

# Introduction to Volume 3

## *From the English West to the Global South*

PEDRITO U. MAYNARD-REID

ALTHOUGH SOME BASICS HAVE remained the same in hymnody and worship music from the nineteenth century until today, these forms of music have experienced many and varied changes during the last two centuries. The speed of change has been as rapid as the speed of social and economic changes in the last two hundred years. In these years, we have moved from the beginning of the industrial revolution, to a technological age, with no end in sight as to the content of change or its speed. Worship music and liturgy has, and is, experiencing the same phenomena.

What has been constant is the need to make worship in general, and music in particular, relevant to the time and context. Although there has always been push-back, those who were in the camp of relevancy have always won the “worship wars.”

An example of the “constants” in the nineteenth century is the effect of the age of Romanticism on hymnody. Prior to this, the focus was on congregational melodic line singing. The classical romanticist harmonization and the growth of the secular part-song influenced the rise of harmonization in congregational singing. Further constants are the effects of the Second Great Awakening as well as the rise and popularity of the Layman’s Revival, which inspired the need for songs that were simple (with simple harmonic structures), based on popular melodies, easy to memorize, emotional, and evangelistic. There was a renaissance in creativity that matched the age, and a movement away from the inflexibility that dominated traditional music.

The twentieth century saw this revolution continue. Hymnody matched the rapid changes brought about by the major wars; the decolonization of nations; ecumenism; new missional emphasis of denominations and para-church organizations; and significant social, moral, and theological changes, all unseen since the birth of Christianity. In all of these cases, cutting-edge hymn and worship songwriters created liturgical works that were attuned to the times—times in which there was more global awareness and greater diversity in music. These were times in which it was recognized that music was not a “universal language,” but a “universal phenomenon” with varied expression (instrumentation, complexity of rhythmic structures and notation, language, and styles).

This is not to say that there were not intense efforts to keep the status quo and to resist the changing times. The growth of Southern gospel is a case in point. Yet even that genre grew out of a need to be relevant to the yearnings of white, cultural southern, conservative Christians, who sought to recapture their identity after the Civil War in the nineteenth century, and the civil rights movements in the twentieth through the twenty-first centuries.

Among the basic and major changes in hymnody and worship liturgy are changes in worldview (a move from a Greek and Eurocentric philosophical grounding), globalization, and social constructs that rejected centuries of Christian teachings and values.

The influence of the Greek worldview and the stress on individualism in the nineteenth century impacted the music of the church. The majority of gospel hymns and songs emphasized the personal dimensions of Christianity. They were self-focused and subjective. The stress was on the “I,” “me,” “mine.” At that time and into the twentieth century the vast majority of Christians lived in the Global North. Today more than 70 percent of Christians domicile in the Global South, where the worldview is communal. Thus, there has been a shift from the individualistic stress to a more communal emphasis and engagement. Whereas the new revival songs of previous generations highlighted personal salvation and liberation from personal sins, many of the songs of the Global South and decolonized peoples celebrate, or make clarion calls for, political and social liberation. The liberative calls of the Old Testament prophets has taken precedence over the seeming individualistic Pauline corpus in the music of the twenty-first century. Conversion and repentance are not only for the individual, but also for nations and communities. There is a theology of righteousness, justice, holiness, and ethics, which is communal, social, and political.

The move away from Eurocentric Christianity saw a move toward a worldview of holism. Whereas the western philosophical assumptions

dichotomize the human person, the eastern/Global South makes no such distinction. The body/matter is not evil and the soul good; the secular is not bad and the sacred virtuous. Worship music of previous centuries emphasized the cognitive over the experiential and emotive. Today, the emotive is an integral part of music enterprise. It is because of this shift that the charismatic dimension of Pentecostalism has dominated the worship landscape of the twentieth century.

The shift is also pronounced as the distinction between what is secular and what is sacred is minimized. For example, there is celebration in some quarters, and chagrin in others that Bob Marley's reggae hit, "One Love," is now in some hymnals. The same chagrin is expressed as unstructured popular dance has become an important part of the hymnic and sacred song liturgical event. Others celebrate this shift as a return to holistic worship in which the whole being is given over to God, and expresses itself in rhythmic praise, as the body joins the mouth and the mind in praise and worship.

The greatest change in hymnody and worship songs since the second half of the twentieth century is in the content. The content has represented the rapidly changing social worldview. And just as the technological renaissance of the twenty-first century is going at a speed beyond our imagination, so the shifts in theology and traditional morality are shifting. As goes the theology so goes the content of hymnody.

Science, technology, urbanization, globalization, and other changes in the world have forced the social issues that have driven these new understandings of Scripture upon us. The hymns of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were inadequate responses to today's concerns.

The modern conception of humanity that rejects the superiority of maleness and whiteness, and promotes equity and inclusiveness, has not only affected translations of Scripture, but stimulated the retuning of old hymns and creation of new worship musical lyrics that are sensitive to feminism and other excluded and marginalized peoples. Language that includes all and demeans none—whether they be of a different race or gender, disabled, of different national origin, or age—is now in vogue. Language that sees God as only male, or highlights oppressive structures or perpetuates them, are eliminated more and more from the worship liturgy.

The globalization of Christianity and the death of European colonization has possibly brought about the greatest change since the nineteenth century when even Christians sang "Rule Britannia, Britannia Rules the World." No longer are the hymns that were staples in the menu of Christian worship for centuries, relevant or dominant in the decolonized churches and movements of the world. *The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* that was produced by Vatican II in 1963, and the rise of societies like ethnomusicology

and ethnodoxology, promoted music and worship that were inculturated in the indigenous patterns of the varied cultures. The metaphors, the musical patterns, the rhythmic structures, were no longer dependent on centuries of European culture, but fresh new texts and musical innovations (which, for many of these cultures, were millennial old) were arising.

The changes were not limited to the Global South. Even within the dominant culture of the developed western world there were rejections of the past and its hymnody as the primary source of worship. The new songs, as was noted earlier, reflected the culture of the times. The old hymns are slowly dying out. The need for hymnals are lessened with technological advances (projection and personal digital devices, for example), and the creation of the Christian Copyright Licensing International (CCLI), which has changed the delivery of worship music. And as in the wider society, the turnover in worship music is significant. It has been called the “binge and purge cycle.” The praise and worship parallels the top charts of popular culture.

At the same time, ecumenism has affected worldwide worship music. Hymnals and worship song collections have become more diverse and inclusive. Worshipers are no longer surprised or at a loss when having a liturgical experience in Jamaica, Walla Walla, Helsinki, or Bangkok, they find themselves singing hymns of Luther, songs from Zimbabwe, and Hispanic rhythmic *coritos* from Puerto Rico.