

CROSSACCENT



CHRISTIAN FUNERAL: SINGING RESURRECTION HOPE



CROSSACCENT

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Jennifer Ollikainen

When it comes to death, the Christian church has no better song to sing. Alleluia! Christ is risen! We rest in the sure and certain hope of Christ's resurrection to which we are joined in baptism. At the time of human death we proclaim our hope in word, song, and blessing. This issue of *CrossAccent* explores the hope and proclamation of Christ's resurrection even while the tears stream down our faces in grief over the loss of our dear ones.

Carl Bear, in his exploration of ancient Christian funeral practice, reveals the ancient struggle with the intersection of culture and Christian ritual at death. This struggle continues today as we plan funerals that proclaim the timeless and often-times countercultural gospel while firmly rooted in our 21st-century reality.

Michael Krentz explores the rich and varied use of language about human death in our hymnody. This exploration opens our eyes to see the many ways the church seeks to capture our human finitude in song and poetry, reaching beyond our human reality into the divine.

Chad Fothergill offers a fascinating glimpse into how Bach's E-flat Major Fugue, BWV 552—a musical offering used at prominent funerals today—points toward and explores the grace of God with hope revealed in motif.

In a departure from the theme of Christian funeral, we've included a recent address of Paul Westermeyer from a conference on Liturgy and Music in Lincoln, NE. One might read this address as both a lament and proclamation of hope for our denomination, offering a requiem for our folly and a call to the careful

stewardship of worship and music as the glory of God and good for humanity.

In the Chorus section Mark Mummert offers a view into the personal and inspired process of a composer setting the *kontakion* to song. In his reflection he lifts up the question of singing this proclamation of resurrection with its Alleluia even in the season of Lent when congregations often fast from this praise. I anticipate (and hope!) that a lively conversation will ensue on our Lutheran Church Musicians Facebook page about how the church understands the tension between the celebration of resurrection even in the midst of the fasting of a penitential season.

Finally, death and resurrection, goodbyes and hellos, are embodied in the life and times of our organization and its community. With this issue we offer grateful thanks and praise to Dee Birkey and Jean Boehler for their contributions to this journal in design and music reviews, respectively. For many years both of these faithful women have offered their gifts in service to the worship life of our congregations and for that, we must sing Alleluia even as they move on from this journal to other service to God. And still, there is hope and new beginnings. Welcome to Lara West who begins as editor of SoundFest with this issue.

Death and resurrection define our lives in Jesus Christ, our Lord. Thanks be to God as we explore this threshold of grace.

Staff Changes

by Nancy Raabe

Effective this issue, *CrossAccent* bids a grateful farewell to two longtime staff members, designer Dee Birkey and music editor Jean Boehler, and warmly welcomes Lara West to Jean's position.

Dee Birkey

Dee's elegant page designs and graceful graphics have distinguished *CrossAccent* for the past several years. She was also in charge of the eye-catching redesign of ALCM's *Grace Notes* nearly a decade ago.



Dee's business, Design Directions, is based in Goshen, Indiana. She also designs *The Mennonite*, a magazine that has won awards for its design. You can view it at themennonite.org/the-magazine/archive.

If you'd like to write Dee a note of appreciation, you can reach her at dbirkey@frontier.net.

Jean Boehler

Jean serves as Cantor at Redeemer Lutheran Church, a vibrant and diverse LCMS congregation in The Bronx, New York. In 2010 she founded Arts in Mission-NY and continues to serve as its director and head teacher. Jean recently received the Musikgarten Achievement Award for exceptional dedication in the field of music education. She earned Orff, Kodaly, and Dalcroze certification from the University of St. Thomas, a MM in Organ Performance from Valparaiso, and a DMA in Organ Performance from UW-Madison.



Jean writes, "It was honor to serve as the music editor for *CrossAccent* these past years. What a joy it was to highlight finely crafted

new music by talented composers! I thank the ALCM music reviewers team, who diligently met deadlines, sorting through piles of music to find that 'needle in the haystack' musical gem. What a gift God has given to us in music! I pray God's richest blessings to all ALCM members as you diligently select and prepare musically spiritual gems appropriate for the resources and musical vocabulary of your congregation."

Lara West

Lara has been writing music reviews for *CrossAccent* for eight years and enjoys learning about new publications, especially those that involve assembly song. She says her goal for the music reviews is that they should highlight the best of the best out of the many new publications, making it easier for ALCM members to choose quality music that is appropriate for their situations.

Lara is music director at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Lawrence, Kansas, where she serves as pianist, organist and choir director. She also occasionally plays trumpet, guitar and carillon.

Originally from Stephenville, Texas, Lara earned her BA from Luther College and the DMA and MM degrees in church music from the University of Kansas. The lecture-recital for her DMA focused on the organ works of Hugo Distler. She also studied church music in Germany, worked as a church musician there, and continues to enjoy German language and culture. Among her favorite leisure activities are shape-note singing, contra dancing, hiking in the mountains, and being with her extended family. Lara and her husband, Eric, live in Atchison, Kansas, where they both teach at Benedictine College.



Nancy Raabe is Associate in Ministry at Luther Memorial Church, Madison, WI.





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Funeral Music in Early Christianity

by Carl Bear

Nearly every church musician has provided music for a funeral. Those who have played, sung, or planned music for a church funeral know well the difficulties of balancing the expectations of the deceased's family and friends with the expectations of the church community. More often than not, people's expectations regarding funerals are as much shaped by the surrounding culture as they are by Christian tradition and belief. These competing

More often than not, people's expectations regarding funerals are as much shaped by the surrounding culture as they are by Christian tradition and belief.

priorities are especially difficult to navigate given the emotional vulnerability and grief experienced by the loved ones of the deceased. Church leaders in contemporary North America have developed diverse approaches to the question of what constitutes appropriate music in a Christian funeral.

It is not, however, only in contemporary North America where these questions have arisen: Christians in all times and places have grappled with similar situations. Death is a universal phenomenon, and people of nearly every culture and society develop practices and beliefs for dealing with death. Therefore, the church does not find itself in a ritual vacuum when caring for the dead and their families and friends. Rather, the church is constantly in dialogue with the particularities of local customs and attitudes. At the same time, Christians bring their own sensibilities to what death means and what happens to a person after death. Naturally, Christian beliefs sometimes differ from, or are even at odds with, the beliefs and practices of those who are not Christian. Christians must therefore decide whether and how to incorporate practices that are not specifically Christian into their funerals.

What follows are three case studies from early Christianity in which church leaders weighed in on appropriate and inappropriate funeral practices, focusing especially on music. As we will see, these church leaders often differed from their congregations in their

expectation that Christian funerals—because of Christianity’s unique beliefs—should involve uniquely Christian musical practices.

The Funeral of Macrina

Gregory of Nyssa, a prominent 4th-century bishop in Asia Minor (present-day Turkey) wrote an account of the life of his sister, Macrina.¹ As is common in early Christian works narrating the life of a holy person, emphasis is given to that person’s manner of death. Gregory’s “Life of Macrina” is no different; a large portion of the work describes Gregory’s visit during Macrina’s last days, her hour of death, and the subsequent funeral. As a result, Gregory’s account provides one of the fullest and richest accounts of an early Christian funeral, including specific details about the role of singing.

There are two important things to keep in mind when reading “The Life of Macrina”: the genre of the work and the identity of its author. First, Gregory’s “Life” is very much a hagiographic work; its purpose is to emphasize the holiness of Macrina’s life and death. Therefore, we should not be surprised that it tends toward exaggeration and selectivity as it

strives to portray Macrina in the best possible light. Second, Gregory’s identity as a member of the clergy, his male gender, and his close familial relationship to Macrina as her brother all color his narrative choices when describing her death. But we should also keep in mind that Gregory was an eyewitness to many of the events of Macrina’s life, including her death, and that he himself seems to have believed his account to be a true and accurate one.

Death is a universal phenomenon, and people of nearly every culture and society develop practices and beliefs for dealing with death.

Gregory describes Macrina as very much in control of her own death. She is not anxious but calm as she approaches her impending departure. Most of her energy is spent consoling those around her—the community of virgins of whom she was leader, and her visitors, especially Gregory—and in fervent prayer.



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According to Gregory, Macrina's last moments of life are spent in prayer:

Meanwhile the evening came on and a lamp was brought in. All at once she opened wide the orb of her eyes and gazed towards the beam of light, making clear that she was eager to sing the thanksgiving at the lighting of the lamps. But her voice failed her and she fulfilled this intention in her heart by moving her hands, while her lips moved in sympathy with her inward impulse. But when she had finished the thanksgiving and had brought her hand to her face for the seal to mark the end of the prayer, she drew one great deep breath and with that brought to a close both her prayer and her life.²

Macrina dies an ideal death, singing the evening hymn³ in her heart, even though she could not use her voice. Whether or not her death actually happened this way we have no way of knowing, but the story certainly serves to demonstrate Macrina's incredible faith and holiness of life, even at the moment of death.

Macrina dies an ideal death, singing the evening hymn in her heart, even though she could not use her voice.

Gregory emphasizes Macrina's holiness by contrasting her peace at death with the community's reaction immediately following her death. Gregory even portrays himself as succumbing to grief, a surprising narrative choice, but done in service of lifting up Macrina's holiness over everyone else's, including his own.

But when [the virgins'] anguish could no longer be subdued in silence, and grief like some inward fire was smoldering in their souls, all at once a bitter and irrepressible cry broke out, so that my reason no longer remained steady, but as if submerged by a torrent in flood, was swept under by passion. Thereupon, disregarding the duty at



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hand, I yielded myself up wholly to the lamentations.⁴

It did not take long, however, for Gregory to move past his grief and to chastise the virgins surrounding Macrina for their uncontrolled lamentations:

But when I somehow brought my soul back from the abyss I gazed on that holy head, and as if rebuked for the disorder of those who were making such a commotion with their wailing, I spoke to the virgins in a loud voice: "Look at her, and remember her instructions, by which she taught you to be orderly and seemly at all times. One occasion for tears did this divine soul prescribe for us, when she urged us do so at the time of prayer. This we can now do if we exchange the wailing of our lamentations for psalmody suiting the occasion."⁵

This contrast between disorderly lamentations on the one hand and orderly psalmody on the other is a frequent theme in the remainder of Gregory's account, as we will see.

Gregory writes that while Macrina's body was being prepared for burial the community

of virgins was having difficulty keeping their psalmody free from outbreaks of lamentation. Similarly, when the crowds of local laity arrived, Gregory describes their natural response as lamentations that interrupted the psalmody that the virgins were attempting to maintain:

While we were occupied in these tasks, and the psalmodies of the virgins mingled with their lamentations were echoing about the place, I do not know how, but the news quickly spread everywhere in the district, so that all who lived in the neighborhood began streaming towards the calamity, until the forecourt could no longer contain the gathering. We held an all-night vigil for her with hymn singing, as in the festivals of the martyrs. When it was finished and *Orthros* [a reference to morning prayer] was just beginning, the crowd of both men and women flocking in from the whole neighborhood began breaking into the psalmody with their lamentations. Though my own soul was sorely pressed by the misfortune, nonetheless I was working out how it might be possible, given our resources, not to omit anything suitable for such a funeral. I separated the tide of people according to sex, and put the crowd of women with the choir of virgins, while the menfolk I put in the order of the monks. I then elicited a single psalmody, rhythmical and harmonious, coming alternatively from either side as in choral singing, and blending beautifully in the common responses.⁶

Gregory's solution was to divide the crowd by gender and have them join the virgins and monks in singing alternating psalmody. While his description of the result—"rhythmical and harmonious," "blending beautifully"—might stretch our credulity, it is clear that this is Gregory's ideal, suitable for the funeral of someone as holy as Macrina. According to Gregory, this harmonious psalmody continued among the crowd that joined the funeral procession:

I took one side of the bier and invited [Araxius, the local bishop] to the other, while two other eminent clergy took

the rear part of the bier. I then led the way at a slow pace, as was fitting, and so we moved forward little by little. For the people were pressing around the bier, all of them insatiable for that sacred light, so that there was no way open for us to press on easily with the journey. Thus we made our way forward, flanked on either side by no small crowd of deacons and attendants escorting the body in order, all with wax tapers alight in the hands. A kind of mystic procession was set in train, the psalmody resounding harmoniously from beginning to end, sung as in the hymnody of the three children.⁷

The destination of Macrina's funeral procession was a martyr shrine where her parents were buried and where she also would be buried. Gregory notes that before the body was interred there was a time of prayer during



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which the crowd's lamentations once again disrupted the orderly proceedings:

When we came inside the doors of the house [of the holy martyrs] we put down the bier and turned first to prayer. The prayer however became a signal to the people for lamentations. For when during a lull in the psalmody the virgins gazed on that holy face, and

Gregory's solution was to divide the crowd by gender and have them join the virgins and monks in singing alternating psalmody.

the tomb of our parents was already being uncovered in which it had been decided to lay her, one of them cried out impulsively that from this hour we would never look upon that godlike face again. Thereupon the other virgins cried out the same with her, and a disorderly confusion overthrew the orderly and sacred character of the

psalmody, with everyone sobbing at the wailing of the virgins. With some difficulty we made gestures for silence, the cantor took the lead in prayer by intoning the phrases customary in the church, and the people settled down to the service of prayer.⁸

Finally, at the end of the prayers, Macrina's body was buried in the tomb of her parents, after which Gregory departed.

Two aspects of this account are noteworthy. First, Gregory assumes that psalmody is a normal and proper part of a Christian funeral ritual. For Gregory, psalms should be sung during the wake, during the all-night vigil, and during the funeral procession. Although Macrina's funeral was obviously much more elaborate and involved than a typical funeral would have been, there is some indication that everyone in the community would have recognized the need for psalmody during a funeral. Indeed, there are no hints in Gregory's account of any resistance to the ideal of orderly psalmody during a funeral. But it is also clear that many members of the community seemed

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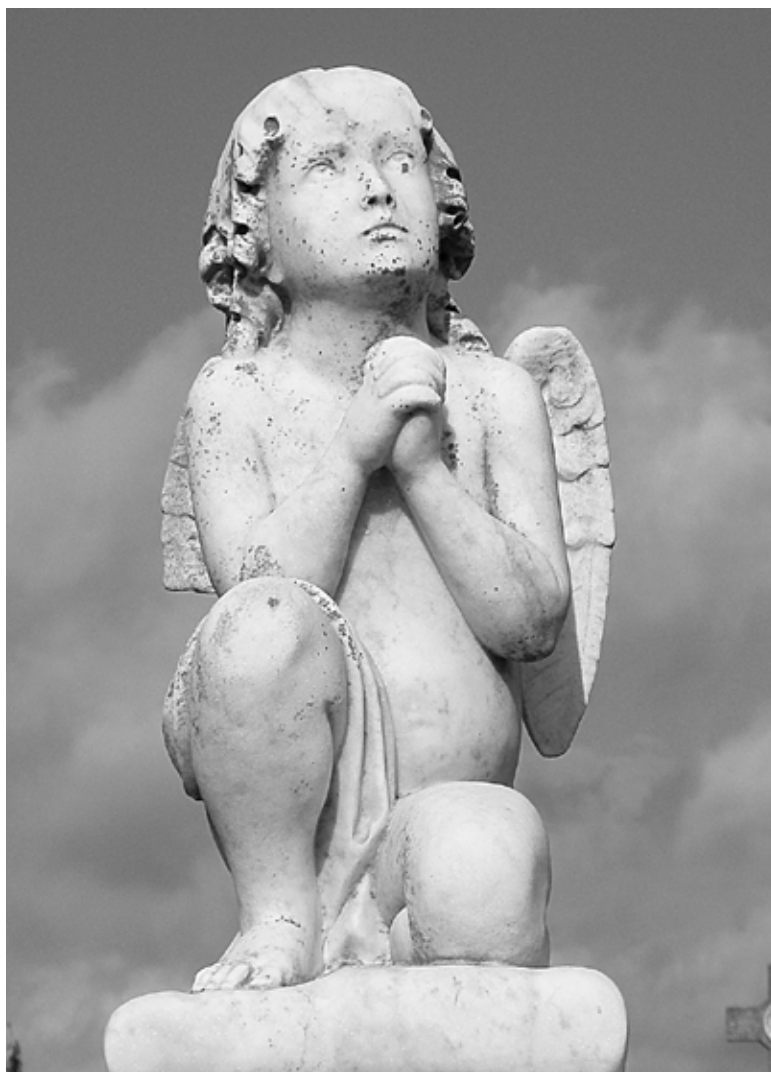
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to have difficulty living up to this ideal as they continued to give in to their need to express their grief through lamentation.

This brings us to the second important aspect of Gregory's narrative: his consistent contrasting of lamentations with psalmody. Gregory describes lamentations as stemming from the passions of grief that were difficult to control and that caused unseemly chaos during the funeral proceedings. Those described as the most susceptible to outbreaks of lamentation are the virgins and the crowd of laity. The monks, on the other hand, are never explicitly described as giving in to the temptation for lamentation. Gregory himself is an interesting case. While he initially descends into emotions of grief at the time of Macrina's death (largely to contrast Macrina's holiness with everyone else's, including his own), Gregory soon suppresses his grief so that he can take over appropriate leadership of the funeral proceedings. His identity as a clergy person, as a male, and as Macrina's brother gives him the role of correcting the grief-stricken outbursts of others, namely the laity and the female virgins. He instead works toward making sure the psalmody that was appropriate for someone as holy as Macrina was as orderly and harmonious as possible.

Funeral Psalmody in John Chrysostom's Antioch

John Chrysostom, a native of the city of Antioch in Syria, served one of the Christian factions in the city as a priest and as a popular preacher during the end of the 4th century. An enormous corpus of his sermons survives, which includes several series of exegetical sermons on books of Scripture as well as many other homilies focused on particular themes or events. Among these latter homilies there are several that commemorate various martyrs. As an ancient Christian center, Antioch was home to numerous martyrs, many of whom were buried in the cemeteries outside the city walls. During the 4th century, as the cult of the martyrs became firmly established, the tombs of the martyrs were given special status and set apart from the surrounding common burials through the building of martyr shrines over their tombs. It was in these martyr shrines where John



preached many of his homilies commemorating the martyrs; often the commemoration would take place in the same location where the martyr was buried.

One such homily is John's commemoration of the martyrs Bernike, Prosdoke, and Domnina.⁹ The mother and her two daughters were martyred during the persecution by Diocletian in 302. John begins the homily by noting that the fear of death was prevalent in the Old Testament, even among such great people of faith as Abraham, Jacob, and Elijah. The three female martyrs whom John is commemorating are contrasted to the Old Testament patriarchs because of their courage in the face of death, a contrast made even stronger because of their gender: "For tell me, what greater sign of that resurrection do you seek, when you see that so great a reversal of

reality has taken place! Women are challenging death, something which before this time was frightening and terrifying even to holy men.”¹⁰ John assumes that women are more likely to fear death than men, which makes the witness to the resurrection of these women martyrs all the more remarkable for him.

In the course of his homily John makes a further argument for why Christians need not fear death: Christian funerals contain psalmody (a sign of joy) rather than lamentation (a sign of grieving).

This is why, while in the beginning there was the beating of breasts and wailing over corpses, now [there are] psalms and the singing of hymns. At any rate, the Jews wept over Jacob for forty days; they wept over Moses too for as many more, and beat their breasts because at that time death was death. But now it is not like this; rather [there are] hymn-singing and prayers and psalms, with everyone making it clear that the matter is associated with pleasure. For the psalms are a sign of

characterized Jewish funeral practices, John points to the hymn-singing, prayers, and psalms that instill confidence in the resurrection among Christians. Reading between the lines, however, we can sense that John is trying to convince his congregation of this particular interpretation of funeral psalmody. We can assume that John’s listeners may have had different experiences and understandings of funerals that were not quite as joyful as John is claiming. Instead, it appears that John is encouraging his Christian congregation to differentiate themselves from non-Christians by living out their faith in the resurrection in the way they conduct their funerals.

We can see a similar line of argument in another of John’s sermons, this one from his exegetical series on the book of Hebrews. Here we can get a good glimpse of the fundamental differences between what John thought should be happening during funerals and what actually was happening.

Why do we have hymns? Do we not glorify God and give him thanks that he has at last crowned the departed, that he has freed him from his burdens, and with fear cast aside taken him to himself? Is not this why there are hymns? Is not this why there is psalmody? All these are the acts of those who rejoice. “For is anyone cheerful,” it says, “then let him sing psalms” (Jas 4.13). . . . Know what it is that you sing on that occasion. “Return, O my soul, to your rest; for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you” (Ps 115.17). And again, “I will fear no evil, for thou art with me” (Ps 22.4). And again, “Thou art my refuge from the trouble which has encompassed me” (Ps 31.7). You should consider what these psalms mean, but you pay no attention; instead you are intoxicated with your grief.¹²

As John himself admits, the actions of most of his congregation during funerals are at odds with his own ideals. For John, singing psalms (which is the true Christian response to death) directly contradicts the worldly response of grieving at funerals. As Jaclyn Maxwell summarizes:

Instead, it appears that John is encouraging his Christian congregation to differentiate themselves from non-Christians by living out their faith in the resurrection in the way they conduct their funerals.

festivity. “Is anyone cheerful among you?” scripture says, “Let them sing psalms!” (Jas 5.13) So, since we are full of good cheer we sing over our corpses psalms that urge us to feel confident about death. “Commit, my soul, into your rest,” it says, “because the Lord has been kind to you” (Ps 114.7). Do you see that death is a kindness and a rest? For the person entering that resting rests from their labors, just as God did from his own affairs.¹¹

This passage seems to be a critique of Hebrew funeral practices—and by extension of Jewish funeral practices—in favor of Christian ones. Rather than the wailing and weeping that

Funerals were another occasion for conflict. . . . Chrysostom condemned both the traditional practices and the premise for them. . . . The attack on funeral customs focused on excessive mourning. The preacher viewed an emotional display of grief as a pagan tendency and an implicit denial of the truth of the Resurrection. After the coming of Christianity, true believers had no reason to be upset by death.¹³

It seems probable, however, that many Christians in Antioch found John's ideals to be unrealistic.¹⁴

Pachomian Funeral Psalmody

Another example of funeral psalmody in early Christianity can be found among the cenobitic (communal) monastic communities of late antique (4th century) Egypt that were founded by Pachomius and his successors. Much of what we know about these communities comes from the corpus of literature that seems to have been written by the Pachomian communities in the late 4th and early 5th centuries, a century or so after Pachomius' death.¹⁵ As such, these documents are less sources for the events they purport to describe—the lives and teachings of Pachomius and other monastic leaders—and more indications of the contemporary Pachomian communities' aspirations, ideals, and beliefs about themselves. Therefore, the various descriptions of death and burial in these documents cannot be read as historically accurate descriptions of Pachomius' and others' funerals but rather what the later Pachomian communities thought these funerals should have been like.

Many of these sources provide various details about funeral practices among the Pachomian communities. One of the most frequently mentioned practices is that of singing psalms during the funeral procession for a deceased monk. For example, the so-called "Rules of St. Pachomius" provide some specific directions for how this psalmody was to be conducted:

127. When a brother has died, the whole brotherhood should accompany him [to the mountain]. No one should stay behind without the order of a

superior, nor sing psalms unless he has been ordered, nor add another psalm to the one previously sung unless bidden by the master.

128. Two shall not sing together at the time of mourning, nor be clothed in a linen mantle, nor shall anyone neglect to respond to the psalmist, but they shall be united both in step and in consonant voice.¹⁶

Like many precepts that attempt to prescribe what was supposed to happen, these passages are useful for understanding what was actually happening and what was therefore being prohibited. These precepts seem to take for granted that psalms would be sung during a funeral procession and are attempting to regulate this practice of psalm singing. The finer details are difficult to interpret, but James McKinnon provides a helpful summary: "Rather than singing psalms spontaneously the monks should simply respond to the chanting of an appointed psalmist."¹⁷

These precepts seem to take for granted that psalms would be sung during a funeral procession and are attempting to regulate this practice of psalm singing.

One of the most intriguing discussions of funeral psalmody in the Pachomian literature is found in the "Paralipomena," a document likely intended to be a supplement to a version of the "Life of Pachomius."¹⁸ The author describes a scene in which Pachomius encountered a funeral procession for a monk who had died. The procession included the monastic brothers, who were singing psalms, as well as the monk's relatives. When the procession stopped to receive Pachomius' blessing, Pachomius surprised them all:

When the Blessed Man had come and had prayed, he ordered the brothers not to sing psalms any more in front of [the dead brother]. He had the dead brother's clothes brought [to him] and ordered them burned in front of everyone. Then, when they had been

burned, he commanded [the brothers] to take up the body and to bury it without psalmody. And when the

Church leaders in each context try to make the best decisions they can based on their understanding of what is authentically Christian and which practices meet the needs of their congregations.

brothers and the parents of the dead brother threw themselves at his feet and entreated him to let them sing psalms over him, he would not endure it.¹⁹

Evidently the prohibition for singing psalmody over the deceased monk met with much resistance. The dead man's parents interpreted

Pachomius' actions as a disgrace to their son and an example of heartlessness. They pleaded with him: "Even though you have caused his clothes to be burned, allow the psalms to be said."²⁰

But Pachomius justified his actions by explaining that he was attempting to show compassion for the dead man's soul by prohibiting the singing of psalms:

Indeed, if you sing psalms for him, he will receive more punishments to account for the psalm, for he departed without having with him the power of the psalms. If you want to add to his eternal sorrows, sing psalms for him; but he will suffer more pain then because of the psalms and he will curse you. Because I know what is expedient for his soul, I take no care of his dead body. If I allow you to sing psalms, I will be found, in the sight of God, someone who pleases [humans], because for the sake of human satisfaction I have disregarded what was expedient for the soul which is going to be punished in judgment.²¹

Clearly Pachomius and the deceased monk's parents had two different understandings of the situation. What the parents perceived as heartless and disgraceful, Pachomius interpreted as compassionate and expedient. There seem to be two aspects to this misunderstanding. First, the monk's family and community were not privy to Pachomius's special knowledge about the state of the monk's soul; they assumed that, like all other monks, this man had died in a state of grace and favor with God. But Pachomius claimed to know otherwise. Second, the singing of psalms seems to have been commonly understood as a way to show honor and respect to the body of the departed, whereas Pachomius interpreted the singing of psalms as having a direct impact on the state of the dead person's soul. In this case, the effect of psalmody for the soul of a condemned person is to worsen his state in the afterlife.

The author of this account seems to be arguing in favor of an interpretation of funeral psalmody that is more about the spiritual, eternal efficacy of singing psalms rather than



the temporal honor and respect that these processions bring. But there is considerable evidence that the temporal interpretation of singing psalms was more common. For example, there are several accounts in the Pachomian literature in which important figures—most notably Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria—are met and accompanied by large crowds singing psalms whenever they visit a community.²² Perhaps the Pachomian community at the time this document was composed was experiencing a transition from an understanding of funeral psalms as giving honor to the departed to an understanding that funeral psalmody was a means of attending to a soul's spiritual state after death. By ascribing the latter view to Pachomius, the founder of the community, and the former view to nonmonastic villagers, the author is attempting to shift the community's perspectives in favor of the latter view.

Concluding Thoughts

Early Christian perspectives on what is appropriate musically during a Christian funeral are clearly not a model for the contemporary church. Fourth-century Christians in the eastern Mediterranean lived in a vastly different context than do Christians in 21st-century North America. Church leaders in each context try to make the best decisions they can based on their understanding of what is authentically Christian and which practices meet the needs of their congregations. I conclude by drawing out some common themes from the ways the early Christian church leaders approached the question of appropriate funeral music in each of these three case studies.

First, all three church leaders do not seem to prioritize pastoral sensitivity. Gregory and John prohibit mourning, while Pachomius doesn't allow psalm singing, both of which are clearly practices that their congregations desired. Each church leader has his own reason for the prohibition that prioritizes some higher truth over the needs of their congregation: Gregory prioritizes the order and harmony of psalm singing over the chaos and passion of lamentation; John prioritizes psalmody as an expression of Christian faith in the resurrection over the human need to mourn those who have



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died; and Pachomius prioritizes the eternal fate of the soul over the temporal honor of singing psalms during the funeral procession.

Second, all three case studies portray church leaders as being at odds with their congregations. It is clear from reading between the lines that church leaders were only partially successful in imposing their particular views about appropriate funeral music on their congregations. Time and again in Gregory's account the people's lamentations creep in alongside the official psalmody. John complains that funeral psalmody should signal joy but that people are still mourning. Pachomius fails to convince the dead monk's parents that singing psalms is not about showing honor but about the state of the soul. As a result, the church leaders tend to explain these differences by portraying others as weaker because of their gender, lay status, connection with non-Christians, or lack of spiritual maturity.

While the perspectives of early Christian church leaders may not serve as a model for contemporary church leaders, perhaps they might serve to stimulate renewed reflection on our own ideas about appropriate funeral music. How do we balance the expectations of the deceased's family and friends with the expectations of the church community? Do we

prioritize pastoral sensitivity or commitment to the ideals of Christianity? Need these two be at odds?

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Notes

1. Gregory of Nyssa, "The Life of Macrina," translated in Anna M. Silvas, *Macrina the Younger, Philosopher of God* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2008).
2. "Life of Macrina," 27.2; Silvas, 135–36.
3. Possibly the Phos hilaron.
4. "Life of Macrina," 28.2; Silvas, 136.
5. "Life of Macrina," 29.1–2; Silvas 137.
6. "Life of Macrina," 35.1–3; Silvas, 142–43.
7. "Life of Macrina," 36.2; Silvas, 143–44.
8. "Life of Macrina," 37.1–3; Silvas, 144.
9. John Chrysostom, "On Saints Bernike, Prosdoke, and Domnina," translated in Wendy Mayer, *The Cult of the Saints: Select Homilies and Letters* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2006), 155–76.
10. "On Saints Bernike, Prosdoke, and Domnina," 1; Mayer, 158–59.
11. "On Saints Bernike, Prosdoke, and Domnina," 10; Mayer, 165.
12. John Chrysostom, "In Hebraeos," 4.5, translated in James McKinnon, ed., *Music in Early Christian Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 88. The provenance of this homily is debated. See Pauline Allen and Wendy Mayer, "The Thirty-Four Homilies on Hebrews: The Last Series Delivered by Chrysostom in Constantinople?" *Byzantion* 65 (1995), 309–48; and Wendy Mayer, *The Homilies of St John Chrysostom: Provenance, Reshaping the Foundations* (Rome: Pontificio Istituto Orientale, 2005), passim, especially 487, where there is a slight leaning toward an Antiochene provenance.
13. Jaclyn L. Maxwell, *Christianization and Communication in Late Antiquity: John Chrysostom and His Congregation in Antioch* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 159–60.
14. Maxwell, 161.
15. See Philip Rousseau, *Pachomius: The Making of a Community in Fourth-Century Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 37–55, for an overview of some of the textual issues.
16. Translated in McKinnon, 57.
17. McKinnon, 57.
18. "Paralipomena," in *Pachomian Koinonia*, trans. by Armand Veilleux, vol. II, *Pachomian Chronnicles and Rules* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1981), 1–2.
19. "Paralipomena," 5; Veilleux, 26.
20. "Paralipomena," 5; Veilleux, 26.
21. "Paralipomena," 6; Veilleux, 27.
22. "Bohairic Life," 28, 201; "First Greek Life," 143; in Veilleux, 1, 51–52, 249–51, 400–401.



Singing at the Grave: Images of Death in Christian Songs

by Michael Krentz

In April 1984, I found myself driving to St. Louis from Deerfield, IL, with my wife and our infant daughter to play for Louis Henry Becker's funeral in St. Louis.

He came to church for the last time as he had come when he was baptized, carried in by others, to finish his journey to God that he had started 96 years before. His friends (there weren't many left) and family surrounded him in the church. Together we sang one of his favorite hymns, "O Sacred Head, Now Wounded" (*Evangelical Lutheran Worship* [ELW] 351, 352; *Lutheran Service Book* [LSB] 449, 450; *Christian Worship* [CW] 105). We sang more than the four stanzas in *ELW*, but not all 10 that are printed in *The Lutheran Hymnal* (TLH; 172), the book we used at his funeral.

What we did was what the church always does at a funeral: we accompanied Louis Henry Becker on the final leg of his baptismal journey. We took him from our care to the care of God, or in the words of Thomas G. Long, we carried him "to the edge of mystery."¹ And we did it with singing.

A closer look at all 10 stanzas in *TLH* of Paul Gerhardt's "O Sacred Head" reveals one of the most important roles of singing—of hymns—at the time of death and at funerals. One way to think about the purpose of funerals is that we take the story of the deceased person and wrap it up into the story of the Crucified One, the Christ. By singing Louis' favorite hymns² we brought him into the liturgy; because the hymns were also about the story of Jesus, we sang of our hope and wrapped Louis in Jesus' victory over death.

Paul Gerhardt manages to do this just within the 10 stanzas of "O Sacred Head."³ Written in the first person singular to the "sacred head, now wounded" of Jesus (not addressed by name until stanza 8, which is stanza 3 in *ELW*),⁴ singers alternately promise to hold Jesus in their suffering and death and ask Jesus (also referred to as Guardian, Shepherd, Savior, and dearest Friend) to stay at the singer's side as she or he dies. Gerhardt does this not by starting with the death of Jesus and moving to the death of the singer, but by intertwining

them through the final six stanzas of the text.

So in stanza 5 the singer sings:
My Shepherd, now receive me;
My Guardian, own me Thine.
Great blessings thou didst give me,
O Source of gifts divine.
Thy lips have often fed me
With words of truth and love;
Thy Spirit oft hath led me
To heavenly joys above.

Then immediately in stanza 6 there is a reversal of thought. Instead of the Shepherd receiving “me,” “I” promise not to part from the Savior and to hold him in his deepest anguish:

Here I will stand beside Thee,
From Thee I will not part;
O Savior, do not chide me!
When breaks Thy loving heart,
When soul and body languish
In death’s cold, cruel grasp,
Then, in Thy deepest anguish,
Thee in mine arms I’ll clasp.

The holding of Jesus’ body by the singer is again reversed in stanza 7. Now “I” hide in the safety of Jesus’ broken body:

The joy can ne’er be spoken,
Above all joys beside,
When in Thy body broken
I thus with safety hide.

By intertwining in this interesting way the death of Jesus and the (foreseen) death of the singer, Gerhardt gives us a framework for understanding death and for thinking about how we sing about death at funerals and at other times. We need to sing in a way that connects our human deaths to the death of Jesus. We need to sing in a way that people can find themselves in our songs, can hear their experience of life and death as we sing. By singing about death in a way that is connected to human lives and experiences with dying, we “accompany [each person] with singing” on the final stage of their journey, and people still living can find clearer meaning in the deaths of loved ones and be better prepared for their own deaths.

Death as Natural

Our Christian hymnody is rich with images and language about death, as poets try to capture our life experiences together with our beliefs.

Remembering Louis Henry Becker

Louis Henry Becker was born on October 27, 1887, in Evansville, IN. He went to Concordia Teacher’s College in Seward, NE, and being hard-working and intelligent he finished earlier than usual. At age 21 he began his call as a teacher at Mt. Calvary Lutheran Church in St. Louis. His first salary was \$40 per month. He met his wife Elsie upon arrival at the school; she was four years younger than he was, a Sunday school teacher and member of the choir. After he had saved up \$400 so he could buy furniture for four rooms, they got married on June 24, 1912, at the small church. It was so crowded that children stood outside at the windows so they could see their teacher get married.

Louis Becker later became principal of the church’s parochial school, and he was also the parish’s organist and choir director. He stayed there for 50+ years. Louis and Elsie raised their six children in their home in St. Louis and later moved to a small house in a nearby suburb. He was frugal and modest and somewhat reserved. He always stood ramrod straight, and his students and others respectfully called him Mr. Becker, but I knew him as Grandpa Becker. From him I learned to play dominoes, caroms, and crokinole; and our walks in Forest Park always included some licorice that he brought out of his pocket and shared. Each Christmas our family in St. Louis (a large group) gathered at my grandparents’ home for a delicious meal and then we sang Christmas carols around the upright piano in their family room.

Louis Henry Becker died on April 8, 1984, in St. Louis, MO.

Poets depict the “problem” of death in different ways, and the “answer” to death also changes. For Herman G. Stuempfle in “How Small Our Span of Life” (ELW 636), death is the thing that brings life—our time on earth—to a close. This is “lowercase-d death,” death as part of the natural way of the universe.⁵ The question is not what death means, it is whether life has any meaning at all. Even if we had more years to live—if death came later—our years would still be

a single beat in the heart,
the catching of a breath,
a drop within the ocean’s deep,
a grain upon the shore . . .

In contrast to the shortness of our lives, our “tick of time,”

suns and stars spin endlessly
through depths of cosmic space,
while aeons roll and ages pass . . .

This hymn portrays “lowercase-d death,” death as natural, death as part of the creation. Stuempfle does not say anything about the ultimate cause of death, which other authors (poets and nonpoets) frequently ascribe to sin and The Fall (Genesis 3). In this hymn the problem is not so much life and death, or sin and death, but whether there is meaning to life, to human existence, at all—and where God is to be found in all of it.

Stuempfle answers by portraying the Incarnation as the coming of Christ into time from eternity. Here the Incarnation is not so much about taking on human flesh, a body, but about breaking into chronological or human time:

O Christ, you left eternity
to plunge in time’s swift stream,
to share the shortness of our span,
our mortal lives redeem.

Stuempfle reminds us in this compelling phrase that Jesus’ own life was ended by death: “You filled your cross-closed years with love,” suggesting that it was love that gave meaning to Jesus’ life and that it is love that gives meaning to our lives (and deaths). Then “you [Jesus] touch us with your risen life that ours may time transcend.”

The image in this hymn is that our lives and deaths are small and insignificant in the

great expanse of time. But the incarnation of God into our time along with the resurrection of the Christ make our lives transcend the limits of time. And all of this is a reflection of love, and love moves us to praise.

Death as the Enemy

For many people, death is just death, but for others death is Death, “uppercase-D Death,” death as the (ultimate) enemy.⁶ If death as a natural part of life is “solved” by God entering our time and breaking it open, Death as the enemy must be defeated. Poets have given us words to sing this imagining of Death in many hymns, especially in hymns for Easter.

One way to think about the purpose of funerals is that we take the story of the deceased person and wrap it up into the story of the Crucified One, the Christ.

Stanza 5 of “At the Lamb’s High Feast We Sing” (ELW 362, LSB 633, CW 141)⁷ is addressed in the second person to the “Mighty victim from the sky.” It is clear that this is Jesus, the Christ, spoken of in the third person in stanzas 2 and 4. The Victim has conquered and “hell’s fierce powers beneath you lie.” Then stanza 6 turns to the matter of death: “Now no more can death appall, / now no more the grave enthrall.” Death has been fearful, appalling, and the grave has kept us in bondage (enthralled us). But the Victim has conquered Death and the grave, and in stanza 7 “Easter triumph” also destroys sin. In this hymn, then, Death and the grave are fearful forces that hold us in bondage, until the Victim frees us from their power and conquers hell’s powers and sin.⁸

Martin Luther’s Easter hymn “Christ Jesus Lay in Death’s Strong Bands” (ELW 370, LSB 458, CW 161) similarly depicts Death as an evil power, a power that even held Christ Jesus: “Christ Jesus lay in death’s strong bands / for our offenses given.” Death is something that binds us, that holds us in shackles.⁹ The Christ is the one who frees us from this bondage, which is sometimes likened to the Israelites’ delivery from bondage in Egypt.¹⁰

Stanza 2 includes several intriguing phrases about Death. First, “the claim of death is ended.” This sounds like a legal matter, that Death has a hold over us by right as a consequence of sin, and this right has been incontrovertible—until our Savior Jesus undid the knot of sin. Second, “now there is naught but death’s gray shell.” Here Death is pictured as a lifeless shell, a shell with no vitality left. Finally, Luther also gives Death a “sting,” like a bee, that can give sharp pain. This sting also appears in “The Strife Is O’er, the Battle Done” (ELW 366, LSB 464, CW 148), a text that gives death legions, like the Roman army. The sting, too, has been taken away. Death can still be seen (experienced), but it has no more power over us.

Unfortunately, the editors of *ELW* did not include this stanza of Luther’s hymn:

It was a strange and dreadful strife
When life and death contended;
The victory remained with life,
The reign of death was ended.
Holy Scripture plainly says
That death is swallowed up by death,
Its sting is lost forever.
Hallelujah!

*(Lutheran Book of Worship [LBW]
134, st. 2)*

This missing stanza answers the question “how did Jesus defeat death?” This question is fundamental to Christian teaching, and people frequently ask it. Luther’s answer is that Death

is swallowed up by Death, that Jesus defeated Death by dying (and rising again).

Death as Sleep, Gate, Gentle Sister

Luther painted quite a different picture of death in his hymn based on the *Nunc dimittis*, “In Peace and Joy I Now Depart” (ELW 440, LSB 938, CW 269). Luther asserts that he can die with joy because “God the Lord has promised me / that death is but a slumber.” If death is only sleep (although it might be very deep sleep) it does not need to be defeated. Rather, in the words of Thomas Ken, the sleeper must be awakened:

All praise to thee, who safe hast kept
and hast refreshed me while I slept.
Grant, Lord, when I from death shall
wake,

I may of endless light partake.¹¹

This 17th-century Lutheran hymn stanza pictures death both as part of the natural order and as sleep:

I am flesh and must return
unto dust, whence I am taken.
But these eyes my Lord will know
when from death I shall awaken,
with my Savior to abide
in his glory, at his side.¹²

This is death that has lost its sting, that has been defanged. We might say it has been demoted from fearsome death to restful sleep.

Sigismund von Birken gives us yet another image of death in his text “Let Us Ever Walk with Jesus” (ELW 802, LSB 685, CW 452). In stanza 3 he writes:

Let us gladly die with Jesus.
Since by death he conquered death,
he will free us from destruction,
give to us immortal breath.
Let us mortify all passion
that would lead us into sin;
and the grave that shuts us in
shall but prove the gate of heaven.
Jesus, here with you I die,
there to live with you on high.

This stanza begins with ideas drawn from Romans 6, where in baptism we die with Jesus so that we may live a new life. But then death (the grave) is portrayed as the “gate of heaven.” We are pictured walking along a path (the



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baptismal journey, if you will), and at the end of earthly life we must pass through a gate to live “on high.” This gate is apparently wide and easy to get through: all we need do is die.

One of the most striking texts that deals with death as “friendly,” as just sleep or a gate, is a text based on words of Francis of Assisi; it has a fresh new translation in *ELW*: “All Creatures, Worship God Most High!” (*ELW* 835). Stanza 5 reads:

And you, most gentle sister death,
waiting to hush our final breath:
Alleluia! Alleluia!
Since Christ our light has pierced your
gloom,
fair is the night that leads us home.
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, alleluia,
alleluia!

People who have suffered a long, debilitating, terminal illness might welcome this picture of “gentle sister death,” who waits to calm and still our labored breathing. This kind of death can be a delivery, not a power from which Christ must deliver us. Here death is an usher who takes us gently to our place with God.

But the text also acknowledges that even in such circumstances there is something dark about death—and that the light of Christ makes even the night of death “fair.”¹³

Death Caused by Humanity

All of the above treat death honestly—whether death is an enemy, or just sleep, or a gate through which we pass at the end of our natural life, or a dear sister who leads us on the path of Jesus to God—but if we want to be fully honest we must also sing about death caused by ourselves, by humanity. In his hymn “Bring Peace to Earth Again” (*ELW* 700, st. 1), Herman Stuempfle treats the fact that many deaths are the direct result of human violence or war:

Where armies scourge the countryside,
and people flee in fear,
where sirens scream through flaming
nights,
and death is ever near . . .

If humans are inflicting death on other humans, then the “answer” is not for God to defeat death nor to awaken us from sleep. We cannot explain it away by saying that death is just a doorway

to heaven or is somehow a gentle sister leading us home. Facing this kind of death, we pray in this hymn’s refrain: “O God of mercy, hear our prayer: / bring peace to earth again!”

Poets who write hymns and the editors of books of these hymns have paid increased attention to war and other human violence since the first part of the 20th century and recently even more so. So *ELW* has a section labeled “Justice, Peace”¹⁴ where its predecessor book, *LBW*, had a more generally labeled section titled “Society.”¹⁵ And hymns treating war are found in other sections of *ELW*, including “Each Winter As the Year Grows Older” (*ELW* 252). William Gay gives us these words to sing in stanzas 2 and 3:

When race and class cry out for treason,
when sirens call for war,
they overshout the voice of reason
and scream till we ignore
all we held dear before.

The image in this hymn is that our lives and deaths are small and insignificant in the great expanse of time. But the incarnation of God into our time along with the resurrection of the Christ make our lives transcend the limits of time.

Yet I believe beyond believing
that life can spring from death,
that growth can flower from our
grieving,
that we can catch our breath
and turn transfixed by faith.

Gay both acknowledges with vivid language the reality of war and the death it brings and provides words of hope even when our eyes cannot see reason for hope (“I believe beyond believing”). Gay places these words in the context of Advent, a time of increasing darkness, and deepens the meaning of the familiar “Prince of Peace” language of Advent and Christmas, concluding his hymn (st. 5) with this eloquent prayer:

O Child of ecstasy and sorrows,
 O Prince of peace and pain,
 brighten today's world by tomorrow's,
 renew our lives again;
 Lord Jesus, come and reign!

Body and Soul

"Lord, Thee I Love with All My Heart" (ELW 750, LSB 708, CW 434) is one of the most remarkable of the great Lutheran chorales, written by Martin Schalling in the second half of the 16th century. Its three stanzas are both a testament of faith and a prayer to Jesus, God and Lord, not to forsake the singer. At the very end of stanza 2 the idea of death is introduced: "in death thy comfort still afford." This leads into the exquisite third stanza, the stanza used

by Johann Sebastian Bach at the end of his St. John Passion after the death of Jesus.

Lord, let at last thine angels come,
 to Abr'ham's bosom bear me home,
 that I may die unfearing;
 and in its narrow chamber keep
 my body safe in peaceful sleep
 until thy reappearing.
 And then from death awaken me,
 that these mine eyes with joy may see,
 O Son of God, thy glorious face,
 my Savior and my fount of grace.
 Lord Jesus Christ,
 my prayer attend, my prayer attend,
 and I will praise thee without end!

Catherine Winkworth's translation hides an issue that appears in the original German and a few things are lost in her translation. In stanza 2 of both the German and English the idea of body and soul is introduced: "Yea, Lord, thine own rich bounty gave / my body, soul, and all I have / in this poor life of labor." Schalling's third stanza speaks of death and what happens after death with this soul-and-body language. The opening lines are a prayer for the Lord to let his "little angels" come to carry "my soul" to Abraham's bosom:

Ach Herr laß dein Engelein
 an meinem End mein Seelelein,
 inn Abrahams Schose tragen.¹⁶

Winkworth omits the soul language in her translation, and Schalling's colorful "little angels" become a more generic "angels." Schalling's prayer continues by asking that "my body" gently rest in its "little sleeping room" (*Schlafkammerlein*) without torment or agony until the Day of Judgment. At Jesus' reappearing the singer asks to be awakened bodily, to see God's Son with "mine eyes." The idea of awaking makes more sense if the body has been in a "little sleeping room"—a small child's bedroom that ideally is a place of rest, safety, and comfort—rather than in a "narrow chamber," which suggests a coffin. Schalling concludes the stanza and the hymn with another fervent prayer, "Lord Jesus Christ, hear me, because I desire to praise you everlastingly":

Herr Jesu Christ, erhöre mich,
 ich will dich preisen ewiglich.¹⁷



The way that Schalling depicts what happens after death does not come through clearly in Winkworth's English translation. Schalling suggests that while the body is peacefully sleeping in the earth the soul goes immediately to "Abraham's bosom."

Poets (and Christians in general) are drawn to soul language, since the word "soul" is inherently poetic because it is metaphoric. That is, the concept of a soul is not a concept from science. Science would describe our thoughts as a collection of electrical signals between neurons. "Soul" language is an attempt to describe the human "self," the sum of who we are, our essence. Susan Palo Cherwien describes death directly and honestly in her hymn "O Blessed Spring" (ELW 447, LSB 595). Our bodies return to dust, and then our "souls take wing," a metaphor of resurrection:

As winter comes, as winters must,
we breathe our last, return to dust;
still held in Christ, our souls take wing
and trust the promise of the spring.

While using body-and-soul language (or a synonym for soul, "spirit") can be elegant and eloquent, the idea of separating human beings into bodies and souls is problematic. Thomas Long puts it this way:

[The] sharp separation of spirit and body, and the devaluing of the body that inevitably accompanies it, runs like a ribbon through Western thought. . . . The Christian view of human beings and human bodies, which in large measure was inherited from Judaism, forms a sharp contrast to this prevailing view and is, in fact, countercultural in two directions at once. On one front, Christians reject as reductionist the view that human beings are only bodies. . . . On the other front, though, Christians with equal force reject the Platonic view that human beings are essentially nonmaterial and immortal souls, temporarily housed in disposable and somewhat loathsome bodies. . . . Christians, to sum up, do not believe that human beings are only bodies, nor do they believe that they are souls who, for the time being have bodies;

Christians affirm, rather, that human beings are *embodied*.¹⁸

If we have bodies that hold our souls then the temptation to treat the body as a mere container or shell for the "good stuff," the soul, is real. The temptation to make the body bad, evil, or the "location" of sin while the soul is good or holy is real. The temptation to make the body mortal (bodies die) but the soul immortal is real. This last temptation is perhaps the most dangerous, because if we say that any part of us is immortal we are claiming somehow to be divine, not to need resurrection. Therefore, in leaving out the soul language in her translation of stanza 3 of "Lord, Thee I Love with All My Heart," Winkworth has been more faithful to sound Christian teaching about death even as she has been not quite faithful to Schalling.

At the Edge of Mystery

Having walked with Louis Henry Becker throughout his life in earthly time, and then at his death having gathered "to worship, to proclaim Christ crucified and risen, to remember before God our brother, to give thanks for his life, to commend him to our merciful redeemer, and to comfort one another in our grief,"¹⁹ we had journeyed in 1984 as far as we could go with him. We had walked with him, in Long's words, to "the edge of mystery,"²⁰ or to the edge of eternity, or simply to God. It was time to commend him to God's care. We used words similar to those found in the funeral rite in *ELW*,²¹ but we could just as easily have sung the final stanza of one of his favorite hymns ("O Sacred Head"):

Lord, be my consolation;
shield me when I must die;
remind me of thy passion
why my last hour draws nigh.
These eyes, new faith receiving,
from thee shall never move;
for all who die believing
die safely in thy love.²²

Our challenge as church is to walk with people all along their journey of life, from baptism to death. Along the way we have the opportunity to sing many songs. If these songs are faithful to our teaching about death, if they use a wide variety of images for death and life

with God, and if we use them well at funerals and on many other occasions, then our singing about death can indeed be life giving. Soli Deo Gloria!

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Notes

1. Thomas G. Long, *Accompany Them with Singing: The Christian Funeral* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 75, an excellent book on the subject of funerals.
2. In my 40-plus years of playing funerals, discerning the deceased's favorite hymns and singing them at the funeral is the most common way that funeral hymns are chosen.
3. W. G. Polack, *The Handbook to The Lutheran Hymnal*, 3rd and rev. ed. (St. Louis: Concordia, 1958), no. 172.
4. Interestingly, the *ELW* translation omits this direct naming of Jesus.
5. Long, 38ff.
6. Ibid.
7. The first printing of *ELW* mistakenly dates "At the Lamb's High Feast We Sing" to the 17th century; Paul Westermeyer more creditably dates it between the 4th and 9th centuries in his *Hymnal Companion to Evangelical Lutheran Worship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2010), 167.
8. This sounds very much like Luther in the Small Catechism, who has us delivered from sin, death, and the devil" as a gift or benefit of baptism (see "Small Catechism of Martin Luther" in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2006), 1165.
9. This hymn speaks of the grave's "dark prison."
10. "Come, You Faithful, Raise the Strain" (ELW 363, st. 1; LSB 487, CW 142).
11. "Awake, My Soul, and with the Sun" (ELW 557, st. 2; LSB 868, CW 582).
12. "Jesus Lives, My Sure Defense" (ELW 621, st. 4).
13. This contrasts with the night of death that is "fraught still with many an anxious thought" in "Jesus Lives, My Sure Defense" (ELW 621, st. 4; LSB 741 and CW 167, st. 1).
14. *ELW* hymns 705–729.
15. *LBW* hymns 413–437.
16. Mathias Gastritz, *Kurtz und sonderliche Neue Symbola etlicher Fursten und Herrn* (Nürnberg: Gerlaz, 1571).
17. Ibid.
18. Long, 24–25.



Bach's Benediction: The E-flat Major Fugue, BWV 552, and the Christian Funeral Liturgy

by Chad Fothergill

As the featured artist at the St. Louis World's Fair of 1904, French organist and composer Alexandre Guilmant (1837–1911) performed 40 recitals within a span of six weeks, a whirlwind *tour de force* made all the more extraordinary by the report that not a single work was programmed more than once.^{1,2} Guilmant's inaugural program on September 12 opened with J. S. Bach's (1685–1750) Prelude in E-flat Major, BWV 552, and closed six weeks later on October 22 with the corresponding fugue,³ a composition now known colloquially as the "St. Anne" for its thematic similarity to the early 18th-century hymn tune by William Croft (1678–1727).⁴ Already familiar with both the prelude and the fugue by way of his extensive European and American performance tours, Guilmant is said to have expressed his particular fondness for the fugue during his St. Louis residency with a simple behest: "I want it played when my soul goes to heaven."⁵

More than a century later Guilmant's association of the "St. Anne" fugue with the

end of earthly life continues to find expression in Christian funeral liturgies. Notable instances throughout the 21st century have included services for Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon, The Queen Mother (1900–2002); President Gerald R. Ford (1913–2006); astronaut Neil Armstrong (1930–2012); and musician Gerre Hancock (1934–2012). I suspect that many readers of this journal have themselves probably heard or played the fugue in similar contexts, including those present at the funeral of the Rev. Peter Perella (1978–2014), an ALCM member who also served as the director of worship and liturgical resources for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

The particularly prominent association between the "St. Anne" fugue and the Christian funeral elicits a line of inquiry that the following paragraphs attempt to address, namely: from what material does this work derive such a commanding *Affekt*? What are some of the practical or pastoral considerations for its inclusion in the funeral liturgy? As demonstrated

below, there is no single correlation that can be pressed into a tidy, linear narrative. Neither is the intent here to foist a type of 19th-century programmatic reading or plot archetype on this particular combination of notes, rhythms, and harmonies. Instead, some of the historical, musical, and theological strands of Bach's creative process and the fugue's antecedents are traced as an ever-deepening network of relationships, the sum of their parts offering a conduit for church musicians to both "proclaim the gospel" and "witness to the hope of resurrection during the time of death."⁶ The "St. Anne" fugue is not upheld here as *the* funeral postlude, but as an exemplar of what we should aspire to—whether as theologically minded musicians or musically minded theologians—in our respective contexts.

The particularly prominent association between the "St. Anne" fugue and the Christian funeral elicits a line of inquiry that the following paragraphs attempt to address, namely: from what material does this work derive such a commanding *Affekt*?

"The Strong Name of the Trinity": A Context for the *Clavierübung III*

Along with its companion French-overture-styled prelude, the "St. Anne" fugue frames the third installment of Bach's *Clavierübung*, a "keyboard practice" series whose first and second volumes comprise a pedagogical odyssey through stylized dance forms (the six partitas, BWV 825–830, of 1731) and cosmopolitan mannerisms (the "Italian Concerto" and "French Overture," BWV 791 and BWV 831, of 1735). As indicated by the extant correspondence of his then-secretary, Bach planned to have the *Clavierübung III*—"clavier pieces that are mostly for organists" and "exceedingly well composed"—ready in the spring of 1739, just in time for the first of three Reformation anniversaries observed that year in Leipzig.⁷ The first was slated to mark

Luther's May 25, 1539, Pentecost sermon in the Thomaskirche; the second was for the August 12, 1539, acceptance of the Augsburg Confession by city officials; and lastly, the third was for the usual Reformation festival of October 31.⁸

Between the prelude and fugue, Bach positioned a series of organ preludes on chorales of Luther's German Mass and sections of the catechisms, a strategic and inspired arrangement grounded in Trinitarian representations. Not only did the *Clavierübung III* appear in the Trinitarian year ending "39" (3 + 3 + 3), its total contents numbered 27 individual pieces (3 × 3 × 3) including:

- longer pedaliter and shorter manualiter settings of the Catechism chorales corresponding to Luther's Large and Small Catechisms;
- 3 separate three-voice settings of "Allein Gott in der Höh," the Lutheran versification of the Gloria;
- individual pedaliter and manualiter settings for each of the 3 vernacular Kyrie petitions: "Kyrie, Gott Vater," "Christe, aller Welt Trost," and "Kyrie, Gott heiliger Geist"; and
- the aforementioned E-flat major prelude and fugue, both of which are set in the key of 3 flats and have 3 principal thematic sections.⁹

Even within this large Trinitarian architecture, constructions of individual movements were saturated with theologically minded designs that guided compositional techniques, placement of chorale melodies, meter signatures, and musical gestures. For example, mere coincidence cannot adequately account for the fact that Bach:

- chose to cast the pedaliter preludes of penitential texts—the Kyrie petitions and the confessional chorale "Aus tiefer Not," both of which situate the sinful Old Adam before the law of a merciful and compassionate God—in the *stile antico*, the "old style" governed by Renaissance contrapuntal "laws";
- placed chorale melodies emphasizing Christ, Mediator—"Christe, aller Welt Trost" and the baptism chorale "Christ unser Herr zum Jordan kam"—in the *middle*-sounding voice; and

- structured the pedaliter setting of “Dies sind die heil’gen Zehn Gebot”—Luther’s chorale on the Ten Commandments—in a 6|4 meter ($6 + 4 = 10$) and composed its corresponding manualiter fugue with 10 subject entries.

Throughout the *Clavierübung III*, Bach also exhibits a close reading and keen understanding of Luther’s theological emphases throughout the Large and Small Catechisms. The sweeping pedal ostinato of “Wir glauben all an einen Gott”—Luther’s versification of the Nicene Creed—occurs six times, a likely reference to Luther’s emphasis on God, *Creator*, in his explanation of the first article:

We should emphasize the words “creator of heaven and earth” [and] learn from this article that none of us has life—or anything else that has been mentioned here or can be mentioned—from ourselves, nor can we ourselves preserve any of them, however small and unimportant. All this is comprehended in the word “Creator.”¹⁰

Bach, the diligent pupil of the word, would have likely recalled the six days of creation as told in Genesis: if the meter signature for the preceding pedaliter chorale on the Ten Commandments is any indication of his thinking, then the 2|4 meter ($2 + 4 = 6$) of “Wir glauben” again points to the inspired organization that flows freely throughout chorale settings right into the concluding “St. Anne” fugue.

“The Three in One and One in Three”: Designs for the E-flat Fugue

At the same time that Bach was preparing the pieces of the *Clavierübung III*, the eminent music theorist Johann Mattheson (1681–1764) was finishing his highly anticipated *Der vollkommene Capellmeister* (“The Complete Director of Music”), a large treatise on period practices that was to be published by a Hamburg-based press in 1739. However, a November 1738 announcement in Christoph Mizler’s (1711–78) *Musikalische Bibliothek* indicates that the printing was underway in Leipzig and that the completed tome was, coincidentally, scheduled to appear precisely when Bach planned to have the *Clavierübung III* available:

Herr Mattheson’s *Vollkommene Capellmeister*, a writing which a great many people discerning in music have been awaiting eagerly for quite some time, is now actually “under the press” in Leipzig, and will make its appearance for the coming Easter fair without fail for the delight and profit of music lovers.¹¹

Bach’s own familiarity with and activities within the Leipzig publishing scene may have enabled him to preview drafts or even finished sections of Mattheson’s forthcoming treatise, including what essentially amounted to a musical “dare” directed toward Bach:

So far as is known, of double fugues with three subjects, nothing more has appeared in engraved copper than my own work, under the title “The Sonorous Language of the Fingers,” Parts One and Two, 1735 and 1737, which out of modesty I do not wish to praise to anyone; but would rather wish that something of the same sort might be brought to light by the famous Herr Bach in Leipzig, who is a great master of the fugue.¹²

As will be discussed below, Mattheson’s double-fugue-dare is met head-on by the “St. Anne” fugue. If Bach’s conclusion to the *Clavierübung III* was indeed a response to Mattheson’s

The “St. Anne” fugue is not upheld here as the funeral postlude, but as an exemplar of what we should aspire to—whether as theologically minded musicians or musically minded theologians—in our respective contexts.

collegial prod, this scenario may account not only for the Bach collection’s delayed release in autumn 1739 but also for the pagination changes made by the engravers in order to accommodate the fugue and complimentary prelude.¹³

Though the precise circumstances of its origin remain the subject of conjecture, the “St. Anne” fugue nevertheless presents a towering

accomplishment of learned contrapuntal writing. As summarized by biographer Martin Geck and shown in examples 1–4 below, “this magnificently complex composition contains a five-part simple fugue, a four-part double fugue, as well as another five-part double fugue on a third theme and the first one, so here is the double fugue with the three subjects Mattheson called for.”¹⁴ Like its parent collection, the fugue abounds in dizzying mathematical acrobatics centered around the number 3 and its multiples. In addition to carrying 3 themes in 3 sections, consider that:

- the symmetrical arrangement of measures across the fugue’s 3 sections—36, 45, and 36—are multiples of both 3 and 9 ($3 + 3 + 3$);
- the total number of measures, 117 ($1 + 1 + 7 = 9$), is a multiple of the Trinitarian publication year (39×3);
- just as there are 27 pieces ($3 \times 3 \times 3$) in the *Clavierübung III*, there are 27 whole or partial statements of the primary fugue subject; and
- the number of primary subject entries in each section is based on multiples of 3, with 12 entries in the first section, 6 in the second, and 9 in the third.¹⁵

Fascinating as these observations might be, a focus on these numerical relationships alone is ultimately of little or no theological import for the proclamation of the gospel at the end of the Christian life. Yet within the mostly inaudible Trinitarian framework the *Clavierübung III* and its concluding fugue are other, more significant and perhaps more discernible gestures that direct our attention toward the death-destroying power of the cross, all of which underscore the funeral liturgy’s proclamation that “Christ crucified and risen is the witness of worship.”¹⁶

Heard in this light, the so-called “cross motive” that begins Subject I of the “St. Anne” fugue (example 2) is an especially fitting gesture that follows the Trinitarian blessing given not only at the conclusion of the funeral liturgy but also at the end of the Small Catechism’s concluding baptismal booklet. Luther’s benediction here becomes Bach’s benediction, a sign of the cross made not only upon rising and retiring each day but also the sign carried by Christians from baptism to death. For many

others the motive may conjure recollections of the famous Psalm 90 paraphrase by Isaac Watts (1674–1748), “O God, Our Help in Ages Past”—itself often sung at funeral liturgies—even though the pairing of Watts’ text and the “St. Anne” tune did not appear until 1814.¹⁷

Out of its liturgical, catechismal, and hymn-related contexts, Subject I is rather unremarkable and its presence is quite pervasive in sources that either predate or are contemporaneous with Bach’s *Clavierübung III*. Some of these sources carry tenuous connections to Bach, including the first fugal section of Buxtehude’s E-major *Praeludium* (example 5) and the final movement of *Gelobet sei der Herr, denn er hat erhöht* (example 6), a cantata by Johann Krieger (1651–1735) that may have been transmitted to Bach through Johann Gottfried Walther (1684–1748).¹⁸ One antecedent of the “St. Anne” subject that Bach almost certainly knew was that of Conrad Friedrich Hurlebusch (1691–1765), a keyboard virtuoso who may have visited Bach around 1735. Even if they did not meet, Bach would have come to know his colleague’s work in his capacity as the Leipzig agent for Hurlebusch’s *Compositioni musicali per il cembalo divise in due parti* (1735), a collection whose contents contain a D-major fugue subject almost identical (example 7) to that of Buxtehude’s E-major *Praeludium*.^{19, 20}

In contrast to the treatments by Buxtehude, Krieger, and Hurlebusch, Bach cast Subject I in a *stile antico* fugue of five voices, its stately counterpoint striding along with a serene sense of assurance and calm that belies its mastery of Renaissance-inspired counterpoint. One is tempted to wonder here if Bach thought back to a portion of Luther’s 1529 preface to the Large Catechism as he worked to conclude the catechism-chorale collection with a five-part imitative composition: “Thus we have, in all, five parts covering the whole of Christian teaching, which we should constantly teach and require recitation word for word.”²¹

The use of the *stile antico* and other learned contrapuntal techniques in funeral compositions has a long-standing association in Lutheran musical circles. In 1667 Heinrich Schütz’ pupil Christoph Bernhard (1628–92) composed a now-lost *stile antico* motet that was performed for the funeral of a Hamburg mayor;

less than a decade later, Dieterich Buxtehude offered *Mit Fried und Freud*, BuxWV 76, a four-stanza study in invertible counterpoint (example 8) at the 1674 funeral of his father.²² And in 1685, Nicolaus Adam Strungk (1640–1700) published a *stile antico* work upon the death of his mother, *Ricercar Sopra la Morte della mia carissima Madre Catharina Maria Stubenrauen*, wherein according to David Yearsley:

Strungk reflects on the death of his mother in a long and complex contrapuntal essay, one which begins as a *fuga contraria reversa* where the fugal subject is answered by its exact melodic inversion, and culminates in a section combining the opening theme with three countersubjects.²³

Even as Bach himself lay dying in 1750 he is said to have dictated the “deathbed chorale,” “Vor deinen Thron,” BWV 668, an expansion and revision of a 1715 *Orgelbüchlein* setting that shows Bach “virtuosically engaged with the techniques of learned counterpoint, including melodic inversion, diminution, and stretto.”²⁴

The technique of inversion, of presenting a musical idea in *rectus* and *inversus* forms, is also found in the second section of the “St. Anne” fugue. Beginning at m. 37, a florid eighth-note subject (example 3a) comes charging out of the *stile antico* counterpoint, its first four notes sounding even before the other four voices release the final E-flat sonority of the preceding section. In ascending order from bass to soprano, the four manual voices—the feet have a reprieve in Section II—state the new subject in *rectus* across a span of 10 measures before a series of descending *inversus* entries at m. 47 (alto), m. 49 (tenor), and m. 51 (bass; shown in example 3b).

Just as performers and scholars have searched for musical antecedents for Subject I, so too have they suggested a number of pre-existing sources for Subject II—models from within and beyond the *Clavierübung III*. For example, Gregory Butler has noted similar melodic and rhythmic profiles in the florid stepwise motion of the soprano and alto voices in Krieger’s aforementioned cantata movement (example 6),²⁵ and I recall a graduate seminar on the *Clavierübung III* in which the contour

of this subject was compared to the running sixteenth-notes of the pedaliter “Christ unser Herr zum Jordan kam.” In the latter instance, the rise and fall of the left-hand line was further discussed as musical allegory for the flowing waters of the Jordan River, the right-hand gestures “dipping” in and out of this line with the cross motive (example 9). In the “St. Anne” fugue, the superimposition of Subject I’s cross motive over the *rectus-inversus* activity of Subject II not only signals Bach’s response to Mattheson’s challenge but also seems to recall this baptism chorale structure and, by extension, Luther’s words from the Large Catechism:

This act or ceremony consists of being dipped into the water, which covers us completely, and being drawn out again. These two parts, being dipped under the water and emerging from it, point to the power and effect of baptism, which is nothing else than the slaying

Fascinating as these observations might be, a focus on these numerical relationships alone is ultimately of little or no theological import for the proclamation of the gospel at the end of the Christian life.

of the old Adam and the resurrection of the new creature, both of which must continue in us our whole life long. Thus a Christian life is nothing else than a daily baptism, begun once and continuing ever after.²⁶

In contrast to the majestic *stile antico* of Subject I and to the cascading gestures of Subject II, the third and final subject of the “St. Anne” fugue is a vigorous *giga* in the *stile moderno* (example 4), with its palindromic rhythm in 12|8 that verges on the “jaunty” side. Using the dance typologies established by Meredith Little and Natalie Jenne, Subject III and the concluding section of the “St. Anne” fugue could be grouped under the “Giga II” category, or compound-meter works that contain more sixteenth-note activity and longer phrases and that exude considerably more lilt than their “Giga I” counterparts.²⁷ Moreover, Little and

Jenne observe that the “Giga II” is more likely to be found within instrumental works, especially those that may contain “fugues or quasi-fugal procedures.”²⁸ In one of their examples from Bach’s Leipzig tenure, BWV 829, the “Giga II” subject “begins with gusto” while the following fugue “achieves remarkable fluidity with its sequences and wonderful chains of suspensions,”²⁹ a description easily transferred to the ebullience of the “St. Anne” fugue’s closing section.

Like the entries of Subject II, those of Subject III occur in ascending order, with the entry of the uppermost voice leading directly to a clear—almost clarion—statement of Subject I beginning in m. 88. From this point forward, the

Luther's benediction here becomes Bach's benediction, a sign of the cross made not only upon rising and retiring each day but also the sign carried by Christians from baptism to death.

two subjects interact freely and are buoyed by the rise, fall, and curlicue motion of sixteenth-note strands that seem to reach up to the cosmos, the pedal dancing the gigue twice in mm. 93–94 and 105–108 but otherwise keeping the rhythmic and harmonic motion within the confines of gravity.

Nevertheless, everything about the conclusion of the “St. Anne” fugue suggests an upward lift of winged flight. A similar musical gesture can be found in Bach’s cantata *Liebster Gott, wenn werd ich sterben*, BWV 8, composed for the 16th Sunday after Trinity and the musical corollary to Luke’s gospel about the raising of the youth at Nain (Luke 7:11–17). In the bass aria of the fourth movement the predominant eighth-note “Giga I” rhythm suddenly intensifies into the more active and longer-phrased “Giga II” at the text “*verkläret und herrlich vor Jesu zu stehn*” (to stand before Jesus, transfigured and glorious; example 10), a rhythmic profile not unlike that of the “St. Anne” fugue’s final

subject. Of the cantata movement’s text and orchestration, Alfred Dürr observes:

The fear of death is now overcome, and the ritornello, clearly articulated and in a joyful gigue rhythm, unfolds its theme in a homophonic string texture together with a virtuoso concertante flute part.³⁰

This overall stylistic shift from the *stile antico* of Subject I to the *stile moderno* of Subject III—all within the concluding work of a Lutheran catechism-chorale collection—suggests yet another comparison to the vocal music of Johann Krieger. In her study of Krieger’s cantata *Danksaget dem Vater*, Mary Benson Stahlke has shown how texts that convey the meaning of the law are set in the *stile antico* while those that proclaim the gospel message are presented in the *stile moderno*.³¹ Again, while Bach’s connection to Krieger’s music is tenuous, it is still possible to view the “St. Anne” fugue in the context of the Christian funeral liturgy as musical commentary on the Christian’s baptismal journey: moving from the song of the penitent before the law through baptismal waters to the dance of the transfigured saint now joined to Christ’s resurrection. Though I have tried to avoid a programmatic reading of the “St. Anne” fugue as Bach conceived it, its musical, thematic, and theological trajectory in the funeral liturgy may be compared to words attributed to Patrick (372–466):

I bind this day to me forever,
by pow’r of faith, Christ’s incarnation,
his baptism in the Jordan River,
his cross of death for my salvation,
his bursting from the spiced tomb,
his riding up the heav’nly way,
his coming at the day of doom,
I bind unto myself today.³²

“By Pow’r of Faith”: Certainty in the Unheard

Absent these historical, musical, and theological threads, the “St. Anne” fugue still remains a well-crafted and satisfying musical work. Felix Mendelssohn (1809–47) played the fugue on August 6, 1840, to open an all-Bach organ recital in the Thomaskirche, one of the first documented instances of such a program.³³ And in the 20th century many transcriptions

have been recorded, ranging from five-part viol consort to concert band to Arnold Schoenberg's (1874–1951) restless yet brilliantly kaleidoscopic orchestration. Indeed, the fugue alone stands as one of many “high-quality examples of the art of composition” encouraged for use in the funeral liturgy, works that “reflect the spirit of Christian confidence, trust, and hope in the resurrection characteristics of the spoken parts of the service.”³⁴ While other well-known compositions can also articulate these themes—triumphal and celebratory examples by Charles Widor and Louis Vierne come to mind—the “St. Anne” fugue is one of few works that transmits a sure and certain *hope*.

Longer postludes such as the “St. Anne” fugue, though, do require thoughtful planning on the part of musicians, pastors, and funeral directors alike. More than once I have encountered a funeral director who presumed all of the liturgical music—even hymns—to be traveling music for movements of the casket, family, and other logistical choreography. As noted in one of the companion volumes to *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, funeral liturgies often bring the ritual actions of the Sending into relief.³⁵ At the 2011 Conference on Liturgy at Mount Olive Lutheran Church, Minneapolis (“Holy Death: The Parish and Its Liturgy at the Time of Death”), one of the presenters reminded attendees that the rituals, actions, and sounds of the funeral liturgy are often “seared” into the memories of those present. What a time to bring the finest fruits of craft, content, and meaning that we have to offer!

Will assemblies of mourners hear the various meanings and allusions of the “St. Anne” fugue described here? Probably not. Even if the notes alone are heard, attention is likely drawn toward the greeting of relatives and friends, or transportation to the committal site, or preparations for a luncheon. But I would argue here that with a well-crafted and well-

intentioned postlude—the “St. Anne”; a French toccata; a hymn stanza; full organ, piano, or solo instrument—musicians can actively proclaim

Nevertheless, everything about the conclusion of the “St. Anne” fugue suggests an upward lift of winged flight.

the Gospel message of the Christian funeral liturgy in works of art—the “St. Anne” fugue or otherwise—that, if nothing else, “anticipate the beauty previewed and promised in Jesus Christ.”³⁶

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Appendix of Musical Examples

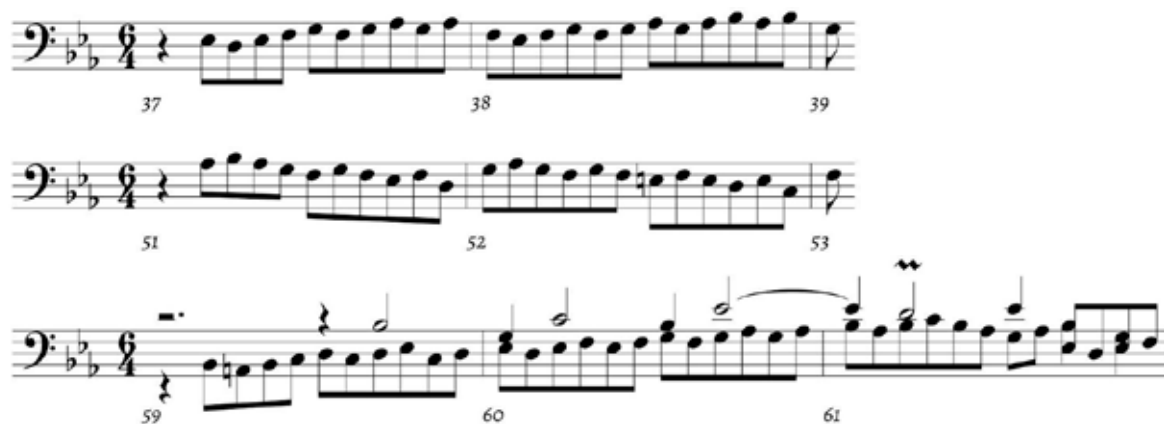
Example 1. Overall fugue structure

mm. 1–36 4 2 meter	mm. 37–81 6 4 meter	mm. 82–117 12 8 meter
<i>Stile antico</i> fugue à 5 with cross motive Subject I	New fugue subject (II) à 4 appearing in <i>rectus</i> and <i>inversus</i> ; combination with Subject I beginning at m. 59, the midpoint of the entire work	New gigue-like fugue subject (III) à 5; combination with Subject I beginning in m. 88

Example 2. Subject I with cross motive



Example 3. Subject II shown in (a) *rectus* at m. 37, (b) *inversus* in m. 51, and (c) in combination with Subject I at m. 59



Example 4. Subject III

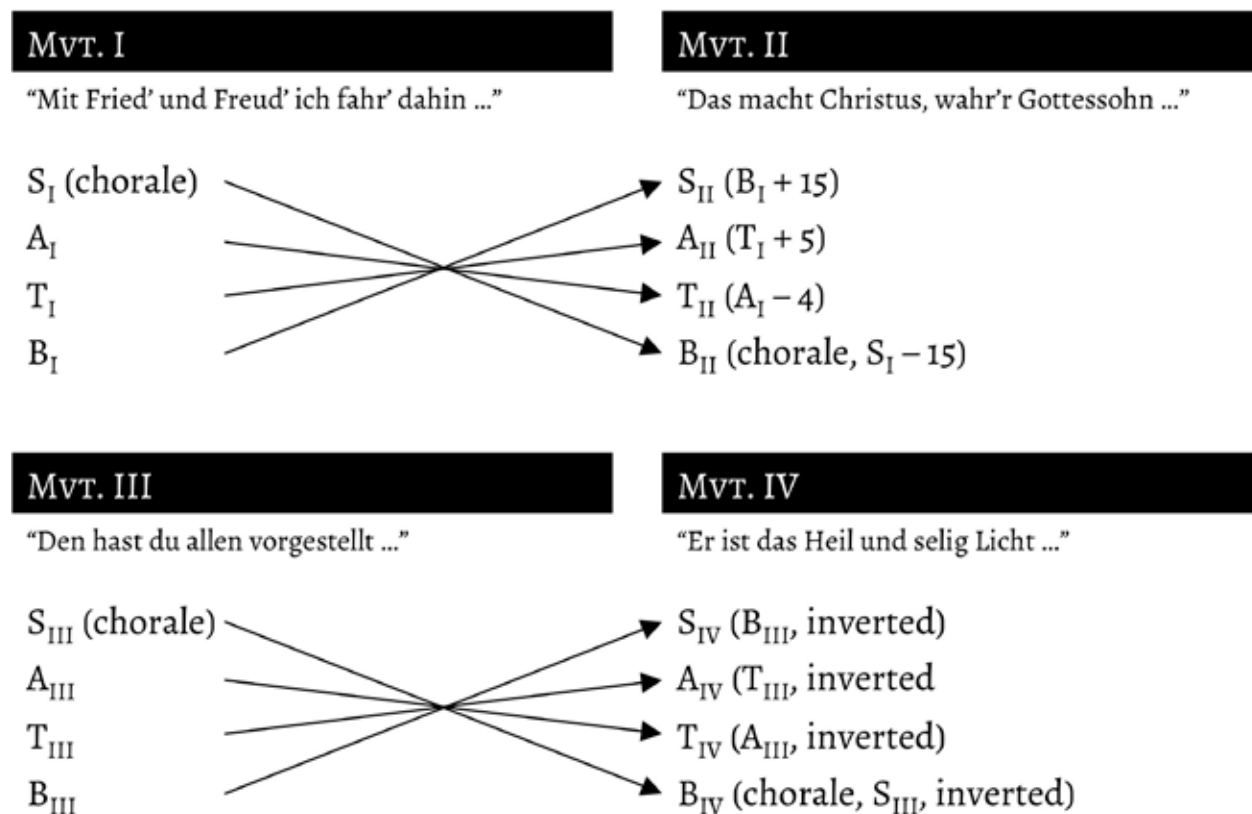


Example 5. Buxtehude, first fugue subject from *Praeludium in E*, BuxWV 141, with similarity to cross motive of Subject I

Example 6. Excerpt from Krieger, *Gelobet sei der Herr, denn er hat erhöht*, with similarity to Subject I in tenor voice

Example 7. Hurlebusch, opening of the Fugue in D from *Compositioni musicali per il cembalo divise in due parti* (Hamburg, 1735), with similarity to cross motive of Subject I

Example 8. Invertible counterpoint scheme of Buxtehude's *Mit Fried und Freud*, BuxWV 76, a setting based on Luther's versification of the Nunc dimittis (Luke 2:29-32)



Example 9. Opening of the pedaliter "Christ unser Herr zum Jordan kam," BWV 684, from the *Clavierübung III*



Fl. traverso

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Basso

Continuo

ver - klä - ret und herr-lich vor Je - su zu stehn, vor

46 47 48

Example 10. Excerpt of the bass aria “Doch weichet, ihr tollern” from Bach’s cantata *Liebster Gott, wenn werd ich sterben*, BWV 8

Notes

- Orpha Ochse, *The History of the Organ in the United States* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1975), 358.
- Craig R. Whitney, *All the Stops: The Glorious Pipe Organ and Its American Masters* (New York: Public Affairs, 2003), 24.
- Piet Bron, “Calendar of Felix Alexandre Guilment, 1901–1911,” www.guilment.nl/ca1901.html (accessed October 15, 2014).
- C. T. Aufdemberge, *Christian Worship: Handbook* (Milwaukee: Northwestern, 1997), 458. The tune was named for the London parish where Croft served as organist.
- Russell Stinson, *J. S. Bach at His Royal Instrument: Essays on His Organ Works* (Oxford and New York: Oxford UP, 2012), 135. Stinson subsequently notes, however, that it was not the E-flat fugue but rather Bach’s six-part setting of the chorale “Aus tiefer Not schrei ich zu dir,” BWV 686, that was played on Guilment’s house organ as his body was removed.
- Dennis L. Bushkofsky and Craig A. Satterlee, *Using Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, vol. 2, *The Christian Life: Baptism and Life Passages* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2008), 155.
- Hans T. David and Arthur Mendel, eds., *The New Bach Reader: A Life of Johann Sebastian Bach in Letters and Documents*, rev. and enlarged by Christoph Wolff (New York: Norton, 1998), 202.
- Robin A. Leaver, “Bach’s *Clavierübung* III: Some Historical and Theological Considerations,” *Organ Yearbook* 6 (1975): 17.
- Ibid. A number of authors have noted the Trinitarian associations with this collection and the “St. Anne” fugue including, in chronological order, John David Peterson, “Symbolism in J. S. Bach’s Prelude and Fugue in E-flat and Its Effect on Performance,” *The Diapason* 67, no. 3 (February 1976): 1, 6–8, 16; John O’Donnell, “And Yet They Are Not Three Fugues: But One Fugue (Another Look at Bach’s Fugue in E-flat),” *The Diapason* 68, no. 1 (December 1976): 10–12; Richard Benedum, “Structure and Symbolism in Bach’s Prelude and Fugue in E-Flat, BWV 552,” *Bach* 10, no. 4 (October 1979): 19–24; and David Humphreys, *The Esoteric Structure of Bach’s Clavierübung III* (Cardiff, Wales: University College Cardiff Press, 1983).
- Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 432–33.

11. Gregory G. Butler, "Der vollkommene Capellmeister as a Stimulus to J. S. Bach's Late Fugal Writing," in George J. Buelow and Hans Joachim Marx, eds., *New Mattheson Studies* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge UP, 1983), 293.
12. Quoted in Martin Geck, *Johann Sebastian Bach: Life and Work* (Orlando, FL: Harcourt, 2006; originally published in German, 2000), 225.
13. Gregory Butler, *Bach's Clavier-übung III: The Making of a Print* (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 1990), 39–44. Butler also observes that the otherwise explicit title page of the *Clavierübung III* makes no reference to free works, or those not based upon chorale melodies. Could this indicate that Bach's original intent was to issue a still-Trinitarian compendium of 21 chorale settings (2 + 1 = 3), but that the fugue required not only an equally hefty prelude to match but also four more pieces—the seemingly out-of-place *Duetts* (BWV 802–805)—to restore a comprehensive Trinitarian number scheme? Interestingly enough, without these six pieces the *Clavierübung III* still retains Trinitarian bookends through the use of a three-flat key signature in the opening pedaliter "Kyrie, Gott Vater" and closing manualiter "Jesus Christus, unser Heiland," the most extensive and structurally virtuosic of these manuals-only settings.
14. Geck, 226.
15. Several of these relationships are described in the previously cited articles by Peterson, O'Donnell, and Benedum. For a discussion regarding the balance between mere symbolism and theological content in Bach's music, see Jeremy S. Begbie, "Created Beauty: The Witness of J. S. Bach," in Jeremy S. Begbie and Steven R. Guthrie, eds., *Resonant Witness: Conversations between Music and Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011), 83–108.
16. Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2006), 279.
17. Paul Westermeyer, *Hymnal Companion to Evangelical Lutheran Worship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2010), 478–479.
18. Butler, *Bach's Clavier-übung III*, 9–11.
19. Peter Williams, *The Organ Music of J. S. Bach*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge UP, 2003), 159.
20. Butler, *Bach's Clavier-übung III*, 2–9.
21. Kolb and Wengert, 386.
22. David Yearsley, "Towards an Allegorical Interpretation of Buxtehude's Funerary Counterpoints," *Music & Letters* 80, no. 2 (May 1999): 183–85.
23. David Yearsley, *Bach and the Meanings of Counterpoint* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge UP, 2002), 16–17. Yearsley adds here that "C. P. E. Bach listed Strungk as one of his father's influences, and it would seem unlikely that this, perhaps Strungk's most famous keyboard piece, would have remained unknown to Bach."
24. *Ibid.*, 1–5.
25. Butler, *Bach's Clavier-übung III*, 9–11.
26. Kolb and Wengert, 464–65.
27. Meredith Little and Natalie Jenne, *Dance and the Music of J. S. Bach*, expanded ed. (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2001), 260–75.
28. *Ibid.*, 168–69.
29. *Ibid.*, 174.
30. Alfred Dürr, *The Cantatas of J. S. Bach*, rev. and trans. by Richard D. P. Jones (Oxford and New York: Oxford UP, 2005), 551–53. In what probably amounts to a tantalizing coincidence, it should be noted here that the second violin's harmonic reinforcement in this passage bears striking resemblance to the profile of Subject I and its distinct rising fourths.
31. Mary Benson Stahlke, "Johann Krieger's Musical Contrast of Law and Gospel in the Cantata *Danksaget dem Vater*," in Carlos R. Messerli, ed., *Thine the Amen: Essays on Lutheran Church Music in Honor of Carl Schalk* (Minneapolis: Lutheran UP, 2005), 65–81.
32. ELW 450, st. 2; also LSB 604.
33. Stinson, 40–41.
34. Inter-Lutheran Commission on Worship, *Lutheran Book of Worship: Ministers Desk Edition* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, and Philadelphia: Board of Publication, Lutheran Church in America, 1978), 39.
35. Bushkofsky and Satterlee, 175.
36. Begbie, 108.



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To the Glory of God and the Good of Humanity

by Paul Westermeyer

Editor's note: This article is from a plenary address for a conference on Worship and Liturgy held October 4, 2014, at Grace Lutheran Church, Lincoln, NE, the church where Lutheran Summer Music was launched.

Where We Are

Why is there so much talk about mission at the moment? I fear that much of it is not primarily because we care about the church's mission but because we have misconstrued mission as trying to make sure our institutions survive. We are greeted with a barrage of messages that tell us there once was a mainline Protestant church from sea to shining sea. In the 1950s and 1960s, the presumed golden age which happens to be the time when I was growing up, the whole country in this narrative is supposed to have been full of Biblically literate Christians. Indeed, the whole country is presumed to have been Christian. Now—because we are too archaic, because we use too many old words and the wrong music, because we are not relevant, because we don't understand or embrace the spirit of the age—we are losing members. So

to populate and prop up what we presume to be our dying institutions, we have to do what we should have been doing—and what was presumably done after World War II. Pastors therefore shame their people for not padding their dynasties, which is understood as being missional; and we have a spate of articles and meetings about “mission,” which often is a euphemism for marketing.

The “mainline decline” narrative is derived from the culture's metanarrative of our time and place: everything and everybody are for sale. Success is about how to market products and sell things. Bigger is better and smaller is bad. Christianity and the church are regarded as products to be sold, and the point is to beat the competition. Mission is about sales techniques and how to get lots of people, not only “seekers” from the general population but people from the church down the street. The *how* of this proposition has had various components, among them these:

- don't use anything beyond fourth grade words and ideas;
- don't use “archaic” words like “narthex” or “hymn”;

- don't use any music written before the decade we're living in and certainly not any music from the church's heritage unless it's part of the popular civil religious culture—not chant from the East or West, polyphony, classic hymn tunes, congregational or choral pieces from the liturgy, or organ literature;
- do use one style of music, like the music the culture uses to market its products;
- don't use the church's liturgy;
- make worship into a talk-show pep rally, with the minister the talk-show host and the musician the sidekick;
- abandon the lectionary;
- use a lectionary of your own choosing or none at all, with no regard for our sisters and brothers in the rest of the church;
- embrace the culture by becoming it; and
- don't do anything counter-cultural that addresses systemic issues like justice and peace.

The message is that if we do these things—or some of these things, or the right set of these things—our churches will be full. Once again from sea to shining sea there will be Biblically literate Christians who will talk daily about pastors' sermons, just as there used to be before the current generation messed things up.

The message is that if we do these things—or some of these things, or the right set of these things—our churches will be full.

Two Problems

There are two problems with this narrative. One is *historical*, the other *theological*. The historical one asks if there ever was such a time as this narrative describes. I doubt it.

Historical

Several things have for some time seemed clear to me:

1. So far as I can tell, the students and their families in my high school were no more Biblically literate in the 1950s than the students and their families in my grandsons' high schools today.

2. The proposition that many more people were going to church when I was a high school student than are going there today is a curious one. The whole city was certainly not in church in the 1950s. The streets on Sunday morning were as deserted then as they are now.
 3. Then, as now, there was a second narrative. Some churches throughout the city from various denominational streams had and still have these things in common: they sang the Lord's song around word, font, and table, then went into the world with what they had received to serve their neighbors. Then, as now, some of these congregations did not run from their neighborhoods but stayed put in service there. Such places were not always full of people, but they had participatory congregations. These were not, as they still are not, the churches that got a lot of publicity. Their pastors, organists, choir directors, and choirs were often quite able, but not stars. The churches that fled their neighborhoods to the white suburbs tended to have the stars for preachers and musicians. They may have been somewhat fuller, but they were not as full as we pretend. Then, as now, those congregations tended to be spectators at worship, not participants. And then, as now, they tended to avoid systemic ethical issues like racism, war, peace, justice, sexism, and homophobia.
 4. Further, I knew enough from historical studies to realize that the whole country did not go to church in past generations, in spite of what we are told.
 5. I also knew that analyzing our current cultural context on the basis of the narrow patina of sales techniques, in spite of the metanarrative that drives it, is far too simplistic. Our current circumstances require a more holistic and substantive assessment than that.
- A full-orbed assessment needs a wide range of interdisciplinary study by many people—which is being done.¹ That is beyond what I wanted to tackle, but I did want to search out the historical details of the mainline decline narrative. So I assembled a shelf full of books from Luther Seminary's library and started

to work on them; but then lectures, classes, and articles I had to prepare postponed the research.

Before I got back to this project, I found that Ted A. Campbell at Perkins School of Theology had wondered about these things and had written up his findings.² He assembled the so-called mainline denominations, taking into account their complicated combinations and splits (he points out that we're hardly a match today for the situation in 1925), then looked at membership data in 1925, 1950, 1975, and 2000. He discovered that these mainline denominations never accounted for more than 16.8 percent of the population, and he doubts that "membership . . . ever accounted for more than a quarter of the population in the twentieth century."³ The percentage of members compared to the growing population has "fallen significantly since 1950" because newer immigrants since the late 1800s have not been Protestant, especially after the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965.⁴ Campbell found no "consistent decline" between 1925 and 2000, but did find a bulge that peaked in the mid to late 1960s.⁵ It was a "precancerous" bulge rather than a "pregnant" one because it included many nominal members who not surprisingly disappeared.⁶

How these mainline denominations came to be considered so mighty is complicated, says Campbell. He suggests several reasons: first, the distant memory from before the Civil War when Methodists, Baptists, Lutherans, Episcopalians, Congregationalists, and Presbyterians "probably did constitute a majority of non-Catholic Americans"; second, the "cultural impression that these churches were the true American churches"; and, third, their engagement in the Federal Council of Churches, which was the predecessor of the National Council of Churches.⁷

The first of these points is not about a majority of Americans. Martin Marty says that "20 percent of the colonial citizens were active in churches. Change came after 1776, so that, in one common estimate, church participation jumped from 17 percent to 34 percent between 1776 and 1850."⁸ That's not a majority. Taken together, even if one were to consider all of these percentages including

the ones from 1776 to 1850 as referring to "mainline denominations," they suggest that from the colonial period through 2000, 16.8 to 34 percent of the population were "active in churches." That's not a majority and certainly not everybody in the country.

Campbell concludes his article thus.

So what's left after the fashionable old-line members of the mid-20th century fade away? Probably neither the mighty American mainline that never was nor the handful of wrinkled churchgoers depicted in popular reports. What remains are Christian communities with a stronger core of

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committed and active believers than is often represented—communities with durable institutions capable of transmitting church cultures across generations. They have considerably more members than they had at the beginning of the 20th century, and despite emerging divisions, they have stronger forms of visible unity than their predecessors had at that time.⁹

These words point to the second narrative which, in spite of the publicity given to the metanarrative of sales techniques, is about the church now as in the 20th century and before that, broken as usual but singing the Lord's song around word, font, and table, then going into the world to serve the neighbor whether that was or is popular or not (and it often was and is not).

Theological

Except in the sense of truth-telling, whether these statistics are accurate or not is—from a theological point of view—irrelevant, which

exposes the second problem. It concerns the presupposition of the mainline decline narrative. It is a theological problem, or more precisely, an ecclesiological one. The problem is the presupposition that we sustain the church and that the church is identifiable with our institutions. That is false. We don't sustain the church; God does. Various institutions come and go as the body of the baptized lives out its being in the world. There are times of plenty and times of scarcity, and the church at all times—in season and out of season—is

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called to do its work with the knowledge that it is in God's keeping, no matter what. We don't have to worry about that. This is the second narrative, reflected in Luther's explanation to the third article of the Creed, which follows Jesus' promise and the faith of the church:

I believe that by my own understanding or strength I cannot believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to him, but instead the Holy Spirit has called me through the gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, made me holy and kept me in true faith, just as he calls, gathers, enlightens, and makes holy the whole Christian church on earth and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one common, true faith.¹⁰

Music

Music turns out to be a central—perhaps *the* central—component or symbol of these two narratives. It illustrates and symbolizes how they differ. In the narrative that says we sustain the church, music is perceived to be what the

culture perceives it to be. It is a sales tool, a manipulative technique for getting people to do something—namely, to join us and keep our coffers full. In the narrative of the church's faith, however, music is for the glory of God and the good (edification or sanctification, depending on the tradition) of humanity.

The first narrative is about civil religion. Civil religion concerns the spirit of an age. William Inge, dean of St. Paul's in London, was assigned this topic in 1911: “The cooperation of the Church with the Spirit of the Age.” He responded that “if you marry the Spirit of your own generation you will be a widow in the next.”¹¹ (The temptation here is not only that of the church. It runs in two directions. The church wants to crawl into the power of the state, and the state wants to co-opt the church for its power.)

How a generation regards itself and behaves is a concern of the church in this sense: the church pursues its vocation in the culture it serves by living with it into its promise and plight—that is, by being contextual. The church's vocation is not, however, to marry the culture or become trendy like the culture. Even if well-meaning, marrying the culture erases the church's being and very soon leaves it a widow since a culture, especially one geared to selling things, is a fickle partner. Marrying the culture denies the help the church can give. The church needs to embrace the grace that God gives for it to be of any value, which is why the church has regarded itself as the bride of Christ and regards any other marriage as promiscuous. Another way to say this is like the “Nairobi Statement on Worship and Culture” of the Lutheran World Federation,¹² which regards worship as not only contextual but also transcultural, cross-cultural, and counter-cultural.

A brief summary of the church's characteristic perspective about music in the second narrative goes like this. Colossians 3:16 follows the heritage of the psalms and views music as carrying gratitude to God, allied to the word of God dwelling in us: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God” (NRSV).

These words point to the basis for the church's view of music most of the time. There are exceptions: (1) music was abandoned in the church by a 4th-century monk named Pambo or someone in the 6th century in his name, by the 16th-century reformer Ulrich Zwingli, by the early 17th-century Baptists, and by the Quakers who followed; and (2) Arius in the 4th century used jingles to propel his ideas. Most of the church most of time, however, has taken a different tack.

- The church fathers excised musical instruments because they were associated with expensive and self-indulgent revelry that left out the widow and the orphan and were perceived to be idolatrous and immoral.
- Augustine followed the instrumental exclusion and reflected the thought of the early church when he commended the jubilus—the wordless musical “a” at the end of the “Alleluia”—for its praise to God; he and the other church fathers also commended music that carried worthy texts of praise to God and helped us hear the word of God.
- The Eastern churches followed the same perspective as the early church, including singing without instruments. These features not only shine through the practice of the Eastern church but are in the woodwork of writers like Timothy Ware and Alexander Schmemmann.
- In the West Hildegard of Bingen reflected the medieval period, which regarded music highly for the same reasons. For her the whole creation gave praise to God; and in her morality play the Virtues are musical, while the devil cannot sing.
- At the Reformation Luther warned against the use of music for erotic rantings but celebrated its best crafting as the inevitable response to God for what God has done and as a joyous proclamation to humanity. Like Augustine and the church fathers, Calvin knew the dangers of music but viewed it positively as praise to God and edification of humanity under the category of prayer.
- The same course has been followed by J. S. Bach, Harriet Krauth Spaeth, and the

Lutheran stream; Calvinists and their stream; the Wesleys and the Methodist stream; John Mason Neale, Catherine Winkworth, and Anglicans; Pope Pius X, Vatican II, and Catholics; and anonymous Black spirituals in various streams with commentators like Melva Costen and James Abbington. There are variations, of course—for example, whether sanctification or edification is emphasized, or whether this perspective is expressed explicitly or implicitly—but all of these streams warn us of the dangers and misuse of music as they simultaneously commend it for the glory of God and the good of the neighbor.

What Are We Called to Do?

We have tended to put aside these insights as we flagellate ourselves for not filling our churches with people and filling our coffers with money because we have not figured out or followed some magic—often considered musical—sales formula to worldly success. We

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call that flagellating by the name “mission.” We think that if we just find this or that magic thing—especially the right music, or maybe the right chumminess or strategy—we will market the church successfully and be like the church in the golden age of the 1950s when the whole country is presumed to have been part of it. What are we to do?

Church musicians give us a clue. Unlike the gloom-and-doom meetings that characterize much of the church, the meetings of church musicians are unusually happy. This curiosity has puzzled me, since at every one of these meetings there are horror stories of faithful musicians who have helped congregations and choirs sing quite well, sometimes over

considerable periods of time, but who have been treated badly, forced to resign, been victimized, or fired unjustly and summarily without cause. Musicians have been the convenient scapegoats for many of the church's problems. What I conclude from this is that church musicians have the privilege of the poor and the oppressed, not that they are any better or worse than other people in the church, but that systemically they are easy targets. Being victimized gives them the freedom to know and tell the truth that makes us free and happy.

(The way church musicians are treated is complicated. Behind their treatment stands a systemic problem that they are, with a few notable exceptions, shut out of the educational programs of the church. They and pastors usually have to learn their crafts in different venues, from different standpoints, and with no dialogue. Without even knowing it, their

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teeth are set on edge against one another before they ever meet. Musicians are primed to regard their roles as employees, while pastors who hold the power are primed to regard them as technicians employed to do the pastor's bidding. Neither learns the communal nature of the church with its collegial character and gifts unless they search it out or stumble on it by a happy accident. Those who so search or stumble find untold rewards for themselves and their people that counter the horror stories.)

The first thing we have to do as the whole church is to tell the truth. Civil religious marketing strategies will not help us because they are geared to obscure the truth with talking points and other deceptions. The truth is that there is no such past as we imagine. The church and the world are a demoralizing mess now and always have been. They're also miraculous and incredible wonders, but you only see the wonders if you admit the mess. To see the church or the world through the

pretense of rose-colored glasses is to see a figment of our imaginations. Original sin tells us this. So do the front page of the daily paper and honest historical study. There is no golden age and never has been. There is no magic formula and never has been. We cannot by our music or chumminess or marketing strategies or whatever construct a point of contact with God. There is no contact point except in Christ. That's what the liturgy makes very clear, and in the process protects us from ourselves and our self-serving strategies and propaganda. The problem is not with the liturgy or musical styles. The problem, as always, is with our curved-in sinfulness. We think we can invent a formula that will get us and others into God's presence. It's a devious way to avoid the work we are called to do in response to God's grace that sets us free from this kind of works righteousness. We monkey around with our worship and our music as a clever way to avoid serving our neighbors. We need to start by being honest.

And then we need to do what we are called to do. What is that? What does the Lord require of us? asks Micah: "to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8). Jesus spelled that out. He said that the first and greatest commandment is to "love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength." The second," he said, "is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'" (Mark 12:30-31). The answer about what we are called to do is the typical paradoxical simplicity of the Christian gospel. It's quite simple, but not simple to do; we are called to work out and then carry out the implications of these commandments in all their simple complexity.

We might sort out the implications in this way, starting with the second commandment. Loving the neighbor means proclaiming to the neighbor the grace of God. That's not the legalistic box of trying to get the neighbor to do what we want with music or anything else as the manipulative technique. It's the freedom of God's word that liberates all of us from bondage to just such strictures. Mostly we will do this proclaiming not with words but with deeds: deeds of kindness and deeds that take on the principalities and powers for the sake of justice and peace. None of this happens by

some magic formula. It happens by figuring it out day by day, making choices day by day, working at it brick by brick and piece by piece in the rhythm of confession and forgiveness, trying and trying again, pouring ourselves out for the sake of the world over and over.

Behind this stands the first and greatest commandment, to love God above all else. Paradoxically, the only way to keep the first or the second commandment is to know the gospel and how it turns everything upside down: behind the commandments is not our love, but the love of God poured out for us. We're part of a cracked and broken world where we are sure to mess things up (though there is a huge difference between delighting in the law of the Lord and following the advice of the wicked, as Psalm 1 teaches us), but God loves us anyway and calls us into the fray anyway. The gospel drives the whole business. It propels the Christian life.

Worship

That brings us to worship. As two of my perceptive teachers—Cyril Richardson and Bard Thompson—told us, the gospel only has meaning in the context of a worshipping community. Worship has a primary claim on the Christian, and the Christian life is not possible without it. The Christian life is not all worship, but worship integrates it, feeds it, and grounds it. Without worship the rest evaporates.

We have had two centuries now of robust study and research about, practice and editing of, and theoretical and practical work on worship across the whole ecumenical church. Though we don't agree on everything either within or across our denominational divisions, and though we love to fight about it mostly with our closest brothers and sisters, we nonetheless have been blessed with a remarkable ecumenical consensus reflected in quite responsible hymnals, worship books, and supplementary materials. We have largely common structures with well-edited, up-to-date, and inclusive detail around word, table, and font, with daily prayer around the Sunday word and table sequence. Not surprisingly this matches what the church has been doing for two thousand years. The sequence concludes every Sunday with an imperative for the coming

week that says to go and be for the world what has been received. We know something about this and can make some affirmations, like these.

When we assemble for worship, it looks like what we do. We come, pray, praise, sing, listen, share the peace, bring and share bread and wine, stand, sit, kneel, go. But God turns the whole business upside down. In, with, and under the word, bread, and wine, God comes to us with the Trinitarian gifts of cross and resurrection, with forgiveness and new life, with health and peace, with blessing.

That is, we are dealing here with the holy, with God, with otherness, with the truth. Whatever horror is out there in the world, we can face it squarely with lament because we know how the universe is really made. That's why Black slaves were able to stare their horror in the face and sing "This world's a wilderness of woe" and "sinners scream and cry 'while

The answer about what we are called to do is the typical paradoxical simplicity of the Christian gospel.

the moon drips away in the blood.'" And that's why they also sang "My dungeon shook and the chain fell off," and "I'm free at last . . . born of God and been baptized."

Worship does not look or sound like the world around us. It uses the raw materials of that world that are all we have but contextualizes and cleanses them in the narrative of grace (which is why applause that calls attention to our prowess is so destructive). The Orthodox know this and teach us well. To enter their worship is to enter an antechamber of heaven. Outside the church may be plain, but inside it is replete with icons pointing to another world, with the music of the spheres, with the holy, with otherness. Once Jesus is called on in our assemblies at worship, no matter what the tradition, something like that is what happens. No matter how explicitly or implicitly it is expressed, we are dealing with the holy, with otherness.

Music in Worship

This means the music we use in worship must be well-crafted as the church—with Luther as one of its chief summarizers—has taught us. The slovenly will not do. What calls attention to itself and does not fit the flow of worship will not do. What is for some purpose other than the glory of God and the good of humanity will not do. That is, music fits the same scheme as all the rest of life: it is for the glory of God and the good of the neighbor.

Musical style is not at issue, since any musical style can be perverted for curved-in uses. That does not mean judgments cannot be made. They must be made. Since the church's music is fundamentally vocal and communal, the musical syntax has to be fundamentally vocal and communal.

We come, pray, praise, sing, listen, share the peace, bring and share bread and wine, stand, sit, kneel, go. But God turns the whole business upside down.

For the *congregation*—an assembly that sings without practice—that means music of the folk. The church has known this and has a huge repertoire of it: the congregational stratum of chant in the East and West, chorales, Genevan psalm tunes, 18th-century tunes, the 19th-century heritage of *Hymns Ancient and Modern*, Black spirituals, shape notes, the 20th-century congregational stratum from individual writers, Taizé, Iona, and global music.

There is much music in that list, plus other music as well, that is known by many, many people, but the assumption that there is some music—any music—that is known by everybody is nonsense. If you wait for that you will never sing anything at all. Everything we sing has to be learned, and every community has to learn it together from the inside out as participants, not spectators. The duty and delight of the church musician is to help an assembly figure out how to learn and sing it. That means figuring out what a given congregation knows, what a congregation sings and can sing, how it keeps what is worth keeping, how it renews its heritage and learns

new things, how it relates to the rest of the church at the moment, and how it relates to the rest of the church before and after the present moment. The church's song is finally an oral tradition that consists of what is worth keeping across centuries of adding and subtracting, to which the hymnal is a cue card. The musician is called to respect that oral tradition, build on it, enhance it, and enliven it.

For the *choir*—which does practices—virtually anything is possible so long as it too fits the flow of worship, can be sung competently by the singers, and is within the scope of the worshipping assembly's comprehension (which includes a lot more than we usually admit: congregations are very smart in spite of the way some leaders treat them). The choral music of the church is also a huge treasury from which we can learn much. Joseph Swain says it "is by far the greatest [he calls it "inexhaustible"] of any institution, nation, people, or religion in the world."¹⁴ Able composers are continually increasing it.

The organ, which was introduced in the West a millennium ago, also has a huge repertory, associated primarily with the church's congregational and choral song. No other instrument comes close to that repertory with those associations. Other instruments were gradually added to the musical mix so that now the West has a massive and ever-expanding set of congregational, choral, organ, and instrumental possibilities to explore and to keep developing.

Conclusion

The church's music is for the glory of God and the good of humanity. We are called to figure out what that means, communally and with seriousness of purpose, joy, gladness, and delight. If we exclude what the church has learned and continues to learn from its trials and errors, we will be much the poorer. We junk the work of our sisters and brothers in Christ—in this regard as in others—at our peril. God will sustain the church as in the past in spite of what we do, but that does not suggest doing things poorly without the wisdom of the church past and present.

As we figure this out communally and responsibly, the voice of the church pours

out its sounds for the sake of the world—with clarity, purpose, integrity, wisdom, goodness, beauty, artistry, and mission. God is glorified with gratitude and humanity is served well. You who sponsor conferences like this one are aware of these things and seek to explore them. On behalf of the whole church, thank you for your continuing work on these important matters.

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11. W. R. Inge, *Diary of a Dean, St. Paul's, 1911–1934* (New York: MacMillan, 1950), 12.
12. In S. Anita Stauffer, ed., *Worship and Culture in Dialogue* (Geneva: Department for Theology and Studies, Lutheran World Federation, 1994), 23–28; also found at http://download.elca.org/ELCA_Resource_Repository/LWF_Nairobi_Statement_1994.pdf
13. Though, as always, they come with their own historical contingencies, and though our age tends to reject all historical considerations, judgments like those of Pius X about holiness, goodness, beauty, excellence of form, and universality in his *motu proprio* of 1903 cannot be dismissed as easily as we assume. Nor can the craft of composers like Palestrina and Bach. Nor can the craft of countless known and unknown congregational hymn and hymn-tune writers that the church across generations has embraced as worthy of repeated use. Nor can context. This is not about arbitrary legalism or esoteric standards in a vacuum. The church's dialogues and practice about these matters, with all their trials and errors, have much wisdom embedded in them. To neglect them is to deny our responsibilities for stewardship and to serve our generation and ones who follow poorly at best.
14. Joseph P. Swain, *Sacred Treasure: Understanding Catholic Liturgical Music* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2012), 6.

Notes

1. This is reflected in books like Maeve Louise Heaney, *Music as Theology: What Music Has to Say about the Word* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2012).
2. Ted A. Campbell, "Glory Days? The Myth of the Mainline," *The Christian Century*, 131:14 (July 2, 2014): 11–13. See also Martin E. Marty, "Legacy of the Protestant Mainline Reconsidered," *Sightings* (July 29, 2013).
3. Campbell, 12.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid., 13.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Martin E. Marty, "Church Affiliation Colonial and Now," *Sightings* (November 5, 2012).
9. Campbell, 13.
10. "Small Catechism of Martin Luther," *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2006), 1162.

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Even at the Grave We Make Our Song

by Mark Mummert

In 2003 I was commissioned by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to compose an acclamation for funerals. This commission was made during the five-year project called *Renewing Worship* when the church was considering material for review toward the publication of *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* (ELW) in 2006. The text I was given to set was unknown to me at the time: “All of us go down to the dust, yet even at the grave we make our song: alleluia.” I came to learn that the text was a translation of a *kontakion* (a hymn form in Byzantine Rite churches) for the departed from the eastern Byzantine Rite for the burial of the dead attributed to Theophrastus, who died around 842 C.E. The text came to be included in the 1977 Book of Common Prayer at the commendation of the dead in the burial rite.

The text was enormously provocative for me. My mother died in June 2001 at age 60 after a long battle with cancer. While I had experienced plenty of deaths in my life, nothing prepared me for the grief I would experience at the death of my mother. Even in 2003, two years after her dying, I was still feeling the sting of death and a tremendous loss. So when the commission came I was ripe for entering into the heart of this text and very open to where it would lead me musically.

I maintain that the text, in a few words, holds together the truth of our human frailty with the hope we are given through faith in Christ Jesus. The acclamation puts on the lips of the singer our Easter word—“alleluia,” our

praise of God—even at a time when our words fail us and we do not understand. Confident that God’s word is the final word, we trust that every human death is pulled into the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The compositional process is sometimes arduous, sorting through numerous attempts and discarding many, with the constant tweaking of what remains until it feels that the work is possible. Somehow, by the Spirit’s breath, the process of composing this acclamation was very quick and easy. I remember speaking the text aloud and then sitting at the grand piano in the chapel at the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia one night and playing, really from the first attempt, the acclamation as it stands today. We use the word “inspiration.” I understand better, through the process of composing this acclamation, what that is.

Perhaps it came easily for me because the acclamation finally filled a void. I had plenty of music sounding in my life’s ears that brought to expression the grief of death, but little music that combined in such a short space the reality of death with confidence and trust in God such that we are led to praise. The occasion of the composition of this acclamation gave me opportunity to praise God in the wake of my mother’s death, trusting that God’s promises to me, my mother, and all the baptized are fulfilled in God’s good time.



The submitted acclamation included an organ/piano accompaniment and a soprano descant above the assembly acclamation, using the Latin words from the Western mass of burial: *Requiem aeternam, dona eis, Domine, requiem* (Rest eternal, grant them, Lord, rest). It seemed to me a useful juxtaposition: an adaptation of an Eastern *kontakion* with a text from the Western church, a sign that even our earthly divisions don't make a difference in the wide embrace of God. The *kontakion* was published as ELW 223.

In 2005, when asked to compose a setting of Holy Communion for consideration in the final stages of the Renewing Worship process, I was asked to consider repurposing the Alleluia from the funeral acclamation in the canticle *This Is the Feast* in the setting of Holy Communion. The motive here was driven by the possibility that if the setting of *This Is the Feast* would be well known by a

worshipping assembly, particularly as an Easter canticle, then when the funeral acclamation is sung, the Alleluia that we make at the grave is indeed “our” song—a song full of Easter rejoicing. This technique of using an identical Alleluia in a funeral acclamation and an Easter canticle helps link human death and dying with Easter promise and hope. As we drew closer to 2006 and the publication of *ELW*, I learned that my composition of the canticle *This Is the Feast* would appear in the first musical setting in the book (*ELW* p. 101). This meant for me that the funeral acclamation had even more possibilities for useful resonance in worshipping assemblies that used *ELW*.

In 2009, when it seemed clear that *ELW* Setting One was gaining some traction throughout the church, I expanded the funeral acclamation. I went back to the text of the *kontakion* as it appeared in the Book of Common Prayer and adapted it as a sung commendation for choir or



cantor and assembly. To the final acclamation I added a harmonized setting for the choir (SATB). The full text of the 2009 expansion appears as follows:

Cantor/choir:	Give rest, O Christ, to your servant(s) with your saints, where sorrow and pain are no more, neither sighing, but life everlasting.
All:	All of us go down to the dust, yet even at the grave we make our song: Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.
Cantor/choir:	You alone, O God, are immortal, the creator and maker of all that breathes, and we are mortal, formed of the earth, and to earth we shall return. For when we were created, you said: “You are dust, and to dust you shall return.”
All:	All of us go down to the dust . . .

This expansion of the acclamation was composed both for funerals and for services that are held to remember those who have died. In my congregation we began using the expanded acclamation at the prayers of intercession on All Saints Day, when the names of those in the congregation who died in the last year are read aloud. Later, in 2010, I was asked to expand the acclamation further to include an ostinato chant in the midst of the acclamation that would be sung as congregants moved to stations to light candles in memory of those who had died. I chose here again to use the Latin *Requiem aeternam* as the text of this ostinato chant, informed by the repertoire of Taizé. (The score of this final expansion is available at S506 in *Music Sourcebook*, vol. 2, *All Saints through Transfiguration* [Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2013].)

Some have inquired about what to do with this acclamation at a funeral in Lent, when the church does not sing the word “alleluia.” We may consider that funerals in Lent are a celebration of the Easter promise (just as the Sundays are not “of” Lent but “in” Lent) and therefore are lifted out of the observance of Lent. A note in a funeral bulletin during Lent may invite the assembly to suspend the diet of the Alleluia for the duration of the service and receive the funeral as a down-payment on the

promise of Easter, even out of time, and sing “alleluia” without hesitation.

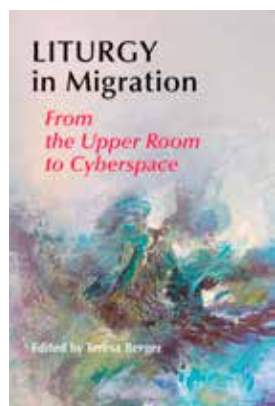
What I learned from the regular use in my congregation of both the expanded funeral acclamation (sung at every funeral and also each year at the festival of All Saints) and the canticle *This Is the Feast* from ELW Setting One is that worshipping communities do recognize common melodies and make associations with those melodies, leading them to make connections with the texts and the circumstances of singing those texts. The resonances between Easter promise and faith in the midst of death are clearly made by the common melody for the word “alleluia” in both works. “Alleluia” is indeed “our song,” made at the grave and as we celebrate the Easter promise of our dying and rising with Christ. The music proclaims the

promise. At a Christian funeral we “accompany them with singing,” as Thomas G. Long’s recent book by that title suggests (*Accompany Them with Singing: The Christian Funeral* [Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2009]), and such singing brings to expression the truth of our need for God and the praise of God for acting in the face of such need.

“All of us go down to the dust,” music © 2003 Augsburg Fortress; “This is the feast,” music © 2006 Augsburg Fortress. Reprinted by permission.

Mark Mummert is director of worship at Christ the King Lutheran Church in Houston, TX.





Liturgy in Migration: From the Upper Room to Cyberspace.

Ed. by Teresa Berger.

Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2012.

xxiv, 311 pp.

ISBN-13: 978-0-8146-6275-5.

\$39.95, paperback.

The Yale Institute of Sacred Music sponsored a conference in 2011 titled “Liturgy in Migration.” This volume is a collection of 13 papers that grew out of that event. In spite of what the title might imply for some, this work is neither a unified narrative of the history of worship nor a resource for those who plan worship among immigrant communities. Instead it seeks to give a number of examples of how one might make use of “migration as an interpretive lens for the study of liturgy” (xiv). The case for this approach is made in the introductory essay by the editor.

The scene for all that follows is set in an initial article by Graham Ward titled “Belonging to the Church.” After underscoring the universal human need for connection with others, he goes on to address some of the challenges to traditional modes of belonging in contemporary society under the term “Virtual Association Capitalism.” This leads to a conclusion that should resonate with Lutherans: “Put briefly, in order to inhabit liturgically where we are today in and through and beyond all liquidities and flows of time, space, and peoples, we need better and more informed catechesis” (15).

The 13 successive papers are loosely grouped into two categories: “Historical Moments of Liturgical Migration” and “Contemporary Liturgical Migrations.”

The first section includes the essays “Ritual Practices on the Move between Jews and Christians,” “A Shared Prayer over Water in the Eastern Christian Traditions,” “Migrating Nuns—Migrating Liturgy,” “‘From Many Different Sources’: The Formation of the Polish and Lithuanian Reformed Liturgy,” “Methodism’s

‘World Parish’: Liturgical and Hymnological Migrations in Three Ecclesiastical Generations,” and “An Immigrant Liturgy: Greek Orthodox Worship and Architecture in America.”

The section on Contemporary Liturgical Migrations includes “Eastern Christian Insights and Western Liturgical Reforms,” “Hispanic Migrations: Connections between Mozarabic and Hispanic Devotions to the Cross,” “Sounding the Challenges of Forced Migration: Musical Lessons from the Ethiopian Orthodox Christian Diaspora,” “Asian American Catholics and Contemporary Liturgical Migrations,” “Soundings from the Liturgical Ecumene: Liturgical Migration, Christian Mission, and Mutual Conversations,” and finally “Liturgical Migrations into Cyberspace: Theological Reflections.”

As the titles make clear, a number of these articles do in fact deal with the liturgical life of communities that have experienced geographical dislocation. In “An Immigrant Liturgy” Kostis Kourelis and Vasileios Marinis explore the experience of Greek immigrants and the impact that their new location had on their worship and life as church. In a story that will be familiar to anyone who knows about the struggles that German Lutherans went through with the “language question,” Greeks over the years have also had a varied and evolving relationship between the language of “home” and that of their new country. Perhaps more uniquely, the architectural vocabulary of worship in the Orthodox tradition proved a challenge as new immigrants, often with little financial resources, adapted spaces from other traditions. As the Greek community became

more firmly established in America, more new construction was possible, at times carrying traditional Greek church architecture into a distinctly modern American style.

In her article on the liturgical music of the Ethiopian Orthodox diaspora Kay Kaufman Shelemay offers another example of how geographic migration can have a profound impact on the traditional worship of a whole people. This article provides a wonderful window into an ancient tradition of Christianity that is little understood outside of its place of origin. There is much in Ethiopian liturgical practice that is radically different, not only from Western Christian traditions of worship but also from the other branches of Eastern Christianity as well.

While there is some form of musical notation, the liturgical music of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church is primarily oral. Learning it requires years of study, traveling from place to place learning from *marigetas*, or master musicians. Quoting one such *marigeta* we are told, “It is very easy to be priest. But to be a qualified *marigeta*, you have to study hard. . . . You have to learn Ge’ez, you have to learn *senasel* [sistrum], you have to learn *zema* [chant], you have to learn *aqwaaqqam* [instrumental practice and dance]. . . . [You] have to go to another place, [to study with] another *marigeta*, [so that] you can find some different knowledge from the other” (236). Given that the music of the liturgy is passed on in such a way, the Ethiopian diaspora struggles mightily to find ways to maintain its tradition of sacred song in a new land.

If articles such as these talk about liturgy in migration in terms of the movement of entire communities, there are also those that deal with the migration of ideas, rituals, and texts. One article that combines these two “optics” is “Migrating Nuns—Migrating Liturgy: The Context of Reform in Female Convents of the Late Middle Ages” by Gisela Muschiol. In that time period, to reform a women’s community normally meant to enforce stricter rules of enclosure. This practice would often be introduced by the “migration” of a group of women from a stricter community into the one to be reformed. But it was not just a new group of leaders who made the migration; they would also bring with them revisions in the Office that would signal such a change.

In “Ritual Practices on the Move between Jews and Christians” Clemens Leonhard looks at a tomb inscription, the celebration of Pesach, blessings after a meal, and the Liturgy of the Word that came to preface the Eucharist itself. The author makes more of the influence that the classical *symposia* had on both the Jewish and Christian communities than on the direct influence of the one on the other. One might well question whether this has been as clearly established as the author seems to believe. One might also question whether one should so easily dismiss the witness of Justin Martyr as demonstrating that a Service of the Word did, in fact, normally precede the breaking of the bread.

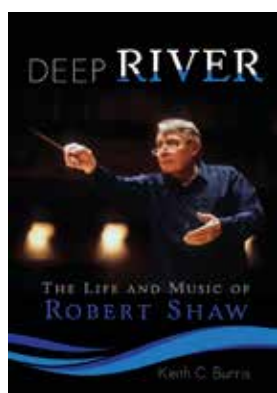
Mary K. Farg’s “A Shared Prayer . . .” is an extremely detailed comparison of five versions of a prayer known as “Great Art Thou”: Armenian, Byzantine, Coptic, Ethiopic, and Syriac. This prayer, dating at least back to the 8th century, is a prayer for the sanctification of the waters on the feast of the Epiphany. By focusing on the manuscript evidence, structural differences, and differences in phrasing, she was able to demonstrate the complex “migration” of this text between the traditions.

In the concluding article, “Liturgical Migrations into Cyberspace,” Stefan Bönert uses the concept of migration as a way to reflect on the movement toward digital and virtual interconnectedness. The extent to which these “new ways of belonging” augment, transform, or supplant historically received ways of being and worshipping as church remain to be seen.

Liturgy in Migration is a valuable collection of papers on a very diverse range of topics related to the worship of the people of God. As a motif with which to tie together this set of papers, the “optic” of migration works. But can migration really serve as an interpretive lens for the study of liturgy in any sustained way? In the introduction to this volume, we are told that “it would be all too facile to dismiss *Liturgy in Migration* as being in conversation merely with a currently fashionable theory that, in a few decades, will have exhausted its appeal” (xvi). Only time will tell.

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Keith C. Burris.

Deep River: The Life and Music of Robert Shaw.

Chicago: GIA, 2013.

xxvi, 631 pgs. + DVD.

ISBN-13: 978-1-57999-975-9.

\$45.00, hardcover.

Robert Lawson Shaw was the champion of serious choral music and of choral/symphonic literature in mid-20th-century America. It could also be said that by raising standards—through a wealth of recordings, by building audiences, by commissioning new works, and by popularizing the repertoire—Shaw was the first champion of a truly American classical music tradition. He developed an art of choral performance practice that did not exist in America before him. Shaw did this through sheer will and determination and out of a philosophy based on a deep spirituality. By a series of seemingly coincidental or perhaps fortuitous events, Robert Shaw seemed to be in the right place at the right time in history. Some might say that Shaw was lucky. Burris clearly shows, however, through extensive research, documentation, and organization that Shaw made his own luck. The themes of creativity, originality, and hard work are all persistent threads in this appropriately titled work.

Burris states three goals in his preface: (1) to tell the story of Robert Shaw's work—a job that he created; (2) to tell the story of Shaw's approach to music, his devotion and belief in the power of music to change lives—a religious experience; and (3) to show a portrait of an artist and the sacrifices he made for art. Burris accomplishes these goals without turning Shaw into some saintly musical messiah and presents a seemingly honest and detailed look into Shaw's private life, warts and all.

Shaw, born in 1916, was a product of mid-20th-century Americana, "as American as corn" (171). He was formed by his parents as well

as by Protestant Christianity and music. For his pastor father and musician mother, religion and music went hand in hand. Music was prayer. Early on, however, Shaw was also developing his philosophy of the power of music. Directly as a product of his upbringing, he saw music as the medicine to a "broken and heartless world" (20). Shaw's well-documented letter writing to his singers—his "preaching" to the choir—was a natural outgrowth of this philosophy and was learned at an early age from his father, who likewise corresponded with his flock, and was also an outgrowth of Robert's early aspirations to follow his father into the ministry.

At Pomona College in Claremont, CA, Shaw had the opportunity to explore life outside his father's domination and found a path to move away from organized religion. Shaw decided that the arts, specifically music and more specifically choral music, were the proper medium for religious experience.

Shaw's escape from the religion of his upbringing continued after his days at Pomona through his association with Fred Waring. Although Shaw had no formal musical training, Waring saw an innate talent in Shaw and brought him to New York. It was through his work with Waring that Shaw crystallized his philosophy and began to dream of building a classical choral ensemble and tradition—in other words, a tradition of "serious" classical music. In 1941 Shaw formed the Collegiate Chorale, whose primary goal was to present the best in a cappella literature. Shaw was already departing from the glee club tradition of his Pomona days and from

Waring's commercialism. Preaching choral music—"good" music—Shaw believed he was preaching democracy and brotherhood and not just entertainment. Raising the standards again in 1948, Shaw formed the Robert Shaw Chorale. This smaller and more professional ensemble would be, as Shaw promoted throughout his life, the vocal companion to the professional symphonic orchestra.

Throughout this chapter in Shaw's life Burris begins to demonstrate Shaw's extreme work ethic, his fanatical need for score study, his willingness to take on multiple projects, and his willingness to take chances to improve his own ability and realize his goals and dreams. On more than one occasion, Burris calls attention to a conflict in Shaw's character and belief system. On one hand, Shaw knew exactly what he wanted to accomplish. On the other hand, he believed that he didn't possess the training to accomplish his goals. Most of us, given these conflicting feelings, would first try to develop our skills to the point where we gained self-confidence and put off the challenges until we felt more self-confident, or perhaps abandon the goal completely. This willingness of Shaw to jump into a new endeavor first, to step out onto that limb, and to use this new experience to learn the craft is perhaps the primary distinction that sets Shaw apart from others. His distrust of his own abilities led him to spend an inordinate amount of time in preparation and to make continual personal sacrifices for his art. At times his sacrifices may have been his family and personal life; at other times it was his health.

Shaw's willingness to do everything to prepare led him to rely on a constant stream of mentors, likened by Burris to father figures. Later in life Shaw would return this favor and become the mentor to many talented and promising musicians. Early in his career, however, Shaw needed mentors to help him grow as a musician. While Waring was an early mentor, by 1945 Shaw was looking elsewhere. Julius Herford and William Schumann also fulfilled this role. Shaw formed a close and long relationship with Arturo Toscanini and, while working with Schumann at Julliard, began recording with Toscanini and the Robert

Shaw Chorale, all the while using Herford to learn repertoire. In all of these endeavors, Shaw was learning his craft on the job. He took on projects in order to grow and forced himself into uncomfortable positions that he felt ill-equipped to handle. According to Burris, this is a constant theme in Shaw's life: he was always in over his head. It was his talent, vision, and willingness to throw his whole self into projects that, in the end, created success for Shaw.

In 1956 Shaw left New York for another mentor and learning opportunity. While still leading the Robert Shaw Chorale in New York, Shaw moved to Cleveland to become associate conductor of the Cleveland Orchestra under George Szell. Shaw led the choral/orchestra portion of the symphony's engagements. Shaw saw the opportunity to develop a symphonic chorus into a professional-quality vocal ensemble that would join forces with a professional orchestra. The chorale was in the midst of an extensive recording run with RCA. These early recordings included the Mozart Requiem; Brahms Requiem; and Bach's Mass in B Minor, Passions, and cantatas. Newer works also became part of Shaw's repertoire. He popularized the music of Benjamin Britten, Francis Poulenc, and Bela Bartok. The years 1956–67 were turbulent yet also were another learning time for Shaw. According to Burris, Shaw often felt that Szell looked down on him as a choral conductor. While there was conflict, both benefitted from this tenure.

Beginning in 1967 and lasting over 20 years, Shaw was the principal conductor for the Atlanta Symphony. It is perhaps Shaw's time in Atlanta with which most musicians are best familiar—it is certainly the case for this reviewer. For Shaw, Atlanta represented the opportunity to take the reins of a major orchestra completely on his own. He would finally move out of the shadows of a Toscanini or Szell and be responsible for the entire artistic development of a fledgling ensemble. Shaw used his opportunity in Atlanta to synthesize his long-standing musical philosophy. He took the orchestral precision he had learned from Szell and melded it with his own desire to combine both orchestra and chorus under similar philosophies. Atlanta was a laboratory

for his vision of music and remained so until his retirement in 1988.

Retirement from full-time duties in Atlanta brought fulfillment to Shaw in many ways. Burris points out that both as an artist and a mentor/teacher Shaw was able to enjoy the fruits of his years of study and sacrifice. He was able to control his projects and become an American musical elder statesman.

Quoting Burris:

Shaw, in later years, would say, "I didn't use Szell nearly enough . . . we became antagonistic relatively early and I didn't take full advantage of him." But he also said, "Everything I know, sort of, I learned from him." Cleveland marked the third of five crucial events in Shaw's career five points at which, like a child on a trampoline, he bounced to a new and higher level. The first was coming to New York to work for Fred Waring. The second was Shaw's association with Toscanini. The third was the move to Cleveland. The fourth was building

a world-class orchestra and chorus in Atlanta. And the fifth was recording his own favored and most often repeated repertoire the great symphonic-choral masterworks and a number of smaller, a cappella choral works by composers closest to his heart (214).

In the end Burris accomplishes his three goals. He shows a brave visionary who, willing to take chances on himself, created and popularized a new American choral and classical music tradition. A flawed man, Shaw battled demons on the way to realizing his dreams. *Deep River*, therefore, is more than a story of a life. It is the story of a journey, not just the journey of one life but the potential journey of each reader.

David Rhyne

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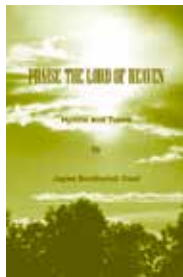


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CONGREGATIONAL SONG



Jayne Southwick Cool.

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Wayne Leupold Editions (WL800049), \$13.00.

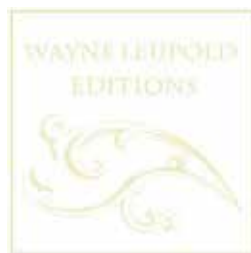
This is a useful collection of 40 hymn texts by 11 different authors, with 40 new tunes, all compositions of Jayne Southwick Cool—seven with vocal/instrumental descants also. Ample notes by the composer give the singer helpful background on all the hymns.

For all these texts (including eight of her own), Cool's melodies have that indispensable quality of being both interesting and accessible without turning boring upon repetition. There is one in 5/4, for example, with a text by John Core full of musical metaphors ("All Creation Danced in Answer," ETERNAL CANTOR), and one by John Dalles as if by Mary and Martha from Luke 10 ("Friends, Today Our Lord Will Meet Us"). Consider her carol-like tune HENRYM for a Pentecost hymn by Daniel Merrick ("Come Holy Spirit, Come We Pray"), or her text-and-tune match for the tax collector in Luke 18 ("O God, Be Merciful to Me," JUSTIFIED). Need a hymn for athletes? Try "Honor God: Creator, Genius." How about a hymn on Psalm 137, a rarity ("These Times Seem Alien Country")?

Three new tunes also "refresh" older classic texts: "Christ Himself Is with Us," "Lord Jesus Christ, We Humbly Pray," and "You Will I Love." In particular, PRESENCE (for "Christ Himself") and CATHLEEN (for "You Will I Love") are "refreshments most worthy!" Indeed (in this writer's opinion), CATHLEEN is a worthy match also for "Jesus, Thy Boundless Love to Me"—the great Paul Gerhardt hymn that has languished in English for more than a century without a well-matched tune.

The collection is arranged alphabetically, but a full range of indices gives the user easy access topically, liturgically, and scripturally.

Jayne Southwick Cool is retired as director of music at Bethel Lutheran Church, Middleburg Heights, OH (a Cleveland suburb). She was a contributor to *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* (ELW 220, "May the God of All Healing") and numerous other publications and has been a presenter for Choristers Guild, Hymn Society, and ALCM conferences. DS



João Wilson Faustini.

Adoro Te Devote.

Wayne Leupold Editions (WL800052), \$14.50.

Adoro Te Devote is the third collection of hymn tunes written by Faustini that has been published by Wayne Leupold. It contains 104 pages of tunes for old and contemporary hymn texts using fresh, simple melodies that expose worshippers to Brazilian musical elements. The volume offers opportunity to reimagine English-language hymn texts by Thomas Aquinas, Bianco da Siena, Clement of Alexandria, Mary Bittner, James Heart Brumm, John Core, R. Frederick Crider, Jr., John A. Dalles, Edith Sinclair Downing, Gracia Grindal, Jane Marshall, John Merrick, and John Thornburg. Although some of the texts are known to English speakers and are often wed to particular tunes in people's collective memory, Faustini's latest edition does the cross-cultural work of bringing these texts to the church with melodies that help keep the church's "old, old, story" and song new each day. Although some of the melodies are from other Latin American countries, the major stylistic influences come from Portuguese, African, and Native American genres that together create a Brazilian feel for the music. This resource can be employed by churches that use organ and piano. Because Faustini has indicated chords where appropriate, it can also be employed by churches that use guitars. Like the first two volumes, *When Breaks the Dawn* (WL800014) and *The Heavens Are Telling* (WL800039), this third volume continues to make hymns available to English-speaking congregations for both choral and congregational use. It is helpful that tune names and meters are provided for each hymn. Another

bonus is that the collection is indexed, as most hymnals are, by composers and arrangers, authors and translators, topic, source (Scripture citations), meter, tune, and title for easy reference. Not intended as a stand-alone hymnal but as a supplement, *Adoro Te* can be an appealing and affordable resource for cross-cultural congregations or congregations with progressive musical leadership that wish to experience global expressions of the church's song. As such, the music is accessible to musicians of all skill levels, and arrangements can be embellished with whatever resources are available locally. *DT*

INSTRUMENTAL | ORGAN



Johann Sebastian Bach.

***The Complete Organ Works*, vol. 7, *Six Trio Sonatas and Miscellaneous Trios*.**

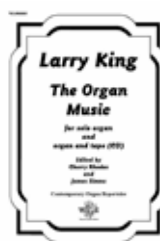
Ed. by George B. Stauffer.

Wayne Leupold Editions (WL500022), \$48.00.

This volume of Bach's *Complete Organ Works* includes not only Bach's celebrated Six Trio Sonatas but also the miscellaneous trios attributed to Bach or his workshop. It should be remembered that the Six Trio Sonatas composed for his son Wilhelm Friedemann belong to the series of pedagogical keyboard works that Bach began assembling in the 1720s, including the *Orgelbüchlein*. What features of this new Wayne Leupold edition might recommend its purchase?

First, the miscellaneous trios in the Leupold edition include 14 pieces by Bach or his circle that were transmitted individually, many of which were transcriptions of instrumental or vocal works by Bach or other composers. These present a fascinating study of trio-sonata arrangements that illustrate the developing mastery of the style. Second, this new edition is rich in helpful and informative commentary on the genesis of the trio sonata, the characteristics of Bach's mature trio-sonata style (extensive use of invertible counterpoint and dance-like meters), and the historical context of this music. Third, the different readings encountered between the two primary sources for the Six Trio Sonatas (P 271 and P 272) are explored and clearly presented in the

extensive Editorial Report found at the end of vol. 7. By contrast, the Bärenreiter edition locates its "Critical Commentary" in a separate volume, thus making it less accessible to the performer/scholar. Fourth, 18 plates (facsimiles) of autograph or manuscript copies demonstrate the challenges of transcribing this music in a modern performing edition. A careful comparison of the Leupold and Bärenreiter editions with respect to the initial two movements of the Trio Sonata #3 in D minor reveals that there are virtually no "note changes" (pitch or rhythm) in corresponding passages. Minor changes of articulation (occasional presence of staccato marks and continuation of triplet notation) have been made in the Leupold edition that are not present in the Bärenreiter edition. These are attributed to differences in the sources, P 271 and P272. A somewhat more substantial difference between the two editions involves the use of a more active bass line at the repeat sign in measure eight of the *Adagio e dolce* (second) movement in the Leupold edition. I wholeheartedly recommend the purchase of this edition for those desiring the latest scholarship presented clearly and persuasively. *JB*



Larry King.

***The Organ Music for Solo Organ and Organ and Tape (CD)*.**

Ed. by Cherry Rhodes and James Simms.

Wayne Leupold Editions (WL900005), \$66.00.

This retrospective collection includes three fine contrasting works by Larry King (1932–90) written between 1978 and 1984. These attractive pieces are written in a modern yet accessible style. There is a directness and economy of presentation that is refreshing. "Fanfares to the Tongues of Fire" (1978) is a fantasy-like work based on the Veni creator hymn for Pentecost. A variety of textures, registrations, and some whole-tone material evoke the Pentecost event.

"Resurrection" (1981) is a more extended work in four continuous movements: Lament, The Rising, The Ecstasy, and Reflection. The first movement features the plainsong *Vinea mea electa*, while the second movement

juxtaposes different transpositions of a tone row, in triplets, against sustained chords. The Ecstasy gradually breaks free with a syncopated melodic motive (“alleluia”) set against a steady, descending bass line. The composer suggests the use of a “bright Enchamade reed” for the left-hand solo at the climactic point. Interestingly, the composition does not end there, but proceeds to a calm Reflection featuring the Haec dies plainsong introit for Easter Day set against the “alleluia” motive from the third movement.

“Revelations of Saint John the Divine” (1984) for organ and tape (CD) is the most radical work in the collection. Yet it is carefully worked out, and electronic sounds on the tape alternate with electronically modulated voices. The careful control and build-up of texture is an important compositional technique in this work. The tape part has been transferred to a CD for use in performance. The CD also includes a very helpful “click track” practice version which combines electronic sounds on the right channel and Larry’s voice counting measures on the left channel. Cherry Rhodes, to whom the work is dedicated, has included very helpful notes regarding performance practice suggestions for this work.

A biography and photographs of the life of Larry King are included in this volume, as is the CD containing the electronic portion and practice version of the final work. This collection is highly recommended for those wishing a lively encounter with spiritually fulfilling 20th-century liturgical music. *JB*



Francis Hopkinson.

The Keyboard Manuscript of Francis Hopkinson, vol. 3.

Ed. by H. Joseph Butler.

Wayne Leupold Editions (WL600280), \$37.00.

Francis Hopkinson, lawyer, signer of the Declaration of Independence, and probable designer of the American flag, led a fascinating life. This is apparent in the extensive preface to this volume, the third in a series. Hopkinson was also a musician and the organist of Christ and St. Peter’s Church, Philadelphia. Butler presents a careful,

scholarly edition of Hopkinson’s musical copybook. It gives a snapshot of the stylish music of the upper classes in the early years of the American experiment. The contents include small keyboard pieces by a number of English (including Handel) and Italian composers, anonymous sources, and one French composer, Claude Balbastre. Many are arrangements from vocal and instrumental works. Some of the pieces are charming. Others are only historical curiosities. For the church musician, the best of the pieces would make interesting repertoire for national holidays or other times, playable on organ, harpsichord, or piano. *KO*

HANDBELLS



Susan E. Geschke.

Resounding Joy.

3–5 octaves handbells.

Agape (2682), \$4.50.

This original piece for handbells would be acceptable for students and could be considered secular or sacred. It is much like a theme and variations using different techniques: mallets, echoes, shakes, and martellatos. It would not be as effective on handchimes alone. As a teaching piece, it demonstrates both dynamics and tempo changes. Level 2+. *M*



God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen.

Arr. by Joel Raney and Arnold Sherman.

3–6 octaves handbells, with optional 3 octaves handchimes.

Agape (2699), \$4.95.

This piano work by Joel Raney, adapted for handbells by Arnold Sherman, begins at a fast and furious clip and keeps up the energetic pace throughout. Ringers will enjoy the passages with mallets as well as the brief but effective use of handchimes. This piece would fit best as a prelude or postlude or most certainly in a concert setting. Level 3+. *ML*



David Haas.

You Are Mine.

Arr. by Lloyd Larson.

3–5 octaves handbells.

Agape (2696), \$5.25.

Here is a piece that will bolster up the confidence of a young or beginning handbell choir, a strong addition to your worship services. There is a key change and some brief meter changes, but the melody is so flowing that ringers might not even notice. This would be perfect for general worship, confirmation, baptism, or a service with a discipleship emphasis. Level 2+. *ML*



Harold Arlen.

Over the Rainbow.

Arr. by Israel Kamakawewe'ole and Chris Peck.

3–5 octaves handbells, with optional 3–5 octaves handchimes, ukelele.

Agape (2686), \$5.25

Your youth ringers need something for the church talent show? This is the piece! Find a ukulele player, add some island print shirts, and you have a hit on your hands. The tempo is important to the integrity of the piece—keep it moving. (Ukulele part: 2686P, \$2.50.) Level 3. *ML*



Robert Lowry.

How Can I Keep from Singing?

Arr. by Cathy Moglebust.

2–3 octaves handbells, with optional 2–3 octaves handchimes.

Agape (2693), \$4.50.

This is a wonderful arrangement of a most beloved hymn that is sure to please all members of your congregation, young and old alike. Moglebust begins with the singing-bell technique, taking the title of the piece literally. Then, in typical style and thoughtfulness, she launches into a malletted section with lots of energy and enthusiasm, all while the hymn tune is rung in a round. A 2–3 octave version is also available (Agape 2690, \$4.50). Level 3. *ML*



Jonas Myrin and Matt Redman.
10,000 Reasons (Bless the Lord).
 Arr. by Peggy Bettcher.
 3–5 octaves handbells.
 Agape (2694), \$5.25.

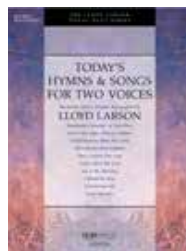
It is often a struggle to find music for youth handbell choirs, music that speaks to them from a more contemporary standpoint. This flowing arrangement, with minimal bell changes, will become a favorite. Level 2+. *ML*



John Jacob Niles.
I Wonder as I Wander.
 Arr. by Peggy Bettcher.
 3–5 octaves handbells.
 Agape (2697), \$5.25.

The singing-bell technique opens this piece and sets the mood very effectively. There are two Christmas melodies woven together: I WONDER AS I WANDER and COVENTRY CAROL. This selection would be suitable for any worship service. There is only one key change, and the dynamics stay mostly in the *piano-mezzo forte* range. Level 2+. *ML*

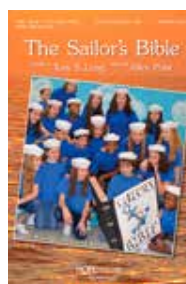
VOCAL | DUET



Today's Hymns & Songs for Two Voices.
 Arr. by Lloyd Larson.
 Medium voices, piano.
 Hope (8618), \$16.95.

A refreshing collection of ten songs often used in contemporary or blended worship styles today, this book will be a good source for special music in those contexts. The duets featured include full piano accompaniment. While the arrangements contain the syncopation often found in this style of music, the piano accompaniment will aid the singers in mastering the rhythms. The two vocal lines are medium range and could be sung by a variety of voice combinations. *MS*

CHILDREN'S CHOIR



Allen Pote.
The Sailor's Bible.
 Arr. Tom S. Lang.
 Children's choir, piano.
 Hope (8631), \$8.95.

This musical for young voices is extremely flexible. Each story can be performed separately as a 15-minute mini-musical, or all three stories could flow into one for a 45-minute program. Forty speaking parts are listed in the script, but a cast as small as 10 to 12 could perform it as well. It includes three Bible stories: Noah and the great



Worship Symposium 2015

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The annual Calvin Symposium on Worship, at Calvin College and Seminary, Grand Rapids, Michigan, is a three-day conference which brings together a wide audience of pastors, worship leaders and planners, artists, musicians, scholars, students and other interested worshipers. People come from around the world for a time of fellowship, worship, and learning, seeking to deepen and integrate all aspects of worship, develop their gifts, encourage each other and renew their commitment to the full ministry of the church.



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Conference Director:
Ken Courtney, CCM



Week 1: June 21-26, 2015

Week 2: June 28-July 3, 2015

Montreat

Montreat, NC

**You Are My Beloved:
Baptism to Transfiguration**

Conference Faculty:

Kimberly Clayton, David Gambrell, I-to Loh, Eric Wall, Joby Bell, Nancy Menk, Stephanie Wiltse, Mark Miller, Dan Stokes, Jane Morison, Christine Hong, Melissa McNair King, Anne Wilson, Kimberly Bracken Long, Clark Campbell-Taylor

Conference Directors:
Vicki and Steve Fey



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flood, Jonah and the great fish, and Paul's shipwreck. Each story demonstrates how God can bring peace to our lives. This work would be more appropriate for a slightly older children's choir. It is mostly in unison with some brief two-part passages. The vocal ranges are very accessible for children's choirs. *AW*

ADULT CHOIR



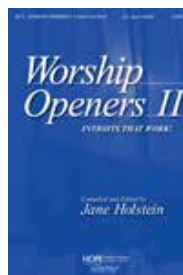
Mary Kay Beall and John Carter.

Gloria in Excelsis!

SATB, piano.

Hope (5882), \$1.95.

This original Christmas anthem from the team of Beall and Carter is appealing in its music and text without being too technically demanding. Though identified as SATB, it is really an SAB piece in which the men twice divide at the cadence. Set in a minor key using a strongly rhythmic 6/8 meter, the thematic material is repeated and passed around from voice to voice with new variations for each stanza. The simple text makes use of the Christmas angel imagery to announce Jesus' birth and to encourage the listener to come and rejoice. Fun to sing and easy to learn, it would work especially well for a smaller choir or school group. If you are in a time crunch, the publisher offers a digital print option (58826DP) for the same price with a minimum order of six copies. *DR*



Worship Openers II: Introits That Work!

Compiled and ed. by Jane Holstein.

SATB, piano.

Hope (8619), \$3.95.

This collection of very short choral pieces contains 12 excerpts from anthems in the Hope catalogue. Each can be accompanied by piano but some could be adaptable for organ. While the title of the collection refers to worship openers, each excerpt could appear at various points in a worship service, from a prayer response or a psalm antiphon to a choral benediction. Each selection is three or four pages long, and there is a wide variety of keys, tempi, and texts. The collection is mostly SATB throughout with divisi on a few chords. It is accessible for a wide range of ability levels and can be sung by small or large choirs. *AW*



In the Bleak Midwinter.

Arr. by Joel Raney.

SATB, piano, with optional instrumental parts.

Hope (5883), \$2.10.

Using the Gustav Holst tune CRANHAM, this setting presents the Christina Rossetti lyrics in a very reflective way. It begins with a simple treble stanza, moving from unison to SAA voicing. The second stanza is a very singable SATB setting, with the voicing staying well within the average choir's range. Raney breaks away from the hymn to include a stanza of the Austrian carol "Still, Still, Still," whose lyrics fit well with the preceding stanza of "In the Bleak Midwinter." He then modulates from F to G and

finishes with an SATB setting with optional descant. This is a very good setting that matches the lyrics and music well. There are also instrumental parts available for purchase (5883P, \$24.95) as well as an accompaniment CD (5883C, \$26.95). *MS*



K. Lee Scott.

Write Your Blessed Name.

SAB, piano.

Hope (5905), \$1.95.

This original octavo uses lyrics written by Thomas à Kempis (1380–1471) and later translated by S. Kettlewell. The SAB setting is very easily sung and is an excellent example of how music can interpret the lyrics. The lyrics are a prayer and the music reflects the reverence of this very well. There are some small sections where optional soprano division is indicated, but it may be sung without divisi, since the additional notes are always covered elsewhere in the choir or accompaniment. This is a superb arrangement for a small choir. There is also a full SATB setting available from Hope (A 632, \$1.95) as well as a performance/accompaniment CD (5905C, \$26.95). *MS*



Joel Raney.

Run to Bethlehem.

SATB, piano, with optional instrumentation.

Hope (5903), \$2.10.

This original octavo is a cheerful, syncopated setting that utilizes some jazz harmonizations in the accompaniment. It begins with an original melody in C minor. The rhythm adds excitement to the text and reflects the joy that the shepherds felt that first Christmas night. Raney utilizes the GREENSLEEVES tune and the lyrics from “What Child Is This” in the second half of the octavo. The rhythm continues to add some complexity to the piece. The octavo closes by returning to the original melody. This is a nice arrangement that has instrumental parts (5903O, \$24.95) and an accompaniment/performance CD (5903C, \$26.95) available. Singers will need to be comfortable with syncopation, since it figures prominently in the melody. *MS*

◀ **SOUNDFEST REVIEWERS**

John Bernthal (JB)

Associate Professor Emeritus of Music
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Valparaiso, IN

Marilyn Lake (ML)

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Southminster Presbyterian Church
Prairie Village, KS
Music Educator, Shawnee Mission
School District, KS

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Dien Ashley Taylor (DT)

Pastor
Redeemer Evangelical Lutheran
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Austen Wilson (AW)

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PLENARY SPEAKERS

Mary Louise Bringle
Larry Rasmussen
Benjamin Stewart



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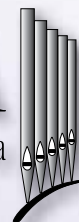
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again and expecting different results.

~Albert Einstein

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that Christ is for us preparing,
we'll gather in song, our hearts aglow,
all joy of the heavens sharing,
and there we will join God's endless praise,
with angels and saints adoring.

(ELW 627, st. 5; see also LSB 503, st. 5)

Many church musicians say that they would rather play for a funeral than for a wedding. It's a seemingly peculiar preference, but I feel the same way. It is a privilege to accompany a grieving family through a difficult and vulnerable time. It is a blessing to hear their stories of faith and to make suggestions for appropriate hymns and songs that sing that faith story. It is a joy to proclaim Christ's death and resurrection, especially at a time when the promise of resurrection is experienced so acutely and poignantly.

How can we church musicians serve more effectively when it comes to funerals? As Michael Krentz wrote in his article, "Our challenge as church is to walk with people all along their journey of life, from baptism to death. Along the way we have the opportunity to sing many songs. If these songs are faithful to our teaching about death, if they use a wide variety of images for death and life with God, and if we use them well at funerals and on many other occasions then our singing about death can indeed be life giving."

Consider offering a session on funeral planning at your church. In the congregation I serve, we call it "Hymns for the Final Journey." Allowing people to think ahead of time about which Bible readings and hymns they would

like to have included in their own funeral services can be quite freeing. While at first it may seem like a depressing or daunting topic, it gives people the opportunity to make choices about how they would like their faith to be expressed. A few simple forms can be made available and kept on record in the church office. At the time of death these filled-out forms may be a source of great relief and comfort for the family. Knowing that their loved one had given thought and care to the hymn and Scripture choices takes away some angst for the family.

Blessings to each of you as you lead the church's song. We sing in times of joy and sorrow, times of plenty and times of want, times filled with anxiety and times of peace. We sing knowing that God is with us at all times.

. . . No storm can shake my inmost calm
while to that Rock I'm clinging.

Since Christ is Lord of heaven and earth,
how can I keep from singing?

(ELW 763, refrain)

Registration Form



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Biennial Conference of the Association of Lutheran Church Musicians

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☐ \$160 Wednesday, July 22 ☐ \$160 Thursday, July 23

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| <input type="checkbox"/> \$185 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$185 | Student |

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|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|--|
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