Singing with the Faithful of Every Time and Place: Thoughts on Liturgical Inculturation and Cross-Cultural Liturgy

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Jesus shall reign where'er the sun
Does his successive journeys run;
His kingdom stretch from shore to shore,
Till moons shall wax and wane no more.
Isaac Watts, *Psalms of David Imitated*, 1719 (Stanza 1)

The United Methodist bishop Joel Martínez noted at a conference in 1996 that "each generation must add its stanza to the great hymn of the church." I have found this a viable metaphor for understanding the range of congregational song available to us today. If we think of all Christian congregational song as comprising a grand hymn of the church throughout the ages, two thoughts come to mind immediately: (1) when singing a hymn, one does not begin on the final stanza but usually sings all of the stanzas, and furthermore, one does not usually stop on stanza three of a four- or five-stanza hymn; (2) the second point that this metaphor raises is a question: What does the stanza being shaped by Christians in this generation look and sound like? Looking at worship in general and congregational singing specifically through the lens of culture may open up some insight into this question.

The Dialogue between Cult and Culture

Culture has always been integral to cult. Since the Second Vatican Counsel (1962-65), this relationship has come to the forefront of liturgical discussions. Many of these discussions reflect the worship concerns of minority cultures within a dominant cultural environment. Ethnic minorities increasingly are seeking ways to embody in worship their language, customs and patterns of being-in-community. Africa, in particular, has been a fertile trial region for contextual liturgies. Even before Vatican II, the Belgian missionary Guido Haazen notated the Congolese *Missa Luba* in 1956, sung in Latin from oral practice. Father Stephen Mbunga, whose doctoral thesis in 1963 supported in strong terms the development of African expressions of music,[1] composed *Missa Baba Yetu* (Mass of Our Father) in 1959 based on traditional music of the Lake Malawi region. These works, countless discussions among Africans, and the encouragement of forward-thinking missionaries paved the way for the recognition by Pope John Paul II of the "Zaïrian Rite" of the Mass in 1988. Many composers of African Christian music since the Second Vatican Council have been encouraged to continue their efforts toward musical inculturation.

In the United States discussions concerning the relationship between cult and culture have increased in frequency and intensity. The ten-year report of *The Milwaukee Symposium for Church Composers* (1992) includes a section on "Cross-Cultural Music Making."[2] According to Edward Foley, the primary drafter of the Milwaukee report, *The Snowbird Statement on Catholic Liturgical Music* (1995) represents in part a reaction to, and perhaps a retrenchment from, many of the ideas presented in it. Under the auspices of the Lutheran World Federation, *The Nairobi Statement on Worship and Culture* (1996) reflects a much broader ethnic consultation combining the efforts of many representatives, who include the liturgical theologian Gordon Lathrop from the United States, and the Benedictine liturgical scholar Anscar Chupungco from the Philippines.[3] One of the most systematic discussions of the relationship between worship

and culture thus far, this document specifies four areas of interaction:

- Worship is *transcultural*. "The resurrected Christ whom we worship, and through whom by the power of the Holy Spirit we know the grace of the Triune God, transcends and indeed is beyond all cultures" (2.1). Transcultural elements extend to various aspects of worship as well as to the ordo or core liturgical structure of liturgy.

- Worship is *contextual*. "Jesus whom we worship was born into a specific culture of the world" (3.1). Borrowing from Chupungco's theories of liturgical inculturation, the contextual aspects of worship are derived from the principle of dynamic equivalence and creative assimilation. Dynamic equivalence involves "re-expressing components of Christian worship with something from a local culture that has an equal meaning, value, and function. Dynamic equivalence goes far beyond mere translation; it involves understanding the fundamental meanings both of elements of worship and of the local culture, and enabling the meanings and actions of worship to be 'encoded' and re-expressed in the language of local culture" (3.2). Creative assimilation requires "adding pertinent components of local culture to the liturgical ordo in order to enrich its original core" (3.4).

- Worship is also *counter-cultural*. Based on Romans 12:2, the Nairobi Statement suggests that "Jesus Christ came to transform all people and all cultures, and calls us not to conform to the world, but to be transformed with it" (4.1). Furthermore, a counter-cultural perspective "also involves the transformation of cultural patterns which idolize the self or the local group at the expense of a wider humanity, or which give central place to the acquisition of wealth at the expense of the care of the earth and its poor" (4.2).

- Finally, worship is *cross-cultural*. "Jesus came to be the Savior of all people. He welcomes the treasures of earthly cultures into the city of God" (5.1). The document states that "care should be taken that the music, art, architecture, gestures and postures, and other elements of different cultures are understood and respected when they are used by churches elsewhere in the world" (5.2).

These four criteria together provide insight into how liturgy and culture may be effectively woven together in the worship experience. While all are important and essential in any analysis, I will focus on contextual and cross-cultural aspects of congregational singing. What and how we sing in worship is a significant aspect of liturgical inculturation.

Aylward Shorter defines inculturation as "the on-going dialogue between faith and culture or cultures. More fully, it is the creative and dynamic relationship between the Christian message and a culture or cultures."[4] Anscar Chupungco enlarges on this definition: Inculturation is a "process of reciprocal assimilation between Christianity and culture and the resulting interior transformation of culture on the one hand and the rooting of Christianity in culture on the other....[This] process of interaction and mutual assimilation brings progress to both [worship and culture]; it does not cause mutual extinction."[5] Using these definitions as a guide, I propose to look at inculturation through selected congregational songs.

Case Studies in Culture and Hymnody

Drawing on the Nairobi Statement, we can say that congregational singing is a *transcultural* activity in worship. Virtually all Christian traditions have and do participate in some form of congregational singing.[6] Hymns are also *contextual* artifacts. Analyzers of Western hymnody usually include literary, theological, and historical perspectives, but are less likely to look at hymns through a cultural lens. It may be that cultural knowledge is assumed. However, when songs beyond the Euro-North American context are sung, the cultural aspects of the experience come to the fore.

In an attempt to explore the benefits of a cultural analysis of hymns and hymn singing, we will examine more closely three well-known congregational songs that represent stanzas of what Bishop Martínez called "the great hymn of the church." Isaac Watts's "Jesus Shall Reign" serves as an object of contextual analysis. Prudentius's "Corde natus ex Parentis" illustrates a cross-cultural dimension of hymnody from a historical perspective. The South African freedom song "Siyahamba" is an example of a song, forged recently in a specific cultural and political context, that has spread around the world, and is used extensively across cultures. As the choice and popularity of "Siyahamba" indicates, many of the songs that make up the "stanza" of our generation come from the Southern hemisphere. Noting this reality, I will suggest an approach for understanding and incorporating in our worship the different structures that come to us through the use of songs from beyond the Euro-North American context.

"*Jesus Shall Reign"—a contextual case study*. As one of the best-known hymns in the English language, "Jesus Shall Reign" (1719) has served as an expression of missionary vision for virtually all Protestant denominations for at least two hundred years. By the nineteenth century Watts's free paraphrase of selected verses from Psalm 72 had come to epitomize the emerging expansion of the missionary movement.[7] His words have shaped the thought and theology by which the Western church defined its understanding of missions during the period of its most dramatic growth.[8] The identity of Christian missions was nurtured in the milieu of European political monarchies, and developed during a time when Christians assumed not only a relationship between the kingdom of Christ and major European kingdoms, but also the divine right of kings. "Jesus Shall Reign" gives voice to an emerging movement devoted to spreading the Good News of salvation "throughout the world which was ignorant of this knowledge of God in Jesus Christ."[9]

This, and many of Watts's other hymns and psalm paraphrases, deserves to be sung in churches everywhere. Like all of our congregational song, "Jesus Shall Reign" reflects its culture, and may be seen as an artifact of liturgical inculturation. Watts understood the context of those who would sing his psalm-paraphrases and hymns; part of the process of hymnic inculturation was to compose texts in a manner that allowed them to be understood by the singers of his time, "working-class worshipers of England's Nonconformist congregations."[10] Furthermore, he adapted to the practice of lining out metrical psalms by following the principle of one line, one thought, so that precentors expressed a complete thought when speaking a line before the congregation was to sing it. This avoided the dreadful practice of singing only a partial idea and having to wait for the next phrase from the precentor to complete the thought.[11]

While I value this psalm paraphrase as representative of one stanza in the unfolding hymn of the church throughout the ages, our present context forces us to examine Watts's understanding of "kingdom" in light of increasingly cross-cultural societies. The image of kingdom in Watts's day

was one of a consummate hierarchy in which the rulers of the nations represented, to varying degrees, the authority of God. Such an image crumbles under the weight of the current international reality. This old-world view of "kingdom" inherited from the eighteenth century provides at best an ambiguous model for Christ's realm on earth. In a world where the influence of multi-national corporations often supersedes that of national governmental structures, the concept of kingdom may come across as both archaic and irrelevant unless it is grounded theologically in an understanding of the eschatological realm of God.

As we shall see "Jesus Shall Reign" shows Watts as a patriot of the monarchy. Yet he and Dissenters in England were often in tension with this monarchy. The Schism Act of 1714 forbade independent congregations like Watts's to run schools, and foreshadowed the possibility of further persecution for those outside the Church of England. Queen Anne died providentially on the day the Act was to take force, and it was repealed by 1719, the year that Watts's *Psalms of David* Imitated was published.[12] Perhaps Watt's paraphrase of Psalm 90, "Man Frail and God Eternal" (better known as "Our God, Our Help in Ages Past"), written following the enactment of the Schism Act, reflects a tempering of his patriotic pride. In stanzas four and eight of the original text Watts notes the ephemeral nature of all nations:

> Thy word commands our flesh to dust,
> Return, ye sons of men:
> All nations rose from earth at first,
> And turn to earth again.
>
> Like flow'ry fields the nations stand
> Pleas'd with the morning light;
> The flowers beneath the Mower's hand
> Lie withering e'er 'tis night.[13]

Watts's habit of Christianizing the psalter, a hallmark of his psalm paraphrases,[14] was a major change from earlier metrical versions that attempted to stay as close as possible to the Hebrew. So, rather than follow the lead of Sternhold and Hopkins's *Whole Booke of Psalmes* in the mid-sixteenth century, or Tate and Brady's New Version, first published at the end of the seventeenth century, Watts set out on a new course, "[taking] the Hebrew and recast[ing] it, as if the psalmist were writing in the Christian era."[15] One result was "Jesus shall reign," the astonishing incipit for Psalm 72.[16] As Watts states in his "Preface; or An Inquiry into the right way of Fitting the Book of Psalms for Christian Worship," Christians sing the psalms from a different perspective from the Hebrews, for we express nothing but the character, the concerns, and the religion of the Jewish king; while our own circumstances, and our own religion (which are so widely different from his) have little to do in the sacred song; and our affections want something of property or interest in the words, to awaken them at first, and to keep them lively.[17]

As Robin Leaver has noted, "In the older metrical versions there was a concern for a re-representation of the psalm, but in Watts the concern was for re-interpretation."[18] Re-interpretation of the psalter for worship is liturgical inculturation through congregational song. While Watts's approach to the psalter demonstrates a particular Christocentric inclination, there is both internal textual and external social evidence that the hymn "Jesus Shall Reign," though reflecting its culture well, suffers from an ethnocentric propensity by today's standards. One of the dangers of liturgical inculturation is that the regional appeal of a hymn may limit its

universal application. As Watts Christianized the psalter to fit his own religion, he also particularized the psalter to fit his own region of the world. Hymnal editors have usually excised stanzas two and three of Watts's original hymn partly for their regional disposition:

> Behold the islands with their Kings,
> And *Europe* her best tribute brings;
> From *North* to *South* the princes meet
> To pay their homage at his feet.
>
> There *Persia* glorious to behold,
> There *India* shines in *Eastern* gold;
> And barbarous nations at his word
> Submit and bow and own their Lord.[19]

Psalm 72 specifically mentions Tarshish, Arabia, and Saba; Watts substituted locations where England was developing mission activity along with colonial and economic interests. The "barbarous nations" in the second stanza quoted above actually appear in a revised form in a twentieth-century American hymnal as "savage tribes."[20]

This substitution of contemporary locations for biblical or mythological ones represented a codified literary device of the time known as "imitation." Following the example of great eighteenth-century poets such as John Milton, Alexander Pope, and John Dryden, Watts was not only a master of this device, but also was in the vanguard of its use.[21] While freeing psalm-singing from a strict metrical approach that was often poetically stilted, he offered Dissenting congregations freer adaptations or paraphrases of the psalms. Indeed, the complete title of his primary psalm collection, *The Psalms of David Imitated in the Language of the New Testament, and Apply'd to the Christian State and Worship*, is a direct reference to the device of imitation.[22] Many followed Watts's lead by "imitating" the psalms in their own cultural context. The effective use of imitation depended on a thorough knowledge of the original psalm, usually in the 1611 translation commonly known as the King James Version.

Although Watts could identify with the "stranger in distress, the widow and the fatherless," as he did in his paraphrase of Psalm 146, "I'll Praise my Maker While I've Breath,"[23] issues of justice receive short shrift in "Jesus Shall Reign." Psalm 72 states that "He shall keep the simple folk by their right, defend the children of the poor, and punish the wrong doer . . . . For he shall deliver the poor when he crieth; the needy also, and him that hath no helper. He shall be favorable to the simple and needy, and shall preserve the souls of the poor" (verses 4, 12–13). The mandate of this prophetic passage is considerably obscured in Watts's paraphrase found in the original stanza six:

> Blessings abound where'er he reigns,
> The prisoner leaps to lose his chains,
> The weary find eternal rest,
> And all the sons of want are blest.

Watts freely adapted the psalms and omitted those ideas that he thought unworthy of a New Testament ethic.[24]

How can we know what the hymn meant in its time? Evidence comes from the colonial caste system in eighteenth-century India under British rule. The East India Company was chartered by Queen Elizabeth I in 1600, and by 1689 the directors of the Company resolved to "make us a nation in India."[25] By 1711, just a few years before the writing of Watts's hymn, Alexander Dalrymple noted that the "great endeavour of all commercial states, is to draw the production of other countries to its own center."[26] Because Western music of this era was philosophically based on certain "universal" laws that were as constant as "the circulation of the blood and the law of gravity,"[27] music not corresponding to these natural laws was by implication inferior. Music was one of the cultural props that allowed eighteenth-century British expatriates to maintain their role at the assumed pinnacle of society, separate from the local population. The arts "mask[ed] the image of *realpolitik* by erasing all evidence of that which had been subdued and of how the defeat was accomplished by trade and labor exploitation, racial separation, bureaucratization, and the brutality of military enforcement."[28]

In his discussion of the great missionary expansion of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Jaroslav Pelikan refers to "Jesus Shall Reign" as a symbol of Christian growth. He notes that "the sun never sets on the empire of Jesus the King, the Man Who Belongs to the World."[29] God's purpose and Great Britain's ecclesiastical, political, and economic destiny seem to merge in "Jesus Shall Reign." Was the Dissenting British parishioner singing subconsciously:

> [Britain] shall reign where'er the sun
> Does [her] successive journeys run;
> [Her] kingdom stretch from shore to shore,
> Till moons shall wax and wane no more.

Given that Watts was known to substitute "Britain" for "Israel" in some of the psalms, probably not.[30]

"Corde natus ex parentis"—a cross-cultural case study. The text of "Jesus Shall Reign" clearly reflects the culture of its time not only in its Christian updating of the psalter, but in the rhyming of its poetic couplets and its long meter structure. "Of the Father's Love Begotten" demonstrates a historical cross-cultural excursion of nearly sixteen centuries.

This Latin hymn is the work of the Spanish poet Marcus Aurelius Clemens Prudentius in the early fifth century of the Christian era. Prudentius was educated in law before turning to an ascetic spiritual life at age fifty-seven.[31] His devotional poetry was widely read, and was influential during the Middle Ages. Many hymns were derived from his long Latin poems, as was the case with "Corde natus ex parentis." Needless to say, early fifth century Spanish piety is far removed from a twenty-first century Christian. Prudentius' poetic reflections on the nature of Christ within the Trinity, however, growing out of the theological controversies of the fourth century, provide a transcultural content—that is, content that has relevance across cultures in time and in space—for the broader Christian community.

In 1851 John Mason Neale, a guiding light of the Oxford movement in worship, architecture, and hymnody, translated and versified the Latin text as "Of the Father's Love Begotten." Translation always modifies the original, especially in hymnody, where stringent rules of meter and rhyme must be observed. Even the opening line of the English translation departs significantly from the Latin, which is literally "born of the parent's heart." Neale's English text was revised by Henry

Williams Baker for inclusion in the first edition of the monumental *Hymns Ancient and Modern* in 1861. A doxological stanza was added at a later date.

To the poem of a fifth-century Spanish poet, and a tune found in medieval Italian and German trope collections (*Divinum mysterium*), the English translation added the imprint of mid-nineteenth-century Great Britain during a time when the Anglican Church was attempting to reclaim the glory of the medieval church. England also left other cultural marks on this text when the previously monophonic, unaccompanied melody was harmonized and accompanied on the organ, and when it was sung not by choirs at monastic gatherings but by congregations. The hymn comes to many of us in our hymnals more or less in the manner conceived by Neale and Baker in mid-nineteenth century England.

The story is not over, however. Federico Pagura, a bishop in the Argentine Methodist Church and a fine poet in his own right, translated the original Latin poem into Spanish, a language descended from Prudentius' proto-Catalonian native tongue. Though the Spanish of Pagura's Argentina is vastly removed in syntax, time, and space from Prudentius' Latin, the Spanish translation, "Fruto del amor divino" (1962), offers Spanish-speaking Christians a way to sing this great classic hymn in their own language. Furthermore, it is a way for contemporary descendants of folks from the Iberian peninsula to claim through song a sense of unity with a church dating back to the fifth century.[32] The incipit of the Spanish translation, literally "fruit of the divine love," once again departs from the original Latin. "Fruto del amor divino" appears in *Mil Voces Para Celebrar* (1996), the United Methodist Spanish-language hymnal, with an organ accompaniment from *Hymnal 1940*, an earlier hymnal of the Episcopal Church in the United States. With Pagura's translation and the new harmonization, this classic hymn is given a thoroughly American (South and North) treatment.

The spirit of Prudentius' original poem pervades the versions we sing today, although regrettably many current hymnals have omitted some of the most important stanzas. After several translations and adaptations, however, this is not the original poem. Neither is the musical experience of singing this hymn today similar to that of the monastic world of Prudentius' day. The versions of "Corde natus ex parentis" offer a cross-cultural mosaic of fifth-century Spain, medieval Italy and Germany, nineteenth-century England, twentieth-century Argentina, and the United States. While this is a more complex example than some, whenever we sing Martin Luther's "A Mighty Fortress," Isaac Watts's "Our God, Our Help in Ages Past," Charles Wesley's "Hark, the Herald Angels Sing," Fanny Crosby's "Blessed Assurance," the anonymous American folk hymn "Wondrous Love," or Charles Tindley's "Stand by Me," we are entering into a cross-cultural experience that has countless permutations depending on translations, textual modifications, and musical arrangement.

"Siyahamba"—an African case study.[33] This well-known Zulu song has been incorporated into several recent hymnals and is widely sung in North America.[34] Rather than being composed for congregations, it emerged out of struggles in the streets and townships of South Africa, being conceived orally and only later written down. The South African ethnomusicologist David Dargie notes that "Siyahamba" originated as a freedom song with Amadodana, a Methodist young men's group, within the cultural context of apartheid political oppression.

Though the words are few, they are as pregnant with meaning as an African proverb—especially to those who live in the culture. Usually translated as "We are marching in the light of God," the simple text contains layers of meaning. "We" is a word of community, the community of those

living, as well as the community of the living dead, the ancestors. "Marching" is an action that unifies the members of the community as they move physically and spiritually in the same direction. It is a physical, kinesthetic response to the Spirit, not a passive acquiescence. "The light of God" has meaning on several levels. While light is a symbol of creation and of Jesus Christ, who is "the light of the world," it is also a common subject of songs of healing, or *ngoma*, throughout Southern and Central Africa. The refrain, "Let darkness be replaced with light," is coded language for "seeing clearly."[35] God is the source of clear sight in the midst of the struggle; that is, God is the source of discernment and truth. As we march we can see our way ahead—even though armed police may be in our way. Our path is clear. Where there is light, there is hope.

"Siyahamba" and many of the South African freedom songs available in current hymnals were forged in the fires of the anti-apartheid struggle. Out of defining events like the Sharpeville Massacre in 1960 a song emerged that when sung in the streets could convey hope in the face of oppression, maintain dignity in the face of violence, and unite people in the face of turmoil. When this message is sung, the words are embodied in the lives of the community that sings and dances it. The song's cyclic musical structure immediately draws in everyone present. As "Siyahamba" was conceived orally, and is performed without written music, its portability allows the song to be taken to places of darkness where its message can expose evil in its myriad forms, and offer the singers hope. It allows the performers/participants to add to the basic song a message that draws into it the existential reality of the situation. "We" grow in number as we "march," for there are those who join us literally on the way. The song accommodates and even facilitates a growing, evolving community of believers. "We are marching," knowing we are never alone in our struggle. The living dead are always singing with us. When this song is taken into the liturgy as a processional it brings with it the struggle of the streets, and it sanctifies this struggle in the liturgy. Singing "Siyahamba" says that liturgy is not hermetically sealed from daily life, but is a place to mend the wounds of oppression, and to receive a blessing to return to the streets in hope for freedom.

Three cross-cultural messages. As North American congregations sing these songs in worship in the twenty-first century, they receive not only their textual and musical content, but also aspects of their culture. "Jesus Shall Reign" is an icon of the English monarchy at the height of its missionary zeal and colonial expansion. Though hymnal editors have excised the stanzas that manifest its most parochial aspects, vestiges of eighteenth-century colonialism remain. Yet "Jesus Shall Reign" reflects for us, as much as for eighteenth-century Christians, a vision of a world where Christ is sung—in the words of "From All That Dwell Below the Skies," Watts's paraphrase of Psalm 117, "through every land, by every tongue." It is a cross-cultural expression whose "kingdom" images present a challenge to Christians living in a democratic, non-monarchial political system such as the United States. Yet its cross-cultural message is still relevant.

"Of the Father's Love Begotten" is a much more complex example which draws from several cultures through seventeen centuries. It is a historical cross-cultural masterpiece that caries with it vestiges of early Christian theology, medieval plainsong, the Oxford movement of the nineteenth century, with twentieth-century permutations. The essential Trinitarian theology that emerged from the councils of the early church is still relevant to Christians today.

"Siyahamba" differs from the other two in that it is a song growing out of a relatively recent struggle—against apartheid in South Africa, one of the most insidious forms of sustained institutionalized political oppression perpetrated by a dominant government on its people. Though the experience of oppressed South Africans may seem far removed from our lives, those who join in solidarity with them by singing "Siyahamba" sing of resistance to all forms of oppression. Furthermore, singing "Siyahamba" may give voice to those who have experienced oppression within the United States and to others who wish to stand in solidarity with them.

As a concurrent cross-cultural experience, "Siyahamba" may offer particular challenges to congregations in the United States, challenges that may not be present in Western historical cross-cultural artifacts. "Siyahamba" originates in an oral culture and uses a cyclic musical form that differs from the stanzas of Western poetry. It is to this particular cross-cultural challenge that I wish to turn.

Sequential versus Cyclic Song Structures

Sequential songs. These maintain a train of thought over several stanzas, and develop an idea, bringing it to a climax or logical conclusion.[36] This may be achieved in several ways. A hymn on the Trinity may devote each of its first three stanzas to an aspect of the concept, and conclude with a doxological stanza of praise that lifts up all three facets in unity. "Come, Thou Almighty King" is a classic example. A more recent Trinitarian hymn is Jeffrey Rowthorn's "Creating God, Your Fingers Trace," which refers to the work of the members of the Trinity as "Creating God," "Sustaining God," "Redeeming God," "Indwelling God," omitting the classic formula, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Or a hymn may follow the progress of a passage of Scripture. See the familiar setting of Psalm 23 from the *Scottish Psalter*, "The Lord's My Shepherd," or, for a New Testament example, "While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks by Night," based on Luke 2. Both of these follow the narrative as presented in the King James Version. A more recent example is Timothy Dudley-Smith's paraphrase of the *Magnificat* in Luke 1, "Tell Out My Soul," derived from the translation found in the *New Jerusalem Bible*.

A sequential hymn may tell a story. Hymns have always told part or all of the life of Christ as musical ballads. The medieval hymn, "O Love, How Deep, How Broad, How High," is a fine example. "O Sons and Daughters" takes the singer through the passion, resurrection, and post-resurrection events of Christ's life. The stanzas of the African American spiritual, "Were You There," focus on the progression of events during Christ's passion. Sydney Carter's "Lord of the Dance" is a more recent example of a hymn that tells the story of Christ's life in a ballad form around the metaphor of dance.

Some hymns describe an attribute of God, or praise God, but conclude with a final stanza of petition. Petitions often employ subjunctives, or imperative verbs—for example, note the petitions (italicized) in the final stanza of Charles Wesley's famous hymn, "Love Divine, All Loves Excelling":

> *Finish* then thy new creation;
> Pure and spotless *let us be*.
> *Let us find* thy great salvation
> Perfectly restored in thee.

A more recent example is the Japanese hymn "Here, O Lord, Your Servants Gather" by Tokuo Yamaguchi, with a translation by Everett Stowe. The first three stanzas elaborate the theme of John 14:6, "I am the way, the truth, and the life," while the final stanza is a series of petitions with the imperative verbs "grant," "help," and "send." These petitions to God serve as a climactic conclusion to a sequential hymn.

Other hymns elaborate on a specific teaching of Christ, and then bring the idea home by applying it to the lives of persons today (a hermeneutic approach). The African American spiritual "When Israel Was in Egypt's Land (Go Down Moses)" concludes in some hymnals with a hermeneutical stanza:

> O let us all from bondage flee, (Let my people go.)
> And let us all in Christ be free, (Let my people go.)

The classic Christmas hymn "Once in Royal David's City," written for children by Cecil Frances Alexander, a children's educator and the wife of an Anglican minister, has a strong hermeneutical sense:

> Jesus is our childhood's pattern,
> Day by day like us he grew;
> He was little, weak and helpless,
> Tears and smiles like us he knew;
> And he feels for all our sadness,
> And he shares in all our gladness.

Some hymns drive their point home with a final stanza, or closing emphasis, on heaven as the goal of Christians. This eschatological approach was a technique often applied by Charles Wesley. See, for example, the final stanza of "Love Divine, All Loves Excelling":

> Changed from glory into glory,
> Till in heaven we take our place,
> Till we cast our crowns before thee,
> Lost in wonder, love and praise.

In the eleventh century Bernard of Clairvaux closed a hymn with a reference to heaven (translated from the Latin by the nineteenth century poet Edward Caswall):

> Jesus, our only joy be thou,
> As thou our prize will be;
> Jesus, be thou our glory now,
> And through eternity.

Hymns about communion often do this, referring in the final stanza to the celestial banquet in which all Christians will share, with Christ at the head of the table. Cesareo Gabaraín's communion hymn "Sheaves of Summer" ("Una Espiga") captures this spirit beautifully in its final stanza:

> En la mesa de Dios de sentarán.
> (At God's table we will sit.)
> Como hijos su pan compartirán.
> (As God's children we will share his bread.)

Finally, the concluding stanzas of some hymns may call us to a commitment to Christ in response to what Christ has done for us. Isaac Watts's "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross" is a classic example:

> Were the whole realm of nature mine,
> That were a present far too small;
> Love so amazing, so divine,
> Demands my soul, my life, my all.

John Bell's recent hymn, "The Summons," asks the question, "Will you come and follow me?" in the first four stanzas. The final stanza responds to Christ's summons:

> Lord, your summons echoes true when you but call my name.
> Let me turn and follow you and never be the same.

Classic sequential hymns use endless variations. The list above is only illustrative.

Cyclic songs. These also have many possibilities for worship. They are usually more textually and musically compact. Unlike the literary approach of sequential structures, cyclic forms may be sung with little or no reference to printed text or music once the song has become familiar to the assembly. Their brevity, and the oral or aural means of transmission, allow worshipers to move their bodies without being encumbered by books, and to observe other ritual actions as they sing. Congregations may sing, for example, while the offering is being taken, while communion is being shared, as families and sponsors come forward for baptism, or as the people welcome a newly baptized person. I have noticed that the level of congregational participation is much greater when people participate in liturgical actions unencumbered with hymnals. A common ritual action is bringing forward the congregation's offering, accompanied by a short, familiar song. In some traditions, the Bible, a symbol of the Word made flesh among us, is held high and carried in procession to the middle of the people before the reading of the Gospel. These are times when a brief cyclic song can gather the community around this important event to watch or participate as singers in the procession.

One common misunderstanding about cyclic structures is that they are repetitive. While this may appear to be the case, I have observed that creative leaders of cyclic songs vary nearly every cycle in some modest way. Those who use cyclic structures effectively approach them more as theme and variation. They may change the instrumentation slightly, or sing some cycles unaccompanied. They may vary the text slightly, changing only a word or two. For example, "Father, I Adore You" uses this approach, with successive cycles naming the remaining persons of the Trinity. Varying the dynamic level from cycle to cycle is another way to add variety. Cantors may improvise separate parts over the congregation's ongoing cycle.

Many Taizé chants use this technique. The cantor's part for the familiar Taizé song "Bless the Lord, My Soul" is based on verses from Psalm 103. This part adds variations to the basic cycle sung by the people. African songs in particular, though not all of them, use an additive approach

to each cycle. A soloist may begin, followed by the choir, and finally all of the people. Through successive cycles the enlivener signals slight changes in the text, or sings with increasing energy a separate part above the congregation's cycle.

Percussion instruments may be added little by little. Movement may begin minimally, and increase in intensity as the musical experience "heats up." Variations may be planned to some degree, but groups that work together over time learn to vary cycles spontaneously. This applies to congregations as well as instrumental groups, whether a West African drum ensemble, a Taizé group, or a praise team preparing contemporary Christian music. Cultural groups whose traditional music is cyclic seem to understand instinctively how these forms work. Others can learn to lead cyclic songs effectively, however, by becoming sensitive to the possibilities of the form.

Refrain forms. The third musical structure combines aspects of both sequential and cyclic structures. The refrain reinforces the overall theme of a hymn. Recent hymns using refrains, many coming from Roman Catholic renewal music, have become popular. "I, the Lord of Sea and Sky" uses this form effectively: the stanzas speak from the perspective of God, and the refrain offers an opportunity for the people to respond, "Here I am, Lord," borrowing from Isaiah 6:8. A soloist or choir can sing the stanzas, while the congregation responds on the refrain. "Lord, You Have Come to the Lakeshore" ("Tu has venido") is similar. The refrain, beginning with "O Lord, with your eyes you have searched me," establishes a strong first-person perspective, drawing the singer into the story as participant.

Refrains may be helpful when teaching a congregation new hymns. Beginning with the refrain when introducing the hymn, and using choir or soloists on the stanzas, allows the congregation to participate quickly while learning parts of the song by listening. Brian Wren's "Woman in the Night" is an example of a hymn that can be taught effectively by this method. Each of the stanzas reflects the perspective of a different female biblical character, and having various women sing the stanzas solo not only personalizes the story but also creates contrast when the people all enter on the refrain, "Come and join the song, women, children, men."

Closely related to refrains are call-response forms. African American spirituals often use this approach. Not only does a call-response add variety to the musical presentation, it is a more authentic way of singing spirituals, as this pattern was used by African American during slavery. Here are some examples:

"They Crucified My Lord"
Call (Solo): They crucified my Lord;
Response (All): And he never said a mumbalin' word.

"When Israel Was in Egypt's Land"
Call (Solo): When Israel was in Egypt's land;
Response (All): Let my people go.
Call (Solo): Oppressed so hard they could not stand;
Response (All): Let my people go.

In many hymnals the call-response patterns may not be indicated. The leader will need to decide how to achieve this effect after examining the song.

Choosing songs according to structure. Knowledge of underlying structures not only adds variety to the presentation of the music in worship but also may bring out the meaning of the text for the singers. Structural knowledge of congregational songs can also be helpful when placing songs within the liturgy. Three general principles emerge:

> 1. Sequential structures communicate theological content in an ample and carefully worded manner. Because of their literary form sequential hymns often work well to provide theological commentary, reinforcing the theme of the day, and anticipating or following ritual actions.
>
> Sequential hymns are not generally effective during ritual activity in worship unless they are very familiar to the congregation (virtually memorized). If well known, sequential hymns may function in a cyclical manner. The selection of well-known hymns varies from congregation to congregation and by faith tradition. Even congregations that use sequential hymns for choir processionals usually sing only familiar songs when combined with ritual activity. Generally, ritual activity that demands the congregation's complete participation does not blend well with sequential hymn singing; for example, a processional during communion is not the best time to introduce a new sequential hymn and expect full and active singing by the congregation.
>
> 2. Cyclic structures focus on community-building and support ongoing ritual activity, especially since they may easily be sung without the aid of books. The essentially oral character of cyclic forms (even though appearing in hymnbooks or other media) calls for a physical response. This is obvious in African and African American cyclic music as well as many Contemporary Christian songs where an outward physical response is normative. The mantra-like cyclic structures of the Taizé chants also have a profound physical effect on the one who sings or prays the song. It is a response that relaxes the body and focuses the mind for centered prayer.
>
> Congregations may benefit by having a variety of cyclic songs at their disposal, perhaps as many as thirty to forty at any one time. The assembly may sing memorized cyclic songs in liturgy on short notice, giving the order of worship an element of spontaneity. While a memorized sequential hymn may work spontaneously, the flow of the service may be lost if the people need to take time to look it up in the hymnal.
>
> 3. Refrain forms can be used in a variety of situations. When soloists or choir sing the stanzas, leaving only the refrain for the congregation, the congregation may be able to participate in a ritual activity as they sing. An example of a ritual activity in which cyclic songs or refrain forms are effective is receiving communion, especially if the congregation processes to receive the communion elements. Cyclic songs such as "Eat This Bread," or "Jesus, Remember Me" from the Taizé Community, work well. Refrain hymns such as "One Bread, One Body," "You Satisfy the Hungry Heart," and "Alleluia, Alleluia, Give Thanks to the Risen Lord," are effective during this ritual activity, as the choir or a soloist sings the stanzas.

Conclusion

All congregational song structures have the potential for providing valid liturgical experiences. Community formation takes place, and theological content is provided, whenever a congregation sings. Using a variety of song structures at appropriate places in the liturgy recognizes the strength of each. One of the challenges of singing cross-culturally, using the music of the world church, is to understand the structures of the songs and how these structures may function most effectively within the liturgy. Music leaders will add energy to worship, and integrate music more completely into the fabric of liturgy, if their choices are not based only on textual themes or musical style, but also for integration into liturgical rituals. Choosing congregational music with an understanding of its structure allows the music to permeate liturgy without drawing attention to itself, while it provides more emphasis on the theological themes and ritual actions that enrich worship.

Spectrum of Congregational Song Structures

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Refrain Forms
Response
Antiphon
Litany
Epimone

Sequential Structures	*Cyclic Structures*
Strophic	Theme and Variation
Textual orientation	Movement orientation
Eye oriented	Ear oriented
Literate tradition	Oral tradition
Predictable performance time	Open-ended performance time
Linear in structure	Episodic in experience
Verbose	Concise
Comments on ritual activity	Participates in ritual activity
Content oriented	Community oriented
Moves toward climax in content	Moves toward participation and integration of participants
Musical Considerations for Sequential Song	*Musical Considerations for Cyclic Song*
Includes strophic hymns where the same music is repeated for successive stanzas	Maintains a steady beat once the song begins
Includes through-composed music and texts where there is no repetition of the music	Each repetition of a cycle needs some small variation
May include texts with brief textual repetition (usually on the last line) or epimone	Often uses a soloist (cantor) to sing over the cycle

The essence of the text is essentially monochromic (teleological)	Improvisations by soloist over ends of phrases
Harmonic variations, varying instrumentations, and descants may provide musical variety from stanza to stanza	Often accompanied by physical response
	Integration of choir and congregation as a unit
	Polychronic (vs. monochromic) sense of time
	Textual improvisations to fit ritual context

ENDNOTES

1. Stephen B. G. Mbunga, *Church Law and Bantu Music: Ecclesiastical Documents and Law in Sacred Music as Applied to Bantu Music* (Schieneck-Beckenried, Switzerland: Nouvelle Revue de Science Missionaire, Supplement 13, 1963).

2. *The Milwaukee Symposium for Church Composers* (Washington, D.C.: The Pastoral Press, 1992). See paragraphs 56–80.

3. "Nairobi Statement on Worship and Culture: Contemporary Challenges and Opportunities," in *Christian Worship: Unity in Cultural Diversity*, ed. S. Anita Stauffer (Geneva: Lutheran World Federation, 1996), 25–28.

4. *Toward a Theology of Inculturation* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1988), 11.

5. *Liturgical Inculturation: Sacramentals, Religiosity, and Catechesis* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1992), 29. The term "inculturation" is derived from the Latin inculturatio and is currently used almost exclusively when referring to the relationship between liturgy and culture. "Enculturation" is a term reserved by anthropologists for the socialization of individuals. John E. Kaemmer, *Music in Human Life: Anthropological Perspectives on Music* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993), states that "a universal feature of human life is the replication in every generation of the techniques, values, and symbols that characterize a particular mode of human life. The instilling of these qualities in the young is called socialization or enculturation" (75).

6. By exception the reformer Ulrich Zwingli restricted congregational singing of any kind, though he was a music lover and performer himself. Even The Society of Friends, noted for gathering in silence, have a hymnbook in the United States: see *Worship in Song: A Friends Hymnal* (Philadelphia: A Publication of Friends General Conference, 1996).

7. See Robert A. Schneider, "Jesus Shall Reign: Hymns and Foreign Missions," in *Wonderful Words of Life: Hymns in American Protestant History and Theology*, ed. Richard J. Mouw and Mark A. Noll (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 83–84. Schneider notes that "Jesus Shall Reign" is the second most widely published mission hymn in the nineteenth century, after Reginald Heber's "From Greenland's Icy Mountains."

8. Kenneth Scott Latourette devotes three volumes out of seven of his *A History of the*

Expansion of Christianity (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1939–1945) to the nineteenth century.

9. Robin A. Leaver, "Theological Dimensions of Mission Hymnody: The Counterpoint of Cult and Culture," in *The Hymnology Annual: An International Forum on the Hymn and Worship*, ed. Vernon Wicker (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Vande Vere Publishing, 1991), 1:38. See also Lionel Adey, *Class and Idol in the English Hymn* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1988), 15, who refers to "Jesus Shall Reign" as an "idol" of the British nation, and describes how patriotism and the church have often functioned inseparably in hymns.

10. Esther Rothenbusch Crookshank, "'We're Marching to Zion,' Isaac Watts in Early America," in *Wonderful Words of Life* (note 7), 21.

11. Rothenbusch Crookshank, 23.

12. See Rochelle A. Stackhouse, "Hymnody and Politics," in *Wonderful Words of Life*, 47.

13. Ibid., 47–52. I am indebted to Rochelle Stackhouse for her insightful analysis of "Our God, Our Help in Ages Past" reflected in this portion of my essay.

14. Watts's free paraphrases of the psalter, including the addition of overtly New Testament references, caused a firestorm of controversy among Reformed groups and others who followed John Calvin's mandate of 1542: "No one can sing anything worthy of God, unless he has received it from God himself . . . we can find no better songs for this purpose than the Psalms of David, which the Holy Spirit himself has uttered and made" (quoted by Louis F. Benson, The Hymnody of the Christian Church [1927; Richmond: John Knox Press, 1956], 82–83, 86–87). For a detailed account of the clash between psalm singing and Watts's paraphrases in Reformed congregations in America, see William B. Bynum, "'The Genuine Presbyterian Whine': Presbyterian Worship in the Eighteenth Century," *American Presbyterian: Journal of Presbyterian History* 74:3 (1996): 160–65.

15. J. R. Watson, *The English Hymn: A Critical and Historical Study* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 153.

16. For further examples see Watson, *The English Hymn*, 153–56.

17. George Burder, ed., *The Works of the Reverend and Learned Isaac Watts, D.D.* (London, 1810), 4:113, as cited in Watson, *The English Hymn*, 153.

18. Robin A. Leaver, "Isaac Watts's Hermeneutical Principles and the Decline of English Metrical Psalmody," *Churchman* 92 (1978), 58.

19. See Erik Routley, *A Panorama of Christian Hymnody* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1979), 20-21, for the complete text. Italics in original.

20. While most hymnals eliminate these two stanzas altogether, at least four hymnals published by Southern Baptists in the twentieth century combine parts of the two stanzas with some alterations. *The Baptist Hymnal* (1975, p. 282) provides the following conflation of Watts's original stanzas two and three: "From north to south the princes meet/To pay their homage at his feet;/While western empires own their Lord,/And savage tribes attend his word." I

experienced the irony of this particular version of Watts's hymn when the students I was teaching in a Nigerian seminary sang it during a morning chapel service. In a hymnology class after chapel, the ensuing discussion allowed these capable Nigerian pastors to express their feelings not only about the issue of colonialism in hymnody, but the difficulties of singing many Western hymns in their worship.

21. Watson, *The English Hymn*, 104–05, cites a historical and literary precedent for substituting images of Great Britain for those in the Hebrew Bible in William Barton's Old Testament readings of seventeenth-century British history. Barton, a Puritan minister, gave the reader bracketed English alternatives to Israel in one case, or from Parliament to Deborah and Barak in another. His version of the psalter was preferred by the House of Lords during the Civil War.

22. I am grateful to my colleague, Kenneth Shields, a professor in the English Department of Southern Methodist University and a founding member of the Charles Wesley Society, for pointing out this particular literary trait of imitation in Watts's hymns and for placing it in the context of literary devices used at this time. Shields discusses imitation in his article, "Charles Wesley as Poet," in *Charles Wesley: Poet and Theologian*, ed. S T Kimbrough, Jr. (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1992), 49–52. As Shields noted in a conversation with me on June 6, 1997, "In eighteenth-century poetic tradition of Milton, Pope and Dryden, imitation pays homage to the authenticity of the western literary tradition of Greece and Rome, appropriates those texts and gives authority to the imitation, and provides pleasure to the sophisticated reader who knows what is going on." A similar process was employed in the case of biblical imitation. It is a hermeneutical device that is most effective if those who read it are thoroughly familiar with the original text. Since the singers of Watts's hymns were steeped in the tradition of the metrical psalms, it was most likely that they were able to appreciate his poetic commentary regardless of whether or not they approved of it. As Watts stated in a letter to Cotton Mather in 1717 concerning The Psalms of David Imitated, "Tis not a translation of David that I pretend, but an imitation of him, so nearly in Christian hymns that the Jewish Psalmist may plainly appear, and yet leave Judaism behind" (quoted in Albert E. Bailey, *The Gospel in Hymns* [New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1950], 52).

23. Isaac Watts, *Psalms of David Imitated in the Language of the New Testament*, 1719, alt. by John Wesley, 1737.

24. See Bynum, "'The Genuine Presbyterian Whine'," 163. As Albert Bailey states in The Gospel in Hymns, "Watts himself knew perfectly well that the Psalms were a veritable treasure of praise. What he objected to was the undiscriminating way in which this treasure was used: the failure of the Church to disregard the obsolete, the heathen, the un-Christian elements found therein, and so suffuse what was left with the spirit of the gospel" (52).

25. See Richard Leppert, "Music, Domestic Life and Cultural Chauvinism: Images of British Subjects at Home in India," in *Music and Society: The Politics of Composition, Performance and Reception*, ed. Richard Leppert and Susan McClary (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 63–64.

26. Ibid., 63, as quoted by Leppert from Dalrymple's Observations on the present state of the East India Company; and on the measures to be pursued for ensuring the permanency, and augmenting its commerce.

27. *Music and Society*, 74.

28. Ibid., 68.

29. *Jesus Through the Centuries: His Place in the History of Culture* (New York: Harper & Row, 1985), 221.

30. Bynum, "'The Genuine Presbyterian Whine'," 163. One must also bear in mind that hymn singing was primarily the domain of Dissenting and Evangelical congregations during the early eighteenth century, and not of the Church of England.

31. See *Hymns of Prudentius*, trans. David R. Slavitt (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996) for an orientation to Prudentius' hymns.

32. Pablo Sosa traces the development of Latin American liturgical music all the way back to Prudentius' hymn in "Spanish American Hymnody: A Global Perspective," *Hymnology Annual*, ed. Vernon Wicker (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Vande Vere Publishing Ltd., 1993), 3:57–70.

33. Portions of this section appeared in an earlier essay, "Siyahamba, South African Freedom Song," *The Chorister* 51:6 (December 1999), 23–27. David Dargie comments that the text is basically the same in Siswata (the Swazi people), Xhosa, and Zulu.

34. The collection and cassette, *Freedom Is Coming: Songs of Protest and Praise from South Africa*, ed. Anders Nyberg (Chapel Hill, N.C.: Walton Music Corporation, 1984), first brought these songs to a broader audience through the impetus of the Iona Community in Scotland. Selections from this book, originally published by Utryck for the Church of Sweden Mission, have appeared in at least seven North American hymnals since this time. For example, see *United Methodist Hymnal* (1989): "Thuma Mina" (497); *Hymnal: A Worship Book* (1992), "Asithi: Amen" (64), "Thuma Mina" (434); *Chalice Hymnal* (1995): "Masithi" (30), "Siyahamba" (442), "Thuma Mina" (447); *Covenant Hymnal* (1996): "Siyahamba" (424), "Hallelujah! Pelo Tso Rona" (499), "Thuma Mina" (626); *Voices United* (1996): "Sanna Sannanina" (128), "Thuma Mina" (572), "Siyahamba" (646); *The New Century Hymnal* (1995): "Masithi" (760), "Siyahamb'" (626), "Thuma Mina" (360), "We Shall Not Give Up the Fight" (437); *The Book of Praise* (1997): "Thuma Mina" (777), "Siyahamba" (639), "Asithi Amen" (264), "Freedom Is Coming" (725). Recent African American hymnals such as *This Far By Faith* (1999) from the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA) make extensive use of South African sources. Current hymnal supplements continue to expand this literature into common usage: see *With One Voice* (1995) from the ELCA, *Wonder, Love and Praise* (1997; Episcopal Church, USA), and *The Faith We Sing* (2000; United Methodist), for more examples.

35. See John M. Janzen, *Ngoma: Discourses on Healing in Central and Southern Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 111–18.

36. An expanded version of the following section is available in C. Michael Hawn, *Gather into One: Praying and Singing Globally* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), chapter 7.

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