

HYMN ANALYSIS FORM
Div 2889, Spring, 2002

Your name: SAMPLE ANALYSIS

Hymn Analysis #: EXAMPLE

TEXT

Name of Hymn: Rise up, O men of God (Baptist Hymnal, 1975. #268)

Author: William P. Merrill

Dates: 1867-1954

Background Information: This hymn was written by William P. Merrill in 1911 at the suggestion of Nolan R. Best, editor of The Continent. It was suggested that there was an urgent need for a hymn on the topic of “brotherhood” and Merrill responded with the composition of “Rise up, O men of God.” Merrill was inspired by an article entitled, “The Church of the Strong Men” while taking a trip on a steamer in the middle of Lake Michigan. On reading the article, he wrote the hymn almost without conscious effort. (From Companion to Baptist Hymnal, 1975 by William J. Reynolds, Broadman Press, 1976)

Basic thought of hymn:

1. Poetic meter: Short Meter (SM)
2. Rhyme scheme: A B C B
3. Poetic devices:

| Device | Location |
|-------------|--|
| Itemization | From one stanza to the next. “Rise up, O Men of God” begins each stanza. |
| Climax | St. 1, line 3: “Give heart and mind and soul and strength” |

4. Scripture references:

| Reference | Location |
|---|--|
| Deut. 11:13 (serve the Lord) | St. 1, line 4: “To serve the King of Kings.” |
| Heb. 10:37 (the Lord shall come and not tarry) | St. 2, line 2 “His kingdom tarries long. |
| Acts 20:28: (we are caretakers of the Church) | St. 3: “The church for you doth wait, Her strength unequal to her task.: |
| Matt 12:50 (whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother, sister, and mother) | St. 4, line 3: “As brothers of the Son of Man.” |

(from Spencer’s, Hymn and Scripture Guide, Agape Press, 1993)

4. Theological implications:

“Rise up, O men of God” is an excellent hymn for men to sing in a variety of situations where men gather for Christian community. The hymn was originally written for a men’s group and was intended to be sung by men. However, today the hymn has fallen from favor in many churches which seek to sing only inclusive language hymns.

The hymn is an excellent example of early 20th century Liberal Theology espousing an optimistic view of human potential. Coming to the forefront around the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, Liberal Theologians were influenced strongly by Biblical Criticism (the “Christ of History”). In addition, Christ’s Second Coming (and the subsequent “Kingdom of God”) was not viewed as a physical event but was thought of metaphorically. One important tenant of Liberal Theology was the idea that human beings (“mankind”) could establish the Kingdom of God in physical form on earth by improving the social conditions of all human beings.

This hymn by William Merrill (written in 1911) expresses the basic tenants of Liberal Theology, especially in the following ways:

1. View about the Second Coming: “His kingdom tarries long”; “the church for you doth wait.”
2. Man(kind) can “bring in the kingdom” : “Rise up, O men of God”; “Bring in the day of brotherhood”
3. The Social Gospel (social issues) : “end the night of wrong”

TUNE

Tune Name: ST. THOMAS

Composer: Aaron Williams (1763)

Information concerning the source of the tune:

ST. THOMAS is the second quarter of a 16-line quadruple SHORT METER (SM) tune called HOLBORN which appeared in Aaron Williams’, Universal Psalmodist, second edition (London, 1763). This fragment appears as a separate tune in the 5th edition (1770) and the same year appeared in Isaac Smith’s, Collection of Psalm Tunes. (from, Companion to Baptist Hymnal, 1975, by Wm. J. Reynolds, Broadman Press, 1976)

Comment briefly on the tune and/or setting. This may include such aspects as form, melody, harmony, rhythm, text/tune relationship. Or, make comments which would be helpful for future reference:

1. Form: Two phrase period: AB. Phrase 1 half cadence. Phrase 2 = perfect authentic cadence.
2. Melody: F Major. The tune begins on the 5th with a rising perfect 4th to the tonic (in so doing in a musical way, exemplifying the idea of “rising up.” Conse-

quently, this is a particularly good tune for this text). The range is a major 9th. Phrase one is mostly diatonic steps; phrase 2 is mostly chordal skips. There are no chromatic embellishments.

3. Rhythm: Rhythm is mostly quarter notes with a few pairs of 8th notes used on passing tones and neighbor tones. Dotted half notes are used in the middle of phrase 1 and at the ends of phrases 1 and 2.
4. Harmony: The harmonic organization consists mostly of primary chords with a few secondary chords (ii & vi) used in cadential embellishment. There is one secondary dominant (V7/V) at cadence of the 1st phrase.

Discuss briefly appropriate uses of this hymn:

Personally, I have ambivalent feelings about this hymn text. In one regard, I feel the hymn has no use in a Christian worship service or in Christian education. This view is based partly on my personal reaction to Liberal Theology and the ideas that it espoused, namely those mentioned above under the theological analysis. In addition, the hymn is intrinsically “non-inclusive” and consequently could not effectively represent the true sentiments of a mixed congregation.

On the other hand, the original intention of the hymn was as a hymn for men to sing expressing their particular and personal responsibilities and relationship to God. Excluding the problems with Liberal Theology, if the hymn is used in a way that especially highlights the attitudes of males (i.e., in a men’s gathering or on a special church occasion honoring men) then there is a possibility of effective use.

However, if the hymn is used corporately in a mixed congregation, then there is a problem concerning the language. The idea that some have espoused that the word, “men” is representative of “mankind” is not good enough. In fact, the very scriptural basis of the third stanza (Matthew 12:50) is in error regarding the intended inclusiveness:

Matthew 12:50 For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother, sister, and mother. (RSV)

Merrill, st. 4 As brothers of the Son of man, Rise up o men of God.

Considering the hymn corporately and in the historical context in which it was written, one would have to assume that only men are capable of the lofty and heroic sentiments expressed in the hymn. I personally altogether disagree with this sentiment and would, therefore, never select this hymn for public corporate worship.

