



UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS PRESS

---

Mutual Reinforcement and the Origins of Spirituals

Author(s): John F. Garst

Source: *American Music*, Vol. 4, No. 4 (Winter, 1986), pp. 390-406

Published by: [University of Illinois Press](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3052227>

Accessed: 04/08/2011 12:05

---

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at  
<http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



University of Illinois Press is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *American Music*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

JOHN F. GARST

---

## Mutual Reinforcement and the Origins of Spirituals

About 1800 there arose a new species of American hymn, the black spiritual.<sup>1</sup> Black spirituals first came to the attention of the general public at the time of the Civil War, after which they became popular worldwide. Typically, they have a call-and-response structure, in which a leader "calls" by singing verse lines and a group "responds" with refrains and choruses.

The year 1800 marked another significant event, the birth of camp meetings, the first of which was in Kentucky. Within five years camp meetings had spread to every geographical section of the United States, and during their first few years another new species of American hymn, the camp-meeting song, appeared.<sup>2</sup> While hymns in standard forms were probably sung at these meetings, the term *camp-meeting song* has come to refer specifically to items with refrains, choruses, or both. It is believed that such songs were sung responsively, that is, in call-and-response form.

Call-and-response black spirituals and white camp-meeting songs are very similar. Indeed, given only printed transcriptions, many white and black songs appear to be identical or nearly so. Accordingly, George Pullen Jackson's term "white spirituals"<sup>3</sup> is appropriate for white camp-meeting songs and other American folk hymns of whites. Hereafter, *spirituals*, used without a modifier, is intended to embrace both black and white spirituals.

Since blacks and whites attended camp meetings together from the beginning,<sup>4</sup> it is not surprising that both sang songs of camp meetings,

---

John F. Garst is professor of chemistry at the University of Georgia. He has a special interest in old American hymns and tunes and is coeditor, with Daniel W. Patterson, of a reprint edition of the *Social Harp* (1855).

but who contributed what to the origins of these songs is unclear. Did either race sing similar songs *before* camp meetings began? What are the origins of the call-and-response forms of spirituals?

According to Jackson whites developed the camp-meeting song, and blacks imitated it.<sup>5</sup> Camp meetings attracted large, emotional crowds and featured much singing, but there were few hymns that a large fraction of a crowd could sing from memory. Simple refrains and choruses, however, were quickly learned, and songs in call-and-response form developed spontaneously. A leader sang verse lines from memory or improvised them, and the crowd joined in on refrains and choruses. Since blacks attended camp meetings, they had ample opportunities to learn camp-meeting songs and their methods of construction.

William H. Tallmadge<sup>6</sup> proposes an alternative view whereby slaves brought call-and-response music, ubiquitous in Africa, to the New World. They continued their musical forms even after taking up a new language and applied their musical methods to whatever songs they took up. During the last half of the eighteenth century, American blacks sang religious songs in call-and-response form and brought these songs to the earliest camp meetings. The call-and-response forms they introduced proved ideally suited for camp meetings, and whites quickly adopted them.

Given these conflicting interpretations, my purposes in this essay will be (1) to report new facts relevant to the issues at hand, (2) to review diverse aspects of the evidence, (3) to point out that a fallacious logical principle has been applied by some scholars, and (4) to argue for a strong African heritage for call-and-response forms of spirituals, even though some such forms were familiar to whites before camp meetings. I shall contend that the mutual reinforcement of a characteristic that existed in each of two cultures before their fusion is one of the most important ways in which the fusing cultures influence one another.

A small but interesting point concerns the evidence for responsorial singing at camp meetings. Direct evidence seems to be nonexistent. Our principal sources of camp-meeting songs with music are nineteenth-century singing-school manuals, which contain pieces in forms (internal refrains and choruses) appropriate for responsorial singing, thus permitting the inference that they were sung this way originally. However, as Tallmadge points out, the songs are arranged for homophonic, not responsorial, performance, so one must assume that responsorial practice was eliminated by arrangers who considered it inappropriate for singing schools.<sup>7</sup> In fact, at least a few examples of camp-meeting songs are noted responsorially for voices (treble, alto,

tenor, bass)—a small step from having an individual leader and a responding group.

Jeremiah Ingalls's *Christian Harmony* (1805) contains "When converts first begin to sing" with only the tenor singing the first two lines of the hymn, but with each line followed by the refrain "wonder, wonder, wonder" set for all voices.<sup>8</sup> D. H. Mansfield's *American Vocalist* (1849) includes three camp-meeting songs in which only the tenor sings the verse lines while all voices sing the refrains and choruses (fig. 1).<sup>9</sup> The same book contains four other camp-meeting songs with the verse set for two voices (tenor and bass) and refrains and choruses for all.<sup>10</sup> These occurrences reinforce the inference that at camp meetings such songs were indeed sung responsorially.

Were whites familiar with responsorial singing, especially of hymns, before camp meetings? The sudden appearance of many choruses in hymnals, beginning in early camp-meeting times, indicates a great increase in their popularity. If it could be shown that blacks sang chorused hymns before whites, this would support African origins of call-and-response in American hymnody.

In 1971 Eileen Southern cited Richard Allen's tuneless hymnal of 1801 (two slightly differing editions)<sup>11</sup> as the first to contain choruses.<sup>12</sup> Allen was a black Philadelphia minister (and bishop and founder) of the African Methodist Episcopal church, and the hymnal was for the use of his congregation. Robert Stevenson, however, points out an occurrence of a chorus in a 1774 hymnal compiled by Samson Occum, an American Indian.<sup>13</sup> Commenting on these facts, Tallmadge notes that "the real significance of Allen's hymnal is that it was the first to reflect, if only in a small way, the oral responsorial hymnody developed by black singers during the preceding fifty years. This fact is evinced by the inclusion of a vagrant or wandering chorus which is appended to three of the hymns in the collection." He further states in a footnote that, "actually, the one example of a designated 'chorus' in Occum ('Farewell to my pain') is an attached chorus provided by Occum. It is not vagrant or wandering; the latter variety did not appear in hymn-books until after 1800."<sup>14</sup>

In Allen's hymnal three distinct choruses are attached to four hymns. There is one instance (not two, as indicated by Southern)<sup>15</sup> of two hymns (not three, as stated by Tallmadge)<sup>16</sup> sharing the same chorus. "The voice of Free Grace, cries escape to the mountain" and "From regions of Love, Lo! an angel descended" both have a chorus that begins "Hallelujah to the Lamb who purchased our pardon."

The information provided by Tallmadge, Stevenson, and Southern suggests that choruses in hymnals were extremely rare before Allen's 1801 collection. But such choruses, although not very common, did appear in other hymnals, and Occum's publication is not the earliest.

# CHRISTIAN BAND. L. M.

The image shows a musical score for a song titled "CHRISTIAN BAND. L. M." It consists of four staves of music, each with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. The lyrics are written below the notes. The first staff has a "1." and the second a "2.", indicating different parts or verses. The third and fourth staves have "3" and "4." respectively. The lyrics are:
   
1. There is a band of brethren dear, I will be in this band, Hal-le - la - jah!
   
Who live as pilgrim strangers here, I will be in this band, Hal-le - la - jah!
   
2. The prophets and apostles too, All belonged to this band, Hal - le - la - jah!
   
And all God's children here below, I will be in this band, Hal - le - la - jah!
   
3. King David on a throne of state, I will be in this band, Hal - le - la - jah!
   
And Lazarus at the rich man's gate, Were numbered in this band, Hal - le - la - jah!
   
4. And Jew and Gentile, free and bond, I will be in this band, Hal - le - la - jah!
   
And rich and poor the world around May be - long to this band, Hal - le - la - jah!

Figure 1. A camp-meeting song arranged responsorially for voices, from *The American Vocalist* (1849), p. 328. Note the presence of both an internal refrain and chorus sung by the entire group, while only the tenor sings verse lines.

Listed below are several early examples of responsive forms, including choruses, that seem to have been overlooked (the designation "chorus" appears in the original).

1773. George Whitefield, *A Collection of Hymns for Social Worship*, 18th ed. (London: n.p.)

Hymn 65 (p. 60), "Give thanks to God most high"

[Chorus after first and fourth stanzas:]

His Pow'r and Grace  
Are still the same,  
And let his Name  
Have endless Praise.

[Chorus after second and third stanzas:]

Thy Mercy, Lord,  
Shall still endure,  
And ever sure  
Abides thy Word.

Hymn 1, book 2 (p. 111)

Who can have greater Cause to Sing,  
Who greater Cause to bless,  
Than we the Children of the King,  
Than we who Christ possess?

[Pattern, twice repeating last line of stanza, used for each stanza; italics in original:]

*Than we who Christ possess?*  
*Than we who Christ possess?*

Hymn 64, book 2 (p. 176), "Jesu, let thy pitying Eye"

[After each of first five stanzas, variant after sixth; italics in original:]

Turn, and look upon me, Lord,  
*Turn, and look upon me, Lord.*  
And break my Heart of Stone,  
*And break my Heart of Stone.*

Hymn without number (p. 230), "Salvation! O the joyful Sound!"

[Chorus:]

Glory, Honour, Praise and Power  
Be unto the Lamb for Ever.

Jesus Christ is our Redeemer  
Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!  
Praise the Lord.

1793. John Peak, *A New Collection of Hymns and Spiritual Songs*, 3d ed. (Windsor: Spooner)  
 Hymn 21, "Jesus, grant us all a blessing"  
 [After each stanza:]  
 Farewell, Brothers, farewell, Sisters  
 Till we all shall meet again.
1797. John Curtis, *A New Collection of Hymns and Spiritual Songs* (Newark, N.J.: Dodge)  
 Hymn 23, "Jesus grant us all a blessing"  
 [After each stanza:]  
 Farewell brethren, farewell sisters. . . .  
 [See 1793, J. Peak, above]
1798. Josiah Goddard, *A New and Beautiful Collection of Select Hymns* (Conway, N.H.: Leonard)  
 Hymn 124, "Salvation! O the joyful sound"  
 [Chorus:]  
 Glory, honor, praise, and power . . .  
 [See 1773, G. Whitefield, hymn 64, book 2, above]  
 Hymn 299, "Thy presence, gracious God, afford"  
 [After each stanza:]  
 Thus, Lord, thy waiting servants bless,  
 And drown thy gospel with success.  
 Hymn 337, "Come all you mourning pilgrims round"  
 [Chorus:]  
 Sing glory honor to the Lord,  
 Salvation to our King,  
 Let all that's washed in Jesus' blood,  
 His glorious praises sing.  
 Hymn 255, "Alas! and did my Savior bleed?"  
 [Chorus:]  
 O the Lamb, the lovely Lamb!  
 That dy'd on Calvary!  
 The Lamb was slain, and lives again,  
 To intercede for me.
1799. Amos Pilsbury, *United States' Sacred Harmony* (Boston: Thomas and Andrews)  
 ASHLEY (p. 33), "Salvation! O the joyful sound!"  
 [Chorus:]  
 Glory, honor, praise, and power . . .  
 [See 1773, G. Whitefield, hymn without number, above]

In addition, John Glas's *Christian Songs*, "used by Churches of Christ, scattered thro' Britain and America," first published in 1749, contains two hymns with choruses in the American edition of 1784.<sup>17</sup> I have not seen earlier editions. Glas suggests certain popular tunes for some of his hymns, for the use of those "who do not place Religion in the air of a tune."

Whitefield's hymnal is particularly interesting. Given his great influence in America, it seems safe to assume that British editions of his hymnal were used widely in the colonies. The 1773 edition, the only one I have seen, is the eighteenth; the first edition was published in 1753. Three American printings in the 1760s are listed by Evans.<sup>18</sup> I do not know which edition first contained choruses.

Whitefield's hymnal includes a number of "dialogues" in which the lines for one group of singers (women, perhaps) are italicized. The dialogues were sung responsorially,<sup>19</sup> and many of them were written and published (in England) by John Cennick in 1743, in a work that Jackson believes marked the beginning of the production of homespun hymns for the Great Awakening. However, hymns in dialogue form date from at least 1560.<sup>20</sup>

With the dialogues providing the key to the meaning of italics in Whitefield's hymnal, we find above an example ("Who can have greater Cause to sing") in which the last two lines of each verse are twice repeated responsorially and another example ("Jesu, let thy pitying Eye") in which each pair of lines of a chorus is performed responsorially within the chorus. These are clear responsorial patterns; repetition provides a responsorial end refrain in the first case and responsorial internal refrains (in the chorus) in the second.

We must conclude that at the outset of camp meetings white singers were already familiar with verse-chorus structures, not only in secular songs, as pointed out by Tallmadge, but also in hymns. It appears they were also familiar with responsive singing of internal refrains in hymns. While Tallmadge states that "there is no evidence indicating that the singers were familiar with the responsive singing of internal refrains," this is contradicted not only by the findings above but also by the ancient tradition of the work song, in which call-and-response and internal refrains are universal.

In England, it seems, we once had a wealth of work songs accompanying the sweep of sickles in the wheat, the lifting of heavy stones in the quarry, the communal steeping of woollen cloth to shrink it and to fix its dye; rough songs with ramshackle words and recurring refrains, sometimes punctuated with cries. . . .

As usual with work songs proper, our nineteenth century shanties are mostly leader-chorus, solo-and-response songs. The pattern



is ancient and universal. . . . Brother Felix Fabri of Ulm, on a pilgrim ship from Venice to the Holy Land in the 1480s heard the seamen "sing when work is going on because when at sea it is very heavy and only carried on by a concert between one who sings and orders and the labourers who sing in response." And a good thousand years before, lolling on an Aegean cliff-top . . . Daphnis and Chloe watched a ship sail by below them and that "which other Marriners used to do to elude the tediousnesse of labour, these began, and held on as they rowed along. There was one amongst them that was the Celeustes, or the hortator to ply, and he had certain nautic odes or Sea-songs: the rest like a Chorus all together strained their throats to a loud holla, and catcht his voice at certain intervals."<sup>21</sup>

Tallmadge emphasizes that Allen's hymnal was the first to contain *wandering*, as opposed to *attached*, choruses. However, it is not clear that the example in Allen's hymnal is truly a wandering chorus. In at least one later compilation, the two hymns that share the same chorus in Allen's hymnal are combined!<sup>22</sup> This suggests that they may be two parts of the same original hymn. If so, it would be natural for each part to have the same chorus. This point needs further investigation.

Chorus wandering may have been in the white tradition *before* 1800. Some of the choruses listed above seem separable, that is, they do not appear to be integrally related to the associated hymn, so that, logically, they could be dissociated and united with some other hymn. Proof of this is found in *The Chorus* (1860),<sup>23</sup> in which the chorus "Glory, honour, praise and power" is joined to the hymn "Oh, for a thousand tongues to sing." The last part of the same chorus, "Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Praise the Lord," is used in *The Sacred Harp* with the hymn "In the floods of tribulation."<sup>24</sup> "Oh the Lamb, the loving Lamb" is joined in *The Chorus* with the hymn "Well might the sun in darkness hide." Since these same choruses are joined with other hymns in the listing above, we can thus document both the separability of choruses published before 1800 and their wandering at later dates. Furthermore, we see that the responsorial forms in Allen's hymnal were not novel at the time of its publication.

Now consider melody, the chief concern of George Pullen Jackson, who is among those who have denied African roots for black spirituals. His primary evidence for European roots centers on his analysis of 892 black and 562 white spirituals. As summarized in his "Tune Comparative List," Jackson found 262 black spirituals with melodic correspondences to 116 white spirituals. Of the 116 white-spiritual tunes, 60 were traced to Britain, 15 were widespread in white American secular

song, 17 were by known composers, and 15 possessed melodic structures too simple and common to trace to a definite ancestor.<sup>25</sup>

The melodies for as many as two-thirds of the 892 black spirituals could not be traced. In answer to the question, "Who made them?" Jackson writes: "The negro singers probably made the large part of them, and indeed in precisely the manner that the white folk made *their* songs—by endless singing of heard tunes and by endless, inevitable and concomitant singing differentiation. . . . I believe, and the data shows, that [this process] has resulted in the very large number of songs which, though formed primarily in the white man's moulds, have lost all recognizable relationship to known individual white-sung melodic entities."<sup>26</sup>

Thus, Jackson admits that most of the black spirituals were original with blacks. However, he maintains that these spirituals were essentially European in melodic character, made "in the white man's moulds" even when they had black authors.

In a history of the "white origins" theory, Dena Epstein attacks Jackson's methods: "To Jackson, priority in publication was certain proof of origin. . . . Jackson's assumptions cannot be accepted, and questions of origin, priority, and whether the direction of influence was white-to-black, black-to-white, or, as seems most likely, in both directions are still to be answered."<sup>27</sup> In fact, Jackson did not use publication dates as the primary basis for concluding there was white-to-black transmission. For some entries in his "Tune Comparative List," the publication date of the black version actually precedes that of the white (e.g., nos. 12 and 36). Jackson assumed that all of the songs, both white and black, existed in tradition before they were published, so that publication dates themselves could not be very significant.

Jackson's arguments for a general white-to-black transmission are broad and complex and take into account every piece of evidence he could bring to bear on the problem. In summarizing his work, Epstein omits his most compelling piece of evidence, that a significant number of the tunes can be traced to Britain.<sup>28</sup>

Tallmadge questions the significance of Jackson's tune-comparative findings on different grounds: statistics. Using Dorothy D. Horn's judgments of the validities of the white-black correspondences in Jackson's "Tune Comparative List," he reduces Jackson's 116 claims to 70 valid items.<sup>29</sup> He then notes that "these seventy items represent slightly less than eight percent of the 892 black spirituals. This percentage seems to indicate, as Samuel P. Bayard claimed, that white folk hymnody and the Negro spirituals represent two fairly independent melodic genres. . . ."<sup>30</sup>

Both the statistical analysis and the claim that Bayard thought that

white and black spirituals represent two fairly independent melodic genres require further discussion.

Consider first the statistics. Jackson's 892 black spirituals include 116 listed in the "Tune Comparative List" and 146 additional variants, yielding 262 (29.4 percent of 892) black spirituals with melodic correspondences in white songs. Tallmadge includes the variants in the total of 892 but omits them from his list of valid items, an inconsistent procedure. If one follows Jackson in including the variants in both categories, and if the variants are randomly distributed over those dropped from Jackson's 116 and those retained, then one obtains  $70/116 \times 262$  or 158 black spirituals with corresponding white spirituals (17.7 percent of 892).

Two other factors suggest that the true percentage of black spirituals with corresponding melodies in white song is much higher even than this. One is a statistical matter that seems not to have been discussed in this connection. The other is collectors' bias.

The statistical factor enters because Jackson did not consider the entire corpus of black and white spirituals. Instead, he considered subsets of each. Let  $P$  be the percentage of all black spirituals with melodic correspondences among all white spirituals. If the subset of 892 black spirituals is a representative sample of all black spirituals, then the percentage of the 892 with correspondences in the whole body of white religious song is also  $P$ . But if the subset of 562 white spirituals is a random sample of all white spirituals, then the probability of inclusion of any particular white spiritual in the subset is simply the fraction  $f$  of the whole body of white song constituted by the subset. Thus, some of the black spirituals in the set of 892 could have white-spiritual counterparts not included in the set of 562. The percentage of black spirituals with white counterparts is therefore underestimated by both Jackson and Tallmadge.

If  $p$  is the percentage of the 892 black spirituals with correspondences among the 562 white spirituals, then  $p$  is the product of  $P$  (the percentage of all black spirituals having white counterparts among all-white spirituals) and  $f$  (the fraction of white spirituals included in the 562). To estimate  $P$  one must divide  $p$  by  $f$ . Of course, all three values must lie between zero and one (or 100 percent).

If we grant Tallmadge the reduction in valid items in Jackson's list, the value of  $p$  seems to be about 18 percent. What is the value of  $f$ ? Perhaps 0.5 is reasonable; I consider it generous. Using these values, one calculates  $P$ , the percentage of all black spirituals with melodic correspondences in white song, as 36 percent.

Considering the bias of collectors, even this must be too low. Collectors of black spirituals tended to omit, deliberately, items they recognized as belonging to the white repertoire. In *Slave Songs of the United*

*States* (1867), the first collection of black spirituals in book form, William Francis Allen specifically stated this policy.<sup>31</sup> The white compilers of the tunebooks Jackson consulted must have had the opposite bias. Consequently, both subsets are highly biased toward minimizing overlap. Therefore the actual percentage of black-sung religious songs with melodic correspondences among white-sung songs is much larger than estimated above. Even 90 percent is not unreasonable.

However, this play with numbers is nearly meaningless. Statistics do not really speak to the question, "To what extent are the black spirituals rooted in African traditions?" No matter what the figures may indicate, a supporter of European roots of black spirituals can claim, as Jackson did, that the spirituals by blacks were made in European style, "in the white man's mould." Similarly, a supporter of African roots can claim that black spirituals rooted in European tradition are not "true" black spirituals. Indeed, collectors must have been trying to isolate the "true" black spirituals from those contaminated by white influence, although it is not clear how successful they were. Perhaps it is time for someone to isolate a set of the "most African" black spirituals for further examination.

Both Tallmadge and Jackson cite Samuel P. Bayard as a tune expert in support of their (contradictory) views.<sup>32</sup> Jackson quotes a letter from Bayard probably written in the early 1940s. The statements cited by Tallmadge were published in 1950. Had Bayard changed his mind in the meantime? Or is there some confusion here?

Here is the complete statement made by Bayard in 1950: "The large mass of folk tunes sung by north American Negroes appears, on the whole, to be an independent creation of that people. The influence of imported European (mostly British) folk music is plainly discernible in Negro folk melody, and Negro repertoires are shot through with versions of the principal British folk airs and other popular tunes; yet we cannot help recognizing in the music of this people a fund of song tunes generally distinct from that current among whites."<sup>33</sup> Here is Jackson's report of Bayard's earlier letter:

Mr. Bayard regards this white man's "mould" aspect of negro religious song as "one of the most important and cogent evidences we have of the derivation, not only of specific songs and airs from the whites by the blacks but of the direct taking over also of the technique of making and the manner of singing spirituals. Despite the differences in detail between negro and white spirituals, their *melodism* is much the same basically," he stated in a letter to me. If one is seeking music that is more definitely negroid, Mr. Bayard states, one should look for it in the secular "hollers" and blues.

But . . . "if derivation from white by black was ever clear, it is in this negro religious folksong as a whole."<sup>34</sup>

There is no inconsistency in Bayard's statements. He seems to have recognized a fund of tunes distinct from those of whites in black folksong as a whole, but he saw this less in the spirituals than in other types of songs.

Certain remarks published in 1819 by John Fanning Watson have been widely quoted recently as evidence against Jackson's theories. For example, according to Epstein: "He [Jackson] was apparently unaware that as early as 1819 John Fanning Watson had written of 'the colored people' getting together at camp meetings and singing for hours 'short scraps of disjointed affirmations, pledges, or prayers, lengthened with long repetition choruses. These are all sung in the merry chorus-manner of the southern harvest field, or husking-frolic method of the slave blacks.'"<sup>35</sup> But these remarks are consistent with Jackson's theory. Jackson believed that blacks adopted current fashions of white music almost instantaneously,<sup>36</sup> so 1819 would not have seemed an early date for what could be interpreted as a description of a scene consistent with the notion that, beginning shortly after 1800, blacks adopted methods used by whites in generating camp-meeting songs.

In fact, other remarks by Watson offer strong support for Jackson's "white man's mould" idea: "We have too, a growing evil, in the practice of singing in our places of public and society worship, *merry airs*, adapted from old *songs*, to hymns of our composing; often miserable as poetry, and senseless as matter, and most frequently composed and first sung by the illiterate *blacks* of the society."<sup>37</sup> These comments have been widely quoted as support for black-to-white transmission. And so they are, for particular items. Even so, they strongly support, rather than contradict, Jackson's theory that blacks made their songs in the "white man's mould," since the "*merry airs*" from "*old songs*" to which Watson refers must have been those of the popular culture. Otherwise, Watson could not have recognized them.

Watson's statements are testimony for black-to-white transmission, even if the composition was "in the white man's mould." It is hard to conceive that black-to-white transmission did not occur, but actual evidence for it is scarce. A particular case from about 1858 is documented in William F. Allen's introduction to *Slave Songs*: "The words of the fine hymn, 'Praise, member' (No. 5), are found, with very little variation, in 'Choral Hymns' (No. 138). The editor of this collection informs us, however, that many of his songs were learned from negroes in Philadelphia. . . ."<sup>38</sup> Here we have a specific acknowledgment of collecting from blacks for publication in a book for whites.

*The Choral Hymns* is the title on the cover of an 1860 edition of *The*

*Chorus*, by A. S. Jenks and D. Gilkey, which was copyrighted in 1858.<sup>39</sup> The 1860 printing was the "twenty-third thousand." A. S. Jenks is acknowledged in *Slave Songs*,<sup>40</sup> but Gilkey is not, so Jenks must be the editor referred to in the quotation above. The book is a collection of camp-meeting and revival choruses and hymns (no music).

The testimonies of Watson and Jenks suggest that a free flow of religious song material from blacks to whites occurred over a long period of time. Since blacks attended camp meetings in large numbers from the very beginning, black-to-white flow probably occurred as early as 1800. There is no strong reason to believe that it did not occur earlier.

Despite Tallmadge's and Epstein's reservations, the evidence for white-to-black transmission and European melodic roots for many of the black spirituals is compelling, and luckily so. Otherwise we would face the terrible problem of explaining how a slave population in contact with a dominant culture for about 200 years could have avoided the musical traditions of that culture!

Jackson documented what was really obvious to begin with, that European musical traditions were adopted by blacks. William F. Allen recognized this in 1867 in his introduction to *Slave Songs*:

Still, the chief part of the negro music is *civilized* in its character—partly composed under the influence of association with the whites, partly actually imitated from their music. . . .

The greater number of the songs which have come into our possession seem to be the natural and original production of a race of remarkable musical capacity and very teachable, which has long enough been associated with the more cultivated race to have become imbued with the mode and spirit of European music—often, nevertheless, retaining a distinct tinge of their native Africa.<sup>41</sup>

It was also noted by F. S. Hoyt, who wrote in 1882:

"Revival Songs" . . . were sung in the white congregations of the South, and were found in old religious song-books, which, though published by individual enterprise rather than upon denominational authority, had considerable circulation. These stirring devotional hymns, with their well adapted tunes, the colored people attendant upon the white congregations memorized, loved, and adopted. Not being able to read, and, therefore, unable to correct their recollections by reference to the printed page, they often confused both the sense and the verses—thus bringing these "revival songs" of their adoption to partake more or less of the character of those which were entirely of their own invention.<sup>42</sup>

And it was acknowledged by Erich von Hornbostel, whom Epstein

credits with being the first authority on African music to address, in 1926, the character and origins of black spirituals: "The great mass of the songs now in vogue are real folksongs of American Negro origin. . . . They are not mere imitations, nor are they African songs . . . influenced by the white man, but they are songs made by the Negroes in European style. . . . In short, the American Negro songs are European in style and pattern, they are American folksongs as far as they have originated amidst American folk and culture. . . ." <sup>43</sup>

Most of the preceding amounts to a defense of the work and views of George Pullen Jackson, who documented a European heritage for the spirituals. However, Jackson went even further by denying an African heritage.<sup>44</sup> In my opinion he made two fundamental mistakes: (1) He followed a false principle of exclusion and insisted on attributing to the European heritage all characteristics of spirituals found in both the African and European traditions. (2) He went out of his way to deny that certain "racial emphases" (rhythms, mode preferences, and performance styles of blacks) are African in origin. Neither position is sensible.

Jackson's denial of an African heritage cannot be justified, but perhaps we could begin to understand what motivated him if we knew what he thought the opposing view was. He stated this in *White Spirituals in the Southern Uplands*: "The question as to the sources of the Negro spirituals has been discussed rather widely and for a long time. In this discussion there have been two unfortunate elements. One element has been the romantic zeal of those who wish to believe that the Negro's songs are exclusively his own creations."<sup>45</sup> Thus, Jackson was attacking an extreme position that the black spirituals were made with no contribution from whites or the European musical heritage. In counterattacking he went to the opposite extreme.

While popular commentators might have held the view Jackson sought to correct, I doubt that any serious student of the subject ever did. Certainly this was not the view of Krehbiel, whom Jackson appeared to regard as his chief antagonist: "That there should be resemblances between some of the songs sung by the American blacks and popular songs of other origin need surprise no one. . . . It would be singular, indeed if this [that slaves adopted songs learned from their masters] were not the case, for it is a universal law. . . ." <sup>46</sup> Krehbiel himself first pointed out that the popular spiritual "Oh, Freedom over Me" has a tune that is a composite of strands from H. S. Thompson's "Lily Dale" and George F. Root's "Battle Cry of Freedom."<sup>47</sup> He argued for an African heritage, not against a European one, and tried to choose examples in which the European influence was minimal. In Jackson's view, however, he was not successful.

One clear distinction between black and white spirituals is in performance style, a point emphasized recently by Epstein, who quotes from von Hornbostel: "You will readily recognize an African Negro by seeing him dance and by hearing him sing. Not what he sings is so characteristic of his race, but the way he sings. This way of the Negro is identical in Africa and America, and it is totally different from the way of any other race, but it is difficult, if not impossible to describe or analyze it. . . ." <sup>48</sup>

All who have heard African singing and folk performances of spirituals by black Americans will agree with von Hornbostel and Epstein, I believe. The "racial emphases" noted by Jackson are African heritages.

Tallmadge's hypothesis that blacks brought a preexisting responsorial hymnody to the camp meetings is plausible, although it may be difficult to substantiate or refute. One cannot dispute, however, that blacks attended camp meetings in large numbers and expressed their overwhelming preference for responsorial singing in short, choppy phrases—a clear African heritage. Call-and-response was well adapted to camp-meeting needs, and, no matter which race first used it at a camp meeting, it fell on receptive and responsive ears. Thus, whether blacks initiated the style at camp meetings or joined in its use, they brought their African heritage to bear. The consequence of this mutual reinforcement of a shared characteristic was the greatly increased use of call-and-response by whites and its continued heavy use by blacks.

Skeptics of an African influence on spirituals have resisted admitting the consequences of mutual reinforcement as evidence. They have insisted that uniquely African traits be found. Yet for at least two reasons mutual reinforcement must be one of the most powerful of all mechanisms of influence in a fusion of cultures. First, a shared characteristic provides common ground, which will be sought by the members of the fusing cultures. Second, such characteristics, in general, will be similar but not identical in the two cultures. People may resist great changes in their ways, but they are attracted to small variations that provide some of the "spice of life." A shared characteristic should have a greater probability of surviving in a mixed tradition than it would if it were to remain isolated in either contributing tradition.

Jackson attempts to force the burden of proof on the proponents of an African heritage by claiming all mutual characteristics for the European (British) heritage alone. This is no more valid than claiming them for the African heritage alone, which is Tallmadge's tendency. Does a blue-eyed child inherit eye color from its blue-eyed father or its blue-eyed mother? When there is a double heritage, neither is invalidated by the other. One must guard against claims and implication to the contrary.



## NOTES

1. Dena J. Epstein, *Sinful Tunes and Spirituals: Black Folk Music to the Civil War* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1977); George Pullen Jackson, *White and Negro Spirituals: Their Life Span and Kinship* (Locust Valley, N.Y.: J. J. Augustin, [1943]).
2. Jackson, *White and Negro Spirituals*, pp. 79–87.
3. George Pullen Jackson, *White Spirituals in the Southern Uplands: The Story of the Fasola Folk, Their Songs, Singings, and "Buckwheat Notes"* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1933).
4. Epstein, *Sinful Tunes*, p. 197.
5. Jackson, *White and Negro Spirituals*, pp. 81–87, 261–63, 285–86.
6. William H. Tallmadge, "The Black in Jackson's White Spirituals," *The Black Perspective in Music* 9 (1981): 139–60.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 141.
8. Jeremiah Ingalls, *The Christian Harmony* (Exeter, N.H.: Henry Ranlet, 1805), p. 15.
9. D. H. Mansfield, *The American Vocalist* (Boston: Brown, Taggard and Chase, 1849), pp. 321, 328, 337.
10. *Ibid.*, pp. 290, 298, 325, 335.
11. Richard Allen, *A Collection of Spiritual Songs and Hymns Selected from Various Authors* (Philadelphia: John Ormrod, 1801); *A Collection of Hymns and Spiritual Songs from Various Authors* (Philadelphia: T. L. Plowman, 1801).
12. Eileen Southern, ed., *Readings in Black American Music* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1971), p. 52. Southern subsequently revised her citation to include reference to "'wandering' choruses or refrains; that is choruses that are freely added to any hymn rather than affixed to specific hymns." See *Readings in Black American Music*, 2d ed. (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1983), p. 52.
13. Robert Stevenson, "English Sources for Indian Music until 1882," *Ethnomusicology* 2 (1973): 411; Samson Occum, *A Choice Collection of Hymns and Spiritual Songs* (New London, Conn.: Timothy Green, 1774).
14. Tallmadge, "The Black in Jackson's White Spirituals," pp. 157, 160 n. 33.
15. Eileen Southern, *The Music of Black Americans: A History*, 2d rev. ed. (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1983), p. 86.
16. Tallmadge, "The Black in Jackson's White Spirituals," p. 157.
17. John Glas, *Christian Songs*, 6th ed. (Perth: R. Morison, Jr., 1784).
18. Charles Evans, *American Bibliography* (New York: Peter Smith, 1941).
19. See Jackson, *White and Negro Spirituals*, p. 21.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 24 n. 7.
21. A. L. Lloyd, *Folk Song in England* (New York: International Publishers, 1967), pp. 287–88.
22. Andrew Broadbuss, *Dover Selection of Spiritual Songs* (Richmond: Dover Association, 1828); personal communication from Richard Hulan.
23. A. S. Jenks and D. Gilkey, *The Chorus* [on title page; cover bears title *The Choral Hymns*], rev. ed. (1858; Philadelphia: A. S. Jenks, 1860).
24. *Original Sacred Harp, Denson Revision, 1971 Edition* (Cullman, Ala.: Sacred Harp Publishing Co., 1971), p. 145.
25. Jackson, *White and Negro Spirituals*, pp. 141–227, 265–67.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 267.
27. Dena J. Epstein, "A White Origin for the Black Spiritual? An Invalid Theory and How It Grew," *American Music* 1 (Summer 1983): 53–59, see especially p. 58.

28. Ibid.
29. Tallmadge, "The Black in Jackson's White Spirituals," p. 150.
30. Ibid.
31. William Francis Allen, Charles Pickard Ware, and Lucy McKim Garrison, comps., *Slave Songs of the United States* (New York: A. Simpson, 1867), p. vi n.
32. See Jackson, *White and Negro Spirituals*, p. 269 n. 2; and n. 29 above.
33. Samuel P. Bayard, "Prolegomena to a Study of the Principal Melodic Families of British-American Folk Song," *Journal of American Folklore* 63 (1950): 41.
34. Jackson, *White and Negro Spirituals*, p. 269 n. 2.
35. Epstein, "A White Origin for the Black Spiritual?," p. 58.
36. Jackson, *White and Negro Spirituals*, pp. 287–88.
37. Southern, ed., *Readings in Black American Music*, pp. 62–63.
38. Allen, Ware, and Garrison, comps., *Slave Songs*, p. ix.
39. See n. 23 above.
40. Allen, Ware, and Garrison, comps., *Slave Songs*, p. xxxviii.
41. Ibid., pp. vi–viii.
42. F. S. Hoyt, in his introduction to Marshall W. Taylor, *A Collection of Revival Hymns and Plantation Melodies* (Cincinnati: Taylor and Echols, 1882), p. ii.
43. Quoted in Epstein, "A White Origin for the Black Spiritual?," p. 57.
44. Jackson, *White and Negro Spirituals*, pp. 292–94.
45. Jackson, *White Spirituals in the Southern Uplands*, p. 242.
46. Henry Edward Krehbiel, *Afro-American Folksongs* (New York: Schirmer, 1914), p. 15.
47. Ibid., p. 17.
48. Epstein, "A White Origin for the Black Spiritual?," p. 57.