



Smithsonian Folkways Recordings

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CLASSIC SOUTHERN GOSPEL

from SMITHSONIAN FOLKWAYS



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- 1 **I'm Working on a Building** BILL MONROE AND THE BLUEGRASS BOYS 1:51
(A.P. Carter / APRS, BMI)
- 2 **No Disappointment in Heaven** DOCK BOGGS 2:29
(Frederick Martin Lehman)
- 3 **Wondrous Love** THE OLD HARP SINGERS OF EASTERN TENNESSEE 2:06
- 4 **Are You Washed in the Blood?** RED ALLEN 2:43
- 5 **What Are They Doing in Heaven Today?** HARRY & JEANIE WEST 2:16
(Rev. Charles Tindley)
- 6 **The Lost Soul** THE WATSON FAMILY 2:57
- 7 **Hallelujah Side** EARNEST STONEMAN 2:20
- 8 **Walking in Jerusalem (Just Like John)** THE COUNTRY GENTLEMEN 2:15
- 9 **Sinner, You'd Better Get Ready** THE LILLY BROTHERS 2:57
- 10 **When He Reached Down His Hand for Me** BILL MONROE AND THE BLUEGRASS BOYS 2:45
- 11 **Away Over in the Promised Land** THE A. L. PHIPPS FAMILY 2:15
(A. L. Phipps / Mountain Eagle Publishing Inc.-Pin Knob Music Co., BMI)
- 12 **No Tears in Heaven** KILBY SNOW 2:29
(William Doane-Fanny Crosby)
- 13 **Old Country Church** TOM MORGAN 2:49
- 14 **Glory to the Lamb** THE DEBUSK WEAVER FAMILY 2:43
- 15 **Amazing Grace** CLARENCE ASHLEY, CLINT HOWARD, FRED PRICE, JEAN RITCHIE, AND DOC WATSON 3:54
(John Newton)
- 16 **River of Jordan** THE POPLIN FAMILY 2:08
- 17 **Shake Hands with Mother Again** THE ALLEN BROTHERS 2:54
(W. A. Berry / Bridge Building Music Inc., BMI)
- 18 **Gabriel's Call** HAZEL AND ALICE 2:13
(Hazel Dickens-Alice Foster-Jeremy Foster-Marj Seeger / Wynwood Music Co. Inc., BMI)
- 19 **What Would You Give in Exchange for Your Soul?** BILL MONROE AND DOC WATSON 4:26
- 20 **He Said, If You Love Me, Feed My Sheep** THE STANCER QUARTET 2:54
- 21 **I Am a Pilgrim** THE COUNTRY GENTLEMEN 2:55
- 22 **I'm Going to a City** INDIAN BOTTOM ASSOCIATION OF OLD REGULAR BAPTISTS 3:18

INTRODUCTION

SOUTHERN GOSPEL is a catch-all phrase that is not easily defined, but at least three elements are common to all the genres covered by this term: first, *southern* refers to its geographic roots, in the southern United States; second, *gospel* implies that its lyrics subscribe to Christian tenets, which relate a message of salvation through a belief in Jesus, almost always with an evangelical, personal, and optimistic spirit; third, the phrase specifically refers to performers and consumers who are white.

Not all gospel music performed in the South is by whites, of course, but the racial complexities invested in the term *gospel* remain strong in the 21st century. This is illustrated by the decades-old racial divides that find Sunday-morning church services largely segregated into black and white congregations. Another example is the National Academy of Recorded Arts and Sciences's use of

the terms "Best Traditional Soul Gospel Album" and "Best Contemporary Soul Gospel Album" (African-American) and "Best Southern, Country, or Bluegrass Gospel Album" (Anglo-American) to make these racial distinctions utterly clear when it comes to voting in the Grammy categories. Not surprisingly, the 2005 Dove Awards, administered by the Gospel Music Association, utilize fifty categories, including "Rap/Hip Hop Recorded Song of the Year," "Southern Gospel Album of the Year," "Bluegrass Recorded Song of the Year," "Urban Album of the Year," "Spanish Language Album of the Year," and "Short Form Music Video of the Year." These categories reflect not only the fact that organizations love to give out awards, but also that the gospel world is complex, with race and ethnicity and technology all part of a rich social gumbo.

THE 19TH-CENTURY ROOTS

of Southern Gospel Music

TO UNDERSTAND contemporary Southern gospel music, you must go back to the mid-19th century. As the United States expanded westward following Reconstruction, folk and folklike styles of religious folk-music continued to evolve and flourish. Revival hymns, spiritual songs (both black and white), and gospel hymns emerged by the later part of the century, disseminated by way of printed sources as well as oral tradition.

Shape-note singing, also called fasola singing (combining three of the simplified solfège syllables used to teach sight singing), emerged in the middle of the 19th century. These shapes help the inexperienced sing without a working knowledge of key signatures or an ability to read staff notation. Shape-note singing is above all a social form of religious music. Singing-school teachers brought people together to instruct them in the rudiments of music theory. People gathered in small and large groups just for the purpose of singing this music. These gatherings lasted for varying lengths of time, from an afternoon to

several days, depending on the number of people who participated and the distance they had to travel. By the late 1800s, formal singing conventions were being held across the South.

Revival hymns and camp-meeting songs set the stage for the final third of the 19th century, when, in the aftermath of the War between the States, a new wave of evangelism, which emphasized revival "song-services" with sweet lyrical compositions, flourished. Ira D. Sankey and Dwight Moody were key figures in this movement. They collaborated on several dozen gospel-hymn collections between 1874 and 1894, and helped popularize gospel hymns, such as "Sweet Hour of Prayer," that proved fashionable among both black and white Christians. They delivered an evangelical message that was as simple and direct as their advertising slogan: "Mr. Moody will preach the gospel, and Mr. Sankey will sing the gospel."

By the late 19th century, singers, evangelists, and publishers began forming new alliances.

Normal (nonshape note) singing-schools—intensive music-education courses, which taught all of the rudiments of music using religious texts and songs—began replacing the shorter singing-schools. The Ruebush-Kieffer Publishers of New Market, Virginia, conducted the first such school in 1874. Ten years later, A. J. Showalter, manager of Ruebush-Kieffer's Southern office, began his

PUBLISHING, QUARTETS, and Early Southern Gospel Music

THE FLOWERING OF modern Southern gospel is closely tied to two publishers: the James D. Vaughan Publishing Company, of Lawrenceburg, Tennessee; and the Stamps-Baxter Music and Printing Company, of Jacksonville (near Dallas), Texas. Beginning with the founding of the Vaughan company, in 1902, a small number of publishing businesses promoted gospel songbooks out of which people sang and which they used for normal singing-schools. They printed many of

own company at Dalton, Georgia; he also began teaching normal singing-schools. These songbook publishers printed monthly or quarterly newspapers that expedited communication between singers and teachers. *The Musical Millions*, published by Ruebush-Kieffer, began in 1870 and continued for 45 years.

the early gospel songs that are today considered classics within the genre and that many people mistakenly believe come from oral tradition. Songs that have entered oral tradition, such as "The Sweetest Gift a Mother's Smile" and "I'll Fly Away," are actually composed pieces that first appeared in Vaughan or Stamps-Baxter songbooks early in the 20th century. Many other songbook publishers sprang up in the Deep South, from Texas through Georgia, but none had the strength

and impact of the two major publishing houses.

By the early 1900s, these publishers had begun sponsoring their own small groups, usually quartets, to sing out of and promote their songbooks. The publishers actually paid the quartets a salary, which they could afford because their books were selling well. Vaughan, for instance, sold an estimated 100,000 songbooks in 1915—a fact that could be attributed in part to quartets that had gone on tour about five years before. Stamps-Baxter soon followed this lead, and both companies maintained quartets for several decades. These groups kept up a regular routine of performing, and by the middle 1920s had added radio appearances and record dates to their schedule.

The history of publishing Southern gospel music, as the genre started to be called in the 1930s, is encapsulated in the life of Luther G. Presley (1887–1974), who spent nearly five decades writing sacred songs and working for the Stamps-Baxter organization. During the height of gospel songbook publishing—roughly 1925 through 1950—Stamps-Baxter maintained auxiliary offices in Pangburn, Arkansas, and Chattanooga, Tennessee. Presley composed hundreds of songs, many with themes of eternal life in heaven, and they were published in Stamps-Baxter books such as *Thankful Hearts and Heavenly Highway*. The success of the Stamps-Baxter organization was sealed in 1927 with the astonishing success of "Give the World a Smile,"

which was first recorded by the Stamps Quartet in the fall of 1927 for RCA Victor Records and was then reprinted numerous times in Stamps-Baxter songbooks. "Give the World a Smile" is the best-known song from this era, and is still associated with the Stamps Quartet.

Family ensembles, which sometimes mixed sacred and secular songs, continue to be a Southern gospel wellspring. Groups like the Lewis Family were preceded by the Stoneman Family of Galax, Virginia. Ernest V. Stoneman, the patriarch of the Stoneman Family (which included Patsy from "Hee Haw" and the legendary bluegrass fiddler Scotty), began his recording career in 1924 and continued performing into the era of bluegrass. His early religious recordings (from 1926) nicely illustrate the family and community foundation of early Southern gospel music. He, his wife, and several friends and neighbors journeyed to New York City for a three-day Victor session, where the Dixie Mountaineers joined voices to produce many recordings, including "The Resurrection," "Sinless Summer," and "The Great Reaping Day." The strongest religious sides were three songs first published in the late 19th century: "Are You Washed in the Blood of the Lamb," "I am Sweeping Through the Gates," and "Going Down the Valley."

Other early Southern country-music recording artists mixed a similar sacred and secular repertoire. The Monroe Brothers—Bill

and Charlie—first recorded for Bluebird in 1936, when they featured a number of late 19th-century hymns, including “What Would You Give in Exchange?” and “God Holds the Future in His Hands.” The Blue Sky Boys and other brother groups also utilized similar sacred numbers on their radio shows and records.

PENTECOSTALISM

and Southern Gospel Music

THE PENTECOSTAL MOVEMENT, the largest religious movement to have originated in the United States, began in Topeka, Kansas, in 1901, within a small, all-white Bible-study group organized by Charles Fox Parham, a former Methodist preacher. It quickly spread into black communities throughout the country. By the first years of the 21st century, Pentecostal churches claimed more than two hundred million members worldwide, making them the largest Protestant religion in the world. The sensational growth of Pentecostal (also called Holiness or Sanctified) sects suggests

Northern or Midwestern duos, such as Gardner and McFarland, mined similar territory during the late 1920s and into the 1930s. In the middle 1940s, when bluegrass emerged, many bluegrass groups included religious numbers; some even performed gospel songs in four-part harmony as part of their show.

that this is an important movement, which has strongly affected music and culture.

For many Americans, Pentecostalism came to the fore in Los Angeles in 1906, during the Azusa Street Revival, led by the black American preacher William Joseph Seymour. This revival is particularly noteworthy because it focused nationwide attention on this movement and its interracial constituency. The fact that blacks and whites worshipped together and their leader was African American was remarkable enough, but the Azusa Street Apostolic Faith Mission continued for

nearly three years, seven days a week. Between the summers of 1906 and 1909, tens of thousands of converts received the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, spoke in tongues, and danced through the power of the Spirit. This period not only focused attention on Pentecostalism, but helped disseminate these beliefs throughout the United States.

Over the next several years, churches like the Pentecostal Free-Will Baptist Church, the Fire-Baptized Holiness Church, the Church of God, and the Pentecostal Holiness Church proliferated. Slowly, perhaps inevitably, the churches began to become racially separated—a trend that became intensified as the 20th century wore on. In 2005, the Assemblies of God was the largest predominantly white Pentecostal church, while the Church of God in Christ held the same position in the African-American community.

There were no recordings of white Pentecostal musicians until the late 1920s, when groups such as McVay & Johnson and the Ernest Phipps Holiness Singers entered the studio. These

dynamic recordings demonstrate that—in the South, at least—Pentecostal music was closely tied with the old-time, stringband tradition and was a precursor of gospel-bluegrass. The recorded music was performed to the accompaniment of banjos and guitars; voices were pitched high, and their quality was nasal. The ensemble singing heard on the Phipps recordings was highly spirited and featured loosely unison singing.

Pentecostalism and its music are meant to appeal to everyday folks: the performers want to reach out and change the lives of as many people as possible, and their music reflects this desire. The repertoire of many early Pentecostal musicians reflects their evangelical spirit; songs such as “Clouds of Glory,” “We Shall All Be United,” “If the Light Have Gone Out in Your Soul,” and “I Know That Jesus Has Set Me Free” underscore this impulse. Although the music of contemporary Pentecostal musicians has changed to reflect more recent trends, this impulse and spirit remains undiminished.

MODERN SOUTHERN GOSPEL MUSIC

THE RISE TO PROMINENCE of gospel performances on the radio and records beginning in the middle 1920s, as well as live performances, helped alter the face of what would become known as Southern gospel music. The tradition of singing out of shape-note books gradually declined, and the communal spirit of the old-fashioned camp meetings and friendly singing conventions was altered in light of the more widespread popularity of the music. Fewer touring singers were directly linked to and supported by publishers because the groups could support themselves. White religious music, specifically the gospel music that emerged during the 1920s and 1930s, soon became a full-time professional business, which could sustain a slowly growing community of singers, songwriters, promoters, publishers, and broadcasters.

The maturation of Southern gospel as it is known today involved four important changes:

1. The music became commodified into a product that helped further its commercialization.
2. It moved out of the churches and into the hands of publishers and promoters.
3. It was infused with elements of jazz, blues, and commercial country music to make it more "worldly."
4. It became entertainment as well as spiritual solace.

The notion of commercialization and entertainment is especially noteworthy. By the early 1940s, Southern gospel music was often being billed as "family entertainment with a message" and "all-around good entertainment, featuring the most popular gospel songs of the day." Professional Southern gospel quartets, born in the early part of the 20th century as business enterprises (most notably the Vaughan and Stamps groups, described earlier), helped move the music closer to popular tastes. These quartets incorporated African-American elements, such

as syncopation, vocal interpolations by the bass singer, falsetto singing by the lead singer, extended and more greatly improvised performances at live programs, and the use of a wider variety of instruments to accompany singing.

In the 1940s, the Blackwood Brothers Quartet used their Shenandoah, Iowa, base to launch a career in gospel music. They started out on their own small record label and with broadcasts over radio stations, most notably WHO, which helped disseminate their music throughout the Midwest. By the early 1950s, the Blackwood Brothers realized that the South offered them more professional opportunities, so they moved to Memphis and began recording for the RCA Victor Company.

Spurred by the success of groups such as the Blackwood Brothers after the close of World War II, white gospel quartets rose to even greater heights of popularity. Grand Old Opry star Wally Fowler left his band to concentrate on his gospel quartet career, and by 1948 he was a full-time quartet singer and a busy promoter, who occasionally set up as many as five programs on a single night! Every Friday, he staged an old night-sing at the home of the Grand Ole Opry, the Ryman Auditorium. Southern gospel music was slowly moving into the mainstream of American music. It soon echoed themes exploited in popular songs. "Gospel Boogie," copyrighted in November 1947, and first recorded by the Homeland Harmony Quartet in early 1948, became an instant sensa-

tion. It was immediately covered by nearly a dozen black and white artists, of whom some recorded it under an alternate title, "A Wonderful Time Up There." Because it was so closely allied with trends in popular culture, its success created a controversy within the gospel community.

But gospel-song writing was nothing new. Some of the best and most popular songs performed by these singers were composed by Albert E. Brumley, whose "I'll Fly Away" has been recorded more than 500 times. Brumley was born on 29 October 1905 in rural eastern Oklahoma. Attending his first singing-school in 1922, he was struck by the power and beauty of what he heard, and he continued to study at the Hartford (Arkansas) Music Company. This small, regional publisher annually issued one or two songbooks, which were based on the seven-shape system. By the late 1920s, Brumley had begun composing songs for Hartford; he composed "I'll Fly Away" in 1932.

Over the next twelve years, Brumley unleashed some of his best compositions upon the gospel world: "Jesus Hold My Hand" (1932), "I'll Meet You in the Morning" (1936), "Turn Your Radio On" (1938), and "If We Ever Meet Again" (1945). Most of these compositions were promoted at conventions, over radiobroadcasts, and at live contexts. The first songbook dedicated specifically to his work, *Book of Radio Favorites: A Collection of Sacred, Sentimental, and Western Songs* (1937), helped spread his fame, but it was not

until he switched to Stamps-Baxter, in 1938, that his written songs reached a nationwide audience.

Within ten years, Brumley had bought out the old Hartford Music Company in order to form the Brumley-Hartford, which is still operated by his family in southern Missouri. He continued to write songs and run his publishing company until his death, in 1977. Performers as diverse as the Chuck Wagon Gang, Elvis Presley, and Hank Williams have recorded his songs, which are firmly in the early 20th-century gospel mold. "I'll Fly Away," for example, opens with the same melody as the well-known "Prisoner's Song," and it begins with the catchy line "If I had the wings of an angel."

Though the Chuck Wagon Gang had been around since the mid-1930s and the Johnson Family since the early 1940s (often performing songs by Albert E. Brumley), some of the older, more conservative singers felt that the popularity of these groups—along with the Speer Family and the Statesmen Quartet—was built upon an ephemeral foundation. Fowler and his cohorts suggested that nothing but good could result from spreading the message of the Gospel to more people. The battle took place on all types of grounds: backstage at programs, in churches, at all-night sings, and in letters to newspaper editors. Ultimately, the argument became moot, as younger singers reached a larger audience and the quartets became stronger.

During the late 1940s and into the 1950s,

Southern gospel quartets, in parallel with their African-American counterparts, drew such large crowds and sold so many records that their music edged into the realm of popular culture. Elvis Presley was such a big fan of the Blackwood Brothers that once, before he began his solo career, he auditioned—unsuccessfully—to join the group. During the mid 1950s, after his move from Sun to RCA Records, the Jordonaires (a quartet) became an integral part of his group and appeared on many of his recordings.

Despite the popularity of quartets in Southern gospel music, some conservative Christian radio stations broke Statesmen records on the air to protest their "jazzy music." Their disfavor toward the highly entertaining pop-oriented quartets underscores the fact that many Southern gospel fans held fast to the notion that their music should be used solely to glorify the life and works of Jesus Christ. The worldliness of quartets disturbed them, and they refused to popularize music that had what they perceived to be worldly rhythms and sounds. These are the fans who supported family groups and easily related to gospel-bluegrass.

Contemporary Southern gospel music continues to cast the same wide net that it has for the past century. Many of the controversies between the conservative and more worldly branches of Southern gospel music that emerged in the late 1940s still flare up. There are many more fully professional Southern gospel groups

today; many of them—especially family-oriented groups, such as the Crabbs, the Easters, and the Gaithers—continue to appeal to Southern gospel music fans. The professionalism and popularity of this music is underscored by the formation of the Southern Gospel Music Association, located on the grounds of Dollywood in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee, near Knoxville, in 1995.

Although this music remains most strongly supported south of the Mason-Dixon Line, it has continued to spread, so that it is now being performed throughout the United States. Southern

Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Michigan strongly support this music; it is even popular on the West Coast. The Crossroads Quartet, based in metropolitan Seattle, Washington, since they formed in the mid-1950s, exemplifies this trend. Despite their distance from the South, their website states that "We sing Southern Gospel Quartet style. Our music is four-part harmony with a key [*sic*] board and bass and is upbeat, positive in message[,] and as one lady said, 'You can understand the words'" (<http://www.crossroadsqt.com>).

SOUTHERN GOSPEL MUSIC

on Smithsonian Folkways

BECAUSE OF THE NATURE of the Smithsonian Folkways catalogue, the more folk and folk-oriented strains of Southern gospel, most notably gospel-bluegrass, predominate. Moses Asch did not eschew or deliberately overlook popular trends in music, but Southern gospel

quartets are all but absent from the Smithsonian Folkways archives. Virtually all of the recordings issued by Folkways during Asch's tenure were brought to him by outside producers, musicians themselves, and a host of dedicated (sometimes eccentric) visionaries and enthusiasts. But no

one, it seems, brought quintessential Southern gospel quartet music to him during the years that he ran Folkways. Perhaps it was viewed as being too commercial during the 1950s and 1960s, or perhaps he rejected such submissions.

That the classic Southern gospel quartets are missing from Moe Asch's Folkways catalogue does not mean that they are absent from Smithsonian Folkways Recordings. This is due to the inclusion of the Stancer Quartet performance, first issued by Smithsonian Folkways in 1997. Furthermore, several of bluegrass groups, most notably the Country Gentlemen and Bill Monroe & the Bluegrass Boys, often featured quartet singing (either unaccompanied or with minimal accompaniment) as part of their live programs and on their recordings. While these can be categorized as bluegrass-gospel, the relationship

between the unaccompanied version of "Walk in Jerusalem (Just Like John)" by the Country Gentlemen and a performance by the Statesmen is undeniable.

Classic Southern Gospel, therefore, focuses on bluegrass-gospel and country-gospel by family groups, in a genre often categorized as country-gospel music. This collection briefly touches on the roots of Southern gospel by including one sacred-harp selection and a performance by singers from an Old Regular Baptist Church. These roots are important to acknowledge because groups as diverse as Bill Monroe and the Watson Family drew on the harmonies heard on sacred-harp singing. Furthermore, Baptist hymns provide the foundation for the repertoire of many Southern gospel groups.

SONG NOTES

1. I'm Working on a Building

BILL MONROE AND THE BLUEGRASS BOYS.

Bill Monroe, vocal and mandolin; Yates Green, guitar and lead vocals; Bobby Hicks and Joe Stuart, fiddles; Rudy Lyle, banjo; Chick Stripling or Bessie Lee Maudlin, bass. (From SFW CD 40063, 1993; recorded May 13, 1956)

Ralph Rinzler's original notes to CD 40063, "Live Recordings 1956-1969: Off The Record Volume 1," quote Monroe as saying: "I believe that I heard the Carter Family sing that song, and we got requests for it on our show dates and I thought that I should learn it. It's a holiness number[,] I would say. You know[,] there's holiness singing in my music, bluegrass music. From the time you're a boy on[,] you want to build something[,] and when you get older, to think that you're working on the building like that, why, it gives you a wonderful feeling." This 1956 selection underscores the profound impact that Pentecostalism exerted on Southern gospel. Monroe was also correct

about the Carter Family's performance of this song, which they recorded in 1934 and issued on Bluebird and Montgomery Ward. It was recorded in the 1940s by J. E. Mainer on King, and by Monroe himself on Decca in 1954.

2. No Disappointment in Heaven

DOCK BOGGS.

Dock Boggs, vocal and banjo. (From SFW CD 40108 1998/ FW02392 1965; recorded in 1963)

Written by Frederick Martin Lehman in 1914, "No Disappointment in Heaven" was first recorded in 1926 by the Midwestern duo of Perry Kim and Einar Nyland, followed quickly by a wide variety of artists, including Peck's Male Quartette (1930), Bob Wills and the Texas Playboys (1936), and Arthur Smith's Carolina Crackerjacks (1940). A Midwesterner himself, Lehman studied for the ministry at Northwestern College in Naperville, Illinois, and had a long career as a pastor and

a gospel composer, whose most famous song is probably "The Royal Telephone." In 1911, he moved to Kansas City, where he helped found the Nazarene Publishing House. Dock Boggs (1898–1971) heard "No Disappointment in Heaven" while growing up in southwestern Virginia. This version was recorded by musician-historian Mike Seeger in 1963, shortly after Boggs's rediscovery, and represent Boggs's first wave of recordings since the late 1920s.

3. Wondrous Love

THE OLD HARP SINGERS OF EASTERN TENNESSEE.

Approximately 12 mixed voices. (From FW 2356, 1951).

Southern-style sacred-harp singing developed in the early 19th century from a desire to simplify the teaching of notated music (using the standard fa-so-la syllables) to a wider audience. The first Southern tunebook, *Kentucky Harmony*, appeared in 1816, and was followed by dozens of others published across the South. Sacred-harp singing was often taught in singing-school, where many people initially learned to sing in four-part harmony. Many early country music and Southern gospel artists attended 20th-century singing-schools, and the impact of the style can be heard in such early groups as the various Stamps and Vaughn quartets. "Wondrous Love," a personal favorite, is found in numerous songbook collections, and can be found in print as early as 1811.

4. Are You Washed in the Blood?

RED ALLEN.

Red Allen, vocal and guitar; Frank Wakefield, vocal and mandolin; Pete Kukendall, banjo; Tom Morgan, bass. (From SFW CD 40127 2001/Folkways FW 2408 1964; recorded in 1964)

This hymn of Christian redemption, published by the Reverend Elisha A. Hoffman in 1878, has become a Southern gospel standard. Recorded in the late 1990s as "Blood of the Lamb" by Wilco on Mermaid Avenue II, pioneering Southern gospel groups as diverse as the Dixie Sacred Singers and the Reverend M. L. Thrasher & His Gospel Singers recorded this as "Are You Washed in the Blood?" as early as 1927. This powerful but restrained version is one of the best of Red Allen's recordings from his 1964 band, which featured Frank Wakefield's fluid mandolin and compelling vocals.

5. What Are They Doing in Heaven Today?

HARRY & JEANIE WEST.

Jeannie West, vocal and guitar; Harry West, vocal and mandolin (From FW 2357, 1957)

This Southern gospel standard was composed by the Reverend Charles Tindley, the famous Philadelphia-based African-American pastor and composer, and published in 1901. Although you may not recognize Tindley's name, you

will recognize his compositions, which include "We'll Understand It Better, By and By," "The Storm Is Passing Over," and "I Shall Overcome." The last was transformed into the civil-rights anthem, "We Shall Overcome." Currently musical instrument dealers in Statesville, North Carolina (near Jeannie's birthplace), Harry and Jeanie West participated in the folk revival that swept America in the early 1960s. Along with two albums on Folkways, the Wests recorded for Riverside, Prestige, and Everest Records.

6. The Lost Soul

THE WATSON FAMILY.

Doc Watson, vocal and guitar; Rosa Lee Watson, vocal; Gaither Carlton, vocal. (From SFW CD 40012, 1990/Folkways 2366 1963; recorded circa 1961)



This slow and mournful dirge about paying the price for being unredeemed on earth is the most somber song on this collection. It is performed in a minor key, and Doc Watson sets the tone with his opening chord. Although "The Lost Soul" probably appeared in late 19th- or early 20th-century hymnals, a printed or recorded source for this performance has not been located.

7. Hallelujah Side

EARNEST STONEMAN.

Ernest Stoneman autoharp and vocal. (From FW 2315, 1957)

First recorded by Ernest Stoneman (with family and neighbors from Galax, Virginia, performing as the Dixie Mountaineers) in 1926, "Hallelujah Side" was part of Stoneman's repertoire for more than sixty years. The Stoneman Family often performed this song during the 1940s and 1950s, but this spare rendition is particularly effective in its simplicity. "Hallelujah Side" was published in 1898 by the Reverend Johnson Oatman and J. Howard Entwistle and recorded in the late 1920s and early 1930s by groups as diverse as Frank Welling & John McGhee and the Chumbler Family.

8. Walking in Jerusalem (Just Like John)

THE COUNTRY GENTLEMEN.

Eddie Adcock, baritone vocal; John Duffey, bass vocal; Tom Gray, tenor vocal; Charlie Waller, lead vocal.
(From SFW CD 40133 2001/ FW02411 1963; recorded 6 January 1963)

The Country Gentlemen have been a fixture in the thriving Washington, D.C., bluegrass scene since their founding, in 1957. This is their first and "classic" lineup, which remained stable throughout the first half of the 1960s, a period that saw the release of their first album (Folkways F 2409, *Country Songs Old and New*) and a



memorable 1961 Carnegie Hall performance as well as scores of live dates through the D.C. area. Bill Monroe performed "Walking in Jerusalem (Just Like John)" throughout his career, and his arrangement clearly inspired The Country Gentlemen, as did the Southern gospel quartet tradition. The song, however, has its strongest roots among black American quartets. It was recorded as early as 1922 by the Excelsior Quartette (of Tidewater, Virginia) and later, in 1941, by the highly influential Golden Gate Jubilee Quartet. The earliest known version of the song was recorded for Victor by the white vaudeville singer and actress Kitty Cheatham, in 1916.

9. Sinner, You'd Better Get Ready

THE LILLY BROTHERS.

Everett Lilly, vocal and mandolin and "B" Lilly vocal and guitar. (From SFW CD 40158 2005/ FW 2433, 1962)

Derived from the duet recorded by Bill and Charlie Monroe in 1937, this song of warning was a Lilly Brothers staple during the 1950s. The source of the Monroes' recording is not entirely clear, but it almost certainly came from a hymnal or oral tradition. The first published versions of "Sinner, You'd Better Get Ready" appeared in 1887 in both *Cabin and Plantation Songs* and *Jubilee & Plantation Songs*. It initially appeared on record in 1931, when Bryant's Jubilee Singers recorded it for ARC.



10. When He Reached Down His Hand for Me

BILL MONROE AND THE BLUEGRASS BOYS.

Bill Monroe, mandolin and tenor; Mac Wiseman, vocal and guitar; Don Reno, baritone; Benny Martin, bass.
(From SF CD 40063, 1993; recorded 6 September 1965)

This traditional hymn almost certainly has its roots in the late 19th century, and is a song that Monroe almost certainly knew his entire life. Artists as diverse as Johnny Cash (on his 1962 Columbia album, *Hymns from the Heart*) and Candi Staton have recorded their own versions of it. Ralph Rinzler observed: "In preparing this recording, every person with whom I spoke who had been at the first Fincastle Bluegrass Festival recalled this performance as being the emotional highlight of the weekend. It was one of the last

songs of Carlton Haney's initial presentation of the famous Bluegrass story" (notes to CD 40063, *Live Recordings 1956-1969: Off the Record Volume 1*). With its spare instrumental accompaniment, this rendition displays its close ties to the Southern gospel quartet tradition exemplified by the Statesmen and the Cathedral Quartet.

11. Away Over in the Promised Land

THE A. L. PHIPPS FAMILY.

A. L. Phipps, vocal and guitar; Kathleen Phipps, vocal and guitar; Helen Phipps, vocal and autoharp; Leeman Phipps, vocal and bass. (From FW 2375, 1965)

The Phipps Family of Barbourville, Kentucky, has blended a sacred and secular repertoire since their formation, in 1943. Their sound is similar to that of the pioneering country music group The Carter Family, who lived not far away, in Maces Springs, Virginia. A. L.'s uncle, Ernest Phipps, recorded several sacred selections for Victor in 1927 in a style that clearly influenced his nephew. "Away Over in the Promised Land" may have its roots in camp meetings, which flourished in Kentucky and along the frontier in the 1820s through the 1840s.

12. No Tears in Heaven

KILBY SNOW.

Kilby Snow, autoharp (From Folkways 2365, 1962).

Like Ernest Snowman, Kilby Snow was born and raised in Grayson County, Virginia, and moved to Pennsylvania as an adult in search of more lucrative work. Snow continued to perform after his move north, often appearing at local coffeehouses in the 1960s. For many years, he was an important figure at the Philadelphia Folk Festival. This is Snow's instrumental version of William Howard Doane and Fanny Crosby's Reconstruction-era hymn, which first appeared in print in *The Silver Spray*, edited by Doane (1868). Crosby's rather maudlin text was inspired by a sermon bearing the same title and preached on 6 August 1865 by C. H. Spurgeon. "No Tears in Heaven" has appeared in countless hymnals



and songbooks, and this complex of sermon and songs seems to have been an inspiration to Eric Clapton, whose song "Tears in Heaven" is a tribute to Conor Clapton, Eric's preschool son, who died in an accident in 1991.

13. Old Country Church

TOM MORGAN.

Tom Morgan, bass; and others (From FW 31072, 1983)

Luthier and bassist Tom Morgan has been involved with bluegrass music since the 1950s. Now living in Morgan Springs, Tennessee, he spent some of the 1950s and 1960s living near Washington, D.C., playing with the Country Gentleman and other local groups, and helping struggling young musicians like banjoist Bill Keith and mandolin master Frank Wakefield. Highly nostalgic, "Old Country Church" became a standard among Southern gospel artists by World War II, and it has been recorded by a wide variety of artists, including Little Jimmy Dickens and Webb Peirce.

14. Glory to the Lamb

THE DEBUSK-WEAVER FAMILY.

Burton DeBusk, vocal and guitar; Mary Elizabeth DeBusk, vocal and autoharp; Donnie Weaver, vocal and guitar; Linda Weaver, vocal and autoharp. (From FW 32431, 1979)



The musical and geographical links between the Carter Family and the DeBusk-Weaver Family are strong and clear from the first note of the performance of "Glory to the Lamb." Their family roots go back to the same region of southwest Virginia as those of the Carters, and at one time they lived about thirty miles from the Carter family homestead in Maces Springs. Like the Carters, the DeBusk-Weaver family began singing in church and at home to entertain friends and neighbors, and they have continued to do so since moving to southeastern Pennsylvania, in 1959. Although "Glory to the Lamb" first appeared in print in 1900 and was initially recorded by the Kentucky Ramblers in 1930, the Carter Family's 1935 recording for ARC remains definitive.

15. Amazing Grace

CLARENCE ASHLEY, CLINT HOWARD, FRED PRICE, JEAN RITCHIE, AND DOC WATSON.

Clarence Ashley, vocal; Clint Howard, vocal; Fred Price, vocal; Jean Ritchie, vocal; Doc Watson, lead vocal. (From SFW CD 40029 1994; recorded in April 1962)

These are among the most respected names in Southern vernacular music. Each of these musicians was caught up in the 1960s folk revival. This performance was documented in April 1962 at the Ash Grove, a well-known folk-club in Los Angeles, where "Amazing Grace" often served as the closing number for Clarence Ashley's group, whose regulars included Howard, Price, and Watson. Jean Ritchie often joined them, as she did on this occasion. "Amazing Grace" is one of the best-known hymns, having been written by Englishman John Newton in 1789. In its earliest printed incarnations, it was usually known as "New Britain," and "Amazing Grace" served as its subtitle. The more well-known title did not prevail until the mid-19th century.

16. River of Jordan

THE POPLIN FAMILY.

Edna Poplin, vocal and guitar; China Poplin, vocal and banjo. (From FW 2306, 1963)

With roots that can be traced back to the 1720s, the Poplin family of Sumter, South Carolina, has

been a musical family since at least the 1920s, when "modern" country music developed. The family's musical patriarch, Hunter China Poplin, was born in 1904 and lived his entire life in Sumter. "Uncle China" began playing the banjo as a boy, and with siblings Connie Lee (harmonica), Willie Bell (piano and organ), Joe Fielder (guitar), and Edna (guitar), he formed the family band before the Great Depression. In various forms, the Poplin Family Band played together for nearly six decades. Their 1963 Folkways recording was their first commercial release. This version of "River of Jordan" is related to songs with similar themes, such as "I'm Going to Walk the Streets of Glory," recorded as early as 1927 by The West Virginia Snake Hunters and Roy Harvey & Posey Rorrer.

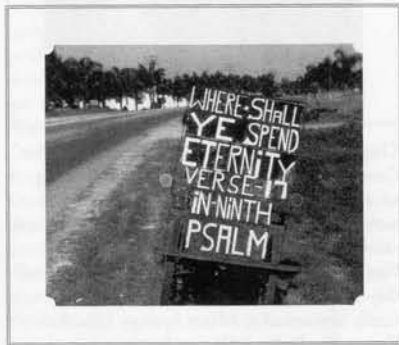
17. Shake Hands with Mother Again

THE ALLEN BROTHERS.

Harley Allen, vocal and guitar; Greg Allen, vocal; Ronnie Allen, vocal and mandolin. (From FW 31075, 1980)

If you've had even a passing interest in bluegrass music over the past few years, then you know that the Allen Brothers really are brothers, and their father was Red Allen, the famous mandolin player and singer. They performed in their father's band in the 1970s before forming the Allen Brothers. In more recent years, the brothers have strayed far from their strong bluegrass

background. Harley, in particular, has gained status as a songwriter: his compositions have been recorded by country-music artists as different as Garth Brooks and Allison Krause. This sentimental "mother-and-home" sacred song has a long recorded history, which stretches back to 1930 and includes artists such as Asher Sizemore & Little Jimmy, Bill Cox, the Happy Valley Family, and Wade Mainer.



18. Gabriel's Call

HAZEL AND ALICE.

Alice Gerrard, vocal and guitar; Hazel Dickens, vocal and bass, David Grisman, mandolin; fiddle; Lamar Grier, banjo. (From SFW CD 40065 1996; recorded in the mid-1960s)

This selection is taken from the aptly named *Pioneering Women of Bluegrass*, which was initially recorded in the mid-1960s and reissued some 30 years later. Though they were not the first women to perform bluegrass, Alice Gerrard and Hazel Dickens were among the more prominent early female performers to explore the genre. This dynamic performance of a rather obscure sacred song features nice interplay between Gerrard and Dickens's voices, as well as several nice instrumental breaks.

19. What Would You Give in Exchange for Your Soul?

BILL MONROE AND DOC WATSON.

Bill Monroe, vocal and mandolin; Doc Watson vocal and guitar. (From SFW CD 40064 1993; recorded 17 May 1963)

Although loose and casual, this performance is very much in the tradition of the famous brother duets, such as the Blue Sky Boys, Homer & Walter Callahan, and (of course) Bill and Charlie Monroe—duets that were highly popular in the 1930s and 1940s. This version comes from a series of informal recordings that Monroe and Watson did when they toured together in the early to middle 1960s. "What Would You Give in Exchange" is clearly influenced by the Monroe Brothers' version, recorded and released in 1936. The song, published in 1912 by F. J. Berry and J.

H. Carr, proved so popular that Bill and Charlie Monroe recorded parts 2 through 4 by the end of 1938. Wade Mainer, the Dixon Brothers, and the Prairie Ramblers also recorded versions of "What Would You Give in Exchange" during the late 1930s.

20. He Said, If You Love Me, Feed My Sheep

THE STANCER QUARTET.

Four unknown singers. (From SF CD 40097 1997; recorded 8 January 1967)

Mike Seeger recorded this obscure but talented quartet as part of a Sunday afternoon radiobroadcast on WBBI, based in Abington, Virginia. While most Southern gospel quartets are segregated by gender, the Stancer Quartet is unusual because you can hear at least one female voice in the mix. "He Said, If You Love Me, Feed My Sheep" has been recorded by only a handful of Southern gospel and other groups, including Big Country Bluegrass. The title and theme are derived from a Bible passage found in John 21:15–17. As Mike observed in his notes, "If you want to hear old-time family and community singing in the South, tune in to small-town Sunday morning religious programs." Even in the days of increasing consolidation of radio ownership, this remains true into the 21st century.

21. I Am a Pilgrim

THE COUNTRY GENTLEMEN.

Eddie Adcock, baritone vocal; John Duffey, tenor vocal; Tom Gray, bass vocal; Charlie Waller, guitar and lead vocal. (From SPW CD 40133 2001/ FW 2411 1963; recorded 6 January 1963)

This may be one of the best known and most celebrated post-World-War-II Southern gospel songs. It is almost always associated with Merle Travis, who copyrighted and recorded it (for King) in 1946, but did not compose it. The song was well enough known among African-American gospel quartets in Tidewater, Virginia, that it was recorded as early as 1924 by the Norfolk Jubilee Quartet, and it was popular enough that the Silver Leaf Quartette of Norfolk choose it for their 1928 debut recording. All told, the song, under the titles "I'm a Pilgrim," "I'm a Pilgrim and a Stranger," and "I'm a Pilgrim and a Stranger in This Land," was recorded by 14 African-American groups from across the South, before Travis ever entered the King studio.

22. I'm Going to a City

INDIAN BOTTOM ASSOCIATION OF OLD REGULAR BAPTISTS.

Led by Brother Mike Halcomb; various congregation members, vocals. (From SPW CD 40106, 1997; recorded 10 June 1993)

Because Old Regular Baptists do not allow sound recordings during their worship services, this performance was recorded 10 June 1993 at a special meeting of the Indian Bottom Association. The melody, which resembles that of the first strain of "Wayfaring Stranger," is first lined out by Brother Halcomb, and is then repeated (with some variation) by the members of the congregation, much as they would during a church service. This style of lining out has its roots in 16th-century England, and most of the contemporary performance practices (the vocal phrasing, the manner in which the songs are led, etc.) are still handed down through personal contact. This music is sometimes referred to as "singing in the good old-fashioned way," and has influenced prominent country singers, as George Jones and Emmy Lou Harris. Artists on this album whose voices also betray this influence include Bill Monroe and Jean Ritchie.

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Photos courtesy of Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, FSA-OWI Collection: Front cover and inside tray: Dorothea Lange; back of booklet, pp 15 and 20: Marion Post Wolcott; p 16:

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