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Chapter 12

Churches and Devotional Practice

Martin V. Clarke

Abstract

This chapter discusses the contribution of hymnology to nineteenth-century intellectual culture. It demonstrates how clergy and musicians engaged in scholarly writing and debate concerning the history, context, practice, and spirituality of congregational song. Using a diverse range of sources, including journal articles, lectures, sermons, and hymnals, it argues that hymnology was recognised as an important area of scholarship that drew on a range of musical and religious perspectives. Interest in it extended across denominational and national boundaries, and was characterized by professional and amateur participation. The key to understanding hymnology's centrality in intellectual culture lies in the pervasiveness of church music in nineteenth-century cultural practice and experience.

Keywords

Hymnology, church music, congregational song, spirituality, hymnals

Introduction

The music of the church, including that intended for congregational participation, was an important part of intellectual musical culture in the nineteenth century, attracting the attention of professional and amateur musicians, and clergy and laity from many religious traditions.¹ In a wide range of nineteenth-century contexts, hymnology was a topic on which intellectual discussion and scholarly publication focused, with considerable attention paid to its historical contexts, its practice, and its devotional and spiritual significance.

Intellectual interest in hymnology and the repertoire, practice and meanings of sacred music more broadly were both ecumenical and international in this period. Scholars, leaders and practitioners associated with a range of ecclesiastical bodies made contributions to debates about music in their own contexts, but many also showed awareness of and engagement with ideas and practices from other historical and contemporary Christian traditions. Contributors ranged from provincial preachers seeking to influence thought and practice in a single church or chapel through to Pope Pius X, whose writing on sacred music influenced the whole of the Roman Catholic Church.

Clergymen were important figures in much of the intellectual activity that took place in the nineteenth century. Although the long association between universities and the church in Britain was undergoing change in this period, through measures such as the University Test Act (1871), there was still a widespread and strongly-held view that the clergy ought to be graduates, not least to enable them to continue the church's traditional place in intellectual culture (Haig 1984, 33; Kirby 2016, 59-65). In the USA, pastors of different traditions working in seminaries were among the first to develop courses and syllabi in hymnology. An interest in history was common among many clergy, especially but not exclusively where particular branches of enquiry had a direct bearing upon religious belief or practice. In

Britain, many clergy were members of historical or antiquarian societies, such as the Surtees Society and the Camden Society, and their participation in such learned circles allowed them to bring their Christian faith and intellectual reasoning together in ways that they considered profitable for themselves, the church, and society at large (Jann 1985, 207). On the one hand demonstrating the church's intellectual pedigree to their fellow antiquarians and historians, their work could also be used to strengthen their position in relation to various religious practices and attitudes (Levine 1986, 85).

Given the prominent role of music in Christian liturgy, it was natural that the intellectual interests of the clergy extended to the history and practice of music, especially within sacred contexts. They lectured, wrote, and debated alongside professional musicians, including those of high repute nationally. Many of the prominent figures were active as composers and performers of church music, as well as in a variety of educational roles. Naturally, clergy and church musicians played a prominent role in scholarship concerned with liturgical music, including a significant focus on congregational music. This needs to be understood in relation to the burgeoning of congregational singing in many denominations, including the Church of England, and the plethora of hymnals, now typically containing words and music together as standard, that were issued by denominations, factions and parties – especially in the second half of the nineteenth century. In keeping with broader scholarly attitudes, nineteenth-century intellectual endeavour in congregational music frequently demonstrates a keen awareness of its contemporary practical application, as scholars sought to reconcile past and present and to shape the future of church music (Jann 1985, 213). The courses in hymnology developed by John A. Broadus for The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (1892) and David R. Breed for The Western Theological Seminary (1903) both combined thorough historical overviews with reflections on the purpose, value and practice of congregational hymnody. Historical research traversed

denominational and national boundaries freely; British and American writers covered a range of topics, and were themselves influenced by continental European scholarship and practice, notably the plainchant reforms centered on the Abbey of St-Pierre de Solesmes, led by Prosper Guéranger (1805-75) and Joseph Pothier (1835-1923). The 1890s saw the first doctorates awarded by American universities for research on hymnological topics (see Richardson, n.d.).

This chapter examines the contribution of hymnologists associated with the church, both clergy and laity, to nineteenth-century intellectual culture through their work on historical and contextual aspects of congregational music, their reflections on and attempts to shape its current practice, and their understanding of its devotional and spiritual significance. It draws on a wide range of publications, including those focused specifically on intellectual endeavour (tending principally to address historical, contextual, and practical matters), and sermons and hymnals, which often reflected scholarly thought to affirm or advocate the devotional and spiritual merits of congregational song. Each of these three areas will show that hymnology's place at the intersection of historical, literary, theological, and musical study made it a vibrant and rigorous part of nineteenth-century intellectual culture.

History and context

Hymnology's quest to document the history of hymns, the biographies of their creators, and the historical and cultural contexts of hymnody reflects the broader nineteenth-century urge to compile and consolidate knowledge on particular topics in publications that aimed to provide comprehensive coverage within clearly defined parameters. In Britain, continental Europe, and North America, large-scale works on a variety of topics, representative of many different scholarly disciplines, emerged. While *A Dictionary of Hymnology* (1892) compiled by John Julian (1839-1913) covers a more specialized topic than some other works, it is

nonetheless an unmistakable product of the period that also saw publication of the *Dictionary of National Biography* (Vol. 1, 1885) and George Grove's *A Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (Vol. 1, 1879). Commenting on the cultural context surrounding Grove's *Dictionary*, Deane Root situates it in relation to a number of contemporary developments, all of which might be regarded as equally relevant to understanding the emergence of Julian's *Dictionary*:

expositions of industry and of culture gathered the most advanced products of society under one roof (as for example at London's Crystal Palace from 1851); museums assembled artifacts for the edification of the general public (the opening of the new British Museum building and reading room, 1857); professions established associations that pooled expertise (in the United States, the Music Teachers National Association, founded 1876); editions and scholarly works collected knowledge and created foundational texts for further education and research (for example for J. S. Bach from 1851, for Beethoven from 1862). (Root 2012, n. pag.)

Furthermore, such activity was also to be found in the areas of theology and biblical studies, with many publishers issuing biblical dictionaries and encyclopaedias of theology and religious history, such as Cheyne and Black's *Encyclopaedia Biblica* (1899) and McClintock and Strong's *Cyclopaedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature* (Vo. 1, 1867). It is thus unsurprising that hymnology, situated at the convergence of literature, music, and religion, should also be characterized by attempts to produce comprehensive reference works. While Julian's *Dictionary* dominates the nineteenth-century hymnological landscape, owing to its unparalleled scale and scope, it emerged from a developing field of scholarly activity alongside a range of other smaller-scale publications that tended to have a narrower focus. Despite hymnology's inherent interdisciplinary nature, many of its nineteenth-century reference works treat music and musicians at best

peripherally, instead focusing primarily on hymn texts and their authors. Nonetheless, their passing references to musical aspects indicate an underlying acknowledgment of music's important role in the practice and experience of hymnody. Julian's *Dictionary* is similarly dominated by consideration of texts and authors, but includes a series of survey entries on the hymnody of different denominations and countries, in which more attention is paid to the practice of hymnody; specific musical inquiry is found predominantly in journal articles and short publications. Common across all these different types of publication is an emphasis on historical record and the tracing of changes and developments.

Literary-focused works

The full title of Josiah Miller's *Singers and Songs of the Church: being biographical sketches of the hymn-writers in all the principal collections* (2nd ed., 1869) makes clear that, despite the obvious recognition of music in the main part, its focus is on the literary aspects of hymnody. Miller (1832-80) adopts a chronological approach, "so as to provide the materials for a history of the schools of hymn-writers, and the eras of the hymnic art" (Miller 1869, vii). The book is aimed at a lay readership of churchgoers, with the intention of providing "such information of the authors and origin of our hymns as will add to the pleasure and advantage of private devotion and public worship" (Miller 1869, v). Rational knowledge and religious devotion are, for Miller, complementary, and there is no sense in which he sees his scholarship as separate from his religious identity as a Congregationalist minister. In recognition of hymnody's ecumenical nature, and perhaps also revealing a degree of commercial acumen, he lists 25 hymnals, representing a wide range of denominations, to which his volume is intended as a biographical companion.

Most of Miller's references to music are made in passing, typically noting a particular tune with which a text has been associated, or mentioning an author's musical background or interests. Occasionally, however, discussion of some aspect of music is more developed, such

as in his entry on Martin Luther. This extensive entry begins with a biographical overview of Luther's life and a brief discussion of his theological writings before turning to his work in the area of congregational hymnody. In this, Miller attends to Luther's textual and musical contributions in an integrated way. After outlining Luther's appreciation of music and views on its moral and educational value, he describes how Luther sought to use music in a religious context:

At his own house he gathered a band of men skilled in music, with whose assistance he arranged to his own heart-stirring words the old and favourite melodies of Germany, taking care to adapt them to congregational worship, so that the people might resume that place in public praise of which their Romish guides had deprived them. (Miller 1869, 42)

Prior to this statement, Miller has made no reference to Luther's work in writing or translating hymn texts. It is thus highly revealing that in the context of hymnody and the Protestant Reformation, Miller addresses music and musical participation first. In these brief remarks, he presents musical repertoire and practice as two of the most significant manifestations of Luther's reforms. While Luther's words are acknowledged as "heart-stirring," the two critical factors of their success are musical: their association with familiar music and the opportunity for musical participation. In an historical account dominated by the literary aspects of hymnody, Miller nonetheless shows a keen awareness that its efficacy and the regard in which it is popularly held rely heavily on its participative nature, in which music is a vital element. This is later affirmed after discussion of Luther's work as author and translator:

Upon the minds of the people awakening to the new era, and already moved by reading Luther's noble translation of the New Testament, the singing of these evangelical psalms and hymns made a very deep impression. The masses sang Luther's tunes and Luther's words;

and the enemies of the Reformation said, ‘Luther has done us more harm by his songs than by his sermons.’ (Miller 1869, 43)

Miller’s high regard for Luther and his musical initiatives needs to be considered in the context of Miller’s own identity as a Congregational minister. As a leader in an institution characterized by the exercise of autonomous ecclesiastical governance at the level of an individual congregation, and theologically firmly within the Protestant Reformed tradition, it is unsurprising that Luther’s resistance to the ecclesiastical hierarchy of Roman Catholicism and his promotion of music that he considered popular and accessible at local level would have been appealing.

Writing from an overt denominational standpoint in *Methodist Hymnology*, American author David Creamer (1812-87) seeks to emphasize the Wesleyan lineage of *A Collection of Hymns for the Use of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (Methodist Episcopal Church 1836), to which his volume is intended as a companion. Unsurprisingly, Creamer draws heavily on the literary works of John and Charles Wesley; his volume is in three parts, dealing respectively with the biographies of authors represented in the hymnal, descriptions of the poetical works of the Wesley brothers, and individual commentaries on each hymn from the hymnal. In the middle part, however, he gives some attention to the singing practices and repertoire of the early Methodists, arguing that Methodists

have not only always been a *singing* community, but have endeavored to sing with the spirit and the understanding; and this their learned and pious founder was convinced could be done only by singing *correctly*; hence he furnished them with *music books*, containing the tunes in use among them, and insisted upon their use by his societies and congregations. (Creamer 1848, 192)

Creamer displays a characteristic tendency in nineteenth-century Methodist history-writing by according John Wesley’s views and actions an unquestionable authority and an

unchallenged status as representative of eighteenth-century Methodism. The existence of a number of unofficial tune-books from the period, along with Wesley's own accounts of divergent musical practices experienced on his travels, indicate that Methodist music in the eighteenth century was more varied than Creamer suggests. He goes on to recognize the interdependence of words and music in creating hymnody's powerful influence on many Methodists, arguing that Wesley attempted to ensure that his followers sing suitable hymns, with "the sublimity of the sentiment harmonizing with the melody of music" (Creamer 1848, 192). However, in summing up the situation in mid-nineteenth-century American Methodism, he argues that there has been a change:

It is to be feared that the character here given of *Methodist singing* has been, in this country at least, somewhat modified, by the introduction of choirs of irreligious persons into our "churches," and the use of popular hymns and tunes, to the frequent exclusion of our own Hymn-book, containing, as it does, the incomparable hymns of John and Charles Wesley. (Creamer 1848, 193)

Here, Creamer hints at another motivation for his work: the promotion of what he regards as Methodism's historic repertoire and practice. In the same year that his book was published, he became a member of the committee responsible for compiling *Hymns for the Use of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (Methodist Episcopal Church, 1849), in which he advocated faithfulness to the denominational heritage in opposition to those seeking a more diverse repertoire (Bagnall Yardley, n.d.).

Although he does deal briefly with musical aspects of Methodist hymnody, Creamer's emphasis on its "official" history is indicative of a more general approach in nineteenth-century hymnology, which also explains the common lack of attention to music. Hymnologists were, in the spirit of the times, driven by a desire to record accurate and, as far as possible, comprehensive historical and factual data about hymns and their writers. In an

era in which the firm bond between an individual text and tune, published side-by-side, was just becoming commonplace, the lack of integrated study of text and music is, therefore, unsurprising. Also, owing both to the minimal engagement with musical topics, and the priority given to the creators and compilers of hymns, rather than those who sang them, such writing does not generally permit insight into the ways in which hymnody was used and received, or the spiritual or emotional effects it had upon those who experienced it.

Julian's *Dictionary of Hymnology*

While Julian's *Dictionary* is dominated by historical entries on individual hymns and hymnals, and biographical accounts of hymn-writers, it also contains a broad array of entries that survey a larger body of hymnody, mostly defined either by place or denomination. Musical aspects of hymnody are frequently mentioned in all these types of entries, though most commonly only very briefly, typically to record the publication of associated tune books or such like.

More wide-ranging attention is given to music in an extensive entry on "Missions, Foreign," which attempts to survey the use of hymnody in missionary work in all areas of the world, apart from Europe. This article, compiled by the Baptist author W. R. Stevenson, reflects both the enormous energy that the Western churches devoted to overseas mission in the nineteenth century, and the emerging scholarly work in what would become known as ethnomusicology. Stevenson is reliant on publications available to him and reports received from current and former missionaries, with the result that the level of detail provided is uneven, and varying in its focus. While details of many hymnals prepared for use in various countries and contexts are given, the more noticeable emphasis on music throughout this article is significant. It reveals that the missionaries appreciated the importance of practice in realizing the benefits they perceived hymnody to offer to their work and those whom they sought to evangelize. Stevenson also recognises music as a way of helping the reader to

understand something of the cultural context about which he writes; the hymns that were translated would have been familiar to many of his readers, but by including details of poetical and musical characteristics, attitudes, and challenges, he is able to present a sense of the complexity of the worldwide use of hymnody. Although all of this work falls under the principal heading “Missions, Foreign,” it is very clear that, apart from the custom of translating English hymns for use overseas, there is little else uniform about the practice and reception of hymnody in the places covered in the entry. Recurrent themes include the relationship between texts and music, and the technical challenges associated with indigenous poetical and musical structures, the characteristics of musical performance, and implicit comparisons between these and Western systems and practices.

On the relationship of words and music, one of the most common observations is that translations have retained the meter of the original English text, but very often do not rhyme, so that the tunes associated with the texts in the source hymnal can also be used in foreign contexts. Such an approach incorporates Western music into the didactic emphasis of missionary work, of which hymnody was a key part. The brief remarks on Vancouver’s Island exemplify the perception of the musical missionary as teacher that pervades many of the accounts: “The Rev. A. J. Hall, of the *C.M.S.*, who is labouring among the *Kwa Gulth* tribe, in the north of Vancouver’s Island, has prepared a number of hymns in the language of that people, and has taught them to sing them” (Stevenson 1892, 739). The method of teaching is never probed in the article; in part, it may have been driven by pragmatism, allowing the missionary to commence musical work quickly and confidently, but, as both accounts of poetical and musical systems, and comments on encounters with indigenous music elsewhere in the entry reveal, technical and cultural value-judgments may also have been influential.

Comments on hymnody in Japan and China, among other places, refer specifically to the indigenous poetical structures and linguistic traits of those countries and their languages, and the associated challenges in introducing translated hymnody. After a detailed description of the metrical structure of common forms of Japanese poetry, Stevenson remarks:

Another difficulty was to find suitable tunes to these peculiar metres. A few English tunes, like ‘Home, sweet home,’ could easily be adapted, and one or two Japanese tunes were available. These, however were but few, and the effect was no by means pleasing.” (Stevenson 1892, 742)

On Malayalam hymnody in Southern India, a specifically musical problem is noted: “The tunes to the lyrics are somewhat wild and irregular, and cannot usually be expressed in English notation, because the intervals in Hindu music differ from ours, several being less than a semitone” (Stevenson 1892, 751). Elsewhere, however, solutions to this type of problem are also described, such as that adopted in a recent hymnal published for use in Syria: “the tunes being printed in good musical type (European notation, but with notes running from right to left) and occupying the upper portion of each page, whilst the hymns, in clearly printed Arabic characters, appear on the lower portion” (Stevenson 1892, 755). The descriptions of these technical challenges seem to serve several purposes; in part, they attempt to educate the curious reader on aspects of cultures likely to be unfamiliar, while also affirming the achievements of the missionaries who overcame such obstacles to their work, yet they also invite, and sometimes provide, direct and value-laden comparisons between indigenous and Western systems and practices.

While the predominant cultural assumption of religious and social superiority that often characterized missionary activity pervades much of the writing about other cultures, a range of attitudes can nonetheless be discerned. In some cases, the perceived qualities of the indigenous music, or simply its unfamiliarity, are used to deem it unsuitable for

congregational hymnody; in the case of Siam, the local music is considered by missionary Mary L. Cort to be “very weird and monotonous,” and thus unusable in worship (Stevenson 1892, 745). Commenting on an observation by a Baptist missionary about the limited subject matter of native Bengali hymnody, Stevenson suggests that “Perhaps these statements may be partly explained by the fact that in this part of India the native music is wholly melancholy” (Stevenson 1892, 747). Along with the example of Japanese poetry, mentioned above, the description of Bengali hymnody indicates that, at least sometimes, there was a desire to draw on local cultural repertoire and practice to introduce hymnody. For instance, Stevenson documents the singing of the Lord’s Prayer and several canticles to “native chants” in Fiji (Stevenson 1892, 741), and provides a detailed description of the Christianisation of the *Kirttan*, a type of musical performance, in the Marathi-speaking area of Western India. In it, he comments on the evangelistic motivation of the development as well as listing the indigenous musical instruments used (Stevenson 1892, 750). By contrast, information is also given on how Western musical forms have been introduced and received in many places; alongside the use of native chants in Fiji, it is also noted that “The people delight in singing, and those who have been taught new tunes go round and teach them to others in the villages” (Stevenson 1892, 741).

This article on foreign missions illustrates how closer attention to the musical repertoire and practice of hymnody can affect the nature of scholarly writing in hymnology. Whereas literary topics tend to focus on printed materials as a basis for historical or analytical commentary that aims to be objective, attention to the practice of hymnody necessarily reveals the divergence of opinion on matters of musical repertoire and practice, and broadens the field of intellectual inquiry beyond historical record to questions of meaning and value, albeit sometimes in an implicit way. In so doing, hymnology reveals itself, reflecting the practices and materials it documents, to be at the intersection of multiple scholarly

methodologies and traditions. The breadth and depth of Julian's *Dictionary* was such that it remained unrivalled as the standard reference work in hymnology until it was eventually succeeded by *The Canterbury Dictionary of Hymnology* (Watson and Hornby, n.d.).

Musical studies

Hymnology focused primarily on musical aspects tended to be published in the form of shorter essays or articles, either individually, such as William Havergal's *A History of the Old Hundredth Psalm Tune, with specimens* (1854), or in periodicals such as *The Proceedings of the Musical Association* and *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular*. Havergal's extended essay largely aligns with the more general trend in hymnology for establishing facts about origins, authorship, and details of variant versions, but he also ranges more widely in a final section that examines the popularity and reception of "The Old Hundreth" tune. His essay was clearly intended to have popular appeal to a broad audience, as it dealt with arguably the best-known of all hymn tunes, and promised to answer the vexed question of its authorship, which had attracted attention in the press. Havergal begins by documenting the publication history of the tune, paying particular attention to its many rhythmic variants. Forasmuch as his intention is to provide a clear historical record, his approach is not characterized by any sort of dogmatic insistence on the primacy of the earliest version. Instead, after explaining how the rhythmic variant adopted by Thomas Ravenscroft had become standard in English-language psalters, he goes on to claim that:

The symmetry of the tune thus modelled is remarkably beautiful. Had that beauty been discovered or even suspected, it might have saved the tune itself from the violence which has been practised upon it" (Havergal 1854, 16).

In this statement, the influence of aesthetic judgment and consideration of the tune's practicality on Havergal's approach, alongside historical considerations, is clear.

After addressing the question of authorship and making brief remarks on harmonization and a plea for the adoption of a quicker tempo than had become customary, Havergal recounts a series of “facts and incidents concerning this celebrated tune” (1854, 44). These include the reactions of musical luminaries such as Haydn and Berlioz to hearing the tune performed by massed voices in St Paul’s Cathedral, and the first reported singing of the tune in New Zealand on Christmas Day, 1814. He also provides details of its use in several other musical compositions. While he makes almost no interpretative comment on the various accounts of the tune’s use, his implicit intention appears to be to demonstrate its popularity and its widely recognized dignified suitability for use in public worship, which relate directly to its musical form and origins, as set out in the earlier part of the essay. Once again, this reveals a breadth of scholarly interest, although historical record is clearly prioritized. In part, this seems to stem from hymnology’s subject matter; hymn tunes such as that discussed by Havergal have the express intention of pointing beyond themselves, enabling singers and hearers to contemplate the divine. As such, their ability and efficacy in this regard are natural subjects for enquiry, resulting in musical scholarship that combines analytical, historical, and reception-focused approaches.

The writings of the Rev. J. Powell Metcalfe (1824-c.1900) demonstrate the participation of churchmen in intellectual debates about music in nineteenth-century Britain. A frequent contributor to *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular*, Metcalfe was also active as an editor of musical publications with educational and religious aims. His writings focus both on historical and contemporary aspects of church music. In “The Music of the Church of England, as Contemplated by the Reformers,” he seeks to show that there was a close alignment between the religious values promulgated by the reformers and their work in relation to music:

The motto still remained, “understood of the people;” *that*, we say, was adopted which was felt most natural, most congenial to the sober religious feeling of the people, *as* a people – that which was calculated to touch the deeper feelings of the Englishman’s heart, and aid it in vibrating to the appeals of God’s awful truth. (Powell Metcalfe 1865a, 157)

Metcalfe goes on to trace the use of a variety of different musical forms in the Church of England, including plainchant, metrical psalmody, anthems, and services. He explores their ancient origins, and pays particular attention to the work of musicians who captured the spirit of the reformers in music, such as “that noble confessor, John Marbeck,” though noting that it took “the far greater work of Thomas Tallis to fit [service music] for the highest form of the English Churchman’s worship” (Powell Metcalfe 1865a, 158). In conclusion, he argues for continuing attention to be paid to the appropriate character of music for use in the Church of England, calling upon churchmen to ensure that “sober English hearts be quickened in devotion by such devout strains as our greater masters have bequeathed to us, or as their no unworthy successors of our day still give us” (Powell Metcalfe 1865b, 179). Metcalfe sums up his appeal by saying, “As English churchmen, let our motto be – ‘English strains for English praises’” (Powell Metcalfe 1865b, 179). He uses this as a basis to advocate that clergy entrust church music to professionals, so that the nation as a whole may derive spiritual benefit from it. This focus on specifically British music reflects a broader interest in ideas about music and national identity, but also relates to a desire to affirm the Church of England as the national church and to ensure that its music was in alignment with its status.

Such concerns were not unique to Britain; the protracted debates about the history and practice of plainchant emanating from the scholarly work of several figures associated with the Abbey at Solesmes had important political elements. While its more obvious focus on religious practice is considered below, it was also influential in shaping relationships between Catholic and Republican identities in France. This was especially notable with regard to

attitudes towards Germany, played out through the competing claims of French and German plainchant scholars in shaping the Vatican's deliberations on an official plainchant edition (Ellis 2013). Continental European Protestantism also saw a burgeoning of scholarship on the history of hymnody in this period. Within Lutheranism, Robin Leaver characterises the nineteenth century as a period of restoration and conservation, noting, for example, that new scholarly editions of earlier Lutheran repertoire and writings about the practice of music in worship were published, alongside new collected editions of works by J.S. Bach, Schütz, and others (Leaver, 2001).

More broadly, the connections Metcalfe's article seeks to establish between the historical repertoire and practice of church music and the contemporary situation reveal an important aspect of much nineteenth-century scholarship on matters of religious music. Many of those who contributed to scholarly publications combined their interest in musical history with a lively and often professional interest in its present state, either as clergymen serving in a variety of clerical appointments, or as practitioners in churches, chapels, cathedrals, and educational institutions. Thus it is possible to perceive a dynamic interrelationship between their historical research and their musical practice and advocacy; historical knowledge undoubtedly played a legitimizing role with regard to practice, while a desire for practical innovation or reform may also have served as an impetus for promoting greater understanding of musical heritage.

Practice

A strong emphasis on practical application characterizes much of the scholarly work and debate on sacred music in the nineteenth century. As noted above, historical research often served a purpose in supporting claims for a particular practice or repertoire in a contemporary context, typically stemming from the involvement of writers in the life of the church, either

as clergy or musicians. Articles and other publications with a more overt practical focus were also plentiful, and, again reflecting the growth of hymnody, many were concerned with developing the opportunities for, and musical quality of, congregational participation. A range of perspectives, sometimes competing, sometimes complementary (including religious, aesthetic, and pragmatic), can be observed in writings on topics ranging from plainchant to the relationship between choirs and congregations, and the need for suitable musical education for clergy, church musicians, and congregations.

Plainchant

Plainchant was one of the most widely debated forms of liturgical music in this period. This was owing both to the extensive work being undertaken to prepare new editions for use in a variety of local, national, and international contexts, and to the associated scholarly activity investigating historical and interpretative aspects of chant. The work of the Benedictine community at the Abbey of Solesmes, and especially the writings of Guéranger, Pothier, and André Mocquereau (1849-1930), are particularly important in this regard, both in their own right, and in terms of their influence on advocates of plainchant elsewhere. Guéranger was instrumental in the post-revolution revival of monastic life at Solesmes, and gave the role of plainchant in the community's liturgical life high priority. His vision was idealistic, and this extended to his attitude to plainchant; he sought to use modern scholarship and intellectual inquiry to recover an authentic repertoire and practice of chant that would befit a community that aimed to capture the essence of its order's foundation (Bergeron 1998, 13-15).

Guéranger's musical vision required the work of later scholar-monks to realize it, and the markedly different approaches pursued by Pothier and Mocquereau, especially in the area of rhythm, reflect something of the lively rigor of the intellectual debates around church music. Pothier promoted a rhythmic interpretation based on the accents of speech, while Mocquereau sought to uncover more fundamental aspects of syllabic patterns, uninhibited by

the constructions of prose or meter (Bergeron 1998, 107-119). He also favored making historical sources available to modern users by adopting new photographic technology, whereas Pothier aimed to produce a modern printed edition drawing on scholarly research, which would have direct practical value. Mocquereau's approach in particular appealed to the emerging discipline of musicology, thanks to its scientific methodology and concern for comprehensiveness (Bergeron 1998, 92-93). Pothier, conversely, sought to build a living relationship with tradition, enabling the ready adoption of plainchant by contemporary worshippers through practical, accessible editions (Bergeron 1998, 153).

The significance of this scholarship in terms of Catholic musical practice at large in this period is most clearly seen in its incorporation into Pope Pius X's *motu proprio, Tra le sollecitudini* (1903). This document, issued at the pontiff's own initiative, drew directly on the work that had been undertaken at Solesmes, and reflected the careful practical attention Pius X had given to sacred music throughout his earlier career. It affirmed the status of Gregorian chant within the Roman liturgy, as well as establishing wider standards for the content and practice of liturgical music (see Joncas 1997 and Schaefer 2008, 115-116).

The advocacy of plainchant was also a prominent feature in nineteenth-century Britain, and the influence of Solesmes is readily acknowledged by many writers (see Zon 1999). The practicalities of plainchant as a form of congregational music were prominent, and even when papers had a theoretical focus, such as H. B. Briggs' "The Structure of Plainsong," the report of the ensuing discussion indicates that audience members were keen to reflect on practice. Briggs acknowledges the importance of theoretical work from Solesmes, while in his remarks after the paper, the chairman, Charles W. Pearce, commented on the practical value of the Solesmes method, recalling a visit to the Church of the Cowley Fathers, Oxford, where he was "delighted with the capital results that had been obtained" (Briggs 1897-98, 90). Not all aspects were viewed favourably, however, as another

respondent, Mr Southgate objected that “I myself regard this old notation as an interesting antiquarian study rather than one of modern utility” (Briggs 1897-98, 90-91). Significantly, even in this dissenting response, the speaker’s focus is practical; underlying the scholarly discourse on sacred music is a keen awareness of the importance of practice.

Other papers and reports have a more overtly practical focus. A report of the annual meeting of the London Gregorian Choral Association printed in *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular* in January 1894 summarizes another lecture given by Briggs, in which he argued that “not only was plainsong theoretically and practically the best possible musical setting of the Church service, but that the English Church had no right to use any other” (Anon. 1894, 28). He went on to promote the Solesmes system as the most musically and devotionally effective.

Institutions such as the London Gregorian Choral Association and the Musical Association are important in understanding the intellectual culture in which debates about the theory and practice of church music took place. The former promoted both the practice and study of plainchant, through lectures and events such as its annual festival service. That Briggs (a prominent editor of plainchant) also addressed the Musical Association underlines that body’s engagement with the music of the church. The summaries of discussions printed in its *Proceedings* permit an insight into its membership in addition to those who presented papers. Clergy and church organists feature prominently throughout the period; their attendance and participation suggest a desire to maintain a symbiotic relationship between their natural practical interest in musical matters and the broader field of contemporary scholarship. Their interests, however, were not confined to plainchant, but extended across other aspects of liturgical music, including repertoire, performance practice, and training.

Church music at the Church Congress

Joseph Barnby's address to the Church Congress in 1873, subsequently published in *The Musical Times*, covers many musical topics. Its origins and publication are themselves significant. The Church Congress was an annual meeting of clergy and laity from the Church of England to discuss matters of contemporary concern in the church's life. Although it lacked legislative power, it was nonetheless a significant gathering of influential persons associated with the church. Various aspects of church music were discussed at meetings of the Congress throughout the nineteenth century, and speakers on musical topics included clergy with significant musical reputations, such as F. A. Gore Ouseley, Thomas Helmore, and J. B. Dykes, and prominent musicians such as Barnby, John Stainer, and John Hullah.² *The Musical Times* often published complete papers or summaries of musical topics discussed.

Barnby's lecture is a wide-ranging survey of contemporary church music, in which he makes a broad distinction between two principal types of service: congregational and cathedral. He deliberately eschews an historical approach, instead focusing squarely on practical matters, in order "to point out certain particulars in which that service may be thought to have fallen short of the high aim it is intended to fulfil, and briefly to indicate, so far as I am able, the means by which a greater completeness of result may be attained" (Barnby 1873, 267). Two principal themes emerge from his paper: methods of good practice for the use of music in the liturgy, and the importance of education and training. While praising the effects of the choral revival in Anglicanism, Barnby is also a firm advocate of congregational singing. He does not propose uniformity, however, but instead argues that the musical content of the service needs to be decided upon according to the nature and experience of the congregation:

select the very best music such [as the] congregation can understand and in which it can join. If the capacity of a community is limited to the appreciation and religious enjoyment of Hymns, then the best Hymn Tunes should be selected. Where, on the other hand, a considerable part of the congregation can appreciate more scientific music, by all means let such music fulfil the highest purpose to which it could be applied by being incorporated in the Service. (Barnby 1873, 269)

The apparent value judgments about different types of music are revealing; Barnby, an educated musician who worked in several prominent London churches, unsurprisingly attributes greater musical worth to more complex music, yet his attitude towards congregations unable to cope with such music is benevolent, but perhaps also paternalistic. More significant, however, is that the apparently less “scientific” music of congregational hymnody still merits detailed attention. Barnby is not simply concerned with achieving higher standards through the promotion of choral music performed by highly-trained choirs, but also seeks to encourage the pursuit of musical excellence among the whole congregation. This was by no means a uniformly accepted position, and Barnby’s contribution was certainly not the final word on the matter. Some years later, in 1890, a contribution from the Bishop of Manchester prompted an extensive debate on the matter in the pages of *The Musical Times*. Complaining of the detrimental influence of choirs on congregational singing, he advocated renewed focus on full participation. Respondents cited numerous examples from around the country both supporting and opposing the Bishop’s arguments; one, identified only as F. P., implies that the Bishop’s position was a theoretical one, claiming that “if he sat in the midst of a congregation (if he have a delicately constructed ear) he would often be inclined to wish all the singing were left to the choir” (Powell Metcalfe and Foster 1890, 616). Barnby’s own solution is that hymns should be sung in unison throughout, by congregation and choir, so that the effect is not spoiled by individuals inventing their own harmony, or by men’s voices

singing the melody and causing harmonic infelicities. Cathedral music receives briefer attention, but in the final part of the paper, Barnby proposes some blurring of the boundaries between the two types of musical service, suggesting that the inclusion of a congregational hymn in all cathedral services and, where resources permit, an anthem in parochial services, would offer benefits to both types of congregation, the latter being regarded as “a kind of musical sermon” (Barnby 1873, 271). This clearly indicates that he is not solely concerned with good musical practice, but also with the spiritual benefits that this can bring to worshippers.

The connection between spirituality and music is also evident in his comments on the need for both clergy and musicians to receive effective training and education with regard to musical aspects of worship. In line with many other commentators of the period, he advocates that clergy need greater musical education, and that they should also consult with and delegate responsibility more willingly to church musicians for the musical aspects of worship so that the maximum benefit may be drawn from the latter’s experience and expertise. The church musicians themselves, however, do not escape his criticism, and he details the qualities necessary for a successful choir-master:

We want men not only of musical but of intellectual cultivation, – men, who themselves feeling the inner meaning of a hymn, and appreciating the facilities music offers for the expression of that feeling, shall be able to explain clearly and fully to their choirs and congregations the scope and content of every composition they undertake. If once the choir-master can put himself thoroughly into the position of the interpreter of the work, and can enlist the sympathies of those he teaches for what he himself admires and appreciates, he has obtained the best lever for moving his choir to a higher position. (Barnby 1873, 269)

Barnby and others show that the scholarly interest in the practice of church music was neither confined to rarefied discussion of sophisticated music, nor purely concerned with

technical aspects of composition and performance. Instead, there was widespread acknowledgment that congregational music was worthy of attention, not least because of its ubiquity, and a recognition that it embodied the close relationship between music and religious experience; the cultivation of good congregational musical practice was thus seen to have complementary musical and spiritual benefits.

Spirituality

The perceived devotional and spiritual benefits of congregational song also received direct attention, principally in sermons and hymnal prefaces. Preachers and editors alike advocated the practice of hymn-singing as a means of engendering appropriate devotional behaviour among a congregation, and for promoting personal piety. Despite inevitably different preferences in terms of repertoire and musical style, writers from a range of different denominations and liturgical traditions shared a common belief in the spiritual and practical efficacy of hymnody. They also frequently adopted similar approaches and arguments in setting out its merits, typically exploring biblical precedents for or injunctions about singing, linking the act of singing to the roles and attributes of each person of the Trinity, and connecting personal and corporate aspects of religious faith.

Sermons on singing

The publication of sermons, especially those preached upon significant occasions, was commonplace among Anglican clergymen in the nineteenth century. Their sermons were often published as a commemoration of a particular event, or to raise funds in support of a good cause. The range of events and causes included some related to music, such as the opening of a new organ, or a gathering of church choirs. Given the centrality of music to such occasions, preachers are likely to have been duty-bound to consider the relationship between music and faith in a more focused and avowedly affirmative way than may have been the

case in routine sermons on other occasions. Indeed, it was common practice to invite notable preachers for such occasions, and sympathy towards the musical practice or cause would surely have governed the choice to a considerable extent.

The Trinitarian basis for expressing praise through song is clearly expounded in a sermon *On Church Music* by William Gresley (1801-76), Prebendary of Lichfield, preached and published in support of the fund for an organ at St Paul's Church, Brighton. In the first part of the sermon, Gresley relates the singing of praises to God the Father's works of creation and providence, Christ's work of redemption, which "put a new song into the mouths of men and angels," and the receiving of the gifts of the Holy Spirit (Gresley 1852, 7). The emphasis on the Trinity is both expected and important, as it represents a clear statement of doctrinal orthodoxy, with which the practice of hymnody is firmly aligned. Charles Wilton (1795-1859) succinctly sums up the Christian's duty of praise in a sermon entitled *Congregational Singing and Instrumental Church Music*: "In all these characters of the Triune Jehovah, we offer to him our *petitions*; and in each of them, likewise, the oblation of our praise is not only a reasonable service, but a bounden duty" (Wilton 1822, 5).

Scriptural references and appeals to biblical precedents abound in sermons focusing on congregational song. Most obviously, preachers drew on the psalms both to justify the use of song to express religious ideas and feelings, and to establish the standard to which all hymns should aspire. Gresley argues, "it is impossible to find nobler, or more suitable words, in which to express the various emotions of devout thankfulness, than those inspired Psalms which are already prepared for our use in the sacred volume" (1852, 11). He goes on to advocate the practice of chanting the psalms, so that their literary qualities are not diminished by being transformed into metrical verse. More significantly, he cites the whole of Psalm 150 to justify the use of musical instruments in church, concluding that "After this stirring invitation, we have no need of further argument or authority to warrant us in the use of

instruments of music, in order to add dignity and beauty to God's service" (1852, 14). While his advocacy of the organ as the most suitable instrument for use in worship reflects the occasion and purpose of the sermon, his use of scripture to support his position is important. Although he was preaching in a period in which the construction of organs in churches and chapels was becoming more and more common, such developments were not always without conflict on matters including propriety and expense, especially as older customs were superseded.

In *Congregational music: A Sermon preached before the Choral Association of the Diocese of Llandaff* (1862), Alfred Ollivant (1798-1882), the diocesan bishop, draws two aspects of significance from the psalms; first, like Gresley, he makes the obvious point about their exemplary content, but he then goes on to use them as a springboard for a discussion of the ongoing appropriateness of the practice of singing in church. Noting that not all ancient Jewish liturgical customs were preserved by the church, he argues that psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs are uniquely suitable for expressing religious devotion:

music, so far from being a hindrance to such feelings, may be made a most powerful instrument of refining and exalting them, uniting the Church on earth with the Church in heaven, and lifting the soul upwards, in the highest degree of which it is capable, to communion with God and the holy angels before His throne. (Ollivant 1862, 7-8)

In this passage, Ollivant makes the link between scripture and personal devotion and spirituality clear. As he expands on this aspect, he refers to the nobility of singing praises to God in worship, for, unlike listening to readings and sermons, or partaking of Holy Communion, it is a "disinterested" activity in which the primary focus and purpose is an offering to God, rather than receiving from him (Ollivant 1862, 8-9). Citing passages from Isaiah (6:3) and Revelation (4:11, 7:10, 12), he argues that it is in songs of praise that the church on earth comes closest to the ecstatic experience of the church above. Having

established the devotional correctness and potential of congregational singing, he turns to the question of good practice, exhorting the assembled members of the diocesan choral association to promote lively congregational singing in their own churches. Using St Paul's injunction in 1 Corinthians 14:15 to sing with the spirit and understanding, he argues that the association's duty is to "give a higher tone to our congregational services, to induce the people generally to take an interest in music as an instrument of devotion, and as a part of the worship of God's house with which they themselves have something to do" (Ollivant 1862, 16). In these remarks, Ollivant blends spiritual, practical, and educational concerns, reflecting once again the broad range of scholarly interest in hymnody, and the intersection of different approaches.

Gresley also deals with spiritual matters, but with a specifically Anglican focus. Advocating greater congregational engagement and more energetic singing, he argues that despite the high quality of choral training available in many parish churches, "we seem to miss something of that united congregational worship which is so heart-stirring and impressive" (1852, 19). He implores the congregation to use the opportunity of the new church organ to enhance the vitality of their singing as well as the church's choral music (1852, 21). His particular attitude indicates the influence that the Oxford Movement had upon him, especially in its focus on the revitalization of liturgical worship and the role and function of choral music within it.

Wilton ends his sermon with specific points of exhortation and encouragement. Like Ollivant, he uses St Paul's famous words from 1 Corinthians 14 to advocate considered and well-prepared musical performances in church. Significantly, he concludes with words of encouragement, focused specifically on the spiritual benefits of singing: "They, who have learned to laud and magnify their God below, will be best prepared to praise him in those

realms above ... What encouragement, then, is there for you to sing praises!" (Wilton 1822, 18).

Gresley, Wilton, and Ollivant were Oxbridge-educated, and although their clerical careers took different paths, they were all active scholars; Gresley published principally on ecclesiastical history and philosophy, Wilton, who spent most of his ministry in Australia, wrote on the natural sciences and the relationship between science and religion, while Ollivant was Regius Professor of Divinity at Cambridge before his preferment. Although the sermon is a distinct genre from the types of scholarly writing discussed above, their engagement with musical matters indicates that this was a topic of active interest for scholar-clergy beyond those for whom music was a particular professional focus. That they preached on hymnody demanded an engagement with its religious nature and its role in spiritual devotion. In the same way that concerns with congregational musical repertoire and performance practice were part of the mainstream musicological discourse in the nineteenth century, so too were its religious aspects of interest to a wide cross-section of clergy, and by inference, the laity who made up the choirs and congregations on the occasions when these sermons were preached.

Hymnal prefaces

Similar themes can be observed in the prefaces of numerous nineteenth-century hymnals. Although many of these were very brief statements, they typically affirmed the role of hymnody in expressing praise, often supported with a scriptural quotation. Occasionally, however, editors explored in depth the nature of hymn-singing in their particular tradition, and the rationale for their selection of hymns. The influential Baptist minister Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834-92) compiled *Our Own Hymn Book: A Collection of Psalms and Hymns for Public, Social, and Private Worship* (1868) for his congregation at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, London. In the preface, he notes that "The range of subjects is very

extensive, comprising not only direct praise, but doctrine, experience, and exhortation; thus enabling the saints according to apostolical command to edify one another in their spiritual songs” (Spurgeon 1868, vii). Elsewhere, he deals with the provenance of the hymns, but in this short statement, he draws on scriptural precedent to indicate the spiritual value of hymnody. His description of the editorial principles on which the book was compiled reflects the balancing of historical awareness and practical concerns with the goal of shaping devotional practice. It reveals an awareness of the importance of music in bringing about the desired devotional effects, to the extent that on occasion it outweighs the concern for historical accuracy:

The hymns have been drawn from the original works of the authors, and are given as far as practicable just as they were written. ... The very few alterations which we have personally made are either grammatical corrections or emendations which seemed to be imperatively demanded by the interests of truth, or were necessary in order to change the metre into such as could be sung. (Spurgeon 1868, viii)

The Wesleyan Methodist compilers of *A Collection of Hymns, for the Use of the People Called Methodists, with a New Supplement* (Wesleyan Conference Office, 1877) aimed to situate their new contribution in relation to Christian heritage:

The Spirit of its living Head having never departed from the Church, it follows that those in all ages who by the Holy Ghost have called Jesus Lord should have been occupied with attempts to set forth his praise. As in the old time they still “prophesy and do not cease,” so that our age is richer in good hymns than any that have gone before it. (Wesleyan Conference Office 1877, iv-v).

On specifically musical matters, the preface to the edition with tunes reveals a tension between the spiritual succour sometimes gained from familiar repertoire and a desire to promote music deemed appropriate for improving the conduct of worship. With regard to the

former, it notes, “Some of the tunes selected have been long unheard in many of our congregations; but, while these would have been refused by a severe taste, their exclusion would in certain localities have been deemed almost an affront to sacred associations” (Wesleyan Conference Office 1877, vi). Simultaneously, the “earnest purpose” of the collection is summarized as “to improve the ‘Service of Song in the House of the Lord,’ and to promote the devotional use of our hymns in the home and in the social circle” (Wesleyan Conference Office 1877, vii). These remarks indicate the complex interrelationship of musical taste, liturgical preferences and values, and local and centralized priorities. Music’s central place in enlivening religious devotion is affirmed even as its contentious nature is strongly implied.

Conclusion

Although individual writers approached the subject of congregational song from different perspectives, the boundaries between studies of its historical context, practical application, and spiritual and devotional significance are almost always porous. There is also a high degree of complementarity, with authors and audiences sharing broad interests in sacred music, often informed and influenced by professional activities and personal interests. That history, practice, and spirituality should have been points of focus is unsurprising in the context of nineteenth-century scholarship at large, and particularly within the fields of music and religion. Hymnody’s rich and complex heritage undoubtedly made some of those who studied it susceptible to the nineteenth-century determination to document, categorize, and systematize historical records that prevailed across many disciplines. Historical inquiry also related to practical concerns, most notably in relation to the use of plainchant, and attempts to revitalize choral services in the Anglican tradition. Technological developments that allowed organ building to thrive in this period also contributed to a focus on the practice of church music, as new instruments presented opportunities for change and challenges to established

customs. To a large extent, historical and practical studies were brought together by those with a particular interest in shaping the devotional practices of nineteenth-century worshippers. By drawing on historical precedent to legitimize particular repertoires, and advocating renewed attention to practical matters, they sought to enhance the spiritual discipline of individuals and congregations across a wide variety of ecclesiastical and liturgical traditions.

That scholarly musicians and clergy engaged in hymnological writing and debate provides important insights into both church music's place in nineteenth-century intellectual culture and the particular nature of congregational music in a specific historical and cultural context. The place of church music in intellectual culture was not a matter of abstract or detached inquiry, but one in which participants traversed a variety of roles that gave them a dynamic interest in its vitality. Whether clergy responsible for the conduct of worship, professional organists and choir directors, or musical or theological educators, those who wrote about, lectured, and debated on aspects of congregational music saw no boundaries between their scholarly pursuits and their other professional activities. Rather, engagement in scholarship, whether through active research or learning from others, carried the potential for direct impact on their church-related endeavours. Historical research could add weight to their attempts to shape practice, which, in turn, was intended to have a direct impact on the spiritual devotion of participating congregants.

The attention given to congregational music also emphasizes an important point about its nature in the context of nineteenth-century cultural practices. Religious observance was still a mainstream activity in the period covered by the sources discussed above, and a culture of clerical involvement in the pursuit of knowledge was commonplace. For musicians, the church was also a significant source of employment, furthered by the particular attention given to organs and choirs at this time. Congregational music-making was thus a familiar

activity for many people associated with a wide variety of ecclesiastical and liturgical traditions, and, to some extent, across both national, class, and socio-cultural boundaries. Its place in intellectual culture is thus unsurprising, for it was music that was in both the public and professional consciousness. Research and scholarship in this area therefore carried with it the potential to affect the musical and perhaps also the spiritual experiences of many people and institutions.

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¹ This stands in contrast to the frequent marginalization of congregational music in musicology during the second half of the twentieth century; notable exceptions include Temperley (1979), Leaver (1991), and Zon (1999). More recent works demonstrating the growth of interest in this field include Ingalls, Landau and Wagner (2013), and Nekola and Wagner (2015).

² For a summary, see Monk (1881-82) and Dibble (2007).