vivid language practically to help worshippers visualize Jesus' death and their eventual transition out of this world.

In "This Is My Father's World," Babcock crafts the screen "Faith as Picturesque" in language depicting nature. Humans are familiar with this type of imagery and can easily visualize what each looks like through the phrases "of rocks and trees, of skies and

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43. Gabriel, "He Lifted Me."

44. Gaither and Gaither, "Because He Lives."

45. Gaither and Gaither, "Because He Lives."

46. Gaither and Gaither, "Because He Lives."

47. Gaither and Gaither, "Because He Lives."

seas,” “the birds their carols raise, The morning light, the lily-white,” and “in the rustling grass, I hear Him pass.”<sup>48</sup> The colorful and vivid language that Babcock used throughout the hymn helps the worshipper see how God, the Father, is present in nature.

Theologically, each hymn provides clear and vivid imagery that speaks to how one’s faith can, concretely, connect to Jesus’ death, Jesus’ resurrection, and God’s creation. This consistent thread of descriptive language allows the worshipper to visualize and connect with God sensibly. That is, the rhetoric that the hymnists use throughout all four hymns gives the worshipper a way to understand the brutality of Jesus’ death, much like the first screen, “Worship as Life-Giving,” detailed. The worshipper can accept the reality of Jesus, his death and resurrection, and God’s creation of the earth because the hymnist has given the worshipper a visual, which is present in all four hymns. These practical and understandable applications of Jesus’ death, resurrection, and creation, can instill in the worshipper a belief that these events actually happened and presently have an impact on his or her life.

Most of what the four hymnists do rhetorically in their hymns is reflect and deflect reality. To answer my overall research question, I chose to illuminate how the four hymnists used vivid language to illustrate Jesus’ resurrection, death, and nature. Each hymnist, essentially, reflects what he or she believes to be true of each narrative, and simultaneously deflects what he or she believes to be false, whether intentionally or not. For example, the Gaithers clearly believe in Jesus’ resurrection, but even more so that the power Christ harnessed in his resurrection is something obtainable by the worshipper when he or she transitions from life on earth to heaven. At the same time, the

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48. Babcock, “This Is My Father’s World.”

Gaithers deflect any view of Jesus' death as the end, focusing on their belief that he rose from the dead and continues to live within the worshipper. Babcock believes that the earth is something that belongs to God the Father, but even more so that the beauty in nature is something created by God and is something that the worshipper should find joy in living in. Simultaneously, Babcock deflects the idea of Earth as a simple and unadorned place humans live on. Instead, he chose to personify Earth and give it a relationship to humankind through its beauty while also exemplifying God as interacting with humankind through the Earth. Gabriel believes in Jesus' "lifting" power. While figurative, Gabriel shows that Jesus is capable of returning the worshipper to a place of hope no matter how "deep" or "dark" their past is. Gabriel, therefore, deflects the idea of hopelessness and that, no matter what, Jesus is capable of "lifting" one from a life of sin. And lastly, Hussey believes in Jesus' brutal death on the cross but, even more so that his death carried the burden of all the sin of the world. While not explicit, Hussey deflects Jesus' resurrection by pure omission and, instead, focuses solely on Jesus' death, not resurrection. Whether the hymnists chose to focus solely on Jesus' death, resurrection, or both, their selections speak volumes to how they perceive Jesus' life and relationship to the worshipper. The same is true for the hymns that depict nature. Each hymnist selected the terms to describe God's creation, and his or her reflection of nature is optimistic as it speaks about the beauty of God's creation.

### **Conclusion**

In analyzing these twentieth-century hymns, I discover the ways these four hymnists shaped the Christian perspective through constructing terministic screens that communicate that worship is life-giving, that faith relates to time, and, lastly, that faith is

picturesque. So, how do these screens that I have dissected from these hymns rhetorically inform Christians' theological framework? Additionally, how do these hymns and their screens teach theological lessons? All three screens point to worship and faith. Much like Chapter II where I discussed "Worship as Relational" and "Worship as Dialogue," I focused here on how hymnists depict worship and faith. In the first screen, "Worship as Life-Giving," I revealed how each hymn depicts worship as a way to receive life, and that it can be restorative. Through the death and resurrection of Jesus, his humanity, and God's sovereignty, the hymnists each relay the idea that sorrow and pain are temporary, yet Jesus' resurrection and God's sovereignty provide lasting fulfillment to the worshipper. In the second screen, "Faith as Timely," I revealed how the hymnists use time as a way for the worshipper to examine his or her perception of time as an aspect of his or her faith. More specifically, the hymnists promote the idea that faith is long-lasting, and Jesus and God are present through all phases of life. In the third screen, "Faith as Picturesque," I revealed how the hymnists' use of descriptive language allows the worshipper to visualize, and thus pragmatically connect to, Jesus' death, resurrection, and God's creation. The hymnists not only help the worshipper envision narratives such as Jesus' death, resurrection, and nature by using vivid imagery in the hymns, but also use the hymnists' own experiences on earth to inform their perceptions of the reality of what happened to Jesus and nature created by God.

When one looks at the historical context of this century and the screens I discovered through these four hymns, there is mirrored ideals across both. In the twentieth century, the digital age made many things easily accessible and visible. The massive spread of product through advertising and manufacturing as well as Christianity

through televised church services, movies, music, and peak evangelicalism is no coincidence. Out of the four hymns I discovered the “Worship is Life-Giving”, “Faith is Timely”, and “Faith as Picturesque” screens. All three of these screens evoke a sense of personability. One’s life is certainly personal and the idea that life can be strengthened is somewhat of a quest for some. Time, a concept that rules our day to day lives and dictates when and where we live our lives, and pinpoints moments in time to exact hours and minutes is something that is personal. Lastly, the idea of faith evoking vivid and beautiful images in one’s mind is something subjective in that everyone imagines descriptive language differently thus making it personal.

I bring up this personability trait to illuminate how the historical context of these hymns also presents its own personability. The century allowed for practically anyone to thrive and become their true selves. Consumerism encouraged purchasing the newest and coolest clothes, devices, furniture, cars, and some many other products. People could customize their style and essentially be whoever they wanted to be. Christianity, on the other hand, was promoting the idea that Jesus was a companion, and that God could be a divine being that anyone could have a personal, intimate relationship with. In the twentieth century, one could find their favorite genre of music in Christian music, they could watch movies that were not only faith-based but entertaining, and they could listen to their favorite preacher on television from the comfort of their homes. This thread of personability that I outlined in the screens is much alive in the fabric of the twentieth century.

In the next, and final, chapter I will be concluding my thesis. In this conclusion, I will review each of my chapters and the arguments I made throughout. I will ultimately

end with a discussion about my specific research into eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth-century hymns and what this rhetorical analysis means practically in Christian lives.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

Hymns have the power to take the scriptures and put them into an understandable, moving, and metaphorical context. Hymns also have the power to reflect the hymnists' experience and perception of their specific relationship to the divine. This power is rhetorical because, whether the hymnist chooses to adapt scripture or base their hymns on inspiration from scripture, both can inform how Christians shape their theological frameworks.

Rhetorically, hymnists give Christians verbiage to express themselves in worship. In an optimistic light, hymns can give a community of believers and worshippers a sense of shared experience and shared vocabulary. Congregations and communities of believers can form a connection to what they all find to be true, God the Divine and Jesus the Savior are worthy of praise, by singing the same hymns and reciting the same terminology from those hymns. However, in a more critical sense, hymns can potentially disregard the authentic expression of worship because they fundamentally require a worshipper to use someone else's words, perhaps taking away the true authenticity of an individual's worship. This calls into question whether or not Christian music, specifically hymns, can speak to each individual and his or her own experience or, rather, if the hymns shape each individual's understanding of his or her faith and reality of Jesus and God. My objective in this thesis was to highlight how a selection of twelve hymns inform Christians' theological frameworks, promote certain beliefs, and call people to act in a



certain way. My analysis used Burke's terministic screens to show how these particular hymnists filtered reality and Christians' understanding of God, Jesus, and their faith.

### **Hymns in the Eighteenth, Nineteenth, and Twentieth Centuries**

The eighteenth century was a pivotal moment in American history. As a new nation, the United States broke away from English rule and embarked on a journey seeking the individual freedoms of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness as outlined in the Declaration of Independence. Religiously speaking, the eighteenth century was the starting point for the Evangelical revival movement. At the beginning of the Great Awakening, there was a "feverish growth" in Christianity due to the significant rise in the number of people attending church.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, a rise in diversity of church denominations began in the eighteenth century with churches spanning from Baptist to Methodist, Lutheran to Episcopal, Presbyterians to Congregationalists, and Reformed to Disciples of Christ.<sup>2</sup> Even with the emergence of different churches, hymns played a large role in unifying all types of Christian believers.<sup>3</sup>

In the nineteenth century, America underwent immense turmoil through the War of 1812, the Civil War, and the Industrial Revolution. Men were sent off to war, the country was divided, slavery was coming to an end but still destroying the lives of those still held captive, and the Industrial Revolution, albeit good for the economy, was wreaking havoc on workers both physically and mentally. On the other hand, the

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1. "Religion and the Founding of the American Republic," *Library of Congress*, accessed March 25, 2021, <https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/religion/rel02.html>.

2. Stephen A. Marini, "Hymnody and History: Early American Evangelical Hymns as Sacred Music," in *Music in American Religious Experience*, eds. Philip V. Bohlman, Edith L. Blumhofer, and Maria M. Chow (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 123.

3. Richard J. Mouw, *Wonderful Words of Life: Hymns in American Protestant History and Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2004), 4.

diversity in Christianity grew, specifically in hymnody. Previously, most recognized hymnists were white males; however, during this time women were beginning to make headway as hymn writers.<sup>4</sup> Additionally, as the Second Great Awakening emerged, characterized by a surge in church attendance, universities and colleges, and thematic diversity, other types of hymns surfaced, most notably, gospel hymns. Thematically speaking, hymnists were moving away from the strict idea that hymns must be psalmody, or written from the Psalms or scriptures, and started incorporating revivalist and emotional rhetoric.<sup>5</sup>

In the twentieth century, consumerism engulfed the nation with the invention of the television. People with the financial means were demanding product thus there was a continual need for manufacturing and production in the U.S. The second World War ending brought about the idea of the “perfect family” and out of it came the generation called “Baby Boomers.” In Christianity, evangelicalism was in full swing as missionary work began to increase globally.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, with the digital age in its developing stages, Christianity spread much faster than before. Mega churches, bookstores, music, movies, television, and memorabilia began to saturate the Christian world and eventually develop what is currently the Christian music industry. The emergence of Christian contemporary music began in the 1960s, and churches nationwide began to adopt this

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4. Mouw, *Wonderful Words of Life*, 12.

5. Stephen Prothero, *American Jesus: How the Son of God Became a National Icon* (New York: Macmillan, 2003), 74.

6. Donald M. Lewis, “Christianity Reborn: The Global Expansion of Evangelicalism in the Twentieth Century,” in *Christianity Reborn: The Global Expansion of Evangelicalism in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Donald M. Lewis (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2004), 273-4.

type of worship into their services.<sup>7</sup> The precedent that previous centuries set in terms of diversity in Christianity advanced even more through gospel hymnody and hymns that focused more on the humanity of Jesus than his divinity.

### **Terministic Screens in Eighteenth, Nineteenth, and Twentieth Century Hymns**

In Chapter II, I discussed the four terministic screens I discovered in my analysis of eighteenth-century hymns: “Jesus as Present,” “Worship as Relational,” “Expectation of Heaven,” and “Worship as Dialogue.” Through these four screens, the hymnists reference both Jesus and God, but their primary focus is on Jesus. In my first screen, “Jesus as Present,” I explained how each hymnist promotes the idea that the worshipper should relate to Jesus as a human man who underwent the same temptations as any human. The hymnists create this sort of closeness between the worshipper and Jesus experientially by discussing Jesus as a “normal man.” The hymnists reflect the idea that Jesus is someone who can walk alongside the worshipper, while simultaneously deflecting the idea that Jesus is a faraway being that does not interact with the worshipper. In the screens “Worship as Relational” and “Worship as Dialogue,” I argued that each hymnist encourages the worshipper to use the act of worship as a way to connect not only to God and Jesus, but as a way to connect to their fellow worshippers. Specifically, in the screen “Worship as Dialogue,” I showed how the hymnists reflect the idea that, through singing and speaking, Christians can find an intimate connection with God and Jesus alongside their fellow worshippers. Lastly, in the “Expectation of Heaven” screen, my analysis explored how the hymnists illustrate what heaven is and what it looks

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7. Don Cusic, ed. *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Christian Music: Pop, Rock, and Worship: Pop, Rock, and Worship* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2009), 360.

like. Theologically, through their terms, they reflect the idea that heaven is a palace-like place in the afterlife while simultaneously deflecting the idea of heaven on earth.

In my analysis of nineteenth-century hymns, I discovered three screens: “Jesus as Comforter,” “Jesus as Friend,” and “Jesus as Redeemer.” Throughout all three hymns, the consistent thread that ties this century together is Jesus. More specifically, this century’s hymns focus more on the relationality and personhood of Jesus. Contrary to the previous century hymnists in the nineteenth century reflected the ideal of Jesus as a friend, rather than Jesus as divine. Particularly in the screen “Jesus as Comforter,” my analysis showed how the hymnists depict Jesus as calming, accepting, loving, and merciful. In the screen “Jesus as Friend,” I explained how the hymnists depict Jesus as personable and companionable. And finally, in the screen “Jesus as Redeemer,” I argued that the hymnists depict Jesus as the Savior, the one who atoned the sins of humankind, through a painful, torturous, and unjust death on a cross. All the screens I identified in these nineteenth-century hymns reflect Jesus as he can appear to the worshipper through the hymns’ text. Additionally, because all three screens focus on Jesus, the hymnists simultaneously omit God, which is an interesting deflection. Theologically, this does not necessarily omit God from the worshipper’s experience or faith journey; however, it can affect the worshipper’s theological perspective and understanding of God. Churches who often use these hymns in worship, being that each of these hymns were, and currently are, popular cross-denominationally, might also promote Jesus, as opposed to God, at the forefront of their theological framework, thus affecting how they operate as a community and congregation.

In analyzing twentieth-century hymns, I discovered three screens: “Worship as Life-Giving,” “Faith as Timely,” and “Faith as Picturesque.” These screens either focus on worship or faith, making important claims about either how they affect the worshipper directly or how they frame an individual’s faith. In the screen “Worship as Life-Giving,” I discovered that the hymnists choose to depict the brutality of Jesus’ death to make it feel real for the worshipper through visual and descriptive language. Additionally, the hymnists speak mournfully about Jesus’ death. Yet, through his resurrection, as the hymnists depict, there is life and hope that comes from his sacrifice and eventual resurrection. Out of Jesus’ death came life in that, despite his unjust suffering and eventual death on a cross, he overcame death and sin, thus giving, through grace, life, and salvation in Jesus. Theologically, this screen encourages the worshipper to not just focus on the death of Jesus, but also rejoice in his resurrection. The balance that these hymnists present between the death and resurrection of Jesus promotes a fuller picture of what Jesus came to earth to do and ultimately achieved: salvation for all on the cross. In the screen “Faith as Timely,” I argued that the hymnists use terms that speak about the past, present, and future. The hymnists indicate to the worshipper that Jesus intervenes in the present, the past, and the future. Through all three screens, the hymnists reflect the idea that Jesus intervenes, and is therefore active, beyond the confines of time, thus deflecting the idea that Jesus was only a figure of the past, present, or future.

### **The Rhetorical Impact of Hymns**

In any work of art, whether musical lyrics, poetry, books, or another medium, the rhetors choose the terms they use and those they do not. This selection has a significant impact on how the audience perceives, understands, and acts on the piece. This is

rhetorical because these writers, or rhetors, use their texts to inform, and therefore shape, how their audience thinks through their selection of terms. Additionally, how they use those terms reflects and deflects certain ideas. That is precisely what these hymnists from the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries have done in this selection of twelve hymns. Through their selection of terms, whether they be about Jesus, God, worship, or faith, and the manner in which they presented those terms, the hymnists reflected and even deflected specific elements of Jesus, God, worship, faith, and Christianity. Whether or not we know their intentions in using a specific term, the way they communicated about each of these themes has implications for how Christians, in particular, understand and shape their reality of who God and Jesus are and what their worship and faith should demonstrate as believers. Lyrics are only a portion of a song, yet they have a significant impact on how Christians think. In a secular sense, the music industry continues to saturate entertainment; therefore, music is a prominent medium much of society is consuming. Christians should be aware of how music speaks to, informs, and influences how they think as Christian music, hymns included, continues to inform their theology, or understanding of the divine and Jesus.

Hymns in America set the foundation for what has now become a nation filled with Christian contemporary music that dominates radio stations, CD players, and music streaming services nationwide. Had it not been for hymn writers such as Horatio G. Spafford or Fanny Crosby, the Christian music industry might not be where it is today. Hymns, whether replicated from the scriptures or inspired by one's experience, outline what it is to be a powerful medium for Christians and Christian communities. Hymnists in America stretched the confined and patriarchal mindset of early American Christianity

by providing an avenue for people from all walks of life to express themselves while maintaining the firm belief that music is a mighty force in the Christian faith journey.

Throughout my thesis, my primary focus was on answering the question: How do hymns rhetorically inform Christians' theological framework? To do this, I examined hymns from three centuries so that I was able to evaluate how hymnists from different periods used language to speak to Christians. Time and time again, I found that each hymnist was telling his or her own story while also writing a song for a collective group of Christians. Through their works, the hymnists showed that worship is something that can remind one of Jesus' sacrifice, his resurrection, the power of God the Father, the beauty on Earth and heaven, the everlasting and present power of God and Jesus, and so many other lessons that teach and inform how Christians should live their lives and construct their theological framework. The hymnists, whether intentionally or not, had the power to instill in each worshipper that came across their works the ability to understand Jesus, God, or their faith in a more tangible way through worship music.

In addition to finding terministic screens in each history that reflect and deflect certain ideals, I also found that the historical context of each century correlated with these screens. In the eighteenth century, I outlined how the screens promoted Jesus' companionship, something that was not a popular thought in England Christianity. These screens reflect the complexity of worship and relationship to Jesus which is especially important given America's emancipation from England rule, a rule that did not invite, let alone allow for diversity in thought. Additionally, the continued presence of regality in these hymns is something I found interesting in my research as the U.S. was separating from a monarchy at the time these hymns were written. With America essentially trying

to deflect every ideal of monarchy and regality as a new nation with its own democratic system, it is surprising for one to see that the hymnists seemingly reflect this instead.

In the nineteenth century, I outlined how the screens promote the friendly, comforting, and redeeming qualities of Jesus. In the century, wars were pulling families apart, slavery was destroying and killing people, and the Industrial Revolution, albeit beneficial for American economy, was negatively impacting the health of millions. To have hymns that worshipped a Jesus that could be a friend, comforter and redeemer in this tumultuous time in history was powerful to the Christian faith.

In the twentieth century, I outlined how the screens depict the life-giving nature of worship, the timeliness of faith, and the idea of that faith can be picturesque. Given the historical context of the twentieth century when consumerism and evangelicalism were both at an all time high, it certainly makes sense that these hymns evoke personal themes. The digital age made practically anything from clothing to furniture to church services accessible to anyone with a television thus allowing for people to customize their lives from the inside out, a personal thing. The screens I discovered drew on this personal touch in that one's life can be strengthened through worship, time is something sown into the fabric of our daily lives thus has a significant impact on one's faith, and faith can be vivid and beautiful, depending on how one imagines their faith in reality.

Despite my work in this thesis, there is quite a bit of space left to be filled by rhetoricians analyzing Christian hymnody. My analysis came from a comparatively small pool compared to the great expanse of all hymns written since the eighteenth century. It would be interesting to see how hymnody before the eighteenth century rhetorically functioned outside of America and within other colonized areas of the world. Likewise,



the authorship of hymns would be an interesting area of study. Authorship has a drastic impact on the works themselves, and by analyzing a more expansive and diverse group of hymnists, scholars would have the opportunity to dissect the rhetorical devices different types of rhetors employed in their works. Hymnody was primarily written by white males until the nineteenth century, therefore, an analysis of gender or demographic diversity and hymnodic themes would be crucial to rhetorically analyzing Christian music.

No meaning is universal; every community of faith is different, much like every individual. Each of these hymns are prevalent in a variety of congregations in the United States, therefore, each hymn could be analyzed differently from one denominational perspective to another. But this is the beauty and encouragement rhetoricians partake in. The idea that communication is fluid and that no meaning is universal challenges us, whether societally or individually, to delve into what communities consume and how they interpret it. Music is one of many forms of communicative texts that is universally admired but speaks to each listener differently. We should thank those who came before us for giving us the words we cannot say, the thoughts we cannot think, and the ideas we cannot quite manifest, for it is through their work that we have the tools to understand and construct the very fibers of our reality.

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