# *Hymns of the Old Colony Mennonites and the Old Way of Singing*

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In an article on the origin and development of the so-called Old Way of Singing, Nicholas Temperley described it as a phenomenon that had existed during several centuries of Anglo-Saxon culture in both Great Britain and North America.[1] A brief analysis of a German hymn sung by the Old Order Amish led him to suggest further that the practice might in fact be a characteristic of Protestant worship in general.[2] In this article I shall examine various aspects of the hymnody of a group known as the Old Colony Mennonites that may lead to further clarification and expansion of the concept. The availability of written documents that can be compared with the music of congregations still singing in a style that seems to have changed very little in the past century makes it possible to study this particular melismatic hymn-singing tradition—the Old Way of Singing among the Old Colony Mennonites—in considerable detail. Because there are still congregations living in relative isolation, it is also possible to examine the ways in which their musical practices reflect and reinforce their view of the world and its relationship to them.

Old Colony Mennonites are one of several groups of Mennonites for whom the injunction to live apart from the world has manifested itself in visible and sometimes dramatic ways. They share with the larger body of Mennonites basic Anabaptist tenets of faith such as the concept of the church as a voluntary community, the refusal to take an oath, and the renunciation of violence.[3] Like the Hutterites, the Old Order Amish of Pennsylvania, and the Old Order Mennonites of Waterloo County in southern Ontario, however, they have been distinguishable by their simple, austere clothing and rural way of life and by their avoidance of technological developments that might compromise their attempts to remain separated from the world.[4] And like the Hutterites and Old Order Amish, the Old Colony Mennonites have a rich tradition of hymn singing.[5]

Mennonites living in the Vistula Delta around Danzig in the late eighteenth century were descendants of Dutch Anabaptists who had fled persecution in the Netherlands in the mid-sixteenth century and found refuge in the free city of Danzig and on the estates of Polish noblemen.[6] The annexation of the Polish province of Royal Prussia to Prussia in 1772 brought significant changes. The language of worship in Mennonite churches had remained Dutch until the 1760s, by which time the local Werder-Platt had become common, but High German now became the language of instruction in schools and began gradually to influence and invade Mennonite culture.[7] Under the new regime, Mennonites who refused military service were not allowed to acquire more land, a restriction whose result would soon have been a large number of landless families. This regulation, combined with other pressures that now began to build in a bureaucratic military state, caused many Mennonites to view with considerable enthusiasm the invitation of Catherine the Great to occupy the Ukrainian steppes she had recently wrested from the Turkish Empire. The first settlers left in 1788 and arrived on the steppes of Ukraine in an area immediately north of the Black Sea in 1789.

In Russia, Mennonites lived in closed colonies in which they exercised control over most civil as well as religious matters. After overcoming the initial hardships accompanying settlement on the open steppes, the colonists prospered, and population growth resulted in the establishing of new colonies in other parts of the country.[8] The Russian reforms of the 1860s following the end of the Crimean War introduced changes—compulsory use of Russian in schools and measures suggesting that their exemption from military service might soon be threatened—that were alarming, especially to the more conservative Mennonites. These concerns, in addition to the constant quest for more land, led some seventeen thousand Mennonites to emigrate to the Canadian province of Manitoba and the states of Minnesota, Kansas, and Oklahoma in 1874.[9]

It is in the Manitoba segment of the emigration that the Old Colony story begins. The Mennonites coming to Manitoba were already the most conservative portion of the group that had left Russia; the more progressive had generally chosen the United States as their destination. Some saw the entrance into a new land as an opportunity to return to the old way of doing things. At the center of the further division between conservative and progressive factions in Manitoba was the manner of hymn singing. The group that came to be called the Old Colony Mennonites chose to return to an oral hymn-singing tradition, known in their Low German vernacular as the *oole*

*Wies* (the "old melodies" or the "old way"), while the remainder chose the modern method of singing from notation, which had already become common in schools and congregations in Russia.[10] The desire to maintain traditional ways and avoid worldly influences subsequently took the Old Colony Mennonites from Manitoba and Saskatchewan to Mexico in 1922, from Saskatchewan to the Fort Vermilion area in Northern Alberta beginning in 1934, from Mexico to British Honduras in 1958, from Mexico to Bolivia in 1967–68, and more recently from Mexico and Central America to isolated areas of the United States and Canada.[11] The musical sources on which this study is based are the results of field work done among the Old Colony Mennonites of Mexico by Charles Burkhart in 1950[12] and field work that I did from 1989 to 1993 in Old Colony Mennonite congregations in the Fort Vermilion area of northern Alberta, Canada.[13]

Just before they left for Ukraine, the Mennonite communities in Prussia had begun to exchange their Dutch hymnals for German hymnals adapted from their Lutheran neighbors. Mennonites leaving the Vistula Delta after 1788 took with them the first Mennonite hymnal in German, published by the Mennonites in Danzig in 1767.[14] By 1806 the Mennonites still living in Danzig had introduced printed music for the use of organists into their congregations, bringing to the hymnody of the Prussian Mennonites a practice that had been common in Lutheran churches from the end of the seventeenth century onward.[15] The Mennonites moving to Russia were untouched by such changes, partly because they left too soon to be aware of them and partly because such niceties of civilization as musical literacy tended to get lost in the face of the hardships inevitably encountered by agricultural pioneers, a condition Old Colony Mennonites were to encounter again and again as they moved from one remote area to another.

Very little is known about congregational singing in the Russian Mennonite colonies in the first five decades of their existence. As with the singing of congregations in Germany in the late eighteenth century, of parish churches in England in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, and of the early days of the New England colonies, most of what we do know comes from critics and reformers who found the singing offensive. Heinrich Heese, a teacher in the colonies from 1818 on, spoke of "the present-day disharmony" and "distorted singing."[16] Jacob Abraham Klassen recalled his impressions as a seven-year-old boy of a church service in 1854: "Endlessly long hymns from the *Gesangbuch* were begun by the *Vorsänger* of the congregation, and sung with so many flourishes and embellishments that the melody became completely unrecognizable, and it was impossible,

despite my good ear, to retain any of these strange melodies in my memory."[17] Speaking about the churches of his childhood in the 1870s, Johannes Rempel suggested that the singing in many congregations was beneath contempt. At the end of the first verse of a hymn, he wrote, the *Vorsänger* (song leader) "continued the note after the congregation fell silent, often with the most wonderful embellishments and flourishes in a tremulo voice, but always with great strength."[18] A visitor to the Mennonite colonies in the 1820s wrote, "The singing is forced out of their throats and is shrill and loud beyond measure."[19]

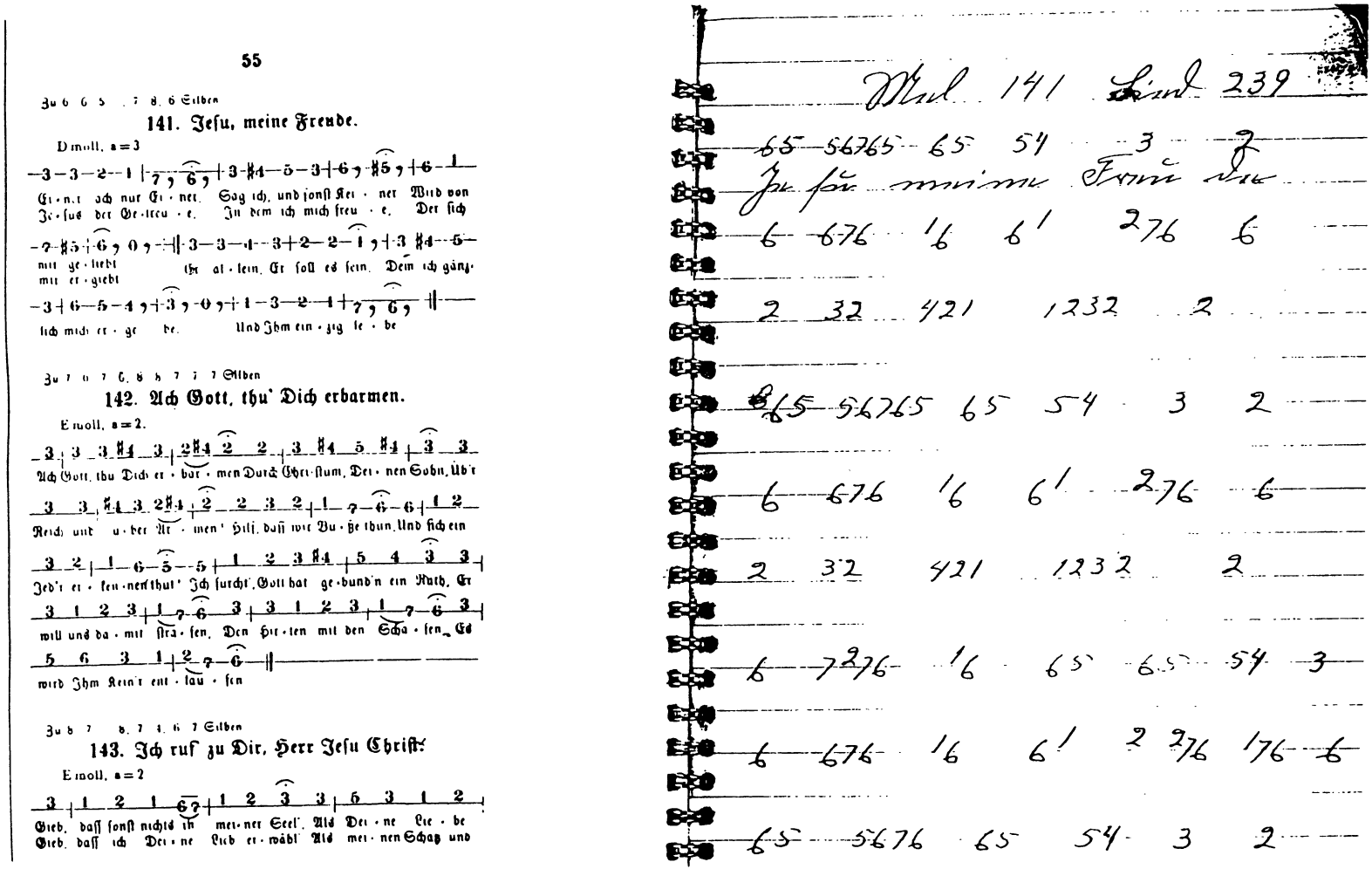
There are clear parallels here to developments in other traditions. The Lutheran tradition from which the Mennonites of Prussia had borrowed so heavily had developed similar characteristics. Some of the accusations leveled at congregational singing in German Lutheran churches of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were that the singing was very slow, that the congregation added ornaments to the melodies, and that precentors added interludes complete with embellishments between lines of hymns.[20] Nicholas Temperley has shown that the singing of psalms in parish churches of the early eighteenth century—the Old Way of Singing—was characterized by a very slow tempo, loss of regular meter or rhythm, ornamentation of the basic melodic line, and improvised descant.[21] He described the development of the style thus: "In places where congregations are left to sing hymns without musical direction for long periods, a characteristic style of singing tends to develop. The tempo becomes extremely slow; the sense of rhythm is weakened; extraneous pitches appear, sometimes coinciding with those of the hymn tune, sometimes between them; the total effect may be dissonant."[22] In the United States, students of early American psalm singing have noted precisely the same features. Robert Stevenson cites an advocate of singing schools who said, "When the people learn to sing by note they will no longer interpolate ornaments so lengthy as to triple the number of notes in the original tune."[23]

The Old Way of Singing was challenged in different ways. The singing schools of eighteenth-century America, with their singing masters and shape notes, have already been mentioned. Temperley suggests that the installation of organs in churches and the formation of choirs of charity children and male singing societies were the chief symbols and agents of reform in the Anglican church of the eighteenth century.[24] In German Lutheran churches, hymnal reforms began in 1817 with efforts to restore texts, followed by a long process of melody restoration that took until 1950 to complete.[25]

The quotations cited above show that there were those in the Russian Mennonite colonies who were also dissatisfied with the state

of congregational singing in their churches. The circumstances of their Russian trek had forced the Russian Mennonite pioneers to preserve their hymns by means of an oral tradition, in which the singing in church services was led by several vorsänger who were responsible for choosing the hymns and then initiating and leading the singing. The *Gesangbuch* used by the Russian Mennonite colonists originally contained 150 psalms drawn from Lobwasser's *Psalter* and 505 hymns: 312 borrowed from Lutheran or Reformed sources, 108 translations of Dutch hymns, and a number of hymns that Peter Letkemann has identified as original Mennonite hymns.[26] The melodies to which they were sung had also been brought from Prussia. The exact state of the melodies they appropriated cannot be known, but later I will provide some evidence of the basis from which the tradition may have developed.

The first efforts to reform congregational singing in the colonies were made by Heinrich Franz, a Prussian Mennonite teacher who came to work in the Mennonite village of Gnadenfeld. In the preface to a *Choralbuch* that circulated in manuscript form until it was published in a four-part version in 1860 by Breitkopf und Härtel, and in 1865 in the single-line version that is still in use in some Mennonite congregations in Canada, Mexico, and Paraguay today,[27] he wrote, "Experience shows us that the holy art of singing has lost much of its beauty, clarity, and correctness, preserved and propagated as it is solely by ear. In 1837 . . . I began to assemble the hymns of the *Gesangbuch* in order to do my small part in improving singing, first in my school and through it in the church services of the congregation in which I had been placed as a teacher, so that they would regain their original purity and consistency." Franz used a notation system based on numbers, or *Ziffern,* in which the numbers stand for the notes of the scale in a solmization system that permitted schoolchildren to learn the hymns of the *Gesangbuch* with ease, yet which would also be used later to transcribe the "Hallelujah Chorus" from *Messiah* and Mendelssohn's *St. Paul* for the use of church and community choirs. The system had its origin with Rousseau in France, with subsequent refinements by Galin, Paris, and Chev in France and by Bernhard Natorp in Germany. Franz's system used Natorp's symbols for pitch notation; symbols for the notation of rhythm were combinations of French elements and features unique to the Mennonite teacher.[28] The left half of Figure 1 shows three chorales—numbers 141, 142, and 143—printed in ziffern in the *Choralbuch.* The key of 141, "Jesu, meine Freude," is indicated as "D moll" at the top left of the hymn, along with an indication of what scale step the A of the song leader's tuning fork represents and the number of syllables in each line.



55

Zu 6 6 5 . 7 8. 6 Silben

141. Jesu, meine Freude.

D moll. a=3

Ei-nes ach nur Ei-nes, Sag ich, und sonst Kei-nes Wird von
Je-sus der Ge-treu-e, In dem ich mich freu-e, Der sich
mit ge-liebt
mit er-giebt
ihr al-lein, Er soll es sein, Dem ich ganz-
lich mich er-ge-be, Und Ihm ein-zig le-be

Zu 7 6 7 6. 8 6 7 7 7 Silben

142. Ach Gott, thu' Dich erbarmen.

E moll. a=2.

Ach Gott, thu Dich er-bar-men Durch Chri-stum, Dei-nen Sohn, Ub'r
Reich und u-ber Al-men' Hilf, daß wir Bu-ße thun, Und sich ein
Jed'r er-kenn' sein Thun' Ich furcht', Gott hat ge-bund'n ein Ruth, Er
will und da-mit stra-fen, Den Hir-ten mit den Scha-fen, Es
wird Ihm Kein'r ent-lau-fen

Zu 8 7 8. 7 4. 6 7 Silben

143. Ich ruf zu Dir, Herr Jesu Christ.

E moll. a=2

Gieb, daß sonst nichts in mei-ner Seel', Als Dei-ne Lie-be
Gieb, daß ich Dei-ne Lieb er-wähl' Als mei-nen Schatz und

*Figure 1.* A page from the Heinrich Franz *Choralbuch* (left) and a page from a notebook in the private collection of John Wiebe (right)

The *Choralbuch* contains 163 chorale tunes and an appendix of 112 tunes that includes a number of the spiritual folk songs that played such an important role in nineteenth-century German hymnody.[29] The first Russian edition of the *Gesangbuch* had been published in 1844. The influence of the *Choralbuch* on the hymnody of the Russian Mennonites is revealed by the fact that the tunes for hymns in the second Russian edition of the *Gesangbuch*, published in 1854, six years before the *Choralbuch* itself was published, were indicated by numbers that corresponded to the 163 tunes in Franz's book.[30] Along with the rise of the Mennonite Brethren church in 1860, a movement that led to the introduction of German translations of Moody and Sankey gospel hymns and choral singing into Russian Mennonite congregational life, the *Choralbuch* was an important factor in the growth of musical literacy in the colonies.[31] Conservative Mennonites may have resisted the reforms and continued to sing in the old way, but they did accept the numbering system of the *Choralbuch* as a way of identifying the melodies they wished to sing.

The services in which the *oole Wies* can be heard seem to have changed very little in the past two centuries. One indication of this is the architectural style of the meetinghouse. The two buildings I have visited in northern Alberta are very similar to the one preserved in the Mennonite Museum in Steinbach, Manitoba, for example, except that the narrow benches in the museum have backs, whereas those in the Alberta churches do not. The building is painted an austere gray inside and out; no electric wires run to it. The sanctuary is in the shape of a rectangle, with the front of the room formed by one of the longer sides. Men and women enter through separate doors, the men sitting on the right side of the sanctuary and the women on the left, younger people at the back and older members toward the front. In one service I attended, some of the oldest members of the group sat at the front of the room facing the congregation.

The singing is led by as many as six vorsänger, who enter after the members of the congregation have been seated and take their places facing the congregation on a raised platform at the front of the church. They take turns announcing the number of the hymn and initiating the singing and are also responsible for performing short interludes between phrases that serve to lead the congregation to the first note of the next phrase. Two hymns are sung before the minister enters the room to deliver the sermon. Many of the hymns in the *Gesangbuch* contain a dozen or more stanzas, but the congregations I visited sing only two or three verses of each hymn.[32] Because of the highly melismatic melodies, the syllables of the words of the hymn

texts are drawn out and very difficult to recognize, but since almost every member of the congregation possesses a *Gesangbuch* there is, in fact, ample time to contemplate the words of the text while the hymn is being sung.

The vorsänger sing with a loud, penetrating tone. In contrast to the kind of singing generally considered acceptable in the church choir or conservatory, in which vocal production characterized by a relatively low laryngeal position and an open throat with a balance of higher and lower partials and free vibrato is the ideal, Old Colony singers sing with a closed throat and a high laryngeal position, which results in a nasal twang, a straight tone with little vibrato, and many high partials. The low laryngeal position and open tone of trained singers requires support from the diaphragm and other parts of the body, normally acquired after months and years of vocal exercises. The high laryngeal position and resulting brilliant sound allows the untrained singers to project their singing in an equally powerful manner with seemingly little effort.[33] Two vorsänger singing a chorale for me in a relatively small room produced interference patterns and overtone clashes I had previously associated with trumpet duets.

The vorsänger I questioned informed me that they sing with this particular tone because they think it is needed to lead the congregation. They felt that not many people actually sang along, although this was not my experience. The singing of the congregation, in which many members take part, is powerful and moving once one has become accustomed to the tone quality. Although only men can be vorsänger, the women in the congregation participate equally in the singing, and I have been told by one vorsänger and his wife that the women often are able to remember the elaborate melodies better than the men, occasionally continuing when the men fall silent. The sermon is read in a highly stylized manner by a minister wearing a long frock coat and high leather boots and is interrupted twice by prayers in which the members of the congregation turn and kneel. The sermons themselves may not have been written by the minister; according to Redekop, they are collected and passed on from generation to generation.[34] Following the sermon a vorsänger announces and leads the closing song, chosen in response to the text of the sermon, after which the building empties very rapidly, with no one pausing to converse in the churchyard.

The process of selecting and training vorsänger seems to be an informal one. Young men who show an aptitude—who seem to be able to remember the long, complex melodies after years of regular attendance at Sunday morning services—are asked to join the group

of vorsänger at a weekly rehearsal. The purpose of the rehearsals is not primarily to prepare for the Sunday morning service, although this may occur as well, but rather to teach the melodies to less experienced colleagues and in general to keep up the repertoire. Two men who discussed the process with me suggested that they had been reluctant to join at first but had eventually consented. One of them said that as a schoolboy he had been known for the number of songs he had stored in his memory. There is no reason to think that musical talent is not distributed as evenly among the Old Colony Mennonites as it is in any other population group, and his comment suggests that the men who become vorsänger are in general those with considerable musical aptitude. The wife of another singer told me proudly that her husband had always learned melodies very quickly, sometimes after one hearing. The vorsänger I have talked to do not have a technical vocabulary with which to discuss their music, however. Although their control over the melodies and texts is assured and skillful, they are not aware of the history of the repertoire beyond their own experience with it, and their skill does not seem to be the result of conscious analysis, at least not of melodic structures.

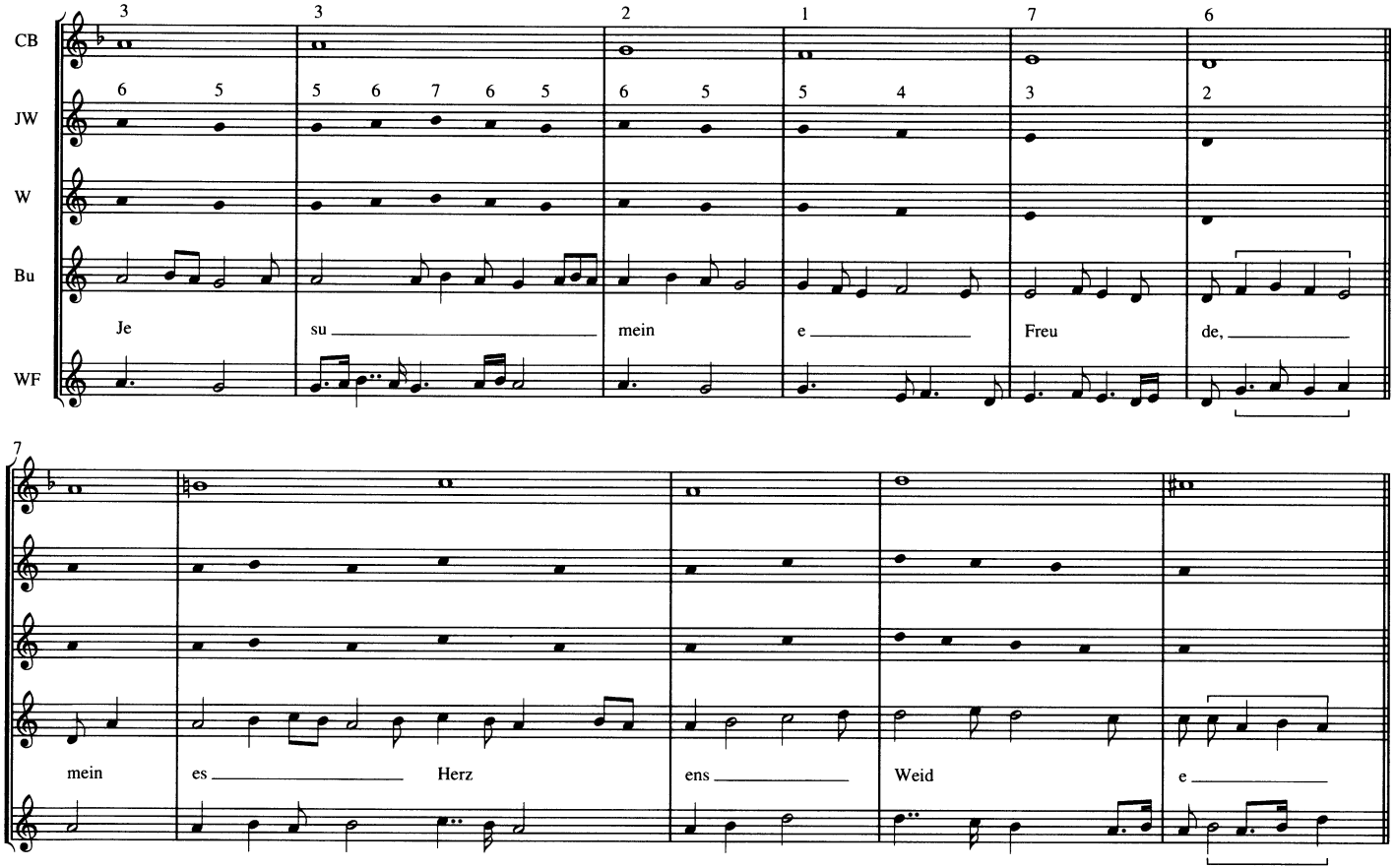
In some ways the Old Colony Mennonites have come full circle. In the early sixteenth century their Anabaptist ancestors rejected what they considered the empty rituals of the Roman Catholic church in favor of a more personal commitment to the ideals of Christianity and an attempt to re-create the worship patterns of the early Christian church. It seems fair to say, however, that Old Colony worship services have taken on the patterns of a liturgical church, in which the order of service varies little from Sunday to Sunday and traditional corporate worship takes precedence over expressions of individual piety.[35] The conservative, traditional patterns found in their worship services are a reflection of patterns found in the rest of Old Colony culture as well. Redekop has identified salvation, understood as acceptance by God as faithful people or a faithful community rather than as faithful individuals, as one of the main goals of Old Colony society. A second goal is to live the Old Colony way of life by conforming to Old Colony norms and maintaining separation from the world.[36] These goals explain many Old Colony characteristics: a suspicion of more education than is considered necessary to function effectively in a rural setting; a suspicion of outsiders and a desire to remain apart from those not part of Old Colony society; and a reluctance to accept technological innovations not directly related to making their farms more efficient. The distinctions in dress are becoming less apparent, although the women wear dark dresses to church and cover their

heads once they are married; the men wear dark jackets and no ties. There are varying levels of acceptance of technological innovations. Old Colony Mennonites in Canada make use of automobiles, electricity, telephones, and other modern conveniences, but communities in more remote settlements have restricted their use for a much longer time. It is not surprising that, in a society in which preserving a way of life is one of the most important goals, there would be ritual practices, including musical practices, that support and symbolize those efforts.

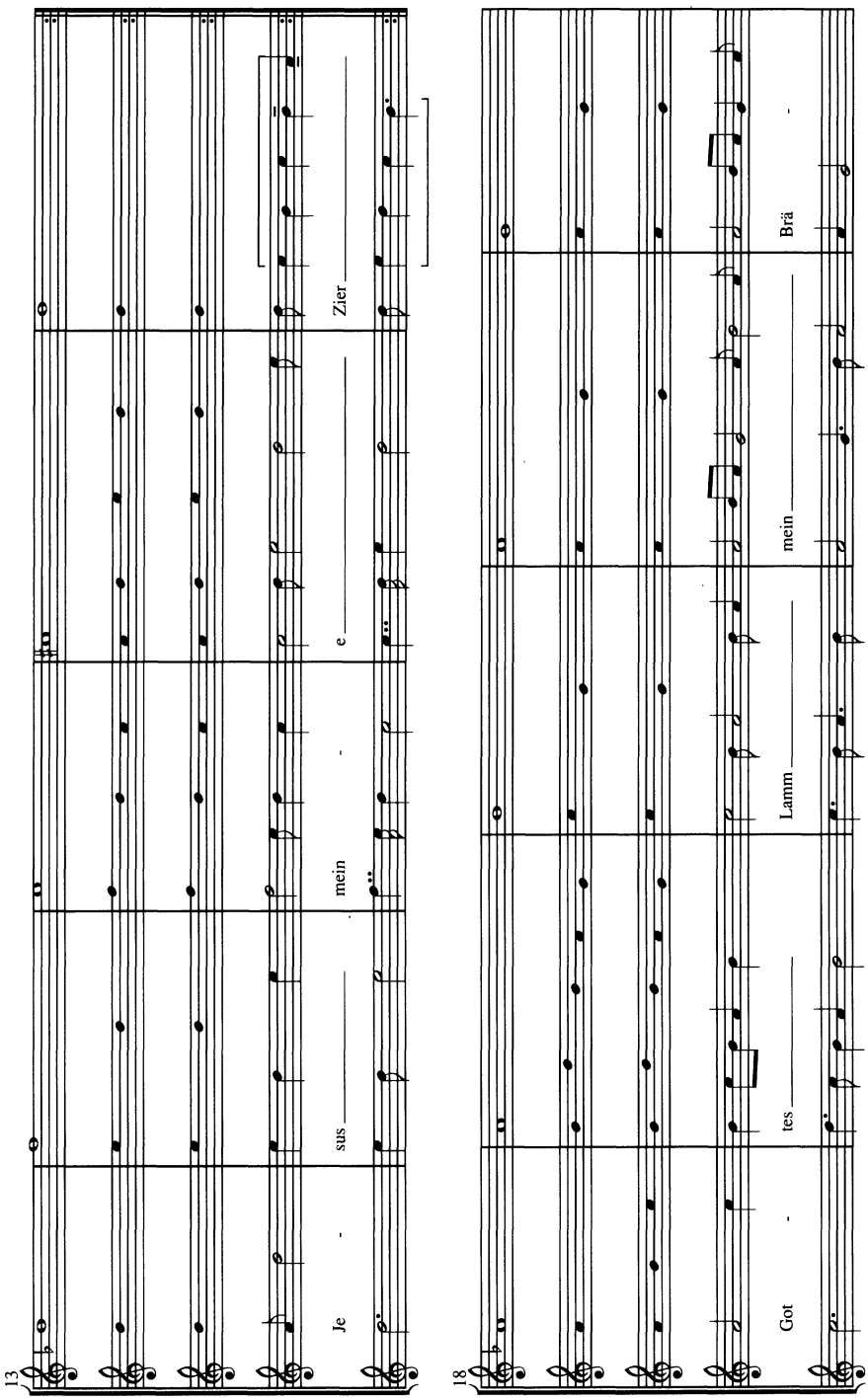
Written records of the music in an oral tradition are normally obtained by a researcher from outside the tradition by means of recording and transcription. In fact, Burkhart made transcriptions of eleven Old Colony hymns without the benefit of a tape recorder, writing down the melodies as his informants sang them. He also had access to a tape recording of two hymns made in North Newton, Kansas, by Cornelius Krahn, when some Old Colony Mennonites from Mexico, among them a competent vorsänger, came to the United States to buy farm machinery.[37] The discovery of several written documents made by practitioners within the tradition itself is what has made the systematic study of these melodies possible, however, and I will begin with these before moving on to consider transcriptions of actual performances.

In my first meeting in the summer of 1989 with a retired vorsänger, now in his mid-seventies, I was shown a small black notebook in which eighty-six Old Colony melodies had been notated in ziffern. The existence of notated versions of these melodies within the group itself was quite unexpected. The version of "Jesu, meine Freude," melody 141, found in this book (JW) is shown on the right side of Figure 1. According to my informant, it had been copied in Saskatchewan in the 1940s from a book owned by an older vorsänger as a way to help remember the complex, occasionally convoluted versions of the chorales. The next summer he showed me another book of melodies (W) notated in ziffern, this one obtained from his brother in Mexico. The second book contains 103 hymns, all of those in the first book plus a number of others. This book also had its origin in Saskatchewan but was expanded in Mexico. All the hymns are numbered and can be found in the Franz *Choralbuch*.

Example 1, "Jesu, meine Freude," illustrates the relationship between the original melody as presented in the *Choralbuch* (CB), the melodies as found in the two Old Colony books (JW from northern Alberta and W from Mexico), and two transcriptions of performances (Bu [Burkhart] from Mexico and WF from northern Alberta). The




*Example 1.* "Jesu, meine Freude," melody 141

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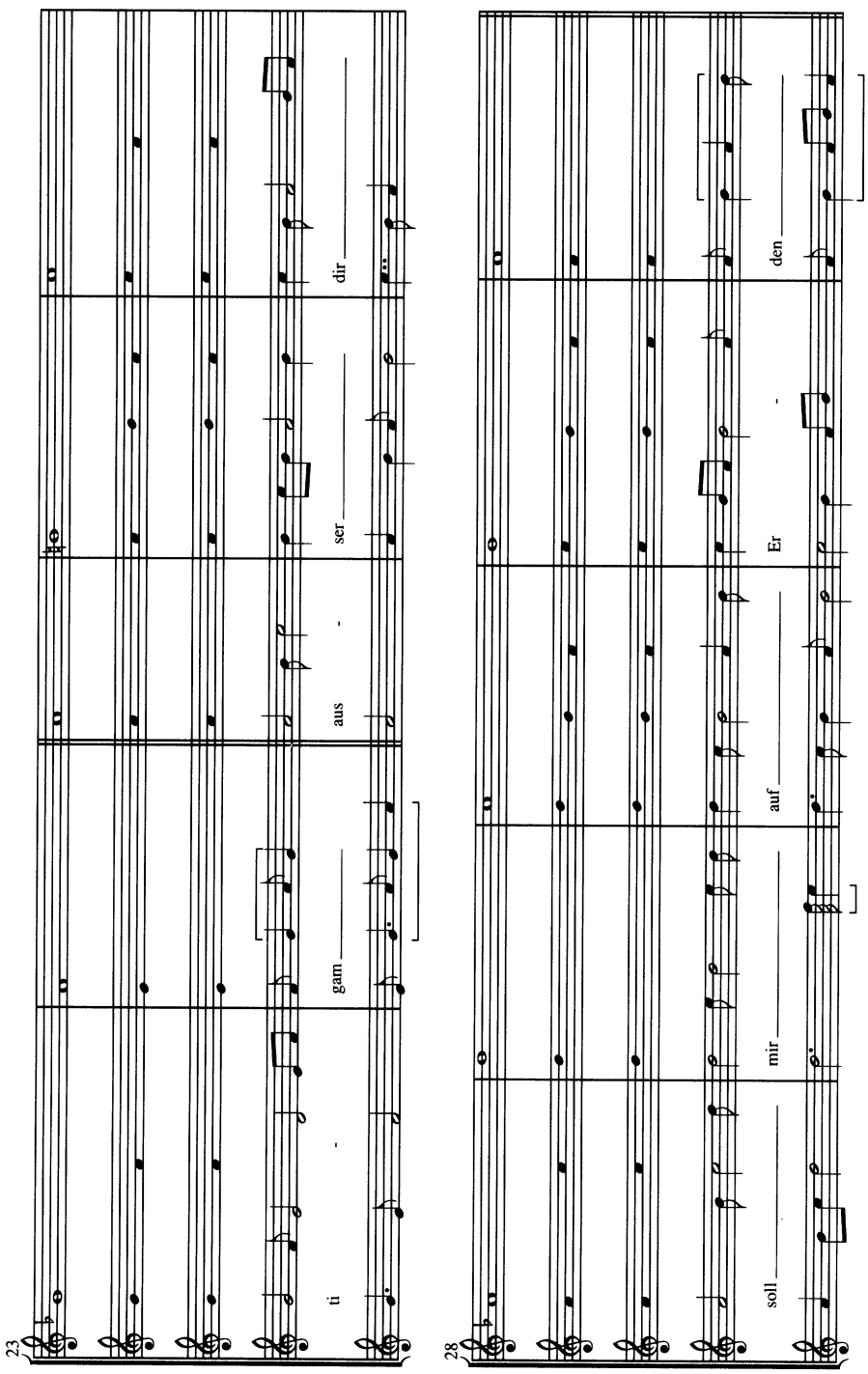


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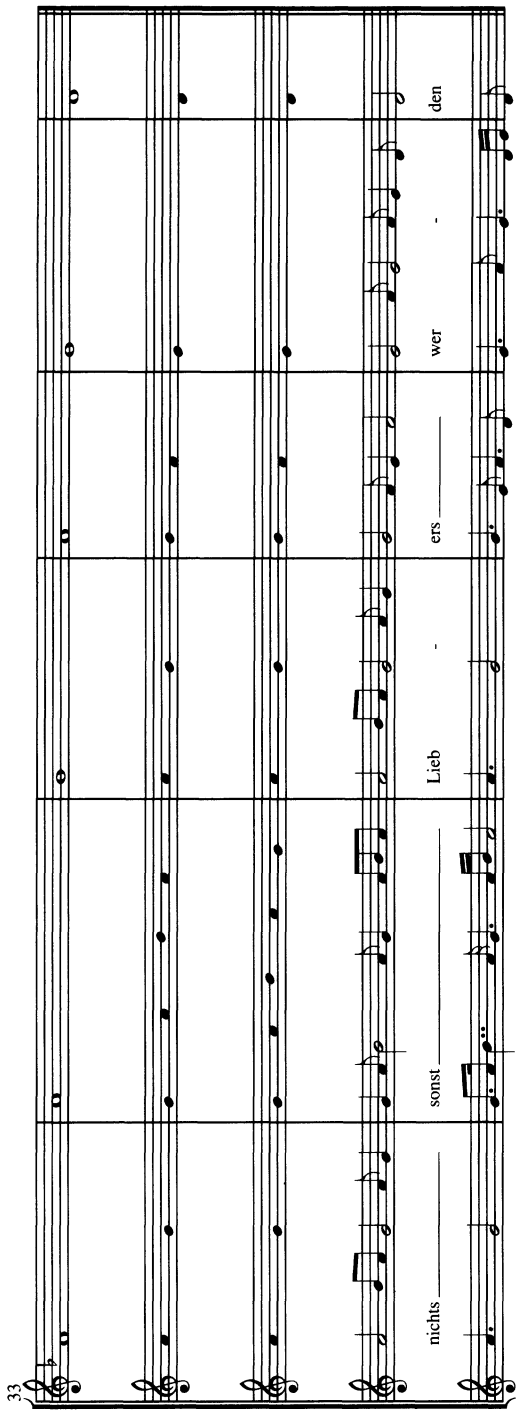


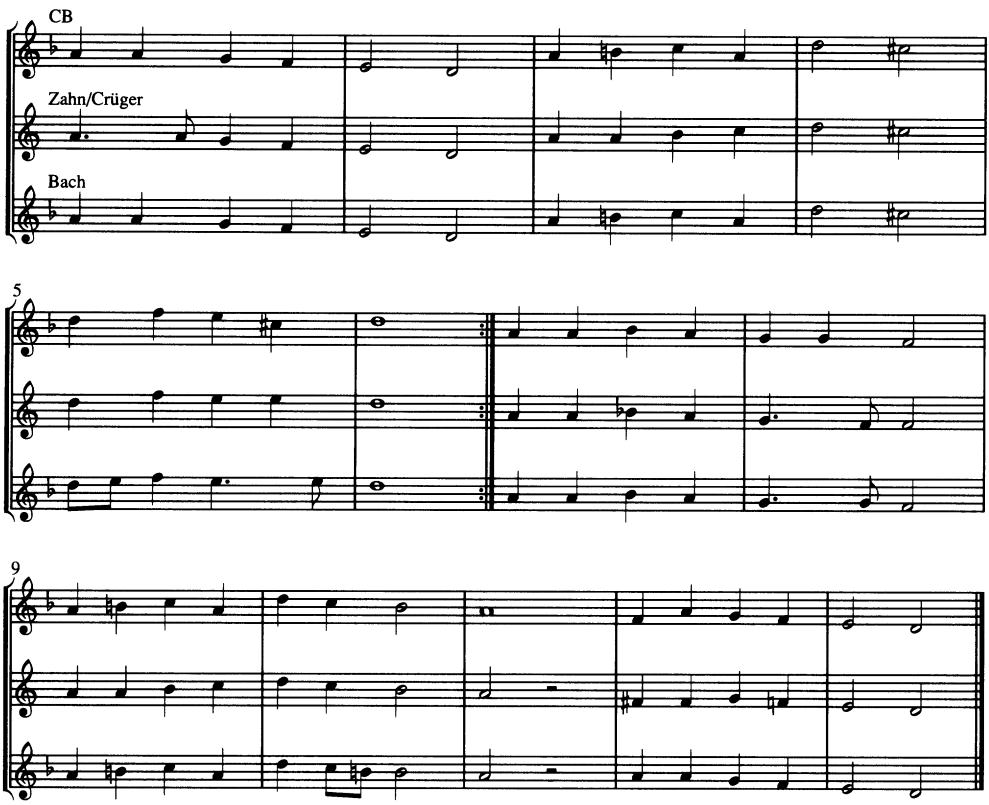

*Example 1.* continued

melodies in all the transcriptions have been given the same tonic to make comparisons easier and transposed when necessary to avoid ledger lines. The melody in CB is itself different from the version we know from one of Bach's harmonizations, for example.[38] Note the drop to the C-sharp in measure 16, the B-flat in measure 31, and the F instead of A at the beginning of the last phrase in measure 33. An examination of the three versions in Example 2 shows that both in turn are different from the version given in Zahn,[39] reminding us that even the written, syllabic version of this melody has appeared in more than one form over the centuries.

It is also important to note that the way in which the writers have understood the solmization is quite different. The ziffern can be seen above the first phrase of CB and JW. Although the pitch content of the melody is identical in both, the CB version uses the numeral 3 (mi) to represent F and 6 (la) to represent D. This is the standard way of applying solmization syllables to a minor scale, thus relating it to the scale of the relative major scale. JW uses 6 (la) and 2 (re) to represent the F and D. The Old Colony author has heard the melody in the context of a scale with the characteristics not of a minor key but of what Harold Powers calls a white-key octave species with an imitation Greek name,[40] a dorian mode. This is confirmed by the internal details of the melody, which contains no chromatic inflections. All the transcriptions of modal melodies I have made reveal no hint of inflections suggesting the melodic minor scale or of raised leading tones; the singers use "white notes" only.

The tendency of the Old Colony singers to revert to modal scale patterns is confirmed by a comparison of the CB and JW collections. Fifteen melodies in which the final note is represented by 6 in CB have the final notes represented by 2 in JW. Furthermore, fourteen melodies that end on 1 in CB, that is, in the major mode, also end on 2, or dorian, in JW. Only two hymns ending on 6 in CB end on 6 in JW as well. There are eight melodies in CB ending on 6 where the JW versions end on 1; these are usually hymns in which there is very little correspondence between the two versions, suggesting that in some cases the drifting of melodies away from their original form has progressed further than in others, so that the original modality of the tune has been forgotten.

One can see that the CB version is less ornate than the notated Old Colony versions, which in turn are less ornate than the transcribed versions of actual performances. (The interludes between phrases enclosed in square brackets in Bu and WF are sung by the vorsänger alone and serve to lead the congregation to the beginning




*Example 2.* "Jesu, meine Freude"

of the next phrase. The Low German term used to describe the function of the interlude is *Schwunk jäwe,* meaning to give momentum or impetus.) In the case of "Jesu, meine Freude" there is a clear correspondence between the Old Colony versions and the CB version, although this occurs in only about 45 of the 103 melodies in W. The emphasis in this study will be on melodies in which the original chorale is still visible. While this approach is an obvious first step in the study of this repertoire, it may very well be that the melodies that no longer resemble the original chorale will reveal aspects of melodic construction and elaboration that might be overlooked in those melodies whose ancestry is still apparent.

In trying to account for the ornamental notes in melismatic melodies like this when the original melody is not known, it is sometimes tempting to say that the first note accompanying a syllable must be the primary, original note.[41] Example 1 suggests that this may not

always be the case. In the second measure of JW, for example, the A, which is the primary note in the original chorale, appears to be a passing tone between the G and the B, with the emphasis on the G. This interpretation is confirmed by the two transcriptions: in Bu the A is either a passing tone or an anticipation; in WF it is first a passing tone, and only at the end of the melisma does it become a primary tone. This is also true particularly where the original chorale tone is a relatively unstable scale degree, as in m. 8, where the B-natural is an upper neighbor to the A in JW, a passing tone in Bu, and again only attains primary status in WF at the end of the syllable. Measures 15, 19, 20, 30, and 31 are similar.

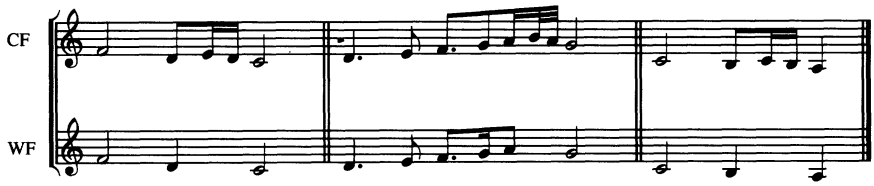
Before dealing with the relationship between JW and W on the one hand and Bu and WF on the other, it is necessary to comment briefly on the transcriptions. Transcriptions can serve at least three purposes: one, to allow us to study the music of an oral tradition using the techniques that we apply to music that has been transmitted to us in notated form; two, to preserve music that is in danger of disappearing; and three, to make it possible to re-create the music, either by members of the group whose music it is or by someone from outside the group. The first purpose is clearly the most important for this study. By crystallizing the music in notated form we are able to make the kinds of analyses that allow us to compare this music to other musics, realizing, of course, that tomorrow's performance is likely to be slightly different from yesterday's. Transcription for the purpose of preservation is certainly a concern, for those both inside and outside the group, but so far there are still viable communities in which the tradition is being perpetuated, so that the crisis of oblivion is still sometime in the future. The third purpose was clearly a factor in the creation of JW and W. The fact is, however, that except for the owner of JW, who always held it unobtrusively on his lap when he was leading a congregation, no other vorsänger in the congregations I have visited actually use these transcriptions, preferring with what seems like a healthy instinct to cultivate their memories rather than their sight-reading abilities. Whether or not my transcriptions can serve this purpose remains to be seen. One vorsänger has made tape recordings of hymns that he uses in teaching young singers and has shown interest in the possibility that my transcriptions might be of some use in this task, but he has not been able to use the ones I have supplied him because he cannot read music.

On a less general level, it is plain that Burkhart and I have used different principles in making our transcriptions, partly perhaps because I have had the luxury of a tape recorder while he did his

transcriptions in the field from live performances. His transcriptions are "phonemic," using half notes to indicate what in his opinion are important tones and smaller notes to indicate ornamental tones, without attempting to be precise about rhythm. My transcriptions are "phonetic," based on a constant pulse (eighth note = approx. 138) against which all notes are measured, giving a reasonably precise record of what was heard, but without the clear information about important structural notes that the other method can convey.[42]

The performances are remarkably similar, in spite of the fact that one occurred in Mexico in 1950 and the other in Northern Alberta in 1990. The differences are essentially minor variations on the surface of the music, reflecting varying degrees of ornamentation, although there are several passages in "Jesu, meine Freude" where the kinds of significant variants that one might expect in a setting where transmission is not reliant on written sources can be found. The two instances of this occur in mm. 11–13 and 23–24. Here the disagreement goes beyond neighboring tones or anticipations to result in different cadential notes.[43] The first of these demonstrates one way in which the differences in these tunes seem to have evolved. While the contour and pitch content of the melody in this passage remain essentially the same, the alignment of music and text has shifted: the vorsänger in Bu completes the movement to the A found in the other three versions in his interlude, and the arrival of the D at the beginning of the next phrase in the other three versions is delayed in Bu until the second note of m. 13. The disagreements in JW and W—mm. 11, 18, 19, and 34—are less substantial. Cadential patterns are similar, with one or two extra notes in each of mm. 11, 18, and 34. An examination of the other transcriptions in JW and W reveals an equally consistent correspondence in all but a few chorales, even when the deviation from the original melody is substantial, suggesting that the repertoire has been relatively stable for at least the past fifty years since their common origin in Saskatchewan.

The differences between the two versions raise further questions about the process of transcription. Bu, the Mexican version, contains more embellishments than WF, even though the underlying structure is very similar. There is an extra neighboring tone in m. 3, an extra passing tone in m. 4, and so forth. These differences can arise in a variety of ways: a performance may in fact contain more embellishments, turns, anticipations, and passing tones than another; the number of such ornaments that can be heard may depend on the number of singers; and different transcribers may vary in the amount of detail




*Example 3.*

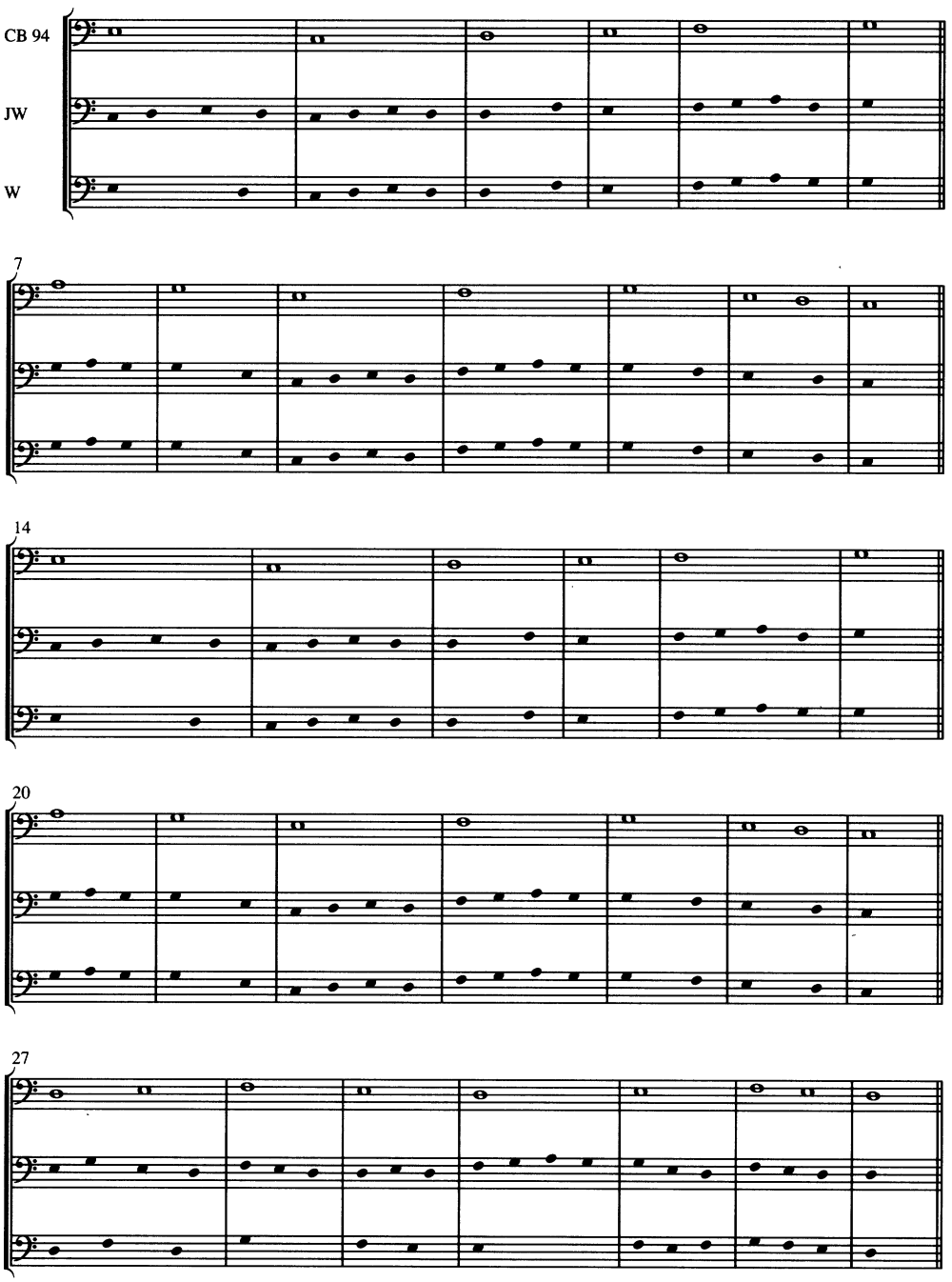
they wish to record. I have vivid memories of a church service in which the person who inserted ornaments most copiously was not one of the vorsänger but a man sitting in one of the front benches as a member of the congregation. Example 3 shows the way in which the performances of two vorsänger singing the same passage together can vary because of the addition of embellishments. One could speculate that the addition of these ornaments is one way of expressing individuality in a culture stressing conformity, in the same way, perhaps, that the dark, monochromatic clothes of the women are individualized by fine stitching, details that are visible only upon close inspection. On the other hand, musical factors no doubt also come into play: the difficulty untrained singers may experience, for example, in sustaining the long notes resulting from a very slow tempo.

In transcribing the performances of larger groups individual variations tend to be submerged and obscured. This is no doubt also true of the rehearsals of vorsänger during the week, where individual variations will be subjected to the influence and judgment of the entire group, thus slowing down and controlling the process of change. This demonstrates that variations in the written record can be produced not only because of different traditions resulting from geographic or temporal separation but also because of different kinds of performances and the number and type of performers. In other words, transcriptions showing variants cannot simply be taken at face value: it is necessary to ask about the conditions under which the transcriptions were made. What was the purpose of the transcriptions? JW and W, for example, are transcriptions with very special properties, arising within the tradition and containing only enough information to allow someone already steeped in the tradition to re-create the melodies. They were created as an aid to memory rather than as scores of works that were to be repeated in essentially the same way in subsequent performances. Was the author writing down a version from his own memory, in which case editorial emendations made possible by the writing process may enter? Was the author transcribing the performance of one

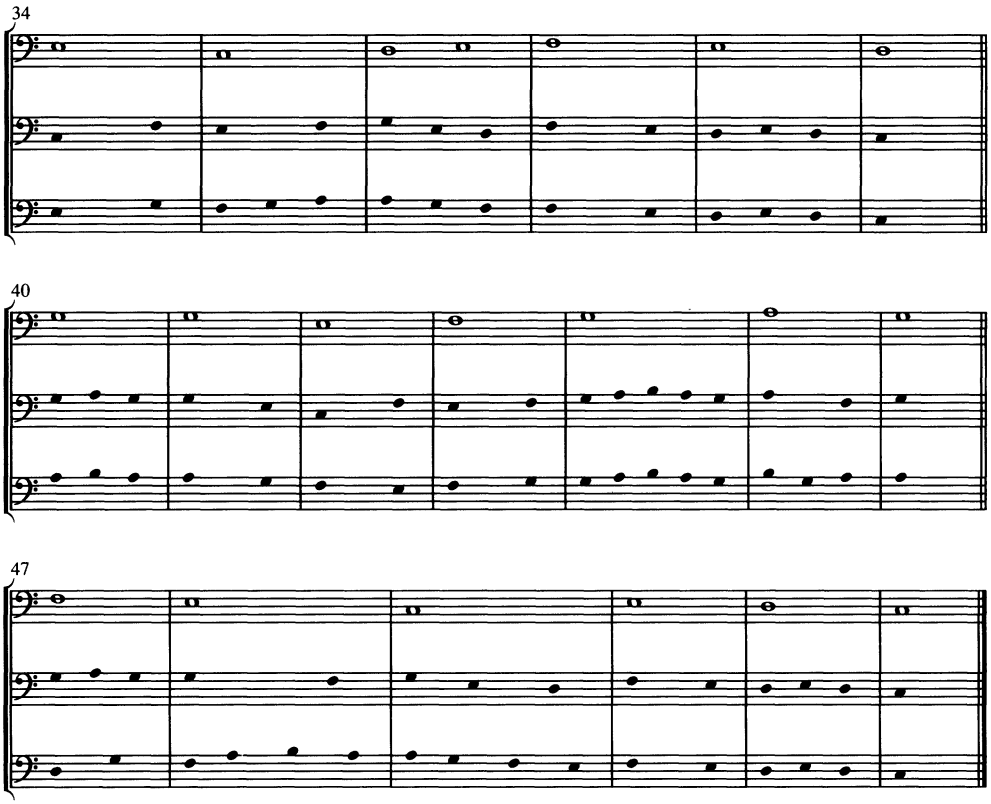
singer, in which case the transcription might include minute variations that could be submerged in the other possible source for a transcription, the singing of a larger group? And even here the transcriber must choose among the various versions that are usually audible within the group. One important principle that arises from these considerations is that the most heavily embellished version is not necessarily the most recent. It is also easy to see how melodies in isolated congregations might occasionally diverge as embellishments and variations introduced by a particular singer, for example, are repeated, remembered, and then suppressed or reinforced, depending on the force of his personality or voice, the length of his tenure in a particular congregation, or the general musical dynamics within the group of vorsänger or the congregation.

Example 4, melody 94, "Die Nacht ist nun dahin," is somewhat unusual in that JW and W display considerable degrees of divergence in several phrases, while at the same time it is clear that they both correspond closely to the CB version. The first two phrases differ only in the first measure, which is more active in JW, and by one note in the approach to the first cadence on G. The divergences in the last four phrases are more substantial and show what seem clearly to be the results of parallel but independent development. This can be seen in the similar shape of the beginning of the penultimate phrase, for example. In spite of the differences, the cadential note of the third phrase in both melodies and the music for the final three measures of the fourth and sixth phrases are the same.

The question of parallel development can be explored more precisely in the transcriptions of three performances of melody 3, "Wach auf mein Herz und singe," in Example 5. Bu is Burkhart's transcription of the version he heard in Mexico, and WF and JH are my transcriptions of the singing of a group of vorsänger in rehearsal and of the singing of one of my informants and his wife respectively. My transcriptions are of versions sung by singers from congregations whose members, though meeting in buildings only ten miles apart, rarely sing together. Three of the four phrases in both JW and W end on the tonic note, F. In JW the note designated as the first scale degree (F) is approached from the second. In the Mexican version W, the note is approached by a pattern described by 2–3–2. A survey of the transcriptions of actual performances reveals that in Bu and WF the second degree of the scale is in fact consistently decorated by a neighboring tone, whereas this occurs only once in JH, the version sung by the owner of JW, the book created in Saskatchewan. The person who created W seems to have noticed the discrepancy and



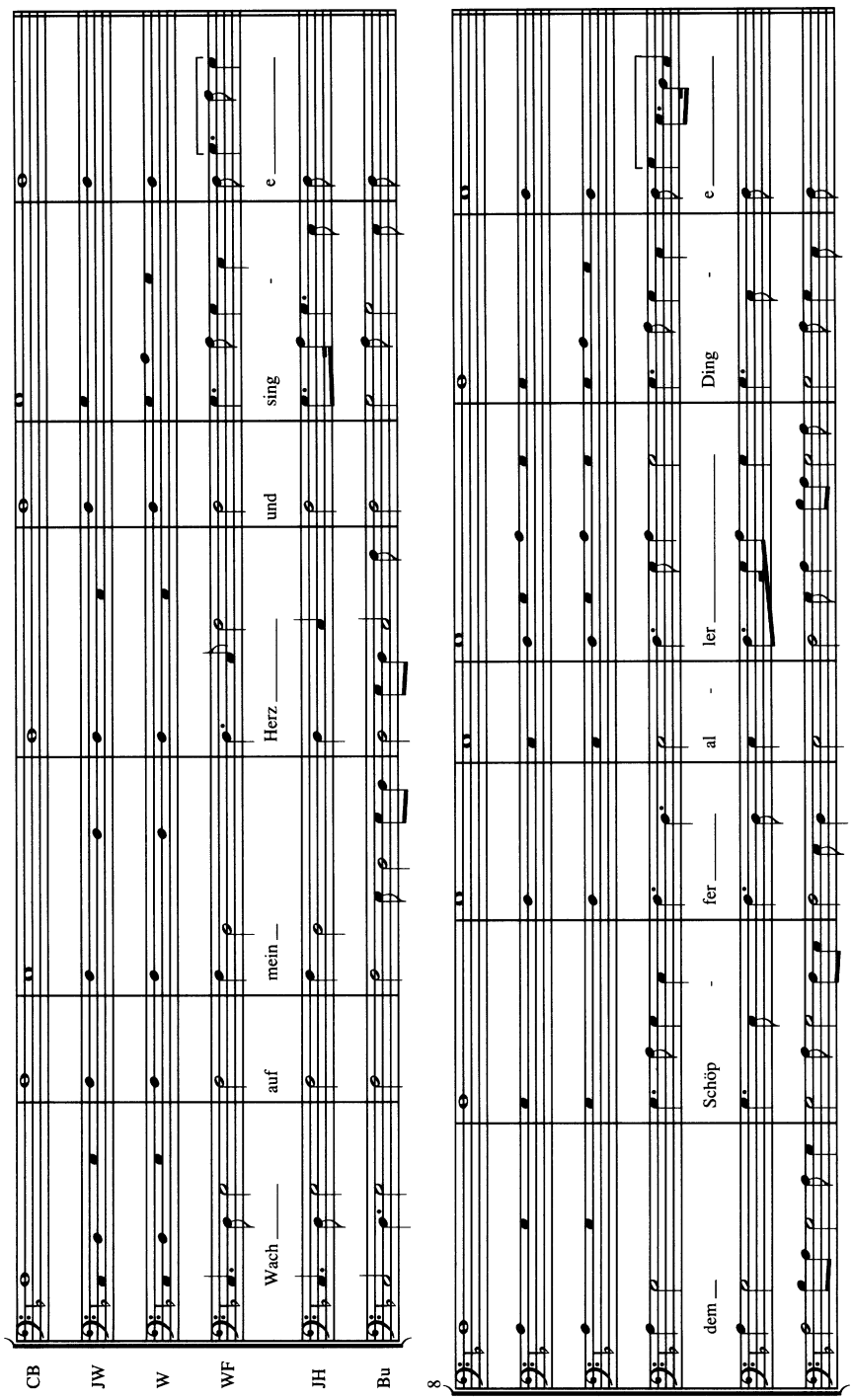

*Example 4.* "Die Nacht ist nun dahin"



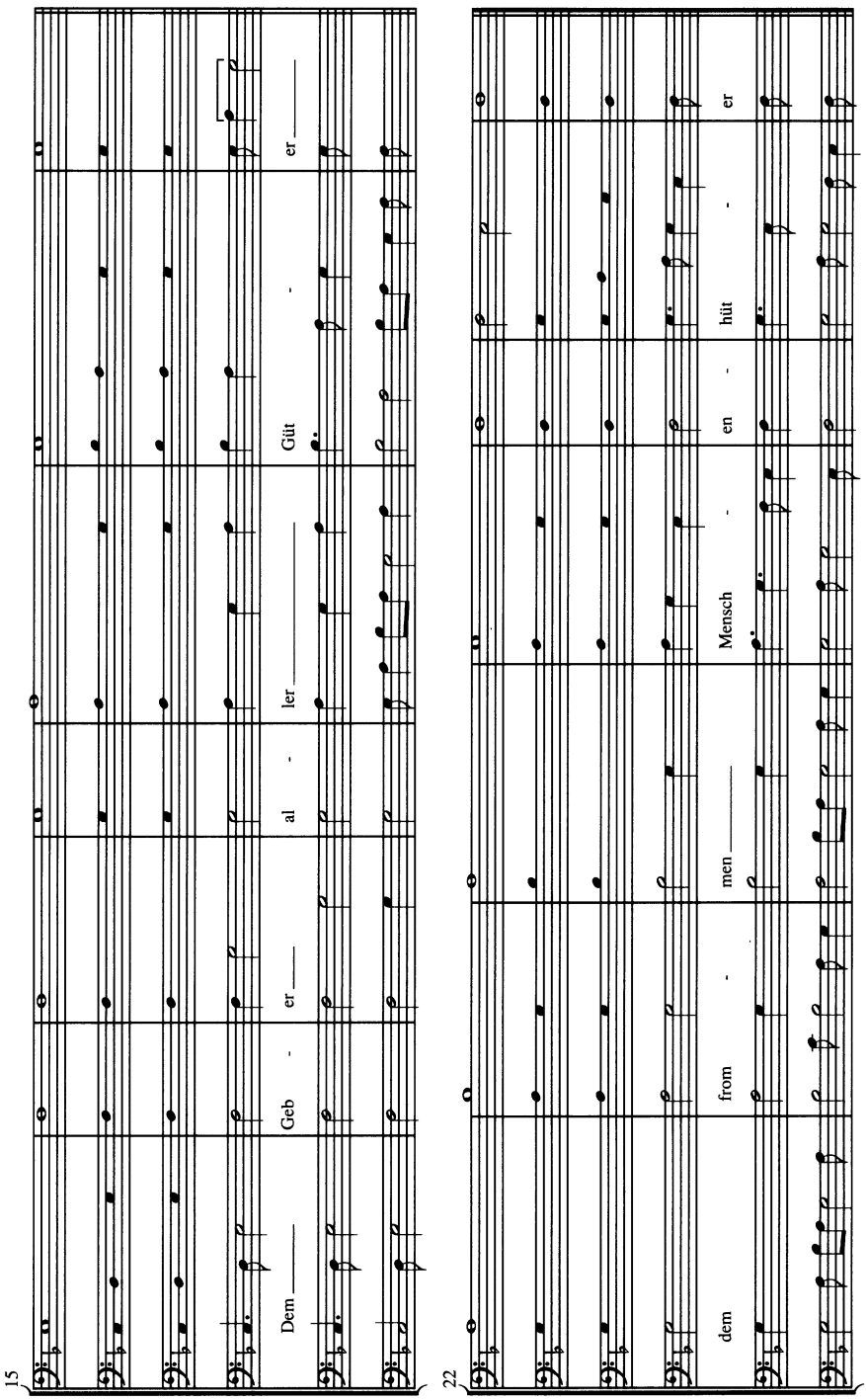

*Example 4.* continued

created a version that conformed more closely to actual practice in his group.

The contrast between the two Alberta transcriptions and the Mexican version Bu is more pronounced in melody 3 than in "Jesu, meine Freude." Having said earlier that transcriptions can be misleading in the amount of detail they reveal about an actual performance, it seems safe to say that in this case the level of ornamentation in the performance Burkhart transcribed was considerably higher, although the underlying melodic contour is almost exactly the same. In trying to explain the origin of the extra notes found in melodies sung in the Old Way, Temperley suggested that they arise as singers in a group struggle to match the pitches sustained by the leaders.[44] Some of the surrounding notes touched on in the matching process solidify in the collective memory, becoming notes around which other embellishments can be fashioned. Jackson outlined a similar process when he




*Example 5.* "Wach auf mein Herz und Singe," melody 3




*Example 5.* continued

wrote, "Hence the singer, holding as best he can to any given tone while waiting till the group-mind decides to sing the *next* tune-tone, tends to waver up and down. The process reminds somewhat of a drunken man hunting for a keyhole. The relief of one tends to become the relief of the many. The many tend to waver along similar lines. Their vocal vagaries become fixed, stylized, incorporated with their 'tunes,' and a singing *manner* is born—or evolves."[45] While there is no question that the pitch-matching process accounts for many of the extra notes in Old Way melodies, the profusion of ornamentation in Bu—note especially the first three syllables of the last phrase—along with the evidence of Example 3 suggests that there is an element of carefully constrained improvisatory freedom exercised by many singers that goes beyond the wayward fumbling about for notes implied by the pitch-matching theory. Jackson's comparison of a group singing in this manner to a drunken man hunting for a keyhole does not do justice to the extraordinary way in which such groups are able to preserve the essential elements of dozens of melodies in their memories while at the same time allowing for considerable variation between and around individual notes.

Variants such as these raise other questions: Just what is it Old Colony musicians remember? How are the contents of those memories translated into the audible manifestation of a musical work? And what is the status of that manifestation? A number of these issues have been explored in some detail by Leo Treitler in his studies of the oral transmission of medieval chant. He has suggested that a musical performance may range from the reconstruction of a musical work based on stylistic principles and musical gestures stored in the memory, through a performance of a work fixed with relative stability in the memory, to a performance from a written score. He has emphasized that these acts of musical expression exist on a continuum and may in fact be mingled in various traditions or stages of a tradition.[46] More recently he has written that stability of transmission may be a function of the value system of the community of musicians. The musical works transmitted will be consistently the same only if it is important that they be the same, and not every culture will insist that this be so.[47] Because Old Colony melodies are almost all based on preexisting chorale tunes, they do not have much to say about composition in an oral culture, but it is possible to gain some insights into some of the other issues. One of the earliest indications that the study of Old Colony melodies might also have some relevance to the study of oral transmission in medieval chant came with the discovery of the last page of JW, shown in Figure 2, an attempt by its owner to transcribe

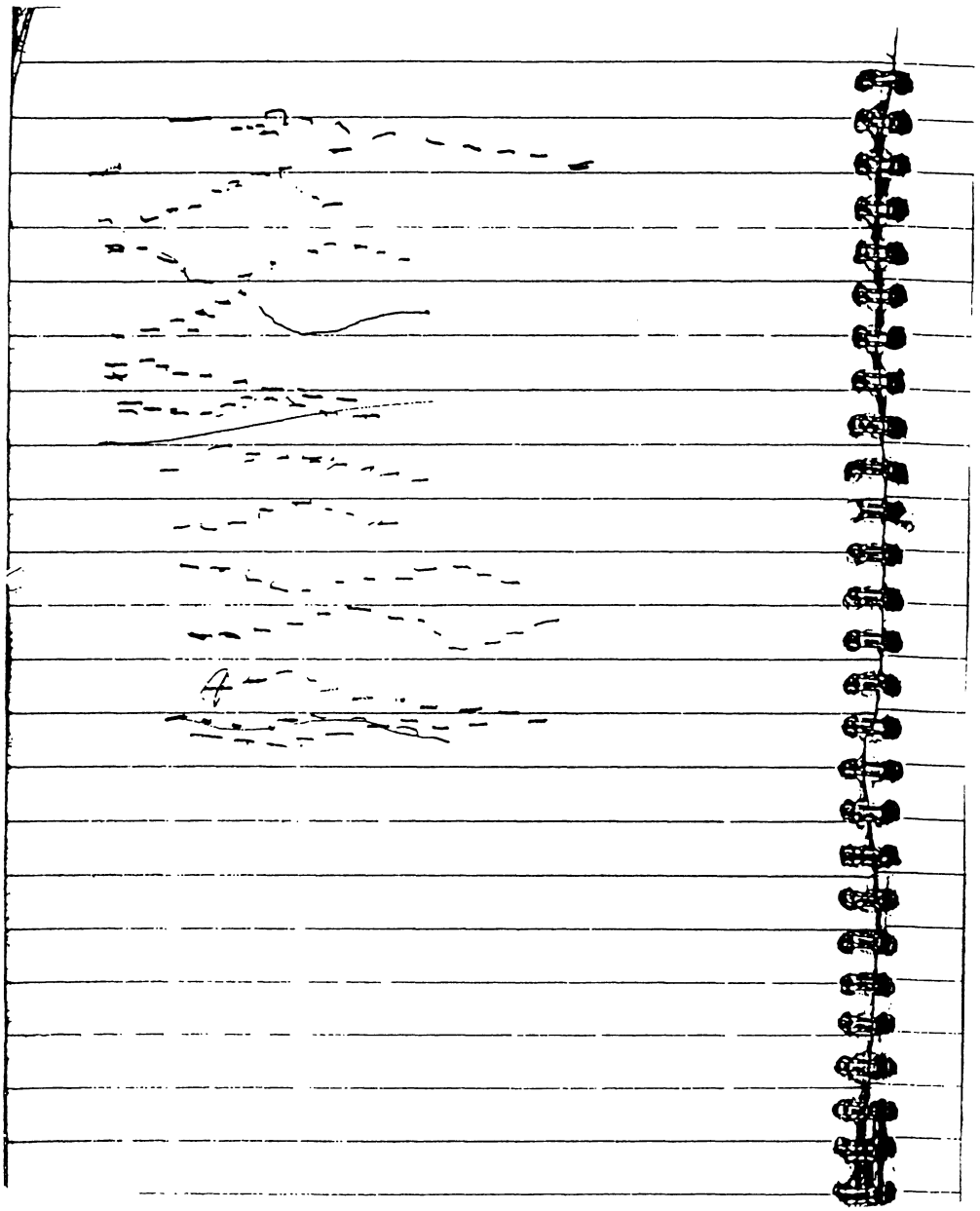


*Figure 2.* The last page of JW, from the private collection of John Wiebe

an unfamiliar hymn. The similarity to the procedures used in medieval manuscripts during early stages of the development of notation is quite striking and suggests certain parallels in methodology and thought processes in addition to the melismatic melodic style and modal scales.[48] In making this connection I am acutely aware of the potential pitfalls and have in mind Treitler's statement that "what such evidence can do is spark the imagination to make hypothetical reconstructions, and it can give a sense of their plausibility."[49]

Old Colony society is characterized by a strong tendency to retain things as they have been, and there is no reason to believe that the members of that society do not feel that they are attempting to sing the melodies exactly as they have learned them or that they consciously and deliberately introduce variations into their performances. One vorsänger told me with considerable relish how a colleague of his got off track one Sunday morning, whereupon he jumped in and took over with the correct version, much to the other's chagrin. For any one singer there are a right way and any number of wrong ways to sing a melody, and members of one congregation are acutely aware of the difficulty of singing a hymn with another congregation, a process in which even small variations could produce serious disruptions. A term they use to refer to the versions of other congregations that differ from theirs is *fesunge,* which could be translated as "sung out of shape." They thus exemplify a part of the continuum in which a high degree of stability is valued, a stability that is all the more striking because there is no central administrative or theological, let alone musical, authority that could exercise control.

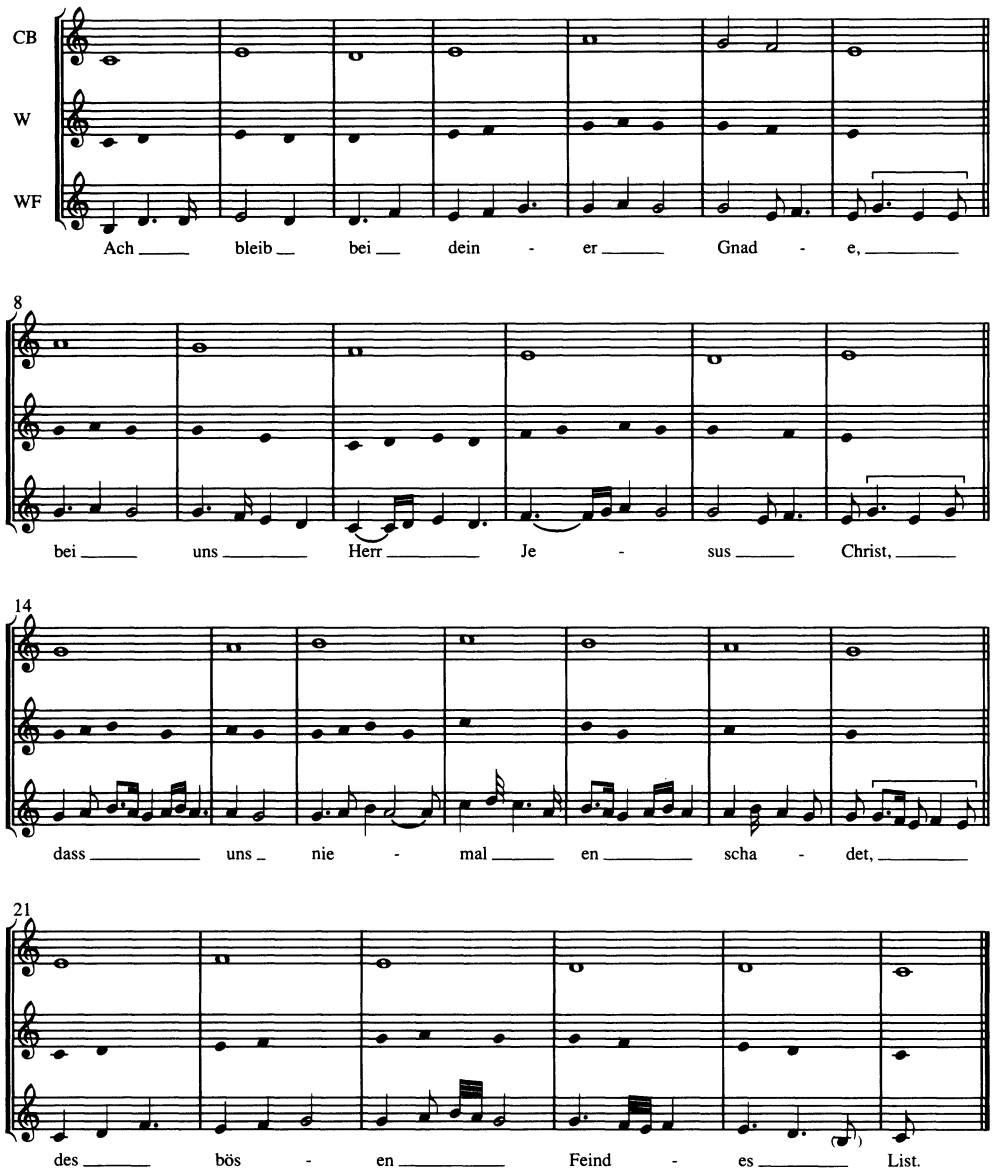
The close correspondence of these various transcriptions and performances gathered from congregations scattered over several countries suggests that the mental images or patterns from which the Old Colony singers create their musical works display a remarkable permanence.[50] To be sure, the permanence is not the permanence a score in written form can insure. This is so in two ways. At one level the surface variations suggest that their mental scores resemble the scores of certain works by Bach or Mozart, for example, in which one can assume from examples in similar works by the composers themselves that the score itself does not contain all the notes or does not provide all the rhythmic details that would have been found in a performance by the composer. It is possible to see JW and W as such scores, reductions in the manner of a Schenkerian graph but with performance rather than analysis as a goal. At another level the variants in what is ostensibly a tradition in which stable transmission is desirable demonstrate at least three important aspects of oral transmission: the

inability to recall perfectly in every case, the ability to draw on the contents of the memory in order to continue a performance in spite of this inability, and a seemingly unconscious creative urge that manifests itself in ornamentation and rhythmic variation, leading gradually in some cases to the creation of new and different melodies.

Example 6, "Ach, bleib bei deiner Gnade," is another melody that illustrates deviations from the original chorale melody. The first occurs in the very first measure, where the tonic note is replaced by movement around notes of the dominant triad in the transcription of the recorded performance, contradicting both CB and JW. Another deviation occurs in mm. 5 and 8, with the relatively unstable sixth scale degree, A, replaced in both Old Colony versions by the more stable fifth degree, G, as the primary tone. The A appears in both as an upper neighbor.

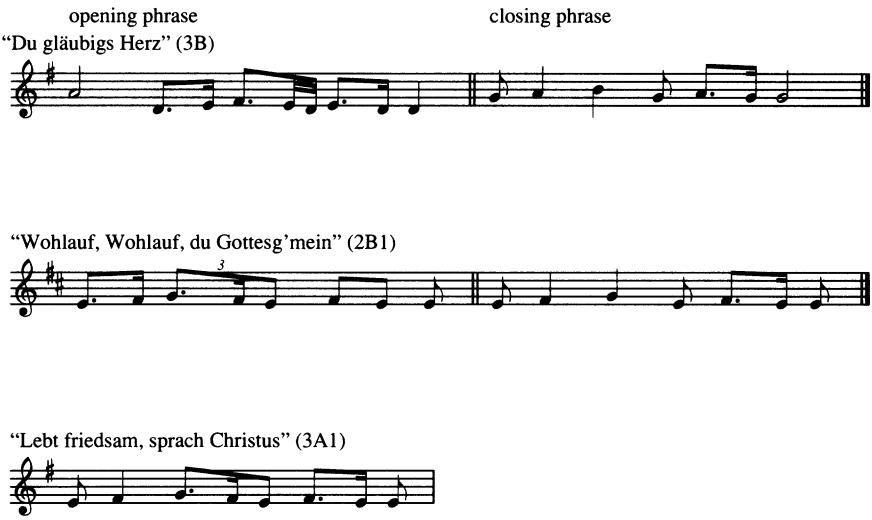
In addition to the characteristic ways in which individual notes are anticipated and decorated with upper or lower neighbors, one can also find longer formulas in Old Colony melodies. An example can be seen in m. 14 of Example 6, in the movement from G to an anticipation of the A. A shorter version of this gesture can be seen again in m. 18. An almost exact replica can be observed in mm. 2 and 34 of "Jesu, meine Freude," Example 1, in both Bu and WF. In these and several other melodies in which this pattern can be found, it always occurs in the movement from the fifth to the sixth scale degree, or *sol* to *la.* Although this is not the place to discuss Old Order Amish melodies in any detail, it is appropriate to point to similar patterns illustrated in Example 7, the first and last segments of Burkhart's transcription of "Du gläubigs Herz" and segments of two other Old Order Amish hymns. In the case of Old Colony melodies the presence of an *Urmelodie* that in such a large number of cases is still clearly visible suggests that these formulas at least are characteristic ways of decorating notes or moving from one note to another. When asked about a specific instance of melodic elaboration, a vorsänger gave a simple but elegant definition of a passing tone. I had pointed out a spot where the notated version read 3–5 but the singers in a recording he was listening to sang 3–4–5, and he explained in his Low German mother tongue, "*Toom han kome!*" (In order to get there!).

The question of the origins of the melodies can now be broached once more. Did they develop from syllabic chorale tunes, or did the Mennonites take over a style of singing from their Lutheran neighbors that was already melismatic? How does one account for the melodies that do not seem to bear a resemblance to the original tune? On this last question Temperley argues convincingly that some of the melodies




*Example 6.* "Ach, bleib bei deiner Gnade," melody 2

sung in parish churches may have been generated by harmonization, more specifically the process of faburden.[51] The argument is less convincing when applied to the singing of the Amish in his brief treatment of their hymnody.[52] I have found no evidence for polyphony of any kind in the singing of the Old Colony Mennonites, nor does




*Example 7.* Formulas in Old Order Amish hymns

Burkhart mention this practice in his work with the Old Colony Mennonites or the Old Order Amish.[53] The large body of Old Colony melodies, with two separate written sources, allows one to come to this conclusion: the presence of many melodies that still bear clear resemblances to the original chorale, in the company of melodies that show degrees of deviation ranging from the barely recognizable to the completely different, suggests that the melodies that cannot be matched have arisen from the process of melodic accretion and ornamentation rather than from harmonization.

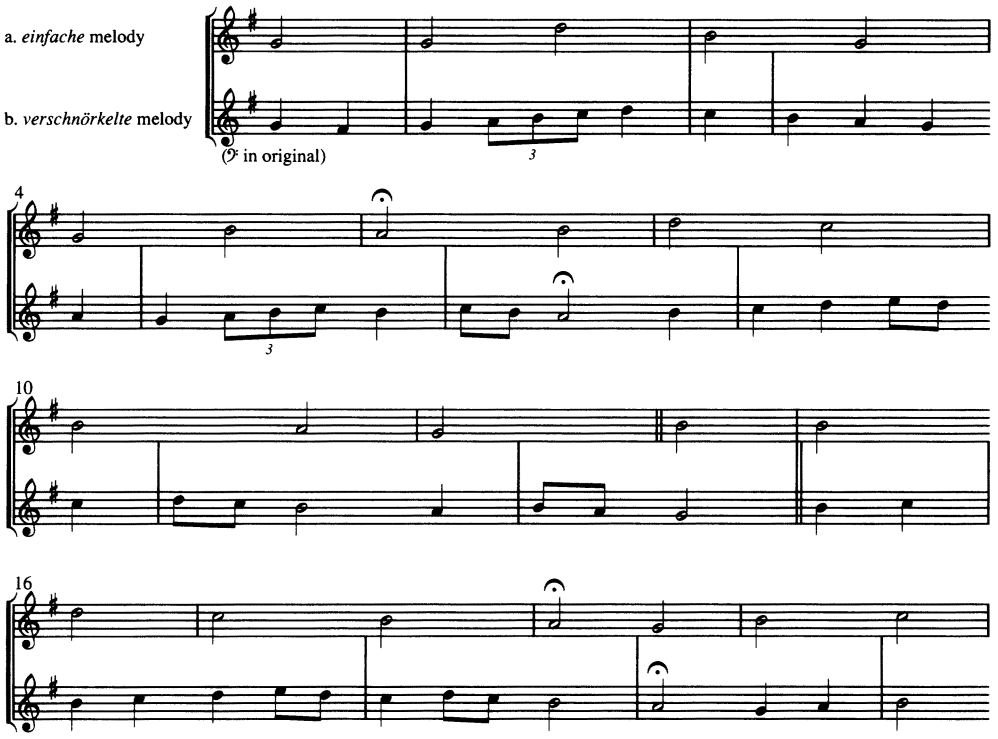
While it is probably impossible to recover the precise details of the melodies that the Mennonites in Prussian Poland adopted, it is possible to get some hints about the state of chorale melodies in Lutheran congregations of the time from books on church music published in the early nineteenth century by Bernhard Natorp and Franz Kessler.[54] Like the reformers cited earlier, these two men decried the state of singing in the congregations they visited. Both speak of melodic corruption and variation from congregation to congregation (Natorp, ix; Kessler, 76–77). Phrases of familiar chorale melodies were inserted into less familiar chorales, resulting in hybrid melodies (Kessler, 80). Both men refer with scorn to the way melodies were "*verschnörkelt*" (*Schnörkel* means frill or flourish). Kessler has this to say about the consequences of very slow tempos found in many congregations: "First of all, it is for many an opportunity for various very

tasteless insertions and for a hodgepodge of supposed decorations and ornaments, such as trills, etc." (Kessler, 92).[55] The problem was particularly severe in churches without an organ (Natorp, 81), but even in churches with an organ and an organist the congregations would introduce variations that might be disguised by the sound of the organ (Natorp, 106) or might even be influenced by an organist who introduced ornaments into the melodies himself (Kessler, 92).[56]

Both writers give examples of melodic variations: the omission of the opening tonic note in "Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern" and the resulting repetition of the fifth degree of the scale, for example,[57] or the substitution of C-sharp for the C normally heard as the fourth note of "Allein Gott in der Höh sei Ehr" when sung in G major (Kessler, 82). Example 8 presents "Aus meines Herzens Grunde" as given by Kessler, the *einfache* or simple melody on top and the *verschnörkelte* on the bottom (Kessler, appendix 3).[58] As in the Old Colony melodies, the added notes consist mainly of passing tones and neighboring tones. Probably because an organ was present in most churches, the deviations from the original melody are not as drastic as in many Old Colony melodies. Some indication of rhythm is given, but it is likely that the original performance might not have fit so neatly into a $\frac{4}{4}$ meter.

Of even greater interest is Natorp's transcription of "Wer nur den lieben Gott lässt walten," shown in Example 9, because examples of Old Colony versions of the same tune are also available (Natorp, 243). The notated version in the Old Colony book gives two numbers for this particular melody—57 and 58—but the original melody is derived from 58.[59] It is given here, along with an Old Colony transcription (JW), Natorp's version, and a transcription of a performance by a group of Old Colony singers (Ens). Natorp notated the melody using letters, with the first line given thus: E f♯ g♯ A h c H c d C H A h c H a G f♯ E. In transcribing it I have imposed a rudimentary metric and rhythmic pattern on the melody, but any notions about its relationship to the original performance must be qualified in the same way as they were for Kessler's example. As in Kessler's example, the variations in Natorp's example are at the surface, consisting mainly of passing tones, neighboring tones, and anticipations, whereas the Old Colony version departs significantly from the original in several places —the very first note is an example—and, of course, it is much more active both melodically and rhythmically. The structure of its scale is also quite different: A dorian rather than A minor.

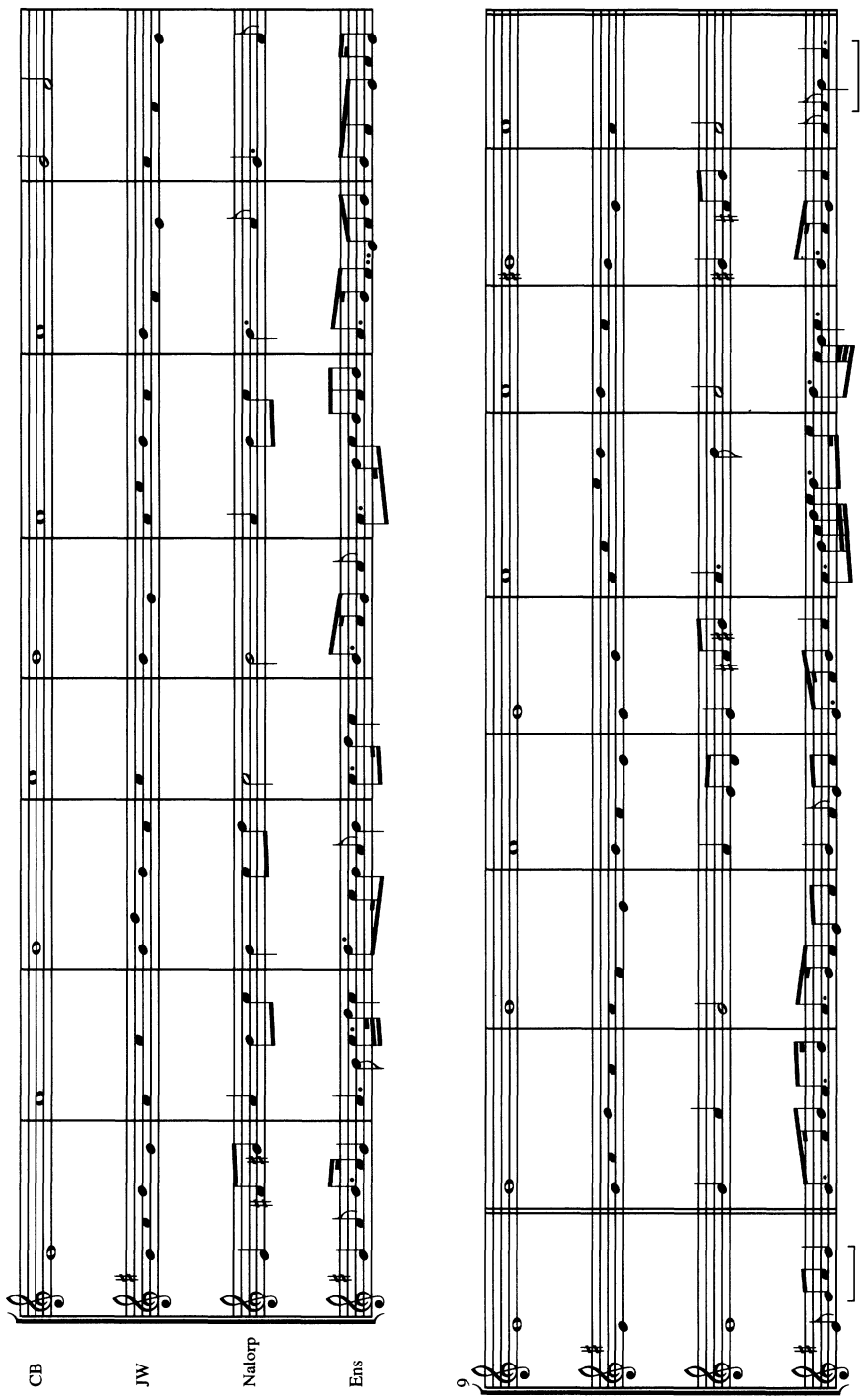
While the Natorp and Kessler examples may not give exact indications of the kinds of melodies the Mennonites appropriated, they do



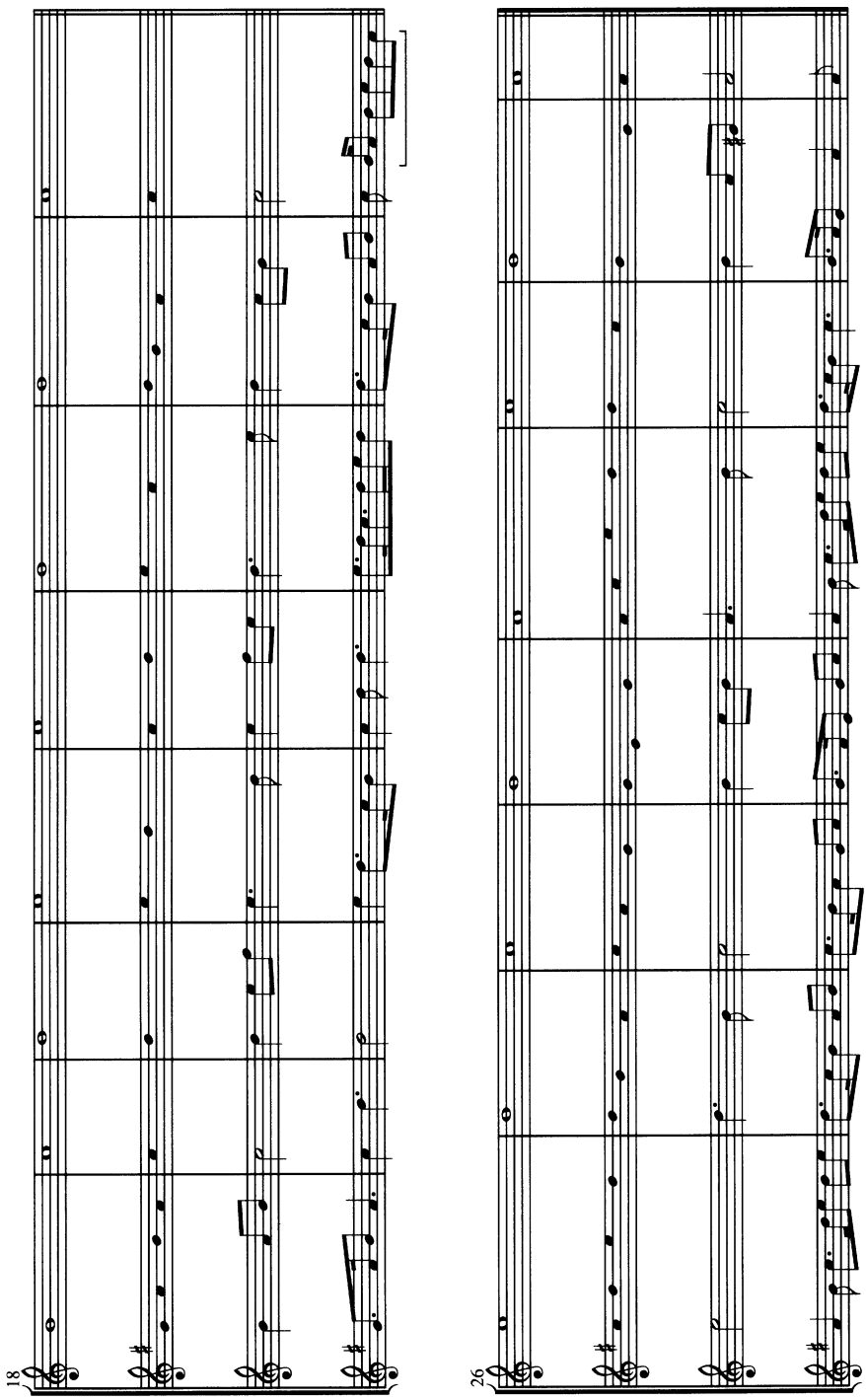

*Example 8.* "Aus meines Herzens Grunde"

show that the Mennonites living around Danzig in the late eighteenth century almost certainly took over a melodic tradition that either allowed or already contained the kinds of variations and elaborations that subsequent reformers condemned so vigorously, and that they then proceeded to develop and extend this tradition over several centuries of congregational life. They also show quite clearly that the Old Way of Singing was a persistent feature of German Lutheran congregational life as well.[60]

The discussion of the development of the Old Colony Mennonite tradition has shown the Old Way of Singing manifested in a community in which it seems to have been preserved in relative isolation. Because documents and transcriptions from various times and places are available for comparison, it has been possible to make observations about the process of oral transmission in such a setting, observations that may be helpful in the study of older traditions now accessible only through written sources.




*Example 9.* "Wer nur den lieben Gott," melody 58




*Example 9.* continued

Other questions remain. Why, for example, do Old Colony Mennonites adhere to this ancient way of singing even after the isolation of the earlier part of this century has been breached by pickup trucks, television sets, and radio stations broadcasting the latest sounds from Nashville? If Sammie Ann Wicks is right, the reference to Nashville may be more relevant than it might seem at first, for she argues that the melismatic, highly ornamented singing styles of Dolly Parton and other country singers are in fact grounded in the Old Way of Singing as manifested in the hymnody of the Old Baptists of the southern United States.[61] I do not propose this as an answer to my question but as a way of suggesting that the Old Way of Singing, rather than simply being a quaint and isolated manifestation of melodic corruption practiced by scattered small groups, is actually a fundamental form of human musical expression. To return to Temperley's formulation, "In places where congregations are left to sing hymns without musical direction for long periods, a characteristic style of singing tends to develop." That is, when people are left alone, untroubled by musical literacy and learned musical performance practices, one of the ways they tend to sing is in this particular, peculiar way. I have been told by people who have heard my tapes of Old Colony Mennonite singing that there are strong resemblances to sounds heard in Indonesia, in East Africa, or in Coptic Christian services. The Old Order Amish tradition has developed separately, yet shares many characteristics with these others, including the melismatic style, erratic, nonmetric rhythms, and tone quality. So does the singing of some Newfoundland folk singers, to cite a very different example. Rather than regarding it as singing gone wrong, which is the impression one gets when reading its detractors,[62] it might be more useful to see it as a reversion to a form of musical expression that provides important insights into the way human beings make music.

The other important issue is the role the *oole Wies* of the Old Colony Mennonites plays in defining and sustaining their identity as a group. According to Catherine Bell in her recent study of ritual theories, ritual behavior exists at least in part to set a group apart from others and to produce persons invested with a sense of ritual, capable of perpetuating the values and traditions of the group in a process that "is designed to do what it does without bringing what it is doing across the threshold of discourse or systematic thinking."[63] This is exemplified in many areas of Old Colony life, but nowhere more clearly than in their music. The fact that a return to the traditional way of singing was a crucial factor in the formation of the Old Colony group in Manitoba suggests the powerful part music can play

in this process, as does the fact that their way of singing hymns is one of the primary ways by which they are identified in the minds of many other Mennonites. Although they do not speak in such terms—they say that Old Colony services are open to anyone—their manner of singing is undoubtedly one of the most effective barriers to intrusions from the outside into their congregational life: strange to hear and even more difficult to learn. More importantly, in a setting in which the visible signs of their distinctiveness are diminishing, their hymns serve as a striking, audible symbol of the separation from the world that lies at the core of their culture.

One of the most infuriating aspects of the Old Way of Singing to reformers was the intransigence of its practitioners: logical explanations of their erroneous ways were doggedly and unreasonably resisted. Their stubborn adherence to a musical practice that seemed melodically corrupt and aurally offensive was incomprehensible to the educated musician. It is only when the singing and the melodies are seen as an elemental way of making music, especially in settings where transmission of text is a priority, and as a profound expression of a particular way of viewing the world that their importance as more than just a strange way of singing hymns can be understood.

## *Notes*

I am grateful to David Gramit, Brian Harris, and Regula Qureshi for their helpful comments, and to Michelle Bozynski and Krista Gilliland for their assistance with the transcriptions and musical examples.

1. Nicholas Temperley, "The Old Way of Singing: Its Origin and Development," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 34 (1981): 512, and *The Music of the English Parish Church,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 90–96. See also Sammie Ann Wicks, "A Belated Salute to the 'Old Way' of 'Snaking' the Voice on Its (ca) 345th Birthday," *Popular Music* 8 (1989): 59–96.

2. Temperley, "The Old Way of Singing," 544.

3. See J. Denny Weaver, "Becoming Anabaptist-Mennonite: The Contemporary Relevance of Sixteenth-Century Anabaptism," *Journal of Mennonite Studies* 4 (1986): 162–82, for a succinct discussion of Anabaptist beliefs.

4. Calvin Redekop, *The Old Colony Mennonites: Dilemmas of Ethnic Minority Life* (Baltimore, Md.: John Hopkins Press, 1969), 43. For another sociological study of the Old Colony Mennonites see Leo Driedger, "A Sect in a Modern Society: A Case Study, the Old Colony Mennonites of Saskatchewan" (master's thesis, University of Chicago, 1955).

5. On Hutterite hymnody see Helen Martens, "Hutterite Songs: The Origins and Aural Transmission of Their Melodies From the Sixteenth Century" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1968), and "Hutterite Melodies from the Strassburg Psalter," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 48 (1974): 201–14; on the music of the Old Order Amish

see George Pullen Jackson, "The Strange Music of the Old Order Amish," *Musical Quarterly* 31 (1945): 275–88, William I. Schreiber, "The Hymns of the Amish Ausbund in Philological and Literary Perspective," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 36 (1962): 36–60, and Bruno Nettl, "The Hymns of the Amish: An Example of Marginal Survival," *Journal of American Folklore* 70 (1957): 323–28.

6. Cornelius J. Dyck, ed., *An Introduction to Mennonite History* (Scottdale, Penn.: Herald Press, 1967), 94.

7. John Friesen, "Mennonite Churches and Religious Developments in Russia, 1789–1850," in *Mennonites in Russia 1788–1988: Essays in Honour of Gerhard Lohrenz,* ed. John Friesen (Winnipeg, Manitoba: CMBC Publications, 1989), 45.

8. See James Urry, *None but Saints: The Transformation of Mennonite Life in Russia, 1789–1889* (Winnipeg, Manitoba: Hyperion Press Limited, 1989), for a comprehensive analysis of this period in Mennonite history.

9. Harry Loewen, "A House Divided: Russian Mennonite Nonresistance and Emigration in the 1870s," in *Mennonites in Russia, 1788–1988,* 127–43.

10. Frank H. Epp, *Mennonites in Canada, 1786–1920: The History of a Separate People* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1974), 287. See John B. Toews, ed. and trans., "Harmony amid Disharmony: A Diary Portrait of Mennonite Singing in Russia During the 1860s," *Mennonite Life* 40 (Dec. 1985): 4–7, for an account of the controversy over the introduction of singing according to notes in the Mennonite colonies of Russia.

11. Redekop, 11–28. For an example of the most recent migrations see "Mennonites: Who Are They?," *Seminole [Texas] Sentinel,* 30 Apr., 7 May, 14 May, 21 May, and 28 May 1989. My thanks to William Everett for bringing these articles to my attention. See also John Friesen, "Field of Broken Dreams: Mennonite Settlement in Seminole, West Texas," *Journal of Mennonite Studies* 14 (1996): 124–41.

12. Charles Burkhart, "The Music of the Old Order Amish and the Old Colony Mennonites: A Contemporary Monodic Practice" (master's thesis, Colorado College, 1952); "Music of the Old Colony Mennonites," *Mennonite Life* 7 (Jan. 1952): 20–21, 47; and "The Church Music of the Old Order Amish and Old Colony Mennonites," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 27 (1953): 34–54. I am grateful to Professor Burkhart for giving me permission to make use of his research.

13. My thanks to Arlyn, Henry, and Louella Enns, Lillian Lee, and Abram Braun for their generosity in serving as guides to the Old Colony community and to William Friesen, Cornie Friesen, and John and Helena Wiebe for sharing their music with me.

14. *Geistreiches Gesangbuch, worinn eine Sammlung aus denen 150 Psalmen Davids, und auserlesenen alten und neuen Liedern zu finden ist, zur allgemeinen Erbauung und zum Lobe Gottes herausgegeben,* Königsberg, 1767.

15. Robert L. Marshall, "Chorale," *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (London: Macmillan), 4:320.

16. Peter M. Friesen, *The Mennonite Brotherhood in Russia (1789–1910),* trans. J. B. Toews et al. (Fresno, Calif.: Board of Christian Literature, General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, 1978), 111, 113.

17. "Endlos lange Gesangbuchlieder wurden von den Vorsängern der andächtigen Gemeinde angestimmt und mit vielen Schnörkeln und Verzierungen, die aber die Melodie gänzlich zur Unbekenntlichkeit entstellten, ausgeführt, und es war mir rein

unmöglich, trotz meines guten Gehörs, eine dieser sonderbaren Melodien im Gedächtnis zu behalten." Jacob Abraham Klassen, "Autodidakt: Erinnerungen aus meinem Leben," Archives of the Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

18. "The Memoirs of Johannes Rempel (1936)," Archives of the Conference of Mennonites in Canada, Winnipeg, Manitoba, 8.

19. "Der Gesang ist über alle Maassen grell und laut aus der Kehle gepresst." Daniel Schlatter, *Bruchstücke aus einigen Reisen nach dem südlichen Russland in den Jahren 1822–1828* (St. Gallen: Huber, 1830), 364. My thanks to James Urry for bringing this passage to my attention.

20. Georg Feder, "Decline and Restoration," in *Protestant Church Music: A History* ed. Friedrich Blume et al. (London: Victor Gollancz, 1975), 340.

21. Temperley, *The Music of the English Parish Church,* 90–96.

22. Temperley, "The Old Way of Singing," 511.

23. Robert Stevenson, *Protestant Church Music in America: A Short Survey of Men and Movements from 1564 to the Present* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1966), 27. On the conflict between reformers and the singers of the Common Way, see also Gilbert Chase, *America's Music: From the Pilgrims to the Present,* 3d rev. ed. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1967), 19–37.

24. Temperley, *The Music of the English Parish Church,* 104.

25. Feder, 378–81. Walter Blankenburg discusses both the causes of the crisis in congregational singing and the attempts at restoration in "Krisenzeiten des evangelischen Kirchenliedes," in *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Geschichte der gottesdienstlichen Musik* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1979), 267–83.

26. Peter Letkemann, "The Hymnody and Choral Music of Mennonites in Russia, 1789–1915" (Ph.D. diss., University of Toronto, 1985), 331. The number of psalms was reduced in the first reprinting in 1775, and by the beginning of the nineteenth century they had disappeared altogether. *Mennonite Encyclopedia,* ed. H. S. Bender et al. (Scottdale, Penn.: Mennonite Publishing House, 1955–59), 2:877.

27. *Choralbuch zum Gebrauch in den Mennonitischen Schulen und Kirchen in Kanada,* 13th Canadian reprint (Altona, Manitoba: D. W. Friesen & Sons, 1976; first published by Breitkopf und Härtel, 1865).

28. Letkemann, "Hymnody," 133–55.

29. On the latter see Feder, "Decline and Restoration," 339. Forty-eight (30%) of the 163 chorales in the *Choralbuch* can still be found in the most recent German hymnal published by Russian Mennonites in North America, *Gesangbuch der Mennoniten* (Newton, Kans.: Faith and Life Press, 1965).

30. Letkemann, "Hymnody," 56–57.

31. See Wesley Berg, *From Russia with Music: A Study of the Mennonite Choral Singing Tradition in Canada* (Winnipeg, Manitoba: Hyperion Press, 1985), for a history of musical development in the main body of Mennonites who left for North America.

32. Redekop reports the singing of six to eight verses in Mexico; *The Old Colony Mennonites,* 60. According to John Wiebe, northern Alberta congregations used to

sing four or five verses of one hymn at the beginning of the service, until they agreed to add a morning hymn and reduce the number of verses to two or three. He also informed me that the singing may begin with a verse other than the first, depending on the occasion and the scripture text for the day.

33. I am grateful to Alan Ord for his help in analyzing the vocal production of the Old Colony Mennonite singers. See also Wicks, "A Belated Salute," 67, for an analysis of the vocal production of southern shape-note singers, whose vocal production seems to be similar. While most scholars, including this one, spend most of their time examining the music sung by practitioners of the Old Way of Singing, it should not be forgotten that the manner of singing is equally distinctive and was given equal attention by the reformers.

34. Redekop, *The Old Colony Mennonites,* 60.

35. Old Colony Mennonites are sometimes criticized by their more evangelical neighbors for having little or no spirituality, but I have to say that I have rarely felt a sense of reverence, a feeling of entering a time and place set aside from the ordinary, so strongly as I have in Old Colony Mennonite worship services. It is important to make clear my relationship with the group whose music I have been studying. I am a Mennonite who grew up in a rural area, who can speak Low German fluently, who owns a *Gesangbuch* that once belonged to my great-aunt and was passed on to me by my grandmother, and who does not share but is aware of the taboos that Old Colony community members grow up with. It was therefore possible for me to gain access to the community much more quickly than might otherwise have been possible, although it is possible that there are questions an outsider might ask that do not occur to someone more or less on the inside of the community. It should also be said that while my informants have shared their music and insights with me gladly and generously and have been told how the information will be used, it is possible that not all members of the group would approve.

36. Redekop, *The Old Colony Mennonites,* 35.

37. The tape seems to have disappeared from the archives. Until I began my field work I was aware of only one recording of Old Colony singing in Canada, prepared by Gerhard Ens of Winnipeg, Manitoba. I am grateful to him for allowing me to use it. Since then I have acquired recordings of fourteen more performances of hymns sung by active or retired vorsänger or groups of vorsänger.

38. Final chorale from the motet "Jesu, meine Freude," BWV 227, *Neue Bach Ausgabe,* ser. 3, vol. 1 (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1965), 104. The rhythm in the final phrase has been altered to preserve the vertical alignment of pitches.

39. Johannes Zahn, *Die Melodien der deutschen evangelischen Kirchenlieder* (Gutersloh, 1889), tune 8032, Johann Crüger (1653). Zahn also shows several variants.

40. Harold Powers, "Introduction: Mode and Modality," in *International Musicological Society, Report of the Twelfth Congress, Berkeley, 1977,* ed. Daniel Heartz and Bonnie Wade (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1981), 502.

41. This is the strategy used, for example, by Jackson, "The Strange Music of the Old Order Amish," 279. See also Temperley, "The Old Way of Singing," 527–28, 540.

42. Burkhart's transcriptions of Old Order Amish singing were done from recordings, and in these he used a phonetic approach, demonstrating that the phonemic approach

in the Old Colony transcriptions arose at least in part from the circumstances under which the transcriptions were made.

43. WF is a transcription made of a performance of the hymn by two vorsänger in a congregation in the Fort Vermilion area, but not the one in which JW was used while its owner was active as a vorsänger. The differences in Bu may be the result of variations in a local congregational tradition, or they may reflect an alternate tradition that may have developed in the group that left for Mexico from Manitoba in the 1920s.

44. Temperley, "The Old Way of Singing," 528–29.

45. Jackson, "The Strange Music of the Old Order Amish," 278–79.

46. Leo Treitler, "Oral, Written, and Literate Process in the Transmission of Medieval Music," *Speculum* 56 (1981): 476–80.

47. Leo Treitler, "The 'Unwritten' and 'Written Transmission' of Medieval Chant and the Start-Up of Musical Notation," *Journal of Musicology* 10 (1992): 146.

48. It might also be possible to speculate that the singing of the Old Colony Mennonites, who come from roughly the same geographic and genetic stock and whose music operates within a quasi-liturgical framework, provides a more accurate picture of the rhythmic and tonal qualities of at least some phases of medieval chant performance in more isolated centers than some of the elegant interpretations of the recent past. Note the suggestion by Bruno Stäblein that "[o]ne can assume on many grounds a more guttural, forced, nasal tone with occasional use of falsetto in the Middle Ages"; Stäblein, "Choral," *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart,* ed. Friedrich Blume (Kassel: Bärenreiter-Verlag, 1949–86), 2:1295. My translation. See also Lance W. Brunner, "The Performance of Plainchant: Some Preliminary Observations on the New Era," *Early Music* 10 (1982): 317–28.

49. Leo Treitler, "Sinners and Singers: A Morality Tale," review of *Re-Envisioning Past Musical Cultures: Ethnomusicology in the Study of Gregorian Chant,* by Peter Jeffery, *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 47 (1994): 157.

50. Some knowledge of just how much music can be retained in the memory can also be gained from a study of Old Colony singers. The informant who gave me the book containing eighty-six melodies said that he and others would have known all of them at one time and that he had known singers who knew more. Burkhart reported that the vorsänger who sang for him knew sixty melodies; "Music of the Old Colony Mennonites," 20. This is in sharp contrast to the reports that in German Lutheran congregations in the early nineteenth century the number of chorale melodies in common use had dwindled to as few as twenty; Walter Blankenburg, "Gemeindegesang, Evangelisch," *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart,* 4:1763. These numbers are not, of course, given as suggestions for the limits of memory capacity; this is as many melodies as they need to remember for the purposes of their worship services. They do give some indication of how much music can be remembered without the help of notation, however, even when melodic and rhythmic patterns are relatively amorphous.

51. Temperley, "The Old Way of Singing," 531–32.

52. Temperley, *The Music of the English Parish Church,* 539–44. On polyphony in folk traditions see also William Talmadge, "Folk Organum: A Study of Origins," *American Music* 2 (1984): 47–55.

53. Feder refers to a tradition of *Sekundieren* in Lutheran congregations of the eighteenth century, in which the men of a congregation would sing an accompanying part; "Decline and Restoration," 340.

54. Bernhard Natorp, *Über den Gesang in den Kirchen der Protestanten. Ein Beytrag zu den Vorarbeiten der Synoden für die Veredlung der Liturgie* (Essen und Duisburg, 1817), and Friedrich Kessler, *Der musikalische Kirchendienst: Ein Wort für alle denen die Beförderung des Cultus am Herzen liegt; insbesondere für Organisten und Prediger* (Iserlohn, 1832). I am grateful to Ken Krilly of the Music Library at Yale University and James Whittle of the Music Resources Centre at the University of Alberta for their assistance in making microfilms of these two rare books available to me.

55. "Zunächst ist dasselbe für Viele eine Veranlassung zu allerhand oft sehr geschmacklose Einschiebsl und allerlei vermeintliche Verzierungen, als Trillern u.s.w."

56. Compare Temperley's assertion that the presence or absence of organs seems to be crucial to the development of the style; "The Old Way of Singing," 515. Without giving any reasons, Feder suggests, in fact, that the introduction of the organ to many congregations in the middle of the seventeenth century may have been linked to the deterioration of their singing; "Decline and Restoration," 341–42.

57. The Old Colony versions of this chorale also begin on the fifth degree of the scale rather than the tonic.

58. In the book the bottom melody is notated in the bass clef, but this is clearly an error.

59. A number of tunes in JW and W have from two to five numbers indicated. There will be only one CB melody that corresponds, but the texts associated with the other tunes will normally have the same number of syllables, making it possible to sing the hymns even though the original tunes have disappeared.

60. Mennonites made up only a small portion of German settlers attracted to Russia in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Similar musical traditions have been discovered and investigated among other German colonists, but a discussion of this music and its relationship to the music of Old Colony Mennonites must await a separate study. See Johann Windholz, "Schwindendes Erbe: Mündliche Überlieferung der Russlanddeutschen," in Boris Meissner et al., *Die Russlanddeutschen, Gestern und Heute* (Köln: Markus Verlag, 1992), 231–51, for an overview of the literature on the subject. My thanks to James Urry for bringing this article to my attention.

61. Wicks, "A Belated Salute," 79.

62. The critical tone of the reformers is reflected in the observations of recent historians like Feder as well: "Much of the *deterioration* was doubtless the natural result of *careless* congregational singing" (340; my emphasis). This attitude is, of course, also reflected in the title of his chapter, "Decline and Restoration." The question might be asked: When does the decline and deterioration of one tradition turn into the valid and authentic expression of another?

63. Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 93.