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Contemporary styles in church music choral writing

Thomas, Leonard Merrill
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CHORAL WRITING

by
LEONARD MERRILL THOMAS
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First Reader 
Associate Professor of Church Music
Second Reader Chairman of Church Music Department
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Title Page</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Table of Contents</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Table of Musical Illustrations</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Preface</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Introduction, Stylistic Trends in the Anthem, Mass, and Episcopal Service</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>Contemporary Music for Protestant Worship</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>New Trends in Jewish Liturgical Music</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>Contemporary Views of the Mass</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Notes I</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Notes II</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## TABLE OF MUSICAL ILLUSTRATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Composer</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bernstein, Leonard</td>
<td>Haskivenu</td>
<td>Page 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bloch, Ernest</td>
<td>Sacred Service</td>
<td>27-28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clokey, Joseph</td>
<td>Christ Conquereth (Anthem)</td>
<td>12-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A Canticle of Praise</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diamond, David</td>
<td>Young Joseph</td>
<td>18-19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lockwood, Normand</td>
<td>The Birth of Moses</td>
<td>15-17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peeters, Flor</td>
<td>Mass (St. Joseph)</td>
<td>41-42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sowerby, Leo</td>
<td>The Canticle of the Sun</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stravinsky, Igor</td>
<td>Mass</td>
<td>37-40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thiman, E. H.</td>
<td>Ye'Sons and Daughters of the King (Anthem)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Villa-Lobos, H</td>
<td>Mass (St. Sebastian)</td>
<td>34-35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Preface

This study of contemporary styles in church music choral writing will cover works written during the past twenty years. It will deal with composers generally recognized as the best representatives of this period.

It is the purpose of this thesis to discover the cultural trend of present-day church music through a detailed analysis of representative larger choral works of Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish composers. The Cantata, Mass, Jewish Sacred Service, and the Anthem will complete the picture of church music in both long and short forms.

Music written by established composers of this period, generally recognized as the best representatives, will be considered.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction, Stylistic Trends in the
Anthem, Mass, and Episcopal Service
This study is concerned with new trends in contemporary church music. The following chapters will deal with a musical analysis of Protestant, Catholic and Jewish liturgical music. This thesis is analytical rather than comprehensive in nature and will show certain characteristics of contemporary liturgical music.

Reverend J Schuler states in regard to modern church music:

...there is a deterioration in modern music. As composers withdraw from God, their music is bound to lose its beauty. Great music is secular. Music created for the church does not interest the composers of our time. Material progress is the concern, not interest in the arts.¹

This represents one school of thought regarding contemporary music in the Catholic church. The other school of thought believes that contemporary music has its place in the church. The purpose of this analytical study is to discover what direction church music in general is headed, through an analysis of representative larger choral works; namely, the Mass, Cantata, and the Sacred Service. Some musical material of shorter length, such as the anthem, will be discussed in this chapter so as to complete the picture of church music in both long and short forms.

The general development of music in the nineteenth century followed a mood of European civilization which moved away from liturgical expression, and such liturgical music as was written revealed all too often in a saccharine sentimentality.² Music of today has taken on a "new look" but has it moved away from liturgical expression?

²/ Ibid, p. 79.
The liturgical composer of today realizes that musical style covers a multitude of things. Individuals differ in ways of doing things; so, too, do schools of art, countries, eras. Style usually involves the "whole nature of man". Contemporary, to the liturgical composer, does not signify work of our modern epigonoi, redolent of the latter end of the last century, but music written in a manner that is sincere, vital, and relevant to twentieth century life. He cannot remain indifferent to the technical development of his art. Contemporary American music is a reflection of the thinking and feeling of people in our time, communicated through works in artistic form created by men and women in our midst. It is an essential part of the culture in which and by which we live.

The sacred vocal polyphony of the sixteenth century itself often reproduced earlier styles. This is not an uncommon thing today. Composers have made use of the resources offered by the rich heritage of our early church music.

In 1549, Bishop Cirrilo Franco said:

Know well that music among the ancients was considered the most excellent of fine arts, with which they performed great feats in moderating the affections and passions of the soul, the which we do today by means of rhetoric and oratory.

King John IV of Portugal repelled Franco's humanism and emphasized subjectivity. He felt that the operation of music was like music itself, involved in a specific period.

It depends upon the changing conceptions of man, the composer must satisfy situations of his time. The relationship of the composition to the word seeks either to give prominence to the expression of mood, or to expound the words with tonal

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4/ Milner, Caecilia, pp. 83-86.
5/ Paul Lang, "Symbolism in Music" Musical Quarterly, October, 1953, p. 567
coloring, and shows how diversely the question of musical expression can be solved.\(^6\)

Both Franco and King John IV had something to offer. We cannot deny that the music among the ancients is considered excellent and yet, at the same time, composers of today must reflect ideas of their own time.

The techniques of church music are those of all music. Criticism of church music must be according to the standards of other musical undertakings.\(^7\) Church music is not, therefore, exempt from the necessity of technical consideration; it cannot be isolated from the whole of musical development.

With these things in mind, the anthem will be discussed. Unfortunately, recognition must be made at the outset, of the basic unrepresentativeness of this phase of church music. Many thousands of choral anthems are already in existence, and each year many hundreds more are composed, published, and put into use, while only two are considered here.

* 

The first important realization to be accepted in the study of choral anthems, is that the fundamental use of any text or music used in the church service must be for worship. The important constituents of a good anthem text are meaning or idea suited to worship and the service of worship in form and content, and to the demands of music and literature in technique.

In choosing a text, the composer should consider three things: (1) Choosing words which embody ideas stimulating the imagination, (2) Confining himself to material of high literary quality and (3) Selecting a text that literally cries out to be sung.\(^8\)

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\(^6\) Ibid.
\(^7\) Archibald T. Davison, Protestant Church Music in America (Boston, E. C. Schirmer) 1933, p. 13.
The principles of the art of music are not dispensed with by the demands of religion, but subordinated by these demands to the aid of worship. The ideal of music in the church is to make the artist's "beauty of wholeness" approach the "Beauty of Holiness."\(^9\) Therefore, it is clear that a consideration of the technical realities\(^{10}\) of the art of music must have a place in an analysis of church music.

*  

**Christ Conquereth** by Joseph Clokey is a good example of that type anthem which shows an influence of early church music. He has borrowed form and thematic material from Gregorian chant, but has treated it according to his own individuality of style and creativity. The Gregorian method of antiphonal psalm singing is the basis of the form:

- **Antiphon** - intonation by first choir cantor, the rest sung by full choir
- **Psalm Tone** - first half verse by second choir cantor, second half, full choir
- **Antiphon** - first choir
- **Psalm Tone** - second verse of Psalm sung by second choir
- **Antiphon** - first choir
- **Gloria Patri** - first half sung by cantor, rest by all
- **Antiphon** - all

Clokey's interpretation and treatment of the form in **Christ Conquereth**, presents the following variations of the above form:

- **Organ introduction** - presenting intonation of antiphon in imitation harmonized in a modern manner
- **Antiphon** - sung unaccompanied as anciently by cantor or antiphonal choir
- **Organ introduction** - repeated
- **Psalm tone** - as originally sung, but with a counterpoint to Alleluia imitatively in three upper voices of choir, motif derived from antiphon theme
- **Antiphon** - full choir in unison
- **Organ introduction figure**

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\(^{10}\)/ Ibid.
Psalm tone - with Alleluia counterpoint both slightly altered, the psalm tone being simply a recitation on the dominant without intonation or cadence. In the second half verse the organ accompaniment introduces the antiphon theme as a second counter-melody.

Antiphon - extensively developed. Finally stated by cantor or antiphonal choir in g minor.

Gloria Patri - treated fugally. First half same theme as antiphon rhythmically altered; second half reminiscent of psalm tone.

Antiphon - unison, developed form, not as originally stated.

In tonality too, Clokey has augmented the ancient practice. The original mode of the eighth psalm tone has been retained throughout the first part of the composition up to the Gloria Patri where modulation is made into the closely related modern tonality of g minor. The eighth psalm tone is used in its original form, but the antiphon is adapted from the intonation of an Alleluia antiphon upon the Psalms at Vespers on Saturday during the Easter season.11

J. Roff (Notes II) developed a high degree of musical objectivity in his Tantum Ergo, an anthem for mixed chorus.

* *

For the most part, anthem composers have taken advantage of the wealth of resources offered by sixteenth and seventeenth century protestant church music and earlier Catholic music. Healey Willan has demonstrated this in his Gloria Deo (Notes II). His contrapuntal passages are reminiscent of the early sixteenth and seventeenth century vocal music.

Clokey has shown the adaptability of Gregorian chant to anthem writing.

Eric Thiman has demonstrated another source of early church music. Thiman, along

11/ The Liber Usualis, the Benedictines of Solesmes, eds. (Tournai, Belgium, Desclee and Co.) 1938, p. 307.
with men like Vaughn Williams have used French and English seventeenth century melodies as their musical sources.

_Ye Sons and Daughters of the King_ another Easter anthem, represents an Old French Air (XVII Century), harmonized by Eric H. Thiman. There is a strict rhythm throughout the anthem, however, there is a certain fluidity between the text and music causing an almost chantlike interpretation. The English version of the text is by J. M. Neale.

After the organ introduction of four measures, the opening melodic line states the theme throughout the entire anthem -- the words Alleluia appear after each statement of the main theme. (Ex. 1)

![Musical notation showing the theme of _Ye Sons and Daughters of the King_.](image)

The main theme is repeated three times followed by a modulation from g minor to b minor (same thematic material). Following another Alleluia, there is a modulation back to the original key of g minor. After the final Alleluia, two measures interlude prepare for the final Amen. (Ex. 2). W H. Harris (Notes II) used many secondary chords in his _The Beatitudes_ for double choir.
It is noticeable in the final Amen that many secondary chords are employed, a device used frequently among modern composers.

*

In conclusion, music in the church is an abstraction comparable to the meaning of worship, which justifies itself only in its relation to Beauty and to the text of which it may be the setting, deriving from that text a concrete interpretation and contributing in return, an enhancing of the meaning and mood of the words. The principles of the art of music, being allied to that quality in Christianity which favors intellectuality, are retained and subordinated to the demands of spirituality.

***

The Mass setting of the twentieth century has changed in many ways from the emotionalized flavor of the nineteenth century. The number of Mass settings written so far in this country is few and the attitude toward them is still too new to be the total affirmation. There are several reasons why few Mass settings are written but the main reasons are: (1) The restriction of performances of contemporary masses; few composers enjoy writing a large scale work knowing that it will have little opportunity to be heard. (2) Masses written by recognized composers may sound strange and undesirable to present-day ears. (3) Strict regulations of the Catholic church prevent them from being performed in the church, and Protestant churches, considering them Catholic, will allow them to be performed in concert only; there are usually never enough concert performances to warrant the publication of a Mass setting.

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13/ Ibid. 76.
Conceptions of church music and attitudes toward it vary widely and in many ways. The Episcopal church service and its music has not changed a great deal within the past decade, however, "there are indeed many individuals devoted to the Chant, and many enthusiastic crusaders striving to restore church music to its ancient dignity, but the crusade is not a popular one".

"This lack of interest in the plainsong and even violent dislike is not confined solely to the Anglicans, but it may be observed in the Roman Church in this country." The custom of having Choral Services, at least occasionally, is no longer unusual in the Episcopal Church in this country. No service can be called "choral" unless the priest or officiating minister sings his part of the Service: The Versicles, Collects, and in the Communion Service, the Prefaces and Intonations to the Creed along with the Gloria in Excelsis.

There are many parishes in the Anglican Church throughout the world where the use of the Proper of the Mass has been restored and where the Mass is celebrated with all the ceremonial and music of pre-reformation times.

***

In this first chapter, a definite influence of early church music is noted in the Anthem. Some composers have taken advantage of the rich musical resources which are available and have utilized them to the greatest advantage. Modality seems to gain prominence in anthem writing and there is a definite influence of plainsong and Gregorian chant seen in some of our recent works.

16/ Ibid
17/ Ibid. p. 10
18/ Ibid. p. 13
Mass settings are few so far in this country. A more detailed analysis of some of our present-day Mass settings will be found in Chapter III. It is unfortunate that those Masses which are worthy of more notice can never be heard.

There is striving in the Episcopal Church to restore church music to its ancient dignity. The Choral Service is no longer unusual in the Episcopal Church. Whether or not contemporary music will ever have a prominent place in the services remains to be seen.

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CHAPTER II

Contemporary Music for Protestant Worship
In the three following chapters, four cantatas, two Jewish sacred services, and three Masses, from the representative fifty compositions under consideration, will be discussed individually. The purpose of this discussion is two-fold. Firstly, a more detailed clarification of the application of a musical criterion to actual sacred choral composition may be obtained. Secondly, there will be an opportunity for a closer observation of some of the more interesting techniques of choral composition, both problematic and successful.

* 

A Canticle of Praise by Joseph Clokey is an excellent example of the sort of thing an enterprising composer with initiative can do with the rich musical resources offered by the heritage of early church music. The text, by Clokey, as freely paraphrased from a canticle ascribed to St. Basil the Great, is material treated with individuality of style and creativity.

Clokey's use of the modern idiom here foreshadows what the new church music may be in expressiveness, as moving, honest, deep and reticent of emotion as the traditional style of the unadorned triad, and with more versatility. (Ex. 1)
Modern techniques characteristic of the composition are multi-rhythm, (Ex. 2)

modality, (Ex. 3)

tone blocks in the impressionistic manner, (Ex. 4) whole tone progression of chords in the same position.

The work, when analyzed section by section, may appear to be a succession of unrelated passages, however, upon examining the mood and character of each section, a definite textual and musical form is clearly presented.

The composition is comprised of twenty-four sections broken down from three larger sections. The opening motif is introduced in the first measure of the organ prelude
(Ex. 5). Section A introduces the opening chorus by means of a six measure organ
fanfare effect (Ex. 6). Part I (Section B–M) presents the second motif which it develops.

Part II (Section O–S) presents and develops new material in a contrasting mood characterized by an impressionistic type of organ accompaniment. There might be question as to whether or not the moving parallel fourths with the sustained tonic note in the pedal, is used merely for 'effects sake'. Part III (Section T–X) restates the opening motif. (Ex. 5). It is interesting to note how Clokey brightens the mood of the last four sections by chord progressions from I to a V chord, to III-major, to I. Section X is a restatement of the second motif, or more specifically termed 'first motif prime'. One other interesting feature of the composition is the closely knit form throughout the work even though an organ interlude follows each section.

The difficulty of imparting coherence to a musical work of this size involving several mood changes is considerably less when an accompaniment is used. The instrumental prelude, the postlude (or extension), and the interludes, when similar in charac-
ter, seem to bind the work together. The accompaniment furnishes modulatory passages and can also prepare for difficult rhythmic changes.

The question of the appropriateness of a cantata of this sort to the average Protestant service is bound to arise and can be volubly argued from both sides without conclusiveness. Without becoming involved in the futility of such an argument, there is one thing to be said. From the point of view of artistry, creative originality, technical temper, and sensitivity of relationship between the music and text, spirit and service of worship, this cantata is perfectly appointed to Protestant worship.

If *The Canticle of Praise* represents that type of originality which interprets old material, *the birth of moses*, by normand lockwood, exemplifies creative originality, and the contrast of rich harmonic choral textures. The text, found in the book of Exodus, may be considered one of the best known and best loved stories in the Bible. The music is scored for women's voices (SSA), with piano and flute accompaniment. The composer who writes for women's voices realizes that "here is a medium which unlike men's voices is not rich in sound, and is more markedly monochrome". However, Lockwood shows great variety in style and has the knack of switching with great facility from one way of writing to another. By the use of a flute, color has been added and the superstructure enhanced. Lockwood can use music to highlight words in a narrative fashion (Ex. 1), or can use words as an inspirational source

![Musical notation](attachment:image)

Davison, *Choral Composition*, p. 135.
for the music. The aggressively modern role which Lockwood usually takes is not as frequent in his choral music. However, the composer has not at all abandoned these modern techniques. Like the text, the musical setting displays much expressiveness. For the most part, the music admirably reflects the mood of the three main sections of the text. There is a balanced contrast of moods. Theoretically, therefore, the use of a combination of idioms is justified as in character with the mode of expression, a basic unit of composition.

The dramatic introduction, by the piano, is attained by the rhythmic patterns employed (Ex. 2). The mood is set for the weighty words "and Pharaoh charged all his people". There are fifteen sections with three main sections (A-E, F-H, I-O). Section A, combined with the introduction, opens the story in a narrative manner. The main theme begins in section B (Ex. 3). The flute provides an obligato effect with a gentle flowing quality. The tempo is once again increased in section E (Ex. 4) pre-
paring for a change in mood in section II (F-H). Section III returns to the main theme (Ex. 3) and indicates a true A B A form. Section O acts as an extension; however, because the text does not repeat words or phrases, the composition as a whole has a closely knit feeling, and one is not aware of sections, introductions and extensions.

Syncopation, always an obtrusive rhythmic characteristic, is a feature present throughout the composition. There are also multi-rhythmic figures, a widely used technique characteristic of this modern period of writing. The composer has also shown a great feeling for clean-cut linear writing.

The expressiveness of the text, the musical skill of the composer, and the sensitivity of their inter-relationship, have made this biblical setting suitable for worship or for the enhancement of devotion.

* 

Young Joseph, by David Diamond represents another Biblical story from a text by Thomas Mann. The elaborately polished literary style of Mann and the warmth of musical expression by Diamond has added this work to our rich musical resources.

This composition is also scored for women's voices with piano or organ accompaniment. There is also a string orchestra accompaniment; however, this might not be so practical in most Protestant churches.
Diamond's musical setting, by its contour of line and mass, has captured the subtle musical and worshipful nuances of the text. The opening measures set a mood -- a mood that captures the listener at once. The composer has used many groupings of fourth and fifth intervals within the chords and yet has maintained a harmonic character within the music.

The composer has made continuous use of secondary chords throughout the composition. Although the music everywhere subserves and enhances the text, it has one fault, the fault of unrelated contrast in both the text and the music. Instead of a balanced contrast of opposites, it is an asymmetrical contrast.

The composition in its entirety comprises three main sections. The first section tells a story, sets a mood, and paints a picture. The second section, now in a new key (Modulated from b minor to g minor), gradually decreases in volume, in spirit, and becomes almost mystically silent (Ex. 1). Following the text

"nothing answered from the depths", the mood changes into one of hope and confidence with the words "and turned her very eyes toward heaven". After a return to the original key (b minor, indicating a true ABA form), Diamond utilizes the expression in the music,
of what the text suggests, by using multi-rhythms (Ex. 2). The section ends in a

subtle manner -- not dynamically, but by simply recalling the main theme (Ex. 3)

Diamond has realized the fluidity of plainsong; the music has moved diatonically practically all the way and skips of more than a fourth are seldom seen. Plainsong almost never repeats either its text or its music for purely artistic reasons. The repetition of either text or music for the sake of spinning out the musical substance to greater lengths is indicative of a secondary interest in the words. Diamond is always the servant to the text.

* 

Leo Sowerby's The Canticle of the Sun, an eighty page composition for mixed voices with piano or orchestral accompaniment has many striking and rewarding features. The ten verses of Saint Francis' mystical poem are set as one large composition. The
medieval text has moments of great beauty which the composer has treated with imagination and care. This music is written in a modern, dissonant idiom.

Sowerby's style is firmly rooted in the music of the late Romantic and post-Romantic composers, and from this point of departure has gradually branched out into the confident use of dissonant harmony. The composers use is an individualistic elaboration of tried and true conventional practices. His choral writing discovers the expressive emotional content of the text and projects and emphasizes it, enhancing the text instead of merely clothing it with music. His choral music is usually "big" music, even when the dynamic marking is soft and the composition is not a long one.

In form content, The Canticle of the Sun resembles a modification of Clokey's Canticle of Praise. Clokey's composition contained twenty-four sections, while Sowerby has composed fifty sections. The whole structural plan is quite similar to Clokey's; however, since Sowerby has created so many new ideas in choral textures, it is difficult for the listener to acquaint his ear to so many different ideas all at once. Upon second hearing, one might begin to capture the depth of the work.

Like Brahms, Sowerby is a master of counterpoint and might be also compared with Reger and Hindemith in this respect. The composer uses contrapuntal devices with consummate skill, bringing them to twentieth-century fruition by basing them on his own harmonic conceptions. His contrapuntal subjects are rather diatonic and stay close to the key.

One predominant characteristic found in the music itself is Sowerby's use of "moving parallel chord blocks". This device stems from the impressionistic school; which states that chord blocks of equal construction result in a constant shifting of tonal
center or seeming absence of key, often altered to conform to the scale tones of the key.

"Added notes" and "repetition", other feature characteristics, may also apply to any one of several schemes of musical writing; escaped chords, unprepared, unresolved notes and non-harmonic additions to the normal harmony. These merely add a certain color to the music.

The fourth and final characteristic which is predominant throughout, is "chord building in fourths", which is not a twentieth century discovery.

The first use of this device was in the early days of organum with the first attempt of combining voices. The range extends from a chord containing two to eight, or more notes.
The devices used by Sowerby are not new, but the combination of these devices open an unexplored channel for young composers. The composer has not forgotten that liturgical music must be an expression of not only truth but beauty.

Leo Sowerby is also ever present, for the twentieth-century American composer, for the present as a part of it, and for the future perhaps even more than he realizes.

***
CHAPTER III

New Trends in Jewish Liturgical Music
We cannot understand the problems of Jewish music without first understanding the problems of the Jewish civilization. What are these problems? The challenge which confronts Jewish life today is that of adopting an age-old tradition to a new and ever-changing scene. More concretely this means: "(1) Preserving and recapturing out of the Jewish past everything in it which is good, true, and beautiful. (2) Modifying the past so that it conforms to the requirements of modern living. (3) Creating new Jewish things: books, ideas, customs, values, etc. These in turn, are the tasks of Jewish music. (1) The preservation and recapture of the past of Jewish music. (2) The adoption of it to the musical present. (3) The stimulation of new Jewish musical creativity." 1

Much of the choral singing in the American synagogues of today is reminiscent of Mendelssohn's oratorios and romantic opera, and chances are that the chant can be traced back on Italian operatic virtuosity. 2 And although musically the Occidental harmonic and polyphonic arrangement of the oriental chant proves satisfactory only in the rarest cases, the essentially "foreign" (Oriental) character of Hebrew synagogue music is obvious to the musician and the non-musician alike and has been noted by non-Jewish and Jewish observers throughout the ages. 3

The reform movement, which reached its first height of development about 1810, had started in Germany in the eighteenth century, and its earliest signs had been choral arrangements in the classical style and the organized employment of musical instruments in

3/ Ibid, p. 212
the synagogue. The institution of synagogue choirs, which became a common practice at the beginning of the eighteenth century, was largely due to the Protestant example; many of the Jewish hymn melodies sung by these choirs were -- again following Protestant precedents -- adapted from folk songs, Jewish or German.\(^4\)

With the development of music in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries there rose new synagogue composers who sought to utilize for the liturgical service what was best in contemporary musical art. Here in the twentieth century composers have sought to apply to the liturgy the achievements of modern harmony and counterpoint. At the same time, composers tried to strip synagogal music of its romantic cloak and give it a background more appropriate to its original ancient, Oriental character. Ancient modes were reconstructed, the foreignness of the service was underlined, and harmonic accompaniment was reduced to a minimum.

With this newest trend in the Jewish musical renaissance, is a new Jewish musical mode of expression. Composers like Ernest Bloch, Lazare Saminsky, Roy Harris, Bernard Rogers, Leonard Bernstein, Lukas Foss and many others too numerous to mention have enriched liturgical music by original works in which the ancient spirit is expressed in modern terms. Their liturgical style has exerted its influence, in turn, both on the modern masters of Hebrew music and on the composers inspired to independent works by the world of the Bible.

In Hebrew music of our time, Ernest Bloch and Leonard Bernstein are good "father and son" representatives, figuratively speaking. "Bloch, in a period of disruption and disintegration, has reasserted the structural aim. His style is aromatic, certainly, but the predominant impression is one of musical balance and stability." The composer

\(^4\) Ibid., p. 215.
has feeling for the architectural qualities of line and mass. Aurelio de la Vega has described Bloch as "a figure dressed in modern garments who speaks the language of ancient prophets."

Bloch's Hebrew music has little in common with the works of the eastern Jewish national school of composers, for the composer rejects the fundamental tendency to incorporate actual folk tunes in musical works of art. The composer himself said:

"It is the Jewish soul that interests me, the complex glowing, agitated soul that I feel vibrating throughout the Bible. All this is in us. All this is in me. It is all this that I endeavor to hear in myself and to transcribe in my music -- the venerable emotion of the race that slumbers down in our soul."7

Bloch's own words clearly show that his must be a purely emotional music. Almost all of his music is conceived in an essentially contemplative mood; always full of a somber spirit of resignation in the beginning but turns to hope and confidence toward the end. Bloch's greatest crowning achievement in the field of Hebrew music is his Sacred Service (1932).

Leonard Bernstein, on the other hand, represents the freshness of spirit and confidence of youth. "Bernstein is a composer only the North America of the twentieth century could produce; he belongs to the second generation who do not speak American with a European accent but that American tongue which many purists on the old continent resent."8

Bernstein's homogeneous style proves that American music has reached a new, a higher stage of development. This development can be witnessed in works like the "Lamentation," based on a song the composer had put down on a Biblical text at the age of seventeen. The composition opens in a spirit of resignation and despair but ends on a note of hope and confidence. 9

The Jewish masters of the western world, the pioneers of the national idea in eastern Europe, and Ernest Bloch as the creator of a Hebraic idiom in music represent the characteristic contemporary trends in the music of Israel. Leonard Bernstein represents a leading exponent of new trends which may open a new chapter in American musical history.

Ernest Bloch's Sacred Service does for Jewish ritual what the classical Masses do for the Christian. From beginning to end there is a strong, yet simple modality. This widens and richens in the Cantor's recitatives and occasionally in the choruses, in typically traditional chant with predominant augmented seconds. The result is intensely moving and it is easy to become absorbed in the music.

David Diamond has written a section of the Service called Mah Tovu. It is interesting to note the similarity in structure between Diamond and Bloch. Bloch's Mah Tovu comes in part 1 of his Sacred Service (Ex. 1). In Roy Harris' Mi Chomocho, see

\[ \text{E. Bloch} \]

\[ \text{D. Diamond} \]

9/ A number of important works of contemporary music are particular testimonies to the influence of Bloch.
how the interpretation of the text differs from that of Bloch's (Ex. 2).

For the main theme of Part I see (Ex. 3)

As was previously stated, Bloch's music usually begins in a somber spirit of resignation. This is found true in parts I - II - III of the Service. Part I is meditative in spirit in the beginning but ends on a note of confidence with the words "Boruch hu u vo-ruchshemo" (O praise Him and His holy Name). Part II, which is the Sanctification, returns to the same mood with the exception of a new musical texture. The triads are now pure in harmony -- maybe realizing the purity of the text "Sanctified be Thy Name evermore (Ex. 3). The section again ends on a note of confidence with the words "The Lord shall reign evermore Halleluia". Part III, sung in silent devotion, begins with a symphonic prelude leading into an a cappella chorus singing what we recognize today in the Protestant churches as a choral response "O Lord, may the words of my mouth, and the meditations of my heart be acceptable in . . . ". Bloch shows his greatness by being able to maintain facility in writing for any medium. Part III ends with the words "and be Thou exalted, O Lord o'er all". In Part IV, Bloch begins the section on a note
of rejoicing rather than the usual sadness and contemplation; however, the whole structural aim is purposely planned so as to end in an almost silent mood in preparation for part V, which is prayerful in spirit. Bloch not only knew where to place the accents and soft passages but knew when to do it. In part V, the prayer leads into the words "To Him the might, glory, and power" (that note of confidence again). A Benediction follows part V and ties the whole work together by recalling the main theme (Ex. 3).

* 

Leonard Bernstein's Haskivenu does not show the spiritual depth of Bloch's Sacred Service, but it does show a freshness of spirit and originality.

The text, 'literally translated means:

Grant, O heavenly Father, that we may lie down in peace, and that we may rise up into life.... Shield us and remove us from every enemy, pestilence, sword, famine, and sorrow.... Spread over us the tabernacle of Thy peace.

Tonalities evidenced in the work are major triads superimposed on other major triads, new chord structures, skips of augmented fourths, likened to the dissonant quality of Sowerby's style, and yet there is a greater degree of harmonic content within Bernstein's writing.

Syncopations and rhythmic variations of many kinds add color to the text and through Bernstein's use of these rhythms he has shown a deep understanding of the Oriental character of the older Hebraic idiom.

The structural content is one of great clarity. Each section is definitely marked, both physically and aurally. The work is one of unity and coherence.

The introduction by the organ is stately and compelling. Almost immediately the mood changes and becomes 'hushed' by a sustained low e in the pedal --this is held
for forty measures. The Cantor gives out the intonation (Ex. 1) followed by the alto, soprano, tenor, and bass. The Cantor's solo, which follows this section, is very lyric and expressive (Ex. 2). After the solo an organ interlude sets the mood for the text "Shield us and remove us from every enemy". The rhythmic patterns are new and exciting giving emphasis to the most important words. The Cantor again recalls the solo and this is followed by a rhythmic variation of the opening intonation. The choir reiterates the theme, and both choir and Cantor end on a note of gratitude and humility.

Bernstein's structural plan looks something like this:

(1) Introduction -- organ
(2) Intonation -- Cantor
(3) Development of the intonation -- chorus
(4) Solo -- Cantor
(5) New theme -- chorus
(6) Solo -- Cantor
(7) Intonation (restatement) -- Cantor
(8) Redevelopment of intonation -- chorus
(9) Chorus and Cantor

We have discussed in this chapter works by two outstanding men of musical composition: Ernest Bloch, with his spiritual reach, and that intense quality so peculiarly intrinsic to his music, the quality of aspiration; and Leonard Bernstein, with his lyrical and contemplative moods, representing new trends in Jewish liturgical music.
Just what trends in Jewish synagogue music are to follow cannot be known. However, Bloch and the Jewish masters of the western world, together with the pioneers of the national idea in eastern Europe, represent the characteristic contemporary trends in the music of Israel. How long can they go on producing better works of art without that inner satisfaction and happiness? They all lack the firm roots without which an art of national aspirations can never flourish.  

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CHAPTER IV

Contemporary Views of the Mass
The twentieth century has brought no new forms, but many harmonic devices for the old ones, such as: polytonality, atonality, rhythmic experiments, neo-modality, and sharp dissonance. The Baroque forms have returned. Both neo-romantic and neo-classic forms have been flourishing. The present day philosophical attitude seems to be toward objectivity and universality.

* 

Latin American music promises much for the future, not only because of the artistry and skill of present-day composers, but because music has always meant so much to the Latin American people. Waldo Frank says\(^1\) in his "America Hispana", about the Mexican, and the same is also true about the Latin American people:

> Music is the freedom of the slave, the health of the broken-hearted. In a world of unwieldy earth like Mexico, whose history for many years has been bondage and body betrayal, the breath of music is the release of the spirit. This most substantial form makes the soul substantial and its rhythms make real the flight of the soul's burden.

Although the purpose of this thesis is to discuss primarily music by American composers, it is difficult to draw a boundary line between music of the American, European, and South American countries.

Villa-Lobos' Mass of Saint Sebastian, written in 1937 (although not a recent work, is too important to be left from discussion), is a work of great religious fervor, composed with technical skill. There are a great number of diversified musical elements all united in a three-part counterpoint. The whole underlying spirit of the Mass stems

from 16th century vocal music. Cowley states that:

....the music relates itself more to the Spanish and Portuguese composers of this period, with their humanly intense music, than to the less emotional Lassus and Palestrina. 2

The Mass, scored for three women's voices, with instruction to double all parts an octave lower with men, results in a richly-woven fabric of sound due to the interlocking of parts. The rhythm is usually very close to that of 16th century music, with the exception of some dramatic pauses and sforzandi, and some staccato passages in the Credo. Tonally there is great variety. It is mainly diatonic with the exception of a few chromatics. The impression is one of being modal and yet modal cadences are very seldom employed. There are modulations from mode to mode, and from mode to key and back. It does not sound wandering, however, because one mode or key is usually confirmed before there is a change. Changes therefore, come as surprises.

Perfect intervals are preferred at cadences, and there are many ingenious approaches to them; for example, the final cadence of the Kyrie (Ex. 1). In the Gloria,

![Ex. 1](image)

use of multi-rhythms is frequent (Ex. 2). All variety of triads are used freely, including many diminished triads in root position, and some based on perfect fourths. Dissonant tones do not always resolve conjunctly.

The most unusual movement is perhaps the Credo. There is a long string of short sentences, each ending very definitely, and each different in style and character. Some are primitive sounding. Some are like simple folk tunes. Some are complex and chromatic. In one place, melodic tritones predominate. The most characteristic feature of Villa-Lobos is his putting together borrowed materials of the Baroque and Classical period and modern French models -- along with Indian, Negro, and Portuguese tunes and rhythms in a convincing unit.

The Sanctus (Ex. 3) and the Benedictus are in conjunct modal motion with increasing passing tones. In the Agnus Dei there is a sudden accent, and a dramatic tone, leading to a gripping final unexpected major triad.

Actually all of the Mass sounds like sacred music and all of it reflects the
composers unique ability to integrate primitive and folk elements with those of Renaissance counterpoint. The Mass throughout contains a moving quality. There is an interrelationship of high spirituality of Renaissance vocal music with emotional powers of drama, discord, and chromaticism of Villa-Lobos' own times.

The recent Mass of Igor Stravinsky poses many problems in connection with liturgical expression. First of all, the Mass traditionally belongs to an idea of God and a way of worship. This brings up the question, "since the Mass is an act of liturgy, is there such a thing as a Concert Mass, and if so, what are its emotional, social, or esthetic terms?" Because churches for several centuries have recognized only "approved" styles, does the composer who writes a personal Mass challenge both religion and lay audience?¹ This leads to the second question of whether or not Stravinsky's Mass is lacking in "spirituality".² Certainly the matter of religious music and its spiritual values is one of association and language, and not one of either religion or music. It is after all the text, not the music, that is specifically religious. The music represents an attitude toward the text.

Stravinsky's attitude is reflected in the beauty of his created sound. His style is always consistent and his rhythms have been classed into a completely personal manner of expression. The composer has never needed the excuse of some predecessor's work for his own boldness.

Like all of the really new music of the twentieth century, the Mass represents an escape from the burden of a "classical-romantic" tradition to which, for many years,

nothing new has been added. In analyzing a work of this type, purely atonal, it must be remembered that Stravinsky works by intervals and the resulting chords are incidental.

In the Kyrie, it is possible to consider that Stravinsky, without the authority of another century, could have created an invention of the following cadences. See (Ex. 1a).

There is another possibility of this consideration in the Christe (Ex. 1b). There is much chanting in the Mass but the rhythmic chant that Stravinsky employs is not the exclusive property of the Catholic tradition; if there is a familiar sound to it, it is that of the most ritualistic intonation (Ex. 2)
When asked why the Gloria, usually considered to be a jubilation or hymn of praise, is so restrained, Stravinsky explained: "In this movement we are entering into the presence of God, and must be humble in His presence. Before Him we are nothing."

The composer approaches the Credo (Ex. 3) with the same emotional quality

---

existent in the *Gloria*, that being a quality of restraint and humility. Stravinsky makes little or no distinction in mood between the Et Incarnatus, Crucifixus, and Et Resurrexit, in comparison to other sections. Concerning the *Credo* the composer replies: "The Credo is simply a contract between God and man stated in paragraphs. Amen is the signature."²

In complete contrast to the other sections of the *Mass* Stravinsky has constructed the two Hosannas in the *Sanctus* to sound quite wild because they are loud, syncopated, and heavily accented. There might be considerable discussion as to whether or not the orchestral accompaniment would be in any way overshadowing the importance of the Text. (Ex. 4). "The complex rhythms and sustained cadential harmonies make this section sound vaguely like Machaut, but otherwise these two composers show very little resemblance".³

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²/ Ibid.
³/ Ibid.
By extended use of multi-rhythms, Stravinsky has uniquely enhanced the nuances of the text — "Lamb of God that takest away the sins of the World . . . . . . ."

These polyphonic lines are fine, sensitive, and moving (Ex. 5).

\[ \text{\textit{A.L.T.O}} \]

In Robertson’s book on sacred music he believes that:

We cannot say liturgical music is dead when we examine the Mass in G minor of Vaughan Williams, and Stravinsky's Mass. In neither of these Masses is there a trace of the operatic style, of the use of stereotyped fugues, or of exaggerated emotional expression at the conventional points. Problems are faced freshly and solved so successfully that these works may be called true liturgical music.\(^1\)

Liturgical church music is the liturgy set to music, not the liturgy as an excuse for music, and it demands faith or, at the least, a suspension of disbelief in all those who participate in it.

\(^1\) Alec Robertson, Sacred Music, London: 1950. 64.
Mass in honor of St. Joseph by Flor Peeters is marked by a simplicity of beauty. The polyphonic lines are more relaxed and flowing and the homophonic sections are not so abrupt as in his shorter Mass.

Melodies in the minor mode offer the arranger considerable chromatic scope. Both the 6th and 7th of that mode appear in an altered and unaltered form and considerable variety is possible through the use in A minor, for example. Counter point too offers much by way of variety and continuity, not only as regards substance, but form as well.

The rhythmic structure is very simple, yet moving. Tonally, Peeters does not utilize great variety as far as the modal structure is concerned, however the results are quite relaxing to the ear. The modulations are clear and simple. The composer makes use of the neapolitan 6th, and perfect cadences are usually consistent throughout—wide use is also made of 7th, 9th, and 11th chords. The harmonic structure contains the conventional chords.

The Kyrie in A minor, begins in a contrapuntal fashion announcing the opening theme (Ex. 1). The Christe begins on a V chord which leads back into the opening

\[ \text{Organ} \]

\[ \text{Con Ped.} \]
key and phrase, Kyrie, thus stating a simple ABA construction. The Gloria in C major contains a gay, happy spirit. The development in A major begins with the words "Glorificamus te". The return to the original theme comes with the words "Quoniam tu solus" followed by an extension on the word Amen. The Credo is one of the most unusual of the setting. Here, Peeters has employed an almost chant-like effect in a homophonic setting doubling soprano and tenor part and keeping the bass note on G. This movement contains many solos and also many more key changes in comparison to any other part of the Mass. The composer utilizes a very clear harmonic type of structure for the Sanctus. One interesting note concerning the Hosanna is that the quality of rejoicing and praise usually employed in the Hosanna is completely absent from Peeters interpretation of it. The tempo is marked allegretto but the dynamic markings which are marked pp lend a certain reserved tension to this section. The Benedictus is the least emotional of all the movements and yet with the use of simplicity in writing sometimes the greatest effects result. The key is F, with a solo entrance by the bass (Ex. 2) --this same figure is found in the Agnus Dei, but in the original key of A minor. With the text "dona nobis pacem" the work ends in C major and with a sense of complete confidence. The complete picture of the work is one of simplicity and beauty.

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CHAPTER V

Conclusion
In the light of the foregoing analysis and with regard to some of the questions posed in the introductory chapter, what predictions can be made concerning church music in the future? Before answering that question, let us re-examine our findings.

The liturgical trend in Protestant church music is toward an added interest in the historical influences of Gregorian chant and plainsong. There is also an influence of the early sixteenth and seventeenth century polyphonic school of musical thought. The representatives of Protestant church music have made the future of church music look brighter. Joseph Clokey, who is conservative in comparison with Normand Lockwood and Leo Sowerby, sometimes has unabashed tunefulness or overlushious harmony, but his taste and discretion allow these to become a source of strength rather than weakness. Clokey's writing seems more restrained and serious in comparison with some of his earlier works. His interest in the historical influence of Gregorian chant and plainsong has directed him toward a mode of expression aimed at sound results through the simplest means.

Lockwood, a modernist and an expert in the use of different tonalities in simultaneous contrast, demonstrated that his preoccupation with new sounds has not dulled his feeling for melodic beauty. His music is filled with lyric impulse. The expression is one of nobility, its gravity lightened by a sonority of warm luster, and by much stimulating rhythmic invention. This is completely un-European music.

David Diamond's musical settings are concerned with contour of line and mass; and he has captured the subtle musical and worshipful nuances of the text. The music everywhere subserves and enhances the text. Diamond has realized the fluidity of plainsong. Diamond is always the servant to the text.
Leo Sowerby's confidence in the use of dissonant harmony does not in any way detract from the beauty of the text. Sowerby realizes that the expressive emotional content of the text must be projected and emphasized, not merely clothed with music. One interesting factor in Sowerby's use of dissonant harmony is that his harmonic and contrapuntal subjects are rather diatonic and usually stay close to the key.

The whole area of modern technique with its concepts of melody, harmony, counterpoint, and rhythm, all uniting in a style that is, with most contemporary composers, at least, dissonant in varying degrees, is a problem for the twentieth-century composer who is trying to adapt his style to the field of choral expression. Some have succeeded while others have failed.

There are many philosophies concerning the standard of evaluating works of art as expressed by authorities on aesthetics and criticisms. It is unlikely that any one philosophy express the whole truth, but most authorities agree that a work of art is inherent in itself.  

The twentieth-century Jewish composer has tried to strip synagogue music of its romantic cloak and give it a background more appropriate to its original ancient, Oriental character. Ancient modes have been reconstructed, the foreignness of the service has been underlined, and harmonic accompaniment reduced to a minimum. With this newest trend in the Jewish musical renaissance, is a new Jewish musical mode of expression.

Ernest Bloch can no longer claim the youthfulness that is associated with "modernism"; yet he belongs to the "music of our day". Race is a controlling force in art; and in Bloch—the Jewish soul becomes the creative motive, the philosophy of each composition. Almost all of Bloch's music is conceived in an essentially contemplative

mood; always full of a somber spirit of resignation in the beginning but turns to hope and confidence toward the end.

Leonard Bernstein's homogeneous style proves that American music has reached a new, higher stage of development. Bernstein's works show a freshness of spirit and originality, and the structural content is one of great clarity. His deep understanding of the Oriental character of the older Hebraic idiom is witnessed in his choral writing.

The Mass settings of the twentieth century reflect ideas of early Plainsong masses and those polyphonic masses (14-16th century) of mystical understanding.

The most characteristic feature of Villa-Lobos' Mass is his putting together borrowed materials of the Baroque and Classical period and modern French models — along with Indian, Negro, and Portuguese tunes and rhythms in a convincing unit. Villa-Lobos has shown the ability to integrate primitive and folk elements with those of Renaissance counterpoint.

Stravinsky's Mass stands alone in the degree of objectivity reached. Like Bruckner, Stravinsky does not let the instruments intrude into the voice lines. Voice lines are simple. The intonations of the Gloria and Credo are again given to a solo voice as they were before the Viennese Masses. Stravinsky's "dona nobis pacem" is a stroke of harmonic genius which puts the whole movement in proper perspective. The composer's style is always consistent and his rhythms have been classed into a completely personal manner of expression. Like all of the really new music of the twentieth century, the Mass represents an escape from the burden of a "classical-romantic" tradition to which, for many years, nothing new has been added.

Flor Peeters, an organist, displayed his concepts of the Mass in a setting which was marked by simplicity. The structural plan is quite simple and the harmonic
structure contains the conventional chords; however, one is quite aware of the freshness of composition. The organ masses of the twentieth century are often written with the voices echoing the coloristic passages of the accompaniment. Peeters has not utilized this device quite so frequently -- there seems to have been a greater concern for the choral structure with less emphasis upon the accompaniment.

The contemporary masses are either written to be sung a cappella, with organ accompaniment, or with very small instrumental groups. The twentieth century mass repertoire, at least that which we have dealt with, follows the liturgical text very closely. The text is once more rising in importance and the voice parts are written to express it.

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Contemporary music opens a new mode of expression. The composers have discovered different ways of expressing the sacred liturgy. With this in mind, we return to the question at the beginning of the chapter; what predictions can be made concerning church music in the future? The future is unpredictable, but if we consider that even in the past, and today, great composers have taken an added interest in composing music for the sacred liturgy we must contend that the future looks brighter.

The cultural development of music also shows the cultural development of man. The liturgical revival, in churches of all denominations, proceeds slowly and the bodies that foster it deserve far more support and encouragement from all concerned.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMPOSER</th>
<th>COMPOSITION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bacon, Ernst</td>
<td>Cantata for Chapel Rededication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Becker, John J.</td>
<td>Moments from the Passion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bernstein, Leonard</td>
<td>Hashkivenu (1945); text from Friday eve Synagogue service.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bloch, Ernest</td>
<td>Sacred Service (1934)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Branscombe, Gena</td>
<td>The Lord is Our Fortress (1947); for women's chorus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brant, Henry</td>
<td>Credo for Peace; mixed chorus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clokey, Joseph</td>
<td>A Canticle of Praise (1953)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cone, Edward T.</td>
<td>Let Us Now Praise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copland, Aaron</td>
<td>In the Beginning (1947); mixed a cappella chorus with soprano solo.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diamond, David</td>
<td>Young Joseph (1944); women's trio with piano, organ, or string accompaniment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foss, Lukas</td>
<td>Tell This Blood, Songs of Anguish (1945)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fromm, Herbert</td>
<td>Anim Z'miras; Psalms 23, 97; All the World Shall Come (anthem); Priestly Benediction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gideon, Miriam</td>
<td>How Goodly are Thy Tents (SSA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hanson, Howard</td>
<td>The Cherubic Hymn; chorus and orchestra (1950).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harris, Albert</td>
<td>The Song of Koheleth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harris, Roy</td>
<td>Alleluia (1945); Israel (1946), a motet; Mass (1948), for men's voices and organ.</td>
</tr>
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<td>Harrison, Lou</td>
<td>Alleluia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Howe, Mary</td>
<td>Prophecy (1943); men's voices, piano or percussion. A Devotion (1944); men's voices a cappella.</td>
</tr>
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<td>COMPOSER</td>
<td>COMPOSITION</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inch, Herbert</td>
<td>The Return to Zion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jojo, Norman Dello</td>
<td>A Psalm of David (1950)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lahmer, Revel</td>
<td>Hear Lord</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lockwood, Normand</td>
<td>The Birth of Moses (1949); for women's voices, flute and piano.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martin, Frank</td>
<td>Golgotha, Oratorio; In Terra Pax (1944), a short Oratorio.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riegger, Wallingford</td>
<td>Who Can Revoke (1944); SATB with piano.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rogers, Bernard</td>
<td>Response to Silent Prayer (1945); The 99th Psalm (1948), chorus and organ.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanders, Robert L.</td>
<td>An American Psalm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schumann, William</td>
<td>Te Deum (1944); Truth Shall Deliver (1946).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sowerby, Leo</td>
<td>The Canticle of the Sun (1944); for mixed chorus and piano or orchestra.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Starer, Robert</td>
<td>Vayechulu (Hebrew); organ optional.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Still, William Grant</td>
<td>Those Who Wait (1943); The Voice of the Lord (1946); Wailing Women (1946); Carry Him Along (1947); From a Lost Continent (1949).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stravinsky, Igor</td>
<td>Mass (1947); for mixed chorus and woodwind quintet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talma, Louise</td>
<td>Carmina Mariana (The Missal, 1943); The Divine Flame (Oratorio, 1945-48).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thompson, Randall</td>
<td>The Peaceable Kingdom (1936); a sequence of sacred choruses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomson, Virgil</td>
<td>Hymns From the Old South: The Morning Star, Green Fields, Death 'tis a Melancholy Day (1949).</td>
</tr>
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<td>COMPOSER</td>
<td>COMPOSITION</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weaver, Powell</td>
<td>Now the Day is over (anthem).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walter, Karl</td>
<td>Missa, Veni Creator Spiritus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weinberg, Jacob</td>
<td>Isaiah. Praise the Lord His Glories Show.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White, Robert</td>
<td>Precamur, Sancte Domine.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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NOTES II
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMPOSER</th>
<th>COMPOSITIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anderson, W. H.</td>
<td>Carol O Ye Angels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bancroft, H. H.</td>
<td>Bethlehem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bevan, R. T.</td>
<td>Thee We Adore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chambers, H. A</td>
<td>Awake, My Soul (Morning)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tchaikovsky-Chambers</td>
<td>Hymn to the Trinity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clokey, Joseph</td>
<td>Christ Conquereth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crawford, T. J.</td>
<td>Good Neighbours Then</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Davies, H. Walford</td>
<td>O Thou that hearest prayer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egerton, Arthur H.</td>
<td>Blessed Art Thou</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Te Deum in C# minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garland, Hugh</td>
<td>Bread of the World</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harris, W. H.</td>
<td>The Beatitudes (Double Choir)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harwood, B.</td>
<td>Draw nigh to God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holst, G.</td>
<td>Christmas Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jenkins, Cyril</td>
<td>Fierce Raged the Tempest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lang, C. S.</td>
<td>Miserere Domine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Langlois, H. G.</td>
<td>Grant, we beseech Thee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lupton, H J.</td>
<td>The Bells Are Ringing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lyon, James</td>
<td>Away In A Manger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meek, Kenneth</td>
<td>Jesu of a Maiden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thee We Adore</td>
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<tr>
<td>Naylor, Bernard</td>
<td>The Ascension</td>
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<tr>
<td>Roff, J.</td>
<td>Tantum Ergo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rowley, A.</td>
<td>O most merciful</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shaw, G.</td>
<td>O be joyful (Festival)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shuttleworth, F.</td>
<td>The Lord is Righteous</td>
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<td>COMPOSER</td>
<td>COMPOSITIONS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Smith, Norman O.</td>
<td>Blessed Lord</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thiman, E. H.</td>
<td>Ye Sons and Daughters of the King</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weatherseed, John J.</td>
<td>O Lord, Our Heavenly Father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whitehead, A.</td>
<td>Carol of the Good Thief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willan, Healey</td>
<td>Introits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vittoria-Wolff</td>
<td>Gloria Deo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Williams, A.</td>
<td>Motet for Five Voices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hosanna to the Son of David</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Bells Ring Out at Christmas</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Primary Sources
A. Musical Scores


Secondary Sources
A. Books


Thomas, Lowell, Knowing the Music of Our Church, New York: 1950.


B. Periodicals


C. Unpublished Materials


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Abstract

CONTEMPORARY STYLES IN CHURCH MUSIC

CHORAL WRITING

by

LEONARD MERRILL THOMAS

(B.S. in Music Ed., Muskingum College, 1952)

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

1954
It was the purpose of this study of church music to discover contemporary trends in choral writing through a detailed analysis of some representative choral works.

In the first chapter, the stylistic trends of the anthem showed an added interest in the rich musical heritage of early church music. Plainsong and Gregorian chant have influenced composers to utilize these styles clothed in modern dress. Modality seems to have gained precedence, and the text once again has gained much importance. The anthems today have almost completely divorced the sentimentality of the nineteenth century.

Some of the larger choral works include the Cantata, Mass, and Jewish Sacred Service. The purpose of chapters two, three, and four was to establish a musical criterion to actual sacred choral music and to observe some of the more interesting techniques of choral composition.

Representative composers of today who have written music for Protestant worship are Joseph Clokey, Normand Lockwood, David Diamond and Leo Sowerby. Their tendency is an increased interest in the enhancement of the text. They utilize polytonality, modality, sharp dissonance and multi-rhythms; but above all, they each realize the importance of the inter-relationship between text and music and that liturgical music must be an expression of truth and beauty.

The study of the setting of the Mass in the twentieth century is also a study of the cultural development of man, just as in any other music. Composers of today reflect ideas of each preceding era, including polyphony, plainsong, classicism, and romanticism.
The men, representative of today's settings to the Mass Ordinary are Villa-Lobos, Stravinsky and Flor Peeters. Their tendency is away from large forms for chorus and orchestra. These masses are written for smaller groups, usually a cappella, with organ accompaniment or with a small chamber orchestra group.

Very few masses have been written because composers do not feel the urge to write works when they see little opportunity for their performance. The twentieth century seems to be another transition period which points toward objectivism. It is not possible to know what label future generations will attach to the present period.

Jewish liturgical music is returning to its original ancient, Oriental character. Ancient modes have been reconstructed, the foreignness of the service has been underlined and harmonic accompaniment reduced to a minimum. The representatives of Jewish liturgical music, Ernest Bloch and Leonard Bernstein, have developed this newest trend in the Jewish musical renaissance in a new musical mode of expression. The Jewish masters of the western world, the pioneers of the national idea in eastern Europe, and Ernest Bloch as the creator of a Hebraic idiom in music represent the characteristic contemporary trends in the music of Israel. Leonard Bernstein represents a leading exponent of new trends which may open a new chapter in American musical history.

Contemporary music opens a new mode of expression. The composers have developed new ways of expressing the sacred liturgy. Even though the future seem unpredictable, more and more prominent composers have taken an added interest in composing music for the sacred liturgy. The future looks brighter because man is once again searching outside of himself for the answers to eternal truths.