



The Message of Sacred Song

Dr. O. Talmadge Spence

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This hard-back hymnal of stirring original songs set to beautiful music is sure to bless the heart and draw the hearer closer to God.

From the Forward: The composer of all of these sacred song forms was born in Virginia, in a Christian home, reared in his majority years in Washington, D.C. His father was an ordained minister of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Music was a major part of this ministerial family because of many avenues of worship which prevailed. However, it was the utter simplicity of song that was the major manner of expression. The main thing in all of those early days was that music was for *The Message* of the Holy Bible. . . .

After World War II, in the Bible churches in the United States, the four most familiar sacred song forms were: (1) the Youth Chorus, (2) the Testimony Song, (3) the Hymn, and (4) the Anthem. These forms came during the Rodeheaver period and the early "Youth for Christ" in its best days of evangelism. None of these early forms involved the present, contemporary "beat" and "structure" of this "Rock and Roll" generation. The present "Youth for Christ" is dedicated to neo-evangelicalism.

The first song form, the *Youth Chorus*, was dedicated to some genuine emotion in the Christian testimony of the Christian youth. The lyrics spoke of victory, joy, love, sin, forgiveness, or praise. The Chorus was the testimonial song for Christian young people. This stirred a youthful claim of Christ in worship and refreshed the older saints as well. There were regular youth services in the monthly calendar of the church, often an earlier Sunday evening service. Sometimes a children's rendition in song or that of an older teenage group was set forth at the chancel area of the sanctuary. It brought life and youthfulness to worship from *The Message*.

The second song form, the *Testimony Song*, was dedicated to a narrative of the Christians coming to the Lord Jesus Christ and saving grace. Solos, duets, trios, and quartets were just beginning in the order of the American worship services as far as a "special" was called. This song form should not be understood as one and the same with "the Gospel Song" of the charismatics. Their songs are experiential and subjective, and often without doctrine and scriptural integrity. The earlier Testimony Song was usually presented before *The Message* was preached in the worship service. Sometimes it would follow *The Message*, too. This brought a full Bible testimony to worship from *The Message*.

The third song form, the *Hymn*, was dedicated exclusively to some great doctrine of the Bible such as creation, nature, providence, redemption, the Blood of Jesus, the Trinity, the Cross, the Atonement, or some other major theme of *The Message* of the believers faith. This was prominently from English hymnody. This was presented in a strong, stately tempo which stirred reverence in the congregation. Biblical doctrine would be preserved in the peoples heart and mind. This brought faith and dignity to the worship from *The Message*.

The fourth song form was the *Anthem*; this was most special to worship. This song form brought a passage directly quoted from the Bible, always out of the Authorized King James English Version. This would be a time when a portion of the congregation would meet to "practice" (as it was called) this special song form for a forthcoming worship service. There were simple music schools in churches in those days which finally included small instrumental sacred ensembles, too. This became the highlight to *The Message*. . . . This brought a classical musical growth to worship--from *The Message*.

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