

**ARCHETYPES IN WHITE COMMERCIAL GOSPEL MUSICS:  
CONSTRUCTING CHRISTIAN NATIONALIST IDENTITY**

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## ABSTRACT

Alan Lomax famously posited: “the chief function of song is to express the shared feelings and mold the joint activities of some human community. It is to be expected, therefore, that the content of the sung communication should be social rather than individual, normative rather than particular” (Lomax 1968: 3). The songs to be explored in this dissertation come under the large umbrella of what I am calling “White Commercial Gospel Music(s),” a term which, by my definition, encompasses Bluegrass Gospel, Gospel-tinged Country Music, Southern Gospel Quartet Singing, a large portion of Contemporary Christian Music, and a portion of the “Hillbilly” music of the early and middle twentieth century. It is the vernacular and popular sacred music that in large part originates from, and in its early history was consumed in, what has been called by sociologists the “Vernacular South,” (Harvard Dialect Survey 2003, Cukor-Avila 2001) the region of the United States South from Kentucky and West Virginia, and West to Louisiana. As a group of genres, WCGMs are harmonically accessible, have repetitive natures that invite singing along, and for the most part adhere to Harlan Howard's famous description of what a country song should contain: “three chords and the truth.”

This dissertation presents findings from an extensive repertoire survey of WCGMs, fieldwork trips to the Vernacular South (particularly to the 2011 and

2012 National Quartet Conventions), and discourse analysis of the repertoire surveyed. It seeks to draw connections between archetypes contained within WCGM lyrics and music and identities within the highly politicized section of modern Christian Southern Evangelicalism called “Christian Nationalism” (Goldberg 2006). Through the theoretical lenses of Carl Jung (1902, 1912, 1934), Judith Butler (1990 1996), and Marvin Carlson (2003), the dissertation draws connections between the performative elements of this music and modern Christian Nationalist identity.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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This dissertation is dedicated to Tammy Lynn Hossele, who could have been but never was.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### Chapter 1

<b>The History of WCGMs and Christian Nationalism</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1.1 Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1.2 Literature Review</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>1.3 The Myth(?) of Southern Culture</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>1.4 The Bedrock of WCGMs</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>1.5 Groundwork of Christian Nationalism</b>	<b>17</b>
1.5.1 <i>“The City on a Hill”</i>	17
1.5.2 <i>The “Great Awakening”</i>	20
1.5.2 <i>The Cane Ridge Revival</i>	21
1.5.3 <i>Gospel Revivals</i>	24
<b>1.6 The Rise of Gospel Publishing Houses</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>1.7 The Undergrounding of Evangelism</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>1.8 Second Wave Christian Nationalism</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>1.9 The “Moral Majority”</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>1.10 Religious Cultures Explored</b>	<b>32</b>
1.10.1 <i>The Pentecostals</i>	33
1.10.2 <i>The Fundamentalists</i>	34

1.10.3 <i>The Evangelicals</i>	35
1.11 Christian Nationalism	36
1.12 The Definition of Archetype	37
1.13 Aims and Methods	41
1.14 Theories	44
1.15 The Archetypes of the Music of Christian Nationalism	49
1.15.1 “ <i>Old Time Religion</i> ”	50
1.15.2 “ <i>Judgment Day</i> ”	51
1.15.3 “ <i>Momma</i> ”	52
1.15.4 “ <i>Soldier</i> ”	53
1.15.5 “ <i>Stand Our Ground</i> ”	54
1.16 Conclusion	55
Chapter 2	
“ <b>You Gotta Have Old Time Religion:</b> ” <b>Hypersentimentality as Identity Constructor</b> <b>and Enforcer in Christian Nationalism.</b>	58
2.1 Overview	58
2.2 Introduction	58
2.3 Liminality in the Southern Consciousness	60
2.4 The Transformation of Rural Whites into Christian Nationalists	62

<b>2.5 Old Time Religion songs</b>	<b>64</b>
<b><i>2.5.1 Rustic Settings and Simple Chapels</i></b>	<b>65</b>
<b><i>2.5.2 Old Time Religion Tropes</i></b>	<b>68</b>
<b><i>2.5.3 Self Reference and Self Reverence</i></b>	<b>71</b>
<b><i>2.5.4 Persecution and Reward</i></b>	<b>76</b>
<b>2.6 Old Time Religion in Modern Christian Nationalism</b>	<b>86</b>
<b>Chapter 3</b>	
<b>“Meet Me in the Middle of the Air:”</b>	
<b>Death-Defying Acts at Judgment Day</b>	
<b>in White Commercial Gospel Musics</b>	<b>89</b>
<b>3.1 Overview</b>	<b>89</b>
<b>3.2 The Specific Power of Judgment Day Songs</b>	<b>90</b>
<b><i>3.2.1 The Relation of the Church with the Book of Revelation</i></b>	<b>91</b>
<b><i>3.2.2 Rednecks at the Margins</i></b>	<b>96</b>
<b><i>3.2.3 Holy Rollers: Marginalized Religious Practices</i></b>	<b>98</b>
<b>3.3 The Judgment Day Archetype Songs</b>	<b>101</b>
<b><i>3.3.1 Superpowers</i></b>	<b>102</b>
<b><i>3.3.2 Bodily Resurrection</i></b>	<b>114</b>
<b><i>3.3.3 The Holy Ghost Price</i></b>	<b>120</b>
<b><i>3.3.4 Mockeries of Wrongdoers</i></b>	<b>121</b>

3.3.5 <i>Battle Lines</i>	129
3.3.6 <i>Robes and Crowns</i>	133
3.4 Conclusion: Modern Connections	136
<b>Chapter 4</b>	
“What A Friend We Have In Mother:” Sainted Mommas, the Feminine Sacred, and the Performativity of Motherhood	138
4.1 Overview	138
4.2 Definitions of Motherhood	141
4.2.1 <i>The Sacred Mother</i>	144
4.3 The Momma Archetype	147
4.3.1 <i>Caretaker and Confidante</i>	148
4.3.2 <i>Spiritual Powerhouse</i>	154
4.3.3 <i>Ghost Mommas</i>	157
4.4 The Performativity of Motherhood	161
4.4.1 <i>“Mother” Maybelle Carter</i>	161
4.4.2 <i>Sandi Patty’s Fall from Grace</i>	173
4.5 The Rigidity of the Momma archetype	177
<b>Chapter 5</b>	
“Make Him a Soldier:” Embodying Southern Manhood	179
5.1 Overview	179
5.2 Muscular Christianity and Military Culture	181
5.2.1 <i>Soldierhood in Antebellum Gospel Hymns</i>	184
5.2.2 <i>The Construction of Masculinity Today</i>	185



<b>5.3 The Music of the Soldier Archetype</b>	<b>187</b>
<b>5.3.1 <i>Militaristic Tropes</i></b>	<b>187</b>
<b>5.3.2 <i>Witnessing as Soldierhood</i></b>	<b>191</b>
<b>5.3.3 <i>Biblical Heroes to Emulate</i></b>	<b>199</b>
<b>5.4 The Body of a Soldier</b>	<b>207</b>
<b>5.5 Modern SGM Quartets: Performative Masculinity in Practice</b>	<b>212</b>
<b>5.5.1 <i>“1+3” SGM Quartets</i></b>	<b>213</b>
<b>5.5.2 <i>“2+4” SGM Quartets</i></b>	<b>216</b>
<b>5.6 Soldierhood in Modern Christian Nationalism</b>	<b>220</b>
<b>Chapter 6</b>	
<b>“We Will Stand Our Ground:”</b>	
<b>Modern Performative Christian Nationalism</b>	<b>222</b>
<b>6.1 Overview</b>	<b>222</b>
<b>6.2 Nationalism(s) and Christian Nationalism</b>	<b>223</b>
<b>6.2.1 <i>9/11 and Muslim as the new Other</i></b>	<b>226</b>
<b>6.2.2 <i>Drawing Battle Lines</i></b>	<b>227</b>
<b>6.2.3 <i>Archetypal Images</i></b>	<b>229</b>
<b>6.3 “The Cross is My Statue of Liberty”</b>	<b>230</b>
<b>6.3.1 <i>The Scale of the NQC</i></b>	<b>234</b>
<b>6.3.2 <i>“There’s a lot of Sparkle in Southern Gospel”</i></b>	<b>240</b>
<b>6.3.3 <i>Production Values and Flag Waving</i></b>	<b>242</b>
<b>6.3.4 <i>The Real America</i></b>	<b>243</b>
<b>6.3.5 <i>Community Through Crisis: September 11</i></b>	<b>245</b>
<b>6.3.6 <i>Embodying Nationalism: Mass Bodily Practices</i></b>	<b>248</b>
<b>6.4 What is Sacred?</b>	<b>249</b>

<b>Chapter 7</b>	
<b>“It is My Way of Life:” Enforcement and Embodiment</b>	<b>252</b>
<b>7.1 Overview</b>	<b>252</b>
<b>7.2 Participatory Performativity</b>	<b>254</b>
<b>7.2.1 <i>Clothing and Consumerism</i></b>	<b>257</b>
<b>7.2.2 <i>Iteration and Re-iteration</i></b>	<b>257</b>
<b>7.3 “One Road:” The Archetypes and Absence of Choices</b>	<b>258</b>
<b>7.4 Christian Nationalism as a Way of Life</b>	<b>261</b>
<b>7.5 The Past as Future in the Minds of Christian Nationalists</b>	<b>262</b>
<b>7.6 Implications for Further Study</b>	<b>264</b>
<b>7.7 Conclusion</b>	<b>266</b>
<b>References</b>	<b>268</b>
<b>Discography/Videography</b>	<b>280</b>
<b>Appendix A: Discography by Archetype</b>	<b>292</b>
<b>a. <i>Old Time Religion</i></b>	<b>293</b>
<b>b. <i>Judgment Day</i></b>	<b>296</b>
<b>c. <i>Momma</i></b>	<b>299</b>
<b>d. <i>Soldier</i></b>	<b>304</b>
<b>e. <i>Stand Our Ground</i></b>	<b>307</b>

## Chapter 1

### The History of WCGMs and Christian Nationalism

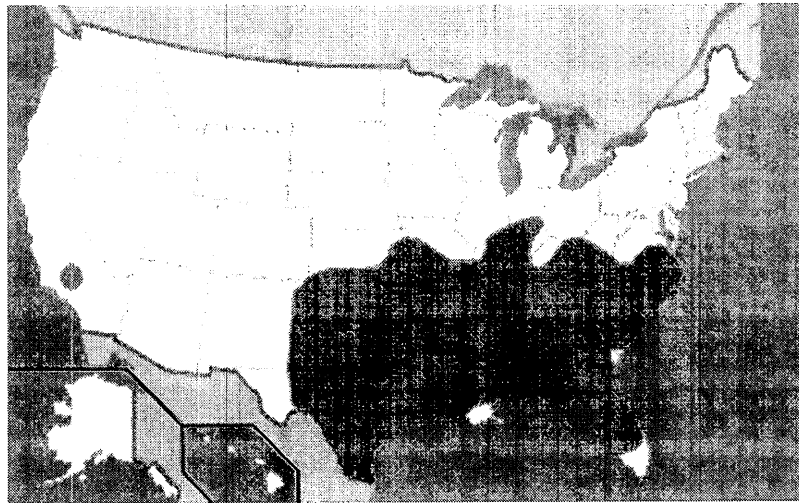
#### 1. 1 Introduction

Alan Lomax famously posited: “the chief function of song is to express the shared feelings and mold the joint activities of some human community. It is to be expected, therefore, that the content of the sung communication should be social rather than individual, normative rather than particular” (Lomax 1968: 3). The songs to be explored in this dissertation come under the large umbrella of what I am calling “White Commercial Gospel Music(s)” (WCGM(s)), sometimes marketed by the music industry as “Southern Gospel Music”(SGM). The term WCGM, by my definition, encompasses Bluegrass Gospel, Gospel-tinged Country Music, Southern Gospel Quartet Singing, a large portion of Contemporary Christian Music, and a portion of the “Hillbilly” music of the early and middle twentieth century. It is the vernacular and popular sacred music that in large part originates from, and in its early history was consumed in, what has been called by sociologists the “Vernacular South,<sup>1</sup>” the region of the United States

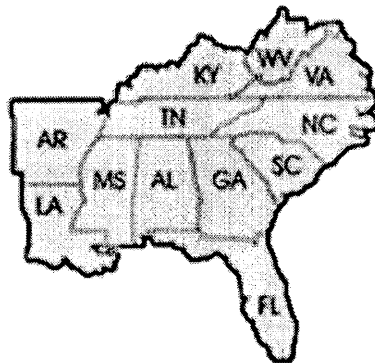
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<sup>1</sup> In the South of the United States, with the exception of the coastal regions of South Carolina (Gullah dialect) and the Gulf coast of Louisiana (Cajun dialect), “ya’ll” is a unifying element of AAVE (African American Vernacular English) and SWVE (Southern White Vernacular English). (Bailey 1993, Cukor-Avila 2001, Harvard Dialect Survey 2003).

South from Kentucky and West Virginia, and West to Louisiana. As a group of genres, WCGMs are harmonically accessible, have repetitive natures that invite singing along, and for the most part adhere to Harlan Howard's famous description of what a country song should contain: "three chords and the truth."



*Map of the U.S.A., with regions of the "Vernacular South" (where "ya'll" is used) shaded.*



*Detail of the map, with individual states labeled.*

Although only minimal attention has been given to WCGMs in academic literature (Goff 2002, Cusic 2002, Graves/Fillingim 2004, Harrison 2008) these musics have nevertheless emerged as a cultural force in the modern American South. People's emotions, and indeed even their ideas about their identity, are intrinsically linked to this music. Evidence of this can be found in a survey that J.D. Keeler conducted in the year 2000 of fans of Southern Gospel music in the quartet tradition. He found that 68% of respondents said that they listened to Southern gospel music because "it represents Southern culture, of which I am a part" and over 80% either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "it is my way of life" (Keeler 2004: 216-217).

My dissertation presents findings from an extensive survey of the lyrics of over one thousand recorded and printed examples (1800 to the present day) of White Commercial Gospel Musics. In the course of my analysis of these songs and their lyrics, themes began to emerge. As I studied the music and the culture further it became apparent to me that these weren't merely themes, but they were archetypes. These archetypes are linked to ideas of personal relationships with God, gender roles, political conduct and ideas of heaven and hell, and they serve as a powerful tool in constructing the identity of Southern Evangelical Christians. Within this dissertation I seek to explore connections between these archetypes and the religious, political, and social roles they prescribe to practitioners and fans

of the music. I have chosen to concentrate specifically on the music surrounding a branch of politicized conservative Christianity which journalists have termed “Christian Nationalism” (Goldberg 2006 and Hedges 2006). This movement holds five elements at its core: American militarism; a belief that the United States of America was founded as, and should continue to be, a Christian Nation; fear of an “Other”; Dominionism—a desire for a worldwide spread of this particular type of Christianity; and a privileging of traditional and old over new and innovative.

Through fieldwork, analysis of printed music, and critically listening to over a thousand separate recordings of WCGM, I discovered that these songs and their archetypes serve as a tool to construct and enforce Christian Nationalist identity. Practitioners of Christian Nationalism are deeply connected to this body of music. In fieldwork, I witnessed tens of thousands of attendees at the National Quartet Convention who were able to sing along (from memory and in four-part harmony) with the standard repertoire of WCGM. In my listening, I encountered tropes and prescriptions that this dissertation enumerates and explicates. The archetypes that emerged within my study and follow here build Christian Nationalism from the ground up—constructing gender identities, political agendas, and militarism on a basic level. I argue that songs serve to, in Lomax’s words, “mold the joint activities” (1963: 3) of the community of Christian Nationalists. The religious movements I examine in the larger scope of my

dissertation have been quite apolitical earlier in their history. In fact, until 1980, over ten million self-identified Evangelical Christians in the American South were not even registered to vote (Barker, 2010). Yet, in a little over thirty years, these religious groups have emerged as an election-swaying political force in the United States. It is a culture that it is important to attempt to understand, and I maintain that studying both the history and the modern incarnation of the music that has become *the* popular music of the Politicized Evangelical Movement through the lens of ethnomusicology is part of that understanding of what makes the movement thrive and expand.

As I studied the songs used in worship within the religious communities of Pentecostals, Fundamentalists, and Modern Evangelicals I observed thematic links and repetitive tropes<sup>2</sup>. Through analysis of these tropes, including investigation of Southern Evangelical life through background reading and preliminary fieldwork, particular distinct archetypes emerged. These are explicated in section 1.15, and consist of: “Old Time Religion,” “Judgment Day,” “Momma,” “Soldier,” and “Stand Our Ground.” I argue throughout the dissertation that it is these archetypes, contained in WCGM, that both construct

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<sup>2</sup> Throughout this dissertation, I use the term “theme” to describe concepts illustrated in lyrics of the music and the term “trope” to discuss repetitive phrases or characterizations. “Archetypes,” by contrast are more deeply rooted, and are performed in such a way that it seems that performers are not even aware of the performative aspects.

and enforce identities crucial to the success of the Christian Nationalist movement. The song archetypes contain idealized images of identities, religious expression, and gender role prescriptions that allow the rigid prescriptions of Christian Nationalism to thrive.

## 1. 2 Literature Review

One of the reasons I am drawn to this subject matter is the dearth of current scholarship on the topic. Despite a massive body of recordings and a large amount of fan-based archiving, very little academic work has been done on the topic. Primary sources I reviewed include published gospel revival songbooks, hymnal introductions (always an excellent source for instructions on how music is meant to be performed) and both commercial and field recordings of WCGMs. Secondary sources include fan publications such as *The Singing News*, liner notes accompanying recordings, marketing materials such as Christian book and music vendors' catalogues and websites, fan websites, and artists' publicity materials. Although many liner notes that accompany WCGM recordings are woefully incomplete, Alan Lomax has written excellent notes for several recorded collections of the music<sup>3</sup>, and the Smithsonian Folkways label has issued

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<sup>3</sup> Lomax, Alan. 1977a Liner notes in *The Gospel Ship: Baptist Hymns and White Spirituals from the Southern Mountains*. 8094-2, New World Records.



extensive liner notes for their very useful collection entitled *Classic Southern Gospel*<sup>4</sup>.

Although a few historical surveys of the music exist, most notably James R. Goff Jr's *Close Harmony: a History of Southern Gospel* (2002) and Don Cusic's *The Sound of Light: a History of Gospel Music* (2002), neither of these seek to draw conclusions between the music and the culture of the American South as it impacts Christian Nationalism, nor do they explore issues of gender, the body, or vocal expression. Although each of these books is an exceptional historical overview of the topic, they overlap with each other and—due to the amount of material they cover—contain only cursory discussions about many aspects of the music. Most investigations of the lyrical content of SGM that attempt to draw corollaries between the music and the society of the American South are written from the perspective of media studies or communication studies scholars (notably, articles included in the collection *More Than Precious Memories: The Rhetoric of Southern Gospel Music* (2004) edited by Michael P.

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-----, 1977b Liner notes in *White Spirituals from the Sacred Harp*. 805205-2, New World Records.

-----, 1993. Liner notes in *Sounds of the South*. 82496, Atlantic.

-----, 1997. Liner notes in *Southern Journey, Vol. 4: Brethren, We Meet Again*. 1704 Rounder Records.

<sup>4</sup> Lornell, Kip. 2002. Liner notes in *Classic Southern Gospel: From Smithsonian Folkways* 40137 Smithsonian Folkways.

Graves and David Fillingim). This volume contains an interesting exploration of Southern Motherhood in the context of quartet singing families themselves, and also contains a comprehensive survey of fans of the Gaither Vocal Band, an extremely commercially successful singing group. The work of professor of English Literature Douglas Harrison, in his article “Why Southern Gospel Music Matters” (2006) comes closest to comparing the lyrics of WCGMs to aspects of Southern society as a whole, but he does not explore the music itself (aspects of vocal production, melodies, harmonies, rhythmic content). George Pullen Jackson’s 1975 book *White and Negro Spirituals*, contains quite a bit of useful historical information, but is dated in its tone and analysis. Although it is possible to cobble together from various sources the story of WCGMs, there exists no comprehensive attempt to explore the music as a constructor of cultural identity, and, to my knowledge, no extensive work on the history and socio-political connections of this music from an ethnomusicological perspective. Overall, with the exception of Harrison’s work, there is a lack of critical study of the music and society of Evangelicalism in general, and no musical analysis of Christian Nationalism in particular exists at the time of this writing.

There have been some journalistic efforts to explore the culture of Christian Nationalism, notably Michelle Goldberg’s (2009) *Kingdom Coming, the Rise of Christian Nationalism* and Chris Hedge’s (2006) *American Fascists: The*

*Christian Right and the War on America*. What is problematic about both of these is that they are sensationalized and presented without a theoretical bent. Although useful as foundational reading, I found them both to be missing an important element of Christian Nationalism: an understanding that Christian Nationalists view their movement as a sacred trust.

### **1.3 The Myth(?) of Southern Culture**

In the following section, I outline and explore issues of the terminology that surrounds both Southern studies in general and the terms used to describe this music in particular. I examine the idea of “the South” as it has been represented by other scholars (Harrison 2008 and Keeler 2000) and explain how I deal with the racial descriptors that surround these musics both historically and contemporarily.

Many scholars, including Douglas Harrison, have refuted the idea of “the South” as cultural identity. In fact, Harrison dismissed “the South” entirely in his 2008 article “Why Southern Gospel Music Matters:”

While Southern gospel music certainly grew out of the South and continues to be inflected with Southern influences, it is a historical and critical fallacy to treat Southern gospel artistic expression as a creative reflection of a monolithic or univocal culture called 'The South'—not only because such a place, thing, or state of mind is at best a useful scholarly fiction, but also because Southern gospel music obviously appeals to people far beyond the geographical or imaginative borders of the South. (Harrison 2008: 31)

This statement, when compared with my own background reading and fieldwork, is problematic. Since the consumers and fans of this music to a large degree self-identify as “Southern” (Keeler 2000), it would seem that the “state of mind” of the South certainly exists, and this existence is demonstrated in the lyrics of these musics. Furthermore, there are undeniable historical contexts that contribute to the foundational and philosophical elements contained within the lyrics of the music that are inherently Southern in their origin. During the so-called “Great Migration”<sup>5</sup> of the early to middle twentieth century<sup>6</sup>, poor people of the Southern states—both black and white—travelled North looking for employment in Northern manufacturing centers, and they brought their religious and musical practices with them. The appeal of the cultural elements of the South has certainly

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<sup>5</sup> At the beginning of the twentieth century, according to the 1900 census, over one million “Southern-born whites” were “living outside their birth region.” “By 1920, Southerners living outside their home region numbered more than 2.7 million and in 1930 more than 4 million.” By 1980, this number had risen to nearly 12 million. (Gregory 2005:12) Verified at the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series, accessed at <[usa.ipums.org/usa/](http://usa.ipums.org/usa/)>

<sup>6</sup> For an excellent discussion of “The Great Migration,” its inclusion of both white and black Southerners, and its impact on the economy and society of the United States as a whole, see James N. Gregory's *Diaspora: How the Great Migrations of Black and White Southerners Transformed America*. (2005)

spread beyond the borders of the Vernacular South, and this spread has increased since the politicization of Religious Fundamentalism, Pentecostalism and Evangelicalism. Within the scope of my writing, I use the term "Southern" to describe the culture from which this music originates. To not use this term, I contend, negates the heritage and the cultural self-identification of many of the consumers of this music.

With that being said, there is a troubling racial vocabulary surrounding this music. "Southern Gospel" was a term coined by the music industry to distinguish this music from "African American Gospel" and "Christian Contemporary Music." To further the confusion, much African American Gospel could easily be labeled "Southern" as it also has its origins in the American Vernacular South. Additionally muddying the waters is the cross-pollination of gospel music as a whole, as many of the songs of the genre have been stolen, borrowed, pastiched, re-arranged, re-lyricized, re-mixed, mashed up and gone down the road and back again. Place a Titon field recording from the African American New Bethel Baptist Church in Detroit from 1977 next to one from a (white) Old Regular Baptist Church Convention recorded in 1993<sup>7</sup> and you will

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<sup>7</sup> Titon, Jeff Todd, ed. *Worlds of Music*, disc 1, track 22 "Amazing Grace," New Bethel Baptist Church, Detroit, Michigan and *Classic Southern Gospel*, track 22 "I'm Going to a City," Indian Bottom Association of Old Regular Baptists.

find both groups lining out hymns in a remarkably similar fashion: with both groups including elements such as collective improvisation, heterophonic vocal texture, and dovetailing call and response. When Ernest Phipps and his Holiness Quartet (a white Pentecostal group of singers and musicians) recorded in Bristol, Tennessee, in 1927 and 1928, those recordings were released on Bluebird—Victor Recording Company’s “race” label—rather than on the Victor label. The music of Pentecostal itinerant preacher and musician “Brother” Claude Ely incorporates a number of African American influences from field hollers, ring shouts and the blues: such as hocket rhythms, rough vocal timbre and harmonic vocabularies. To say that there is a distinct racial divide within gospel musics between “white” and “black” would do a disservice to the music and to the people of all colours who created and fostered it. The origins of many gospel tunes are shrouded in mystery, and are most often attributed to “Traditional” when they appear in published sources—but whose tradition? From food to vernacular speech to music, the culture of poor white Southerners has more in common with their black neighbours than is commonly recognized. The connections between white and black gospel music are certainly an excellent area for further exploration, but the scope of this work does not allow for any lengthy exploration of this issue.

For the scope of my dissertation, I have chosen to label the music contained within my repertoire survey as “white” rather than “Southern” because

music produced by African-American artists has been consistently labeled “African American” or “Black,” rather than distinguished by a geographical location. As the artists represented in my repertoire survey are largely Anglo<sup>8</sup> in their extraction, I have chosen to use the succinct (and more geographically inclusive) term “white” when referring to them. This is done bearing in mind that many of the racial boundaries that have been thrown up between musics originate in marketing and institutionalized apartheid and racism rather than aesthetics or history alone, and in the chapters that follow (particularly within Chapter Three) I argue that the socio-economic class, perceived simplicity of culture, and “fringe” religious practices of both the artists and consumers of WCGMs have positioned the groups at the margins. This contention is explored in detail throughout the dissertation, and the actual (or self-perceived) marginalization of the Christian Nationalists is one of the ways in which they strengthen their “identity through distinction” (Fletcher 2000).<sup>9</sup>

#### **1. 4 The Bedrock of WCGMs**

In the following section, I outline the historical background of WCGM

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<sup>8</sup> A great many of the artists and songs, particularly in the Bluegrass and early country gospel idioms, have their roots in the Ulster Protestant (alternately referred to as “Scots-Irish” or “Scotch-Irish”) settlers from the British Isles.

<sup>9</sup> This is discussed in detail during my “Theory” section, beginning on page 44.

and its connections to modern Christian Nationalism. I contend throughout the dissertation that the United States of America has, from its colonial infancy, possessed elements of Christian Nationalism, and music has connected to these elements throughout the history of the nation. As early as a sermon delivered by puritan clergyman and soon-to-be governor John Winthrop, the fledgling United States was presented as special and worthy of God's favour. This early contention still exists in the minds of modern Christian Nationalists, who insist that America was founded as a "Christian Nation."

During the early colonization of what would become the United States of America, the Puritans brought musical traditions with them when they immigrated to North America. In these early churches, most congregations knew about "half a dozen tunes" (Cusic 2002: 35) and could sing the entire Psalter—consisting of one hundred and fifty psalm texts—by utilizing these tunes. The first book-length use of a printing press in the new American Colonies was a printing of the *Bay Psalm Book* in 1640, arguably the first White Commercial Gospel Music produced on the continent<sup>10</sup>. The *Bay Psalm Book* was also one of the first texts to use the term "Gospel Musick" to refer to church psalmody. The introduction

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<sup>10</sup> At the time of this writing, a copy of the Bay Psalm Book, one of eleven known to still be in existence, is up for auction. It is expected to sell for between twenty and thirty million dollars (Sotheby's online catalog, accessed at sotheby's.com).



included a “command” to sing the “Psalmes in publick and privat, both by precept and paterne,” and an instruction that “this heavenly musick of singing Psalms, as that which will both glad their [congregations] hearts and glorifie God” (Bay Psalm Book 1640).

In these early American churches, most Protestant congregations (including Baptist, Puritan, and early Anglican congregations) sang the psalms utilizing “lining out,” a technique in which a leader begins a line of a psalm, and then the congregation continues the line in a heterophonic style that varies from church to church. Apparently, this technique was not much beloved by musicians and clergy members during its heyday. Thomas Walter, a New England theologian active in the late 1600s, described this style as “miserably tortured, twisted and quavered . . . into a horrid Medly of confused and disorderly noises” (quoted in Westermeyer 2005: 271). As mentioned earlier, this style is still practiced by some African American congregations, as well as the Old Regular Baptists of the American Vernacular South.

Partly in response to this “horrid Medly,” a movement to educate congregational singers began in the colonies in the form of “singing schools” which used solfeggio and specially shaped notes to teach note reading to communities. Most singing school masters were itinerant in nature, travelling from town to town and selling songbooks utilizing their particular system of shape

notes. John Tuft published his *Introduction to the Singing of Psalm Tunes* in 1721, and by the end of the eighteenth century, there were dozens of systems of shape notes introduced throughout the fledgling United States.

The so-called “Great Awakening” (discussed in greater detail beginning on page 20 of this chapter) of the eighteenth century was partly responsible for introducing hymns with poetic rather than biblical texts into the realm of congregational singing. Don Cusic, in his *The Sound of Light: A History of Gospel and Christian Music* (2002), quotes from a 1969 writing by Hamilton C. MacDougal: “It is easy to understand how welcome the new hymn tunes were, with their pulsating, secular rhythms, their emotional repetitions, the fugal tunes, the iterations of words to cumulative sequences after the ‘sleep’ of formalism” (Cusic 36). The new religious fervour of the American continent was perfectly represented by a new kind of “spiritual”<sup>11</sup> song, songs that began to elevate an emotional connection with God higher than a Scriptural sense of intellectualism. According to Isaac Watts (who composed seven hundred separate hymn tunes in this newer more emotional style) hymn tunes and texts should be “simple,

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<sup>11</sup> Isaac Watts first used the term “spiritual” to describe this type of non-biblical singing when he published *Hymns and Spiritual Songs* (1707). This type of song, which became the bedrock of song-book publishing for the next two hundred years, has little to do with the term “African American Spiritual” outside of their religious content, but instead is a song that serves to emotionally evoke the God experience rather than edify the listener with Biblical knowledge.

sensuous and passionate” and “charged with the emotion of a true believer” (Watts 1707: iv). This emphasis on emotional experience as a crucial part of religious experience was quick to become a dominant characteristic of religion and hymnody in the United States.

## **1. 5 Groundwork of Christian Nationalism**

The next section outlines several waves of religious fervour in the Colonial United States, and in the United States of America through to the Civil War. A brief outline of this history is important because of the lines of connection that modern Christian Nationalists draw from earlier religious Colonial founders to their present philosophy. This background also serves to illustrate the connection of religion and politics that has long existed in the United States, from its earliest founding to the present day.

### **1. 5. 1 “*The City on a Hill*”**

It could easily be argued that the early colonization of the United States represented the first wave of Christian Nationalism. Early settlers came to the so-called “New World” to exercise religious freedom, but quickly these settlers restricted religious freedom to mean freedom to practice only their particular branch of Christianity. One of the most prominent early settlers of the American

Colonies, clergyman and governor of the Massachusetts colony John Winthrop, described his vision of the new land as an opportunity to show the superiority of Puritan Christianity:

our Community as members of the same body, soe shall wee keepe the unities of spirit in the bond of peace, the Lord will be our God and delight to dwell among us, as his owne people and will commaund a blessing upon us in all our wayes, so that wee shall see much more of his wisdom power goodness and thru the then formerly wee have bene acquainted with, wee shall finde that the God of Israell is among us, when tenn of us shall be able to resist a thousand of our enemies, when he shall make us a prayse and glory, that men shall say of succeeding plantacions: the lord make it like that of New England: for we must Consider that wee shall be as a City upon a Hill, the eyes of all people are upon us; soe that if wee shall deale falsely with our god in this worke wee have undertaken and soe cause him to withdrawe his present help from us, wee shall be made a story and a byword through the world. (Winthrop 1630)

This “city on a hill” sermon contains nearly all of the present characteristics of Christian Nationalism: that America, as long as it did not “deale falsely with our god,” would be both prosperous and able to fight hordes of enemies even though their numbers were small. The sermon also contains the elements that there are “thousand[s]” of enemies, and that the United States would have a unique duty to serve as a beacon to the world and would shine as an example of what Christianity should be. The sermon draws on Jesus’ “Sermon on the Mount” (Matthew 5: 7),<sup>12</sup> and its rhetoric echoes through the modern-day rhetoric of

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<sup>12</sup> The entire passage from the “Sermon on the Mount” (Matthew 5-7) reads: “You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hidden.”

Christian Nationalism. The sermon even made an appearance in Ronald Reagan's acceptance speech at the Republican National Convention in 1984: "We proclaimed a dream of an America that would be a Shining City on a Hill."

Expanding on the notion that a strongly religious America could defeat enemies even when outnumbered, Winthrop also pioneered within his later writings the theory of manifest destiny—that white immigrants were entitled to the ownership of the so-called "new world" of the North American colonies. Although he attempted to maintain good relations with the Aboriginal people with which he and his fellow settlers came into contact, he also contended that they were "savages" and called the "plague" of European diseases that wiped out many Native American people "miraculous," and stated that this "miraculous plague" had left the "greater part of the country" "void of inhabitants" (Winthrop 1635). Through the words and teachings of John Winthrop, the groundwork was laid for several elements of modern Christian Nationalism: the idea that white Christians were superior to non-white non-Christians and that these Anglo-Christians had rightful claim to the entire North American continent. The Christian Nationalist movement still embraces this sense of Dominionism, that God has given the world specifically to their group, and that they have both a destiny and a responsibility to hold dominion over not just the North American continent, but the entire world.

### 1. 5. 1 *The Great Awakening*

The idea that a true, deep relationship with Jesus Christ could be an integral part of a religious experience is one of the major tenets of modern Evangelical Christianity. Modern Evangelical Christians contend that a necessary aspect of being “born again” is having an emotionally deep God experience. Christian mass religious fervor was born on the American continent as well. The preacher George Whitefield (1714-1770), who was ejected from the pulpit in his native England, immigrated to the fledgling colonies and preached the importance of a personal, emotional connection to God. This intimate connection to God is highly prevalent in the modern repertoire of WCGM, with songs such as “What a Friend we Have in Jesus” (Scriven 1855/Converse 1868), “I Know a Man who Can” (Campbell/Davies 1969), “Somebody Touched Me” (Bowles/Frye 1926), and many other songs that speak of a deeply personal and emotional connection directly to God. This music and new way of worship was democratizing because it lifted the emotions to the same (or even a more important level) than the intellect, thereby allowing uneducated people to directly communicate with God. In the year 1740, Whitefield preached more than 350 times in seventy-five towns and cities. Crowds in major colonial cities such as Boston, Philadelphia and New York City numbered in the thousands and even tens of thousands, a number which represented nearly twenty-five percent of the population of the American colonies

at the time (Belton 2010).

This first new wave of Christian enthusiasm throughout the colonies, sparked by the preaching of Whitefield, was called “The Great Awakening” (1750). It was a broadening and democratizing movement that had a lasting impact on the religious culture of the United States in general, and on Christian Nationalism in particular. The idea that obedience to God strengthens “freedom” is something that still exists in the lyrics and rhetoric that surrounds WCGMs. It is consistent with the tenets of Christian Nationalism in its embrace of a militaristic ideal of unquestioning duty, that of the “Christian Soldier,” and that being on “God's side” allows more freedom and makes a nation safe and great.

### ***1. 5. 2 The Cane Ridge Revival***

As westward expansion began at the end of the eighteenth century, there was a great body of the new United States left unchurched. This all changed when another wave of “awakening” swept the (then) western United States beginning in 1796 and culminating in 1801 at Cane Ridge, Kentucky. Circuit rider preacher James McGready travelled throughout the Kentucky territory, practising a Presbyterian “revivalist preaching style” (McCauley 1995: 191).<sup>13</sup> In

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<sup>13</sup> So-called “Circuit Rider” preachers were clergymen assigned to multiple churches at one time. On any given Sunday, these preachers would ride a horse between several separate churches,

Cane Ridge, located in what is today the Bourbon County region of Kentucky, there was a mass gathering consisting of highly emotional and charismatic Christian religious expression. Crowd estimates for the year of the Cane Ridge gathering range from twenty thousand to nearly fifty thousand depending on the source (Jackson 1975, McCauley 1995, Belton 2010) and this at a time when the entire population of the United States was just under five million and the population of the Kentucky territory was 220,955 according to the 1800 census.

McGready described the gathering in the following glowing terms:

at the Sacrament in the Ridge congregation. . .there were upwards of five hundred communicants; and at the tables, through the evening, and during the greater part of the night, the people of God were so filled with such extatic [sic] raptures of divine joy and comfort, that I could compare [sic] it to nothing else than the New Jerusalem coming down from heaven to earth. (quoted in McCauley 1995: 193)

The small Cane Ridge Meeting House, built in 1791, became the centre of this gathering, which could be described as the first modern revival meeting. The meeting house and its small archives are still standing on a remote piece of land in

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thereby “riding” the “circuit. This method of assigning preachers was particularly prevalent in rural or frontier areas. The modern contraction “C.C.Rider” has taken to mean any individual who tours a “circuit”—such as musicians—and this term is a popular trope within blues music.



western Kentucky.<sup>14</sup> At this site, beginning in the summer of 1801, people began to gather to experience the religious revival. Many descriptions of highly emotional and physical expressions of worship exist: speaking in tongues, the delivery of sermons and “exhortations” by young children, and incidences of people being struck by the spirit and running off into the woods surrounding the site (Smith 2009, Belton 2010, Jackson 1975, Cartwright 1856). At the Cane Ridge gathering, the frontier spirit of individuality (Kentucky was at the time the farthest western frontier of the U.S.) melded with Scotch-Irish hymnody and psalmody as well as charismatic religious experience. Colonel Robert Patterson, of Lexington, Kentucky, wrote the following in a letter dated September 25<sup>th</sup>, 1801, to Reverend Doctor John King:

Of all ages, from 8 years and upwards; male and female; rich and poor; the Blacks; and of every denomination; those in favor of it, as well as those, at the instant in opposition to it, and railing against it, have instantaneously laid motionless on the ground. Some feel the approaching symptoms by being under deep convictions; their heart swells, their nerves relax and in an instant they become motionless and speechless, but generally retain their senses... from hour one to 24. (Patterson 1801 accessed at caneridge.org)

Although there is evidence that African Americans and Native Americans took

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<sup>14</sup> One of the most spiritually enriching moments during my fieldwork trip to Kentucky in 2011 was being allowed by the kind caretaker to sit for nearly an hour alone in the Cane Ridge meeting house (a stone church building now surrounds and protects it, but the original building still stands) on a hot summer day.

part at Cane Ridge, the worshippers consisted mostly of racially homogenous Anglo-Americans, or more specifically Irish and Scotch-Irish: the “Ulster Protestants” who had settled in the Appalachian frontier. George Pullen Jackson reasons in his *White and Negro Spirituals* (1975) that the Cane Ridge revival was more charismatic than its Eastern seaboard counterpart Great Awakening because the Scotch-Irish and other “Gaels” were “people whose emotions boil at a lower temperature” (Jackson 1975: 79). It also bears mention that the site of the Cane Ridge meeting house is located a little under one hundred miles from the site of the modern National Quartet Convention. To a great extent, it was the meldings that occurred at Cane Ridge that sowed the seeds for modern WCGMs.

### **1. 5. 3 Gospel Revivals**

Throughout the Civil War, there were tent revivals held within camps of armies on both sides of the conflict. Circuit rider tent revivalists, preaching in a firebrand style, and distributing gospel songbooks at their revival services had replaced the circuit rider preachers of the Western Frontier. The gospel songbooks of this era began to canonize a body of music that is still in the repertoire of WCGM today, including the compositions of Fanny Crosby (1820-1915) and Elisha Albright Hoffman (1839-1929). This wave of gospel revivals continued into the turn of the twentieth century, with Preacher/Musician teams such as Billy Sunday and Fred Fischer (Fischer was later replaced by Homer

Rodeheaver) and Dwight Moody and Ira D. Sankey married gospel revival preaching with the gospel hymn to form a powerful method of evangelism. In 1850's *Revival Manual*, Methodist Luther Lee instructs that:

Singing during a revival is an important part of religious exercise. . . . an appropriate verse, well sung, at the right time, will sometimes do more to assist the struggling spirit to take hold of Christ by faith, than a long sermon or a long prayer. (quoted in Goff 2002: 19)

Furthermore, gospel hymns consisted of repetitive language, simple themes of a personal relationship with Jesus and emotional pleas to the sinners of the time to “come home” and “lay your all on the altar.” The simple language and repetitive nature of the gospel hymns invited singing along, and their harmonic construction was simple as well, filled with strong cadential cues that alerted the participants when the familiar refrains were returning.

## **1. 6 The Rise of Gospel Publishing Houses**

The end of the nineteenth century saw the rise of publishing houses in the American South whose sole purpose was the publication and marketing of Gospel Music. Vaughan, Stamps, Harper, and Stamps-Baxter were some of the most prominent of these publishing houses. The commercial success of these publishing houses led to several important aspects of the repertoire and performance practices of modern WCGMS. First of all, the publishing houses used travelling quartet performances to sell their inexpensive paperback shape-

note gospel songbooks. Secondly, these publishing houses often aligned themselves with exceptionally prolific songwriters, who would be contracted to write exclusively for one publishing house. Albert E. Brumley, composer of over seven hundred gospel songs, many of which are still in use, was contracted to Hartford and later Stamps-Baxter. The Bristol Sessions of 1927 and 1928 included six sides from the Stamps Quartet. The Gospel Publishing houses laid the bedrock for the WCGM industry in the modern United States of America.

### **1. 7 The Undergrounding of Evangelicalism**

During the end of the nineteenth and the early part of the twentieth century, the Pentecostal and Evangelical movements were decidedly non-political in nature. According to R.M. Anderson, in his history of the Pentecostal movement: “The Pentecostals regarded both church and state as incurably corrupt, abstained from political activity . . .and placed their hopes for change in an imminent Second Coming” (Anderson 1979: 5). Charles Fox Parham, regarded by many as the founder of the modern Pentecostal church, called patriotism a “Moloch God” and called soldiers “self-appointed murderers” guided by governments he described as “imbecile.” Parham also encouraged his congregants to not vote in elections (quoted in Wacker 2001: 218 and 222).

The Scopes “monkey trial,” which took place in 1925, was one of the first

times that a modern Evangelical political agenda—opposition to teaching evolution in schools—took a national stage. During the trial, the press portrayed Fundamentalist prosecutors of a high school teacher named John Scopes (who was charged with violating Tennessee law by teaching the theory of evolution) repeatedly and on a national scale as “backward.” This backwardness also translated to the state of Tennessee and to the South as a whole. William Jennings Bryan, a noted Southern statesman and Fundamentalist, was questioned for hours by the defence’s attorney Clarence Darrow. Even though the prosecution won the trial, Fundamentalism was dealt a public relations blow that it would take decades to recover from, and the practitioners of religious Fundamentalism dropped out of the realm of political expression and ceased to be active voters.

During this same time period the Charismatic religious movement became more and more segregated. Although at the beginning of the movement, all the way back to the Cane Ridge Revival, Anglo-Americans, African Americans and even Native Americans worshipped side by side, by the end of World War I all the major Pentecostal and Charismatic denominations had separated into denominations that were racially homogenous.

### **1. 8 Second Wave Christian Nationalism**

The time immediately following World War II was unique in the history

of the United States of America. Unlike other nations, there had been no damage to the infrastructure to the United States, and the economy of the United States had actually benefited from the War instead of suffered from it.<sup>15</sup> The United States, bereft of a unifying enemy at the end of World War II, became increasingly culturally fearful of communism. The enormously popular Evangelist Billy Graham was an eloquent opponent of communism, declaring that communism had “declared war against God, against Christ, against the Bible, and against all religion!” and calling it “Satan's version of religion” (Whitfield 1996: 81). Graham's popularity cannot be overstated. During the 1950s in the United States, he preached to enormous crowds, influenced elections and counseled presidents (he continues to counsel American Presidents at the time of this writing). His Madison Square Garden Crusade in 1957 was broadcast by ABC, a move that essentially created Television Evangelism; the media mogul William Randolph Hearst commanded his papers to “puff Graham” (Graham 1997: 150), and he made regular front-page headlines. Graham used billboards, leaflets and even feature films to further his agenda, becoming a masterful user of modern media. Graham openly admitted that he was utilizing the media, and was quoted in *Time* magazine in 1954 saying: “I am selling the greatest product in the world;

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<sup>15</sup> The revenue of the U.S. Federal Government rose from 930 million dollars in 1916 to 5,889 million dollars by the end of the war in 1919 (Rockoff 2010).

why shouldn't it be promoted as well as soap?" This second wave of nationwide Evangelical politicization laid the groundwork for the current third wave of Christian Nationalism, as many of the current demographic of consumers of WCGMs were young during this time.

This wave also solidified a technique that was longstanding in Nationalist agendas: the creation and demonization of the "Other." In Billy Graham's crusades during the 1950s and 1960s, the Other was the "Bolshevik" or the "Communist" or even the Soviet "Fifth Column" who had already "infiltrated Los Angeles." Among other things, Graham preached that one could not simultaneously be a communist and a Christian, that communism was a "religion in and of itself, one of the Devil" and that the only way to combat it was a return to "old-fashioned Americanism" equated with "the way of the cross" (Whitfield 1991: 80).

Despite his enormous popularity, Billy Graham was a controversial figure in his time among many Fundamentalists. Fundamentalist leaders disagreed with his policies of inclusion<sup>16</sup> of various denominations of Christianity, and called the crusades "dangerous" in a pamphlet distributed by Fundamentalist churches during the 1950s entitled "Should Fundamentalists Support The Billy Graham Crusades?" Nevertheless, Graham remains the most influential popular-culture

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<sup>16</sup> That is to say, Graham promoted inter-denominational Christian worship.

religious figure of his time, and he gave Christian Nationalism its first household name, as well as its first Other—the lurking “fifth column”—the unifying Communist enemies of Americanism.

The music of the Billy Graham crusades was grounded firmly in the traditional hymnody of the eighteenth and nineteenth century. Although during the 1970s he would hire Andre Crouch to travel with him and attract more African American attendees, during the 1950s and 1960s the Crusade Songbooks contain primarily traditional hymns that would have easily found a place in mainline church hymnals of their day, such as “My Hope is Built” (Bradbury 1863/Mote 1834), “Great is Thy Faithfulness” (Runyan/Chisholm 1923), and a song that would become forever associated with the crusades, “How Great Thou Art” (“O Store Gud” Boberg 1885, trans: Hine 1899).

### **1.9 The “Moral Majority”**

After the public humiliations of the so-called “Scopes Monkey Trial” in 1925, Evangelicals exited the political sphere almost completely until the 1980 presidential election campaign of Ronald Reagan. It was then that Jerry Falwell began the group he called the “Moral Majority,” which was on the surface a non-partisan group for religious people to organize and promote candidates for local government, but rapidly became a tool of the Republican Party. At the time of the



founding of the Moral Majority, Evangelicals and Fundamentalists existed at the fringes of society and were regarded as of little political consequence. This all changed when Ronald Reagan attended a meeting of Evangelicals and made the following statement: “I know this is a non-partisan event, so you cannot endorse me, but I want you to know that I endorse you and what you are doing.”

According to Ed Dobson, this statement galvanized the Moral Majority and Evangelicals behind Reagan:

We had been at the fringes of culture. I think Evangelicals were considered obscure, sweat-drenched Appalachian hillbillies, for lack of a better term. In other words, no one respected us. And for someone running for president to affirm us was very significant. (pbs.org transcript)

This new acceptance by a politician on the national stage led to an increase in the vocality of the Moral Majority. Although the group itself dissolved in 1989, the seeds were sown for American Evangelicals to take a more active part in National Politics.<sup>17</sup>

### **1. 10 Religious Cultures Explored**

Within the scope of the dissertation, I consider three different, yet theologically similar, groups that are prevalent throughout the American South

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<sup>17</sup> This politicization in its modern form is explored at great length in the chapter 5, entitled “We Will Stand Our Ground.”

and make up the Christian Nationalist movement<sup>18</sup>: the Pentecostals, the Fundamentalists, as well as the modern Evangelical movement—a movement which I contend springs from a combination of the two former groups. These three groups are the modern religious groups in which Christian Nationalism flourishes, and through my fieldwork I discovered that it was members of these three groups that made up the majority of fans of modern WCGMs. Additionally, all three groups have in common that they began either in the South or among displaced Southerners. After comparing doctrines of the three groups, I can outline the following elements they have in common:

1. Belief that the Bible is wholly and literally true.
2. Belief that “witnessing” to others about one's faith is of the utmost importance.
3. Belief in the necessity of a “born again” conversion experience.
4. A religious practice that includes charismatic, emotional spirit-encounters.
5. An emphasis placed on original texts, including doctrines and song lyrics.

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<sup>18</sup> Not all Pentecostals, Fundamentalists or Evangelical Christians subscribe to the philosophy of the Christian Nationalists, but nearly all Christian Nationalists come from these three religious groups.

6. A high level of respect for individual rights and religious practice.<sup>19</sup>

### 1. 10. 1 *The Pentecostals*

Pentecostalism has at its core a belief in a personal connection to the Holy Spirit, and a belief that worship necessarily contains a communion with this Spirit. Other tenets of the religion can vary within individual sects or even churches, but include an eschewing of earthly indulgences such as alcohol, mandating modest dress (especially for women), and a belief that the Bible is literally and entirely true. The movement primarily grew from the Free Methodist movement of the late 1800s, and was co-founded by the evangelists William J. Seymour, an African American preacher from Texas, and Charles Fox Parnham, a white minister from Kansas. Oral Roberts was an extremely visible modern proponent of the Pentecostal church before his death in 2009 (Hill 1984: 583, Anderson 1979, McCauley 1995: 259-311).

Many Pentecostals came from the lowest economic rungs of society. According to Robert Mapes Anderson's history of Pentecostalism *Vision of the Disinherited*:

the movement's initial appeal was to old-stock Whites either in the rural

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<sup>19</sup> This tolerance is within the scope of Christianity only, and extends exclusively to religious practice, not Biblical interpretation. This tolerance does not spread to other religions such as Islam.

environs of their origin or in the urban areas to which they migrated. Regionally, the Pentecostal movement found its readiest response in the South. . . .the 1916 census showed 80% of all Pentecostals residing in the South; the 1926 census reported 55% in that region; and one of every two Pentecostals reported in the 1936 census was still to be found in the states South of the Mason-Dixon line. (Anderson 1979:114)

Anderson goes on to state, “within the South the Pentecostal movement achieved its greatest success in the upland regions centering on lower Appalachia and the Ozark Plateau” (Anderson 1979: 114-115). The Pentecostal experience and the rural, poor white's experience are closely linked, and both the music and the lyrics they produced reflected this.

### **1. 10. 2 *The Fundamentalists***

The Fundamentalists are similar in many ways theologically to the Pentecostals. Their roots are largely in the teachings of evangelist Dwight L. Moody, and by extension his musical director and hymnal/gospel song book editor and composer Ira D. Sankey. The Fundamentalists take their name from a series of twelve books published from 1910-1915 entitled *The Fundamentals*.

Writing about this series, Samuel S. Hill describes them in the *Encyclopedia of Religion in the South* stating that within the volumes:

widely respected pastors, scholars, and laymen berated liberal theology and critical study of the Bible, reaffirmed evangelism and the promotion of piety as the chief concerns of the church, and defended cardinal Evangelical doctrines, notably the inerrancy of the Bible and salvation only by faith in Christ's atoning death. (Hill 1984: 276)

Fundamentalism holds fast to old traditions of the church. In the early part of the twentieth century, Fundamentalists clashed with proponents of the Theory of Evolution, most famously in the Scopes trial of 1925. After the Scopes trial, the movement returned to “their prior concerns, evangelism and piety” (Hill 1984: 276), and most Fundamentalists were not even registered to vote until the presidential election of 1980. Perhaps the most culturally influential Fundamentalist figure after Moody was Jerry Falwell, whose “Moral Majority” movement in the 1980s aligned with the Republican Presidential campaign of Ronald Reagan and re-politicized the Fundamentalists after their long absence from public political life.

### **1. 10. 3 *The Evangelicals***

This is the most difficult of the three groups to define, because it is a term most widely used by Christian denominations. To put it simply, all Fundamentalists and Pentecostals are Evangelicals, but not all Evangelicals are Fundamentalists or Pentecostals. “Evangelical,” in its simplest definition, means “pertaining to the gospel” (Hill 1984: 238). Since every sect of Christianity has the books of the Christian “gospel”—the first four books of the New Testament, which recount the life of Jesus—at their centre, technically every denomination of modern Christianity could be considered “Evangelical.” Indeed, many modern

Protestant denominations designate themselves as “Evangelical.” For the purpose of my writing, however, I am speaking specifically of modern, Southern Evangelicalism, in the manner of Billy Graham and Dwight L. Moody—a non-denominational Christianity based in Fundamentalist Protestantism.

### **1. 11 Christian Nationalism**

The “City on a Hill” writings of John Winthrop (1630) have surfaced as a core text of modern Christian Nationalism. This text has been used politically since the presidential campaign of Ronald Reagan in 1980, and proponents of Christian Nationalism propagate the idea that America is a “Christian Nation” both in song lyrics and in speech. The groundwork laid by the Puritan, not the Constitutional, founders of the United States is the philo-political centre of Christian Nationalism. Through source reading, lyric analysis, and fieldwork, I determined to consider the following as unifying beliefs of the Christian Nationalists:

1. America was and is a Christian Nation.
2. America would be strengthened and protected by a militaristic Christian base.
3. The world at large would be better by an expansion of this superior form of Christian Americanism.
4. An outside, threatening Other exists that will endanger

Christians, particularly within the United States.

5. Older and more traditional is always better than new or innovative.

None of these five beliefs supersede the core beliefs of Evangelicalism, but these beliefs are expressed in unique ways during performances of Christian Nationalism. Songs I explore throughout the dissertation demonstrate the importance of conservatism, hypersentimentality and gender casting that is at the core of the society of Christian Nationalism. The individual chapters that follow explore these connections at length. What follows is a brief explanation of how I defined the term “archetype” as well brief descriptions of the individual archetypes.

### **1. 12 The Definition of Archetype**

I am defining the term “archetype” as a pattern or an ideal that is represented by a significant number of the lyrics of WCGMs. I am also utilizing the Jungian idea of the archetype as connected to what Carl Jung termed the “collective unconscious” (Jung 1902 1912). Jung described archetypes as “primordial types, that is, with universal images that have existed since the remotest times” (Jung 1934: 5). Rather than be truly universal, when put into practice, Jung’s archetypes tend to represent a shared cultural ideal housed in what Jung referred to as “the collective unconscious”—which he described as a

shared cultural and psychic bed on which the psyche rested. Furthermore, Jung refers to both archetypes and the collective unconsciousness as a “deeper layer” which lies beneath the “superficial” “personal unconscious” (Jung 1934: 3).

Jung also expresses some useful ideas regarding what he refers to as “tribal lore,” represented by the archetypes a society presents. He describes tribal lore as “sacred and dangerous” (Jung 1934: 7). It was this, that archetypes are part of sacred lore, which to me seemed the most important aspect of the archetypes. Most work exploring Christian Nationalism (Goldberg 2007 Hedges 2006) and the society that surrounds it disregards the sacred aspect of the tribal lore and archetypes of a group of people—instead questioning the religiosity of the group. I argue throughout the dissertation that to practitioners of Christian Nationalism, the tenets constructed by and upheld through the archetypes of WCGM are sacred. This holy, infallible nature of the archetypes— I argue that the songs that contain them are often held as sacred text—makes them, to use Jung’s term, dangerous.

Critiques of Jung’s work, most notably by Jacques Lacan, who took issue with not only the issue of archetypes, but also even the idea of the unconsciousness, stating in his *Les écrits techniques de Freud* (based on a series of seminars presented in 1932, published in 1975) “if the unconscious really exists” (Lacan 1975:29). What I found problematic regarding Lacan as an analytic



tool was his strict reliance on language—he posits that the unconscious (if it exists) is necessarily built on language models (1975). I instead argue that language acts as a tool to create the archetypes, but language itself does not house the archetypes, this requires the collective unconscious. Furthermore, I agree with Merleau-Ponty (1958) who argues that it is the perception of reality that constructs one’s own reality, what he called the “phenomenology of perception.” Continuing with Jung’s ideas about the archetype(s), in the conclusion to *Man and His Symbols* Marie-Luise von Franz states that

The archetypes not only fit into outer situations (as animal patterns of behaviour fit into the surrounding nature); at bottom they tend to become manifest in a synchronistic “arrangement” that includes both matter and psyche. (Franz 1964: 385)

For the purposes of the chapters that follow, I define the archetype as an image that outlines a particular aspect of Christian Nationalist identity, which necessarily consists of both “matter and psyche.” The archetypes exist, I demonstrate in the chapters that follow, not only within the shared psyche of Christian Nationalists but in the matter that makes up the community. The archetypes are not present only in the imagination of Christian Nationalism, they are made manifest in the lives of the members of the community of Christian Nationalism. Not only do these archetypes construct identity, they enforce it. In addition to this, the archetypes proved time and again to be self-reflexive and fed into their own construction using elements of themselves. Like a snake eating its

own tail, it became more and more difficult to find a beginning and an end to the archetypes. Often the archetypes were themselves about the archetypes—thereby strengthening their power to construct identity at both a psychic and material level.

Specifically, the material I explored for the scope of the dissertation that follows consists of music and lyrics that enforce gender roles (thereby strengthening traditional patriarchy and discouraging change), construct a superiority of identity despite a heritage (whether real or imagined) of low socio-economic groups, and construct a militaristic Christian Nationalist identity. The songs I explore within my dissertation are Christian Nationalist in their nature. That is to say these songs and the archetypes contained within them are important to Christian Nationalist worldview, lifestyle, and community. They enforce and construct the core identity of Christian Nationalists.

Although the archetypes contain unifying musical elements (more about this within the chapters themselves, when I describe the individual archetypes) these archetypes were distinguished primarily by the lyrics of the music. There are some musical characteristics that unify gospel hymnody, and gospel songs overall, such as repetitive harmonic structures, verse/chorus form, and formulaic cadential cues. I contend that while these musical aspects increase the persuasive and participatory powers of WCGMs, they are not as important as the lyrics of the

material in identifying it as gospel or sacred. I engage in musical analysis throughout my research, but in order to examine the social and cultural importance of the music, in this case I contend that it is necessary to privilege the lyrics over the music. It is the lyrics of these songs that contain the archetypes that construct the society and, in Lomax's words, “express the shared feelings and mold the joint activities” of the religious groups I am studying.

### **1. 13 Aims and Methods**

I maintained two goals throughout the research for the dissertation: 1. to examine the roots of modern politicized Evangelicalism, and 2. to explore how music is impacted by (and impacts) the modern Christian Nationalist movement. For the former, I gathered the material for the repertoire survey from primary source documents including commercial recordings, gospel hymnals and shape note songbooks from Southern publishing houses, as well as revival pamphlet songbooks from the middle of the twentieth century, such as the “Billy Graham Crusade Songbooks.”<sup>20</sup> The years covered in the repertoire survey were

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<sup>20</sup> These songbooks were sold as souvenirs, and individual songbooks were printed for each new crusade. They show quite a bit about the musical and philosophical personality of the Crusades, including Graham's involvement in the Civil Rights' movement (he refused to preach to segregated crowds, for example), with the inclusion in the later songbooks of Andrae Crouch compositions alongside traditional hymnody from the 1700s and 1800s.

essentially 1850 to the present day, with a concentration on song recordings.<sup>21</sup> I made every attempt to focus on songs that have remained in the repertoire throughout the history of WCGMs, specifically within the context of Christian Nationalism, and discovered a surprising number of these. Several songs, in fact, exist in nearly identical arrangements in recordings made one hundred years apart.<sup>22</sup> Through analysis of both recorded and print sources, I examined the lyrics' content and categorized individual songs into archetype groups using

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<sup>21</sup> The oldest recording I listened to was pressed in 1906—a Haydn Quartet version of “When the Roll is Called Up Yonder.” I continued to sample recordings up until the time of writing. I surveyed printed or digitally archived books on psalms and hymns as old as the Bay Psalm Book, initially published in 1640.

<sup>22</sup> Following are examples of recordings that are performed in either identical or nearly identical manners (allowing for slight harmonic changes, recording technology, or increase/decrease in personnel): “Tis/Gimme That Old Time Religion”: The Tuskegee Institute Singers (1916), The Criterion Quartet (1920), The Haydn Quartet (1906), JD Sumner and The Stamps Quartet (1969) all using nearly identical arrangements to the Charles D. Tillman (who most likely lifted his arrangement from a Jubilee Singer songbook or performance); “When the Roll is Called up Yonder” Haydn Quartet (1906) and The Jordanaires (2009) both using the Ira D. Sankey arrangement from the 1890s; and “Onward Christian Soldiers”: Haydn Quartet (1901), Victor Military Band (instrumental as “March religioso”) (1912), Sons of the Pioneers (1939), Bill and Gloria Gaither (2002), and the Sanders Family (2000).

keywords, biblical subject matter cues, and gendered lyrical topic matter. I argue in this dissertation that the archetypes expose important characteristics of the society surrounding the music, including ideals of personal, religious and national identity.

In an attempt to study the modern state of Christian Nationalism within the context of the history of Evangelicalism, I conducted interviews and examined archival interview transcripts (from 1970 to the present day) with religious practitioners of Evangelical Christianity, Pentecostal Christianity and Fundamentalist Christianity in the modern American South regarding their opinions on the subjects contained within each of these archetypes. These interviews were either conducted by myself during fieldwork trips to WCGM events, obtained through print sources, or through archival sources such as the “Oral History of the American South” (<http://docSouth.unc.edu/sohp/>) and the “Southern Oral History Program” (<http://sohp.org/>). During the course of my research, I conducted several fieldwork trips to Kentucky, arguably the heart of the American Vernacular South, including attending the 2011 and 2012 National Quartet Convention, the largest Southern Gospel Music gathering of its kind. I have also extensively examined marketing materials of WCGMs, including catalogues and websites, as well as web forums and fan websites in order to dissect modern perspectives and ideas of gender, sexuality and ways in which

these perspectives impact Christian Nationalism.

### 1. 14 Theories

Within the individual chapters of my dissertation, I draw from diverse theoretical perspectives, and have explicated these theories at length within the introductory portions of each chapter. There is, however, a common theoretical strain that runs through all of my chapters. First of all, I draw heavily from the work of gender theorist Judith Butler, specifically her idea of performative gender (1990 1993 1999). Butler posits that gender is, rather than a biological destiny, a performative act that has its roots in societal encoding. In the introduction to the 1999 reprinting of *Gender Trouble*, Butler makes the following statement regarding performativity:

Performativity is not a singular act, but a repetition and a ritual which achieves its effects through its naturalization in the context of a body, understood, in part, as a culturally sustained temporal duration. (Butler 1999: xv)

I have drawn from this idea and extended the idea of performativity into ideas of constructing piety and nationalism in the context of what I am calling “performative religion.” Through what Butler terms “repetition and ritual” of performativity, the archetypes find their power to construct identity as they become “naturalized” and deeply ingrain themselves in the psyche and performative culture of Christian Nationalists. I argue that it is through this

naturalization that the archetypes connect to and construct Christian Nationalism at large.

Ideas contained in the work of performance studies scholar Marvin Carlson's (2003) *The Haunted Stage: Theatre as Memory Machine* were used to explore the hyper-sentimentality of the music and society, through his contention that theatre and performance are strengtheners of connection to history. One element that I found particularly striking as I examined recordings of WCGMs was the continuity of performance practices including vocality, harmonic vocabulary, and repertoire consistency. Carlson speaks to the power of such memory triggers and sentimentality in the case of "reception of texts:"

All reception is deeply involved with memory, because it is memory that supplies the codes and strategies that shape reception...the reception group that Stanley Fish has called the "interpretive community" might in fact be described as a community in which there is significant overlap in such memory. (Carlson 2003:5)

The idea that reception and memory are linked was very important in examining the archetypes. I argue that the archetypes depend on memory to shape reception. There is a deep sense that "older is better" (discussed in Chapter 2) that is ingrained within the songs of WCGM, and this sense of memory as tied to reception is, I argue, crucial in examining the songs as identity constructors.

My investigation of performativity in a religious context, and how Evangelical Christians strengthen their "identity through distinction" were greatly

enriched by the writings of John Fletcher (2007), who uses this concept in his research on Evangelical performativity, at “Hell House” Halloween performances. Fletcher posits that many of the elements of Evangelical performativity that to the outsider look over-the-top, are necessarily so in order to strengthen the “identity through distinction” that is important to the group. Christian Nationalists have a code (outlined on page 37 in this introduction) but they also strongly self-identify by what they are not. Although Christian Nationalists state that they are “simple,” or “old-time,” they also iterate that they are not “Hollywood,” “The White House,” or “big city.”<sup>23</sup> These statements of what Christian Nationalists are not are explored within chapter six, where I discuss performative Christian Nationalism.

The racial and feminist critiques of bell hooks (1992 2000) provided a very useful exploration of the “Other” as perceived by white observers. Her statement that “one fantasy of Whiteness is the threatening Other is always a terrorist” (hooks 1992: 174) was particularly informative during my fieldwork. At the WCGM events I attended (particularly the NQC) the Other was always portrayed as a threatening terrorist at the margins with video projections of the graphic aftermath of September 11, 2001, or with images of white American soldiers ready to face an attack on America which might threaten its Christian

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<sup>23</sup> All of these particular terms were used during the 2011 National Quartet Convention [NQC].



identity.

In terms of studying a group popularly referred to as 'rednecks'<sup>24</sup>, theorists that have proven consistently valuable are David Fillingim (2003 2004), and Jim Goad (1997), whose work has opened the discourse of "redneck" history and culture to academic inquiry in new ways. As an individual who was raised in rural Southern poverty (the granddaughter of a former sharecropper<sup>25</sup>), Fillingim and Goad's work has proven revelatory to my scholarship, serving to re-position my subjects, as well as previous writings about them, in a brand new way. I have attempted, throughout the scope of my research, to "flip the script" of primitivism and "inappropriated othering" (Trinh 1989) that has followed and still follows the groups that I am researching, and re-establish these groups as groups with a culturally rich and underestimated contribution to American culture as a whole.

For the concept of the archetypes, through using Carl Jung's idea of the archetype as psychic building block and drawing on his idea of the "collective

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<sup>24</sup> I use the term "redneck" to define the groups studied when they are poor, white, and Southern. This is done in an effort to reclaim a word that has been used as a perjorative towards members of the culture, including myself.

<sup>25</sup> Sharecropping was a form of itinerant "rent farming," in which poor whites and blacks would farm a parcel of land they did not own. Their landlords took a great amount of their crops, and charged them for supplies. Under this oppressive system, it was very difficult to ever turn a profit and often difficult to even subsist.

unconscious,” I have approached the archetypes as a set of shared ideals that are carried throughout a society below the surface of consciousness (1912). Finally, I have used the theoretical ideas of the “body as lived experience” (Merleau-Ponty 1945 and de Beauvoir 1949) rather than the language model of Lacan (1938 1975) in my examination of song texts, observation of mass bodily practices, and interviews.

Another factor that profoundly influenced my research was my own heritage. Raised in the rural Southern United States in a conservative Christian household, I was exposed to both the religious ideas of the Christian Nationalists and the marginalized social status of “white trash” and rednecks at an early age. Also, a great deal of the standard repertoire was familiar to me when I began my research (although the modern performance practices of WCGM were not) as I have been in one way or another a church musician my entire life; one of my very earliest memories is of singing the song “Yes, Jesus Loves Me” in a church. It would have been impossible for me to separate this background, nor did I wish to separate it, from my research. Although my background did make it easier for me to move throughout the world of Christian Nationalism, after my first fieldwork experience at the National Quartet Convention in 2011, I realized that my current life and political beliefs served to position me outside of the community of my subjects. I discuss this aspect of my research experience at more length in

Chapters 6 and 7.

### **1. 15 The Archetypes Of the Music of Christian Nationalism**

The following section outlines the individual archetypes, and gives a brief summary of songs within each archetype. As previously explained, these archetypes were codified by lyrical cues and Biblical references that I argue serve to construct specific prescriptions of “right” behaviour within Christian Nationalism. During my repertoire survey, I explored five particular archetypes; which I call: “Old Time Religion,” “Judgment Day,” “Momma,” “Soldier,” and “Stand Our Ground.” When I began my fieldwork and deeper historical research into the society that surrounds Christian Nationalism, I found that these five archetypes specifically construct and enforce the unique identity of Christian Nationalists<sup>26</sup>. The following archetypes serve as the building blocks and enforcers of Christian Nationalist identity as it is expressed through music and lyrics.

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<sup>26</sup> In the course of my background listening, I originally explored songs that illustrated the idea of being “born again” and songs that were “community building.” When I expanded my fieldwork and decided to focus on the songs that were unique to the Christian Nationalists in modern performance practice, I discovered that these songs were not commonly performed, nor did they specifically fit into a Christian Nationalist identity.

### 1. 15. 1 *“Old Time Religion”*: *Emphasizing Conservative Traditionalism*

Ideas of what is proper in religious expression are often prescribed within lyrics of WCGM. Particularly prevalent are notions of hyper-sentimentality and techniques of “good” versus “bad” religious traditions. What is most at the forefront in what characterizes ideals of “good” religious practice is that it be hyper-traditional or “old time.” This is not a new concept, as the song for which this archetype is named was first published in a WCGM context in an 1889 gospel songbook entitled “The Revival” by Charles D. Tillman, who almost certainly lifted it from an African American Jubilee performance he heard of the song.<sup>27</sup> The lyrics “Gimme that Old Time Religion” were anglicized to “ ‘Tis the Old Time Religion,” although most contemporary versions use the original lyrics: “Gimme.” The song is still a widely performed WCGM standard, especially among SGM performers. Songs contained within this archetype focus on rustic church locations: “The Old Country Church,” “The Church in the Wildwood,” and “Greystone Chapel”; the religious practices of one's ancestors: “That Old Time Religion,” “The Family Who Prays,” or “Faith of Our Fathers”; and/or stress the importance of believing in the Bible in a literal sense: “Satan is Real,”

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<sup>27</sup> The song had been published in a slightly different version entitled “This Old Time Religion” in an 1873 Fisk Jubilee Singers Songbook, so it was most certainly being performed on the African American Jubilee circuit at the time.

“Do You Live What You Preach,” and “If We Forget God.”

### 1. 15. 2 “*Judgment Day:*” *Performing Death-Defying Acts*

This body of songs describes a powerful defiance over death, and a bodily transcendence over earthly life at the Judgment Day that is unique to religious groups that are literal Bible-believers. Throughout the history of the Christian Church, perhaps no other subject appears more often in hymns than that of death and heaven. There have been excellent rhetorical studies made of songs that deal particularly with images of heaven in SGM (Tucker 2004), but no inquiry into the subject of “Judgment Day” or the Rapture<sup>28</sup>, a subject of great theological importance to the Christian Nationalists, and a theme that is prevalent in their music(s). These songs contain a language of empowerment, paint horrifying pictures of the end of the world, and even contain images of righteous believers gloating at the suffering of sinners.

The “Judgment Day” songs differ from other songs about death and heaven because of their specific textual ties to the biblical book of Revelation, and contain specific lyrics markers I used to make this connection, such as:

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<sup>28</sup> The “rapture” is outlined in the Bible in the book of Revelation. On “Judgment Day,” believers are “raptured”—transported bodily from earth immediately to heaven. The non-believers remain on Earth for a pitched battle between forces of good and forces of evil. I discuss this at much greater length in Chapter 3.

“trumpet,” “jubilee,” “morning,” “Judgment,” “sorting,” and outright references to “Resurrection Day,” “Judgment Day,” or “Last Day.” According to the Fundamentalists interpretation of the Bible, the end of the world will involve a pitched battle between human and supernatural forces of good and evil, and these songs contain the tantalizing promise that religious practitioners who believe correctly will win the battle at the end of the world.

### 1. 15. 3 *“Momma:” Constructing a Role for Women*

When women are portrayed in WCGM, they are nearly exclusively portrayed as daughters or mothers. Mothers have a sacred role in the culture of Christian Nationalism, and are portrayed within the lyrics as idealized caretakers and confidantes, and as supernatural spiritual forces. In modern performance practice, a female artist, most often in the guise of a Christian Contemporary Music lullaby, performs the role of mother. These songs evoke images of home, constancy, and safety: prominent words within the lyrics are: “home,” “always,” and “waiting.” There are also clues to images of vigils kept by mothers waiting at home “night,” “eyes,” “quiet,” and “standing.” There are very few “action” words, as we will see in Soldier songs that are gendered male, and the only body parts that are represented in the lyrics of “Momma Songs” are ones associated with domestic labour or feminine appearance: “hands” and “hair” or aged

appearance “silver hair” or dead appearance “icy brow,” “hearse,” “body.” In fact, I have added a subset to “Momma” songs for “Ghost Momma” songs, as even her death does not release Momma from her duties. There are also numerous songs where Momma is either physically resurrected or appears in a dream or a vision to her child (nearly always a son) to help win a spiritual battle or deliver important earthly advice such as “I Dreamed About Mother (Mama) Last Night” (Rose 1950)<sup>29</sup>, and “Shake Hands With Mother Again” (Berry 1867).

#### **1. 15. 4 “Soldier:” *Building the Male Body***

Males are also subjected to restricting, hetero-normative gender roles in the lyrics of the music. Unlike “Momma” songs, the emphasis is not on reproduction, but a hyper-masculinity that is muscular to the point of violence, and these songs contain a heavy emphasis on bravery and militaristic imagery. In this archetype, which I call the “Soldier” songs, men are prescribed a gender role that is completely obedient to God and the church, or modeled after brave upright and miraculous male heroes from the Bible. These songs also include words containing forceful, even violent imagery with elements of danger of physical

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<sup>29</sup> Throughout the remainder of the dissertation, I list composers and date of composition in this fashion within parentheses. When I am referring to a specific recording, this is designated within the text or in a simple (DATE) after the title.

harm, and possible persecution or social ostracization that might befall the “Soldier” that does his duty. “Soldier Song” keywords are commands of physical action or steadfastness reminiscent of Civil-War-era honour culture (Linderman 1987) such as “stand,” “onward,” “dare,” or “hold.” These songs also contain unifying musical elements that are evocative of military marches (duple metrical feel, an abundance of quarter notes on repeated pitches, and dotted notes that conjure up military trumpet fanfares, for example).

#### **1. 15. 5 “*Stand Our Ground:*” *Christian Nationalism Fusing with WCGMs***

Although all of the previous archetypes construct Christian Nationalist identity, a post 9/11 agenda is presented within this last archetype, in which Christian duty is tied to Nationalistic duty. In these songs it often becomes difficult to tell whether the cross or the flag is garnering priority. The politicized agenda of Christian Nationalism began to appear in songs during the presidential campaign of Ronald Reagan in 1980, and particularly since the attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup>. These new compositions of WCGM display that Biblical Christianity and Christian Nationalism are often inseparable.

All of the archetypes contribute to Christian Nationalist identity as a whole, but it is these songs in particular that transform WCGM concerts and conventions into platforms to promote the agenda of the Christian politicized right



wing, and these songs serve to construct a religious identity that is indistinguishable from a national identity. Performances of these songs are often accompanied with visual projections of nationalistic symbols such as the American flag, the bald eagle and the Statue of Liberty, and audiences often practice ritualized bodily performative expressions of reverence during these visual cues, such as rising en masse to their feet. These songs are truly “God and Country” songs as “God” and “America” are the most frequently occurring words within this archetype. Although all of the archetypes connect to and construct the identity of Christian Nationalists, it is these songs in particular that address an unnamed Other threatening the “American” (and assumed by the audience and performer to be “Christian”) way of life, and a need to “stand our ground” and “defend” this “Christian nation.”

### **1. 16 Conclusion**

The chapters that follow explore each of these archetypes, the history that predicates them, and the modern socio-religious-political movement(s) that currently surrounds them. A central belief of Christian Nationalism is that America was founded as, and should continue to be, a “Christian Nation” that should be governed by the tenets of Evangelical Christianity and by leaders who practice the Evangelical Christian faith. These intersections of religious practice and a Nationalistic agenda, or “Christian Nationalism,” are represented vividly

within the modern expressions of WCGMs. In the remainder of the dissertation, I argue that the rigid prescriptions of gender, religious practice and identity contained within the archetypes serve to construct a culture in which Christian Nationalism is able to thrive.

What is of the utmost importance to me is to put these archetypes, their musical expression and the ways in which they are embodied in participatory performances of these musics, into a historical-cultural context, which is what my research seeks to do. Invoking the advice of Professor Mary Natvig, one of my early musicology mentors, I am endeavoring to “go to the primary source,” and rather than explore merely the culture(s) of this music as it stands today, to try to find the groundwork for how it was able to *become* what it currently *is*. I believe that my archetypes are potentially the musical building blocks of the identity of the Christian Nationalists of the United States and potentially a key part of a new type of understanding—one that includes the idea that the archetypes contained in the music of WCGM are sacred to the practitioners of modern Christian Nationalism, and that the texts of the archetypical songs are as infallible as scripture itself.

## **Chapter 2**

### **“You Gotta Have Old Time Religion:” Hypersentimentality as Identity Constructor and Enforcer in Christian Nationalism**

#### **2. 1 Overview**

This chapter explores the lyrics, harmonic construction and performance elements of the songs within the “Old Time Religion” archetype. It begins with a brief exploration of the displacement and what has been called the “liminality” of Appalachian White Protestants, then outlines specific ways in which Old Time Religion songs illustrate aspects of Christian Nationalist identity through lyrics that are self-reflexive, and serve to both console and encourage. The chapter goes on to explore ways in which the sounds and forms of songs within the Old Time Religion archetype themselves demonstrate and reinforce the importance of old practices.

#### **2. 2 Introduction**

Modern Evangelicals in the United States are identified through distinction (Fletcher 2000). They believe they are a special people, with the knowledge of the one right method of religious expression and biblical

interpretation, and also that they are as defined by what they are not as by what they are. A touchstone archetype within their music is “Old Time Religion” demonstrated by songs that lyrically recount a past that was necessarily better than the present and fetishizes “old” “country” religion. These songs possess a unique characteristic among WCGMs, in that they are often self-reflexive. That is to say, Old Time Religion songs are often songs about songs—prescriptions contained within these songs outline right living and correct religious practices, including the correct way to sing songs. The Old Time Religion archetype constructs and enforces the hyper-traditionalism of the heteronormative, literal Bible-believing, and conservative culture within Christian Nationalism. By iterating and reiterating that older is better, these songs validate the desire on the part of Christian Nationalists for the culture to remain the way that it “was,” and these songs often denigrate change and progress. The songs within this archetype also paint persecution—or perceived persecution—as something that further strengthens Christian Nationalist identity. Finally, Old Time Religion songs portray a specific religious practice as the only religious practice that will lead to a fulfilling life, an unbroken circle of spiritual connection with one’s ancestors and descendents, and a heavenly reward. Old Time Religion songs serve to enforce Christian Nationalist identity by utilizing a harmonic vocabulary drawn from traditional hymnody and lyrics that explicate an identity that is defined by

what it is not—modern and diverse—and that articulate a conviction of the superiority of tradition and unchanging worldviews.

Furthermore, these songs warn of persecution, console listeners that they are the authentic Christians, and tell them that older is always superior. The notion that people who practice “Old Time Religion” suffer persecution further crystallizes their identity through distinction, and that great reward and power will come to those who practice this form of Christianity—which modern proponents of Christian Nationalism believe is the only valid form.

### **2.3 Liminality in the Southern consciousness**

Christian Nationalists are a culturally homogenous group, made up of white Protestants who connect to the Appalachian musical and religious traditions that WCGMs draw upon. In “A flight from Liminality: ‘Home’ in Country and Gospel Music,” David Fillingim explains: “Southern rural and working class Whites” have been described as “the redneck” and as “the ‘underprivileged white of mill town and rural South’” (Fillingim 2003: 289). Rednecks, according to Fillingim, experience a lack of a homeland in modern times. Fillingim describes country gospel and Southern gospel music (the musics I am calling WCGM) as “percolating from the liminality of redneck life.” Fillingim explains this liminality as follows: “Rednecks have always been at the margins of American life and have thus occupied positions of liminality—between homes, between

jobs, at odds with both African-Americans and white elites” (Fillingim 2003: 290). This “between”-ness of Southern Whites, extracted from the Ulster Protestant exile only to be motivated to move North to industrial centers by the extreme poverty of Appalachia, provided a market hungry for the gospel portion of the Bristol<sup>30</sup> recordings, the honky-tonk hymns of Hank Williams, Sr. and, in the modern world, songs that extol the virtues of the mythologized old country homes of their ancestors.

I contend that this liminality contributes to an element of homesickness that permeates the archetype, including being “homesick for heaven,”<sup>31</sup> a belief that heaven, and not the world, is the true home of a true Christian. This homesickness springs from the fact that Appalachians were an immigrant group, exiles from Scotland and Ireland for their Ulster Protestant practices, and later—for some Appalachians—exiled by poverty from their Southern locales when they moved North to find industrial work during the Great Migration—a period in the early twentieth century in which “28 million Southerners—both black and white—moved north” (Gregory 2005: 14). Fillingim refers to this desire for home as more “eschatological than nostalgic,” (2003: 291) but I hesitate to accept this

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<sup>30</sup> The recordings made in Bristol, at the border of Tennessee and North Carolina in 1927, popularly regarded as the first important Hillbilly music recordings.

<sup>31</sup> “There’ll Be No Disappointment in Heaven” (Boggs, 1963), “This World is Not My Home” (Brumley, 1936), et al.

view entirely. I would instead emphasize that nostalgia, a painful longing for the past and actual past homesteads, is demonstrated in the songs contained within this archetype. Kathleen Stewart posits that nostalgia “creates a frame for meaning” (Stewart 1988: 227). This “frame of meaning” is crucial for Christian Nationalists, as they use nostalgia to connect to the “Old Time Religion” of their ancestors. Although many Christian Nationalists (and most participatory fans of WCGMs in the present time) are from a middle or even upper middle class economic background, they cling to the image of a “simple” heritage in modest surroundings. This nostalgia, and the practices that surround it, serves to fortify the identity of Christian Nationalists as not at the margins, but as the “real” authentic Americans. WCGMs are the music of a displaced people who look for a home to call their own, and the longing to go back to the “way things were” in the United States reflects this.

#### **2.4 The transformation of Rural Whites into modern Christian Nationalists**

In her 2012 book *What's the Matter with White People? Why We Long for a Golden Age That Never Was*, Joan Walsh explores the philosophical bedrock of modern Christian Nationalists. Although extracted from poor white and rural origins, Christian Nationalists wholeheartedly support the agendas of the Republican Party, which opposes social programs for the poor and supports an

economic policy that benefits the economic agendas of the rich. Walsh explains that “white voters” have come to believe that “Democrats are the party of big government—a corrupt big government that doesn’t work for white people, only for undeserving minorities” (Walsh 2012: 21). The rhetoric of Christian Nationalism denies that government programs such as medicare or the GI Bill<sup>32</sup>, originate from the government.

Furthermore, Christian Nationalist figures often invoke whiteness, either openly or through language that is evocative of a brown or black Other. At the National Quartet Convention in 2011 and 2012 (both years in which Barack Obama was president of the United States) “the White House” was often spoken of as a problem facing Christian Nationalists and something that did not represent “real” America or Christianity. In his 2001 book *Suicide of a Superpower*, Christian Nationalist figure Patrick Buchanan states in a chapter entitled “The End of White America” that the Tea Party movement is not racist, and then proceeds to define “white America” as “an endangered species,” bemoans the fact that twenty-first century immigrants are “almost all from Asia, Africa, and Latin America,” and states that “Mexico is moving north” (Buchanan 2001: 131). The

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<sup>32</sup> The GI Bill provided low-cost University educations and mortgages to soldiers returning from WWII and Korea. Popular rhetoric of the modern Christian Nationalists demands that people “pull themselves up by their bootstraps”—and is highly critical of any group that accepts aid in any form from the government.



“culture wars” referred to by popular Fox News figures such as Glenn Beck and Bill O’Reilly do not shy away from racist language either. Appearing on a Fox News program “Fox and Friends” on July 28, 2009, Glenn Beck described President Barack Obama as “a guy who has a deep-seated hatred for white people, or the white culture. . .I don’t know what it is.” This rhetoric (which struggles to define a “white culture”) describes a culture that holds Christian beliefs, is of Anglo or Euro extraction, and upholds “traditional” American values.

## **2. 5 Old Time Religion Songs**

Throughout the next section, I discuss the songs contained within the archetype. I explicate several characteristics of songs within the “Old Time Religion” archetype: the elevation of rustic, old-time locales, the way in which they refer to old-time religious practices, their element of self-reflexivity, and ways in which these songs construct identity through perceived persecution of Christian Nationalists as a group. I cite specific musical and lyrical examples throughout and explore ways in which these musical and lyrical elements are tied to Christian Nationalist philosophy as a whole.

### **2. 5. 1 *Rustic Settings and Simple Chapels***

The songs contained within the Old Time Religion Archetype elevate rural

religious practices and environments—harkening back to an idea prevalent in writings from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that the city is a hotbed of temporal evils and the country is a bucolic environment in which hard physical labour removes the need for activities such as sex and dancing. Writing in 1889, T. Dewitt Talmage described the cities of the United States as “monstrosities of turpitude” (Talmage 1889: 142). Images of rural churches are represented by songs such as “The Church in the Wildwood”(Pitts 1852), “Old Country Church” (variously attributed, usually traditional, 1870), or “Crying in the Chapel” (Glenn 1950)—songs suggesting that a return to the architecture and geography that surrounds traditional Appalachian religious practices can bring about a truer connection to the Lord.

In “The Church in the Wildwood,” recorded by the Carter Family in 1927, the church is described as a “little brown church in the vale”—conjuring an image of a cabin-style rustic building.<sup>33</sup> There is very little actual religion in the song;

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<sup>33</sup> At least, this was always the church I visualized when listening to the song. The actual song was written about a space in which composer William S. Pitt thought a church would look good. Later travelling through the same area, Pitt discovered that a church had indeed been built on this spot, and by one of the great coincidences, had been painted with cheap industrial-grade paint that was indeed brown. The church still stands in Nashua, Iowa and is a thriving tourist attraction as well as a surviving parish. I feel safe in assuming that the Carter Family thought of the brown church in the same way that I did, as rustic, unpainted brown wood.

rather the image of reverence is the church itself: “no spot is so dear to my childhood,” recalling images of a simpler time. The lyrics (as recorded by the Carter Family) also are evocative of simple beauty and sweet memories: “How sweet on a clear Sabbath morning/To listen to the clear ringing bell/Its tones so sweetly are calling/Oh, come to the church in the dale.” The Carter Family version speaks of an unidentified female loved one buried in the church graveyard “Neath the trees where the wildflowers bloom” under a “willow.” Other versions of the song express a desire to “wing my way to the mansions of light” from the rustic church in the lyrics. This desire to create an “unbroken circle” between one’s ancestor’s life practices, burial space, and journey to heaven resonates through the Old Time Religion archetype.

Besides “The Church in the Wildwood,” there are dozens of songs that long for a rustic wilderness church to return to. “That Little Old Country Church House” (Masters 1930) describes a “shabby” and “old” abandoned church with “dust on the pulpit and a lock on the door” where “sermons” about “Old Time Religion” are “preached no more.” “Old Country Church” (Vaughn 1933) describes a church full of “friends” and “precious years of memories” and within the lyrics, homesickness and loneliness is shown through the phrase “how I long once more to be, with our friends at the old country church.” “Crying in the Chapel,” (Glenn 1953) a crossover pop hit for such diverse artists as Elvis

Presley, Rex Allen, The Orioles and Ella Fitzgerald, describes a person discovering the “meaning of contentment” by “being happy with the Lord.” In this song, the “plain and simple chapel” itself is gifted with divine influence, and the lyrics portray a person who is being born again—having a profoundly emotional religious experience of connection to God—simply by being inside the chapel.

“Old Country Church” is a perfect encapsulation of the holy trinity of modern WCGMs within the philosophy of Christian Nationalism: “old,” “country,” and “church.” Within Christian Nationalism, things the way they used to be are necessarily better than things that change or evolve; ruralism is superior to urbanism; and the church is the ultimate guiding force in one’s life. “Old Country Church” demonstrates the iteration and reiteration of this theme, as the lyric “old country church” is repeated constantly throughout the song. The old church as described in the lyrics is a particularly rural American version of a church building: sparsely built and nestled in a clearing in the woods. Memories that are evoked by the song include entire Sundays spent socializing with family and friends, picnics, tent revivals and memories that are “dear to the childhood” of displaced Southern Whites.

In “Greystone Chapel” (1965), written by Glenn Shirley (an inmate at Folsom Prison) and recorded on Johnny Cash’s “Live at Folsom Prison” in 1968,

a prison chapel is an oasis of peace inside the prison. Although the location is not a pastoral country one, the church building is grounded strongly in the rustic country tradition—built of grey stone and simplicity in which “lost men” can have their “souls saved;” the age of the chapel (“100 years”) is an important part of its power with “the touch of God’s hand on every stone.” The church is also described as the only portion of the prison in which the door is “never locked.” Within these songs that describe rustic churches, the buildings themselves hold a special power of community, family, and the spiritual presence of God. The mere act of returning to these churches often leads to a spiritual awakening or re-awakening, as well as experiences of visions of long-dead family members.

### ***2.5.2 Old Time Religion Tropes***

Even for gospel songs, which contain a great deal of thematic and lyric pastiche, Old Time Religion songs are particularly formulaic in their lyrics. There are numerous songs titled “Old Time Religion” or a variant thereof that contain this theme, and many quote from the original song—often in both lyrics and tune. “Give Me That Old Time Religion” (cd 1873, variously attributed, most likely a Jubilee song) is a song that perfectly demonstrates the tangled web of influences, pastiche and false claims of composition that have been part of the Gospel Music industry from its earliest beginnings in the middle of the nineteenth century.

Charles S. Tillman published and copyrighted the tune in 1891, but the Fisk Jubilee Singers had been touring and performing a version of the song containing similar lyrics since the 1880s. Further complicating the web is the fact that the title of the song changes depending on the recording or publication, and many songs with this title are not the same tune. Early and predominantly white quartet groups at the turn of the twentieth century recorded the tune as “Tis the Old Time Religion,” including the Victor label’s Haydn Quartet (1906), one of the earliest recorded versions of the tune. Over time, the song’s title has vacillated from “Tis the Old Time Religion” to “Oh, that Old Time Religion” and “Give me (or gimme) That Old Time Religion.” The “Tis” or “Oh” are almost always performed with groups that practice a European emphasis on 1+3 in a bar of 4/4 time, while the “Give Me/Gimme” lyric is performed by groups who practice an African American style emphasis on 2+4<sup>34</sup>.

“Old Time Religion” songs emphasize not only a connection to American religious practices, but draw a straight line from the biblical apostles to modern day Christian Nationalists. In “Old Time Religion” as recorded by Hovie Lister

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<sup>34</sup> I use this differentiation throughout the dissertation to distinguish between the two most prominent modern styles of WCGMs. 1+3 (emphasis within a measure of 4/4 time) strongly conforms to European ideals of performance practice, and is more conservative in both form and style. 2+4 (again emphasis within a measure of 4/4 time) WCGM incorporates African American influence, more influence from popular music, and a more flamboyant performance style.

and the Statesmen, the lyrics state “It was good for Paul and Silas/Well it helped them when in their troubles/It will help you, when you’re dying (Lord)/Hallelujah, good enough for me.” The lyrics in this arrangement also long for religion “like we used to have,” expressing a desire to turn back the clock on changes within the religious and musical practices of churches within the United States.

Other than the eponymous song within the archetype, the song “Precious Memories” (Wright 1924) is a crystallization of hyper-sentimentality. “Memories” are as valuable as “unseen angels,” and evoke the “sacred past untold” within the singer’s soul. The song keens for the past, describing a “precious father and loving mother,” memories of which “fly across the lonely years.” There is little about actual religion or religious practices within the song, instead the old days themselves possess sacred power. The memories “flood” the “soul,” much in the same way that the born-again experience is described. The memories come unbidden and uncontrolled within the emotional core of the singer portrayed by the lyrics. The past is not only longed for, the past itself is sacred.

### ***2. 5. 3 Self-reference and Self-reverence***

Unique to the Old Time Religion archetype are songs that are about songs.

Songs such as “Daddy Sang Bass” (Perkins 1968) or “An Old Convention Song” (Lovelace/Powell 1982) are both self-referential and self-reverential. These songs perform the belief that old-style songs themselves have a power to transform religious experience. They also contain an element of hypersentimentality, and this is iterated by both the song’s harmonic and lyric vocabulary. Many WCGMs contain the harmonic vocabulary of traditional hymnody in the mode of Isaac Watts or Ira D. Sankey, and the Old Time Archetype songs are certainly no exception. The bedrock of WCGMs are the chords I, IV and V. Often songs recorded in the early days use only V and I, or in the case of an early June Carter version of “O, Death”(traditional) simply a tonic chord strummed as an ostinato.

Within WCGMs, most songs follow the gospel hymn verse/chorus format. The choruses are signaled by strong cadences, so that practitioners find it easy to join in on the repetitive lyrics of the chorus. In the song “Old Time Religion,” a strong I/V7/I cadence signals the end of the verse and the beginning of the chorus. This cue as well as the simplistic and familiar harmonic vocabulary of the Old Time Religion archetype allows the songs within this archetype to exemplify the “old time” musical practices that the songs refer to. Another way in which all WCGMs (specifically within the SGM subgenre) are self-referential is through performance practices and musical arrangements. A 2004 Jordainaires recording of “When the Roll is Called up Yonder” (Black 1893) is harmonically as well as



lyrically identical to a 1906 recording by The Haydn Quartet, and both are based on the Ira D. Sankey arrangement of the song that was present in his 1890s collection of gospel hymns.

This archetype, along with the Stand Our Ground archetype, is highly instructional, presenting a very clear blueprint for religious practices and ways of life. That is to say, these songs not only speak lyrically about the superiority of old forms and practices, they musically reflect old forms and practices. This assertion that older and traditional is superior to modern or changing—threads its way through the rhetoric and music of Christian Nationalists.

Lyrics of songs within the archetype not only extol the virtues of old-fashioned music, they also contain prescriptions within them for how to conduct proper musical worship. These prescriptions reflect the Protestant religious practices of frontier Christianity. In an 1858 saddlebag hymnal entitled *Psalms, Hymns and Spiritual Songs, Original and Selected*, housed at the Cane Ridge archive, the editors outline the importance of hymns in the learning of biblical truth and Christian behaviour:

The hymn-book of a Christian community, next to the Bible, is most generally read, and much and often read by all true Christians. It is assumed that it does, and certainly it ought, to contain the marrow and the fatness of the gospel and the exercises of the Christian heart on all the themes of Christian faith, hope and love. It is the best substitute in the world for what is usually called a confession of faith, an exhibit of Christian doctrine and Christian instruction. (1858: 4)

To practitioners of modern Christian Nationalist Evangelicalism, the Old Time Religion hymns are still “next to the Bible” and considered sacred texts.

The power of these songs is that they inspire and instruct at the same time—and their emotional power is undeniable. Nothing quite compares to the combined fervour and order of a large group of Christian Nationalists, such as those attending the National Quartet Convention (NQC), joining in four-part harmony on a song such as “I’d Rather Be an Old Time Christian” (Brumley 1934). Quoting from the same 1840 saddlebag hymnal introduction, spiritual songs—the precursors to the gospel hymns of the late nineteenth century—were “partly psalms and partly hymns” and the preface of the hymnal finishes with “no exercise of social worship is more delightful, solemn, or sublime than singing the praises of the Lord” (1858: 6). This definition of a spiritual song as part praise song and part instruction manual, a prescriptive archetype for identity construction, is demonstrated by the importance the early Appalachian church placed on gospel hymns as constructors of both individual morality and community bonds.

Another Old Time Religion theme that surfaced in my interviews at the NQCs and other gospel concerts was the importance of singing the old songs out of the hymn books themselves. In the modern “mega-church” movement, many congregations do not have hymnals, but instead sing their hymns using a power-

point presentation of lyrics. This practice is disdained by many modern Evangelicals and called “singing off the wall” (a purposeful double entendre to suggest that it is “off the wall”—not correct). At the annual National Quartet Convention, a popular daily event is the “hymn sing.” At these sings, crowds that number in the thousands join in boisterously on such old songs as “How Great Thou Art”<sup>35</sup> (Boburg 1840), or “I’ll Fly Away” (Brumley 1932). Participants in these hymn sings either sing the songs from memory or read them from the “red back book,” a hymnal used by the Gaither publishing house for its popular “Gaither Homecoming” series of productions.<sup>36</sup> Former Attorney General John Ashcroft, the keynote speaker at the 2011 NQC, has donated money to fund Evangel University’s program to educate future church musicians on the importance and history of gospel hymnody.

A popular standard of this archetype is “An Old Convention Song,” recorded by Ernie Haase & Signature Sound (EH&SS). The lyrics describe an all-

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<sup>35</sup> The modern popularity of this hymn is due to its use within the Billy Graham “crusades” of the late twentieth century.

<sup>36</sup> The “red back hymnal” is a 1951 publication entitled simply *Church Hymnal*. The red-back is written in shape-note notation, and it is used in sing-alongs at the National Quartet Convention and at hymn sings at churches throughout the modern South. It is exclusively referred to as the “red back hymnal” or the “red back book.” It is also produced with a green cover, but this causes no confusion.

day picnic style church gathering and include a list songs that would be appropriate to sing at such a gathering: “ ‘He Set me Free,’ ‘He’ll Pilot Me,’ ‘Anywhere is Home,’ ‘I’m Gonna Walk,’ ‘Just a Little Talk [with Jesus],’ and ‘All the Day Long.’” The lyrics speak of hearing these gospel classics in childhood, and further instruct that gospel hymns should be sung in “shape-notes” and “four part harmony.” When the lyrics state that “some have a country flavor,” the singers on the EH&SS recording change their diction to a country twang, and when they sing the lyrics “some have a modern sound,” they launch into a vocal jazz break—demonstrating the often literal interpretations prevalent within Old Time Religion songs.

Southern publishing companies such as Vaughan, Stamps and Stamps-Baxter published shape-note convention songbooks throughout the late nineteenth and until the late twentieth century. Shape-note schools and singing conventions were attached to several Southern publishing companies, and the Stamps-Baxter school still holds summer programs. A female conventioneer called Freda, with whom I spoke at the 2011 NQC, stated that although she had played saxophone in both middle and high school, she learned “more about music” in two weeks spent at a Stamps-Baxter singing convention than she did in “all of that band.” The convention songbooks were published annually in paperback, with titles such as *Hallelujah Voices*, *Smile Sing*, *Guiding Hand*, and *Singers’ Joy*. The books were

moderately priced, and along with newly composed songs, contained shape note standards such as “Amazing Grace” (Newton 1773) and “Leaning on the Everlasting Arms” (Showalter/Harmon 1887). Along with religious songs, during the cold war years, these shape-note books contained patriotic songs such as “America” (traditional), demonstrating the shift from a Southern Evangelicalism that was apolitical to one which includes the modern Christian Nationalist agenda.

#### ***2. 5. 4 Persecution and Reward***

One of the philosophies of the modern Christian Nationalists is that they are a persecuted group. Despite being a group that is now overwhelmingly comprised of white, middle class or upper middle class Americans in line with the political agendas of the modern Republican Party and the so-called “Tea Party” movement of the early twenty-first century, a great amount of persecution is described within the lyrics of Old Time Religion songs. Although most modern Christian Nationalists are middle or even upper middle class, they still tend to identify as poor and simple folk. This heritage of poverty and marginalization is most commonly presented within lyrics that contain the caveat that those Christians that cling to old ideals will meet with persecution and resistance. This persecution draws not only from the marginalized Appalachian ancestry (either real or adopted by fans of WCGM), but from a connection to the original

Christian martyrs.

During the history of the religious groups that make up modern Christian Nationalism, they experienced ostracization and oppression. Emerging primarily from the low socio-economic strata, Southern Evangelicals and Pentecostals did indeed face a life at the edges among the middle class or upwardly mobile Southern Whites during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In a 1925 editorial published during the infamous Scopes “monkey trial,” H.L. Mencksen described the South as “the bunghole of the United States, a cesspool of Baptists, a Miasma of Methodism, snake charmers, phony real-estate operators, and syphilitic evangelists” (quoted in Angoff 1956:126). This disdain of Southern Whites permeated popular culture, and they became targets for mockery and judgment. Although the Southern White migration northward to industrial centers has been less remembered than the parallel movement of Southern Blacks, the white migration figured commonly in popular journalism of the 1930s and 1940s. Following the Detroit riots of 1943, a *Life* magazine article told of “the 200,000 Southern Whites who have migrated to Detroit with their barbecue stands and tent shouting evangelists” (Gregory 2005: 69). These writings demonstrate that in the press, Southern Whites were never separate from their religious practices, and that these religious practices were particularly reviled.

The Claude Ely song “Holy, Holy, Holy (That’s Alright)” (Ely 1954)

contains a list of epithets that were directed at Pentecostals including “They call us holy rollers” and “They call us the tongue gang.” “Holy Rollers” is a pejorative term still widely used to describe Pentecostals, whose religious practices include “getting the spirit,” which can be expressed by “falling out” and writhing on the ground, or exhibited through glossolalia. The song “Holy, Holy, Holy” is a defiantly self-validating song, answering all the name-calling with the repeated phrase “that’s alright,” because the practitioners of Pentecostalism are “living holy” and “on the way to heaven,” unlike those who mock them. In the background of the recording (recorded live in 1953 at a Whitesburg, Kentucky courthouse) it is easy to hear shouting, hooting, and congregational singing along to the “that’s alright” response.

The threat of persecution in the form of mockery, losing friends, or becoming a “rank stranger” to those you know and love are illustrated by songs such as “I Am a Pilgrim” (published by Travis 1940, often attributed to traditional), “I Don’t Care” (Bradford 1953), and “I Like the Christian Life” (Louvin 1958). This persecution, rather than being a deterrent to practising Old Time Religion, is a way for practitioners to feel a kinship with early Christians, who suffered under Roman persecution and practiced their faith in secret, meeting in catacombs and private homes. The idea that this world is unimportant, and

Christians should exist as a “living sacrifice”<sup>37</sup> to their God adds an element of biblical support to the idea that Christians should be persecuted to strengthen their faith.

In “I Don’t Care What the World May Do,” recorded by the Blackwood Brothers in 1959, the lyrics state that “every day Lord, I will walk by his side/Every step he’ll guide/I don’t care what the world may do, I’m a gonna praise his name.” “Jesus is talking to me/While all of my enemies stare,” a lyric within the first verse, shows one way in which Christians may suffer—that enemies will beset their path. Rather than “the Enemy” of early protestant hymnody—Satan himself—songs within the Old Time Religion archetype set a scene in which Christians will be beset with human enemies. Often these enemies would come in the form of Church disruption and controversy.

The power of “the Church” is ultimate within the Old Time Religion songs. The church building is the subject of reverence, but often it is the body of the Church—made up by a Christian assembly—that is of the utmost importance.

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<sup>37</sup> This admonition is contained in Romans 1 verses 1-12: “Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”



In “Let the Church Roll On” (Riddle<sup>38</sup> 1925), recorded by the Carter Family, the sturdiness of the Church, the importance that it must survive unchanged, or that it is indestructible is emphasized. “There’s gamblers/drunwards in the church,” the first lines of each verse state. The answer to the problem of gamblers or drunkards is, if they “won’t do right,” “turn them out, and /Let the Church Roll on.” The final verse leaves a bit more room for forgiveness and help within the church communities, instructing that if “members” in the church “won’t do right,” the congregation should “take ‘em in, watch ‘em close.”

The Alfred Reed recording of “I Mean To Live with Jesus” (Reed 1927), recorded during the Bristol sessions, illustrates that the fear of worldliness is not a new phenomenon within Christian Nationalism, but was present in Pentecostal songs of the early twentieth century. The lyrics complains of “the awful curse” of “picture shows and pool rooms” and that the prevalence of “moonshiners, clubs, and dancers” make the “world” grow “worse and worse.” This sentiment—that the world is progressively getting more and more immoral—is also illustrated in other recordings, such as “If We Forget God” (Louvin Bros 1958) and “It’s Happening Now” (Daniels 1999). This future, which will be secular, persecutory

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<sup>38</sup> Lesley Riddle was an African-American musician who accompanied A.P. Carter on his “song collection” trips. It is very possible that “Let the Church Roll On” is a much older song that Riddle learned and then taught to Carter.

towards “Old Time Religion” practitioners, and frightening, is also illustrated in Old Time Religion songs.

The 1996 Charlie Daniels recording and composition “Whose Side are You On?” brings the fear of persecution that threads through this music to its ultimate (albeit imaginary) conclusion. The song describes an America in “2001, the year of our Lord” in which “reading the Bible is against the law” and Christians must gather in secret to pray. A police squad, who take the worshippers away, interrupts the secret church meeting described within the first verse. The chorus of the song combines a vocabulary of biblical prescriptions of love and charity with militaristic and even sports imagery and rhetoric:

Get Ready to Rumble, put all of God’s armour on (Chorus)

It Won’t happen in Washington

it’s got to be us

You know that politicians ain’t got the guts  
to stand up with Jesus when the battlelines are drawn—  
whose side are you on? (pre-Chorus following vs. 2)

It’s time to take off the gloves, forget all the rules

Take back our streets and take back our schools.

Hey Satan! Take your hands off America the beautiful. (vs 3)

Don’t worry ‘bout the darkness, ‘cause we are the children of light  
and we can still win the battle

but it's gonna be a whale of a fight. (pre-Chorus following vs. 3)

This seemingly contradictory imagery of “children of light” getting “ready to rumble” is typical of the militaristic rhetoric that surrounds modern Christian Nationalism. Very clear battle lines are drawn within the modern movement, and diversity is often equated with danger. Christian Nationalists are an overwhelmingly racially homogenous group, and African American culture is often equated with secular culture and often portrayed as necessarily dangerous and un-Christian. At the Creation Museum<sup>39</sup>, a multi-million dollar tourist attraction in Ohio near the Kentucky border, the concept of secular influence is represented in a tableau as an urban area, where the words “Modern world Abandons the Bible” in hip-hop style graffiti script greets those entering the room which outlines a stage of “creation” in which the scripture is questioned and wrongly interpreted. In this racial and cultural war, there are battle lines drawn, and a true Christian American will, according to the lyrics contained in this and

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<sup>39</sup> The museum presents “Creation Science” as an alternative to “Evolution Science.” It is 70,000 square feet in size, and admission at the time of this writing was \$29.95. On the day that I visited, the museum was exceptionally crowded with families and church groups winding their way through a history of the world according to literal biblical interpretation, including a garden of Eden and Noah’s Ark that included figures of audio-animatronic dinosaurs.

other songs connected to Christian Nationalism, turn to violence if necessary in order to prevent perceived threats<sup>40</sup> from taking over.

Ancestors and the aged are portrayed as sources of wisdom within the Old Time Religion archetype. Ancestors, in the forms of “mothers” and “fathers” are often invoked. In the Louvin Brothers’ classic “Satan is Real” (Louvin 1959), which consists of bookending choruses and a lengthy spoken word section, a “little old man” stands up during the worship service “at a little church in the country” and reminds the preacher that “Satan is Real!” The old man lists ways in which Satan is manifesting in the modern world including “songs that give praise to idols and sinful things” and in “homes torn apart.” The song states that although “it is sweet to know that God is real,” “sinner friends, if you’re here today, Satan is real, too/and Hell is a real place, a place of everlasting punishment.” “Satan is Real” is an outlier among Old Time Religion songs, which tend to emphasize rewards of fellowship over threats of Satan, Hell and eternal punishment.

Rewards are outlined in greater detail than punishment within the Old Time Religion archetype, answering the anxiety faced by a powerful white, patriarchal, and Protestant majority losing their controlling foothold in the modern United States of America. Old gospel hymns that are still popular such as “Power

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<sup>40</sup> The Others, who present these threats, are outlined in greater detail in Chapter 6.

in the Blood” (Jones 1899) and “What a Fellowship/Leaning on the Everlasting Arms” (Showalter/Hoffman 1887) illustrate that although the world may not agree with the Christian Nationalist philosophies and agendas, true Christians will be wrapped in the “everlasting arms” of both God and the Church body. In “Come on in the Room” (traditional), recorded by the Blackwood Brothers in 1953, promises of “Joy, unspeakable joy” are given to those who practice the right kind of faith. In the Johnson Family recording of “I Have Got Old Time Religion” the “Old Time Religion” is felt “down in my soul” and when Old Time Religion possessors cross over into the next life, they will be greeted by angels saying “Come on in, you are at home.” The idea that heaven, not earth, is the home of a true believer is represented by lyrics such as those in “No Disappointment in Heaven” (Lehman 1914) that paint a picture of being “homesick for heaven.” Christian Nationalists are rapture-centric, and as such believe that there will be a time of “heaven on earth” but only after the great battle at Armageddon.<sup>41</sup> The great battle is a central concern, and the idea that a Christian United States will be the force of righteousness is central to their belief in American Dominionism.

Often within Old Time Religion songs, the practice of old-time Christianity is portrayed as its own reward. “To the Work” (Crosby 1869/Doane 1871), recorded in 1927 by Alfred G. Karnes describes the path and “work” of

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<sup>41</sup> The body of songs that describes this battle and its consequences is discussed in Chapter 3.

Christians as following the same path as “the master”—Jesus. In “I’d Rather Be an Old Time Christian” (Brumley, 1934), a popular red back hymnal song, this reward is outlined.

All the world is bright since I got right  
Now I sing and pray and shout  
All my burdens have been lifted since the savior brought me out  
I will tell the world both far and near as I travel here below  
That I’d rather be an old-time Christian than anything I know.

The song “I Like the Christian Life” (Louvin, 1959) contains lyrics that outline the idea that though followers of Evangelicalism might lose friends, they are not true friends:

They say I’m missing a whole world of fun  
But I am happy and I sing with pride  
I like the Christian life  
I won’t lose a friend by heeding God’s call  
For what is a friend who’d want me to fall  
Others find pleasure in things I despise  
I like the Christian life.

These lyrics illustrate another common thread that fellowship within the Church is more fulfilling, and more important than any human connection that can be found

outside the church.

Southern Evangelicals and Pentecostals were displaced from the American South during the great migration, and the loss of family homesteads is grieved for within Old Time Religion songs. Consequently, another thing that old time religious practices promise is the power of an “unbroken circle.” The Carter Family classic “Will the Circle Be Unbroken,” portrays an anxiety that family and ancestors who have gone to heaven could break church ties. In their recording “The Family that Prays” (Louvin 1959), The Louvin Brothers promise that “the family who prays” “will never be parted/their circle unbroken in heaven shall stand.” This heavenly reunion is promised to those who maintain the religion of their ancestors.

## **2. 6 Conclusion: Old Time Religion in Modern Christian Nationalism**

Songs that fall within the Old Time Religion archetype are an integral element of the modern Christian Nationalist movement. Christian Nationalists are exceptionally conservative, and cultivate the idea that the past was necessarily better, more moral, and less diverse and frightening than the modern era. The Old Time Religion songs serve a multiplicity of functions—they construct and enforce a religious philosophy and a performance practice that never changes. Like the God they believe in, Christian Nationalists believe that Biblical interpretation and

musical practice should remain unchanging. As the songs themselves are sacred texts to modern Evangelicals, they too deserve the privilege of not being re-arranged or interpreted in performance practice. When Ernie Haase & Signature Sound who remain a controversial group in terms of presentation and performance practice, sings “An Old Convention Song” they are demonstrating that they can conform to Old Time Religion archetypes despite their modern, flashy costumes and energetic performance practices.

Former Attorney General of the United States John Ashcroft stated as a guest lecturer in a course at Evangel University in 2011 that hymns “are created with a clear purpose and intention,” “They are a special way to integrate the truth of our beliefs into our lives” (<http://lance.crusadermedia.com>). This firm belief in the power and the sacredness of the tunes and texts of gospel hymnody is reflected within the songs themselves. The unbroken circle that connects the founders of modern Evangelicalism and the United States (who Christian Nationalists believe to be strongly linked to each other) is constructed and strengthened through songs within the Old Time Religion archetype. Through sonic vocabulary as well as lyrical instruction, they identify (and therefore validate) practitioners of Old Time Religion as the “true” and “authentic” Christians. This identity distinguishes Christian Nationalists even from other Christians, and it serves to strengthen the Nationalist agenda by forbidding



innovation and change.

## Chapter 3

### “Meet Me In the Middle of the Air:”

#### Death-Defying Acts at Judgment Day in White Commercial Gospel Musics

##### 3. 1 Overview

In this chapter, I will present a brief history and overview of the book of Revelation and music connected to it in both mainstream and Pentecostal church contexts. I will argue that these songs were particularly attractive to Southern White Pentecostals because of their position at the margins of their society and that a fascination with the book of Revelation is a unique characteristic of Christian Nationalism. This will then be followed with a closer examination of three subsets of songs within the Judgment Day archetype: 1. songs that describe supernatural powers bestowed on believers at Judgment Day; 2. songs that contain elements of victory over non-believers (the Sinner Man trope); 3. songs that describe the riches of heaven and the triumph over poverty on earth obtained after Judgment Day. Each of these sections also includes an analysis of both the lyrics and harmonic vocabularies of a few specific examples from each sub-category.

### **3. 2 The Specific Power of Judgment Day Songs**

In the musical traditions of the Christian Church, perhaps no other subject appears more often in hymns than that of death and heaven. In his article “Looking for a City: The Rhetorical Vision of Heaven in Southern Gospel Music,” Scott Tucker (2004) examined the lyrics of 192 songs from the Gaither Family's collection of songbooks on the subject of the afterlife. Ira D. Sankey, considered by many to be the codifier of the modern revival gospel hymnal, designated 139 hymns specifically about “The Life to Come” in his 1200-song collection, which he distributed and sold at revivals at the turn of the twentieth century. The concept of heaven, and an eternal afterlife, is a central theological point of the Christian faith as a whole. In his article, Tucker effectively summarizes elements that songs about heaven contain: themes of home, the “elimination of suffering and promise of bliss,” the elimination of “earthly concepts of chronological time,” and reunions with dead loved ones (Tucker 2004).

Although a great number of songs exist that describe a tranquil journey into the afterlife, there exists another largely unexamined body of songs that describe a powerful defiance over death, and a bodily transcendence of earthly life at the Judgment Day. It is these songs I have chosen to examine. These songs contain a language of empowerment, paint horrifying pictures of the end of

the world, and describe righteous believers gloating at the suffering of sinners. Judgment Day songs differ from other songs about death and heaven because of their ties to the Biblical book of Revelation: their lyrics are specifically set at the battle at the end of the world, known as “Judgment Day” in the Pentecostal Christian community. Judgment Day Songs are a critical part of WCGM because of their message of ultimate power; they offer groups who existed at the socioeconomic margins a tantalizing promise of ultimate death-defying acts of bodily power at the last days, vindication over those who have looked down on their expressions of faith, and triumph over their conditions of poverty.

### ***3. 2. 1 The Relation of the Church With the Book of Revelation***

In the religious literature and musical traditions of the Christian church, Judgment Day holds a prominent place. Judgment Day—the precursor to the end of the world—is described in the book of Revelation, which is the last book of the Christian Bible. This book is thought by Christians to have been written by the apostle John, and contains elaborate descriptive visions of heaven, the battle between good and evil during the last days of earth, and the ultimate triumph of the forces of God over the forces of Satan. In the introduction to the book of Revelation in the *New Oxford Annotated Bible*, this chapter of the Bible is described in the following way:

The book of Revelation is a work of extremes, ranging from soaring heights of hymnody inspired by Hebrew psalms and canticles to the gruesome language of plagues, warfare, and bloodshed. It uses the dualistic language characteristic of the apocalyptic genre to paint vivid portraits of the opposing sides in the eschatological conflict that will culminate in the victory of God and the final defeat of all evil. With its symbolic numbers and colours, animals and angelic and demonic beings, and replete with echoes and images drawn from the literature of the ancient Near East, the Hebrew Bible, Greece, and Rome. [sic] The book of Revelation is so notoriously complex that the church father Jerome (345-420 CE) was led to remark that it contains as many mysteries as it contains words<sup>42</sup> (421).

“Revelation” refers to the wiping away of the mystery that exists between the realm of the sacred and the realm of the earthly. This mystery is referred to in theology as the “*mysterium tremendum et fascinans*”—“the divine and fascinating mystery” of the nature of God. Regarding the *mysterium*, theologian Charles H. Long has the following to say:

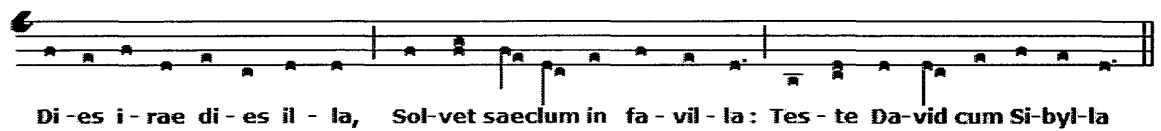
It is especially the *mysterium tremendum* that evokes our feelings of creatureliness, of the diminution of our plans and hopes; it is this feeling that leads to a sense of unworthiness—a sense of the overpowering reality of that which stands over against us, and the fundamental distinction between the human and the divine. (Long 1976: 402)

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<sup>42</sup> This excerpt was taken from the introduction to the book of Revelation contained in the *New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha*. It is a version of the Bible commonly used in so-called “mainline” churches, particularly the Anglican Church in England and Canada and the Episcopal church in the United States. It's interesting to note how even the tone of this excerpt serves to point out the strangeness of this book in the Bible and to distance the Anglican church from the book.

The songs contained in the archetype I am referring to as Judgment Day songs demolish the *mysterium tremendum*. All of the questions are answered when the trumpet sounds, and the believers become elevated next to God in their knowledge and power. It is neither the tranquil spiritual family reunion vision of heaven, or the “cabin in glory” nor “the sweet by and by” of generic Heaven Songs; it is instead a vision of ultimate bodily power, which is expressed musically, vocally and lyrically.

Music that draws its lyrics from “Revelation” has been used in Christian worship from the earliest history of Christian chant, most notably The *Dies Irae*, a thirteenth-century text that is incorporated into Requiem masses by countless composers of Western Art Music.<sup>43</sup>



This chant contains the Latin text “*Dies irae dies illa /solvat saeculum et favilla*” (“see the day of wrath that will dissolve the world into ashes”) and speaks of the trumpet that will summon the dead from their graves: “*tuba mirum spargens sonum/per sepulchral regionum.*” One of the most well known American gospel

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<sup>43</sup> The text remained in the Requiem mass, the Catholic mass for the dead, until it was removed from the mass in the sweeping reforms of Vatican II in 1962.

hymns in the repertoire, the *Battle Hymn of the Republic*, uses imagery from Chapter 14 of “Revelation” for its opening lines “Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord/He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored.” Most of the music of the so-called mainline—that is to say, non-Pentecostal—churches use primarily allegorical imagery from the book of Revelation, as they do not fully embrace the text as a literal representation of prophecy. When hymns utilizing imagery of heaven taken from the book of Revelation are present in mainline church hymnals, they tend to concentrate on the beauty of heaven: “thrones of heaven,” the “crystal sea,” or the “cherubim” and “seraphim.” In other words, the hymns of the mainline church concentrate on the worshipful reflections before the battle, not the battle itself. There are no representations of graphic bodily resurrections, the horrible suffering of those who did not choose their religion wisely, or the physical superpowers and riches awarded to the believers—all of which are prevalent in the Judgment Day repertoire of WCGM.

The book of Revelation is not fully embraced by many branches of the Christian church, and some sects of mainstream Christianity have sought to distance themselves from it. It is viewed by many theologians as highly allegorical, and according to scholar Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza: “Revelation remains for many Christians not only strange and difficult but also theologically

offensive—a book with ‘seven seals,’ seldom read, seen as a curiosity in the Bible, and at most quoted very selectively” (Fiorenza 1991: 6). She goes on to connect the book to the oppressed and the poor: “In contrast to mainline churches and theology, ‘Bible believing’ Christians, who often belong to socially disadvantaged and alienated minority groups, give Revelation pride of place in preaching and life” (Fiorenza 1991: 7). Although Fiorenza states that this is due to the “Bible-believing” Christians utilizing the imagery of Revelation as a “security blanket,” I would contend that it is instead the promise of physical and eternal empowerment that is the attraction of the imagery of this book. As an oppressed group, poor white rural Southerners (to whom modern practitioners of Christian Nationalism attach themselves) could not have helped but be attracted to the ideas presented in the book of Revelation—which would have become familiar to them through the filter of the music of WCGM.

In its infancy, Christianity was a cult religion of the margins, appealing to the poor, the downtrodden and the oppressed. Religious historian Ernst Troeltsch discusses this link between Jesus and the oppressed in his book *The Social*

*Teaching of the Christian Churches:*

The fact, however, remains, that Jesus addressed Himself primarily to the oppressed, and to the ‘little ones’ of the human family, that He considered wealth a danger to the soul, and He opposed the Jewish priestly aristocracy which represented the dominant ecclesiastical forces of His day. It is also clear that the Early Church sought and won her new adherents chiefly among the lower classes in the cities. (Troeltsch 1931:



### 3. 2. 2 *Rednecks at the Margins*

The poor white rural Southerners that were the producers and consumers of early WCGM were an oppressed and marginalized group akin to the “lower classes” that were the first adherents of Christianity. They were thought of by the press of the day, and by Whites of higher social standing as the “little ones” of the human family, to use Troeltsch's term. Even though their whiteness afforded them a higher social standing than their black counterparts, poor white Southerners nevertheless existed at the socioeconomic margins in the rural South. They were often contained in sharecropping tenant-farming systems of class oppression and poverty, and a caste system existed in the South well into the twentieth century.

Paraphrasing social historians Will Campbell and Dickson D. Bruce, David

Fillingim has stated:

The sharecropper system, through which the rednecks eked out a bare existence from the soil, was a more sneaky kind of slavery, so the redneck never had to acknowledge it. (Campbell 1976) In other words, the redneck has been oppressed without ever realizing it. The interests of the white Southern oligarchy, historically the oppressors of both poor white and poor black, obviously lay in keeping the fear and anger of the two groups of poor Southerners directed at one another rather than at the ruling elite. Throughout the nineteenth century, the life of the poor white rural Southerner was a transient, migratory, and contingent one. Rednecks moved often, seeking a place where they could farm with some measure of success and security. The best lands were consumed by large-scale planters in the plantation economy, so small farmers were forced into ever

more remote locations, leaving them in a marginal position socially and economically. (Fillingim 2003: 8 referring to Bruce 1977 and Campbell 1976)

It is my position that Campbell, Bruce, and Fillingim come dangerously close to attempting to completely erase race from the equation, and I stress that I am absolutely not attempting to do so; it must be emphasized that Southern Whites from all economic backgrounds were often complacent and sometimes active in the institutionalized apartheid that exists in the history of the United States.

Nevertheless, I agree with Jim Goad who claims in his provocative *The Redneck Manifesto* that a system of classism has invisibly existed and continues to exist that serves to Other poor Whites and those descended from poor Whites in the American South. He states that: “the mainstream consistently depicts the redneck not as itself, but as a cultural weirdo. The redneck is the *watched*, not the watcher” (Goad 1997: 76). Although in current cultural studies literature, the term “redneck” is being re-claimed (primarily by scholars who come from redneck backgrounds), it nevertheless contains an ugly and pejorative connotation that speaks to the fact that poor white rural Southerners were marginalized as Others in the history of the American South. Another term closely associated with WCGM and the secular music connected to it, “hillbilly,” shares a similar pejorative semantic history.

### **3. 2. 3 *Holy Rollers: Marginalized Religious Practices***

In her excellent study of country music as American literature, *High Lonesome: The American Culture of Country Music*, author Cecilia Tichi discusses the term “hillbilly,” which she summarizes as having multiple meanings including “Poverty, lack of education, and social unruliness”:

Seen from the world of traditional civility, then, the hillbilly is uncouth, in the very worst sense *primitive*. All kinds of negative associations come tumbling in—foul, degenerate, stupid. NO redeeming qualities whatsoever. *Hillbilly* is virtually synonymous with everything that civility loathes and explores. It is altogether repellent. (Tichi 1994: 134)

Furthermore, Pentecostal religious practitioners were culturally marginalized due to their religion and religious practices. The worship practices of Southern Pentecostals involved boisterous services, strictly literal interpretation of the Bible, and a musical practice that incorporated popular music forms of the day; these practices were looked down on by more “mainline” and traditional churches. The term “Holy Roller” was coined in the middle of the nineteenth century to describe the charismatic and improvisatory worship practices of revival movements such as that of the Pentecostals. Throughout their history, white rural Pentecostals have existed as what Trinh T. Minh-ha has called “inappropriated others” (Trinh: 1989) misunderstood, oppressed and identified from the outside. A feature in the *New York Times* entitled “Men of the Mountains: Adventures in the Land of Moonshine” from September 9, 1923 described a rural church service

in the “outskirts of civilization” in the mountains of Kentucky<sup>44</sup> and shows that the notion of hillbillies as exotic, unsophisticated, even savage “others” was firmly entrenched by this time:

We went to the Holy Rollers' chapel, a little two-roomed shack built around a central chimney, known as the 'Dog trot' because to enter from one room to another one went out and around and in from outside. It was a night pitchy dark, a sort of velvet blackness, not a light on the road . . . There were six or eight long benches, and on them were packed men and women, elbow to elbow, weather-beaten men and lean, gaunt women, some with babies in their arms. There was a scattering of children of all ages, with a light of unhealthy excitement in their eyes because of what they were about to see and hear, and a few young people—young men loafing about the door, who were there, not because of any devout interest in exhortation, but because there was no place else to go on a Saturday night.

The service opened with a revivalist hymn, hell-fire and damnation, and the congregation, some standing and some sitting, began to rock rhythmically. Moans and amens were interjected with increasing frequency as the volume of song went on verse after verse. The two preachers sat with closed eyes on a bench facing the congregation, rocking more violently than the rest. A second hymn followed, another and another, and the first preacher warming up to his work, led the singing with frantic ecstasy, with head thrown back, his eyes closed and his mouth working cataleptically. “One more day's work for Jesus. One less of Life for me-e-e!” The singing stopped, lamentations and fanatical confessions filled the small, hot room with a Babel of disordered sound. “. . . The packed humanity sobbing and moaning in unrestrained abandon, the excited children and the suckling and whining babes, and one was

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<sup>44</sup> A reference in the article to the “ill-fated Four Seasons Hotel at Cumberland Gap” infers that the town they depart from may be Middlesborough, Kentucky, but the town is not named in the article.

transported back 2,000 years, into the days when wailing and gnashing of teeth was a not uncommon form of emotional indulgence. (Anonymous 1923)

This excerpt represents several ways in which poor white Southerners were portrayed in the popular press of the day: “frantic,” “packed humanity,” and behaving in a manner that seems pre-civilized. This Othering that has historically followed the practitioners of Pentecostal Christianity and poor Whites has served to marginalize them and put them in a powerless position. The poor were attracted to charismatic Pentecostal religiosity for many reasons, but I would contend that the promise of power offered to them by the Judgment Day message had to be one of the most compelling. In the terrifying images of the end of the world, the sobering fact of their own mortality was countered with an almost unbelievably empowering possibility: they could win the battle at the end of the world.

For this reason, the doctrines contained within the book of “Revelation” are particularly appealing to Redneck Pentecostals, and it is no surprise that a large body of repertoire exists within WCGM that is specifically about Judgment Day itself. Several rhetorical keys in the lyrics of the repertoire mark the apocalyptic imagery of Judgment Day. I used these rhetorical keys to identify songs as belonging to this archetype, as opposed to songs that were merely about heaven and the afterlife. Words that appear in lyrics that place these songs specifically at the last day, and thus belonging to the Judgment Day sub-

archetype, are: “trumpet(s),” “jubilee,” “morning,” “judgment(s),” or “sorting” as well as outright reference to “Resurrection Day,” “Judgment Day,” or “Last Day.” According to the Fundamentalist interpretation of the Bible—Pentecostal Christian Theology holds that the Bible is literally true and infallible—the end of the world will involve a pitched battle between supernatural forces of good and evil. Although the resurrections described are bodily resurrections, they transcend any previous earthly limitations of the human body. People can fly, can fight side-by-side with angels against demons, and they achieve immortality. These newfound powers are demonstrated in the lyrics of the archetype, in which these resurrected or raptured spiritual warriors become non-gendered, powerfully embodied, and strongly vocal: all rise to meet the challenge of the last days, and seemingly become equal partners rather than mere supplicants to the God that they worship.

### **3. 3 The Judgment Day Archetype Songs**

In the section that follows, I investigate several aspects of the songs within this archetype, specifically the promises contained within the archetypes. These promises consist of superhuman powers to be bestowed upon believers at the Rapture, riches that await believers in heaven, and the possibility of witnessing one’s enemies suffering at the last day. Furthermore, I present these songs as

possessing characteristics of vocal command and intensity, often in stark contrast to the stories portrayed in their lyrics which are full of suffering and horror. These aspects are positioned as contributing to the modern Christian Nationalist's identity through distinction and superiority, as well as connecting the (mostly white and middle class) modern day Evangelicals to their impoverished and displaced ancestors.

### **3. 3. 1 *Superpowers***

Since the literal "Bible believers" of Pentecostal Christianity take the biblical book of "Revelation" as a literal and not an allegorical book of prophecy, they believe that at the apocalypse (that the book describes), a great battle will take place that contains the following elements: a trumpet (or a trumpet-like voice) will sound to announce the beginning of the end-times battle; the dead will physically rise from their graves; and armies will descend from heaven and ascend from hell to take part in a pitched battle, the victor of which will rule eternally over heaven. The prophecy goes on to conclude that God will win the battle, and the Devil will be cast into a bottomless pit. Therefore, true believers are assured that they will achieve an ultimate level of God-like physical superpower, non-believers will suffer and be cast into the pit with Satan, and the righteous will win the battle at the end of the world. It is a tantalizing promise of

ultimate power for a group of people struggling under socioeconomic oppression.

As a group, the Judgment Day songs represent the bodily aspect of this victory in the following ways: they demonstrate vocal power, rhythmic intensity, and lyrics that contain both rhetorical commands of authority and that position the performer as a participant in the army of the Lord, equal in bodily and spiritual power to the angels and even to God himself. These songs also universally contain lyrics representations of physical power. Acts of athleticism and prowess abound: “prison bars are broken,” believers fly “in the middle of the air,” and death holds no further “sting.”

“There Ain’t No Grave Gonna Hold My Body Down”

*as recorded by Brother Claude Ely, 1954*

*Chorus:*

There ain’t no grave gonna hold my body down

There ain’t no grave gonna hold my body down

When they hear that trumpet sound gonna get up out the ground

Cause there ain’t no grave gonna hold my body down

Well go down yonder, Gabriel, put your foot on the land and sea

But Gabriel don’t you blow your trumpet

Until you hear from me

Well (I) look way over yonder, seen people dressed in white

I know it was God’s people I seen I doin right (?)

Well I looked way down the river and what do you think I seen



I seen a band of angels they's comin' after me

*Chorus:*

'Cause there ain't no grave gonna hold my body down

there ain't no grave gonna hold my body down

when I hear that trumpet sound gonna get up out the ground

cause there ain't no grave gonna hold my body down

Well I'm going to the river of Jordan,

bury my knees down in the sand,

gonna holler High Hosanna til I reach that promised land

Well, I looked way over yonder and what did you think I seen

I seen a band of angels they's coming after me

Well meet me Jesus, meet me,

well meet me in the middle of the air

And if these wings should fail me there won't be none other pair

*Chorus*

These lyrics are powerfully defiant. When one considers the audience of Brother Claude Ely, an itinerant preacher working on the gospel circuit in the rural American South, one cannot forget the poverty and disenfranchisement of his congregants. These are people who for the most part were economically repressed, with little education, in an area of the country where, by the 1950s, manufacturing work had all but dried up. Other than subsistence tenant farming, there were few employment opportunities, and little room for either education or

social advancement.<sup>45</sup> Poor Southern Whites were a group that was desperate for hope and for empowerment. Rosy visions of heavens where they would be reunited with lost relatives would be attractive to them, but the ability to be empowered to meet Jesus flying “in the middle of the air” had to be much more appealing.

The lyrics to “Ain’t No Grave” present an empowering vision. The repeated chorus, most likely borrowed from a field holler<sup>46</sup> is a performance of defiance and chest-thumping power: the “Ain’t No Grave” line is repeated three times each time the chorus is sung. This is an iteration of the theological belief of bodily resurrection present in many of the literal biblical interpretation sects of

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<sup>45</sup> This lack of work and opportunity led to what has been called a “great migration” north to seek work in factories and mills. For an excellent account of the effect of this movement both culturally and economically for both white and black Southerners, see James N. Gregory's 2005 *The Southern Diaspora: How the Great Migrations of Black and White Southerners Transformed America*.

<sup>46</sup> Brother Claude Ely insisted that he wrote the song at age twelve after nearly dying from tuberculosis. However, the similarity to the field recording of Bozie Sturdivant suggests that at least the refrain was taken from a field holler familiar to the young Ely. A chapter in *Ain't No Grave: the Life and Legacy of Brother Claude Ely* (Ely 2010) entitled “Theft and Deceit in Gospel Music” addresses this issue, as well as other copyright issues within gospel music. Since much of gospel hymnody is formulaic and pastiche, this problem of contested authorship is a common one.

Christianity: the belief that at the day of the apocalypse—the end of the world—that the righteous will rise from their grave whole and perfect and ascend into heaven. Put another way, at the end of the world, those who have played their religious cards correctly get to become god-like. So, the declaration contained in this song is one of ultimate, super-human power in the literal sense. The “trumpet” of the lyrics is the “trumpet” that sounds to announce the end of the world; this trumpet acts a signal for the dead to rise from their graves.

The verses contain even more defiance. The “Gabriel” referred to in the first verse is the archangel Gabriel, the biblical messenger of God. Gabriel is charged in the Bible with informing Mary that she will give birth to Jesus, and telling Elizabeth that she will give birth to John the Baptist. Although Gabriel does not sound the trumpet at the end of the world in the Bible, nevertheless the trumpet has come to be associated with Gabriel in literature and popular culture, including in this and other sacred songs. To issue a conditional order to an archangel is an astoundingly bold move: “Gabriel, don’t you blow your trumpet until you hear from me.” Once the performance is established in this ultimate powerful defiance, then some penitence is illustrated in the second stanza, but even this has an element of athleticism. Mere kneeling will not suffice. Instead, at the river Jordan, where so many pilgrims peacefully cross over in songs about heaven, here Brother Ely is going to “bury my knees down in the sand” and

“holler high Hosanna ‘til I reach that Promised Land.” Another proclamative order is issued, this time to Jesus himself: “Meet me, Jesus, meet me/meet me in the middle of the air.” Then, for the grand finale of death-defiance, we are warned that the wings the singer is using to fly have a possibility of “fail”ure, and that Brother Ely has but one chance for the rendezvous he intends to make with his saviour.

The power is not confined to the lyrics alone, however. What is striking about the recording of Brother Claude Ely’s version of “There Ain’t No Grave Gonna Hold My Body Down” is that it contains many of what Alan Lomax referred to as elements of “African cultural heritage.” First, Ely uses his guitar as a percussion instrument. The strum pattern he uses is nearly identical to a “shout” percussion pattern made by feet and handclaps on a 1934 Alan Lomax recording from the Georgia Sea Islands called “Run Old Jeremiah.” Another similarity between the recording and ring shout recordings made by Lomax is that the tempo gradually increases at regular intervals. These tempo increases are signaled by handclaps that happen at several points throughout the piece, another element that is also prevalent in ring shouts. The rough vocal timbre used by Claude Ely is one that is usually closely associated with African American influences as well.

## Run Old Jeremiah

shout pattern

Traditional

ca. ♩ = 118-150

Feet

Hand claps

*simile*

## Ain't No Grave\*

guitar strum pattern

Ely/Traditional

ca. ♩ = 96-112

*simile*

\*based on 1953 recording

The aspect most prevalent in the Brother Ely recordings is something that I would describe as “musical command.” From vocality to choice of lyrics to instrumental intensity, this is an empowered and muscular performance. This command and stance of defiance is something that would come to influence countless rock and roll performers. A stance of lack of fear in the face of death itself and the musical reflection of that death-defying act is an element of sacred performance within this archetype that is unique to Pentecostals and Evangelicals.

As a microcosm, this piece is the very definition of charismatic Pentecostalism: it contains rhythmic musical drive, which increases in intensity during the performance; it encourages an embodied religious experience; and it nearly demands participation through repetition.

“Ain’t No Grave” is only one song that effectively demonstrates the elements of both powerful imagery and vocal command. “Hallelujah, We Shall Rise” (J.E. Thomas 1904), is a gospel hymn that contains lyrics that both predict “we *shall* rise” and take place in the moment “when death’s prison bars *are* broken.” The lyrics of “We Shall Rise,” as performed by the Carter Family, differ from the standard heaven lyrics in a few important ways.

“We Shall Rise”

as recorded by the Carter Family, 1940

In that resurrection morning, when the trump of God shall sound,

We shall rise (Hallelujah!) we shall rise!

Then the saints will come rejoicing and no tears will e’er be found,

We shall rise (Hallelujah!) we shall rise!

*Chorus:*

We shall rise (Hallelujah!)

We shall rise (Amen)

We shall rise.

In the resurrection morning, when death’s prison bars are broken,

We shall rise! (Hallelujah) We shall rise.

In the resurrection morning, when the shade of life has fled  
we shall rise (Hallelujah!) We shall rise!

In the day of glory dawning when the sea gives up its dead  
We shall rise (Hallelujah!) We shall rise.

I shall see my blessed Savior who so freely died for me,  
We shall rise (Hallelujah!) We shall rise!  
and our fathers and our mothers and our loved ones we shall see,  
We shall rise (Hallelujah!) We shall rise!

*Chorus repeats*

Although the lyrics' couplets are altered by different performers of the hymn in the bluegrass and traditional country traditions, the first line is always performed more or less as it was written in the original hymn: "In the (sometimes altered to "that") resurrection morning when the trump (some versions use "trumpet") of God shall sound." This establishes the setting of the song as the end of the world. The trumpet is sounding, and the dead are about to be "raised incorruptible" as the Bible has foretold. It is a moment—at least for the believers who would experience the song in a religious context—of ultimate triumph. The imagery for the rest of the tune is also full of references to the book of Revelation: "the saints will come rejoicing" refers to all of the righteous dead ascending to heaven, and "no tears" refers to several references contained within Revelation to

“every tear” being “wiped from” believers’ eyes.<sup>47</sup> There are also familiar references to the reunions that will take place in heaven: “our fathers and our mothers and our loved ones we shall see.” In the original version of the hymn and other recorded versions of the hymn—including one recorded by the Stanley Brothers—we are given a powerful image in the last stanza: “On the resurrection morning, we shall meet Him in the air. . .and be carried up to glory, to our home so bright and fair.” At the Day of Judgment, the song promises, righteous Christians get to become at least rhetorically equal in powers to their God. The chorus points out that death is resoundingly defeated with an act of physical force: “death’s prison bars are broken.” Particularly in the Carter Family version, the lead in the bass (A.P. Carter’s) voice is especially prominent, as seen in the following transcription.

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<sup>47</sup> Revelation, Chapter 21, v4. Chapter 7, vs.17.



We Shall Rise\*  
 (excerpt: first chorus)

Thomas

A

Hal - le-lu - jah! A - men!  
 We shall We shall rise, we shall rise,

Hal - le-lu - jah! In the res - ur - rec - tion morn - ing when death's  
 rise. In the res - ur - rec - tion morn - ing when death's  
 Hal - le-lu - jah!

E A

pris - on bars are bro - ken Hal - le-lu - jah, we will rise.  
 pris - on bars are bro - ken we shall rise. we shall rise.  
 Hal - le-lu - jah, we shall rise

\*transcribed from the Carter Family, 1939

This Carter Family recording presents some intriguing musical elements. What is most striking about this particular recording for me is the vocal command that A.P. Carter exhibits. On many of the Carter Family's recordings, A.P. Carter is distant to the point of being barely present. Part of this is due to the composition of the hymn. It is utilizing a compositional element prevalent in many gospel hymns of the era, in which the bass takes up the melody to drive the chorus. He exhibits less vibrato than on other Carter Family recordings—although it is still obvious on both of the ascending “rise”s at the beginning of the chorus, and overall he uses a more forward placement of his voice. He also uses more of his lower register than on many of the other Carter Family recordings. All of this corresponds to the vocal command that Ely's “Ain't No Grave” entails.

Armageddon songs as a whole, although they vary in other musical ways, all contain this performative vocal certainty. They possess an arrogance that is greater in the context of this archetype than in any other; even the militaristic qualities of Soldier songs or the Nationalist jingoism of the purely Christian Nationalist Stand Our Ground songs do not possess such intrinsic certainty. Distilled, the message contained within Judgment Day songs is that practitioners of this type of Christianity are correct, and those who are wrong will be punished. The element of vocal command serves to emphasize this conviction.

In another recording of “We Shall Rise,” by Byron Parker and his

Mountaineers (1940), a slightly more elaborate instrumental treatment is given to the song, and more bluegrass elements are present, including more complex harmonies in the chorus and a full string band, including banjo and string bass. The vocal harmonies also include a “high lonesome” tenor in the chorus, but maintain the powerful bass vocal, present in the original hymn setting. Moving forward quite a bit to the 1973 Chuck Wagon Gang version of the hymn, the hymn is treated with many of the smoothed-out musical characteristics of modern SGM. The tempo is slower, the choruses come to a fermata at each of their endings, and even the long “ay” on “Amen” is softened to “ah” each time the word “Amen” is sung. This transformation represents a period in the history of SGM where hillbilly and African American influences were actively removed from the music. The vocals are much less strident, and there is much less of a power struggle between the bass vocal and the upper voices in the chorus. The lyrics are the same, but the spirit of the piece has lost much of its earlier vocal drive and excitement.

### **3. 3. 2 *Bodily Resurrection***

In songs regarding the day of resurrection, a heavy emphasis is placed on bodily renewal. Hank Williams’ 1951 recording “I’ll Have a New Body (I’ll Have a New Life)” (Presley 1940) speaks eloquently to this bodily replacement

aspect. Williams was a man acquainted with suffering, who dealt throughout his life with Spina Bifida, a painful chronic disorder that some believe led to his struggles with alcoholism.

“I’ll Have a New Body (I’ll Have a New Life)”

as recorded by Hank Williams, 1951

On that resurrection morning, when all dead in Christ shall rise  
I’ll have a new body, praise the Lord, I’ll have a new life  
Won’t it be so bright and fair, when we meet our loved ones there  
I’ll have a new body, praise the Lord, I’ll have a new life

*Chorus:*

I’ll have a new home and love eternal  
With a redeeming God to stand  
There’ll be no more sorrow  
No more pain, there’ll be no more strife  
Raised in the likeness of my savior, ready to live in paradise  
I’ll have a new body, praise the Lord, I’ll have a new life

When Old Gabriel blows his trumpet and we walk the streets of gold  
I’ll have a new body, praise the Lord, I’ll have a new life  
No more pain, worry, sorrow, in this wicked world of sin  
I’ll have a new body, praise the Lord I’ll have a new life.

*Chorus repeats*

Oh dear brother are you living for that day when Christ shall come  
I’ll have a new body, praise the Lord, I’ll have a new life  
Graves all burst and saints a’ shoutin’ heavenly beauty all around

I'll have a new body, praise the Lord, I'll have a new life

*Chorus repeats*

Although Hank Williams suffered many well-documented crises of faith, confessing once to fellow Grand Ole Opry star Minnie Pearl that “there ain’t no light”(Leppert/Lipsitz 1990: 266), he nevertheless effectively performed a large volume of sacred repertoire (his mother was a church organist in Williams’ youth), sometimes under the pseudonym “Luke the Drifter.” He recorded six Judgment Day-specific tunes, an unequalled number for a commercial Country and Western singer: “The Battle of Armagedeon,” “The Pale Horse and His Rider,” “When the Book of Life is Read,” “When the Fire Comes Down From Heaven,” “I Dreamed That The Great Judgment Morning,” and “I’ll Have a New Body (I’ll Have a New Life).” As well as these songs that are specifically about Judgment Day, the subject of the Judgment appears in other songs that Williams recorded: “My Main Trial is Yet to Come,” an outlaw ballad about a man who is about to go to the electric chair, refers to the greater judgment that awaits him at the final day. “When God Comes and Gathers His Jewels” tells the story of a grieving man being comforted that his lost loved one will be resurrected on Judgment Day, and “Angel of Death” and “Wealth Won't Save Your Soul” both warn sinners that earthly wealth cannot protect them from the wrath of Judgment Day.

In “I’ll Have a New Body (I’ll Have a New Life),” the lyrics place the performer at the end of the world: “On that resurrection morning/I’ll have a new body.” This is imagery of a bodily resurrection; indeed it may be the most repetitively insistent body-specific lyrics of the sub-genre. The song is in fact titled “I’ll Have a New Life,” so the fact that the Williams recording is titled “I’ll Have a New Body” is interesting in that it places the emphasis on the body replacement aspect of the rapture. The chorus, with its rapid-fire vocal, evokes the lack of fatigue that Tucker (2004) has pointed out exists in images of heaven. The tempo of the piece is blistering, and the tightness of the vocal phrasing is not characteristic of Williams’ usual scooping and sliding up to the pitch. In most versions of this song, the chorus vocal that Williams sings is broken up between several vocal parts.

When Hank Williams sings about the idea of bodily replacement, he sings with a vigor that is unmatched in his catalog, and there is an assured rhythmic drive to his voice. Again, the element of vocal command is performed: there is no rest, either musically or figuratively, in the chorus of the song. Although the lyrics paint a restful picture of “paradise” with “no more pain,” or “strife,” the music is not restful, but feels nearly aggressive, especially when compared with more modern recordings of the song from the modern SGM tradition. In modern participatory versions (where the hymn is sung by an audience or a congregation

as at the NQC or on a Gaither “Homecoming” video) the tempo is dramatically reduced from a MM of quarter note = 232 in the Hank Williams version to a MM of quarter note = 172 for a version from a Gaither Family “Homecoming” video recording. The latter is typical of the SGM style where the lead melody of the chorus is almost always moved to the bass voice, rather than the high end of the baritone register where Williams sings.<sup>48</sup> The second and third verse also contain lyrics that firmly set the song at Judgment Day: “When Old Gabriel blows his trumpet” in verse two and “Graves all burst and saints a shoutin’” in verse three. This reiterates the physical resurrection when all of the resurrected will become “saints” on Judgment day, and be given new bodies with which to shout. It is imagery that would be terrifying rather than cause for celebration if the performer weren’t on the winning side. The transcription that follows shows the chorus as Williams sings it. In other hymnal arrangements, the chorus is split between multiple voices, but Williams instead sings all the parts himself.

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<sup>48</sup> Other artists, including The Florida Boys, The Dixie Echoes, J. D. Sumner and The Stamps, “The Homecoming Friends,” The Cathedral Quartet, et al. perform the piece at a medium or slow tempo in a nearly identical arrangement from the Red Back Hymnal.

# I'll Have a New Body (I'll Have a New Life)

(excerpt: chorus)

Presley

$\text{♩} = 232$

(Sung 8va) I'll have a new

**A**

home and love e - tern - al with a re - deem - ing God\_\_ to

stand. There'll be no more sor - row, There'll be no more

**E**

strife. Raised in the like - ness of my

Sav - ior read - y to live in Par - a - dise. I'll have a new

bo - dy, Praise the Lord! I'll have a new life. \_\_\_\_\_



Members of more mainline churches in the American South looked down upon practitioners of Charismatic Pentecostalism in the early part of the twentieth century. After they migrated north to find work in the factories and mills of the Midwest and North of the United States, this prejudice followed them. Commonly called “Holy Rollers” in the press of the day, their religious practices drew public criticism. This did nothing to quell the fire among practitioners of Pentecostalism, as they drew from the Bible to uphold their faith, and even drew inspiration from the persecution they suffered. Speaking of her youth, a cousin of Brother Claude Ely, Mary Ely, stated:

Yeah, I remember the girls at school used to tease us. Sometimes they'd follow us as we'd walk to school making fun of the way we worshipped. We didn't pay much mind to them. We knowed it was the price we had to pay in order to have the Holy Ghost. (Ely 2010: 56)

Ely then went on to describe praying “out loud for them kids that was making fun of us. That always made them realize that we loved 'em even if they didn't understand us” (Ely 2010: 56). This persecution as “price” for their religious experience was a common and unifying factor among Pentecostals at the beginning of the twentieth century. The flamboyant religious practices of the Pentecostals are still a target of mockery, even good-natured mockery, by comedians who perform at WCGM concerts.

### ***3.3.4 Mockeries of Wrongdoers***

There are a number of songs in the Judgment Day archetype detailing what might happen to those who have strayed from the right path at the last day. These songs contain what could most definitely be described as un-charitable sentiments directed at non-believers. These songs have a few lyrical and musical elements in common. First, these songs do not offer any hope of redemption. Although there exist songs elsewhere in the repertoire that offer sinners the chance to turn from sin and towards Christ, these Judgment Day songs express the idea that it is “too late” and that the damage to sinners’ immortal souls is irreparably done. They also contain an element of near-mockery and are bereft of pity. They contain sentiments of vindication and vengeance, and not a small amount of gloating. For Christian songs, these songs are full of alarmingly un-charitable sentiments. Musically, these songs are almost always in major keys despite their terrifying lyrics (the song “Sinner Man” is one notable exception), and often are presented at medium or even fast tempos despite containing imagery of suffering and damnation. As is true with most WCGM, they are harmonically simple, lyrically and musically repetitive, and melodically direct. As with other songs within the archetype, vocal command is always present.

Perhaps the most famous song of this particular type is “Sinner Man” (traditional). This tune has been recorded by literally hundreds of artists in dozens of styles. Most commonly thought to come from the African American spiritual

tradition, it has been recorded by Bob Marley (reggae), Nina Simone (gospel-tinged jazz), Three Dog Night (rock), and The Seekers (folk), as well as numerous white and black gospel acts. The tune has also appeared as a snippet in remixes, movie soundtracks and television soundtracks. There is no hope for the “Sinner Man” of the title to find redemption. Rather, it is pointedly communicated in most versions of the lyrics that it is too late for any pleading for mercy now that the Day of Judgment has arrived. The end times are instead a chance for the righteous to witness the suffering of the sinners.

### Sinner Man

Traditional

The image shows two staves of musical notation for the song "Sinner Man". The first staff contains the melody for the first two lines of the lyrics: "Oh sin-ner man, where you gon-na run to? Oh sin-ner man, where you gon-na run to?". The second staff contains the melody for the next line: "Oh sin-ner man, where you gon - na run to, all on that day?". Chord markings "Amin" and "G" are placed above the notes. The music is written in a simple, folk-like style with a 4/4 time signature.

A particularly interesting version of the Sinner Man trope is sung in the Delmore Brothers 1958 version of the song, with added verses, retitled “The Wrath of God” (Delmore 1958). This version is re-tooled as a loping cowboy ballad in a major key, and the gentleness of the musical setting makes the lyrics seem all the more jarring. The “Wrath of God” opens with an admonition that it’s

“too late to pray on that great morning,” followed by a description of the “sinner man” suffering.

As in other songs of this type, the “sinner man” is informed that his suffering will be great, it will be “forever,” and that the “sinner man” will “cry to the rocks and mountains” without sympathy. The lyrics also allude to the lack of faith that Moses shows in the biblical Exodus story and the punishment allotted to him—he was unable to enter the Promised Land—and the lyrics threaten further that if a “man like” Moses was so severely punished then the “sinner man” should brace himself for what is coming. These lyrics are set to a gentle guitar strumming/picking, bass and harmonica accompaniment with smooth vocals recorded with a slight reverb. The chorus is harmonized diatonically (with one chromatic exception on the lyrics “won't hear you” in the background vocals) and the entire piece is sung without a single trace of musical venom, and uses major chords throughout. The contrast between musical interpretation and lyrics is quite striking.

# The Wrath of God

(excerpt: first verse and chorus melody only)

Delmore

$\text{♩} = 170$

Well the wrath of God is sure - ly com - in',  
when this old world, it starts to bum - in'.  
Too late to pray on that great morn - in';  
then Oh sin - ner man where you gon - na hide? —  
Then you'll cry for the rocks and moun - tains.  
Rocks and moun - tains won't hear you.  
Then your die will be cast for ev - er;  
then Oh sin - ner man where you gon - na hide?

Other songs within the “sinner man” trope, including “Sinner, You’d Better Get Ready” (traditional) which warns “the dying times a’coming when the sinner must die.” Unlike most Evangelical gospel hymns, there is no promise of heaven in these songs. “He Will Set Your Fields on Fire” (Ballaw/Brackett nd<sup>49</sup>), although ostensibly a hymn offering redemption, speaks to recalcitrant sinners who have no ability to repent. Although not set at the Judgment, this hymn foretells the Judgment Day and describes the punishment that will come upon sinners at the last day “if from sin you don’t retire, He will set your fields on fire.” The lyrics go on to remind sinners that they have “heard Jesus’ call,” and been offered a chance to “join the heavenly choir” and “rejoice with Him free from every sin when He sets this world on fire.”

What is intriguing about the song is not merely the lyrics, but the commonly recorded performance practice. This hymn is nearly always performed at a breakneck tempo (quarter note = 324 in the Reno & Smiley version) and seems to be a rejoicing at the coming of the end of the world. The terrifying image of the world getting set “on fire” and fields burning is addressed in some

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<sup>49</sup> This was one of just a few songs whose origins were partially shrouded in mystery. The song is usually attributed to “traditional,” but I was able to locate the composers of the tune and lyrics, the first date of publication was impossible to find, even with the powers of online archives.

arrangements (Smith's Sacred Singers 193?, Bill Monroe 1954, King's Sacred Quartet 1947) with a gospel quartet chorus and bluegrass stringband accompaniment. In the Reno and Smiley live recording from 1957, the tempo is the quickest of all versions I surveyed, and the chorus arrangement is different, with a hocket vocal arrangement that resembles laughing (shown in the transcription of the Reno and Smiley version which appears on page 128-129). Instead of offering redemption, the piece as it is performed sounds like it is mocking sinners as they suffer, or at the very least rejoicing at the performer being proved right at the moment of the apocalypse. Furthermore, the Reno and Smiley recording ends after verse two, without the promise of grace offered by the third and fourth verses in the original hymn.

"He Will Set Your Fields on Fire"

*as recorded by Bill Monroe, 1954*

There's a call that rings from the throne it springs to those now gone astray.

Saying: "Come ye men, with your load of sin there at the altar lay."

You don't seem to heed that the chains of greed that their conscience never tire.

Be assured my friend if you still offend, He will set your fields on fire.

*Chorus:*

If you don't from sin retire, He will set your fields on fire.

You have heard Jesus' call and in death your soul must fall.

Now my friends if you desire, you may join the heavenly choir,  
and rejoice with Him free from ev'ry sin when He sets this world on fire.

*Chorus*

You have heard His voice, seen His soul rejoice as trusted in His grace.  
You have blushed with sin as He knocked within, but still you hide your face.  
From the blessed Lord and His own true word, but still you say retire.  
Leave the downward path, kindle not His wrath, or He'll set your fields on fire.

*Chorus*

Won't you take advice, make the sacrifice, completely turn from sin.  
Taking up the cross, counting pleasures dross, let Jesus live within.  
When temptations come you can face towards home, your heart will never tire.  
But rejoice and pray in that last great day, when he sets this world on fire!

*Chorus repeats*



# He Will Set Your Fields on Fire\*

(excerpt: chorus)

♩ = 324

Ballaw / Brackett

G

don't from-a sin re from-a sin re - tire,  
 Now if you don't from sin re - tire. He will

D7

set your fields on your fields on fire.  
 set your fields on fire. Y'have

You have heard, Je - sus' call  
 heard Je - sus' call and in

G

death your soul must your soul must fall.  
 death your soul must fall. Now my

G

friend if you de - if you de - sire,  
 friend. if you de - sire, you may

C  
 join the heavn ly heavn - ly choir.  
 join the heav - en - ly choir, and re -

G  
 joice with Him free from ev - 'ry sin when He

A7 D7 G  
 sets this world on fire.

\* Transcribed from the Reno & Smiley live recording, 1957

### 3. 3. 5 *Battle Lines*

Another trope of the Judgment Day archetype is the “battle line” trope that iterates that “true” Christians will need to pick a side and fight alongside angels at end times, and that this will be precursed by a battle against Christian Nationalists on earth. The modern master of the battle line trope is Charlie Daniels. Charlie Daniels has stated on his Internet forum: “country music and gospel music go together and they always have.” In the same forum, which he maintains on his website, he voices strong right-wing leaning political opinions on subjects ranging from abortion rights to what he calls “Hollywood types” to the military. “Payback Time” (Daniels 1996) is a half-present day end-times-are-imminent reflection and half prediction of suffering to come for those who are wrongdoers

in both Daniel's and the "supreme court of the universe" opinions. The first verses of the song are allegorical in nature and describe perhaps the President—or a generic rich person in a generic white house—which then bleeds into another theme of Judgment Day songs: that the rich in particular will suffer at the last day. The second verse is anti-abortion in its stance (one of the modern ways in which Christian Nationalists currently take sides is within the abortion debate), decidedly political in its leaning, and this verse ties in the idea that abortion is somehow linked to financial gain ("greenback god of choice you are serving.") When the last verse is reached, Daniels concocts a sort of biblical imagery soup, and instead of a single piece of imagery from "Revelation," he uses all of it at once, firmly placing the piece in the Judgment Day archetype. The last verse contains the phrases "mighty shout," "trumpet blast," "last is first and the first is last," "world is hushed and time stands still," "sky will part," "sheep are gathered in," and "wedding supper's ready." He not only uses biblical references, but also references the Judgment Day hymn "When The Roll Is Called Up Yonder" (Black 1893) which would be very familiar to his intended Christian Nationalist fan base—who would agree with this text's status as equal to the Bible. *Steel Witness*, the album the song appeared on, was critically well received, and was nominated for the Southern Gospel Music Grammy in 1997. The recording of the song is a masterwork of studio production, with an ominous fade-in, and an

instrumental vocabulary borrowed from both outlaw country and rock, complete with fuzz guitar distortion, phasing, and minor and power chords. “Payback Time” also contains an element throughout of wordiness, business and vocal certainty. The last verse, presented after an organ solo, dwells on Biblical apocalyptic imagery.

“Payback Time”

*as recorded by Charlie Daniels, 1996*

The hero in the big white house shakes his head and moans about  
the misery of his fellow man just as though he really cared.

While the hand he holds behind his back  
conceals the truth from those he is deceivin'

The camera rolls another reel while the robots on the hill  
Are dashing madly to and fro smiling at the status quo

While in the secret, smoke-filled rooms  
they sell the very air that you are breathing

*Chorus:*

When it's payback time and you take that final ride  
When there is no place to run to and there ain't no place to hide

The supreme court of the universe where justice is not blind  
and no prisoners will be taken

When it's payback time

Another day, another knife another precious unborn life  
Will never see the light of day, will never run or jump or play  
It's just another sacrifice to that greenback god of choice you are serving  
Their blood cries out to be avenged and someday you will cower and cringe  
Where the books don't lie and the judge don't deal  
no high-priced lawyers to appeal  
Where the verdict is eternal and you can't escape the verdict you're deserving

*Chorus (with modified lyrics):*

When it's payback time and heaven rules supreme  
When your gold and silver's worthless and you stand before the King  
When your nightmares are reality and there is no exit sign  
And it's too late for repentance  
When it's payback time

The sun comes up the pendulum swings and each new frightening morning brings  
The children's cries, the cannon roar more loudly than the day before  
The wax of time is drippin' down from both ends of that candle burning brightly  
A mighty shout, a trumpet blast when the last is first and the first is last  
The world is hushed and time stands still and the final chapter is fulfilled  
The sky will part each knee will bow to greet the awesome hour of His returning

*Chorus (with modified lyrics):*

When it's payback time and the sheep are gathered in  
When the roll is called up yonder and eternity begins  
When the wedding supper's ready and the faithful called to dine  
Who'll be sitting at the table  
When it's payback time  
Payback time

The lyrics of “Payback Time” neatly summarize the ideas of the rapture that the Christian Nationalists hold: that those who they believe to be on the wrong side of moral battle lines will be judged at the last day, and their suffering will be horrible.

### **3. 3. 6 *Robes and Crowns***

Although SGM and WCGM is consumed primarily today by White, upper-middle class individuals “typically thirty to forty-eight years in age, well educated and with a higher than average household income” (Keeler 2004: 202), that was not always the target consumer for the musics. In the early history of Southern White Pentecostalism, practitioners of Pentecostalism and fans and consumers of WCGMs tended to be rural, from the lower economic strata and practising a religion that had not achieved political or social power. Much of the early and mid twentieth-century WCGM had what can fairly be described as anti-wealthy statements. From radios in the middle of the twentieth century, Hank Williams warned listeners that “wealth won’t save your soul,” Bill Monroe plaintively asked “What would you give in exchange for your soul?” and the Louvin Brothers sang that “Satan is Real.” The trappings and temptations of riches were spoken against, while the virtues of the poor and modest were praised. At the same time, the rewarding visions of alabaster, gold and crystal that awaited believers in heaven were sung about in songs about Judgment day. Believers

were assured that although times were hard here on earth, in heaven they would be the ones wearing rich garments, and their conditions of poverty would be forgotten for eternity. It is in these songs, which foretell the riches which await believers in heaven that the closest resemblance to mainline liturgical hymns is found. Mainline—that is to say more traditional— non gospel-revival hymnals contain few hymns that quote from “Revelation” and those that do tend to speak of the throne of heaven, and of the angels that sing around it.<sup>50</sup> I have separated these songs from the vindication songs and the bodily super-power songs because of their particular attention to wealth and opulence.

“We Shall Wear A Crown” has been recorded by numerous SGM artists<sup>51</sup> and is solidly in the standard performance circulation. It urges listeners that “if you’re fighting, striving for the right, you shall wear a robe and crown. When the trumpet sounds.” There are other rewards promised as well: physical proximity to and equality with Jesus in lyrics such as “sit down beside King Jesus” and “tell Him how I made it over.” The song is almost always performed in an elaborate and standardized quartet arrangement (credited to Rex Nelon, but reminiscent of a recording made in 1927 by African American pianist and singer Juanita Arizona

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<sup>50</sup> These angelic hymns occur primarily in Revelation, Chapters 4-7, which also includes the opening of the “seven seals,” which precede the trumpet blasts that begin the end of the world.

<sup>51</sup> The Nelons, Karen Peck and New River, The Gaither Vocal Band, Ben Speer Singers, et al.

Dranes) with polyphonic harmonies in the chorus duplicating a feel of vocal command by a single singer, the song whips crowds up into a joyful frenzy when it is performed. Often, performances involve a “reprise chorus,” when after the song is apparently finished, the chorus is repeated once or twice more to enthusiastic congregational/audience response. Despite the fact that this is a relatively contemporary piece, it nevertheless follows a gospel hymn format of verse/chorus, and has a harmonic structure that is reminiscent of much earlier hymns. The turnaround leading into the chorus is a very sonically obvious I/VI/ii/V/I/V/I announcing the beginning of the chorus, which is harmonically much less complex than the verses—containing just a few brief movements away from the tonic and dominant chords. It is a standard performance practice of gospel hymns to have choruses that are repetitive, and this hymn is no exception to the rule. Although the quartet arrangement is fairly elaborate, a congregation or audience member can participate by singing the following lyrics: “I’m gonna wear a crown, gonna wear a crown, when the trumpet sounds, I’m gonna wear a crown” and then add on slightly more lyrics as the chorus is repeated (the remainder of the chorus is slightly more complicated). The chorus itself is rhythmically simple, but has a few accented offbeats that provide the energy. The entire piece combines to be participatory, rhythmically interesting without being rhythmically too challenging, and harmonically familiar. It is the promise of



triumph over poverty and the reward of eternal riches in a textbook gospel quartet hymn.

“John Saw” is another SGM quartet standard that describes “Revelation” in great detail. Even the title is an indication, as is the gospel standard “John the Revelator,” that this is a piece about the biblical prophet John and the book of “Revelation.” The song’s lyrics outline the description contained within “Revelation” of heaven’s riches: “jasper walls,” “shining streets of gold,” and the “heavenly throne.” The promise of bodily resurrection is outlined: “when I step on that shore to walk upon the golden ground that John saw.” The lyrics also contain the familiar promise of the dissolution of the divine mystery: “I wondered time and again, how could it have been to gaze upon that heavenly throne, but I’ll wonder no more, when I step on that shore.” There is a promise of the removal of not only earthly poverty, but also equality in knowledge and power to God, in physical and perfect resurrection to “stroll” with “saints” on “golden ground.”

### **3. 4 Conclusion: modern connections**

Songs about Judgment Day are a crucial part of WCGM. I contend that songs within the Judgment Day archetype most vividly illustrate the Pentecostal and poor white Southerner’s influence on modern WCGM. Mainline churches simply do not embrace the rhetoric of the book of Revelation in the same way that

Pentecostals, or literal Bible believing Christians, do. The belief in a literal, physical resurrection at the last day is unique to WCGM and the culture of Christian Nationalism that currently surrounds it. Macel Ely II concludes his biography of his great-uncle Brother Claude Ely with this testament:

As strict literalist interpreters of the Bible, Pentecostal-Holiness believers trust that one day soon the Lord will return for them, and those who have already died and been buried will literally come out of the ground to be with Jesus. They whole-heartedly believe they will have new bodies and will be free from all sickness or physical impairments. (Ely 2005: 310)

Modern-day Christian Nationalists cling to their heritage of simplicity and poverty. They often proclaim that their religion is directly linked to their persecuted ancestors, all the way back to the beginning of Christian history. Although in modern times this is a racially homogenous group and a major political party recognizes many of their agendas, they nevertheless use the vocabulary of a people at the margins of society. There is a direct link between them and the Pentecostal White Southerners who have so often been portrayed as grotesquely poor, dirty and ignorant instead of resourceful, resilient and of a strong (if misunderstood) faith. This heritage has indelibly stamped the modern WCGM adopted by the Christian Nationalists with the desire to rejoice at winning the end of the world.

## **Chapter 4**

### **“What A Friend We Have in Mother:” Sainted Mommas, The Feminine Sacred, and the Performativity of Motherhood**

#### **4. 1 Overview**

Within the scope of this chapter, I will discuss the performativity of the Momma archetype as it is portrayed in the lyrics of WCGM, and investigate the Momma mythology of the popular media that surrounds WCGM, using “Mother” Maybelle Carter and Sandy Patti as case studies. I contend that this Momma song archetype stems from an inescapable desire for a feminine sacred (Jung 1911). This desire, and a culture of hyper-sentimentality and social conservatism that surrounds the religious community that consumes the music, constructs a narrative in which the popular press, the performers and fans of the music all participate. It is a desired collective remembrance of a now mythologized past with a mythical matron.

Much attention is given in the WCGM repertoire to descriptions of an idealized house, hearth and home. This idealized vision always features a mother at its centre. This Momma, as she is portrayed in the repertoire, does not sleep, appears to pray, cook or tend house without any abatement, and exists only to be a

“living sacrifice” to her children, her home, and her God. This mother is an idealized caretaker and a supernatural spiritual force. Momma songs, as I call them in my archetype breakdown, express the feminine sacred. Rather than a description of any real mother of recent memory, they are instead descriptions of an ideal mother of distant or mythical memory. Within the repertoire, these songs display a strong element of the ideal and a performativity (Goffman 1959) (Butler 1990 1993) in which roles of gender and duty are acted out, not only by male performers but also by female performers. In the case of male performers, the role that is enacted is most often that of a penitent or dutiful son. In the case of female performers, it is in the role of a daughter standing awestruck by the power of a sainted mother, or as an adult performing the role of a mother, most often in the singing of a lullaby. Both the popular press and fans of the musics have come to participate in the elevation of this narrative, and there have been dire career consequences for female performers when they have deviated from the prescription dictated by the archetype.

For the repertoire study contained within this chapter, I have extensively examined the lyrics of approximately one hundred songs that are either specifically about mothers, or that include mothers in their subject matters or settings, such as the Webb Pierce tune “Country Church” (Pierce/Perry 1958) or the Carter Family standard “Can/Will the Circle Be Unbroken?”

(Gabriel/Habershon 1907 & Carter 1935)<sup>52</sup> which is a reflection on the loss of a family matriarch, and the impact that loss may have on family connections. This body of songs was even recognized by the musicians themselves as a specific sub-genre of country and gospel music. In a spoken introduction for a radio broadcast of “Mother’s Footsteps Guide Me On” (Stanley 1959), Carter Stanley introduces the piece in the following manner: “Moving right along, we’ve got a mother song now today, picked out for you.”<sup>53</sup> As well as this repertoire survey, I have also analyzed popular press coverage of female artists to better discover how this “Momma ideal” is exalted by the popular press and what career and press coverage consequences befall female performers who subvert this ideal—this chapter uses Sandy Patti as a case study of this sort of treatment by the media and the industry.

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<sup>52</sup> Various recorded versions of the tune have altered A.P. Carter’s title “Can the Circle Be Unbroken” to “Will the Circle be Unbroken,” which was the original title of the gospel revival hymn. A lengthy and interesting discourse analysis of the Can/Will question can be found in Peterson, 1997:221-233. I am more intrigued by the possibility that Carter and Peer changed it to prevent confusion and possible copyright questions with the original hymn publishers.

<sup>53</sup> The Stanley Brothers. 1960. “Mother No Longer Awaits Me At Home” Tk 27. *The Stanley Brothers On Radio*. Rebel: 111115.

## 4.2 Definitions of Motherhood

When speaking of mothers and motherhood, I am using Linda Rennie Forcey's (1994: 357) definition of motherhood as "a socially constructed set of activities and relationships involved in nurturing and caring for people." WCGM has strongly hetero-normative narratives in its lyrical content: within the narrative of WCGM, men are portrayed as physically strong and masculine to the point of militaristic.<sup>54</sup> Although men are allowed to be emotional when speaking of their personal relationships with God or their mother, their emotions in other situations are rarely explored, and they are certainly not portrayed in any way as "mothering." When song lyrics use the word "Father," they are nearly always referring not to earthly biological fathers, but to God. Women are portrayed almost exclusively as daughters or mothers; other cultural options are rarely presented. The modern conception of this rigid division of labour has its roots in Victorian times. Feminist scholar Evelyn Nakano Glen cites the rise of industrialization and consumer society as taking part in the origins of this gender division in her 1994 article "Social Constructions of Mothering," stating that the

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<sup>54</sup> There exists a large body of WCGM songs, explored in Chapter 5, titled "Make Him a Soldier," about the importance of Christian soldier-hood, in both the literal and figurative sense.

rise of industrialization led to: “The construction of mothering as women’s primary and exclusive identity, the encapsulation of women and children in the nuclear household, and the emphasis on mothering as emotional care”(Glenn 1994: 14). Glenn goes on to point out that in white/bourgeois society of the late nineteenth early twentieth centuries: “A natural division of labour was posited, with men ruling the ‘public’ sphere of economy and policy, while women and children inherited the shrunken ‘private’ sphere of the household” (Glenn 1994: 14). Women, therefore, have been relegated to the labour of domesticity—usually invisible, often thankless and thick with responsibility. Within the tropes of WCGM, including the country music that shares many of the same influences and philosophies, if a child goes astray, then it is the mother who is responsible for saving that child.

David Fillingim has stated that in conservative Christian Southern rural culture (which he unapologetically and more succinctly refers to as “redneck culture”), “the virtues of home life (as opposed to the aggressive, competitive impulses of public life) become *the* Christian virtues.” (1997: 292). In WCGM descriptions of home, fathers are hardly ever represented. Instead, in the narrative of WCGM, the mother is the parent solely held responsible for both the spiritual and physical well being of the children. As this conservative Christian culture gains in social and political power, an increasing number of Americans from

many socio-economic levels are adopting this “redneck culture” as their own, particularly within the Christian Nationalist movement, which eschews cosmopolitan sensibilities. This hetero-normative narrative becomes a powerful tool of influence in how women are viewed, how women are treated, and how women perform.

Judith Butler has argued that: [it is] “the power of discourse to produce the phenomena that it regulates and constrains” (1993: 2). The discourse contained within the lyrics of the Momma songs produces the phenomena of the sainted Momma. It is a cult of a mother that is so perfect, so angelic, so unwavering that she is impossible to emulate, yet she seems to nevertheless be a model for female behaviour. The performativity of gender (Butler 1990, 1993) is exhibited well by the Momma archetype. When the songs are performed by men, not only are images of how dutifully masculine sons should behave exhibited, but visions of perfectly sainted Mommas are painted as well. When female performers sing Momma songs, they perform characteristics of a hyper-feminine motherhood. Scholars have examined performed femininity, and particularly models of Southern femininity at great length.

Feminist scholar Margaret Ripley Wolfe has examined the idea of “The Southern Lady” and quotes an etiquette manual to illustrate traits that a Southern lady should possess: “modesty, chastity, meekness, godliness and compassion”



(Ripley-Wolfe 1975:18). Women of the rural agrarian South had to add a tireless perseverance and physical toughness to these ideas of meekness and chastity.

Describing Poor Valley, where the ancestors of A.P. Carter put down roots after the Civil War, authors Mark Zwonitzer and Charles Hirschberg paint a vivid portrait of such women:

To make a go of life in the Valley, a woman had to be able to make corn bread, worm tobacco, teach her children Christian prayers, plow a straight row, put up kraut and beans for winter, sew a proper school dress, tan hides, keep a house clean and a cornfield free of weeds. Above all, they had to know how to *stretch* what life gave them; they wasted nothing. (2002: 22)

#### 4. 2. 1 *The Sacred Mother*

Although it is often popular to jump to Freudian conclusions when discussing mothers,<sup>55</sup> Carl Jung's (1911) ideas of the psyche and its connection to religious ideas are more relevant here. Jung divided his concept of the religious psyche into masculine and feminine "Shadow selves:" two sides, which he referred to as "anima" and "animus" at their primal states. These sides were

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<sup>55</sup> Nearly all examinations of motherhood turn to Freud. For a summary of the Freudian side of motherhood and its history, the first chapter of E. Ann Kaplan's (1992) *Motherhood and Representation: the Mother in Popular Culture and Melodrama* entitled "The Psychoanalytic Sphere" is invaluable.

reflected as ideal “psychic structures:”

The Anima is the feminine side of the male, the Animus the masculine side of the female, and just as we usually experience our Shadow through someone else, so we experience our own attributes of the opposite sex through another person. In the male, for example, the Anima is first encountered in the mother. (Jung 1911: 120)

In Jung’s interpretation of the psyche, particularly in the realm of pastoral psychology<sup>56</sup>, the mind always struggles for a balance of sacred masculine and sacred feminine. This point of view provides a useful insight into the number of songs that WCGM contains involving mothers. Unlike Catholicism, which exalts the Virgin Mary, Protestantism is devoid of a feminine expression of the sacred, and I contend that mothers are serving to fill the void. In the lyrics of WCGM, the “psychic structure” used as a male artist’s Anima is his mother. The mother of WCGM therefore becomes mythical in her powers, becoming a beacon of a mythologized past of perfect virtue, where food was always on the table, home life was always faultless, and God was always close at hand. Unlike Freud’s famous discussion of the Oedipus complex (1905), this is not an idea of sexual attraction, but a desire to complete one’s self in a spiritual sense. In Jung’s opinion, the failure of much of Western religion lay in its lack of a feminine sacred. Certainly there are, at least in this body of Protestant music, enough songs

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<sup>56</sup> “Pastoral psychology” is a branch of religion-based psychology that is taught at seminaries to clergypeople and Chaplins. It accepts a religious worldview on the part of its patients.

about mothers to demonstrate a hunger for an exaltation of something holy and female.

Jung's ideas concerning the feminine sacred are from the beginning of the twentieth century, published exactly one hundred years prior to this writing. WCGM is a music that is, in many ways, frozen in time. One of the main qualities of the art is the sentimentality of its lyrics and the old-fashioned-ness of its performance styles and instrumentation. The elevation of motherhood was extremely prevalent in American popular culture of the late 1800s and early 1900s, culminating with the declaration of Mother's Day as an official holiday in the United States in 1913. In many of the genres of WCGM, particularly Southern Gospel Quartet Singing and the Ulster Protestant church roots of Bluegrass Gospel, little has changed lyrically since the turn of the twentieth century. Although in secular Country music there has been evidence of women's liberation, and even some notable feminist anthems such as Loretta Lynn's "The Pill" (Lynn/McHan 1975), and Shania Twain's song "Man, I Feel Like a Woman" (Lange/Twain 1997) in which she sings of a multiplicity of femininities, there has been no such parallel rise of feminist expression in WCGM. Instead, in the narrative of WCGM, motherhood has remained the only career choice that enters into song lyrics.

Since I am examining the performativity of motherhood and childhood, I am

utilizing the lyrics as statements of these performances. The lyrics of the songs contain statements about immediacies of emotional and bodily feelings, and I am examining them as descriptions of performed experiences (Butler 1990, Jung 1934, Merleau-Ponty 1945) rather than as detached discourse (Lacan 1938, 1954). I contend that the intent of the lyrics is truly performative, and that these songs do serve to construct social norms and “produce phenomena” (Lomax 1968). In the case of the Momma archetype, the characters performed in the tropes contained within the songs are the mothers themselves (either through the eyes of their children or by being autobiographical in nature) or the mother’s sons or daughters. The music of the songs of the archetype is decidedly gentler than other archetypes: many songs are in 3/4 time, cadences are less obvious, and the songs are usually performed with a feminized vocality even when men perform them. The act of singing a Momma song is an act of performative gender.

#### **4. 3 The Momma Archetype**

Songs within the archetype vary musically from the other archetypes in a few ways. First, these songs are performed in a manner that is almost always musically gentle: slow tempos, subdued vocals, and compact vocal ranges. Out of all of the archetypes, Mother songs contain the most songs in 3/4 meter, and either in this way or through phrasing, seem evocative of the actual movements of

mothering such as rocking or soothing a child. They also contain no musical “surprises” such as extremes of dynamics or metric shifts. The songs contain several specific prescriptions: that mothers should be ultimate caretakers and children’s confidantes; they should possess a nearly supernatural amount of spiritual power; and even after their deaths they will be an active presence in the lives (and afterlives) of their children.

#### **4. 3. 1 *Caretaker and Confidante***

Throughout the repertoire of WCGMs, mothers are portrayed as both caretaker and confidante—ever present, never tiring and always putting the needs of their children ahead of their own needs. The caretaking presence and power and consolation of mothers is so sacred in WCGM that “mother”s become literally interchangeable with “Jesus.” In “What a Friend We Have in Mother” (Scriven 1855/Hendley 193?) (alternately titled “She’ll Be There”) the role of mother as confidante and spiritual caretaker is explored using the tune (and some of the same lyrics) as the gospel revival hymn “What a Friend We Have in Jesus” (Scriven 1855/Converse 1868). “What a Friend We Have in Mother” has been recorded by numerous artists, including the Louvin Bros (1952), Wilf Carter (aka Montana Slim c.d.1947), and Glen Neaves and The Virginia Mountain Boys (1974). The liner notes in The Glen Neaves and The Virginia Mountain Boys’

Smithsonian Folkways release from 1974 describe the song simply as a “widely popular song of religious tone.”<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Finch, Caleb E. and Eric H. Davidson. 1974. Liner notes in *Glen Neaves and the Virginia Mountain Boys: Country Bluegrass from Southwest Virginia*. Folkways: FA3830.

# What A Friend We Have in Mother (She'll Be There)

Music: Converse

Lyrics: Hendley

1. What a friend we have in Mo - ther,  
who will all our se - crets share.  
We should ne - ver keep things from her.  
tell her all, and she'll be there.  
Oh, what ten - der love she gives us  
when in sor - row or de - spair.  
Tell her gent - ly, whis - per soft - ly.  
she will list - en, she'll be there.

The musical score is written in a single system with eight staves. The key signature has one flat (Bb) and the time signature is 4/4. Chord symbols (F, Bb, C) are placed above the notes. The lyrics are written below the notes, with hyphens indicating syllables that span across notes. The score ends with a double bar line.

*Verse 2:*

Day by day as she grows older  
she's the nation's shining sun.

Don't forget the prayers she taught you, you will need them where you are  
Though her hair has turned to silver,  
send her flowers sweet and fine drop a card or send a letter  
she'll be waiting, she'll be there.

*Verse 3:*

When her eyes are closed to slumber  
gently kiss her icy brow  
fold her hands upon her bosom she will rest in heaven now.  
When your days are dark and dreary,  
and your cross is hard to bear,  
do not let your memory fail you,  
think of mother, she'll be there.

In "What a Friend We Have in Mother," the archetype is demonstrated as a dutiful, yet always gentle, confessor. Nothing at all should ever be kept from one's mother: "we should never keep things from her, tell her all and she'll be there." The mother of the song is ever present, always there: there to absolve, there to comfort and console, and there to protect. The lyrics also exhibit a Victorian obsession with morbidity: "When her eyes are closed to slumber, gently kiss her icy brow." The mother of this song is "the nation's guiding sun," has taught her children every prayer that they know, and her love serves as a spiritual



armor for her children even after her physical presence is gone.

In this song as well as others, it would seem that even death doesn't relieve a mother of her caretaker duties. In the 1951 recording "I Dreamed About Mom (Mama) Last Night" (Rose 1950), Hank Williams (recording under the pseudonym "Luke the Drifter") recounts a dream in which he encounters his deceased mother in heaven, where she reads the Bible to comfort him. In a spoken-word portion, which constitutes the bulk of the recording, Williams describes a mother who waited up late nights until her son arrived safely from "party nights" and whose dying act was to shine "again that old-time tender light" from her eyes, smile and pray "to God to keep her children safe from harm." Once again, Momma is portrayed as tireless and without rest when it comes to her children. Also, the fact that the mother portrayed in the lyrics appears in a dream-vision to her son further demonstrates the power of Momma as super-human caretaker and confidante.

# I Dreamed About Mama Last Night

Music: Rose

Lyrics: Rose

The musical score is written in treble clef, 3/4 time, with a key signature of one sharp (F#). It consists of five staves of music. The first staff is an instrumental introduction with a D7 chord and a melodic line. The second staff begins the vocal melody with a G chord. The lyrics are: "I. I've just been to Heav - en, with some - one so true, I dreamed a - bout Ma - ma last night. She read me the Bi - ble like she used to do; I dreamed a - bout Ma - ma last night." The score includes various chords (D7, G, C) and musical notations such as slurs, ties, and a triplet over the word "do".

Spoken: She never closed her eyes in sleep 'til we were all in bed.  
 And on party nights 'til we came home, she often sat and read.  
 We little thought about it then, for we were young and gay,  
 just how much Mama worried when we children were away.

We only knew she never slept, and when we were out at night,  
 that she waited just to know that we'd come home all right.  
 Why sometimes when we'd stay away 'til one or two or three,  
 it seemed to us that Mama heard the turning of the key.

For always when we'd step inside, she'd call and we'd reply,  
 but we were all too young back then to understand the reason why.  
 Until the last one had returned, she'd always keep a light,  
 for Mama couldn't sleep until she'd kissed us all good night.

She had to know that we were safe before she went to rest,  
 for she seemed to fear the world might harm the ones she loved the best.  
 And once she said, "When you are grown, 'to women and 'to men,  
 perhaps I'll sleep the whole night through; I may be different then."

And so it seemed that night and day we knew a mother's care,  
 that always when we got back home we'd find her waiting there.

Then came the night that we were called to gather 'round her bed,  
 "The children are all with you now," the kindly doctor said.

And in her eyes there gleamed again that old-time tender light,  
 that told that she'd been waiting just to know we were all alright.  
 She smiled that old familiar smile, and prayed to God to keep  
 her children safe from harm throughout the years, and then she went to sleep.

My dream —

— is a treas - ure, that I'll al - ways keep, I

dreamed a - bout Ma - ma last night.

#### 4. 3. 2 *Spiritual Powerhouse*

The spiritual power of a mother's devotion, both to prayer and to her children, is presented as nothing short of supernatural in WCGM. Mothers are

presented as perfect “living sacrifices”<sup>58</sup> and when mothers aren’t portrayed as caretaking, they are portrayed as messengers of heaven, spiritual scholars busy with Bible reading, or praying. Mothers’ prayers are given a particular type of power in WCGM, and their prayers seem to have a lot more power than those of non-mothers.

In “There’s Somethin’ Goin’ On (When Momma Prays)” (Peck 2008), as it is performed by the Georgia-based Karen Peck-Gooch<sup>59</sup> accompanied by her group “New River,” on the 2008 album *Ephesians One*. The lyrics promise that, among other things, when a mother prays: “Heaven stops what they’re doing to listen.”

“There’s Somethin’ Goin’ On (When Momma Prays)”

as recorded by Karen Peck-Gooch, 2008

When I was a little child, outside my mama’s room,  
I listened as she talked with God like he was in there, too.  
You could hear her in the still of the morning and even in the heat of the day  
While on her knees she believed, mountains moved out of the way

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<sup>58</sup> This living sacrifice concept is outlined in the Bible in Romans chapter 12 verse 1: “present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God.”

<sup>59</sup> Peck-Gooch has received the “Favorite Soprano Fan Award” from fan magazine *The Singing News* an unequaled eleven years in a row.

*Chorus:*

Heaven stops what they're doing to listen,  
And the angels get ready to fly  
All eyes are fixed on the father, 'cause her faith makes him smile  
And the words are just quiet and simple  
But I know this one thing: there's somethin' goin' on when Momma prays.

Silver hair and wrinkled hands at times her steps are slow  
But all her faithful fervent prayers have changed this world, I know  
There are days when her petitions are many,  
sometimes all that she can do is rejoice  
It makes her shout, 'cause there's no doubt that Jesus knows her voice

*Chorus*

*Bridge:*

*Backing vocals:* She believes

*Lead:* Though her eyes cannot see

*Backing vocals:* His promises

*Lead:* Are all that she needs

*Vocal tag:* But I know this one thing:

There's somethin' goin' on when Momma prays.

In this piece there are two levels to the performance: the voice of the daughter witnessing/hearing the praying: "When I was a little child, outside my mama's room" and the faithful mother herself praying: "while on her knees, she believed, mountains moved out of the way." Therefore, two characters are presented simultaneously. We have the voice of the Momma: "quiet and simple."

This mother's prayers contain no rehearsed liturgical dogma, and one can imagine that there isn't any large vocabulary contained within her prayers. These lyrics recall earlier models from the Momma archetype, such as "God Bless Her ('Cause She's My Mother)" (Louvin/Louvin/Hill 1952) in which the mother is portrayed as rustic and simple in dress and manners to the point that she is made an object of ridicule by the community, which only serves to make her holier in the eyes of her sons and heaven. In "There's Somethin' Goin' On (When Momma Prays)," Momma is humble, quiet, and simple, making her more admirable both in the eyes of her daughter and in the eyes of the angels and "the Father." The faith of the daughter is seemingly stronger in the spiritual power of the prayers of her mother than in God's power, as she claims that: "all her faithful, fervent prayers, have changed this world, I know" and goes on to affirm "there's no doubt that Jesus knows her voice."

#### **4. 3. 3 *Ghost Mommas***

In songs concerning mourning the death of a mother, her Bible often becomes a talisman in WCGM. Examples include "My Mother's Bible" (Reno 1957), "Dust on Mother's Bible" (Owens 1966), and "Mother Left Me Her Bible" (Stanley 1957). In a slight variation on the theme, the posthumous (2003) Johnny Cash box set *Unearthed* contains a compact disc entitled *My Mother's Hymn*

*Book* featuring songs from his own mother's book entitled *Heavenly Highway Hymns*. In a 1959 recording of "Mother Left Me Her Bible," the Stanley Brothers sing: "She left me her Bible to guide me to heaven, worth more than the silver and gold on this earth" and continue into the chorus "I know she'll be waiting for me at the portal, for she left me her Bible to show me the way." This is one of many songs in which the reuniting of sons with their mothers is the primary goal of both going to heaven and the event of the rapture.

In several tunes regarding the "day of rapture and judgment," when God returns to earth to judge the sinners and reward the faithful, reunions with Mothers have a high priority. Numerous songs speak of mothers in heaven, or resurrected physically from the grave on judgment day, waiting to once again greet their homecoming prodigal sons. In these songs, there is absolutely no doubt in the lyricist's mind that his mother has not only made it successfully to heaven, but will be the first one to greet him (his first priority, even before God and Jesus) when he arrives in the afterlife. In a gospel revival hymn that has become a very popular song in the bluegrass repertoire titled "Shake Hands With Mother Again" (Berry 1897), the desire to see one's resurrected mother is clearly illustrated.

One of the striking things about "Shake Hands With Mother Again" is the fact that the appearance of Jesus (the sacred centre of the Christian faith) is not the central focus of the song lyrics. Instead, the performer is focused on the

resurrected mother of the song. In the Pentecostal understanding of Judgment day, true believers will be physically resurrected from their graves at the occasion of the second coming of Christ. So, the author and performer of this song are coming from a perspective that the mother of the subject matter will be resurrected, bodily and whole, on the “day and hour” that the song speaks of. There is a strange undercurrent of formality that is presented in the lyrics. Instead of embracing his mother, or emotionally weeping at the reunion, he is satisfied to hear Jesus himself utter the words “shake hands with mother again.” The son will also be given the opportunity to re-introduce himself to his own mother “Mother, this is your boy you left when you went away.” Within the Momma song archetype, there exists a quantity of songs that express anxiety of being not recognized by loved ones in the afterlife, such as the song “Will my Mother Know Me There?” in which the chorus assures that “yes, I’m sure that she will know me.”



# Shake Hands with Mother Again

Music: Berry

Lyrics: Berry

A

1. If I should be liv - ing \_\_\_ when Je - sus comes, and  
 2. I'd like to say, "Moth - er, \_\_\_ this is your boy, \_\_\_ you

D A

know \_\_\_ the day and the hour, \_\_\_ I'd like to be stand - ing \_\_\_ at  
 left \_\_\_ when you went a - way. \_\_\_ And now my dear moth - er, \_\_\_ it

F#m A E A D A

Moth - er's tomb, when Je - sus comes in His pow - er. \_\_\_ 'Twill  
 gives me great joy to see you a - gain \_\_\_ to - day." \_\_\_

A E7 A D

be a won - der - ful hap - py day, up there on the gol - den

A F#m

strand, When I can hear Je - sus my Sav - iour say, "Shake

A E A D A

hands with Moth - er a - gain." \_\_\_

#### **4. 4 The Performativity of Motherhood**

Female performers of WCGM are consummate performers of motherhood. They exhibit “motherly” qualities as portrayed/performed by the archetypes through modest dress, declarations of deeply-rooted faith, and songs that describe their own mothers. Modern day WCGM groups are often family groups, and their matriarchs always present as strong, with faith unwavering even in the face of illness and tragedy, and artists who are also mothers are often openly credited as being the spiritual guidepost of the family. Family groups such as The Isaacs, Collingsworth Family, and the Hoppers all feature matriarchs in their musical lineups. The next section takes two prominent figures in the history of WCGM, Mother Maybelle Carter and Sandy Patti, and discusses how they have performed, or failed to perform, the Momma archetype.

##### **4. 4. 1 “Mother” Maybelle Carter**

All the accounts of the trip read like something half-remembered from Sunday school. The roads were dusty. She was eight months pregnant. Depending on whose account of the story you read, the Mother in question was reluctant to make the journey, nervous to do so, or not scared at all. This is the now near-mythic account of the trip that “Mother” Maybelle Carter (then just “Maybelle”) Carter, Alvin Pleasant (A.P.) Carter and his wife Sara took from their home in

Maces Spring, Virginia, to Bristol, on the Tennessee/Virginia border to record six sides for Victor Records in 1927. These sides would become part of what is known as the “Bristol Sessions,” and are considered by many to be part of the birth of modern country music, and also by extension the birth of the WCGM recording industry.

The Carter Family, in which Sara and Maybelle supplied the vocals, had what has been described as an “unusually feminine sound” (Dorman 2005: 74) perhaps due to the fact that the most prominent voices on their recordings were female voices. With Sara’s declamatory lead vocals and Maybelle’s authoritative and highly influential guitar style<sup>60</sup>, the groundwork was laid for nearly all of the country music that was to follow. In later years, they would broadcast a weekly radio show on the astoundingly powerful million-watt radio station XERA out of the Texas/Mexico border town of Del Rio, a station that received fan mail from “every state in the nation, and fourteen other countries to boot” (Zwonitzer and

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<sup>60</sup> Although some have noted that this style was taught to her by African American guitar player Lesley Riddle (Peterson, 1997, Wolfe, 1987) the style has come to be known as “Carter scratch” or “Carter lick” and countless country music artists have credited “Mother” Maybelle Carter as an influence. Carter’s playing style (he was recorded as a mature artist) is to my ear’s quite distinct from Riddle’s, and I believe her position as an influence on modern country guitar technique to be well founded.

Hirshberg 2002: 3). This allowed their influence to be heard over great distances during the years of the great depression, a time period during which many people could not afford to purchase recordings. The songs they recorded and performed between the Bristol sessions and the Border Radio years are varied in musical style and lyrical topic manner, from surprisingly gender-role-questioning numbers such as “Single Girl, Married Girl” (traditional/arr. Carter 1927) to gospel standards such as “The Church in the Wildwood” (Pitts 1857).

A song that would become most closely associated with the Carter Family, continuing even with the second generation of Carters, was the standard “Will the Circle be Unbroken,” which they first recorded under the title “Can the Circle be Unbroken” in 1935. Although A.P. Carter took composer credit, and Peer Publishing took publishing rights for the song, there was already a version of the song nearly identical in harmony and structure that was widely available in printed Gospel Revival hymnals of the time:

“Will The Circle Be Unbroken”

as published by Gabriel/Habershon, 1907

There are loved ones in the glory,  
Whose dear forms you often miss;  
When you close your earthly story,  
Will you join them in their bliss?

*Chorus:*

Will the circle be unbroken

By and by, by and by?  
In a better home awaiting  
In the sky, in the sky?

In the joyous days of childhood,  
Oft they told of wondrous love,  
Pointed to the dying Savior  
Now they dwell with Him above.

*Chorus*

You remember songs of heaven  
Which you sang with childish voice,  
Do you love the hymns they taught you,  
Or are songs of earth your choice?

*Chorus*

You can picture happy gatherings  
'Round the fireside long ago,  
And you think of tearful partings,  
When they left you here below:

*Chorus*

One by one their seats were emptied,  
One by one they went away;  
Here the circle has been broken—  
Will it be complete one day?

*Chorus*

This original published version of the song is a rather generic "saints gone

up to glory” hymn, discussing lost loved ones. There are numerous hymns such as this, and it is quite typical of a *fin-de-siecle*-era hymn suitable for an All Saint’s Sunday (November 1<sup>st</sup>) or funeral service. The requests given by the verses are abstract intellectual commands. The song asks the listener to “remember songs of heaven,” and “picture happy gatherings” that happened “long ago.” The portrait painted by the words of the hymn is a murky vision of a past of “tearful partings” and “emptied” seats, and it exists solely in the psyche of the listener, with only a passing mention of remembering the physical act of singing the songs of childhood. The version that the Carter Family recorded, perhaps “collected” on one of A.P. Carter’s “song-catching” trips, has several important poetic changes. It is more immediate, more personal and more graphically about the body of both the performer and the subject matter:

“Can The Circle Be Unbroken”

*as recorded by the Carter Family, 1935*

I was standing by the window  
On one cold and cloudy day  
And I saw the hearse come rolling  
For to carry my mother away

*Chorus:*

(Oh) Can the circle be unbroken  
Bye and bye, Lord, bye and bye  
There's a better home a-waiting  
In the sky, Lord, in the sky

Lord, I told the undertaker  
Undertaker, please drive slow  
For this body you are hauling  
Lord, I hate to see her go

*Chorus*

I followed close behind her  
Tried to hold up and be brave  
But I could not hide my sorrow  
When they laid her in the grave

*Chorus*

Went back home  
Lord my home was lonesome  
missed my mother, she was gone  
All my brothers sisters crying, What a home so sad and (a)lone

*Chorus*

As far as the lyrics are concerned, the Carter Family version is a very different song than the original hymn. First, it is barely a hymn at all. Although a few passing references are made to “Lord,” and it is widely accepted and referred to as a gospel song, the altered text is arguably about family connection and earthly concerns, not sacred and heavenly ones as in the original hymn. From the first line of the Carter Family version, the listener is placed in an immediate and earthy presence with the performer. The singer of the song is “standing by the window”

cold and deprived of sunshine. It is a vivid image, complete with physical sensation, and has none of the generic, even didactic nature of the original hymn. Later, the statement “this body you are hauling” illustrates the physical heaviness and profound deadness of the corpse. The burden of a dutifully respectful (and perhaps eldest) child to attempt to maintain dignity at a funeral—but being unable to do so—is illustrated in “tried to hold up and be brave/but I could not hide my sorrow/when they laid her in the grave.” It is a brilliantly evocative lyric, thick with uncertainty and anxiety.

The lyrics communicate the power of the familial matriarch: without this woman, how can earthly family ties be maintained? Who can take her place? There is some sense in the lyrics that the character portrayed is the one who is expected to fill the void, but part of the piece’s haunting brilliance lies in the hint of existential crisis it evokes: that perhaps no one can truly take a mother’s place. This version of the piece has become the standard version of the tune. In a survey of recordings of the song, including nearly a hundred YouTube versions posted from as far afield as Japan and South Africa, A.P. Carter’s lyrics are nearly the only ones that are performed today.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> One exception to this is the live version of the tune found on the Willie Nelson album *The Troublemaker*, where after a rousing version of A.P. Carter’s lyrics, he launches into the lyrics written by Ada Habershon. After surveying nearly a hundred recorded versions of the tune, this is



In addition to recordings and radio appearances, The Carter Family toured from the early 1930s, until the group broke up in 1943. The group promised a family-friendly show during their tours, a contrast to other performers of the time who had slightly bawdier images. While performers such as “Moonshine Kate,” “Uncle” Dave Macon, and Charlie Poole might sing songs about the pleasures of liquor or incorporate bawdy vaudeville skits into their shows, the Carter Family promised upright seriousness (Peterson 1997: 127). The entire group eschewed movement during performances and was always modestly attired on stage. Promotional materials for Carter Family touring shows promised audiences: “The show is morally good.” Even into the 1960s and 1970s during her television appearances on the Johnny Cash Show, Mother Maybelle would appear in extremely modest clothing, often wearing high-neck dresses with a brooch at the collar, long skirts and long sleeves. Her daughters June, Helen and Anita would often appear in coordinating modest costumes, carrying on the Carter Family promise of moral goodness.

Mother Maybelle Carter was without a doubt a powerfully influential force musically, spiritually and personally to a great many figures in country

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the only commercial version I have found that uses Habershon's original lyrics, although set to Carter's tune (which bears only a passing resemblance to Gabriel's).

music. The popular press has mythologized her, emphasizing her mothering over her musicianship, and it is becoming increasingly difficult to tease out fact from fiction when seeking information about her life. The vocabulary used to describe her is reverent in its tone: "Accomplished musician, savvy manager and gentle confessor to the road-wrecked likes of Hank Williams, Mother Maybelle did her best to live up to the name" (Hirshey 1997: 45). Additionally, there is a mythos that attaches a "backwoods," simple and plain quality to the Carters. Maybelle Carter was an incredibly accomplished musician. Her guitar playing is at once melodic, rhythmically solid and commanding. In addition to her guitar playing, she was also a competent vocalist, autoharpist, and banjo player. From her opening bars of "Wildwood Flower," the instrumental presence and singular voice of the Carter family is unmistakable.

Nevertheless, in a *New York Times* review, by critic Tom Piazza, of a massive re-issued box set of Carter Family recordings, the author states that "the Carters were plain." and "none of the Carters was a virtuoso instrumentalist or singer, although Maybelle's guitar strum, a way of playing the melody on the instrument's bass strings and alternating it with the chords was widely influential." By the end of the review, however, Piazza seems to know that he must invoke the proper respect for Maybelle Carter's maternal impact on country music: "By the time she appeared on the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band's 1973 album

‘Will the Circle Be Unbroken?’—a tribute to early country music, and, especially the Carters—she was universally known as ‘Mother Maybelle.’ But by then, everyone in country music was, musically, at least, part of the Carter family” (Piazza 1994). In this review, Piazza is following the lead that the popular press has given throughout the life of Mother Maybelle Carter and beyond. They have taken a consummate musician, who arguably played a pivotal role in moving the guitar to the forefront of modern popular music, and emphasized her maternal sainthood over her musicianship.

Those that knew her best of all, her own children and her son-in-law, were no less reverent of Mother Maybelle Carter, but their admiration tends to take on a different tone. Johnny Cash spoke of her glowingly, and regularly credited her in interviews and in his autobiography with “saving his life.” In a 1971 episode of his television program, the Carter sisters and he performed a song entitled “A Song to Mama” (Carter/Cash/Jones 1971) which sang the praises of Mother Maybelle Carter.

This song (a transcription appears on pages 172 and 173) deviates from the Momma archetype. Typically in the Momma song archetype, the Momma is invested with otherworldly powers, but in “A Song to Mama” two interesting things happen. First, aging and physical tiredness occur. Unlike many of the spiritual warrior mothers, this real-live Momma is exhausted. Secondly, this

mother is described using so-called masculine traits. “Mama you’re a *trooper*<sup>62</sup>, mama you’re a *soldier*.” Here we get a glimpse of what may be the actual truth, performed by the people who witnessed Maybelle Carter in a day-to-day working and performing mode. She is portrayed here not as the blushing, tireless confessor as so many in the popular press have painted her, but as a tough show person, performing night after night, yet still suffering bodily exhaustion like anyone else. It is an endearing flash of honesty amid the narrative about Mother Maybelle Carter. During the performance of the tribute song, Mother Maybelle stands with one hand on her Autoharp, modestly clothed as always. When the song is over, visibly moved, she wipes away a single tear, quickly regains her composure and re-joins the ensemble for the next song.

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<sup>62</sup> This could also be “trouper” speaking of a traveling vaudeville performer. Both “trooper” and “trouper” carry similar meanings of being physically tough and possessing great endurance.

# A Song to Mama

Music: Carter/Cash/Jones

Lyrics: Carter/Cash/Jones

♩ = c. 84 



Dear \_\_\_\_\_ Ma - ma, now that we're  
ol - der, \* we can see the load on your tired old shoul - ders.  
Ma - ma you're a troo - per, — Ma - ma you're a sol - dier: Ma - ma, you  
mean a lot to me. She  
al-ways got me out of bed, ear-ly Sun-day morn. and took me off to church where I could  
learn a - bout the Lord. Ma - ma tried to tell me how my  
life was gon-na be, but I was young and wild and it was hard for me to

see. Dear \_\_\_\_\_

Ma - ma, now that we're ol - der,

\* we can see the load on your tired old shoul - ders. Ma - ma you're a troo - pet, -

Ma - ma you're a sol - dier; Ma - ma, you mean a lot to

me.

Spoken: Mama, I want to tell you one thing for sure; you always taught us right from wrong when we were younger, and if we'd listened to you then, I know we'd of saved ourselves a lot of problems.

Now that we're grown up and that we're all so much older, we realize that you always knew exactly what you were talking about Mama, and you sure do mean a lot to all of us.

\* Melody in second soprano

#### 4. 4. 2 *Sandi Patty's Fall from Grace*

Expectations of performances of the Momma archetype, both in lyrics and in life, have not changed much over the course of the history of WCGM.

Audiences still have a great expectation that female performers of WCGM maintain a high level of moral goodness, both onstage and off. In the 1980s and early 1990s, Sandi Patty was an undisputed Christian Contemporary Music superstar. After having her career launched by the Gaither Family Vocal Band during their 1981 tour, Patty went on to be one of the highest grossing Christian Contemporary Artists of the decade. She was often positioned as a more matronly figure next to Amy Grant's sisterly, girl-next-door image, due in part to the fact that she is considered heavysset. When it surfaced that Patty had an extra-marital affair with Don Peslis, another Christian Contemporary Music performer, that led to a 1993 divorce, fans were ruthless, her record label pulled her Christmas album entitled "O Holy Night," and her sales figures plummeted (Price 1995: 13). In an interview with *Christianity Today* magazine, Patty discussed her efforts to re-launch her career and repent before both her fans and her God: "I know I let my marriage down in huge ways. I have tremendous regrets about this." Patty went on to express that she felt that she had used her performance career as a "substitute" for a relationship with God:

You think that is a replacement for a spiritual relationship with God; and it is not. That is a lesson I have learned the hard way. (Morgan 1998)

In interviews, Patty often defined this affair and the subsequent breakup of her marriage as a "failure" and expressed her anxieties regarding the events in a book she wrote about the incident called *Broken on the Back Row*:

I was worried that the divorce would damage my career—and even more worried that the press would uncover the terrible secret I was hiding. I was terrified that my kids would be hurt by all the poor choices I had made. (Patty 2005: 7)

One of Patty's first recordings after embarking on her post-divorce comeback was the song "A Mother's Prayer" (Troccoli/DiGesare 1999). "A Mother's Prayer" is a lullaby, and it fits into a surprisingly large niche market of Christian Contemporary Music for babies. In these lullabies, the prescribed role of sainted mother is performed. Although male artists have recorded a few of these lullabies, these are the exception rather than the norm. In the Christian Conservative community, which consumes the products of the Christian Contemporary Music industry, there are very specific modern prescriptions for motherhood. At the "Focus on the Family" (a powerful political lobbying organization of the Christian Right) website there is a "Parenting Roles" tab, including the topic headings: "The Value of Stay at Home Moms" and "Motherhood." The "Motherhood" tab takes the reader directly to an article containing the following bits of information for how to "correctly" mother one's children: "mothering our children well is a *way* we honor God" (emphasis in the original), however, care should be taken to keep God above one's children "lest they become our idols" (Lamdin-Williams 2011).

"A Mother's Prayer" (1999) is typical of the genre of a CCM lullaby. It



opens with a spoken-word prayer voiced by a young child (the well-known “Now I lay me down to sleep” prayer underscored with keyboard-generated-orchestral-strings) and then Patty’s vocal begins. In the lyrics of the song, the performer grants her child (among other things) “peace,” “hope,” “love that never fails or leaves,” and the “comfort of the (heavenly) Father.” During the height of her commercial success in the 1980s and 1990s, Patty was nicknamed “The Voice” in the industry because she is well known for a large range, a huge amount of vocal power, and performance arrangements that almost always ended with showy finishes featuring multiple upward-by-semitone modulations. The musical characteristics of “A Mother’s Prayer” are entirely out of character for Patty. Throughout the piece, she never unleashes her full power or range, and at the ending of this tune, she doesn’t even seem to “finish” the song, never resolving to the tonic (shown in the transcription that follows). She instead surrenders the resolution to the instrumental accompaniment, which makes the song read like a vocal act of contrition, re-anointing Patty in the role of a righteous, loving and faithful mother and wife.

# A Mother's Prayer

Sandi Patty (excerpt)

Lyrics: Troccoli

Music: Di Gesare

F C2  
I wish you peace,  
F C Dmin/C C Ab  
I wish you these. This is my  
Eb Bb  
prayer for you.  
C

## 4.5 The Rigidity of the Momma Archetype

The hyper-sentimentality of WCGM and the conservative culture that surrounds it is particularly prevalent when songs are about mothers. Sainted mothers, constantly praying for the righting of sons that have gone astray are legion throughout the recorded repertoire. Once again drawing from Evelyn Nakano Glenn:

“social relations of gender are fundamentally organized in terms of, or in relation to, the reproductive division of people into male and female.”(R.W.

Connel, 9) Mothering—more than any other aspect of gender—has been subject to essentialist interpretation: seen as natural, universal and unchanging. (Glenn 1994: 3)

WCGM's old-fashioned-ness embraces this unchanging, eternal role of the mother wholeheartedly, and uses it to construct rigid gender roles that further a political agenda that depends on a patriarchal system. Within the role of mother, a woman stands to become all-powerful, even supernatural. However, this narrow limitation of gender roles means that options for women are quite limited within Christian Nationalist Culture. At the 2011 NQC, a video montage of soldiers in uniform did contain one image of a woman, but that woman was pictured cradling a child in her arms—displaying that even defense of one's country does not eclipse the importance of mothering as primary sacred duty for women. This elevation of motherhood, and exclusion of other roles for women, allows the culture to maintain a level of nostalgic elevation of an historical feminine sacred of how mothers used to be—rather than what modern women can become. The narrative also serves to lessen the impact of women throughout the history of the music, and even performing powerhouses of the music are more elevated for their motherhood than their musicianship. All of these factors serve to do a disservice to the women and the music.

## **Chapter 5**

### **“Make Him a Soldier:”**

#### **Embodying Southern Manhood**

##### **5. 1 Overview**

This chapter contains an overview of the military honour culture of the Civil War and antebellum South, and exposes connections between these ideals and those of Christian Soldierhood as expressed in WCGM. The songs themselves are divided into three subcategories: 1) songs that deal most explicitly in militaristic imagery; 2) songs that, while still utilizing militaristic imagery, concentrate primarily on declarations of faith and the spreading of the gospel as feats of bravery; and 3) songs that construct prescriptions of manhood based on Biblical heroes. The chapter concludes with a brief exploration of performative masculinity in modern-day male SGM quartet performance practice (1940 to the present day) and explores the ways that masculinity is constructed through body movement, stage conduct, costuming and vocality. This analysis of modern performance practices draws upon archival and contemporary video footage of SGM quartets, as well as fieldwork conducted at the 2011 and 2012 National Quartet Conference in Louisville, Kentucky.

The archetype for Southern Manhood in White Commercial Gospel Music, which I call the “Soldier,” consists of songs that contain descriptions and

prescriptions for masculinity. In addition to martial (yet not specifically nationalistic<sup>63</sup>) imagery with roots in the “honour culture” of the antebellum and Civil War era (Linderman 1987), songs within the “soldier song” archetype contain instructions on how to be honourable, commands of physical action (such as “stand” or “onward” or “dare”), act as blueprints for how to live an obediently upright Christian life, and/or contain stories of brave and miraculous male heroes from the Bible.<sup>64</sup> The lyrics of these songs also contain elements of what Judith Butler (1990, 1993) calls “performative gender.” That is to say, the archetype is meant to be gendered masculine: they possess forceful, even violent imagery with elements of possible persecution, danger of physical harm, or ostracization that might befall the soldiers.

The archetype contained within these songs is not only masculine, it is hyper-masculine, and it serves to construct a rigidly heteronormative gender prescription for men within the culture of Christian Nationalism. The archetype

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<sup>63</sup> I am separating songs that specifically deal with themes of Christian Nationalism, such as “God Bless the U.S.A.” or “The Cross is My Statue of Liberty” into a separate archetype, to be discussed in the following chapter.

<sup>64</sup> For example, Daniel was cast into a lion's den and managed not to get eaten, Shadrach survived a fiery furnace after refusing to worship an idol and Joshua and his soldiers were able to make the walls of Jericho fall using only marching and trumpets.

models a behavioural pattern found throughout the religious and social experience of modern Christian Nationalism.

In his work exploring homosexuality and “queer experience within the Southern gospel tradition,” Douglas Harrison refers to modern, Southern Evangelical Christianity as a “psychosexually repressive culture” (Harrison 2009: 123), and my own research has led me to agree with this. Conservative Christianity promotes and enforces a heteronormative idea of a dichotomous masculinity and femininity as well as rigid gender roles that serve to strengthen the traditional ideas and practices of conformity necessary to maintain that conservatism.

## **5. 2 Muscular Christianity and Military Culture**

Creating not just men, but soldiers, was particularly important in Southern culture. In the time leading up to the American Civil War, a movement began in England and rapidly spread throughout the United States called “muscular Christianity,” which extolled the virtues of a “sound mind in a sound body” and led to the founding of the Young Man’s Christian Assosiation (Y.M.C.A.) in 1851. Defining the ideals of “muscular Christianity,” British author Thomas Hughes stated that it was: “the old chivalrous and Christian belief” that

a man's body is given him to be trained and brought into subjection and then used for the protection of the weak, the advancement of all righteous causes, and the subduing of the earth which God has given to the children

of men (quoted in Morgan 2005: 211).

These ideals were co-opted by both sides during the conflict of the civil war, but the honour culture was particularly prevalent in the South, where the ideals of Christian soldierhood rallied men to enlist and fight for the noble and subsequently “lost” cause. Courage and religious piety were inexorably linked on the battlefield. In a history of the honour culture of the American South and its role in the culture of warfare, Gerald F. Linderman states:

Many a soldier was certain, in the words of a South Carolinian, that God's ‘unseen hand’ had carried him safely through a furious battle. A Louisiana sergeant, Edwin Fay, the target of Federal balls that narrowly missed, did not ‘believe a bullet can go through a prayer,’ for faith is a ‘much better shield than . . . steel armor.’ The common understanding was that the more complete the soldier's faith, the greater would be God's care. (Linderman 1987: 9)

After the war, generals of the cause were elevated to sacred status: “Our Lee and Jackson, two God-like heroes who were invincible in the battle field. . . They were the purest men who ever adorned or illuminated this land” (Haralson 1874, quoted in Andrew 1998: 677).

In an article outlining the importance of military academies in establishing a new Southern identity after the Civil War, professor of military history Rod Andrew Jr. points out that during Reconstruction (the period after the Civil War):

the Southern military tradition existed mainly in the realm of legend, myth, and cultural notions of what it meant to be an honorable man. The new wave of military education that swept

the South in the last decades of the nineteenth century had no intent to enhance the states' military readiness or regional defenses. Militarism now found expression exclusively in more abstract, mythical terms—honor, patriotism, duty, respect for the law, sacrifice, and even piety. (Andrew 1998: 682)

Prior to the Civil War, Christian Soldierhood had been a concept of actual Soldierhood, and militarism existed in a real-world context. Southern men trained at military academies throughout the South. Rural Southern men usually did not have the means to attend these academies, but were nevertheless part of the honour culture of the American South that these academies helped to promote. The war changed all of this. As LeAnn White writes in her book *The Civil War as a Crisis in Gender: Augusta, Georgia 1860-1865*: “the war presented white men with a crisis for their masculinity—a threat to their manhood as it was socially constructed. Whatever the outcome, they could not simply remain as they were” (1995: 3). During the period of Reconstruction, the South existed as a defeated, destroyed, burnt, and—at least in the Southern imagination—an occupied land. After the Civil War, the men of the South needed to find a new definition for Soldierhood and masculinity. Honour, nationalism and piety became the new order of muscular Christianity. The rise of the idea of “muscular Christianity,” the defeat of the South in the Civil War and the consequent rise of the new militarism of the American South all paralleled the increase in popularity of Soldier Songs as a Gospel Hymn genre. In the newly muscular Christianity, the



defeated Southern Soldiers found a new means by which to construct and perform masculinity: the Church.

### **5. 2. 1 *Soldierhood in Antebellum Gospel Hymns***

Muscular Christianity and the need to construct a new prescription for Southern manhood contributed to the popularity of hymns about Christian soldierhood. Although many of these hymns originated or were composed in Britain, they quickly gained in popularity in the U.S. and were published by Southern publishing companies. They still find a place in the performed repertoire of Southern Gospel Music. In Ira D. Sankey's (1890) *Revival Hymnal* a section, labeled "conflict and victory," includes thirty-nine songs which fit the Soldier archetype, including some that have come into standard use in modern gospel hymnody such as "Stand Up, Stand Up For Jesus" (Webb/Duffield 1830/1858) and perhaps the song most widely associated with Christian soldierhood "Onward Christian Soldiers" (Sullivan/Baring-Gould 1871).<sup>65</sup>

Although on the surface the songs within this archetype contain language that is full of certitude, there is a constant undercurrent of threat: "Crowns and

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<sup>65</sup> At least a dozen other "Soldier" songs are scattered throughout Sankey's revival hymnal. His section on conflict and victory also includes "Temperance Hymns," which themselves would be an interesting line of inquiry. Sample titles of these anti-alcohol hymns are: "The Ship of Temperance" (Sankey/Whittier) and "A Song for Water Bright" (Sankey/Cooper).

thrones may perish” (“Onward, Christian Soldiers”), “mighty men around us falling/courage almost gone” (“Hold the Fort”), and “the arm of flesh will fail you” (“Stand Up for Jesus”). Nevertheless, it is courage in the face of this oncoming danger that rules the vocabulary of these hymns. Systematic tallying of word counts allowed me to discover that the word most often used was “dare,” followed by “stand,” followed closely by “Jesus.” Other words that were frequent were: marching, mighty, purpose, war, soldiers, onward, firm, going, victory, strength and “men.” All of these words are evocative of warfare and either holding fast, being strong, or moving forward, all words closely associated with the martial culture of the Civil War, and the desire to continue to perpetuate this culture after the Civil War within the masculinity prescribed by the church.

### ***5. 2. 2 The Construction of Masculinity Today***

The heteronormative narrative, in which God is gendered masculine, is an integral part of the modern Christian Nationalist movement. While other Protestant denominations in the United States, including the Congregationalists, the Episcopalians and the Evangelical Lutherans have all designed new hymnals that eschew gender-specific language in the lyrics of the hymns, Evangelicals and Pentecostals cling to the original words of the hymns that are often fraught with sexist language. A large internet retailer of hymnals, and an offshoot of the powerful lobbying organization “Focus on the Family,” christianbook.com states

the following in their online description of the *All American Church Hymnal*:

While the wording of many hymns in contemporary hymnals are changed to suit political correctness, this beautiful hymnal retains the beauty of the traditional wording of the original (<http://www.christianbook.com>)

Another hymnal description within the print catalogue for Christian Book

Distributors (the parent company of [christianbook.com](http://www.christianbook.com)) promises that the hymnal

advertised is appealing “to those with a strong appreciation for the traditions of

the church” (Catalogue for Christian Book Distributors 2011). The same

publishing company produces gendered Sunday School curriculums entitled:

“Princess with a Purpose” (for “3-8 year old girls”) and “A Warrior Prince for

God” (for “3-8 year old knights and giant slayers”). In the product descriptions,

the “Princess with a Purpose” curriculum markets the product to “girls” and

“daughters,” while the “Warrior Prince for God” curriculum markets the product

to “knights and giant slayers” who are never referred to within the product

description as “boys” or “sons” (Christian Book Distributor Catalog 2011: 32-33).

This curricula illustrates that even in early childhood, gender roles are strictly

enforced, and boys are instructed that they should be hyper-masculine “warriors,”

ready to fight for God. I contend that the emphasis on hyper-masculinity through

the Soldierhood archetype in WCGM has a two-fold purpose: to exist as a new

prescription for Southern manhood after the defeat and humiliation of the Civil

War and to construct a strict prescription for gender-role conformity within the

conservative and militaristic religious confines of the Christian Nationalist movement.

### **5. 3 The Music of the Soldier Archetype**

#### **5. 3. 1 *Militaristic Tropes***

Musically, these hymns are decidedly martial. Many have a marching two feel, and virtually all recorded arrangements I investigated include both trumpets and drums. “Onward, Christian Soldiers”<sup>66</sup> is a perfect example of a gospel hymn (it is printed on page 190). It contains an extraordinarily memorable melody, composed by Arthur Sullivan (of Operetta fame) and a repetitive chorus that encourages participation, even among congregants who do not know the words to the verses. The music itself has a preponderance of quarter notes, and even the melody seems to “march,” with an abundance of repeated notes, sitting in the

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<sup>66</sup> “Onward Christian Soldiers” and “Dare to Be a Daniel” were originally composed as Sunday school songs for children, but quickly gained popularity as revival hymns. Today, there are many commercially available recordings of both of these songs for children, and performed by children. The Billy Graham foundation also provides a Sunday School Curriculum called “Dare to Be a Daniel” for “tweens” (kids 9-14) according to the BGEA website ([www.billygraham.org/d2bd\\_index.asp](http://www.billygraham.org/d2bd_index.asp)).

middle and lower registers of most singers' voices. Aside from the chorus, however, this hymn's text is decidedly non-martial in its imagery. The verses themselves dwell on the unity of the Church: "We are not divided/all one body we/one in hope and doctrine/one in charity," and on the power of Jesus' name: "At the name of Jesus/Satan's host doth flee," rather than on images of the "soldiers" actually clashing with evil forces. Nevertheless, the imagery is gendered male, and the hymn's masculine tone is inescapable: "Brothers, lift your voices," "Brothers we are treading where the saints have trod," and "This through countless ages/Men and angels sing."

Perhaps the most overtly militaristic gospel hymn still in modern performance practice is "Keep On the Firing Line" (Hatcher 1915)<sup>67</sup>. This song has been recorded by the Carter Family (1941), Ralph Stanley (2006), The LeFevres (1962), and by many other Country gospel and Southern Gospel artists. The hymn itself dates from a 1915 gospel songbook, and portrays elements of danger, warnings of battles that will "surely" come and contains admonitions that "with the Lord" cowards "will find no place." The "firing line" of the title is an allusion to the front lines on the battlefield, where soldiers were urged to hold their ground, despite a hail of oncoming fire from the enemy. During the Civil War, one of the ways that commanding generals had won the respect of their men

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<sup>67</sup> The full lyrics to this song appear on page 191.

was to deliberately expose themselves to enemy fire. During a battle one such officer, John Pelham: “directed his men to lie down while he remained on his horse, intent solely upon the movements and designs of the enemy, wholly careless of the 'fire of hell' hurled against him” (Linderman 1989: 44). It is no wonder then, that verbs such as “stand” and “hold” and “keep” have such a prominent place in the lyrics of these songs. Standing one's ground figuratively when it came to proclaiming one's faith became the new test of bravery, masculinity, and Soldierhood, but these songs still use the language of literal Soldierhood.

1. On ward Christ - ian sol - diers. March - ing as to war,  
 2. At the sign of tri - umph Sa - tan's host doth flee;  
 3. Like a might - y ar - my Moves the church of God;  
 4. Crowns and thrones may per - ish, King - doms rise and wane,  
 5. On - ward, then, ye peo - ple, Join our hap - py throng,

With the cross of Je - sus Go - ing on be - fore; Christ the roy - al Mas - ter  
 On then, Chris - tian sol - diers, On to vic - to - ry: Hell's foun - da - tions quiv - er  
 Broth - ers, we are tread - ing Where the saints have trod; We are not div - id - ed,  
 But the church of Je - sus Con - stant will re - main; Gates of hell can ne - ver  
 Blend with ours your voic - es In the tri - umph song: Glo - ry, laud, and hon - or

Leads a - gainst the foe; For - ward in - to bat - tle See, his ban - ner go.  
 At the shout of praise; Broth - ers, lift your voic - ces, Loud, your an - thems raise.  
 All one bo - dy we; One in hope and doc - trine, One in char - i - ty.  
 'Gainst the church pre - vail; We have Christ's own prom - ise, And that can - not fail.  
 Un - to Christ the King; This through count - less a - ges Men and an - gels sing.

On - ward, Chris - tian sol - diers, — March - ing as to war,

With the cross of Je - sus Go - ing on be - fore.

Public Domain

“Keep on the Firing Line” (Hatcher 1915)  
*as recorded by the Carter Family, 1941*

If you're in the battle for the Lord and right  
Just keep on the firing line  
If you win the battle surely you must fight  
So keep on the firing line

*Chorus:*

Brother keep on the firing line  
Keep on the firing line  
Time is getting short Jesus coming soon  
Brother keep on the firing line

There are many dangers everyone must face  
If you die fighting there is no disgrace  
With the Lord for coward you will find no place  
So keep on the firing line

*Chorus*

God can only use the soldiers he can trust  
To keep on the firing line  
If you wear the crown, bear the cross you must  
So keep on the firing line

*Chorus repeats two times*

### **5.3.2 Witnessing as Soldierhood**

The turn of the twentieth century saw the rise of both Pentecostalism and



Fundamentalism as religious movements in the United States. Although charismatic religious movements had been taking place in the United States since the Cane Ridge Revival in the early 1800s, Pentecostalism as a recognized individual sect only came into being in the early 1900s. Christian Fundamentalism as a movement came about at nearly the same time. Both of these religious movements hold the idea that the Bible is literally and entirely true. Fundamentalism, which is also called Evangelicalism in modern contexts, tends to be less emotional, physical and improvisatory in its religious expression than Pentecostalism. Pentecostalism in its early history was usually distinguished by its belief in glossolalia, or speaking in tongues. Both faiths are prominent in the American South, and both hold “witnessing” or proclaiming one's faith to the un-churched as an important part of religious expression. The term “Pentecostal” has now broadened widely in its use and scope, and many churches that do not practice speaking in tongues nevertheless identify their “spirit-filled” worship as Pentecostal.

With the end of World War I, Soldier songs begin to define bravery and honour in a new way: declaring your faith became the new test of courage. Songs with an emphasis on witnessing and the proclamation of faith still contain elements of bravery, as they emphasize that declaring one's faith contains an

element of danger in the possibility of persecution or ridicule.<sup>68</sup> The importance of biblical study is emphasized, as well as the notion that one's faith will constantly be tested in the world. There is more musical diversity in this group, as well as a less overt military musical vocabulary, in that these are not "marching songs," for the most part. Many of these songs were composed in the time period from 1920-1960, when WCGM in general contained more individuality among performers and a broader influence from diverse musical styles, including country, bluegrass, African American gospel and blues.

"Called to the Foreign Field" (Karnes 1927), recorded by Alfred G. Karnes during the Bristol sessions, stands as one of the earliest recorded examples of a country gospel song in the Soldier archetype. The lyrics tell the story (from a first-person perspective) of a missionary called away from the "dear old battlefield" to "preach His precious word"<sup>69</sup> in a "far and heathen country where

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<sup>68</sup> Many songs, including "Do Lord" and "Happy in Prison" recorded by Ernest Phipps in 1928, and "Keep on the Firing Line" recorded by the Carter Family in 1941, speak of the connection between earthly suffering and heavenly reward through the phrase "to wear the crown, you must bear the cross" or something similar to it.

<sup>69</sup> Whenever the capitalized "His" or any male pronoun is used in the lyrics of sacred music, this is taken to mean "God."

the people know not God.” In the first stanza he expresses his obedience to God by his willingness to accept a call so far away in such a seemingly terrifying place. The chorus of the song is even more daunting, as it expresses the idea that death in this foreign land is a certainty: “I’ll soon be with my loved ones in my happy heavenly home,” and the lyrics also express his manhood by saying that he is being called to the “trials and hardships” of the “heathen country” from the “dear old battlefield.” Karnes himself had been called to the ministry after serving in the Navy in World War I. He served as a circuit-rider Baptist minister in the Kentucky Appalachians, sometimes serving four congregations at a time, as well as serving chaplaincies in prisons and jails as far afield as Jacktown, Ohio (Nelson 2005: 120-123).

“Called To The Foreign Field”

*as recorded by Alfred G. Karnes, 1927*

In the far and heathen country where the people know not God  
I am going there to preach his precious word  
Where they bow to worship idols I am going there to stay  
Where I’ll labour in the vineyard of the Lord

*Chorus*

I’ll soon be with my loved ones in my happy heavenly home  
Even now, the thought my soul with rapture thrills  
So goodbye, my friends and brethren, for the time has come to go

I must leave you on the dear old battlefield

I am called to bear a message to the heathen far away  
And for years, o'er there, a stranger I may roam  
Just to tell them of a savior, one who died to save them all  
That's the reason why I leave my native home

*Chorus*

Many days I'll climb the hillside in the sunshine and the rain  
Many days I'll be in hunger and in thirst  
Just to tell them that our Lord is coming back to earth again  
With his gifts and blessings, all as at the first

*Chorus*

I will stand the trials and hardships just to tell them precious truths  
That the Gospel of our Savior does contain  
And if they will but obey them and be faithful 'til our end  
Up in Heaven we will meet you all again

*Chorus*

We'll not all be foreign labourers, but the time has soon arrived  
When our mission we have faithfully fulfilled  
When our message is delivered and 'tis said of us, "Well done"  
In triumph we'll leave the dear old battlefield

*Chorus*

Another song that illustrates the idea that the act of proclaiming one's faith is a demonstration of bravery is Hank Williams' "Are You Walking and Talking for the Lord" (1952). Within the lyrics, the act of witnessing is portrayed as an

essential element in Christian Soldierhood. What this song adds to the instruction to proclaim one's faith ("If you're called to testify/would the world hear your reply?") is Christian charity: "would you lend a helping hand/to some poor sinner man?" There is, as in many WCGM songs, the ever-present reminder that the end of the world is near: "soon will come the Judgment Day" to add an element of immediacy to the instructions contained in the song.

"Are You Walking and Talking for the Lord?"

*as recorded by Hank Williams, 1952*

*Chorus:*

Are you walking (are you walking?)

Are you talking? (are you talking?)

Are you walking and a'talking for the Lord?

Are you traveling in His light, every day and every night,

Are you walking and a'talking for the Lord?

Would you lend a helping hand, to some poor sinner man?

(are you walking and a'talking for the Lord?)

Would you stop and try to save, on your journey to the grave?

(are you walking and a'talking for the Lord?)

*Chorus*

If you're called to testify would the world hear your reply

(are you walking and a'talking for the Lord?)

Would you stop and shout His name, or bow your head in shame?

(are you walking and a'talking for the Lord?)

*Chorus*

Would you take Him as your King? Let the Hallelujahs ring?  
(are you walking and a'talking for the Lord?)  
Let him lead you all the way, soon will come the Judgment Day.  
(are you walking and a'talking for the Lord?)

The importance of obedience to the Bible and testifying as Soldierhood is portrayed in the Louvin Brothers' 1958 recording "Preach the Gospel." In this song, the performer urges the listener to "preach the gospel regardless who it hurts." These lyrics illustrate the danger of testifying and holding true to one's belief in a new light: that of hurting someone's feelings. The first verse is a micro-encapsulation of the Pentecostal belief that the Bible is entirely true, and one cannot just read the Bible "here and there." The second verse of the song points to a more specific example: that of a preacher who is not hard enough on his congregation, and the third stanza continues in this line, telling a story of a preacher who is moved to preach about how "whiskey" "dooms your soul" but stops because he considers the feelings of a parishioner who "drinks a little."

Preach the Gospel

*as recorded by the Louvin Brothers, 1958*

*Chorus:*

Preach, preach, preach the gospel trust God,  
He'll give you words to say.  
Preach, preach, preach the gospel regardless who it hurts,  
pray that God will have His way.

I can't enjoy my Bible just reading here and there  
I like to take it as it comes and never skip a line  
No need to read the verses that say: "you'll enter in"  
If you don't like the one that reads "you must be born(ed) again."

*Chorus*

I fear we have some preachers well thought of in their Church  
Who change the text God chose for them afraid of who they'll hurt  
They'd like to pick the scripture that's easy on the soul  
Afraid they'll lose their job if they get on the member's toes.

*Chorus*

"Back yonder sits a member," the preacher tells himself  
"He's never missed a service, since I've been the pastor here.  
I'm led to mention whisky, of how it dooms your soul,  
But since he drinks a little, I'd be getting on his toes."

*Chorus repeats.*

"Preach the Gospel" also demonstrates the superiority of acting explicitly on God's commands. The Bible is completely and entirely true, not a line of it is to be disregarded: "I like to take it as it comes and never skip a line." This song demonstrates the crucial nature of militaristic duty within the realm of Christian Soldierhood. God, as one's commanding general, is to be obeyed immediately, completely and without question. Furthering this prescription are songs that elevate Biblical heroes to role models for emulation.

### ***5. 3. 3 Biblical Heroes to Emulate***

Soldier songs perform and prescribe masculinity by utilizing stories of Biblical male heroes. Usually these stories involve men whose faith was tested by danger, battle or fire, and whose courage and faith was subsequently rewarded by a miraculous victory or rescue. One such story is that of Joshua, a biblical warrior who led the Israelites into battle. Joshua's story is recounted in the Hebrew Bible in the book of Joshua, and it is a story that demonstrates the soldier archetype perfectly. Joshua was Moses' successor as leader of the Israelites, and was ordered by God to "Be strong and courageous; do not be frightened or dismayed" (Joshua 1:9). His faith was tested by the assignment of tasks by God: he is ordered to take stones from the Jordan River, send spies into the land of Jericho, and to "Make flint knives and circumcise the Israelites a second time" (Joshua 5: 2). Finally, Joshua is ordered to march around the city of Jericho for six days, and on the seventh day to "march around the city seven times, the priests blowing the trumpets" (Joshua 6:4).

What happens next is told in the song "Joshua Fit the Battle of Jericho" (traditional), recorded by the Jordanaires in 1957. This song, which comes from the African American Spiritual tradition, was also recorded by Elvis Presley with



the Stamps Quartet<sup>70</sup> serving on backing vocals in 1960. Joshua is a biblical hero who is used as a model for constructing modern Christian masculinity. A popular men's prayer group curriculum is "Joshua's Men," created by Dan Reiland, whose introduction promises that men will meet to "sharpen each other in the areas of leadership and character formation" (Reiland 1996: 1).<sup>71</sup>

Many of the recordings the Jordanares released in the 1950s and 1960s bear a strong stylistic resemblance to the African American Quartet gospel tradition of the same time period, and this recording is no exception. The piece has a light swing to it, and the vocal is phrased slightly behind the beat. This piece is more harmonically complex than WCGM of the country gospel or gospel hymn tradition, which is due to the African American influences it contains.

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<sup>70</sup> The Presley version bears enough resemblance to the version recorded by the Golden Gate Quartet to be considered a cover of it. I am not certain of the origins of the Jordanaire's arrangement of "Joshua Fit the Battle of Jericho," however their arrangement of "Shadrack" is identical to the Golden Gate Quartet's.

<sup>71</sup> The "leadership building" plan is a year-long curriculum, with monthly lesson plans. Included in month three, "Leaders Value Relationships" are some thoughts on power: "Power is not evil . . . Jesus had power, more than anyone who has ever lived." Month three also contains a guide for dealing with people based on the "four basic personality temperaments:" "Sanguine, Choleric, Phlegmatic, and Melancholy."

The ultimate biblical hero, of course, is Jesus. Soldier songs do not emphasize the suffering or humility of Christ on the cross, but instead concentrate on Christ's power. According to popular charismatic preacher Billy Sunday (1862-1935), Jesus was “the definition of manhood” and “God is a masculine God” (quoted in Balmer 1994:53). In these hymns, Jesus is portrayed as an embodied physical companion to be emulated. This is closely tied to the movement of muscular Christianity, which positioned Christ himself as a masculinized figure, repositioned as a comrade in arms rather than a peaceful sacrificial lamb. The songs position Christ as a hyper-masculine biblical hero, as a protector or guide in the manner of a ship's captain or leader of a charge. These songs also stress a desire to emulate Christ, to “take up a cross” and “be like Jesus.”

“The Master of the Storm” (Rowe/Thomason 1928)

*as recorded by the Vaughan Quartet, 1928*

Out on the ocean of life we sail, battered by many a raging gale,  
Yet we are sure that we shall prevail, No storm can His ship o'erwhelm  
Billows may threaten and winds may blow,  
Courage and faith we shall always show;  
Nothing can harm us as on we go, For Jesus is at the helm. (at the helm.)

*Chorus:*

He is the Master of wind and tide; safely the billows His ship will ride  
Into the harbor at last it will glide, Where we shall be wondrously blest;  
and so with our Pilot we sail along,

safe from the storm and from all things wrong;  
Soon we shall enter the harbor of song—  
the haven of endless rest (joy and rest).  
Wrecks we are seeing from day to day—poor broken vessels along the way;  
No one to pilot their ships have they; and so they are sinking fast  
Jesus would pilot their vessel, too,  
Comfort and give them courage new;  
If they believed Him and would be true,  
Their trials would soon be past (soon be past)

*Chorus*

True to our Pilot we all shall be, Whether a stormy or peaceful sea;  
Always so helpful and sweet is He, and blessing us evermore  
Soon we shall meet Him upon the strand of the eternal and happy land,  
Then we shall praise Him in chorus grand  
with those who have reached the shore. (reached the shore)

*Chorus*

This 1928 recording of the “Master of the Storm” is an early example of SGM in the Quartet tradition. Founded to promote the shape note publishing company of James D. Vaughan, the Vaughan Quartet traveled and performed throughout the Southern United States. They were also one of the first groups to promote the bass male voice to lead vocal (most other quartets in the time placed the melody in the tenor voice). This popularity of bass lead vocals continues today, and is one of the ways that hyper-masculinity is expressed vocally. In the

published sheet music version of the song, Christ is portrayed as a naval helmsmen, ably steering believers through “the ocean of life,” “battered by many a raging gale.” Jesus is described as “master of wind and tide” who “rules the tempest and tide.” Verse two contains a description of possible sympathy for those who do not use Jesus as their ship’s “pilot,” and thus inhabit “poor broken vessels” that are “sinking fast.” In the final verse, we have a less powerfully masculine description of Christ: “helpful and sweet is He.”

“I Wanna Be More Like Jesus” from the Vaughan Quartet (billed as the “Vaughan Sand Mountain Quartet” at the time of the recording in the mid-1930s) presents Christ as the ultimate model for Christian masculinity. The lyrics are repetitive and contain a constant affirmation of the importance of emulating Christ in the responsive lyrics “Just like Him,” which the background vocalists repeat no less than thirty times during the piece. These lyrics would also provide a touchstone mantra to any audience member singing along. Even if the rest of the lyrics were unknown to a listener, “Just like Him” is a lyric that anyone could participate with.

Another version of the tune, with the melody sung by a tenor voice, was recorded by the Oak Ridge Quartet in 1945 (a transcription follows on page 205-206). This recording shows a great deal of influence from African American vocal jazz and is much more musically innovative than the earlier Vaughan Sand

Mountain Quartet recording. The piano accompaniment is much more active, with a clear boogie-woogie piano style influence in the ostinato of the left hand. The backing vocals are more closely voiced and rhythmically syncopated, making them reminiscent of doo-wop rather than of traditional hymnody or barbershop. The lyrics are also more simplistic and more literal than the Vaughan Quartet recording of “Master of the Storm.” The song expresses a desire to emulate Jesus: “I want to be more like Jesus everyday,” by striving to “walk, talk, be, see, die. . .” “just like Him.” Later in the recording, a desire for not only humility: “want to be lowly,” but the powers of Jesus “to heal the sick,” “cast devils out,” and “raise up the dead” is expressed, illustrating the idea that if one’s faith was strong enough, a listener could perform miracles “just like Him” and exactly as the disciples could in the Bible (Acts 1: 8). The act of reiteration is a powerful lyrical tool. The ability to provide an affirmation—an easily repeated text piece—allows listeners to feel invested in the message of the song. Whether it be a repeated “hallelujah,” “amen,” or “just like him,” a reiteration allows the listener to not only perform, but to sing a declaration of their creed.

# I Want To Be More Like Jesus

excerpt

as performed by the Oak Ridge Quartet

Music and Lyrics: Fowler (attr.)

*J. = c. 136*

F Dmin G7 C7

1. I want to be more, \_\_\_\_\_ more like Je - sus \_\_\_\_\_ ev-'ry day.

1. Want to be more, like \_\_\_\_\_ my Je - sus, \_\_\_\_\_

F B<sup>b</sup> F F Dmin

I want to be more, \_\_\_\_\_ more like

ev-'ry day, \_\_\_\_\_ ev-'ry hour. \_\_\_\_\_ Want to be more.

G7 C Dmin7  $\frac{Amin}{C}$   $\frac{Gmin}{B^b}$   $\frac{F}{A}$   $\frac{C7}{G}$

Je - sus \_\_\_\_\_ ev - 'ry day. \_\_\_\_\_ Oh \_\_\_\_\_ I want to

like \_\_\_\_\_ my Je - sus, \_\_\_\_\_ ev - 'ry step of the way. \_\_\_\_\_

The musical score is written in 12/8 time with a key signature of one flat (Bb). It consists of three systems of music. Each system includes a vocal line with lyrics, a piano accompaniment, and a guitar chord line. The first system starts with a tempo marking 'J. = c. 136' and includes chords F, Dmin, G7, and C7. The second system includes chords F, Bb, F, and Dmin. The third system includes chords G7, C, Dmin7, Amin/C, Gmin/Bb, F/A, and C7/G. The lyrics are: '1. I want to be more, \_\_\_\_\_ more like Je - sus \_\_\_\_\_ ev-'ry day.'; '1. Want to be more, like \_\_\_\_\_ my Je - sus, \_\_\_\_\_'; 'I want to be more, \_\_\_\_\_ more like ev-'ry day, \_\_\_\_\_ ev-'ry hour. \_\_\_\_\_ Want to be more.'; 'Je - sus \_\_\_\_\_ ev - 'ry day. \_\_\_\_\_ Oh \_\_\_\_\_ I want to like \_\_\_\_\_ my Je - sus, \_\_\_\_\_ ev - 'ry step of the way. \_\_\_\_\_'.

2

I Want To Be More Like Jesus

F F B<sup>b</sup>

be, I want to see, I want to live A-bun-dant-ly

Just like Him. Just like Him. Just like Him.

B<sup>7</sup> F G<sup>7</sup> C<sup>7</sup>

give, I want to be more, like Je - sus ev-'ry day.

Just like Him. Want to be more, like my Je - sus,

F B<sup>b</sup> F F Dmin<sup>7</sup>

2. I want Him to guide me, In

ev-'ry day, ev-'ry hour. Want Him to guide me,

G<sup>7</sup> C<sup>7</sup> F B<sup>b</sup> F

The musical score is written in a three-part system (treble, alto, and bass clefs) with a key signature of one flat (B-flat major). The first system contains the first line of the melody and accompaniment, with lyrics 'be, I want to see, I want to live A-bun-dant-ly' and 'Just like Him.' repeated three times. The second system continues the melody and accompaniment, with lyrics 'give, I want to be more, like Je - sus ev-'ry day.' and 'Just like Him. Want to be more, like my Je - sus,'. The third system contains the second line of the melody and accompaniment, with lyrics '2. I want Him to guide me, In' and 'ev-'ry day, ev-'ry hour. Want Him to guide me,'. The score includes various chords such as F, Bb, B7, G7, C7, and Dmin7, and features a repeat sign at the end of the second line of the second system.

## 5. 5 The Body of a Soldier

The lyrics of the songs of the Soldier archetype emphasize physical expressions of masculinity. They are full of actions and commands. Many contain specific instructions on how the body of a soldier should behave and act, such as “I’m Working On a Building” (traditional), recorded by Bill Monroe in 1954.

### “I’m Working On A Building”

*as recorded by Bill Monroe, 1954*

*Chorus:*

I'm working on a building  
I'm a working on building  
I'm a working on building  
For my Lord, for my Lord  
It's a holy ghost building  
It's a holy ghost building  
It's a holy ghost building  
For my Lord, for my Lord

If I was a gambler, I tell you what I'd do  
I'd quit my gambling and I'd work on the building, too

*Chorus*

If I was a drunkard I tell you what I would do  
I'd quit my drinking and I'd work on the building too

*Chorus*

If I was a preacher I tell you what I would do



I would keep on preaching and work on the building too

*Chorus*

The male body, according to the gender-specific prescription outlined in the archetype, should be clean from sinful influences, including alcohol, gambling and other such worldly temptations. The text of “I’m Working on a Building” is a reflection on the Biblical “body as temple” concept (1 Corinthians v6 ch19 and v3 ch16-17). The temple/building in question is the physical and spiritual body of the song’s performer. There is a desire often expressed in Soldier songs to constantly purge the body of these influences by avoiding or eliminating sinful impulses and desires—much in the same way that Muscular Christianity prescribed physical activity as an antidote to bodily temptations. In the gender narrative of modern Evangelical Christianity, sinful impulses (especially those of a sexual nature) are considered for the most part to be a male-only domain. In the contemporary market, there are many books on the subject of sexual temptation marketed to men, while I was unable to find any such parallel books for women.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> *Every Man’s Battle Guide* (Arteburn/Stoeker 2003) promises on its cover to help the reader “win the war against sexual temptation,” while *The Sexual Man* (Hart 1995) contains a “psychologically sound view of what men feel about love and lust.” The only similarly titled book for women, a promisingly titled *A Different Kind of Wild* (Alsdorf 2009) is summarized on its back cover as a way to “break free of perfectionism, fear, and doubt, and learn to live in untamed obedience to the Lord” and has nothing to do with sexuality.

There are other “building” songs, including Brother Claude Ely’s “There’s a Leak in This Old Building” (1953), but this group refers instead to a deterioration of the physical body and a desire to move to the spiritual and bodily renewal of heaven. When Ely refers to “this old building” he is referring to the bodies that Christian believers are given on earth that age, become ill and die—versus bodies that Christians believe they will receive in heaven that are ageless and eternal.

“Step Into the Water” (Talley 1984) begins with a chorus that describes the love of God and contains imagery of the ritual of baptism and heaven, but the subsequent verses paint a much different picture. Especially the first verse is nothing less than a call to spiritual arms. Although the call is spiritual, there is also a clear prescription for how this spiritual warfare should be embodied physically: “stand up,” “square our shoulders back,” and “raise swords.” In the final line the image switches from one of military to agrarian strength: “The church needs more of its members to be workers in the field.” Field work is notoriously difficult physical labour, requiring both strength and endurance; this line implies that there are too many people in the church not willing to sweat and get their hands dirty. This line also carries the implication of class distinction—that Christ is more likely to accept poor workers who do physical, and often disdained, labour into his flock. The second verse is more balanced in its

approach, reminding the listener that there is “vict'ry for the Christian who walks the narrow way,” or to put it in other words: the Christians who are willing to live a hard life here on Earth will receive victory at the Judgment and receive eternal reward in heaven. The last two lines of the verse are a declaration of faith, an act of performative testifying: “I want to live with Jesus, be all that I should be.” By reciting or singing these words, the congregant performs a renewal of the vows of his born-again conversion promise to “accept Jesus as his personal Lord and Savior.” By affirming the commands of “stand up,” “square [your] shoulders back,” and “raise a sword,” militarism is embraced as a necessary component of true faith—firmly entrenching a central tenet of Christian Nationalism—that the ideal Christian is one who can firmly stand his ground, fight the enemy and if necessary, work in the field to feed his family and community.

“Step into the Water”

*as recorded by The Talleys, 1984*

*Chorus:*

Step into the water, wade out a little bit deeper  
Wet your feet in the water of His love  
Step into the water, wade out a little bit deeper  
Come; join angels singing praises to the Lamb of God.

It is time we, the people stand up for what is right.  
It is time we squared our shoulders back, raised our swords to fight.  
For the Bible is our weapon and the Spirit is our shield.

The church needs more of its members to be workers in the field.

*Chorus*

There is vict'ry for the Christian, who walks the narrow way.

There has been a prize appointed for the soul who does not stray.

Oh I want to live for Jesus, be all that I should be

So that I can rest with him forever—live eternally.

*Chorus*

Even more explicit in its prescription of male Southern Christianity is the Louvin Brother's 1958 recording "Make Him a Soldier," which epitomizes the Soldier song archetype in that it is a perfect prescription of how to perform Christian masculinity, and that it contains military imagery. The work of being a good Christian is portrayed as a "fight" and a "vict'ry" to be won. There is a promise of Godly protection: "the Lord will see you through," but also warnings of danger: "rocky shoals" and "swelling tide." There is also the element that one must emulate the sufferings and trials of Jesus: "Carry the cross." The final line of the last verse is a succinct version of a prescription for Christian masculinity: 1. "be a soldier" and 2. "pray."

"Make Him a Soldier"

*as recorded by The Louvin Brothers, 1958*

*Chorus:*

Make him a soldier heed now the call

Help win the vict'ry he died to save us all

Listen to the gentle call:there is work for one and all  
Join in the fight walk in the light  
Do whatever you can do and the Lord will see you through  
Dying a soul to win (for heaven win)

*Chorus*

Walk along the rocky shoals where the mighty ocean rolls  
Many today are drifting away  
Sing aloud of saving grace tell the news to every race  
Bid them to anchor in (to anchor in)

*Chorus*

Do your work and never fret and the Savior won't forget  
Carry the cross, look for the lost  
You must brave the swelling tide, if you reach the other side  
Be a soldier, pray (a soldier, pray)

*Chorus*

### **5. 5 Modern SGM Quartets: Performative Masculinity in Practice**

I break down modern SGM performance practice into two performance practices based primarily on which beats in a measure of 4/4 time are emphasized as well as what level of flamboyance is present in the groups' stage craft. The group referred to as "1+3" (indicating which beats in a measure of 4/4 time they emphasize) exhibit an extremely traditional performance practice indicating which beats in a measure of 4/4 they emphasize), in which little has changed in genre style, costuming and performance practice since the early twentieth century.

The 2+4 group, by contrast, display a higher-energy, more exuberant, and more bodily expressive performance style that emerged in the early 2000s<sup>73</sup> with groups such as Ernie Haas and Signature Sound. In the following section, I discuss both styles, as well as their bodily expressions and investigate ways in which the styles express or challenge ideas of “traditional” ideals of prescriptive masculinity within the context of Evangelical Christianity. I draw on observations from fieldwork conducted at modern SGM performances and conventions as well as modern and archival footage of male SGM quartets.

#### 5. 5. 1 “1+3” *SGM Quartets*

Throughout my research, I observed strict performative practices in the quartet genre. Traditionally, male quartets have used a rigid performance practice that has changed little since the 1940s. 1+3 quartet groups, which still represent the bulk of SGM quartet singing, represent a hyper-masculinized homosocial expression of Southern Soldierhood. Bodily, their performance style is exceptionally weighty and grounded as they stand with their feet placed hip-distance apart, and their spines remain inflexible. There is little arm movement,

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<sup>73</sup> It might also be useful to consider this a “re-emergence.” Historically, there have been groups that fit more into the 2+4 category. The Jordanaires and The Stamps Quartet both performed in a more backbeat-centric style until the middle of the 1960s. Among modern WCGM performance quartets, the 2+4 are in a decided minority.

with the exception of raised hands, or occasional “conducting” style hand movements. Upper bodies are moved very little, and when they do move, they do so by means of what I call a “thoracic swivel,” in which the upper body, from waist to head, is moved as a single unit. Vocal production is tight, with little to no vibrato. Groups tend to perform in a close formation, often shoulder to shoulder, recalling the days in which quartets would share a single microphone, although most modern groups perform with individual (and usually cordless) microphones. Movement is kept to a minimum, and there is no hint of choreography or “steps” in the performance repertoire of these groups. Costuming is also quite conservative, with 1+3 groups performing in business style suits, with no “show business” alterations. These suits are usually dark coloured (navy or gray) and would fit in easily at a bank or any business place. Although they match, they are more uniform than costume.

Musically, there are unifying elements that distinguish 1+3 groups. Rhythmically, the emphasis is placed on beats one and three of a bar of four, and in modern contexts, they are more likely to use recorded accompaniments in live performance, adding to the stiffness of their performance style, as the unchangeable nature of a performance track does not allow for any improvisation musically. These groups are often older than 2+4 groups, with most 1+3 groups made up of men over fifty. A typical performance of a quartet of this type is

presented by an archival recording from “Hymn Time,” a television program that aired in the 1960s, in which the Rebels Quartet performs the Soldier Song “The Fourth Man” (Smith/Johnson 1958). Dressed in matching business-type suits, the performers face the camera and gather around the piano player in tight formation. The song is presented here in a very quick 2/4 time signature, completely free of syncopation, in which both the piano and upright bass play quarter notes—the only hint of walking bass is provided by the bass singer on the lyrics “they wouldn't bend/they wouldn't bow.” The upper bodies of the performers are kept very, very stiff, and for the most part, the only movement shown by any of the performers is hand movements. The one exception is again the bass singer who shows a bit more freedom in his body, and is also provided with a microphone of his own. At the end of the performance, he adds a touch of flamboyance to the performance by picking up the microphone stand and sliding down to his final low note.

This is just one example, but it is representative insofar as it illustrates both an element of militaristic precision and the old-time-religion emphasis that modern 1+3 groups embrace. Performances by groups such as The Dixie Echoes, Kingdom Heirs, Mark Trammell Quartet (and others) illustrate many of the same hyper-masculine elements of performance: conservative business suit costuming, bodily stiffness, especially from the waist down, and movement of the upper body



in the “thoracic swivel.” The primary (and often only) gesturing would consist of a rigid armed, prayerful hand extension at moments of lyric or musical intensity.

### **5. 5. 2 “2+4” *SGM Quartets***

2+4 performers are strikingly different in the realms of musical performance, use of technology, and costuming. This style embraces the showy elements that 1+3 quartets eschew. Musically, 2+4 quartets emphasize the second and fourth beats (also called the backbeats) of a measure of 4/4 time. They also display many more African American musical influences than their 1+3 counterparts, exhibiting rougher vocal timbres, melisma, and a great deal of physicality in their performance styles. Simply put, 2+4 quartets embody music in a much more visible fashion. They use more stage space, take wider stances, bend from the knees, are freer in their upper bodies, and are freer in their carriage and use of their hands and arms. Often, when a singer is particularly expressive of either a musical or lyrics point, he will jump, gesture, or bend down to emphasize his vocality with his body. Costuming is dramatically more flamboyant. Although suits still coordinate, they will often involve rhinestone embellishments, brightly coloured shirts and elaborately modern hairstyles. Performances are often accompanied by live bands, which not only allow for a freer mode of vocal expression, but also allow for more freedom to reprise

choruses, push tempos and sing unexpected encores. This performance style translates as emotional—it incorporates the bodily expression of religious experience and is evocative of the unbridled spiritual expression of the Pentecostal church.

The modern SGM quartet that is the epitome of a 2+4 group is Ernie Haase and Signature Sound. They are a highly commercially successful group in both the SGM and CCM scenes, playing to large crowds and utilizing large and small live bands in their performances. Typical of their performance style is a high energy, full-body performativity that would not be out of place in a Las Vegas review, Pop or a Broadway context. A typical performance is provided by their rendition of “Get Away, Jordan” from their 2007 DVD of the same name. The tempo is brisk, but in contrast to a 1+3 quartet, there is a strong backbeat emphasis provided by the presence of a (live, not pre-recorded track) drummer. Haase's instrumental groups are often integrated, although the vocal group is not. In this particular performance, the drummer is the only member of the ensemble that is an African American. The entire vocal group performs with full-body flexibility, ease of movement in both their lower and upper body, and the utilization of the entire stage space. Three group members use in-ear monitors and cordless microphones to full effect, performing a choreographed, synchronized backwards jump on the lyrics “Get away!” while lead singer Devin

McGlamery performs a kick in their direction. The performance culminates with a reprise chorus, something that is difficult to accomplish with accompaniment tracks, but easy to do with a live band and a musical director.

As an entity, EH&SS presents a case study in new expressions of masculinity and its bodily expressions within a context of modern SGM. The quartet is highly physically affectionate with each other on stage, engaging in sports-like backslapping and high-fiving, but also often putting an arm around a fellow performer, or lightly touching the arm of another performer while walking by him. It is obvious while watching the group performing that they are very fond of each other, and the group is tightly knit. This sort of affection and closeness does not shine through in more traditional 1+3 quartets. Numerous times throughout their concerts, however, there are acts of performative traditional heterosexuality, such as when a band member's wife and child are introduced, or when during the encore, the sports-borrowed ritual of dumping a large cooler filled with water is performed over the group's "coach," Haase.

The 1+3 quartets represent all of the old ideals of Southern Christian Soldierhood: they are uniformed, clean cut, and conform to a patriarchal, conservative ideal. Their rhythmic emphasis on 1 + 3 is more conducive to marching than to dancing. Their posture and movements evoke the Muscular Christianity movement of the nineteenth century, stiff and unchanging—which in

turn recall the mandates of the Soldier archetype, with its emphasis on honour-culture militarism— and orders to "stand," "hold the fort," or "keep on the firing line." These groups also performatively express the worship practices of traditional mainline anglo (non-Pentecostal) revivalism, in which emotions are expressed quietly and inwardly, without the use of the body.

In contrast, the 2 + 4 quartets express a possible evolution of this hyper-masculine ideal—allowing more bodily expressivity in performance. They embrace an emotionally charged, Pentecostal/Charismatic worship style. Even these quartets are quite careful to not stray too far from a heteronormative, Soldierhood, masculine ideal. 2+4 groups also take care to explicitly reference (along with book and verse citations) biblical passages within the context of their stage banter, introduce their wives and children when they are in the audience, and regularly perform songs from the Soldier archetype or of a Christian Nationalistic nature.

The commercial success of Ernie Haas & Signature Sound is closely tied to the fact that EH&SS have the explicit endorsement of the Gaithers and are part of the Gaither Music publishing and recording empire. The Gaither Music group—or more specifically Bill Gaither himself—is responsible for the rise in popularity of many performers and groups. Receiving Bill Gaither's musical blessing and financial support allows groups to perform in new contexts and to be

largely accepted by fans of WCGM in the modern U.S. This connection to the commercial powerhouse that is the Gaither Group allows EH&SS a level of freedom to push the envelope of SGM quartet performance styles and explore new bodily practices.

### **5. 6 Soldierhood in Modern Christian Nationalism**

In a similar fashion to the prescriptive gender roles for women, the rigid, heteronormative prescriptions for masculinity contained within the Soldier archetype prescribe a narrow code of behaviour for men within the modern Christian Nationalist movement. It is, as Douglas Harrison contends, a “psychosexually repressive culture” that I believe constructs rigid gender roles in order to enforce a conservative structure and patriarchal repression. These male roles remain just as they were in the 1850s: hyper-masculinized, militaristic, physically powerful, and rigid in body and mind. These ideals are embodied by the old style 1+3 Southern Gospel Music quartets, with their conservative business attire in lieu of costumes, recorded tracks accompaniment instead of live bands, and upright bodily carriage and lack of freedom and flexibility in their performance style. There is indication, however, that ideas of what it means to be a man within the environs of modern Evangelicalism is expanding. With modern 2+4 Southern Gospel Music Quartets such as Ernie Haase and Signature Sound

embracing more flamboyant bodily expressive modes of performance, flashy costumes and heterosocial affection onstage, the opportunity has arisen for a new kind of masculinity. However, even this group still portrays a large amount of heteronormative performativity both in the contents of the lyrics of their music and their performance style, still borrowing from militaristic imagery in songs such as “I Pledge My Allegiance” or “What God Says” as well as portraying ideals of dutiful Soldier-like obedience to God's will within the context of their music. Little has changed in the body of songs that exhibit the Soldier archetype repertoire from the time of the late nineteenth century. The narrative of WCGM is still one of hyper-masculinity, heteronormativity and patriarchy.

## Chapter 6

### “We Will Stand Our Ground:”

#### Modern Performative Christian Nationalism<sup>74</sup>

##### 6.1 Overview

Within this chapter, I discuss ways in which the modern movement I call “Christian Nationalism” and modern WCGM performance practice, compositions, and marketing intersect. I will describe performance practices and methods in which Nationalistic tropes are used, revered and intertwined with Christian tropes within the music and cultures I am exploring. Ties with militarism, American exceptionalism, and racism will be explored using the theories of bell hooks, Walker Connor, and Benedict Anderson. I will describe at length the annual National Quartet Convention (“NQC”) with the 2011 and 2012 events serving as case studies. The NQC is described as “gospel music's largest event” by its organizers. I will also analyze concerts by groups contracted under the “Gaither Music” organization, on DVD and live events.

##### 6.2 Nationalism(s) and Christian Nationalism

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<sup>74</sup> A Portion of this chapter was published in *Ecumenica* 5.2, a special issue on “Faith, Politics, and Performance.” titled: “The Cross is My Statue of Liberty;” Performing Christian Nationalism at the 2011 National Quartet Convention.

I am using the term Christian Nationalism (Goldberg 2009) to describe a fusion of Christian and Nationalistic imagery and reverence, perfectly described in the popular SGM song “The Cross is My Statue of Liberty” (Enloe 1975). The lyrics of this song display the elements of Christian Nationalism, citing the importance of the Statue of Liberty as a symbol of “liberty,” and iterate “I’m so proud to be called an American/To be named with the brave and the free.” The song then turns to the Christian symbolism of the cross with the lyrics “I’m so proud to be called a Christian . . . as the statue liberates the citizen/So the cross liberates the soul./Oh, the cross is my Statue of Liberty.” These lyrics demonstrate the intertwining of National and Christian symbols that take place within WCGMs, and it often becomes difficult for the listener to tell whether cross or country is garnering priority.

“Southern” Gospel music and WCGMs are musics that are almost exclusively performed and consumed by Anglo-Americans. This brings to mind the issue of Walker Connor’s (1978) discussion of Nation vs. State vs. Ethnic Group:

Defining and conceptualizing the nation is much more difficult because the essence of a nation is intangible. This essence is a psychological bond that joins a people and differentiates it, in the subconscious conviction of its members, from all other people in a most vital way....a subconscious belief in the group’s separate origin and evolution is an important ingredient of national psychology. (Connor 1978: 36-37)

That is to say, the NQC conventioners are united not only by their identification



as “Americans,” but also by their race and a “subconscious belief” in their “separate origin.” I argue that modern Christian Nationalists use an attachment to the South to fulfill their belief in a “separate origin.” In the imagination of Christian Nationalists, the South represents all of the nostalgia, tradition, motherhood, and soldierly chivalry that they elevate.

Although the racial sameness of Christian Nationalism and conventioners was never overtly discussed from the stage or in lyrics, it did add a disquieting racial layer to frequent statements made about a mysterious “they” as an enemy to the “Christian Nation” 's way of life.<sup>75</sup> Thirdly, performance practice of modern WCGMs tend to contain real-life displays of Ernest Renan's statement regarding Nationalism that “A heroic past, or great men, or glory (I mean the genuine kind), that is the social principle on which the national idea rests” (Renan 1994: 17) in the form of tributes to veterans, as well as invocations of the “Christian heritage” of the “founding fathers” of the United States of America. Although American patriotism certainly is often at the forefront, there is a strong undercurrent of

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<sup>75</sup> There was a constant thread whenever “they” were referenced that “they” were threatening. This called to mind bell hook's critique that “one fantasy of whiteness is that the threatening Other is always a terrorist” (hooks 1992: 174). This was especially prominent when “they” were referenced alongside 9/11/01.

manifest destiny present in the lyrics, suggesting the idea that not only was Christianity the solution to the problems that beset America at this time, but indeed the solution to the problems of the entire world. Benedict Anderson states in his introduction to *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (1983): “No nation imagines itself coterminous with mankind” and goes on to speak of “certain epochs” no doubt in the distant past when “Christians” dreamt “of a wholly Christian planet.” These statements were contradicted by what I witnessed at the NQC, as well as through analysis of WCGMs' lyrics, which show that these dominionist elements of Christianity were not at all being left behind in a distant past. This type of modern Evangelicalism does indeed envision Christian Nationalism without borders—of a completely American, “wholly Christian planet.”

I use the term “Christian Nationalism” (Goldberg 2006) to refer to the movement at the centre of the fieldwork described within this chapter, defined by displays that performatively demonstrate: 1) a highly patriotic belief that America is a Christian Nation, harkening back to its colonial Puritan founders rather than a constitutionally based idea of separation of church and state; 2) a belief that America would be both strengthened and protected by a stronger Christian base; and 3) that the world at large would be strengthened and protected by an expansion of this particular sort of Americanism.

Within the scope of my introduction, I outlined three factors functioning as the groundwork for modern Christian Nationalism: Dominionism; the fierce individualism of religious expression paradoxically combined with a deep appreciation for the one kind of religious expression outlined by the Fundamentalists and Pentecostals; and a unifying racial heritage. These elements have given rise to a serious level of distrust of other forms of religions. Although modern Christian Nationalists align themselves with Israel and Judaism, they hold a particular level of suspicion for Islam.

#### ***6. 2. 1 Modern Christian Nationalism: 9/11 and Muslim as the new Other***

Particularly since the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, Christian Nationalism has chosen Muslims as the Other. In addition to this, there is also a definition of people who subscribe to Christian Nationalism and its ideals as the “real America,” opposed to a larger and threatening secular branch of America, whom many believe is embroiled in a cultural war with Christian Nationalists. The “war on Christmas” is a perfect example of this perceived attack. This idea of real vs. Other Americans is constantly iterated by performers of WCGM, as shown by this quote from the 2011 NQC: “This is the real America. Not Hollywood, or Washington, but right

here. People who aren't ashamed of the Gospel."<sup>76</sup> This level of identification drawn from distinction (Fletcher 2007) is an important element in modern Evangelical identity, and will be explored in the NQC section of this chapter.

Although all of the archetypes contribute to the agenda of Christian Nationalism, songs within the "Stand Our Ground" archetype directly address the agenda of Christian Nationalism within their lyrics. They portray a narrative that is the narrative of Christian Nationalism: that there is a threatening Other lurking and ready to strike, that true Christians must "stand up" or "stand their ground" and fight these forces, and that America is the best country from which to fight the battle that is (according to these songs) inevitably coming.

### **6. 2. 2 *Drawing Battle Lines***

Songs that specifically addressed the Christian Nationalist agenda began to surface when Nationalist songs such as "God Bless America" and "My Country 'tis of Thee" began to be printed in hymnals during WWII and the Cold War. Prior to this time period hymnals had not included such songs. Ira D. Sankey's late 1800s *Sacred Songs and Solos* contains the lyrics to "My Country 'tis of Thee," but only as an alternate text to "God Save the King." Since the end of the

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<sup>76</sup> Karen Peck-Gooch, while acting as the emcee for the September 13, 2011 mainstage evening performance at the NQC.

Cold War and the beginning of modern Christian Nationalism, several artists have embraced the rhetoric and philosophy of Christian Nationalism wholeheartedly. I focus in the next section on several examples, including Charlie Daniels and The Kingdom Heirs.

Charlie Daniels has issued several recording projects<sup>77</sup> in recent decades that incorporate the ideals of Christian Nationalism. Perhaps the most militant of these projects is *Steel Witness* (1996), which contains several songs that explain Daniel's concept of Christian Nationalism. "Whose Side Are You On?" "It's Happening Now" and "New Pharisees" are particularly screed-like in their lyrics. "Whose Side Are You On?" presents common themes of the Christian Nationalist

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<sup>77</sup> The album projects that consist either completely of or mostly songs of these type are: *Homesick Heroes* (1988), *Steel Witness* (1996), *Freedom and Justice For All* (2003), *Live from Iraq* (2007) and *America, I Believe in You* (2008). Daniels has been composing Christian-Nationalist centric lyrics since his 1980 "In America," which contained responses to Watergate and the Iran Hostage Crisis. The song was re-released with a new video following the September 11, 2001 Terrorist Attacks. His entire catalog contains many songs that describe Daniels' particular version of Christian Nationalism: "America, I Believe in You" (1995), "It's Happening Now" (1996), "Payback Time" (1996), "Praying to the Wrong God" (1994), "The USS New York" (2008), as well as numerous recordings of material from the traditional hymn and bluegrass gospel repertoire.

philosophy, including the idea that Christians are at constant risk of persecution, that Christian Nationalists need to “stand up,” that Christian Nationalists are the “real Americans,” and that practitioners of all other religions and ways of life are “devil’s pawn(s)” lined up in opposition to Christianity and Americanism.

Charlie Daniels also maintains an active website, in which he regularly blogs about his Christian Nationalist views. It is full of comments that illustrate that the lyrics of his Christian Nationalist songs represent his personal beliefs. Visual examples of performative Christian Nationalism in the Daniels oeuvre include his costuming choice of an American Flag-patterned shirt, and the album cover of *Steel Witness*, which features an enormous cross superimposed over an image of the planet Earth. This illustrates the Christian Nationalist idea that the entire planet would benefit from a conversion to American-centric Christianity.

### **6. 2. 3 Archetypal Images**

Nationalistic visual as well as lyric symbolism is used heavily in performance practice in WCGMs. It has become common practice to incorporate a “patriotic medley” within the course of a WCGM performance, to the extent that a modern WCGM concert would seem remiss if it did not contain one. An extended representation of a Nationalistic display in performance is the Gaither Vocal Band's 2002 *Let Freedom Ring: Live from Carnegie Hall* performance

DVD. This performance, mounted soon after the attacks of September 11th, 2001, features patriotic songs from an all-star cast of modern SGM super-stars including Sandi Patty, Ernie Haase, the Isaacs, and the Hoppers as well as the Gaithers. It represents not only an encapsulation of an Evangelical reaction to the attacks, but also an expression of ritual grief, hero worship and Christian Nationalism. During the performance of “A Few Good Men” (Gaither 2002), for example, at the song’s climax, members of the New York Fire Department, in full dress uniform, walk onto stage to a standing ovation from the audience. At other points during the concert, audience members wearing shirts featuring the stars and stripes are featured on camera, as are audience members openly weeping during a performance of “The Star-Spangled Banner” by the Bluegrass Gospel Group the Isaacs.

### **6.3 “The Cross is My Statue of Liberty:” Performing Christian Nationalism at the 2011 National Quartet Convention**

The organizers of the National Quartet Convention (NQC) describe it as “Gospel Music’s Largest Annual Event.” It is a gathering for fans and performers of Southern Gospel Music (SGM). The convention features music encompassing a broad variety of musical styles, including traditional quartet gospel singing (the foundation of the convention’s musical style), bluegrass gospel and country gospel music. The NQC takes place annually the week following Labour Day, and is

held at the Exposition Grounds near Louisville International Airport in Louisville, Kentucky.<sup>78</sup> The Exposition Grounds are, according to the grounds' own website, a "400-acre property," with "one million square feet of indoor space." "Freedom Hall," the main-stage concert arena for the convention, seats 19,000 people and was filled to capacity during the main-stage events on Thursday, Friday and Saturday, traditionally the busiest nights of the convention. During the NQC, artists and conventioners performed Christian Nationalism through their manner of dress and costuming, iterations in lyrics and emcee commentary, as well as by prominent displays by the producers that merged religious and nationalistic imagery. I experienced the conference as a cultural insider (having been brought up in a conservative Christian household in the Southern United States) and a political outsider (my own political leaning is far to the left). What is singularly unique about the NQC is it allows for performance of Christian Nationalism within a closed space full of racially and culturally homogenous Evangelical Christians<sup>79</sup>. These performances serve to draw the community closer together, and solidify the intertwined American and Christian identity of conventioners.

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<sup>78</sup> At the time of this writing, the producers of the NQC have announced that the convention is moving to Pigeon Forge, Tennessee, and that the date will be later in September.

<sup>79</sup> Although most Christian Nationalists are Evangelicals, a great many Evangelicals do not identify with the Christian Nationalist perspective.



As discussed in the introduction, displays at the convention highlighted the following elements: 1) a belief that America was a Christian Nation; 2) a belief that America would be both strengthened and protected by a stronger Christian base; and 3) that the world at large would be strengthened and protected by an expansion of this superior form of Christian Americanism. The yearning for these three aspects of Christian Nationalism was expressed through performance within the context of the weeklong National Quartet Convention of 2011.

In this section of my chapter, I examine performative expressions (Butler 1990 Austin 1952) of the concept of Christian Nationalism—a philosophy in which Christianity and jingoism fuse, and it is difficult to determine whether the cross or the flag is given priority. My methodology for gathering information about the event consisted primarily of participatory-observational fieldwork, review of archival footage available of previous NQCs, along with short interviews of conventioners.<sup>80</sup> Journalist Michelle Goldberg has stated that

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<sup>80</sup> I refer to the conventioners I spoke with only by first name when I quote them throughout the scope of this chapter for ethical considerations. Many conventioners were highly suspicious of the ethics committee forms that my degree required, and those that did agree to be quoted asked that I use no full names. Due to the incredibly demanding nature of the performer's schedules at the NQC—between performing, meeting with fans, and emceeding events, they worked constantly—I did not approach artists for interviews at the NQC, but I do quote statements made from the main-

“Christian nationalism is a political program, and there is nothing sacred about it” (Goldberg 2006). This was not what I experienced at the conference.

Conventioneers informed me that this was a “mountaintop” spiritual experience for them, that they left the conference feeling spiritually “uplifted,” and that they thought the conference was a piece of “heaven on earth.” I also witnessed many bodily expressions of what I interpreted as spirit-filled Christian worship during moments of Christian Nationalism: people were brought to tears, they stood on their feet with arms outstretched heavenwards, or lifted their faces upwards with blissful expressions. While it may be difficult to view this fusing of politics and religion as sacred, I would contend that to practitioners of this particular brand of Evangelicalism, Christian Nationalism is a noble and sacred calling.

During an interview conducted on the first evening of the conference a conventioneer named Freda expressed her belief that the United States, as a nation, was in “trouble” and the only hope for it was to “experience a revival.” “The Lord,” she said, “is the only thing that can fix this country.” Other conventioners described the conference as a “preview” or “example” of this

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stage by artists, both in the context of performances and while serving as master of ceremonies, when I feel they are appropriate.

revival.<sup>81</sup> This theme was repeated from the stage as well as from interviewees: that America was in danger, and that America's one hope was spiritual (that is to say, Christian) revival. The lyrics of the song “The Cross is My Statue of Liberty” (Enloe 1975), which was performed at the NQC by the Mark Trammell Quartet on September 15, 2011, display elements of Christian Nationalism, citing the importance of the Statue of Liberty as a symbol of “liberty,” and iterate “I’m so proud to be called an American/To be named with the brave and the free.” The song then turns to the Christian symbolism of the cross “I’m so proud to be called a Christian . . . as the statue liberates the citizen/So the cross liberates the soul./Oh, the cross is my Statue of Liberty.” These lyrics demonstrate the intertwining of National and Christian symbols that took place throughout the NQC.

### **6. 3. 1 “*The Super Bowl, the Kentucky Derby and the World Series:*”**

#### ***the Scale of the NQC***

Part of what makes the NQC so special is the fact that it is a space reserved expressly for the performance of this Christian Nationalism. Milton Singer has described “cultural performance” such as the NQC, “as necessarily ‘set apart’ in time, place and occasion” (quoted in Carlson 1996: 13). The nature of

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<sup>81</sup> Betty, September 15 and Anonymous male (Maine) September 15, 2011.

any sort of convention is that conventioners are under the assumption that like-minded individuals will surround them and that, in and of itself, establishes a sense of deep community. Henri Lefebvre posits that space, rather than merely existing in geography, is “socially constructed” (Lefebvre 1991). More than just a “socially constructed space,” the NQC seems to exist to me as a socially *contracted* performance space. That is to say that the conventioners, organizers and performers at the NQC are all involved in a social contract that this convention space is, in its entirety, space for the performance of Christian Nationalism. The conventioners are invested culturally and spiritually in the importance of the event, and have also invested monetarily in the conference.<sup>82</sup> There were many elements specific to the NQC that helped to establish the convention spaces as contracted performance space, from visual cues to costuming to shared housing for the duration of the conference.

Southern Gospel Music stems primarily from Anglo-Southern roots music, drawing heavily from Quartet Gospel Music<sup>83</sup>, Bluegrass and Country Gospel styles. Although the convention’s moniker suggests that the convention would

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<sup>82</sup> My conference package, including accommodations and tickets to all main-stage evening performances, was \$1500, excluding airfare. Other packages are similarly priced.

<sup>83</sup> Which also has significant roots in the African American Jubilee Singing style.

feature solely “Quartet” groups (primarily male vocal groups—not always consisting of four people), the actual performances are a bit more musically diverse. Throughout the course of the week, varying acts are featured: Karen Peck and New River—a vocal group with a female lead vocalist; The Isaacs—a traditional bluegrass group; legendary gospel songwriter Squire Parsons, as well as many traditional-style gospel quartets such as the Kingdom Heirs, the Mark Trammel Quartet, Ernie Haase & Signature Sound and the Gaither Vocal Band. All of the acts have a common message that is in line with the modern American Evangelical movement—a strong belief in “Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior” and the only way to true salvation, and an alignment with Christian Nationalism.

Another aspect of “Southern” gospel music is that both fans and performers of the music, as evidenced by both performers and conventioners, are overwhelmingly Anglo-American. The age demographic of the conventioners (though not of the performers) was skewed to the older end of the spectrum, with most conventioners being in their middle sixties or early seventies. A gathering in celebration of SGM has a special pull for its fans, who truly do adore this music. In a survey conducted by J.D. Keeler investigating “Why Audiences Are in Love with Southern Gospel Music,” respondents agreed with the statements “It energizes me” (54.7%), “It is a way I can be a Christian witness to others”

(54.8%), and “I feel like I am part of a special SGM community” (37.8%) (Keeler 2001: 216-217).

The event consists of several components: a nightly large-scale, six-hour-long variety concert featuring nationally recognized artists on the “main-stage” every evening, as well as all day performances and other events, including the “Exhibition Hall,” a huge convention space, in which there are over one thousand booths offering items for purchase. These items range from t-shirts with patriotic or gospel slogans such as the words “got gospel?” in rhinestones or “Freedom Isn't Free” in red, white and blue, to ornate handbags with rhinestone crosses studded onto the front, to DVDs and CDs of top artists. Also represented at the booths are the artists themselves, who are either (for less commercially successful acts) personally greeting fans, or have staff to take fan orders for an autographed photo for five dollars (the going rate for any of the extremely popular Gaither Vocal Band artists). Still more booths offer church buses, church sound systems, artist representation groups, funnel cakes, mini-donuts, antique and new hymnals and books on the subject of what is considered the most “proper” form of church music. The scale of the Exhibition Hall is difficult to explain, but as a man from Maine described it to me when I confessed that I was frankly overwhelmed by the scale of it all: “It's like the World Series, and the Super Bowl and the Kentucky Derby, all at once, with Gospel Music.”

Images evocative of the flag of the United States of America were everywhere, reinforcing the ideals of Christian Nationalism. From the hotels at which many of the conventioners stayed, shuttle buses ran back and forth to the exhibition grounds where the NQC events are held. These large touring buses are painted white, with red stripes and blue stars. In place of a destination placard, the front of the bus reads “God Bless America.” These views are also expressed throughout the Exhibition Hall on retail merchandise available for sale, and in marketing materials for groups that people can join. There are several alternatives to the American Association for Retired Persons (thought by some to have “too liberal” of an agenda, as I was told by staff at the booth for “The Proud Americans”) such as the “Association of Mature American Citizens,” which bills itself at its booth as “The Largest Conservative Seniors Association.” Its booth features images of an eagle flying in front of a backdrop of the American flag in front of the words “God” and “Country.”

Once one climbs on to the shuttle bus, one enters NQC space. The exhibition grounds host events from approximately 8:30 a.m. each morning—Chapel or Bible study is usually scheduled early in the day—until main-stage performances late in the evening, often ending near midnight. There are two midway-style food courts within the convention space, offering selections ranging from fried catfish to waffle cones, so there is no need to leave the NQC in order to

eat. Many people, due to the traffic and un-reliable nature of the shuttle bus schedule, come early in the morning and stay in the convention space all day long. Also, since many of the conventioners have been attending the NQC for years or even decades, the convention is part reunion; many enjoy mealtimes with old friends. Thus, the conference space, from the threshold of the shuttle bus in the morning, to the exit of the bus late that same evening, is a space in which conventioners feel absolutely comfortable expressing their views on both politics and religion, and they are insulated from any differing opinions for the entire week of the conference. This contracted performance space serves to strengthen their identity of Christian Nationalism for the duration of the convention. While attending the convention, conventioners feel safe performing Christian Nationalism in a way they may not in other, more diverse spaces.

The song the Kingdom Heirs performed September 16th, “We Will Stand Our Ground” (Wilkinson 2011), contains in the opening verse’s lyrics a description of the danger that Christian Nationalism faces:

There are forces in the world today  
who oppose our Christian faith  
they attempt to destroy everything that’s holy and control what preachers say  
but God still has a few good men who won’t bend, won’t bow, won’t burn  
they will fight to the end to defend that faith



until the day that the whole world learns.

The Kingdom Heirs' performance of this song was accompanied by video footage that illustrated that the men of the lyrics were modeled by the United States Armed Forces. This modeling was further shown by the lyrics' use of the phrase "a few good men"—taken from a familiar recruiting slogan for the U.S. Marine Corp. When the lyrics stated "when the world and the flesh and the devil press on, and try to tear our strongholds down," New York City policemen and Firemen in the aftermath of September 11th, 2001 were displayed on the huge video screens over the stage. The very next lyric was: "we will stand our ground." As one, the entire capacity crowd around me rose to their feet in a real-life display of Ernest Renan's statement regarding Nationalism that "A heroic past, or great men, or glory (I mean the genuine kind), that is the social principle on which the national idea rests" (Renan 17). Tributes to veterans were plentiful at the conference; there were numerous occasions in which "all Veterans present" were invited to stand, always resulting in great amounts of applause. The reverence and the community-held belief that these were Christian soldiers as well as American soldiers was iterated by emcees as well as incorporated into song lyrics.

### **6.3.2 *"There's a lot of Sparkle in Southern Gospel"***

Hyper-femininity and hyper-masculinity ruled in costuming choices,

enforcing the hetero-normative nature of Evangelical Christianity, a group that Douglas Harrison has called “psycho-sexually repressive” (2009 1). I also discovered during my time at the NQC, that for a woman of forty, I existed in a strange bracket of dress and grooming between not quite extremely modest and plain, and not quite glamorous enough. Modern Evangelicalism encompasses a broad range of clothing practices on a spectrum from Pentecostalism—which eschews heavy makeup and calls for long skirts and long sleeves on women—to Country Gospel high glamour, which was succinctly summed up by a woman whose jewelry I was dazzled by: “There's a lot of sparkle in Southern Gospel.” When it came to performers, their sparkle did not disappoint. Both male and female performers were often clothed in rhinestone or sequin-accented clothing, and female performers in particular were always well coiffed and heavily made-up, even when they were merely meeting their fans at a booth, and men were usually clad in business-type suits or matching suits with a brightly coloured shirt.

For conventioners, Christian Nationalism was performed and represented through dress—the standard uniform for many conventioners of both sexes was a t-shirt with a patriotic slogan, casual jeans and comfortable shoes. For women who were attired in a slightly more dressy fashion, their clothes were often accessorized with rhinestone pins—an American flag design was popular, as was one that simply read “PRAY” or scarves in red, white and blue. If participants had

not packed enough star-spangled clothing, it was available for purchase in the Exhibition Hall. In aisle 1200, labeled “The Fashion Aisle,” one could purchase all the “sparkle” one could require, and all the red, white and blue themed clothing as well. There were patriotic t-shirts with slogans such as “America: Bring Back the Cross,” scarves printed with images of the stars and stripes and steel crosses wrapped with images of the American flag, or in the camouflage patterns of any branch of the American armed forces. The consumerist aspect of the Exhibition Hall was also often modeled from the stage, with frequent announcements that it was “Only *x* days until Christmas.” and commands to “Shop ‘til you drop.” There was also a winking self-awareness to the consumerism that was often displayed in bits of humour used on the stage, as when a singer teasingly told Southern Gospel Music artist, arranger, composer and producer Bill Gaither that “his funeral would be videotaped and sold for 19.95.”

### ***6. 3. 3 Production Values and Flag Waving***

The production values of the NQC are exceptionally high. Variety concerts are timed with military precision—every act starts and finishes exactly on time. A sound technician and a booking agent both informed me that acts are fined significantly for going over their time slot. At every main-stage performance, there are large computer screens with countdown clocks that

performers can see no matter where on the stage they are performing. Each main-stage evening performance features up to six regionally and nationally recognized acts, and these performances are vocally of an extremely virtuosic calibre. There are six cameras, four hand held and operated by roving cameramen and two on a crane. These cameras provide both close-ups of performers projected on screens above the stage and a feed for live-streaming on the internet; they also record the event for “highlights” DVDs which are edited and available for sale the week after the concert. These screens were used to provide Christian Nationalistic displays often during song performances with a nationalistic theme, or during between-act videos that were shown while technicians tore down for one act and set up for another. During performances of patriotic songs such as “The Star-Spangled Banner,” “I Pledge My Allegiance,” or “We Will Stand Our Ground,” there was a montage of images displayed, always culminating with an animation of a waving flag.

#### **6.3.4 *The “Real” America***

A theme iterated numerous times at each evening’s performance was the idea that America was a “Christian Nation,” harkening back to the vision of Winthrop’s “shining city on a hill” (1630). The importance of declaring that America is a Christian nation also represents a strong backlash on the part of Christian Nationalists to President Barack Obama’s 2009 statement at a press

conference in Turkey that “we [the United States] do not consider ourselves a Christian nation or a Jewish nation or a Muslim nation; we consider ourselves a nation of citizens who are bound by ideals and a set of values” (White House Press Conference Transcript). This “Christian Nation”/ “Real America” theme was a strong component of performed Christian Nationalism present at the NQC. I saw numerous conventioners wearing a t-shirt reading (on the front) “Mr. President, You are WRONG!” (on the back) “This is a CHRISTIAN NATION” (all emphasis in the original). This idea was also illustrated within emcee announcements and song lyrics. In the main-stage performance by the Mark Trammell Quartet, in the spoken introduction to a song, Trammell referred to and then refuted President Obama’s—referred to as “the White House’s”—statement as “a *lie from hell!*” The audience met this declaration with enthusiastic applause.<sup>84</sup>

The conference actively promoted the idea that the conventioners and performers represented an authentic or “real America” with recurring references to anonymous, apparently un-authentically religious or secular Others, such as

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<sup>84</sup> It bears mentioning that President Barack Obama was never referred to by name or title. Instead, without exception, performers used “the White House” or “Washington” to refer to the President’s views.

“Hollywood,” “Washington” (Peck September 14th), or “they” (Ashcroft September 15th). This served to authenticate and strengthen the Nationalistic identity of the NQC conventioners, constantly reinforcing the idea that they were the correct Americans, the authentic Americans, and the mysterious “they” (the Others) were not. John Fletcher has referred to such performances of Evangelical Christians as having the ability to give “a sense of distinction” through performance that “distinguishes them from the rest of the world” (Fletcher 2007: 314). Such moments were the most overtly politicized that I witnessed, displaying Nationalism in its purest dictionary definition, that is to say, an “extreme form of patriotism, marked by a feeling of superiority over others” (Merriam-Webster, 2011). Although individual political candidates were not mentioned, political agendas were: unconditional support of the state of Israel, “traditional” marriage, anti-abortion laws, and bringing back prayer in public schools were all issues that were supported from main stage speakers. In one instance, Les Butler, the emcee for the “Bluegrass Gospel Awards” stated “I know that Jesus is real, no matter what they say in Washington and the White House.”

### ***6.3.5 Community through Crisis: September 11th***

Referenced frequently from the stage were the tragic events of September 11th, 2001. Karen Peck Gooch, a performer and emcee at the event, recounted her experience on the day of the terrorist attacks during her NQC performances, and

how important it was to her to walk towards the convention site, and to see the words: “Freedom Hall” written above the door. She then launched into a virtuosic rendition of “The Star Spangled Banner” on Monday, September 12, 2011, to kick off the main-stage performances, and the official start of that year’s convention. Marvin Carlson has referred to theatre as “a cultural activity deeply involved with memory and haunted by repetition” (2003:11). The convention was indeed “haunted” by the memory of 9/11. During every mainstage evening performance, there were numerous visual and oral iterations of 9/11, including projections of the “Ground Zero Cross” (a T-Bar crossbeam support found in the rubble of the World Trade Center) and a famous image of the Cross of St. Patrick's Cathedral with the dust of the collapsing Twin Towers in the background.

The keynote speaker for the 2011 NQC, Former Attorney General John Ashcroft, also spoke of his personal experiences during September 11th, 2001, both during his main-stage appearance on Wednesday September 14th, and at his Keynote Address on September 15th.<sup>85</sup> During his address, Ashcroft compared

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<sup>85</sup> Key-note speakers for the NQC are almost always politicians with a Christian Nationalist agenda. For example, the keynote speaker in 2010 was former Alaska governor and Vice-presidential candidate Sarah Palin.

himself to the biblical hero David.<sup>86</sup> “David. . .remember David, when they tossed all the armor on him in the presence of Saul?” due to the fact that he was so overwhelmed by the events of that “severe clear” day (Ashcroft, September 15th). Ashcroft went on to say that he relied on his Christian faith to get through the difficulties of his appointment as Attorney General during the time that followed September 11th, 2001. The tenth anniversary of the September 11th attacks had a special pull of community-building for many of the conventioners who have been attending the NQC for many years—a great deal of the conventioners were present at the NQC the moment that the terrorist attacks occurred.

September 11th is a unique event in recent history for many reasons, but an important aspect of it is that it exists as an “I remember exactly where I was when. . .” moment in collective memory. For this reason, these iterations had a special importance in establishing the unity of ritual and identity at the NQC, strengthening the sense of purpose for the conventioners, and solidifying the idea of the unifying danger of a common enemy or Other in the form of radical extremists, poised to attack again at any moment. Thus, when song lyrics would

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<sup>86</sup> David was the young boy who fought Goliath the giant in the Bible, found in 1 Samuel, chapter 17. By referring to this well-known Bible story, Ashcroft was perfectly invoking the “biblical hero to emulate” trope of the Soldierhood archetype.



command the listeners to “stand up” or “stand their ground,”<sup>87</sup> these words held a very real and true importance to the conventioners, who believe that “America” as a “Christian Nation” is in danger, and that it is their sacred duty to defend it.

### **6. 3. 6 *Embodying Nationalism: Mass Bodily Practices***

During performances, there were several instances of embodied performance of Christian Nationalism on the part of conventioners in the audience. During Nation-centric songs, these images were rarely of the performers, and instead were more likely to be an animation of a waving American flag, a stock image of the Statue of Liberty, or a music video montage to accompany the song. These videos consisted of assembled images such as military personnel being reunited with their families, saluting a fallen comrade, standing at attention, or the aforementioned September 11th associated images. These veteran tributes in particular brought to mind Renan's idea of nationalism recalling a “heroic past.” Often images of World War II were projected followed by images of the current conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, serving to equate the two as equally righteous. Whenever an image of the American Flag was projected, the audience immediately rose to their feet en masse. There was no

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<sup>87</sup> “Stand For America” by The Triumphant Quartet, and “We Will Stand Our Ground” by The Kingdom Heirs.

instance in which religious imagery—such as the empty cross—led to this same act.

In the Triumphant Quartet’s performance of the song “Somebody Died For Me,” the main character portrayed in the lyrics is converted to a better way of life not through a traditional “born again” Christian experience, but instead through getting “sent to Iraq” and having the experience of a fellow soldier (who “always lived for Jesus”) giving his life to save his. This ultimate sacrifice on the part of the Soldier archetype is compared to the sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross, and the worshipfulness displayed within the lyrics was also demonstrated by the Triumphant Quartet through lifted hands, reverently closed eyes and bowed heads. It was a highly emotional performance, and many conventioners around me were moved to tears.

#### **6. 4 What is Sacred?**

When Anderson states that “no nation imagines itself coterminous with mankind,” he is discounting Christian Nationalists, a group that share a passion both for their version of Americanism and for the Bible’s mandate to “Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation” (American Standard Version Bible, Matthew 28: 19). While at the NQC, I witnessed a politicized and militarized agenda that seemed at odds with many of the tenets of Christianity, as

I understand them. I observed performances of Nationalism that were profoundly based in a distinction from a vaguely named, ever-present Other, and I witnessed bodily displays of reverence not only to the cross, but to the American flag. I also heard utterances of a desire to bring not only the Gospel, but also a distinctly American Christian Nationalism to the entire world.

My experience at the NQC was not entirely what I expected. I came prepared to see displays of patriotism, but did not expect the intertwining of Christianity and Nationalism to be so tangled. I felt my self-identification as a religious and cultural insider crumble bit by bit during the week, and felt myself become, as I described in one of my field notes, “Other.” When I drew back from my subjects (troublingly I thereby Othered them) I was able to see that although their version of Evangelical Christianity did not fit into my own worldview, for them, Christian Nationalism is indeed a sacred trust. Without exception, the people I interviewed at the NQC were without guile, and I was frankly moved by the strength of their faith and conviction. Their performances of Christian Nationalism were all presented in a space that had been contracted not only as a performance space, but also as a sacred one by the conventioners and performers.

In my auto-ethnography diary file I typed at the end of each day, I wrote the following after the September 11, 2011, main-stage performances: “I am

reminded about Kurt Vonnegut re—Armistice Day vs. Veteran’s Day . . .they are celebrating Armistice Day.” The full quote, from his novel *Breakfast of Champions*, reads as follows:

Armistice Day has become Veterans’ Day. Armistice Day was sacred. Veteran’s Day is not. So I will throw Veterans’ Day over my shoulder. Armistice Day I will keep. I don’t want to throw away any sacred things. (Vonnegut 1971: 6)

The practitioners of Christian Nationalism, through performative acts, demonstrated that the recognition of soldiers, reverence for the American Flag and their concept of “freedom as given from God” (Ashcroft) are all sacred things. Christian Nationalists meld Christianity and Nationalism and gospel music because to their minds they are all inspired by God and therefore equally worthy of reverence.

## Chapter 7

### “It is my Way of Life:”

#### Enforcement and Embodiment of the Archetypes

##### 7.1 Overview

Within this conclusion, I discuss ways in which performative practices are enforced by the archetypes and ways in which these practices serve to enforce the archetypes, as well as ways that the archetypes are embodied by Christian Nationalists. The primary strength of the archetypes—as I observed during my fieldwork and lyrics/music analysis—is their self-reflection. The archetypes described and the ways they musically manifest circle back on each other and are fed by themselves. I will outline three aspects of the archetypes within the following: 1) participatory performance practice as a necessary characteristic of modern WCGMs; 2) the power of iteration and reiteration within the body of songs I explored; and 3) ways in which the archetypes combine to construct the culture of Christian Nationalism.

Throughout the time of my research, I was again and again struck by the consistent repertoire of WCGM songs and by the homogeneity of the community that surrounds them. When I embarked upon my dissertation research, I was interested in how the different archetypes I had observed within the music served

to construct identity for those who were fans of the music. When traveling for the first time to the NQC, I expected to find a politically conservative, slightly old-fashioned group of people who loved old-time gospel music as much as I did. Having been brought up in a household that was a religious mixture of conservative Lutheranism and old-time gospel church, I thought I was better prepared to predict the nature of this music and how the community used it.

What I discovered was something even more powerful than I had initially posited: the archetypes interlocked to provide an entire blueprint for living. They enforced the patriarchy (by outlining strict prescriptions for both “masculine” and “feminine” behaviour), demanded military Christianity that witnessed constantly, and required adherence to a Christian Nationalist/Dominionist brand of Christianity. Furthermore, the archetypes are full of self-reflexivity. That is to say, the music as a whole is often music about music, and it demands a participatory kind of performativity. Not only do audiences sing along in many performances as I describe in Chapter Six, the songs themselves perform other songs within their archetype. So, a song from the Old Time Religion archetype will not only describe religious practices, but self-reflexively also describe Old Time Religion songs. This is achieved by musical style through utilizing a hymn-like chord progression, so the musical vocabulary already exists in the “collective unconsciousness” of the participants. An “Old Time Religion” song is so

comforting to the listener that even if it is newly composed, it contains lyric re-iterations and chord progressions that seem familiar to Christian Nationalists even at first listen.

This self-reflexivity is a key to the strength that WCGM archetypes have in constructing identity. The music as well as the convention culture serve to construct and enforce Christian Nationalist identity: the music is itself instructional, the concert environments are self-contained performative spaces for Christian Nationalism, and the playbook for how to live the life of a Christian Nationalist is contained within both the performance spaces and within the songs. Fans attending the NQC are a perfect example of this: the NQC is a week apart from their normal lives, one that serves to re-charge their identities in an environment where their identities are not only not questioned, but constantly enforced by their environment: an environment where the American flag is nearly everywhere, where right-wing politics are the only politics, and where artists, politicians, and masters of ceremonies are not only performing, they are instructing.

## **7. 2 Participatory Performativity**

The songs of WCGM all contain one element that demands participation—their harmonic vocabulary. Those raised in the church are exposed

to formulaic gospel hymn structures from a very young age. Gospel hymns are easily distilled down to three chords (I, IV, and V(7)). Cadences are uncomplicated (almost always perfect and authentic) and not only conclude hymns but also signal the return of the chorus. All gospel hymns therefore seem harmonically familiar to participatory listeners, as they have heard similar chord progressions for literally their entire lives. This sort of buried-deep information, Jung's collective unconscious, is ever present within WCGM. The sense of familiarity and comfort contained within the harmonic language of the musics is one of the primary reasons for the power to construct identity that these archetypes possess.

Even a newly composed WCGM song, due to the faithfulness that modern compositions have to older ones, seems like it has been around forever to the listener, thereby not challenging the nostalgia that is so important to Christian Nationalist culture. This level of cohesion within the genre allows audiences to easily transform into participatory performers. They clap along, they sing along, and the songs present no surprises or difficult listening. Through the harmonic familiarity contained within the hymns, participatory performers experience a feeling of connectivity to many aspects of their faith: they feel connected to the faith, to their ancestors and to every other hymn they have ever sung.

In performances, particularly ones at large-scale events such as the NQC,



songs within the archetypes are never just listened to. As well as singing along, conventioners also conform to ideas of costuming and consumerism, and engage in mass bodily practices. As mentioned in earlier chapters, a unifying characteristic of WCGMs is that they are extremely accessible for crowd participation. Conventioneers at the NQC are overwhelmingly composed of lifetime churchgoers, and many conventioners have attended the NQC for years or even for decades. “Fan Favorite” showcase performances (constructed via online surveys on the NQC website and via emails) allow the conventioners to actually construct the bill of some main stage evening concerts during the week. Due to their level of familiarity with the music performed at the NQC, I often saw audience members either singing aloud or silently mouthing the words with performers. In addition to this level of participation, most main stage evening schedules included “hymn sings”—where a performance group would lead the crowd in singing old favourites. Attorney General John Ashcroft devoted over half the time during his keynote address in 2011 to sitting at the piano and accompanying the crowd in a hymn sing-along. All of this singing constructs a unified experience and establishes a strong sense of community, and it iterates the archetypes through what Butler calls “repetition and ritual” (1999: xv).

### ***7. 2. 1 Clothing and Consumerism***

Furthering the strength of the archetypes is the way they extend into the consumerist practices of fans of WCGM. In the context of the NQC and in numerous online communities, fans and conventioners participate in WCGM through the purchase of WCGM and Christian Nationalist-themed clothing and merchandise. Conventioneers not only sing along with their favourite groups, they can also display their allegiance through purchasing a t-shirt, a key chain, or a tie, not unlike fans of other popular musics. What is unique to musical acts that align with Christian Nationalism is that merchandise covered with slogans of the Christian Nationalist movement is also available. Through purchasing and wearing these items, the conventioneers are able to further establish their identity, and expand the contracted performance space of Christian Nationalism beyond the convention itself. It was easy to spot conventioneers on the streets of Louisville during the 2011 and 2012 NQC, due to their American-flag covered t-shirts or red, white, and blue rhinestone jewelry. Clothing acted as another tool of not only of establishing identity but of actively proclaiming it.

### ***7. 2. 2 Iteration and Re-iteration***

Perhaps the defining characteristic of the American gospel hymn is the

verse/chorus structure. Unlike older European hymns, which conform to a verse-only melodic and harmonic pattern, but in which words are biblically instructive and not poetically constructed, gospel hymns contain a returning, lyrically simple chorus. Consider, for example, “I’ll Fly Away” (Brumley 1932) in which the chorus contains a simple melodic line and only fifteen separate words. The phrase “I’ll Fly Away” occurs at the end of every single line in both the verse and the chorus, serving both to re-iterate the belief in resurrection at the Day of Judgment and to facilitate participation. During my fieldwork, I often participated with crowds singing this song, and always felt “lifted up” by the tune and its message. The lyrics, as many archetypical WCGM songs do, contain an emphasis on the trials of earthly life: “shadows,” “prison bars,” and “weary days” contrasted with joys and liberation to come: “God’s celestial shore,” “like a bird,” and “I’ll fly away.” To participatory performers, the song is not just a declaration of faith. According to Freda at the NQC, the very act of “singing the old songs” is a “taste of heaven.”

### **7.3 “One Road”—The Archetypes and Absence of Choices**

As well as the harmonic collective unconsciousness and the power of reiteration to inspire and instruct, the WCGM archetypes present a world-view with extremely limited life choices. They contain strict gender roles, enforcement

of old religious practices and a strong identity through distinction from and superiority to all other groups. Momma songs and Soldier songs enforce what Harrison refers to as the “psycho-sexually repressive culture” of SGM, which I contend expands to all WCGM and directly into Christian Nationalist culture. Men are prescribed militaristic masculinity—charged with the defence of God and country through the soldier songs I described in Chapter Four. Women are positioned as the complete opposite of men: de-sexualized and relegated to maternal roles—charged with protecting not only their purity and faith but also that of their children (who remain their responsibility even after they become adults). There is no room within the archetypes or the community that surrounds them for even the idea of an expression of sexuality that does not conform to a hetero-normative ideal.

Religious expression is also repressively limited to a very small range of Christian practices. Old Time Religion songs instruct that a new way is never the right way and the religious identity that was “good enough for” one’s ancestors is sufficient for all the needs of the modern world. When Christian Nationalists speak of things that are wrong, they often speak of them as unreal—“this is the real America, not what goes on in the White House,” for one example. This declaration, which on the surface is one of strengthening a sense of authenticity within Christian Nationalism, seems to me to go deeper. Part of the pattern of

calling one thing “real” and describing something else as “unreal” points to a process of invalidation of whatever the Christian Nationalist is not. Not only do Christian Nationalists disagree with other viewpoints, they do not even believe that those who hold dissenting opinions are worthy of their concern, or that opposing viewpoints are even possible. I encountered a bumper sticker in the parking lot of the Creation Museum that read: “God said it. I believe it. That settles it.” This neatly sums up the perspective that many Christian Nationalists have about their beliefs. They derive them from the Bible, which they believe literally and unquestioningly.

This conviction of faith to the preclusion of all other ideas is encapsulated within the Judgment Day archetype. Within Judgment Day songs, WCGM participatory performers affirm their complete correctness. The songs allow Christian Nationalists to envision and to perform the victory of their beliefs. Not only is this victory portrayed, though, the losers are graphically punished within the archetype: they experience “wrath;” their “fields” are “set on fire” by a wrathful God; the “seas boil” and the “rocks melt.” For people who practice Christian Nationalism, the Judgment Day songs reflect and construct a sense of moral superiority. In the belief of Christian Nationalists, the “Christian Nation” of the United States of America is powerful due to the fact that God is on America’s side. The extension of this Dominionism is the belief that God has given not only

the U.S.A., but also the entire planet to one type of Christian.

A strong concept of the Other is a necessary component of the beliefs of Christian Nationalists. From John Winthrop in Colonial America, to W.J. Bryant in the 1920s to Billy Graham in the 1950s and 1960s to modern day Christian Nationalists, the Other has always been singled out as a threat on the fringes. Just as bell hooks has described, in the minds of modern Christian Nationalists, “the other is always a terrorist” (hooks 1992: 174). Modern WCGM songs that invoke Christian Nationalist ideals express fear that at any moment the American way of life can be destroyed. The fear-of-other narrative, particularly strong within the Soldier and the Stand Our Ground archetypes, serves to further strengthen the identity of Christian Nationalists by uniting them against a common enemy.

#### **7.4 Christian Nationalism as a Way of Life**

A high level of saturation of the archetypes extends into the WCGM(s) fan’s daily life. In the modern United States, it is possible for an individual to be home-schooled, get all of their news from the right-leaning and Christian-championing Fox News, attend a religious Evangelical university and become an adult without ever being exposed to an opposing viewpoint. This homogeneity of lifestyle allows modern Christian Nationalists to be isolated from the diversity and range of experiences that the modern United States contains. Speaking during an interview for the PBS mini-series “God in America,” Reverend Randall

Balmer stated:

This was an alternate universe within the larger American culture. It was possible, and I can attest to this personally, to grow up within that world, within that subculture and have very, very little commerce with anyone outside of that world. (pbs.org transcript)

This sense of isolation allows modern Christian Nationalists to not participate in or acknowledge the existence of a “larger American culture,” in which diversity is increasing.

This sense of isolation also makes it easier for fear of the Other to fester into racism and sexism. I witnessed displays of this during the NQC. Comedians (all male) performed caricatures of women (always portrayed as either wives or mothers), conventioners very openly reviled Barack Obama, and Islamophobia was at the forefront of many of the video montages. When, in performance of “We Will Stand Our Ground,” the Kingdom Heirs sing, “there are those” and a video that is being displayed shows the ruins of the World Trade Center, there is no doubt that “those” are Muslims.

### **7.5 The Past as Future in the Minds of Christian Nationalists**

A unifying sentiment within modern Christian Nationalism, and one that I often encountered during both fieldwork and listening, was the idea that the past is necessarily better than the future. As a woman named Helen, with whom I spoke at the NQC said: “I am afraid of the future.” Lyrics again and again cite

“old time” as better and somehow purer than the America of today. Change is almost always viewed as scary and antithetical to the American way of life as Christian Nationalists understand it. Disregarding the constitutional importance of freedom of religion, I heard many statements to the effect of “the country is in trouble” and only a return to Christianity could save it. This was coupled with a naïve belief that diversity of religious experience in America was not present until the late twentieth century.

To support their agenda, the Christian Nationalists have developed a questionable version of the so-called “founding fathers” of the U.S.A. Writings embraced by Christian Nationalists are those of John Winthrop (1578-1649) and George Whitefield (1714-1770), both founders of not government or constitutional law, but of religious movements in the colonial era. *Preaching Politics: The Religious Rhetoric of George Whitefield and the Founding of a New Nation* contains the following statement:

Lockean liberalism or republicanism ideals were not as profoundly embedded, or at least as widespread, in the minds of colonists. . . the Revolutionary polemicists found it necessary to undermine the monarchy with religious arguments that privileged the relationship of the people to God over a community’s right to choose its preferred form of government. (Dean-Mahaffey 2007: 243)

This viewpoint allows Christian Nationalists to selectively quote from the founding fathers such as Thomas Jefferson, who not only campaigned for religious freedom on the part of Baptists in Virginia, but also published a very-



edited-down and purely humanist version of the New Testament. The selective history that the Christian Nationalists cling to helps to strengthen their identity as “real” or “true” Americans, while those with more secular viewpoints are positioned as incorrect, wrong or even unreal.

### **7. 6 Implications for Further Study**

My research opens the door to further study in a number of areas. An inquiry into the cross-pollination of WCGM and African American gospel in the United States would investigate common origins of much of the current repertoire, and could serve to challenge the current state of segregated musical history. A great deal of musicology (and this work is no exception) focuses on one homogenous group. The strength of this approach is that an in-depth look into one specific culture is possible. However, my research was greatly enriched by its interdisciplinarity. In my study, I attempted to integrate several disciplines: ethnomusicology, cultural studies, feminist studies, post-colonialism, and musicology. Drawing from differing theoretical perspectives improved my research and breadth of inquiry, and I believe that the increasing inter-disciplinarity of academia will serve to inform fieldwork and research as a whole.

Certainly the history of poorly attributed compositions, outright theft of music, and performance style crossroads are all worth more study. My primary

interest for further study would be the performance style shift that occurred after the Brown vs. Board of Education trial in 1954. Prior to this performance shift, there were fewer differences in performance practice between white and black gospel quartets. Although the 2+4 groups I described in the body of the dissertation are re-incorporating African American musical characteristics into their body of work, there is a twenty-year period in which SGM became deliberately more white/European that invites further study. Another area for further examination is the performance practices of women within WCGM, including vocality and participation in accompaniment. Although many of the early female proponents of the style accompanied themselves on piano, guitar, or autoharp, most modern-day performers serve as front-women and do not play instruments. Another trend is the “softening” of vocal timbres among female performers. Although the scope of this dissertation did not provide for a detailed examination of this trend, it would be a fascinating area of enquiry.

Lastly, the Christian Nationalist Movement’s use of music is vast and has a longer history than I would have initially expected. Although the Evangelicals dropped out of politics from approximately 1922 to 1980, American gospel music has a long history of connection to politics. An investigation of these connections could lead to an interesting expansion of my historical research. Included within this research could be a further investigation of the Southern Frontier spirit, and

how it manifests in modern day WCGM.

## 7.7 Conclusion

The importance of music within the Christian Nationalist movement cannot be overstated. As this dissertation has shown, it is used to connect participatory practitioners to the historical bedrock of the Christian Nationalist movement, to prescribe oppressive gender ideals and to charge those involved with ministering to others in a very real quest for world domination. Vocabulary within Christian Nationalism is slippery. Often familiar words mean something very different to those who listen to or perform WCGM in the context of Christian Nationalism. “Liberty” is one such word. This is apparent in a book entitled *America’s Providential History*, commonly used in Christian private schools and by home-schoolers,

The Bible reveals that ‘where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty’ . . . . When the Spirit of the Lord comes into a nation, that nation is liberated. The degree to which the Spirit of the Lord is infused into a society (through its people, laws and institutions) is the degree to which that society will experience liberty in every realm. (quoted in Hedges 2006, 389)

This troubling re-definition of “liberty,” which instead prescribes religious uniformity, is a core belief of the modern Christian Nationalists. Therefore, when the song “The Cross is my Statue of Liberty” is performed, those Christian

Nationalists who sing it and listen to it are hearing something different than what I, as a listener, hear. Umberto Eco states in the introduction to *American Fascists* that through an emphasis on traditionalism (which is at the core of Christian Nationalism and the WCGM archetypes) “there can be no advancement of learning. Truth has already been spelled out once and for all” (Eco 2006: i). This upholding of tradition, which occurs throughout all of the archetypes, is what makes them so powerful as identity constructors. As bell hooks has succinctly said: “being oppressed means the *absence of choices*” (hooks 2000: 5). The power of the archetypes lies in their rigidity. Within the context of Christian Nationalism, innovation is forbidden, as are non-traditional gender roles or sexuality expression, as are new interpretations of Scripture, as are musical innovations.

The Christian Nationalists I encountered through the scope of my fieldwork were all kind people, outgoing and friendly—but they held incredibly firm ideas and beliefs. Their way is the only way, and it is their sacred trust to continue along the Old Time Religion path. As a group, they seem to embrace the simplicity of the “absence of choices.” Like the selective use of American historical writings, modern practitioners of Christian Nationalism have taken to utilizing the archetypes of White Commercial Gospel Musics to enforce their particular views, and to construct an identity for their community.



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Greater Vision featuring Brock Speer. 2003 *Quartets*. Word: 871320. CD.

Greter Vision. 2004. *Live at NQC*. Rovi Music: MW 00001391630. CD.

Greater Vision. 2011. *The Only Way*. AMG: R 2348679. CD.

The Grisham Family. 1928. "Angels Tell My Mother I'll Be There." Columbia: 15255-D. 78rpm.

Haggard, Merle (and the strangers). 1968. *Mama Tried*. Capitol Records: 2219. LP.

The Harmonizing Four. 1995. *I Shall Not Be Moved*. Charly: 8112. CD.

-----, 2006. *This Is Gospel: Vol. 18*. Calvin Records: 092. CD.

Hazel & Alice. 1975. *Hazel & Alice*. Rounder Select. R95667. LP.

The Haydn Quartet. 1906. "When The Roll is Called Up Yonder I'll Be There." Victor: 4689. 78rpm.

The Hoppers. 2000. *Shoutin' Time: Best of the Hoppers*. Homeland Records: 57. CD.

Hynes, Ron. "The Mother Who Bore You in Pain." *Ron Hynes*. The Borealis: 175. digital.

Imperial Quartet. 1915. "When They Ring The Golden Bells for You and Me." Victor: 17982. 78rpm.

The Jordanaires. 1964. "You Better Run." Columbia: CS-9014. digital.

Kentucky Mountain Boys. 1927. "Tis Home Because Mother is Here." Brunswick: 171a. 78rpm.

- 1927. "He Carved His Mother's Name Upon The Tree." Brunswick: 171b.  
78 rpm.
- 1927. "You'll Never Miss Your Mother Till She's Gone." Brunswick: 202.  
78 rpm.
- Kenny and Amanda Smith Band. 2006. *Tell Someone*. Rebel: 1821. CD.
- King's Sacred Singers. 1988. *Favorite Sacred Songs*. King: 556. CD.
- The Kingdom Heirs. 2004. *Forever Changed*. Independent Release. CD.
- 2009. *From the "Red Book:" Vol. 1-3*. Independent Release. CD.
- 2007. *True to the Call*. Independent Release. CD.
- 2011. *We Will Stand Our Ground*. Sonlite Records: R 2243292. CD.
- The Kingsmen. 1998. *Kingsmen Collection: Vol. 1 and Vol. 2*. Riversong: 2256.  
CD.
- Knight, Sandy. 2009. *25th Silver: The Songs of Sandy Knight*. Crossroads:  
CR09432. CD.
- The LeFevres. 2009. *Keep On the Firing Line*. Gusto: 2096. CD.
- The Louvin Brothers. 1960. *Satan is Real*. Capitol Records: 37378. LP.
- 2008. *Classic Album Collection*. Golden Stars: GSS 5603. CD.
- 2003. *The Family Who Prays*. Gusto Records: 0107. CD.
- 1981. *Songs that Tell A Story*. Rounder: 1030. LP.
- 1996. *Tragic Songs of Life*. Capitol Nashville: 37380. CD.
- Masri, Mark. (featuring Jim Brickman). 2010. *The Voice*. Green Hill: 104893.  
CD.
- Mark Trammel Quartet. 2011. *Treasures*. Daywind Records: B 0045FEEZ8. CD.

- Middle Cross. 2000. *Ordinary Day*. independent release. CD.
- Monias, Ernest. 2005. "Mother's Only Sleeping." *The Gospel Side of Ernest Monias*. Sunshine Music: CRC6008. digital.
- Moore and Napier. 2008. "Take a Message to Mother." *Bluegrass Gospel and Sacred Songs*. Gusto Records: 0636. CD.
- Monroe, Bill. 1990. *Bluegrass: 1950-1958 Bill Monroe*. Bear Family Records: R 104654. CD.
- Neaves, Glen (and the Virginia Mountain Boys). 1974. *Country Bluegrass from Southwest Virginia*. Smithsonian Folkways: FW03830. CD.
- The Nelons. 2007. *The Nelons: A Promised Reunion: Vol. 1.*: Music Mill: 72003. DVD.
- Nelson, Willie. 2001. *The Troublemaker*. Sony: 34992. CD.
- Nitty Gritty Dirt Band. 2003. *Will the Circle Be Unbroken: The Trilogy*. Capitol Records: B000063686. CD.
- NQC: Live. 2003-2010 Vol. 4-9. NQC Promotional Videos. DVD.
- NQC: 2010 "100 Years: A Celebration of Southern Gospel Music." NQC Produced Highlight DVD.
- Old Southern Sacred Singers. 1929. Brunswick: 357. 78rpm.
- The Original Five Blind Boys of Mississippi. 1996. *Meet the Blind Boys*. Jewel: 3126. CD.
- Ordge, Jimmy Arthur. 2004. *The Legend*. Royalty Records: 0163. CD.
- Owens, Buck. 2000. *Act Naturally*. Golden Stars: 5277. CD.
- Pace Jubilee Singers. 2000. *Pace Jubilee Singers Vol. 1*. Document Records: B001U99MN6. CD.



-----, 2000. *Pace Jubilee Singers Vol. 2*. Document Records: B001U98MN6. CD.

Paramount Singers. 1992. *Work and Pray On*. Arhoolie: 382. CD.

The Perrys. 2000. *Absolutely Positively Live!* Daywind Records: B0000QZUEF0. CD.

-----, 2001. *Hits and Hymns Vol. 1*. Daywind Records: B00005KBAH . CD.

-----, 2001. *Changed Forever*. Daywind Records: B00005RGMO. CD.

-----, 2006. *Come Thirsty*. Daywind Records: B0000FP2YTK. CD.

Pierce, Webb. 2010. *Webb Pierce: All the Greatest Hits*. Golden Stars: 5278. CD.

Peck, Karen. (and New River). 2008. *Ephesians One*, Daywind: 158227. CD.

The Rambos. 2003. *The Very Best of the Rambos*. New Haven: 28040. CD.

Reeves, Jim. 2006. *37 Great Performances*. Dove: 7145. CD.

Reno and Smiley. 1997. *Tribute to Mother*. King: 6105. CD.

Reno, Don and Red Smiley. 1996. *On Stage* . Copper Creek: R300389. CD.

Robbins, Marty. 1991. *Country: 1951-1958*. Bear Family Records: 15570. CD Box set.

The Rochesters. 2011. *The Rochesters Live in the Bluegrass State*. 2011. DVD.

Rodgers, Jimmie. 1991. *On the Way Up 1929*. Rounder: CD-1058. CD.

-----, 1992. *The Singing Brakeman*. Bear Family Records. 15540. CD.

Sacred Harp Singers. 2003. *Lookout Mountain Convention 1968*. Squirrel Hill Recordings/CD Baby: 0000CAH2BI. CD.

The Sanders Family. 2000. *Sanders Family Christmas*. Daywind: 1215. CD.

The Sauceman Brothers. 2002. *Bluegrass Originals*. Golden Stars: 5347. CD.

- Smith's Sacred Singers. 2010. *12 Sides of Smith's Sacred Singers*.  
Sinetone/AMR. digital.
- Snow, Hank. 1994. *The Yodelling Ranger (1936-1947)* Bear Family Records:  
15587. CD.
- The Sons of the Pioneers. 2004. *Country Gospel, Vol. 2: Onward Christian  
Soldiers*. Music Products BV: 26014. CD.
- The Sons of the Pioneers. 2007. *Country Gospel: the Old Rugged Cross*. Jasmine  
Records: 3578. CD.
- The Sunshine Girls. 2007. *Southern Gospel Legends Series- The Sunshine Girls*.  
Songs of Faith: 5XUWO. CD.
- Sparks, Larry. 2002. *The Old Church Yard*. Rebel: 7502. CD.
- Stanley, Ralph. 2006. *A Distant Land to Roam--Songs of the Carter Family*.  
DMZ: 82796936292. CD.
- , 2011. *I'll Wear a White Robe*. Rebel Records. Digital Release.
- The Stanley Brothers. 1960. *The Stanley Brothers on Radio*. Rebel: 1115. LP.
- , 1997. *16 Greatest Gospel Hits*. Hollywood: 126. CD.
- , 1993. *Old Country Church*. Hollywood: 127. CD.
- , 2003. *Angel Band: The Classic Mercury Recordings*. Mercury Nashville:  
528191. CD.
- , 2003 *The King Years: 1961-1965*. King: 0950. CD.
- Stanley, Ralph. 1992. "Sinner Man." *Back to the Cross*. Freeland: 638. CD.
- , 2011. *A Mother's Prayer*. Rebel Records: 111840. CD.
- Staples, Mavis and Lucky Peterson. 1996. *Spirituals & Gospel: Dedicated to  
Mahalia Jackson*. Verve: 5335622. CD.

- The Statler Brothers. 2010. *The Gospel Music of the Statler Brothers, Vol. 1*. Gaither Music Group: 6004. CD.
- The Statesmen. 1993. *O My Lord What a Time*. Word Distribution: 2656. CD.
- Sturdivant, Bozie. 1997. "Ain't No Grave Can Hold My Body Down." *Library of Congress: A Treasury of Field Recordings*. Rounder: R 318392. CD.
- J.D. Sumner and the Stamps. 1994. *Gospel Masters: J.D. Sumner & The Stamps*. Riversong: 4RGGY. CD.
- The Swan Silvertones. 2005. *1946-1951: The Swan Silvertones*. Acrobat: 3004. CD
- Talley, Kirk. 1997. *Shhhh*. Sonlite Records: B1Z5Q. CD.
- The Tillmans. 1925. "My Mother's Old Bible is True. (My Mother's Bible)" Victor: V-40265. 78rpm.
- Various Artists. 1998. *20 Gospel Video Classics: Historical Performances*. National Recording Corporation: no catalogue number. DVD.
- Various Artists. 2011. *I Saw the Light: White Spirituals and Country Gospel—Roots Collection Vol. 12*. Discmedi. iTunes digital collection.
- Various Artists. 2007. *Gloryland—30 Bluegrass Gospel Classics*. Time Life Records: R 823630. CD.
- Various Artists. 1999. *Sing Me To Sleep, Mommy*, Brentwood Kids: 10445. CD.
- Various Artists. 2000. *Prayers from Hell: White Gospel and Sinner's Blues: 1927-1940*. Trikont: 0267-2. CD.
- Various Artists. 2003. *Close Harmony: A History of Southern Gospel Music, Volume One: 1920-1955*. Dualtone: 1190. CD.
- Various Artists. 1997. *Songs of the Old Regular Baptists: Lined-Out Hymnody from Southeastern Kentucky*. Smithsonian Folkways: 803469. CD.
- Various Artists. 2005. *Voices: 50 A Capella Christian Classics*. Madacy

- Christian: 51812. iTunes compilation.
- Various Artists. 1996. *The Best of Bluegrass: Preachin', Prayin' and Singin'*. Polygram: 532998. CD.
- Various Artists. 2003. *Flowers in the Wildwood: Women in Early Country Music: 1923-1929*. Trikont: US03102. CD.
- Various Artists. 2005. *Classic Southern Gospel from Smithsonian Folkways*. Smithsonian Folkways: 40137. CD.
- Various Artists. 2011. *The Bristol Sessions: The Big Bang of Country Music: 1927-1928*. Bear Family Records: 16094. CD.
- Various Artists. 2002. *I Still Believe in America*. Homeland Entertainment Group: 612232. CD.
- Wagoner, Porter. 2005. *Walk That Lonesome Valley*. Gusto Records: 3001. CD.
- , 1967. *The Cold Hard Facts of Life*. Bear Family Records: 16537. CD.
- , 2007. *Best of Grand Old Gospel 2008*. Teevee Records: 760. CD.
- Watson, Doc. 1995. *Watson Family Tradition*. Rounder: 0129. CD.
- Wells, Kitty. 1993. *The Queen of Country Music*. Bear Family Records: 15638. CD.
- The Whites with Ricky Skaggs. *The Unbroken Circle—The Musical Heritage of the Carter Family*. Dualtone Music: 1162. CD.
- Williams, Hank. 1962. *Hank Williams as Luke the Drifter*, MGM: 3267. CD.
- , 2001. *I Saw the Light (remastered)*. Mercury: 170183. CD.
- , 1998. *The Complete Hank Williams*. Proper Records: 39. CD.
- York, Rusty and the Kentucky Mountain Boys. 2001. *Rusty York and The Kentucky Mountain Boys: Early Bluegrass*. Jewel Recording Company: independent release.



**Appendix A:**  
**Songs Organized by Archetype**

*What follows is a representative selection of songs within each archetype. It is not an exhaustive listing by any means, but contains a fair amount of listening, in order that the reader can acquaint herself with the sonic vocabulary of the music. I have included the artist, song title and whenever possible an album title that is also included within my discography.*

*The archetypes that follow are: Old Time Religion, Judgment Day, Momma, Soldier, and Stand Our Ground. Due to the nature of these archetypes, and the identity they construct, there is a great deal of overlap between them. For the most part, I have therefore attempted to use songs only once, and placed them in the category they most exemplify. Particularly in the case of Christian Nationalist songs, this has led to a quite small list. All of the songs of all of the archetypes are Christian Nationalist in their scope and philosophy. I have included within the Christian Nationalism section of the appendix only songs that particularly speak of the post-9/11<sup>88</sup> modern Christian Nationalism within the final archetype.*

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<sup>88</sup> I have made one exception, including Charlie Daniel's 1996 recording *Steel Witness*. *Steel Witness* is a prescient recording, and one that I wish to explore at greater length in future research.

**a. Old Time Religion:**

Allen, Red. "Are You Washed in the Blood?" *Classic Southern Gospel from Smithsonian Folkways*.<sup>89</sup>

Allen, Rex. "Crying in the Chapel." *I Saw the Light: White Spirituals & Country Gospel*.

Blackwood Brothers. "Come on In The Room." *1953, Vol. 1*.

Carlisle, Bill. "The Heavenly Train." *Prayers from Hell: White Gospel and Sinner Blues 1927-1940*.

The Carter Family. "The Church in the Wildwood," "Let the Church Roll On." *In the Shadow of Clinch Mountain*.

Carson, Martha. "Satisfied." *Satisfied*.

Cline, Patsy. "Life's Railway to Heaven." *I Saw the Light: White Spirituals and Country Gospel: Roots Collection*.

Collins, Edith and Sherman. "I Can't Feel at Home in This World Anymore." *Prayers from Hell: White Gospel and Sinner Blues 1927-1940*.

Daniels, Charlie. "Whose Side Are You On?" *Steel Witness*.

Ely, Brother Claude. "Holy, Holy (That's Alright)." *Satan, Get Back!*

Ernie Haase & Signature Sound. "An Old Convention Song." *A Tribute to the Cathedral Quartet*.

Hovie Lister & The Statesmen. "Old Time Religion." *Gospel Masters: Hovie Lister & the Statesmen*.

Knight, Sandy. "You Keep Praying." *25th Silver—The Songs of Sandy Knight*.

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<sup>89</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all recordings are compact discs.

J.D. Sumner & The Stamps Quartet. "Old Time Religion." *J.D. Sumner & The Stamps*.

J.D. Sumner & The Stamps Quartet. "Give Me That Old Time Religion." *Old Time Religion*.

The Johnson Family Singers. "I Have Got Old Time Religion." *Sunday Mornings in Dixie*.

Karnes, Alfred G. "The Days of My Childhood Plays." *The Bristol Sessions, 1927-1928 (disc 4)*.

Louvin Brothers. "The Family Who Prays." and "If We Forget God." *The Family Who Prays*.

-----"Satan is Real." and "The Christian Life." *Satan is Real*.

The Masters Family. "That Little Old Country Church House." *Best of Bluegrass: Preachin', Prayin' and Singin'*

Members of the Indian Bottom Association of Old Regular Baptists. "Precious Memories." *Songs of the Old Regular Baptists, Vol. 2: Lined-out Hymnody from Southeastern Kentucky*.

Morgan, Tom. "Old Country Church." *Classic Southern Gospel from Smithsonian Folkways*.

Nelson, Willie. "Precious Memories," "There is a Fountain," "Shall We Gather?" "When the Roll is Called up Yonder," and "Will the Circle Be Unbroken?" *The Troublemaker*.

The Nitty Gritty Dirt Band. "Life's Railway to Heaven." *Will the Circle Be Unbroken-The Trilogy*.

Pace Jubilee Singers. "Old Time Religion." *Pace Jubilee Singers, Vol. 2 (1928-1929)*.

Stanley, Ralph. "Old Time Religion." *I'll Wear a White Robe*.

Story, Carl. "Are You Walking and Talking for the Lord?" *Best of Bluegrass*:



*Preachin' Prayin' and Singin'.*

The Sunshine Girls. "Old Time Religion." *The Sunshine Girls—Southern Gospel Legends.*

Pierce, Webb. "Old Country Church." *Country Masters: Webb Pierce.*

## b. *Judgment Day*

4 for One Quartet. "The Next Time He Comes." *Ready to Go!*

Acuff, Roy. "The Great Speckled Bird." *That Glory Bound Train*.

Blanchard, Lowell. "Jesus Hits Like the Atom Bomb." *The Best of Bluegrass: Preachin', Prayin' and Singin'!*

The Carter Family. "When the World's On Fire." and "We Shall Rise." *In the Shadow of Clinch Mountain*.

Cash, Johnny. "When the Roll Is Called Up Yonder." *My Mother's Hymn Book*.

----- . "Ain't No Grave." and "I Corinthians 15:55." *American VI: Ain't No Grave*.

The Chuck Wagon Gang. "We Are Climbing Jacob's Ladder." *Flowers in the Wildwood: Women in Early Country Music: 1923-1929*.

The Country Gentlemen. "Walking in Jerusalem (Just Like John)." *Classic Southern Gospel from Smithsonian Folkways*.

Criterion Quartet. "When the Roll is Called Up Yonder." 78 rpm.

Daniels, Charlie. "Payback Time." and "It's Happening Now." *Steel Witness*.

The Delmore Brothers. "The Wrath of God." *Favorite Sacred Songs*.

The Doc Watson Family. "When the Roll is Called Up Yonder." *Songs from the Southern Mountains*.

The Doc Watson Family. "The Lost Soul." *Classic Southern Gospel*.

Dylan, Bob. "When He Returns." *Slow Train Coming*.

Ely, "Brother" Claude. "There Ain't No Grave Gonna Hold My Body Down."

Greater Vision featuring Brock Speer. "City That's Coming Down." *Quartets*.

The Haydn Quartet. "When The Roll is Called Up Yonder I'll Be There." 78 rpm.

The Hoppers. "Stepping on the Clouds." *Shoutin' Time: Best of the Hoppers.*

Imperial Quartet. "When They Ring The Golden Bells for You and Me." 78 rpm.

The Jordanaires. "You Better Run." Columbia: CS-9014. 45 rpm.

The Jordanaires. "When the Roll is Called Up Yonder." *Voices: 50 A Capella Christian Classics.*

Kenny and Amanda Smith Band. "Stepping on the Clouds." *Tell Someone.*

King's Sacred Singers. "He Will Set Your Fields on Fire." *Favorite Sacred Songs.*

The Kingsmen. "Saints Will Rise." *Kingsmen Collection: Vol. 1 and Vol. 2.*

Knight, Sandy. "I Think I'll Read It Again." and "John Saw." *25th Silver: The Songs of Sandy Knight.*

The Lilly Brothers. "Sinner, You Better Get Ready." *Classic Southern Gospel.*

Monroe, Bill. "Walking in Jerusalem." and "He Will Set Your Fields on Fire." *Bluegrass: 1950-1958 Bill Monroe.*

The Nelons. "We Shall Wear a Crown," "Way Up In Gloryland," "Come Morning," and "There Ain't No Grave Gonna Hold My Body Down." *The Nelons: A Promised Reunion: Vol. 1 DVD Recording.*

Nelson, Willie. "When the Roll is Called Up Yonder." *The Troublemaker.*

Parker, Byron and his Mountaineers. "We Shall Rise." *Prayers from Hell: White Gospel and Sinner's Blues: 1927-1940.*

The Rambos. "We Shall Behold Him." *The Very Best of the Rambos.*

Reno, Don and Red Smiley. "He Will Set Your Fields on Fire." *On Stage.*

The Sauceman Brothers. "Hallelujah, We Shall Rise." *Bluegrass Originals.*

Sauceman, Carl and his Hillbilly Ramblers. "The Pale Horse and His Rider." *Best of Bluegrass: Preachin', Prayin', Singin'*.

Smith's Sacred Singers. "He Will Set Your Fields On Fire." *12 Sides of Smith's Sacred Singers*. digital release.

The Stanley Brothers. "We Shall Rise." *The King Years: 1961-1965*.

Stanley, Ralph. "Sinner Man." *Back to the Cross*.

Stanley, Ralph. "John the Revelator." *A Mother's Prayer*.

Sturdivant, Bozie. "Ain't No Grave Can Hold My Body Down." *Library of Congress: A Treasury of Field Recordings*.

The Swan Silvertones. "Jesus is God's Atomic Bomb." *1946-1951: The Swan Silvertones*.

Wagoner, Porter. "When the Roll is Called Up Yonder." and "Will There Be Any Stars In My Crown?" *Walk That Lonesome Valley*.

Williams, Hank. "I'll Have a New Body (I'll Have a New Life)," "The Pale Horse and His Rider," "Wealth Won't Save Your Soul," "When the Book of Life is Read," "My Main Trial is Yet to Come," "When God Comes and Gathers His Jewels," "Angel of Death," and "The Battle of Armageddon." *The Complete Hank Williams*.

c. *Momma*

Acuff, Roy. "Shake My Mother's Hand For Me," "Tell Mother I'll be There," and "That Glory Bound Train." *King of Country Music*.

Aldous, Rachel. "A Mother's Prayer (Hannah's Song)." *Transform Me*.

Allen, Red. "I Heard My Mother Call My Name in Prayer." *Lonesome and Blue: The Complete County Recordings*.

The Allen Brothers. "Shake Hands With Mother Again." *Classic Southern Gospel from Smithsonian Folkways*.

Blind Boys of Mississippi. "Mother Told Me About Jesus." *All Time Gospel, Vol. 2*.

Borofsky, Michael B., director and producer. "Dear Mama" on "The Best of the Johnny Cash Show." DVD.

The Carter Family. "Can The Circle Be Unbroken?" *Can the Circle Be Unbroken*.

-----"I Have an Aged Mother." *The Carter Family 1927-1934*.

-----"Will My Mother Know My There?" *Gold Watch and Chain: Their Complete Victor Recordings (1933-34)*.

-----"Your Mother Still Prays (For You, Jack)." 1990. *Carter Family—Diamonds in the Rough*.

Carter, Wilf. "What a Friend We Have in Mother." *Montana Slim's Greatest Hits*.

-----"What a Wonderful Mother of Mine." *Montana Slim's Greatest Hits*.

Cash, Johnny. "Send a Picture of Mother." *Johnny Cash At Folsom Prison*.

-----"There's a Mother Always Waiting at Home." *Personal File*.

Clifton, Bill. "When You Kneel at Mother's Grave." *Bill Clifton—The Early*

*Years 1957-1958.*

Daniels, Charlie. "God Bless The Mother." *Freedom and Justice for All.*

Dorsey, Thomas A. "If I Could Hear My Mother Pray Again." *Mighty Day—25 Gospel Greats.*

The Five Blind Boys of Alabama. "I Can See Everybody's Mother But Mine." *Everytime I Feel the Spirit: 16 Greats.*

The Flat Creek Sacred Singers. "Mother, Tell Me of the Angels." 78rpm.

Flatt, Lester and Earl Scruggs and the Stanley Brothers. "Mother No Longer Awaits for Me At Home." *Lester Flatt and Earl Scruggs and The Stanley Brothers Selected Sides 1947-1953.*

----- "A Vision of Mother." *Lester Flatt and Earl Scruggs and the Stanley Brothers Selected Sides 1947-1953.*

The Forrester Sisters. "My Mother's Eyes." *You Again.*

----- "Motherless Child." *Sunday Meetin'.*

Golden Gate Quartet. "Motherless Child." *Jericho.*

The Grisham Family. "Angels Tell Mother I'll Be There." 78rpm.

Haggard, Merle (and the strangers). "Mama Tried." *Mama Tried.*

The Harmonizing Four. "Motherless Child." *I Shall Not Be Moved.*

----- "Mother's Prayer Has Followed Me." *This Is Gospel: Vol. 18.*

Hazel & Alice. "The Sweetest Gift a Mother's Smile." *Hazel & Alice.*

Hynes, Ron. "The Mother Who Bore You in Pain." *Ron Hynes.*

Kentucky Mountain Boys. "Tis Home Because Mother is Here." 78 rpm.

----- "He Carved His Mother's Name Upon The Tree." 78 rpm.

-----, "You'll Never Miss Your Mother Till She's Gone." 78 rpm.

The Louvin Brothers. "God Bless Her ('Cause She's My Mother)." *The Family Who Prays*.

-----, "What A Friend We Have in Mother." *Songs that Tell A Story*.

-----, "Take the News To Mother." *Tragic Songs of Life*.

Masri, Mark. (featuring Jim Brickman). "A Mother's Love." *The Voice*.

Monias, Ernest. "Mother's Only Sleeping." *The Gospel Side of Ernest Monias*. digital.

Neaves, Glen (and the Virginia Mountain Boys). "What a Friend We Have in Mother (She'll Be There)." *Country Bluegrass from Southwest Virginia*.

Ordge, Jimmy Arthur. "Mother's Bible." *The Legend*.

The Original Five Blind Boys of Mississippi. "Mother Told Me About Jesus." *Meet the Blind Boys*.

Owens, Buck. "Dust on Mother's Bible." *Act Naturally*.

Paramount Singers. "Mother." *Work and Pray On*.

Patty, Sandi. "A Mother's Prayer." *Sing Me To Sleep, Mommy*.

Peck, Karen. (and New River). "There's Somethin' Goin' On (When Momma Prays)." *Ephesians One*.

Pierce, Webb. "Country Church." and "Mother Call My Name in Prayer." *Webb Pierce: All Hits*.

The Rambos. "Mama's Teaching Angels How To Sing." *The Very Best of the Rambos*.

Reeves, Jim. "Shall We Gather at the River? (Mother Went a Walking)." 37 *Great Performances*.

- Reno and Smiley. "Always be Kind to Your Mother," "A Pretty Wreath for Mother's Grave," "My Mother's Bible," "Mother's Only Sleeping," and "How I Miss My Darling Mother." *Tribute to Mother*.
- Robbins, Marty. "Pray for Me Mother of Mine." *Country: 1951-1958*.
- Rodgers, Jimmie. "Whisper Your Mother's Name." *On the Way Up 1929*.
- . "Mother, the Queen of My Heart." and "Mother Was a Lady." *The Singing Brakeman*.
- Snow, Hank. "I'll Not Forget My Mother's Prayer." *The Yodelling Ranger (1936-1947)*.
- Sparks, Larry. "Mother, How I Miss You." *The Old Church Yard*.
- The Stanley Brothers. "Mother's Footsteps Guide Me On." and "Mother No Longer Awaits Me." *The Stanley Brothers on Radio*.
- The Stanley Brothers. "Mother Left Me Her Bible." *16 Greatest Gospel Hits*.
- . "Mother Call My Name in Prayer," "Old Country Church," and "Mother's Only Sleeping." *Old Country Church*.
- The Stanley Brothers. "Memories of Mother." *Angel Band: The Classic Mercury Recordings*.
- Staples, Mavis and Lucky Peterson. "If I Could Hear My Mother Pray Again." *Spirituals & Gospel: Dedicated to Mahalia Jackson*.
- J.D. Sumner and the Stamps. "Where We'll Never Grow Old/Near the Cross/Tell Mother I'll Be There." *Gospel Masters: J.D. Sumner & The Stamps*. Daywind.
- The Tillmans. "My Mother's Old Bible is True" ("My Mother's Bible"). 78 rpm.
- Wagoner, Porter. "Here's a Toast to Mama." *The Cold Hard Facts of Life*.
- . "Mother Church of Country Music." *Best of Grand Old Gospel 2008*.



Watson, Doc. "I Hear My Mother Weeping." *Watson Family Tradition*.

The Whites with Ricky Skaggs. "Will My Mother Know Me There?" *The Unbroken Circle—The Musical Heritage of the Carter Family*.

Williams, Hank. "I Dreamed About Mama Last Night." *Hank Williams as Luke the Drifter*.

----- "Message to My Mother." *I Saw the Light (remastered)*.

----- "The Prodigal Son." *I Saw the Light (remastered)*.

----- "Mother is Gone." *The Complete Hank Williams*.

----- "I Heard My Mother Praying for Me." *The Complete Hank Williams*.

----- "Dear Brother." *The Complete Hank Williams*.

----- "I've Just Told Mama Goodbye." *The Complete Hank Williams*.

York, Rusty and the Kentucky Mountain Boys. "If I Could Hear My Mother Pray Again." *Rusty York and The Kentucky Mountain Boys: Early Bluegrass*.

**d. Soldier**

Allen, Red. "Are You Washed in the Blood?" *Classic Southern Gospel*.

Ashley, Clarence and Doc Watson. "Daniel Prayed." *Original Folkways Recordings: 1960-1962*.

The Carter Family. "Keep on the Sunny Side," "Sunshine in the Shadows," "Keep on the Firing Line," and "On the Sea of Galilee." *The Carter Family: In the Shadow of Clinch Mountain*.

The Cathedrals. "Step Into the Water." *Southern Gospel's 15 All-Time Favorites*.

Chuck Wagon Gang. "Lord, Lead Me On." *Close Harmony: A History of Southern Gospel Music, Volume One: 1920-1955*.

Daniels, Charlie. "Whose Side Are You On?" *Steel Witness*.

Ely, "Brother" Claude. "There's a Leak in This Old Building." and "You've Gotta Move." *Satan, Get Back!*

Ernie Haase & Signature Sound. *Get Away, Jordan*. DVD.

The Florida Boys. "Onward Christian Soldiers." *45 Songs of Faith*.

Fowler, Wally. "I Want To Be More Like Jesus." *Close Harmony: A History of Southern Gospel Music, Volume One: 1920-1955*.

Gaither, Bill and Gloria. "Onward Christian Soldiers/We're Marching to Zion." *America, the Beautiful*.

The Isaacs. "Walk On." *Big Sky*.

Jordanaires. "Joshua Fit the Battle." and "Shadrack." *Jordanaires*. Digital release.

Karnes, Alfred G. "Called to the Foreign Field." and "To the Work." *The Bristol Sessions: The Big Bang of Country Music: 1927-1928*.

Kingdom Heirs. "We Will Stand Our Ground." *We Will Stand Our Ground*

The LeFevres. "Keep On the Firing Line." *Keep On the Firing Line.*

The Louvin Brothers. "Do You Live What You Preach?" "Are You Washed in the Blood?" "Weapon of Prayer." and "Great Atomic Power." *Classic Album Collection.*

----- . "Preach the Gospel." and "Make Him a Soldier." *The Family Who Prays.*

Monroe, Bill and His Bluegrass Boys. "I'm Working on a Building." *Classic Southern Gospel.*

The Peerless Four. "I'm a Soldier in the Army of The Lord." *The Alan Lomax Collection: Southern Journey, Vol. 8: Velvet Voices.*

Phipps, Ernest and his Holiness Quartet. "Shine on Me," "I Want to Go Where Jesus Is," "Do Lord, Remember Me," and "Happy in Prison." *The Bristol Sesssions: The Big Bang of Country Music: 1927-1928.*

Rebels Quartet. "The Fourth Man." *20 Gospel Video Classics: Historical Performances.* DVD.

Reed, "Blind" Allen. "I Mean to Live for Jesus," "You Must Unload," and "Walking in the Way With Jesus." *The Bristol Sesssions: The Big Bang of Country Music: 1927-1928.*

Sacred Harp Singers. "Cross of Christ." *Lookout Mountain Convention 1968.*

The Sanders Family. "War Medley." *Sanders Family Christmas.*

The Sons of the Pioneers. "Onward Christian Soldiers." *Country Gospel, Vol. 2: Onward Christian Soldiers.*

----- . "Read the Bible Every Day." *Country Gospel: the Old Rugged Cross.*

The Stamps Quartet. "Like the Rainbow." and "Do Your Best, Then Wear A Smile." *The Bristol Sesssions: The Big Bang of Country Music: 1927-1928.*

----- . "Give The World a Smile." *Close Harmony: A History of Southern Gospel Music, Volume One: 1920-1955.*

The Statler Brothers. "Keep On the Firing Line." *The Gospel Music of the Statler Brothers, Vol. 1.*

Stanely, Ralph. "Keep On the Firing Line." *A Distant Land to Roam--Songs of the Carter Family.*

The Statesmen. "Blood Bought Church." *O My Lord What a Time.*

Stoneman, Ernest V. and His Dixie Mountaineers. "Are You Washed in the Blood?" and "I Am Resolved." *The Bristol Sessions: The Big Bang of Country Music: 1927-1928.*

Story, Carl. "Are You Walking and a Talking for the Lord?" *Best of Bluegrass: Preachin', Prayin' Singin'.*

Talley, Kirk. "Step Into the Water." *Shhhh.*

The Tennessee Mountaineers. "Standing on the Promises." *The Bristol Sessions: The Big Bang of Country Music: 1927-1928.*

Vaughan Sand Mountain Quartet. "I'll Not Deny My Saviour." *Close Harmony: A History of Southern Gospel Music, Volume One: 1920-1955.*

Wright, Woody, Terry Blackwood, Sherman Andrus, Reggie Smith, Wesley Pritchard, Guy Penrod and members of the New York "Firefighters for Christ." "A Few Good Men." *Let Freedom Ring: Live from Carnegie Hall.* DVD.

**e. Stand Our Ground**

*A great many other songs fit here, including many of the Soldier and Momma archetype, but they depend on both their context and their performance practice to express the agenda of Christian Nationalism. I have included here recordings that on first listen are distinctly Christian Nationalist.*

Daniels, Charlie. "It's Happening Now," "New Pharisees," "Payback Time," and "Whose Side are You On?," *Steel Witness*.

----- "My Beautiful America (Recitation)," "In America," "Let Freedom Ring," "The Last Fallen Hero," "Freedom and Justice for All," "This Ain't No Rag, It's a Flag," "America, I Believe in You." *Freedom and Justice for All*.

----- "Simple Man," "Iraq Blues," and "How Great Thou Art." *Live from Iraq*.

Greater Vision. "I Know a Man Who Can." *The Only Way*.

The Kingdom Heirs. "We Will Stand Our Ground." *We Will Stand Our Ground*.

----- "How We Gonna Live in Babylon" *Redeeming the Time*.

Mark Trammell Quartet. "Statue of Liberty." *Treasures*.

NQC: Live. Vol. 5-8. NQC Promotional Videos. DVD.

NQC: "100 Years: A Celebration of Southern Gospel Music." NQC Produced Highlight DVD.

Triumphant Quartet. "Let's All Stand For America." *Songs from the Heart*.