

**General Topics :: Theological Treasure**

**Theological Treasure - posted by roadsign (), on: 2008/4/16 10:07**

As we know, important aspects of our Christian theology seem to be slipping away! Their absence leaves people with a deep thirst that can never be satisfied. And so the discovery of the missing theological treasure is much like finding a welcome spring in the desert.

This morning I found some welcome "theological" springs, actually, during my search for suitable choral anthems. I found it in the lyrics of Negro spirituals. The words are a stark contrast to the lyrics we have become accustomed to. Instead of centering on hope in this life, including our good intentions, they portray a theology of hope in Christ's "better" home. The lyrics remind me of Abraham, who looked far into the future even beyond the temporary "Promised Land" - to his eternal home. (see Heb. 11:10)

Countless wars and disputes have been perpetrated by two deep unmet longings: A home and an identity. These are God-given needs that leave an unquenchable thirst until met by God through Christ - who offers a new identity and a place of rest (an eternal home).

Like me, you may enjoy some of the spirituals

(<http://www.canadianchoralcentre.com/Subcategory.asp?subSacred-Octavos-Season-Spirituals>) HERE : A few of the songs have audio samples, ex:

Deep River  
Give me Jesus  
Just Across that River  
Keep Your Lamps Trimmed and Burning  
Let me Fly  
Poor Mourners Got a Home at Last  
Ride Up in the Chariot  
Songs of the Wayfarer  
Time for Praying

May the Lord bless you through the music, as you fellowship in solidarity with our brothers and sisters, even those who are now "home", who through suffering learned to look ahead to the "city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God."

Diane

EDIT: Maybe someone can find some more audios of spirituals on other sites - and include them here. I wouldn't mind hearing them.

**Re: Theological Treasure - posted by ginnyrose (), on: 2008/4/18 18:56**

Diane,

You are bringing up a very interesting subject: Negro Spirituals! I love them. Many years ago we listened to a Negro choir sing traditional Christian songs and I tell you they sang it totally different than we white folks do, adding slurs and what have you. It was very musical.

Anyhow here is a list of a few I love:

Creation  
In Dat Great Gittin'-Up Morning  
Jacob's Ladder

Joshua Fit d' Battle of Jericho  
Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Chil'  
There is a Balm in Gilead  
Ain't Got Time to Die  
I Got Shoes  
All Day, All Night  
Hold Out Yo' Light!

We sang most of these songs acapella when I went to Bible School with all four parts (soprano, alto, tenor & bass) participating...they were so beautiful. The theology was so simple, reflecting simple faith and perhaps some ignorance on the details, like the "Creation". Anyhow, thinking about this is going to make me yearn for more recordings of these songs.

Diane, I do not know where one can find audios of these spirituals, I just shared the titles of some I personally enjoy.

Blessings,  
ginnyrose

**Re: Theological Treasure - posted by brodav9 (), on: 2008/4/22 16:30**

sorry I couldn't give you the music. Don't know how, but would like to bless you with the words okay? God of Abraham I set my face like a flint before your throne God of Abraham you are my strength and my eternal joy. I set my love upon you my faith is in you only, for your word is forever settled in heaven and your word is forever settled in my heart. maybe you can sort of sing it in a special way for it truly is a special song. God bless.

**Re: - posted by HomeFree89 (), on: 2008/4/22 18:23**

Never mind, the link I posted for a video has a bad ad on it all of a sudden.

**Re: Exploring theological treasure - posted by roadsign (), on: 2008/4/24 9:15**

Ginnyrose, Thank you for your list! There is a vast treasure of AfricoAmerican spirituals that I believe should be remembered in our modern church liturgy. The songs link real historical human experience with real and vibrant hope. In my situation they provide a welcome relief from the old Presbyterian hymns that are full-orbed theological dissertations— songs that require acute eyesight, a quick mind, and strong “teeth” for heavy chewing — in the space of four minutes.

Quote:

----- We sang most of these songs acapella when I went to Bible School with all four parts ...they were so beautiful.  
-----

Ginnyrose, I remember those days when many were blessed by the touring choral groups from our Bible Colleges. (That dates us!)

Here is an acapella rendition of:

([http://www.sheetmusicplus.com/pages.html?cart341801469929475455&targetsmpl\\_detail.html%26sku%3DHL.8745282&spages-http%253A/www.google.ca/search%253Fq%253Dhold%252Bour%252Byo%252Blight%2526sourceid%253Dmozilla-search%2526start%253D0%2526start%253D0%2526ie%253Dutf-8%2526oe%253Dutf-8%2526client%253Dfirefox-a%2526rls%253Dorg.mozilla%253Aen-US%253Aofficial&e/sheetmusic/detail/HL.8745282.html&t&k&rwwws-err5#](http://www.sheetmusicplus.com/pages.html?cart341801469929475455&targetsmpl_detail.html%26sku%3DHL.8745282&spages-http%253A/www.google.ca/search%253Fq%253Dhold%252Bour%252Byo%252Blight%2526sourceid%253Dmozilla-search%2526start%253D0%2526start%253D0%2526ie%253Dutf-8%2526oe%253Dutf-8%2526client%253Dfirefox-a%2526rls%253Dorg.mozilla%253Aen-US%253Aofficial&e/sheetmusic/detail/HL.8745282.html&t&k&rwwws-err5#))  
Hold Our Your Light

Negro spirituals often had a double meaning, as is seen in an article of this song:

I GOT SHOES

Â...I'm goin' to shout all ovah God's Heab'n  
Â...I'm goin' to play all ovah God's Heab'n  
Â...I'm goin' to fly all ovah God's Heab'n  
Â...I'm gonna walk all over God's Heaven

Â... it is very clear that some of the songs created by enslaved people served as expressions of protest. Creators of the songs went to considerable lengths to disguise the true meaning of the lyrics. For those within the enslaved community, however, the meanings were very clear. The best example of a protest spiritual is the song commonly called “I Got Sho

es,Â” but also known as Â”Heav'n, Heav'n.Â” When it is performed in concert settings, the lyrics<sup>10</sup> of this song are rarely understood fully. In its original context, the song is a bold protest against slavery. Basic necessities like shoes were rare in the slave quarters. However, the creators and original singers of this song, boldly confident about ultimate justice, insisted that Â”all God's children got shoesÂ” (and robes, and harps, and crowns, and any number of items that might even be considered to be luxurious!). However, the song lyrics go even further than this. The lyricist continues, exclaiming that Â”everybody talkin' Â”bout Heav'n ain't goin' there.Â” Here, the emphasis is on hypocrisy. The slave master, claiming to be Christian, goes to church every Sunday morning, where he and other congregants talk and sing about Jesus and Heaven. But when he returns to the plantation on Sunday afternoon, he presides over a decidedly un-Heavenly, immoral enterprise, slavery, and participates actively in the un-Heavenly and immoral physical, emotional (and frequently sexual) abuse of other human beings.

Through the veiled lyrics of the song, the creator of this spiritual (whose name has long been forgotten) is expressing -- on behalf of the whole community -- a sense of outrage at the hypocritical behavior of men who have no God-given right to be in the position they occupy. And through the simple yet almost regal musical appeal of the song's melody, the singer turns the tables on the oppressor, reversing the power hierarchy. God's children (so-called slaves) have a place in Heaven, while the oppressor Â”ain't goin' there.Â” Moreover, Heaven might not necessarily be life after death. It might simply be life away from the plantation, away from slavery, in the safety of a place in the North, or in Canada!  
(<http://72.14.205.104/search?qcache:6xgFy-eHc14J:ctl.du.edu/spirituals/Freedom/protest.cfm+%22I+Got+Shoes%22&hl=en&ctclnk&cd4&glca&clientfirefox-a>) source

Quote:

-----God of Abraham I set my face like a flint before your throne  
God of Abraham you are my strength and my eternal joy. I set my love upon you  
my faith is in you only, for your word is forever settled in heaven and your word is forever settled in my heart  
-----

Brodav9 I have enjoyed meditating on these wonderful expression of faith in a hope beyond this earthly existence. Thank you.

Diane

:~X

**Re: - posted by broclint (), on: 2008/4/24 9:33**

Thanks so much Diane for this thread.

I too, Ginny, sang many of these songs in a secular school, believe it or not, at our local university a few :- ) years ago and in fact we sang them all over the state including at what was then some of our predominately black colleges.

Our church choir has sung some of these wonderful songs of hope with their eternal perspective through the years. One that I did not see mentioned was "My Lord what a Mournin".

Amazing also in these songs (minus our tampering with them) is the frugality of notes with which most of these melodies are composed. Amazing, like "Amazing Grace" what can be done with just five tones!

Clint

**Re: - posted by ginnyrose (), on: 2008/4/26 2:36**

Diane,

Still thinking about this subject...

Are you familiar with "Creation"? I have heard it presented several times and am not sure whether it was always the same. But no matter...seems to me you as a musician would find it a fascinating piece to master and present to crowds.

"Creation" utilizes a narrator - preferably a male with a loud, booming voice - who describes a person's concept of God's

creation. While he is telling the 'creation' story you will have a group sing, hum in the background. The only recording I am aware of is done by the "Rosedale Chorale" (from Rosedale College, formally Rosedale Bible Institute) and I am not sure whether it would still be available - it was a long time ago when they did it.

In any case, it is a beautiful piece....but you must remember it is written from the perspective of a person with a lot of faith, imagination, love for God who is a tad bit ignorant of a few details.

This past summer my brother-in-law presented this piece at a family reunion and upon our request gave it at our church. He did the narrating while his wife and two daughters played violins. It was beautiful and the people loved it!

Blessings,  
ginnyrose

**Re: - posted by ginnyrose (), on: 2008/4/26 2:44**

Diane,

Still thinking...

Are you familiar with Rosedale Chorale from Rosedale College? Years ago when Lloyd Kauffman was their director he had the chorale sing a lot of spirituals. Each recording they made back then included several of them. So if you could get a copy of them, I am sure you would be blessed - if you enjoy acappella music, that is.

Blessings,  
ginnyrose

**Re: The "Creation" featuring the Creator - posted by roadsign (), on: 2008/4/26 8:25**

Quote:

----- Are you familiar with "Creation"?  
-----

I was rehearsal pianist for Haydn's Creation - performed in May, 2000. While that has nothing to do with the "Creation" you refer to, Ginnyrose - it does bring back some memories I just gotta share. (pardon the momentary diversion)

At the end of the performance a group of youth jumped to their feet in enthusiastic applause. Afterwards one youth told me, "Tonight is our regular youth night, and we had to come to the concert. I was not thrilled about coming. I'm glad I did! I have never heard such amazing music! I never knew it existed! Wow! Awesome! (And... and many more "Wows!")"

The prelude of this performance featured a super-charged dispute between the conductor and the church pastor - leading to a near cancellation. However, it went ahead, and the Lord broke the static with some static of his own. That night, during the concert, we were "entertained" by a fearsome exhibit of thunder, and lightening, and huge downpour - complete with flickering lights. (The power didn't go off until after it was done)

It was neat to have the Creator display his own presence - especially since the director (is) not a fan of God or church. (though he likes the buildings for his performances).

Clint and Ginnyrose - it looks like you both have a lot to offer me, by way of direction for my church choir. I will respond more later - but first I wish to learn more about the "Creation" Ginnyrose refers to - and your other comments...

PS this director is about to pop in for some rehearsaling. Still praying for him..... Your prayers would be appreciated... (there has been some softening)

Will be back Monday.....

Diane

**Re: "Creation" poem - posted by ginnyrose (), on: 2008/4/29 9:04**

Diane,

Since I read your post, I have been searching the web for the spiritual "Creation". I have found a site with 200 of them but not "Creation". I was stumped! I first heard this perhaps 35 years ago, then I heard it on a tape made by the Rosedale Chorale, directed by Lloyd Kauffman. Then I got to thinking that it may very well be a poem that these guys just added music to, improvised. Anyhow, so this morning I googled "Creation" poem and I came up with the words and here they are :

The Creation

And God stepped out on space,  
And he looked around and said:  
I'm lonely--  
I'll make me a world.

And far as the eye of God could see  
Darkness covered everything,  
Blacker than a hundred midnights  
Down in a cypress swamp.

Then God smiled,  
And the light broke,  
And the darkness rolled up on one side,  
And the light stood shining on the other,  
And God said: That's good!

Then God reached out and took the light in his hands,  
And God rolled the light around in his hands  
Until he made the sun;  
And he set that sun a-blazing in the heavens.  
And the light that was left from making the sun  
God gathered it up in a shining ball  
And flung it against the darkness,  
Spangling the night with the moon and stars.  
Then down between  
The darkness and the light  
He hurled the world;  
And God said: That's good!

Then God himself stepped down--  
And the sun was on his right hand,  
And the moon was on his left;  
The stars were clustered about his head,  
And the earth was under his feet.  
And God walked, and where he trod  
His footsteps hollowed the valleys out  
And bulged the mountains up.

Then he stopped and looked and saw  
That the earth was hot and barren.  
So God stepped over to the edge of the world  
And he spat out the seven seas--  
He batted his eyes, and the lightnings flashed--

He clapped his hands, and the thunders rolled--  
And the waters above the earth came down,  
The cooling waters came down.

Then the green grass sprouted,  
And the little red flowers blossomed,  
The pine tree pointed his finger to the sky,  
And the oak spread out his arms,  
The lakes cuddled down in the hollows of the ground,  
And the rivers ran down to the sea;  
And God smiled again,  
And the rainbow appeared,  
And curled itself around his shoulder.

Then God raised his arm and he waved his hand  
Over the sea and over the land,  
And he said: Bring forth! Bring forth!  
And quicker than God could drop his hand,  
Fishes and fowls  
And beasts and birds  
Swam the rivers and the seas,  
Roamed the forests and the woods,  
And split the air with their wings.  
And God said: That's good!

Then God walked around,  
And God looked around  
On all that he had made.  
He looked at his sun,  
And he looked at his moon,  
And he looked at his little stars;  
He looked on his world  
With all its living things,  
And God said: I'm lonely still.

Then God sat down--  
On the side of a hill where he could think;  
By a deep, wide river he sat down;  
With his head in his hands,  
God thought and thought,  
Till he thought: I'll make me a man!

Up from the bed of the river  
God scooped the clay;  
And by the bank of the river  
He kneeled him down;  
And there the great God Almighty  
Who lit the sun and fixed it in the sky,  
Who flung the stars to the most far corner of the night,  
Who rounded the earth in the middle of his hand;  
This great God,  
Like a mammy bending over her baby,  
Kneeled down in the dust  
Toiling over a lump of clay  
Till he shaped it in his own image;

Then into it he blew the breath of life,  
And man became a living soul.

Amen.Amen.

James Weldon Johnson

This poem is 'narrated' by a male with a loud, booming voice, being very dramatic in his expression, feeling. You need one who is super good. Then while he is speaking have the choir hum and as the narrator progresses have them sing "Amen! that's Good!" At first it is sung softly and as the creator progresses on, gets excited about what God has done the singing gets louder, very expressive. You just might have to improvise just like I now suspect that my BIL did as well as Lloyd Kauffman. The singing is done acapella (four part harmony) with the males at times leading some of it but ending with four-part harmony.

And Diane, if you were to come anywhere near close to what these fellows did with this poem, those Presbyterians might for sure have an heart attack! LOL

Diane, do you very often sing acapella? with four-part harmony? This is a skill that is fast dying out. It requires nourishment in order for it to thrive. The use of musical instruments in worship has facilitated this loss. Anyhow, I love four-part harmony - the human voice is the most beautiful musical instrument there is. Blend the many different voices together in harmony...ah, lady it is like a touch of heaven!

Now you have something else to think about! :-)

If I keep thinking I may come back with more ideas! You see, I love choral music done acapella. Come to think about it I do have more to share but have to run now...

Blessings,  
ginnyrose

PS: Electrical storms as displayed by lightening, thunder, torrents of rain - I enjoy! Just don't want anybody to get hurt. But that drama of nature is so inspiring, man is utterly helpless to do anything about it ... maybe that is why I like them? We rarely see these storms...

#### Re: the theology of "teeth" - posted by roadsign (), on: 2008/5/2 10:12

I ordered some spirituals (choral arrangements) and the choir had a blast last night singing through them. They got a charge out of the spiritual, "Let me Fly" - especially this verse:

Meet that hypocrite on the street,  
First thing he'll do is to show his teeth,  
Next thing he'll do is to tell a lie,  
And the best thing to do is to pass him by.

This does not look like polished theology. But, boy is it sharp! And it is applicable.

Everyday I encounter those who have been soured to church because of hypocrisy. Perhaps they never learned how to escape its deadly fangs. Maybe they never learned to see the "teeth" or recognize the "lie". And maybe they never learned to follow the advice in this song: "to pass him by."

So, how can we apply this "cute" song:

Well - first we need to learn to recognize the hypocrite. You can tell that you are meeting one when you suddenly feel smaller, when he (or she) seems to posture himself in a way that makes him dominant over you - better, more righteous. You feel like a lesser Christian. Oh, sure she may be an important person, maybe even likable, and certainly she sounds like she knows a lot about the Christian life and the Bible. But, careful, there may be a subtle LIE. It's called "works doctrine". How do you know: You feel a pressure to try harder, to be gooder. You may feel condemned because you ju

st don't measure up. You may get the impression that you are less acceptable to God because you are not as good as she.

Watch out for those teeth! Watch out for those who assert themselves over you though power-plays, clever words - it's nothing but growling - like a bear.

Watch out for the lie! And pass him by, before you get snagged! Don't even try to reason with him (or her). You just find yourself entrapped in a confusing web. You'll never win the argument. Pass him by! Quick!

"Now God has us where he wants us, with all the time in this world and the next to shower grace and kindness upon us in Christ Jesus. Saving is all his idea, and all his work. All we do is trust him enough to let him do it. It's God's gift from start to finish! We don't play the major role. If we did, we'd probably go around bragging that we'd done the whole thing! No, we neither make nor save ourselves. God does both the making and saving.

He creates each of us by Christ Jesus to join him in the work he does, the good work he has gotten ready for us to do, work we had better be doing. Eph 2:7-10 The Message

Diane

(Ginnyrose, I'll get to your post yet. Great stuff there!)

**Re: the "Creation" - creatively - posted by roadsign (), on: 2008/5/2 16:37**

Thank you, Ginnyrose for the words for the "Creation". I see possibilities.

Quote:  
----- You just might have to improvise  
-----

That's the fun of it all: we use what we have, not what we wish we had! I have a harpist, violins, trumpet, xylophone, pipe organ, bongos ... Ohh.. am "hearing" it already. (I would wish to delete the "God was lonely" line)

Quote:  
----- And Diane, if you were to come anywhere near close to what these fellows did with this poem, those Presbyterians might for sure have an heart attack! LOL  
-----

Thanks for the warning! We try hard not to rock the boat too much, though the choir is a bit of a "rebel group" in itself. I mean that they don't mind clapping their hands and singing contemporary songs.

Quote:  
----- Diane, do you very often sing acapella?  
-----

We do at each rehearsal - to improve our choral sound - when we are in a room and can stand in a circle. However, the tiered loft and high ceilings make it hard for the choir members to hear each other well, so I support the choir instrumentally on Sunday. I'd love to get that architecture changed, but if that were to happen, there would be heart attacks for sure.

Quote:  
----- I do have more to share but have to run...  
-----



Go for it!

Quote:  
----- Electrical storms as displayed by lightening, thunder, torrents of rain Â...Â... man is utterly helpless to do anything about it ...  
-----

The storm on that night caused flooding which contaminated the water in a nearby town. People died, and many were sick. Some still suffer side effects. If you want to know what brought world attention to our little corner of the world just google: Walkerton water crisis.

Â”Your thunder was heard in the whirlwind,  
your lightning lit up the world;  
the earth trembled and quaked. Psalm 77:18

Diane

**Re: - posted by ginnyrose (), on: 2008/5/2 21:00**

Diane,  
I emailed my BIL about "Creation" and it was as I was beginning to suspect: they took this poem and improvised!

My other ideas...;-)

When I attended Bible School in the 60's and sang in the choir, we used music compiled/written by Homer Rodheaver: "Rodheaver Chorus Collection". Ever heard of him? He was Evangelist Billy Sunday's song leader....from what I read about Sunday he was a flamboyant speaker and it appears his song leader had a flair for the dramatic...but no matter, we loved his music. This collection has a lot of beautiful songs. I do not know whether it is still available...might have to check eBay or some other used book store or [www.bookfinder.com](http://www.bookfinder.com)

The old music lyrics was not repetitious as most of the modern stuff is. The modern stuff is similar to "See Dick Run, see Dick run fast, run fast, Dick can run, can run, can run fast." - has just about as much inspiration as this sentence, IMO!

Are you familiar with the song "Our God, He is Alive" by A.W. Dicus? One time we were at a camp meeting and time was spent in singspiration. We sang this song, and lady! the roof just about flew off! I stood between two bass singers (one was my husband) and they really let it rip - I could not even hear myself sing! LOL I just stood there, looked up at them and they just grinned...

There is another song "Ain't Got Time to Die". Ever heard of it? This requires a strong bass singer to carry the lead in certain parts. The West Coast Mennonite Chamber Choir from BC sings this one on "Songs of Earth, Echoes of Heaven". Anyhow, I purchased this CD just for this song!

This is all I have for now...have fun!

Blessings,  
ginnyrose

**Re: The ministry of Music - posted by ginnyrose (), on: 2008/5/2 23:51**

As I was thinking about this thread, my mind went back to how God used music to calm my grief-stricken soul after our daughter died. We had prayed for her healing, she was anointed with oil but God said "No." and took her. Now he had the task to bring comfort to me and this is one way he did it.

It happened one evening in church service when we were having an hymn sing. This is when all we do is sing, people giving out selections from our hymnbook. During this service, a peace, a calmness engulfed me... after I became aware what had happened because of the singing, a new idea came to me and I told my DH about it and he agreed to it.

The idea: a cousin of mine had given us a gift of money and we decided to put it back for something real special in memory of our daughter....did not know what form it would take, but we saved it for that occasion. Now we decided to use the money and buy six "Zion Praises" hymn books, then invite people over some Sunday evenings when we had no worship service and we would sing! This is what we did! We invited people, being careful who we invited, working to get a good mix of voices so the singing would go well. All of us -six couples - would sit around the dining room table and each would select a song to be sung. After an hour of singing, we would eat some finger foods I had prepared beforehand. The fellowship that ensued was so very edifying, uplifting. This entire process ministered deep into my soul, bring much needed comfort, peace and joy. Actually, words fail to describe what it did to me and that should not really be a surprise because God's ways are far above ours.

Yes, the messages of the songs would come back to minister to me in moments of reflection, serious thoughts....music should not be taken loosely or lightly; should also reflect the beauty of sound that comes from God

Just thought I would share how song has ministered to me doing some of my deepest needs...and I would guess there would be many other testimonies to this effect.

Blessings,  
ginnyrose