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GOSPEL HYMNODY: A LIVING CHRONICLE OF SUFFERING AND HOPE – OR PROMISCUOUS EVANGELICAL HUSTLE?

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OPSOMMING

Die doel van hierdie artikel is om die historiese ontwikkeling van gospelmusiek na te gaan aan die hand van die vraag of huidige gekommersialiseerde vorme daarvan steeds die godsdienstige oorsprong en ekspressiewe krag van die historiese model huldig. 'n Aantal "spirituals" en gospel liedere word aan die hand van metafoor-analise ontleed, waarby die benadering steun op Peter Jackson (2006) se argument dat die metaforiese neerslag van "gebaar" in godsdienstige diskoers op 'n diepgaande wyse by konstruksie van kulturele oordrag en historiese geheue betrokke is. Die fenomeen van lofprysingsmusiek word kortliks bespreek as invloedryke verskynsel binne Suid-Afrikaanse denominasies waar dit algemeen as "gospelmusiek" bekend staan. Daar word bevind dat hedendaagse gekommersialiseerde vorme die aard van gospelmusiek radikaal verander het, maar dat dit steeds as outentieke uitdrukkings van geloof gesien kan word. Nietemin is die sosiale appèl van historiese swart gospelmusiek nie in hedendaagse gekommersialiseerde voorbeelde aanwesig nie, en sluit die laasgenoemde eerder by die sentimente van "wit" gospelhymnodie aan. Onlangse voorbeelde van gospelkleetsrym weerspieël egter onverstaanbaarheid en godsdienstige

onsekerheid as tekens van die postmoderne tydsges. As eietydse manifestasies van hedendaagse religieuse introspeksie, fokus hierdie voorbeelde op die soeke van die individu eerder as op kollektiewe aanbidding.

KEY TERMS

Spirituals, Afro-American gospel hymnody, freedom songs, commercialisation, praise-and-worship music, Black South African gospel music, Afrikaans gospel music, metaphor, gesture, religious meaning, cultural transmission, historical memory

I INTRODUCTION

This article aims to trace the historical development of gospel hymnody by following its development from its roots in the spirituals to recent commercialised examples. The question is whether its polished, commercialised, contemporary manifestations with generally lucrative entertainment in mind are not blatantly contemptuous of gospel music's religious origins and its power of expression. Since recent manifestations of gospel music is an outcome of the diversification of popular Christian music that already started in the 19th century, music as praise and worship will briefly be considered in this article, both generally and in the South African context where it is classified as 'gospel music'.

The article as conceptualised within the domain of hymnology departs from the paradoxical point of view that current forms of gospel hymnody, however commercialised, still present us with a spectrum of religious sentiments and experiences. In order to trace such representations of faith as articulated symbolically, the discussion includes readings of selected examples of spirituals and gospel songs that conform to metaphor theory as first described and applied by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in *Metaphors we Live By* (1980) and more recently by the theologian Peter Jackson (2006) in the context of religious discourse.

The examples of spirituals and gospel songs to be discussed were selected on the basis of their paradigmatic content. It should be noted that the objective of my interpretation is not based on normative evaluation. Also, while in the ensuing discussion examples correspond chronologically to the historical trajectory of gospel hymnody as traced from its origins in the spirituals, this historical orientation should not be seen as conceptually separate from the interpretation of the songs it introduces. As part of the methodological strategies forming part of reconstructive figurative analysis, here the historical background is integrated with the reading of the texts, providing an appropriate, socially grounded context. John Thompson (1990:283), one of the first theorists to delimitate an in-depth hermeneutical approach in the field of metaphor theory, has indeed shown that discursive analysis may easily yield misleading results if undertaken in isolation from contextual guiding parameters. These, he argues, include both the socio-historical framing of the topic, as well as the perimeters imposed by the interpretive point of departure (Thompson 1990:283).

Musically and verbally the spirituals and gospel hymns exhibit simple, repetitive structures

which do not invite rigorous musicological analysis or extensive textual close readings, but rather provide us with brief glimpses into expressions of faith anchored within specific material circumstances. In the case of each illustration, I shall therefore attempt to interpret core metaphors present in the selected song to show how religious meaning is invoked, and how it relates to the historical concept of spirituals and gospel hymnody as redemption songs.

In Jackson's (2006) argument, metaphor is not only a rhetorical figure occurring in poetical language and other types of symbolic discourse; rather, it has the potential imaginatively to transform our human experience both of transcendental realities and those forming part of commonly shared mundane realities. From this, it follows that metaphor forms part of the historical sediment of our existence as laid down through cultural transmission. Metaphor is integral to religious discourse specifically because, as French philosopher Paul Ricoeur has argued in his seminal *Figuring the Sacred: Religion, Narrative, and Imagination* (1995), it is a conceptually founded means by which believers can express and make sense of their thoughts about God and the Divine. Since metaphor enables the religious grounding of the fundamental capabilities and vulnerabilities of human life, it enables deep self-knowledge through its figurative 'picturing' of our relationship to the world and our life among others in that world. Accordingly, Divinity is interpreted in figurative terms that are culturally meaningful.

As suggested above, of particular relevance to the argument is Jackson's (2006:216) conviction that not only does the metaphorical inscription of gesture in religious discourse reflect the quintessential nature of religion, but it also becomes deeply involved in cultural transmission and historical memory. In arguing that gesture metaphors in their literal sense define everyday actions, such as 'handing down', 'laying down', 'grasping', 'picking up' and 'receiving', Jackson (2006:217) observes that, in their metaphorical sense, they denote faculties, actions and institutions, such as recollection, tradition, and religion. It is within this figurative domain, he maintains, that cultural and religious meaning is constructed in ways that take on deep personal and collective significance, while simultaneously vividly projecting the intellectual and material demarcations of a particular *Zeitgeist*.

Originating in African religious fervour and the richly varied cultural African-American social matrix, the roots of gospel hymnody may be traced to the sorrow songs and spirituals sung by slaves in America during the 18th and 19th centuries. What today is generally described as gospel music comprises songs of worship that have been evolving ever since the turn of the 20th century with the rise of Pentecostalism, and that flowered during the 1930s when influential American role players such as the Reverend Thomas A. Dorsey first infused this type of music with secular music sensibilities (Cusic 1990:89).

Part of the process of diversification within denominations and the rise of more extempore and spontaneous forms of worship that developed in reaction to established or traditionalist patterns of worship during the previous century, since the 1960s black gospel has transformed itself by assimilating the ever-evolving styles and genres of commercialised popular music (Dowley 2011: 210). While during the past decades contemporary worship songs coupled with media-driven dissemination have established consumerist practices of an ever growing Christian music audience worldwide, gospel hymnody has followed yet another path in that it has steadily

expanded from its church roots to become a medium of deliberate commercial entertainment. Don Cusic (2002:59ff.) ascribes this, in part, to the economic panacea of selling black music to white buyers which has long been a part of the music industry, but which, during the past few decades has permeated the production of both black and white gospel.

Gospel music is thus a complex form of hymnody that, notably in its commercialised forms that have recently become completely detached from their religious origins, features black and white musical styles that are often liberally intermingled as throbbing, subversive grass-roots-rock-and-roll-gospel or gospel rap performed for audiences or listeners who project onto it their own religious or secular stereotypes (Cusic 1990:217ff.).

2 THE ROOTS OF BLACK GOSPEL HYMNODY

Samuel A. Floyd's (1995) *The Power of Black Music: Interpreting its History from Africa to the United States* meaningfully illuminates the centuries-old linkage between the music, myths, and rituals of Africa and the continuing evolution and enduring vitality of African-American music. Significantly, he notes that it was Protestantism's direct appeal to God through song and praise that most effectively fuelled the religious fervour of enslaved blacks in the United States (Floyd 1995:39). As the historical precedent of black gospel hymnody, spirituals represented the first indigenous religious expression of poor and oppressed African-Americans. However, while depicting the depths of human loneliness, fear and pain, they simultaneously celebrated a triumphant faith in God. Floyd (1995:41ff.) classifies spirituals as being associated with two types of text, namely songs of sorrow and jubilees. While songs of sorrow speak of past and present trials and tribulations suffered by the slaves, many of them also put forth eschatological visions of the metaphysical; a rising above all that is finite, physical and mortal.

Spirituals as expressions of figurative religious meaning retain one of the most consistently recurring tropes, namely, that of the train – which in the context of their origin may be interpreted as a metaphor for freedom. Floyd (1995:213) points out that the trope may be traced back to the Biblical topos of the chariot¹ – as aptly demonstrated in the well-known spiritual *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot* in which the concepts of 'home' and being 'carried away' from the implied hardships of this vale of tears are figurative speech for 'heaven':

Swing Low, Sweet Chariot

Swing low, sweet chariot,
Coming for to carry me home;

¹ The chariot, besides having symbolical significance in various cultures, also fulfils a like function in the Bible as a figurative expression of the powerful influence of Elijah and Elisha who are called "the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof" (2 Kings 2:12; 13:14). In Psalm 68:17, the angelic hosts are declared to be "God's chariots, twice ten thousand, thousands upon thousands". God Himself is represented as riding upon His chariots of salvation in defence of His people (Habakkuk 3:8). In the Book of Zechariah, the four chariots with their varicoloured horses have an apocalyptic significance (<http://www.biblestudytools.com>).

Swing low, sweet chariot,
Coming for to carry me home.

If you get there before I do,
Coming for to carry me home;
Tell all my friends I'm a-coming too,
Coming for to carry me home.

In terms of religious significance, the simple words of this song in fact represent a powerful spiritual testimony since the chariot may be read as a metaphor for faith in God's salvation – most concretely placed, however, within the dire socio-historical circumstances where the song originated. This too has a Biblical reference since in Habakkuk 3:8 God is indeed represented as riding upon His horses and chariots of salvation to deliver His downtrodden people (see also endnote 2). *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot* may therefore be interpreted as representing the faithful believer's plea to God to shepherd one of His suffering children home to heaven ('home') – the chariot itself becoming a metaphor for a soaring heavenward gesture of salvation. Here is a clear demonstration of Jackson's (2006) notion of gesture being used in religious discourse not only as part of its metaphorical mediation, but also of religious actions as projected against specific cultural circumstances.

Often more militant aspects of spirituals were masked by figurative content – a characteristic derived directly from African music where figures of speech were an important rhetorical device, often used to create ambiguity of meaning. In the ostensibly innocent spiritual *Little David Play on Your Harp* (<http://lyrics.bandwidth.com/chrisbryant/little-david-play-on-your-harp>) "Little David" refers to King David not only as the founder of a dynasty that would rule in Jerusalem for over 350 years, but also as an anointed messianic figure who was a deliverer of Israel, and the progenitor of Christ. According to Easton's Bible Dictionary (<http://www.biblestudytools.com>) the figurative Biblical meaning of the harp is the-"harping with their harps"- celebration of the Redeemer's triumphs in heaven (Revelation 14:2). Like triumphs may also be associated with David's slaying of Goliath, which could be interpreted metaphorically as a military victory over Israel's Philistine oppressors. Simultaneously, the song's reference to Joshua who "never quit till his work was done", on the one hand signifies the encouragement of Christian virtue in the slaves by perseverance, in faith, with their burdensome daily labour. On the other, it points to Joshua's triumph at Jericho and the Israelites' miraculous and resounding victory at the battle of Gibeon after God had commanded the sun to remain motionless in the sky for an entire day.

In contrast to *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot*, the Biblical events referred to in the song reveal the focus on victory in *Little David* as being of a material kind, and in so doing assigning this much loved spiritual a place amongst true 'freedom' songs in its overt referral to manslaughter as an act of liberation. Viewed from the perspective of Jackson's (2006) theory of gesture in religious discourse, David's slaying of Goliath becomes a symbolic manifestation of Divine intervention:

Little David Play on Your Harp

Little David play on your harp
Hallelu, hallelu
Little David play on your harp
Hallelu

Little David play on your harp
Hallelu, hallelu
Little David play on your harp
Hallelu

Little David was a shepherd boy,
He killed Goliath and he shouted for joy.
Little David was a shepherd boy,
He killed Goliath and he shouted for joy.

Little David play on your harp
Hallelu, hallelu
Little David play on your harp
Hallelu, hallelu

Joshua was the son of Nun
He never quit till his work was done
Joshua was the son of Nun
He never quit till his work was done

Little David play on your harp
Hallelu, hallelu
Little David play on your harp
Hallelu, hallelu

Spirituals may thus be said to represent both the African American soul in times of sorrow, hope and despair, and the pathos and aspiration of a forcibly transplanted people. These songs enabled them to endure extreme suffering, and later affirmed their faith in God as their liberator. As “Little David Play on Your Harp” illustrates, spirituals were truly ‘redemption’ songs since they not only embodied a spiritual vision that transcended their present pain and life, but also masked political resistance.²

² As far as their musicological relevance is concerned, spirituals are the major source, directly or indirectly, of most forms of popular music that evolved during the 20th century. Since they embody the essence of blue tonality, they are the direct ancestors of the blues and jazz. Early blues was in itself a music of rebellion aimed specifically at the hypocrisy of the white church and

3 GOSPEL HYMNODY AS A TRANSFORMATIVE FORCE

Gospel hymnody derives its name and theology from the gospel of Christ, although, in the case of ‘black’ gospel, the music emphasises suffering which is associated with social oppression. In its original form black gospel hymnody constituted the visions, troubles, sorrow and thanksgiving of urban African Americans at the beginning of the 20th century when the complex socio-political and economical milieu provided a fertile ground for its development. Maultsby (2010:173) observes that from the 1930s, black gospel music emancipated itself from its status as a form of resistance music that was exclusive to African-American folk churches. It matured into a dynamic and viable force in the commercial music industry. In later years it also profoundly influenced white gospel and the subsequent praise-and-worship genres (Dowley 2011:213ff.).

Gospel hymnody eventually became the backbone both of uninhibited religious and musical expression, and of the spontaneously articulated testimonies and prayers of black folk-churches (Floyd 1995:63). Sanctified and Pentecostal churches in particular made extensive use of hand-clapping and foot-stamping of which the antecedent is the African ‘shout’ (Floyd 1995:63). They also made use of drums and tambourines, and their hymnody bore further testimony to its African heritage through call-and-response figures. These practices gave rise to the tradition of the singing preachers of the Sanctified tradition, the ‘memory’ of whom resonates powerfully in contemporary commercialised forms of rap and gospel rap.

White gospel music emerged from the intersection in the 19th and early 20th centuries of Protestant Christian hymnody, revival-meeting spirituals, and assorted popular styles, its rise not only fuelled by religious revivalism and colonialism, but also by well-planned strategies that popularised and disseminated them. At this time, black and white gospel hymnody started to exert an influence on each other, both in terms of their musical and religious content. The distinctive black gospel song grew from a composite body of songs in the historical spiritual / jubilee repertoire and from the Moody-Sankey collections, which became extremely popular during religious revivalism in America from the mid-19th century onwards. Moody and Sankey’s songs were soon adapted and altered to suit the context of the black church (Maultsby 2010:174; Cusic 1990:88). Dwight Moody, a former shoe salesman and Ira Sankey, the composer of his songs together popularised and promoted white gospel hymnody, which Cusic describes as “uniquely American and evangelical in spirit” (1990:59). Primarily sung during the Great Revival in the 19th century, it rapidly spread through its use in Sunday schools, Christian associations and in denominations whose members preferred the appeals of emotion over literary form (Cusic 1990:59). These influential evangelists established what Cusic (1990:58) terms the concept of the religious salesman that would, during the 20th century, manifest in the worldwide religious crusades of preachers, such as Billy Graham.

The texts of white gospel songs were either optimistic or pleading, and were set to tunes the advocates of slavery (Spencer 1990:viii). Blues, gospel, and country music, part of which had a white gospel origin, are the formative constituents of rock music, while soul music is secularised gospel. Rap absorbs many elements of all of these styles, including black American preaching style in terms of its verbal styles of delivery.

that were easy to assimilate. Typically they depicted deeply personal religious experiences that stressed the importance of salvation, cast in poetic parlance that in many cases bordered on religious sentimentality – an aspect that, to this day, forms part of commercialised forms of contemporary Christian music (Dowley 2011:231). The music was generally *strophic* (in verse form), occasionally with a refrain, showing a relatively consistent rhythmic and harmonic structure. Some of the most popular Sankey hymns were “There is a fountain”, “The Ninety and Nine”, and “Out of the Shadow-Land”. The latter was the last song Sankey composed, and he did so for Dwight Moody’s funeral in 1899 (Cusic 1990:66):

Out of the Shadow-Land

Out of the shadow-land, into the sunshine,
Cloudless, eternal, that fades not away;
Softly and tenderly Jesus will call us;
Home, where the ransom’d are gath’ring today.

(Chorus)

Silently, peacefully angels will bear us
Into the beautiful mansions above;
There shall we rest from earth’s toiling forever,
Safe in the arms of God’s infinite love.

Out of the shadow-land, weary and changeful,
Our of the valley of sorrow and night,
Into the rest of the life everlasting,
Into the summer of endless delight.

(Chorus)

Out of the shadow-land, over life’s ocean,
Into the rapture and joy of the Lord,
Safe in the Father’s house, welcomed by angels,
Ours the bright crown and eternal reward.

Even at first glance it is evident that this gospel song, similar to “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot”, figuratively foregrounds the concept of ‘home’ as ‘heaven’. However, here angels as God’s messengers ‘fetch’ believers out of the ‘shadow-land’ to live life everlasting in the ‘summer of endless delight’. In “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot”, the slaves called on God in his omnipotence to free them from their dire material circumstances. Yet in “Out of the Shadow-Land”, a relatively prosperous earthly life is depicted as a ‘valley of tears’ – a pervasive image within late 19th-century white gospel hymnody. Furthermore, the hymn presents heaven as ‘home’ to a monarchy of believers headed by a ‘King’ with ‘royal subjects’, whose eternal reward is the ‘bright crown’;

images which are suggestive of Queen Victoria’s reign. As Cusic (1990:66) notes, in this hymn, apart from an abundance of emotional sentimentality in the lyrics, we find also a romanticised view of religion. This ‘dramatised’ yet sentimental notion of salvation Cusic (1990:66) considers to have been the most appealing aspect of Sankey’s hymns.

White gospel hymnody with its enormous popularity flourished primarily within the organised contexts of worship, whereas already at this stage, black gospel explicitly turned towards commercialisation and entertainment. During the first decades of the 20th century when black practitioners began to publish their music, immediately it became evident that gospel hymnody could be financially profitable. The ultimate transition from spiritual to gospel was furthered particularly by the Methodist minister Charles A. Tindley, one of the founders of black gospel music, and author of great gospel classics such as *I’ll Overcome* (later modified to *We Shall Overcome*; see also the discussion below), and *Stand By Me*. Tindley’s songs inspired Thomas Dorsey who subsequently became known as the ‘father’ of gospel music and who influenced, more than any other individual, contemporary black gospel music (Maultsby 2010:174; Cusic 1990:88).

Mainly through the efforts of Dorsey and Sister Rosetta Tharpe, an African American singer-guitarist who was one of the first celebrities in black gospel (Jackson 1995:1), black gospel hymnody moved from shabby store-front churches with a few untrained singers to gospel-group extravaganzas in large concert halls where singers wore the now iconic blazing pastel gowns and bright suits, accompanied by Steinways and powerful Hammond organs (Boyer 1995:50ff.).

The period between the 1930s and the 1960s was also one during which the movement toward black consciousness in America gained momentum, and it was principally during this period too that black gospel hymnody gained historical legitimacy by spiritually supporting African Americans in their confrontation with an oppression that would eventually lead to the violent conflicts of the 1960s. The civil-rights freedom songs and black gospel music undoubtedly served as prime inspirational sources during the civil rights protests of the 1960s; and made their mark as the most powerful singing movement America has ever experienced (Carawan & Carawan 1990:1).

Significantly, black gospel songs initially written and sung in a-political contexts, likewise became suffused with political impetus during the civil rights movement. Thomas Dorsey’s song *Precious Lord, Take My Hand*, for instance, is viewed by many as the greatest gospel song of all time (<http://pjmillier.wordpress.com>). Inspired by an immense tragedy in the preacher’s life, the song was written after his wife Nettie and new-born son had died. Its contents dwell on metaphors of God as the protecting Father who performs the caring gestures of extending a hand to someone in anguish (Cf. Jackson 2006), and leading him through a dark tempest, described by Dorsey as ‘the night’. Particularly important are the metaphors of ‘the light’ (salvation) and ‘the river’, which may be interpreted to represent the river Jordan as a place of profound spiritual transition:

Precious Lord, Take My Hand

Precious Lord, take my hand,
Lead me on, let me stand.
I am tired, I am weak, I am worn;
Through the storm, through the night,
Lead me on to the light:

(Refrain)

Take my hand, precious Lord,
Lead me home.

When my way grows drear,
Precious Lord, linger near,
When my life is almost gone,
Hear my cry, hear my call,
Hold my hand lest I fall:

(Refrain)

Take my hand, precious Lord,
Lead me home.

When the darkness appears
And the night draws near,
And the day is past and gone
At the river I stand,
Guide my feet, hold my hand:

(Refrain)

Take my hand, precious Lord,
Lead me home.

Take My Hand, Precious Lord was reputed to be the assassinated civil rights leader and theologian, Martin Luther King's favourite song, and he often invited the African American gospel star Mahalia Jackson to perform it at civil rights rallies as a clarion call which would simultaneously nourish the attending crowds spiritually. Jackson also performed the song during King's funeral in April 1968 (Floyd 1995:200). Within these contexts, the song took on an overtly political meaning, referring to the slain preacher, and God the Father as the deliverer from social evil. The river (Jordan) then represents political liberation in citing God's guiding hand across its waters to freedom – the Promised Land. Those singing the words may well have been reminded also of God's intervention at the Red Sea, so that the Israelites could enter their Promised Land (Joshua 4:23). In this

context, the gesture of darkness and night's approach may also be interpreted as referring to Martin Luther King's assassination (Cf. Jackson 2006), and his 'crossing over' into eternal life.

Another poignant example of the genre is the above-mentioned gospel song *We Shall Overcome* which formed part of a selection of spirituals and gospel songs adapted textually during the struggle as 'freedom' songs (Spencer 1995:83). Generally viewed as the 'anthem' of the civil rights movement, the song was sung during mass meetings, prayer vigils, protest marches and freedom rides, and even in prisons (Spencer 1995:84) as part of non-violent protest. Spencer (1995:84) provides the following comparison between Tindley's original gospel hymn and its adaptation as a political song, in which it becomes clear that by substituting the first person pronoun with its plural form, the original figurative meaning of salvation through personal perseverance now, in terms of a gestural reading, suggested more active, mass political action:-

I'll Overcome Some Day

I'll overcome some day,
I'll overcome some day,
I'll overcome some day;
If in my heart I do not yield
I'll overcome some day.

We Shall Overcome

We shall overcome
We shall overcome
We shall overcome someday.
If in our hearts we believe
We shall overcome some day.

Importantly, the alternative version originated when, shortly before Martin Luther King's assassination, a number of those accompanying him on the protest march had suggested the change to "We shall overrun" (Cf. Jackson 2006). In terms of a gestural metaphor, this reformulation symbolises a victorious 'rising' over oppression that is suggestive of violent resistance.

As an instrument of revolution during the civil rights struggle, black gospel's immense mass appeal was increasingly expanded through music which exhibited a highly sensuous, uninhibited nature – a dimension inherent in this music which Floyd (1995:96-97) relates to both the sonic and physical signification of all manifestations and the diaspora of African American music. The considerable rhythmic drive of black gospel was indeed (and still is) one of its most characteristic and marketable features. After the 1960s gospel artists such as James Cleveland, Andraé Crouch and the Disciples as well as the Edwin Hawkins Singers initiated a new era when gospel was performed primarily in theatres, auditoriums and stadiums. New sounds were introduced from a homocentric cultural core into the concert venues of mainstream America (Cf. Maultsby

2010:175ff.).

In tracing the changing face of gospel hymnody as part of this article's objective, the question is at this point, how the explicit commercialisation of black gospel hymnody – which during the period of the civil rights movement resumed its role as redemptive song – influenced religious expression in this body of worship music. An excellent example of commercially transformed gospel music is gospel icon Andraé Crouch's song *Can't Nobody Do Me Like Jesus* (<http://www.invubu.com>) which is charged with submissive intimacy. Though Jesus is continuously described as a 'friend' by Crouch, figurative gestures in the song such as "do me", "picked me up", "turned me around", "healed my body" clearly depict Christ as a close ('soul') companion. In a 1999 live recording in the *Hall of Fame* CD series, the phrase "He's my friend" was replaced throughout with "He's my soul lover". These words suggest an intimate relationship with Christ in which Crouch does not necessarily suggest sexual innuendo, but nevertheless changes the face of 'that old time religion' in proclaiming his message through the medium of throbbing, pulsating Rhythm and Blues music. While this song provokes questions about what 'Christian' music is – or is not – it affirms the thoroughly entertaining nature of gospel hymnody during the post 1980s period which Dowley (2011:221) describes as a through-and-through secular strategy. Yet paradoxically, the song also constitutes a deeply felt testimony of a living relationship with the Lord:

Can't Nobody Do Me Like Jesus

Can't nobody do me like like Jesus.
Can't nobody do me like like the Lord.
Can't nobody do me like like Jesus.
He's my friend.

He picked me up and turned me around.
He picked me up and turned me around.
He picked me up and turned me around.
He's my friend.

Healed my body, told me to run on
Healed my body, told me to run on
Healed my body, told me to run on

He's my friend
Can't nobody do me like Jesus (etc.)

4 GOSPEL AS PRAISE-AND-WORSHIP MUSIC

The argument thus far suggests that contemporary forms of gospel music, although explicitly targeting the market place, may not necessarily be understood as disrespectful of the religious

origins of the genre and its spiritual power of expression; although, in terms of both their religious and musical paradigms, they take on very different guises. While examples such as Crouch's "Can't Nobody Do Me Like Jesus" would seem to corroborate gospel's thoroughly commercialised nature, unflatteringly called an 'evangelical hustle' by Christina Zanfagna (2012:196), and described by Monica Miller (2009:39) as a 'promiscuous' religious practice, simultaneously they are seen to be contemporaneous expressions of an authentic relationship of faith which is depicted in "Can't Nobody" as a personal, highly emotional relationship between an individual and Jesus. Pushing the boundaries of what is 'permissible', 'Christian' or 'Biblical', the song is situated within a consumerist musical culture that venerates the gospel singer, Andraé Crouch both as an African-American preacher and as a multi-platinum artist (De Plicque 2011).

However to dismiss all current forms of gospel music because of their commercial investment would do an injustice to some of its various derivatives currently disseminated and performed world-wide in religious gatherings. One of the consequences of the steady globalisation of gospel music is both a constant fusing of sacred and secular elements, as exemplified variously in this article, but also increasingly of black and white gospel styles. Birgitte Johnson (2008:251ff.) notes that those involved in its production and reception all agree that praise and worship music is worldwide one of the most powerful innovations in Black gospel music and contemporary Christian music during the past two decades.

How do these developments influence practices of praise and worship music in South Africa, where gospel music is immensely popular both among black and white audiences and church-goers?

If traced historically, with regard to the global spread, initially of white gospel hymnody and then of other forms of worship music, the influence of colonialism is not to be underestimated. It is interesting to note that in South Africa, while British culture held sway during the colonial era, it was American white gospel hymnody that exerted a considerable influence during the nineteenth century, and whose traces are still felt today. As Dale Cockrell (1987:417) observes, the South African jazz pianist, Abdullah Ibrahim (Dollar Brand), is often known to improvise in concerts on the Revival hymn *Just as I am*; similarly, Zulu choirs often sing white gospel hymns such as *Trust and Obey* and *Amazing Grace* alongside indigenous ones. In black South African gospel, as demonstrated by the recordings of the internationally revered Ladysmith Black Mambazo, for example, well-known white gospel hymns are commonly combined with indigenous forms of resistance music such as *isicathamiya* music – an *a capella* male choral genre which sprung up among Zulu miners.

In terms of 'white' Afrikaans gospel music, it should be noted that forms of praise and worship music are generally categorised simply as 'gospel' music. Within the Afrikaans gospel market, musical styles reproduce those associated with secular popular music, ranging from pop and rock styles through country and western. This is not to suggest that all Afrikaans gospel is second-rate secular music. An especially poignant release is the gospel song *In Verwondering* ("In Awe"), which won the SABC Crown Gospel Music Award for the best Afrikaans album in 2012. Recorded on video by the gospel singers Louis Brittz, Retief Burger, Neil Büchner and Helmut Meijer, and set to the 'toned-down' rock style typical of secular Afrikaans pop music, the words of the song

glorify the greatness of God in a poetic style that is matched by stunning visual materials filmed in Sutherland in the Karoo. In terms of a gestural reading, the praise and worship orientation of this song may be understood as symbolising the act of raising the arms in humble praise to God's glory. This physical gesture of praise, associated with the charismatic Christian movement worldwide (Dowley 2011:211), is in fact the characteristic biblical posture for praise. As David Calabro (2013:106) explains, it "enables the congregation to sense the God-ward direction of the praise and to participate in the resurrection posture of standing to bless God".

The words of *In Verwondering*, sung in Afrikaans, delivered with great sincerity, together with the visuals of a glorious landscape, declare that the heavens and the earth are the Lord's, as transpires from its translation below.³ It is interesting to note that, while gospel songs – both black and white – traditionally consist of short, repetitive texts, in this case an esoteric, relatively expansive text suggestive of open-ended 'art' poetry is offered in praise to God the Creator:

In Awe

The Creator sings in stars
that fill up the universe
and dancing cling
onto dawn's cheek.
The mirror in the sky
Reflects it all and declares:
"He is Lord!"

The Creator creates words
words that live
he lets his breath
permeate into people.
And the universe in me
shouts in the silence:
"God is in me!"

Refrain:

The stars sing in awe
Bring glory to God in the highest
The heavens bow
And light up your name
Your majesty shines in glory
It shows the brightness of your glory

³ Owing to the length of this gospel text, only a portion of it is presented here, freely translated as accessed on the internet website: Africanspellyrics.wordpress.com/2013/09/22/awe/.

Each heavenly and earthly being
Sings in awe

My words from long ago
Have faded in the stardust
The feeble efforts of my heart
Disappeared in the star rain
The universe in the sky
And the universe in me
Shout in the silence:
"God is here!"
(Refrain)
How can we then be silent
As the orbits bow?
As the heavenly chorus sings
And the galaxies rejoice?
How can we doubt
When the sun and the moon testify?
Everything revolves around you
How then can we still be silent?
(Refrain)

The meaning of this text is reminiscent of Psalm 24:1-2: "The earth is the Lord's, and all it contains, the world, and those who dwell in it. For He has founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the rivers". Honour to God as Creator is also the central message of Revelation 4:11: "Worthy art Thou, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honour and power; for Thou didst create all things, and because of Thy will they existed, and were created". Within the context of a figurative interpretation, "In Awe" suggests nature as revelation, and the act of creation as the gesture of God's 'reaching out' to humankind. This Afrikaans gospel song declares nature as 'shouting out' the supreme nature of God. In this context, God is neither a 'friend' nor 'close companion' nor a 'Royal King', but rather, a 'Teacher-Creator' who touches his children through his Creation, which, again, is not a 'shadow-land of sorrows', but rather a glorious earth which calls for responsible stewardship.

However, it is particularly in the refrain of this song that its most profound gesture of reverence come into play. Here, the domain of God's splendour reaches the heavens, with the stars singing out his glory. In a prayerful gesture of praise, the heavens bow to light up His name. This reference to the heavens, and to bowing, a centuries-old action of prayer and worship, perhaps more than any other image in the song affirms God's immanence. These images are only matched by the sublime metaphor of the 'star rain' following in verse three, suggesting God's 'pouring out' of all glorious watery elements with which he has adorned the earth, and of which the clouds are but one rapturous example. The rain may also be understood as a symbol for water that cleanses, thus suggesting

God's forgiveness and his cleansing love being poured out over the earth and all of its creatures. It was mentioned above that the overarching gesture in "In Verwondering" may be understood as symbolising the act of raising the arms in praise to God's glory. Indeed in the lyrics of this song nature is 'embodied' to partake in this physical gesture of praise, which could also be seen as a gesture of approach in the presence of Deity. Importantly, Calabro (2013:106) explains that, since the times of the Old Testament, it is simultaneously a gesture of deep dependence in which the arms are raised with the palms upward, symbolising a request for the empty hands to be filled. Thus on the most fundamental level of interpretation, the arms raised in praise is also an act of receiving.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this article was to trace the historical development of gospel music from its roots in the spiritual to present-day commercialised examples from a hymnological perspective, investigating religious meaning figuratively in a selection of songs representing its chronological progress. In this regard, the explicit purpose was to trace changes in religious meaning projected metaphorically by this body of repertoire.

An application of Peter Jackson's (2006:216) idea that the figurative inscription of gesture in religious discourse becomes deeply involved in cultural transmission and historical memory was demonstrated in metaphorical readings of a selection of spirituals and gospel hymns. Examples from the spirituals showed an image of God as 'rescuer' from political oppression while King David was depicted as a 'freedom fighter'. In a late 19th-century Sankey hymn, God the 'Royal King' reigned from his 'beautiful mansions above', and resided over an earthly 'valley of sorrow and night'. During the 20th century black hymnody reclaimed its function as an instrument of political liberation when, shortly before Martin Luther King's assassination, the words of the famous black gospel hymn "We shall overcome" were changed to "We shall overrun".

In the 1990s the black gospel song "Can't Nobody Do Me Like Jesus" the 'Royal King' is now an intimate 'friend' or 'soul lover' who 'touches' the believer in 'turning his life around'. Paradoxically it was observed that even this overtly commercialised manifestation of black gospel hymnody projects authentic religious experience. A more recent Afrikaans gospel song, "In Awe", shows great depth in its interpretation of creation as God's revelation and 'gesture' of reaching out to humankind. Here God is the supreme 'Steward' who reigns over the glorious kingdom of nature – a 'kingdom' presupposing environmental responsibility. These readings admittedly offer mere glimpses into the kind of figurative meaning Jackson (2006:217) denotes as the typical domain of cultural transmission and historical memory, thus suggesting deep personal and collective religious significance.

Having considered the historical trajectory of gospel hymnody over the course of this article, it is impossible to speculate on what the future will hold for gospel music as progressing from its current forms. In a gripping study of the religious complexity and theological multiplicity of rap music, Monica Miller (2009:39ff.) suggests that gospel rap's postmodern and complex subjectivity, religious syncretism, and theological quagmire, may only be understood on its own slippery and

slipshod terms. Yet, as she concludes in her article, this music can be understood as encompassing valid expressions of religiosity "because it articulates a quest for meaning and belonging that contributes towards the complex construction of religion broadly" (Miller 2009:42). Focussing in particular on gospel rap's unintelligibility and the promiscuity of its expressions, she shows how this music provides levels of solace in an environment of religious uncertainty coupled with the fact that each day in life brings with it new uncertainties.

In Jackson's (2006) terms, such complex approaches in gospel music demand an epistemology that addresses uncertainty and inquiry, and in doing so confronts the listener and the analyst with fundamental questions regarding human spirituality. In Miller's (2009:48) words, "...what we encounter, I believe, is an ever-changing reality, incoherence to lives in process, a continual becoming that disrupts the reality and illusions of unchanging religious sameness, but yet offers a peek into the convoluted nature of the quest for meaning".

If it is possible for contemporary gospel hymnody to contribute to this deeper level of religious experience, it becomes possible via actions that are gestures such as 'laying down', 'grasping', 'picking up', and 'receiving'. As Jackson (2006:217) contends, in their metaphorical sense, such seemingly simple, day-to-day actions denote the very faculties, actions and institutions of recollection, tradition, and religion. To him, the domain of gesture in religious discourse therefore contains important clues about the ways in which a society presents itself to its members, and where the rhetorical mechanisms of spirituality intertwine meaningfully with those of cultural transmission.

Perhaps to those heavily invested in traditional hymnody, with its centuries-long history of achievement and depth, refinement and musical and textual grandeur, the transient entertainment value and instant gratification of recent examples of gospel music are as unintelligible as forms of worship as are the current post-modernist examples of gospel rap. From a longitudinal interpretive perspective it may be posited that these bodies of repertoire no longer represent the profound social or communal appeal of the spirituals and early examples of black gospel hymnody. However, in their very 'real' interpretation of religious experience as situated within a specific *Zeitgeist*, they offer brief visions of the history, theology, sociology and ethos of their times as 'packaged' within a range of ever shifting musical practices.

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BEROEMDE KLASSIEKEN IN DE JACOBI

Gerrit Christiaan de Gier bespeelt het Garrels/Meere-orgel en het Hess-kabinetorgel in de Jacobikerk te Utrecht.

A. Vivaldi: *Allegro uit Concerto in Do, RV 180/1* (bewerking Fr. Tasini), *Grave uit Concerto in Re, RV 206/2* (bewerking Fr. Tasini); **A. Vivaldi:** *Concerto in D* (bewerking J.S. Bach, BWV 972) (*Allegro – Larghetto – Allegro*); **W.F. Bach:** *Menuet*; **G.F. Händel:** *Suite XIV in G* (*Allemande – Allegro – Courante, Air – Menuet – Gavotte – Gigue*); **W. Hayes:** *Andante (2de deel uit Concerto in G, bewerking R. Langley)*; **G.F. Händel:** *Eight Tunes for Clay's Musical Clock* (geen aanduiding – *Moderato – Allegro – Gigue – Menuet – Moderato – Gavotte – Gigue*); **L. Mozart:** *Uit 'Notenbuch für Wolfgang' (Jägerlied – Marche – Angloise)*; **W.A. Mozart:** *Adagio und Rondo in c/c KV 617*; **R. Hol:** *Fantasie Tooverfluit op thema's uit 'Die Zauberflöte' van W.A. Mozart*.

Gerrit Christiaan de Gier (orrel)
JACOBI CDVDG20130621 (CD 77:40)
Nederlandse kommentaar ingesluit
Opname: Jacobikerk, Utrecht, Nederland (2013)



Die Nederlandse universiteitstad Utrecht beskik oor verskeie pragtige kerke, elk met sy eie besondere orrel – sommige van historiese waarde en ander meer modern. Die Jacobikerk, 'n Protestantse gemeente in die middestad, besit 'n pragtige 2-manuaal orrel waarvan die eerste geskiedenis opgeteken is in 1509 toe die Utrechtse orrelbouer Gerrit Petersz. daaraan begin bou het. Met verloop van tyd het verskeie ander orrelbouers die instrument onderhou en dikwels vergroot. In die tydperk 1739-1742 is die orrel totaal omgebou deur Rudolph Garrels en later, gedurende die vroeë 1800's deur Abraham Meere van 'n nuwe rugwerk voorsien. Ongeveer 20 jaar gelede is hierdie sg. Garrels/Meere-instrument, na deeglike navorsing en besluitneming deur o.a. die kerkraad en amptenare van mommentesorg, gerestoureer tot die toestand waarin die orrel was tydens Garrels se ombouing en Meere se rugwerk-toevoeging. Daar is ook 'n mooi kabinet-orrel (een manuaal, geen pedaal) wat in 1774 deur Hendrik Hermanus Hess van Gouda gebou is. Hierdie mooi instrumentjie is in 2003 deur die gemeente aangekoop en in 2011 grondig gerestoureer tot sy volle glorie.

Die huidige orrelis van die gemeente, Gerrit Christiaan de Gier, het 'n gevarieerde en genotvolle program saamgestel waarin hy die twee orrels met musiek uit hoofsaaklik die middel 18de en vroeë 19de eeu, bekendstel. In aansluiting by die gebruik van die genoemde tydperk, bestaan die program hoofsaaklik uit musiektranskripsies van o.a. J.S. Bach, Langley en Tasini. Die luisteraar word dus getraakteer op getranskribeerde musiek wat oorspronklik as concerti, as musiek vir 'n klein instrumentale groep of musikale uurwerk, die lig gesien het. Komposisies wat vir die klavesimbel gekomponeer is, soos die Suite XIV van Händel, asook die W.F. Bach- en Leopold Mozart-werke, word stylvol en met die nodige sprankel op die orrels uitgevoer. Om die musikale geskiedenis van hierdie twee Utrechtse instrumente mooi af te rond, word die