Reverend William Herbert Brewster has been called “the key architect of the modern gospel sound.”¹ His songs were performed by gospel giants such as Clara Ward, Marion Williams, and Queen C. Anderson. His style of composing influenced those performers’ styles. For future gospel singers, the performance techniques employed by The Ward Singers and other ensembles for whom Brewster composed became foundational principles for creative expression in gospel music. He composed gospel works in many different styles for use both in his own services and as part of his gospel musical dramas. His first published work “I Am Leaning and Depending on the Lord” was written in the early 1930s and published in 1941. Brewster continued writing music until his death in 1987. He wrote music both for use in his Sunday services and for use in a number of his self-composed religious dramas. Different sources accredit Brewster as having written as little as 100 compositions to as many as 500. He has been called one of the most prolific writers of gospel music in the Southern region, according to Charles Thornton.² His music is played and sung in 22 languages.³

Despite his influence on the gospel genre, Brewster is relatively unknown. His work was often claimed by the very gospel singers who were made famous by his music. During an interview with Brewster’s great-granddaughter, who he affectionately called

Gigi, she lamented that Brewster never received the credit he deserved. She remembered late in Brewster’s life that Clara Ward had apologized for claiming authorship of “Move on up a Little Higher” as well as other songs. Despite the apology, Clara Ward never offered to share the royalties she received from Brewster’s music. Modern gospel groups still perform Brewster’s music without acknowledging that these songs are not in public domain. Brewster claimed his works, and in several instances, copyrights are pending. Gigi said that she would never want to be involved in copyright disputes lest she say or do something of which her great-grandfather would not approve. “He was always so forgiving,” she remembers. In an interview Brewster once said, “Lawyers have come to me saying I ought to do something when I didn’t get credit for one of the songs, but I said I’d just write another song.”

When Brewster died, Earnest Donelson, a performer of Brewster’s music, said of Brewster’s music: “It had the message, and that was it. He could have been a millionaire, but he chose to produce and create for the sake of creation and to have it enjoyed by thousands all over the world.”

Brewster’s music cannot be separated from who he is. Many of his songs focus on identity and its relation to spirituality. The lyrics and simple melodies stem from personal experiences and studies. His music is based on traditional ideas about what gospel music should be. It is the culmination of Brewster’s background and education which allowed him to create music not just relevant to the Bible, but music that was also relevant to a larger community.

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4 Thornton 1982.
Brewster was part of the civil rights “uplift movement,” founded upon principles of both Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. DuBois.\textsuperscript{6} The “uplift movement” appealed to mostly middle and upper-class African-Americans. Focusing primarily on advancement through education, the “uplift movement” used religion and spirituality to unify the African-American community in their motivations and goals. According to Heilbut, “Long before the concept of black pride was codified, Brewster’s songs and sermons exemplified racial dignity.”\textsuperscript{7} Brewster used concepts of identity and faith in the music’s text to act as a vehicle for civil rights rhetoric.

**Biography**

William Herbert Brewster was born in west Tennessee, east of Memphis in Fayette County. He was born either in 1897 or 1899, but he never knew which. Birth records were not kept with any kind of regularity in the Somerville community, especially when it came to black citizens. Most black people in the region could not read or write, so they were also unable to keep their own records.\textsuperscript{8} In a depiction of his early rustic life, Brewster’s two birth years were memorable for the semi-natural disasters that had occurred. In 1897 Fayette County suffered a swarm of gnats that hurt both people and the livestock, while in 1899 there had been a particularly harsh winter. Brewster, having always felt like an older soul, claimed 1897 as his birth year.\textsuperscript{9}

Brewster was raised by both his parents and his paternal grandparents. His grandparents on both sides had been slaves. When he was young, they and his parents

\textsuperscript{7} Heilbut, 126.
\textsuperscript{9} Ibid, 186.
worked as sharecroppers. Brewster’s family was more educated than most in their community. His paternal grandfather, Martin Brewster, and his father, Nelson Brewster, were literate. William Brewster said that he had received an almost photographic memory from that grandfather.\textsuperscript{10} His father had finished elementary school, and Brewster followed in his footsteps starting school when he was almost six years-old. Brewster was eager to learn and was not discouraged by the frequent absences that were required as the son of sharecroppers. He continued on to high school which had been started in the community by a Baptist preacher. Brewster said that as a young man he had a hunger for knowledge, a need to know and understand the world.\textsuperscript{11}

The need translated over into Brewster’s spiritual life as well. In the Baptist tradition, a member of the church must be “born again” by accepting Christ into his or her life. This is typically done through public testament followed by a baptism. In Brewster’s church, when a child reached a certain age, they were told to go sit on the mourners’ bench. When the preacher asked who was ready to accept Christ into their life, many of Brewster’s peers shouted and jumped around, and their conversion testimony was accepted. Brewster refused to behave in such a manner, and his calm testimony was turned down repeatedly. Brewster felt that his acceptance of faith came through his own study of the Bible. Around age twelve, Brewster had committed much of the Bible to heart, and he began to understand when the preacher was misinterpreting the Bible for ulterior gain.\textsuperscript{12}

Brewster knew that he wanted to be a preacher from a very young age. When his minister finally accepted his testimony, Brewster’s belief in God was already firmly

\begin{footnotes}
\item[10] Ibid, 187.
\item[11] Ibid, 188.
\item[12] Reagon, 191.
\end{footnotes}
established. Around the time of his official baptism, Brewster’s mother fell ill. He could not attend school regularly and stayed at home to take care of her. One night, after Brewster had finished reading the story of Benjamin in the *Book of Genesis*, he went into his sick mother’s room and laid his head on the pillow beside her. It was then that Brewster had a vision. He saw a band of angels come to him. They told him, “Go ye into the world and preach the gospel.” When Brewster awoke, he was understandably frightened and struggled with what he believed the Lord had told him to do. In September of 1914, Brewster asked God to send him a sign that he should become a preacher. When he went to bed that night, he asked that if God wanted him to become a preacher, He should wake him up at four o’clock. Later that evening, Brewster inexplicably woke up at four in the morning and knew that he would become a preacher.13

Like his dedication to religion, Brewster’s exposure to music started early in his life. In an interview, he remembered:

> My father and mother were both musical, and music was our greatest pastime on the old plantation. Practically every night all the families gathered in one log house and sang… during the days we sang as we worked, picking cotton, harvesting the corn… in a long row we picked and harvested and sang.14

His father knew and taught shape-note singing, a style of writing music in which solfege syllables are assigned to note shapes (Example 1). Shape-note singing is a systematic way to teach harmony and learn music more easily than reading traditional music. At the same time, it is a more sophisticated learning style than learning to sing by ear.

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13 Reagon, 189-191.
Together his family would sing songs like “My Old Kentucky Home” and “Old Black Joe.” Brewster also remembers in another interview, his grandmother’s voice: “She was singing and laughing out loud almost hysterically—that ‘Holy Ghost laugh,’ they used to call it.”

Brewster linked music with God, hearing the sounds of nature as another kind of music. As a child he would sit outside and listen to the world around him. He would feel that the sounds of birds or the rustling of trees were God’s music. Some of his family thought that this behavior was a little odd, but this kind of meditating brought Brewster great peace. It seemed natural to Brewster to connect God’s word with music.

Brewster attended Memphis’s Howe Collegiate Institute under Rev. T.O. Fuller and Rev. Sutton Griggs. Brewster came to be a pastor in Memphis two years after he had graduated from Roger Williams University in Nashville, where he attended seminary.

After his graduation from seminary school between 1922 and 1924, Brewster served as pastor in Forrest City, Arkansas. However, Brewster always thought of Memphis, close

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15 Reagon, 193.
16 Ibid, 193.
to the town where he had been born and raised, as his original home. In 1924, Brewster became pastor of East Trigg Baptist Church in Memphis. He remained there for the rest of his life becoming a leader both in his community and in the church.

The Memphis that Brewster confronted in his first years as pastor was a segregated world. Discrimination mixed with political corruption created an uncertain environment for Brewster’s new congregation. Brewster’s penchant for timely sermons that engaged his listeners created a strong, supportive assembly at East Trigg that loyally stayed with him throughout his years as pastor. Brewster frequently addressed the issue of racism in his sermons. He would say, “When grace is in, race is out.”

However, as a young pastor Brewster struggled with his own feelings towards white Memphians. When faced with their frequent and blatant racism, his Christian ideals conflicted with his growing, albeit valid prejudices. Later in his life, Brewster wrote a story for *The Commercial Appeal* in which he impressively acknowledged his own shortcomings and biases. One night Brewster was driving when he came upon a car in the middle of the road, blocking his way. He saw a white hand waving him to go around. For no particular reason, Brewster felt enraged that a white person would have the gall to tell him what to do, even there, in the middle of the road.Stubbornly, Brewster sat behind the car, becoming more and more angered. Finally, he could no longer handle the frustration. He got out of his car and went to see what was going on with the white person. When he looked down in the other window, he found that the young man was paralyzed from the waist down. Brewster asked God for forgiveness

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saying, “Oh, my God, please forgive me for being so prejudiced against a white hand that I did not consider that it was attached to one of your children who needed my help.” 19

Brewster was active both in his own community and in the Baptist Church at large. Brewster’s involvement in the National Baptist Convention extends back to 1933 when he gave a small speech on activity in the black community. According to the convention annuals, Brewster occasionally had a small part in each year’s program. Brewster most certainly spoke at these occasions, and in several different interviews, he recalls the performances of his dramas throughout different years. However, no mention of his dramas or any of his sermons can be found in these annuals. Almost every year for close to thirty years, Brewster had a leadership position in the convention.

Table 1: Brewster’s Offices in the National Baptist Convention

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Office Held</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>Education Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>Home Mission Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>Home Mission Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>No position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>No position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td>No position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td>Annual missing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>Historical Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>Sunday School Publishing Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957</td>
<td>No position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>Education Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>Education Board</td>
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<td>1960</td>
<td>Education Board</td>
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<td>Education Board</td>
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<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>Education Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>Education Board (Secretary)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 1976, the National Baptist Convention changed the way they elected members to their committees. Before 1976, every state or province had an elected person on every board. After that, the committee elections became national, and less than ten people filled each board.

**Brewster’s Music**

In 1930, Brewster wrote his first song, “I Am Leaning and Depending on the Lord.” It was inspired by how he had learned to depend on the Lord in times of financial trouble, both personal and those related to his church. Brewster often composed music that related to his personal experiences. His lyrics truly resonated with not only his congregation, but also the general public. Brewster had commercial success with many of his songs. Of these, Mahalia Jackson’s rendition of “Move on up a Little Higher” was the first gospel recording to reach 1 million copies sold. Another song, “Surely God Is Able” as performed by the Ward Singers also reached that benchmark. To understand the considerable popularity of Brewster’s music, it is important to see how his music fits into the greater context of gospel music history.

Gospel has its roots in slave field hollers and folk music before and of the same time period. The field hollers, especially, provides the responsorial form often found in gospel music. The transmission of these traditions was primarily oral, and very little of this music is written down. What has been recorded was done mostly by whites, who

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>Education Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>Education Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>Education Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>Education Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>No position</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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20 Reagon, 198.
21 Heilbut, 120.
may or may not have let the music stand in its original, untainted form. The emergence of these traditions in spiritual settings occurred during the Second Awakening of the early 1800’s.\textsuperscript{22} Camp meetings of the period were religious services extended over days and were marked by their extremely emotional atmosphere. After the main services, participants would gather and sing short affirmations, prayers, and pledges which could be followed by a repeating section. These musical ideas were incorporated into the camp meeting services. When added to the African tradition of participatory service, the music took on a responsorial form with the preacher saying a line and the congregation responding with “hallelujah” or some other affirmation.\textsuperscript{23} Jubilee spirituals, which used more sophisticated language and was more complex in harmony and texture, developed after the Civil War. In the final development into modern gospel music, the black Holiness church, a Pentecostal-like sect, codified the camp meeting and jubilee spirituals into the “church song.”\textsuperscript{24} The “church song” is the most complex evolution of gospel music, and it is the modern concept of what is sung by congregations across different denominations today. It is the point at which gospel music had the most realized form, codifying what was acceptable in terms of melody, harmony, and instrumentation. As Holiness churches became more popular in the South, the “church song” spread all over America, and the “church song” was soon being sung by black Methodist and Baptist congregations.

This style of singing was continually popularized through different churches. The National Baptist Convention U.S.A., Inc. and the National Baptist Convention of America attracted soloists who gave performances to huge audiences. At the 1921

\textsuperscript{23} Boyer, 34.
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid, 36.
National Baptist Convention, Thomas A. Dorsey, a blues musician, heard several soloists sing gospel music. The music so affected Dorsey that he dedicated his life to the composing of gospel music. Prior to Dorsey, most music from the genre was recycled material from old hymns and songs. Dorsey brought to gospel music fresh melodies inspired by his blues background. He also accompanied his large ensembles on the piano. Before Dorsey, gospel singing ensembles were primarily male *a cappella* groups. However, his compositions required many more voices. Dorsey essentially created the gospel choir with robed women accompanied by a piano. Brewster’s music is written for the same kind of gospel choir.

Dorsey broadened many elements of what gospel music could be. The brilliance of Brewster’s compositions comes from a further expansion of arrangement and form, while interweaving complex spiritual poetry. When Brewster first began writing, the Holiness movement had begun to take shape in Memphis in the Church of God in Christ denomination. Brewster set his eloquent poetry to the new rhythms from the Holiness movement, which had the wide use of syncopation. Brewster did not face the controversy that had confronted Dorsey. Whereas Dorsey’s music sounded like blues music superficially disguised as gospel music, Brewster’s further expansion of the gospel genre, while indirectly influenced by blues music, stayed within accepted boundaries.

Brewster, though, never really approved of distinguishing between what was morally good or bad music:

25 *A capella*: Music performed by a vocalist or vocalists without instrumental accompaniment.
26 Boyer, 38.
27 Price, 51.
There is a kind of connection between the old blues and the spirituals and the people who were happy-go-lucky that didn’t belong to the church. They teed off on the other kind of music, and I claimed that all of the music is God’s music, that whatever Satan has he took it: he stole it. And I said we ought to recapture it. We’ll take some of it back.  

This statement brings up the frequent comparison of gospel music to blues music and the differences between them, a comparison worth consideration as it highlights what is spiritually relevant about gospel music. Brewster defined gospel music by saying what the genre was not: “If a song doesn’t carry a message to make Christ the center and the Bible the basis, it really isn’t a gospel song.” The most obvious contrast between gospel and blues is the text. Blues’ text can be about anything, but a gospel song must have a spiritual and specifically religious focus. Gospel and blues both originated with the slave hollers, though their histories deviate from there. However, this common background has given blues and gospel music similar harmonic structures and form.

Like the blues, gospel music makes use of formulaic compositional structures. Whereas the twelve-bar blues (Figure 2) is the standard for the secular text, gospel music uses a sixteen-bar blues structure (Figure 3).

**Figure 2: Twelve-Bar Blues**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>I</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>IV</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>IV</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 3: Sixteen-Bar Blues**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>I</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>IV</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>IV</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>IV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>IV</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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The primary chords used in gospel and blues music are the tonic (I), the dominant (V), and the subdominant (IV) of the given key in a piece (see Example 2). These designations arrive from the westernized tonal systems where pitches are organized hierarchically. Tonic, the first note of a scale, is the tonal center around which all other pitches in a song are organized. The dominant, built upon the fifth note of a given scale, is the second most prevailing function besides tonic in gospel and blues. The dominant chord forces the piece to travel harmonically, and because it contains the seventh degree of the scale, known as the leading tone, it begs to be resolved to tonic. Finally, the subdominant (IV), starting on the fourth note of a scale, has two main functions. It serves as a precursor to the dominant, or it can prolong tonic (as in the twelve-bar and sixteen-bar blues). In popular music it is common to see the subdominant appearing after the dominant, leading back to tonic.

Example 2: I, IV, and V

Each box in Figure 2 and Figure 3 represents one bar. Essentially, the only difference between the twelve-bar blues pattern and the sixteen bar blues pattern comes in the addition of four bars when the harmony alternates between the dominant and subdominant, avoiding tonic. Harmonically, tension is created at this point, because the music will not resolve to tonic. These four bars provide time for extra lyrics, especially for thoughts and ideas that need to be emphasized.
When analyzing Brewster’s music, it is important to recognize that he had no formal training in composition. He was most likely unaware of the functionalities in music. Though he may have been unacquainted with these underlying concepts, because of his musical background, he was familiar with what was standard and understood how he could create something that sounded new. Therefore, it is worth applying some principles of common-practice music theory, though this music does not always operate within those parameters, to see how he accomplished his unique sound.

In the chorus of Brewster’s “I Just Can’t Afford to Fail My Jesus Now,” the chord progression (Figure 4) greatly differs from the standard sixteen-bar blues (Figure 3, as seen above).

### Figure 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B-flat:</th>
<th>B</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>V/V</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>IV</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V'/IV</td>
<td>V'/IV</td>
<td>V'/V</td>
<td>V</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>V'/IV</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>IV</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>V'/VII</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>IV</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Figure 3

| Vs. | I | I | I | I |
| I | IV | IV | I | I |
| V | IV | V | IV | |
| V | IV | I | I | |

**Chorus Text:**

I just can’t afford to fail my Jesus now,
I just can’t afford to fail my Jesus now,
One day when I was lost, he died on Calv’ry’s cross,
And I just can’t afford to fail my Jesus now.

Despite the extreme variance from the typical sixteen-bar blues, almost every measure harmonically functions in a similar way to the basic form. The first four
measures serve as tonic prolongation. Since the $V^7/V$ in the first half of the second measure never resolves to V, the phrase is harmonically stagnant. The second four bars are centered along the dominant of IV, instead of IV itself. In the third and fourth four bar phrases, there is no alternating between V and IV as in the standard sixteen-bar blues.

However, the formal structure of the chorus still maintains the AABA sixteen-bar blues form. The line “I just can’t afford to fail my Jesus now,” is designated as A, while the contrasting line, “One day when I was lost, he died on Calv’ry’s cross,” is designated as B. Comparing the first, second, and fourth four bar phrases from Figure 4, it is apparent that they differ harmonically. However, the text on all three lines is almost identical. The first and second phrases have the same rhythmic motive, an eighth note, quarter note, eighth note figure on the text “just can’t afford” (Example 3). Since these phrases have this same rhythmic motive it musically solidifies the connection between the first A and the last A in the blues form.

**Example 3: Same Rhythmic Motive**

![Example 3: Same Rhythmic Motive](image)

The beginning of the first and fourth phrases are in tonic. All three phrases end with similar neighbor note motion, where a note in a chord moves up or down by step. When a phrase of music reaches its end, the resting of a line of music is known as a cadence. In the first and fourth phrase, this ending occurs as a plagal cadence, where the music moves
from IV to I (Example 3). A plagal cadence can be found in all kinds of church music, and frequently occurs at the end of pieces at the “Amen.” Like the rhythmic motive above, the similar motion at these cadences continues to create connections between the A sections in the blues form. The second phrase stands somewhat apart, because it does not have a plagal cadence.

**Example 3: Similar Neighbor Note Motion**

Phrase 1

Phrase 2

Phrase 4
The chorus of “I Just Can’t Afford to Fail My Jesus Now” has the formal structure AA\(^1\)BA. The second A is denoted as A\(^1\) because of its rhythmic and cadential differences to the first and last four bars.

Though the chorus of “I Just Can’t Afford to Fail My Jesus Now” has a phrase structure comparable to that of the sixteen-bar blues, the verse, while having sixteen measures, is not the sixteen-bar blues form. The phrases are not divided evenly into four bars. Figure 5 shows the form diagram for the verse. Taking on the form as a whole, including the verse, the next new phrase is called C to distinguish it from what has come before.

**Figure 5: Form of Verse Text in Measures 17-32**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Number of Bars</th>
<th>Formal Designations</th>
<th>Harmonic Functions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“He brought me all the way, thru dangers toils and snares.”</td>
<td>4+2</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“He leads me day by day.”</td>
<td></td>
<td>C(^1)</td>
<td>II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“He’s my heavy burden share. He’s been so good to me.”</td>
<td>4+2</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>IV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“His friend I’ll always be.”</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“And I just can’t afford to fail my Jesus now.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 6: Text and Form of Verses**

Verse 1:

| C | He brought me all the way, thru dangers toils and snares |
|   | He leads me day by day |
|   | He’s my heavy burden share, he’s been so good to me  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>His friend I’ll always be</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>And I just can’t afford to fail my Jesus now.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Verse 2:**

|   | He is my way provider, my bread in a starving’ land  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>My leader, my provider</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| C¹| He holds me in his hand. He brought me all the way  
|   | That is why you hear me say                          |
| A | I just can’t afford to fail my Jesus now.            |

**Verse 3:**

|   | He is my mighty tower, a rock in a weary land.      
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>My comfort in sorrow.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C¹</td>
<td>My help on ev’ry hand. Took my feet out the miry clay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Started me running on my way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>I just can’t afford to fail my Jesus now.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Verse 4:**

|   | When I think of how he’s brought me, along this old crossway  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>How in trouble he has taught me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C¹</td>
<td>Thy will begun today, the wheel begins to turn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A fire begins to burn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>I just can’t afford to fail my Jesus now.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first two phrases C and C¹ are not harmonically similar, but they are similar in their structure of 4+2. The final phrase of the verse, like the final phrase of the choruses, has a plagal cadence which gives the final “amen” to the piece. While Brewster manipulated forms like the sixteen-bar blues to suit his own needs, he also used other typical forms in gospel music to create his unique sound.

Brewster primarily composed three types of gospel songs: the cumulative song, the jubilee, and the recitative and aria. The cumulative song, also known as a vamp song, uses repetition to emphasize specific concepts and ideas. The repeated line or lines

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31 Boyer, 233.
is the heart of the work, which is expounded upon or is given revelation by the surrounding text. In very much the same manner as Brewster’s cumulative songs, Martin Luther King Jr. made use of this rhetorical technique in his “I Have a Dream” speech. Brewster liked to use this technique in his poetry, especially in one of his most famous poems “I’m Determined to Be Somebody (The Resolution of the Negro Youth.)”

“**I’m Determined to Be Somebody**”

The present conditions and dark circumstance,  
May make it appear that I have not a chance;  
The odds may be against me, this fact I may admit,  
I haven’t much to boast of—just a little faith and grit  
In spite of the things that stand in my way  
I’M DETERMINED TO BE SOMEBODY, SOMEDAY

There’s no royal blood a-coursing in my veins,  
No great family background for me remains;  
I haven’t had a chance as others have had,  
My living conditions have been kinda bad;  
But, it makes no difference what folks think or say  
I’M DETERMINED TO BE SOMEBODY, SOMEDAY

Some may think that I have made a poor start  
Well, maybe I have; but I’ll handle that part;  
At the end of each round I’ll be on my feet,  
For there’s something in ME, that’s hard to beat;  
The fight may be tough, but I’M IN IT to stay,  
For, I’M JUST DETERMINED TO BE SOMEBODY, SOMEDAY

There’s really somewhere I would like to go  
There’s truly some things I’d like to know  
There’s certainly some things I’d like to see  
And something SPECIAL I’d like to be  
Let others do as they will or may  
But, as for ME, I’VE JUST GOT TO BE SOMEBODY, SOMEDAY

As a member of a once down trodden race  
To the carts of Heaven, I’ve appealed my case
I know that Jehovah is the Judge on the bench
Tho’ men may deride and lynch
My blood will cry from the ground and say
("Tho’ you stay me, I’LL BE SOMEBODY, SOMEDAY!")

My head may be bloody, and my skin may be black,
But NOTHING shall throw me off the track;
I’ll climb the ladder, round by round
Until my feet strike higher ground
And when I do, just remember what I say,
I’M DETERMINED TO BE SOMEBODY, SOMEDAY

Brewster achieves this same effect in his cumulative song “Move on up a Little Higher” by echoing this same kind of repetition. The text is about reaching Heaven, and the excitement builds as each image is listed off followed by “Move on up a little higher.”

“Move on up a Little Higher” Chorus (as sung by Mahalia Jackson)

I'm gonna move on up a little higher
    Gonna meet old man Daniel
Gonna move on up a little higher
    Gonna meet the Hebrew children
Gonna move on up a little higher
    Meet Paul and Silas
        Gonna meet my friends and kindred
Gonna move on up a little higher
    Gonna meet my loving mother
I'm gonna move on up a little higher
    Gonna meet the Lily of the valley
    I'm gonna feast with the Rose of Sharon

Musically speaking, none of the phrases in “Move on up a Little Higher” ever start on the first beat of the measure. Instead, every phrase, including the first, begins on the third beat. The rhythm follows the text and is mostly syllabic. Throughout the piece, the phrases have a call and response pattern, and the repetition of this pattern creates the cumulative form.
Most of Brewster’s compositions are jubilees, which are typically joyful stories with few repeating elements. (A jubilee spiritual is not the same thing as the jubilee form. Whereas a jubilee spiritual corresponds to a specific type of early gospel music, the jubilee form describes the composition of a specific piece.) “How Far Am I from Canaan?” has a jubilee form. The text of the verse is outstandingly verbose, which is a common aspect to Brewster’s composed poetry. According to gospel scholar Clarence Horace Boyer “much of what African-Americans know about the Old Testament might very well have come from Dr. Brewster’s compositions. He would not hesitate to include biblical data that some might have called dull, boring, and uninteresting in his songs.”32

The music from the verse of “How Far Am I from Canaan?” is vertically constructed, that is mostly in chords. This syllabic approach to the text makes the music much more like speech. The main chorus, too, is built in chords.

“*How Far Am I from Canaan?” Verse Text*

Verse 1
I am standing on the Jordan. Gazing cross the stormy tide. Here I’ll rest my ev’ry burden, Till all doubts and fears subside. I can hear the angels singing, I can see them round the throne, I can hear the saints all singing, Hallelujah. Now ‘tis done.

Verse 2
I can see the walls of Jasper Gates of pearl and streets of gold. Where no sorrow nor disaster Can disturb one’s peaceful soul. There the wicked cease from troubling And the weary be at rest. There the fount of life is bubbling In that land that’s always blest

Verse 3
I’ve left Egypt land of sorrow. Crossed the red sea of deep despair. Passed the desert land of horror, Leaning on the staff of prayer, I can look far back behind me. See old Satan and his band, Trying to overtake and bind me, on my way to Canaan land.

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Verse 4
I have followed as He led me. Clouds by day and fire by night.
Heav’nly manna He has fed me. Drowned sin’s pharaoh in my sight.
When I thirst, He gave me pure water, flowing from the smitten rock.
From sinking sand He came to save me. He leads me with His precious flock.

Verse 5
I have traveled on this highway. In the midst of storm and rain.
I have seen so much in my day, That has caused me so much pain
That my soul has started yearning, For that land of peace and rest.
and for which long I’ve been journeying, Thru this wilderness.
“How Far Am I from Canaan?” also has another chorus (designated in the score
as a special chorus), which could be used as a final refrain, though that is at the
performers’ discretion. In this special chorus the music divides into three staves with a
solo voice becoming the principle focus. The special chorus has a polyphonic setting.
The lower two parts, which belong to the greater choir, augment the melody of the first
chorus, stretching what had been much shorter over a longer period of time. This allows
for something familiar to act as the accompaniment to the new solo line. In addition to
the accompaniment role, the choral parts stabilize the uppermost line, which as
designated by the score, the soloist is meant to improvise. The text remains simple so
that words do not interfere with the soloist’s improvisational decisions.

“How Far Am I From Canaan?” Chorus Text

How far am I from Canaan?
Land of peace and pure delight.
How far am I from where each mansion stands glistening bright?

Brewster was also fond of changing the tempos in his songs. “Jesus Is All” is a
recitative and aria. Recitatives and arias are standard in vocal music forms. They are
found in operas, oratorios, and cantatas. This form is a classical music standard. As
translated into a gospel music form, the recitative is typically slow with a melancholy

33 Boyer, 220.
text, though this does not hold true for Brewster. The aria quickens in tempo and has a more joyful text. In “Jesus Is All,” the recitative, which is denoted in the Bowles Music House edition as “Solo and Chorus,” is in three parts, a two part choir with a soloist. The solo line is uncomplicated both in music and in text. The melody line outlines the tonic chord. The choir echoes the same text of the solo line in chords.

“Jesus Is All” Solo and Chorus
Jesus is all. My all and all.
I know He’ll answer. When I call.
Walking by his side. I’m satisfied.
Yes He’s my all, my all, and all.

The aria of “Jesus Is All” acts as a refrain and has no solo line. The music becomes syllabic and has the same vertical construction as the verse of “How Far Am I from Canaan?” The tempo moves from “moderate” to “lively”, and this tempo change is what gives the piece its recitative and aria form.

“Jesus Is All” Aria/Verse Text

Verse 1
When I went out to seek the Lord I walked out on his blessed world.
I remember when I prayed that last pray’r the Holy ghost came to me right there.
I stepped on the rock, the rock was sound,
The love of God came streaming down
The reason I know He saved my soul, I dug down deep and found pure gold.
He’s my all my all, my all, my all and all. My all and all.

Verse 2
Yes I remember that day well, My soul was snatched from the gates of hell.
I never felt such love before. It made me run from door to door.
He poured on me. His love so sweet,
It went from my head to my feet,
It started me up the kings highway, I’ll make it home some sweet day.
He’s my all my all, my all, my all and all. My all and all.

Verse 3
He is my friend, my friend indeed. He helps me out in time of need.

34 Boyer, 224.
He is my rock in a weary land. Right by my side He’ll always stand.
I know he knows the way I take.
He is too wise to make mistakes.
He will go with me all the way. You can believe me when I say.
He’s my all my all, my all, my all and all. My all and all.

Verse 4
He is my rose of Sharon sweet. That’s why I bow down at His feet.
He is my Lily of the valley fair. He walks with me my burdens bear.
He is my captain on the field.
My breast plate buckler and my shield.
He bids my sorrows all to cease. And makes my enemies to decease.
He’s my all my all, my all, my all and all. My all and all.

These three forms, the cumulative song, the jubilee form, and the recitative and aria, while fairly simple in harmonic structure, achieve an intellectual level in their comprehensiveness. The overall structure of each piece is highlighted by the emphasis on the melody. The rhetoric behind the cumulative song is meant to be persuasive, and Brewster’s use of repetition in “Move on up a Little Higher” is highly effective. While the jubilee was a standard compositional form during Brewster’s era, his level of language is very unique. The rhyme schema is not complex, but to learn the words and to understand the Biblical background behind them required a high level of thought for his congregation. Finally, the recitative and aria form was borrowed from the classical vocal form by the same name. As such, it creates a sense of drama in the text by juxtaposing the slow and fast tempos. Brewster attempted to educate through an accessible conduit: music.

**The Transformative Powers of Gospel Music**

Gospel music, especially Brewster’s gospel music, is not a passive art form. It is meant to transport a meaning to its listener and transform the performer. Brewster noted
that while sermons might put a congregation to sleep, music made everyone pay attention.\(^{35}\)

I had discovered—even though I had been on a committee to arrange a lot of church music, hymns, and anthems—I discovered what my old granddad had told me: “If you want to catch fish, you have to bait the hook with the kind of bait that the fish like.”\(^{36}\)

Brewster used gospel music in conjunction with his sermons as a vehicle for his civil rights rhetoric. Positioning civil rights rhetoric alongside religious texts both directly and metaphorically gave a religious imperative that civil rights’ causes be enacted. Certain phrases in a gospel song were meant to be taken as motivation to action; phrases such as “crossing over,” “in the morning,” and “one day soon” were statements about changing one’s position in life.\(^{37}\) When Brewster wrote “Move on up a Little Higher,” the cumulative song, he had the intention of conveying a specific message:

The fight for rights here in Memphis was pretty tough on the Black church. The lily white, the black, and the tan were locking horns; and the idea struck me and I wrote that song. We’ll have to move in the field of education. Move into the professions and move into politics. Move in anything that any other race has to have to survive. That was a protest idea and inspiration. I was trying to inspire Black people to move up higher. Don’t be satisfied with the mediocre.\(^{38}\)

Brewster’s songs as well as other civil rights songs were anthems that offered true meaning to the people who sang them. In Memphis and elsewhere, African-Americans would sing gospel songs during sit-ins, they would sing as they were arrested by the

\(^{36}\) Gregory, 120.
\(^{38}\) Wade-Gayles, 45.
police, and they would sing while they sat in jail.\textsuperscript{39} The singing may not have been
planned, but those who used gospel music to empower themselves during these events
knew a common repertoire of gospel songs which denoted their common experiences.

Gospel music both unifies and individualizes. While gospel music allied African-
Americans with one another during the sit-ins, gospel music is also very much about a
personal experience and identity. Nowhere is this contradictory concept better
exemplified than in the use of the pronoun “I” within gospel music contexts. In the
African-American expression, “I” means “we,” as in reference to the community.\textsuperscript{40} This
idea communicates how one is always an individual, yet at the same time he or she is also
part of something greater than himself or herself. Bernice Johnson Reagon is a gospel
composer and performer, who has studied both Brewer and other composers like him.
In her words, the idea of “I” meaning “we” “empowers you as a unit in the universe.” In
the world of gospel music’s metaphorical meanings Brewer uses “I” to empower the
performer and listeners. His “How Far Am I from Canaan?” is then not just about Moses,
but it is also a song of personal encouragement.

This kind of music is what Reagon refers to as “a nurturing of the soul.” Gospel
music is the music of a community, a “democratic style of singing.” The songs can mean
anything as determined by the performer.\textsuperscript{41} The performer’s understanding of gospel,
then, has both individual as well as communal contexts. According to Reagon, “within
the African-American experience, you could own any song.” She believes that this is
part of existing in the moment. Brewer imparts this same concept that faith should be a

\textsuperscript{39} \textit{The Songs Are Free.}
\textsuperscript{40} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{41} \textit{The Songs Are Free}
part of every moment in his music with songs such as “Our God Is Able” and “Jesus Is All.”

In the 1963 March on Washington at which Dr. Martin Luther King gave his famous “I Have a Dream” speech, Mahalia Jackson performed Brewster’s “Move on up a Little Higher.” Brewster and King knew one another, and Brewster often sponsored King during his trips to Memphis. Combined with Brewster’s own feelings and involvement in the “uplift movement,” his music was, in some ways, an artistic expression of King’s rhetoric.

While Dr. Brewster most certainly believed in the advancement of the African-American community, much of what he has said in response to interviews has been about racial harmony. Growing up in his small community, Brewster remembers the way in which there was not always racial tension, despite segregation laws:

> We didn’t have any racial hate back then. I was a big boy before I learned anything about that. Folks black and white were Jim Dandy about helping each other out. They’d go by lantern light, cross foot logs, and wade water to help each other.\(^{43}\)

Even in Memphis, where Brewster had at first encountered so much discrimination, he helped others to look beyond race. Surprisingly, it was radio that opened this door.

In 1947, John R. Pepper and Bert Ferguson had a failing radio station named WDIA on their hands. They had tried general programming (meaning white programming), by playing symphonies along with country and western music, and yet, the station had no audience. Then, they had an idea; they would try to reach the completely untapped African-American audience, which included thousands of people in

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\(^{42}\) Price, 51.

the Mississippi Delta. After the great success of Nat D. Williams’ *Tan Town Jamboree* on WDIA, Brewster, a well-respected member of the African-American community, received his own show *Gospel Jewels.*

WDIA had immense success with black and white listeners alike. *Gospel Jewels* delivered sermons and gospel music directly from East Trigg Baptist Church. WHBQ, a different radio station, also offered Brewster a radio station called *The Old Camp Meeting of the Air.* Brewster was able to expand his audience in an incredible way. People, black and white, would come to East Trigg to hear him speak. As Brewster remembers it: “They came, as the old Biblical quote says, from Dan to Beersheba, particularly the young people who were in the colleges here… they came to be in the big camp meeting that night.” In the late 1940’s and 1950’s, East Trigg was integrated. Whites who were bored of the standard fare that they received at their own churches came to hear Brewster’s engaging sermons. In this same crowd, a young truck driver based out of Memphis came to hear Brewster’s music and soak up his sermons. His name was Elvis Presley.

However, when there was later clamor for integration after the death of Martin Luther King, whites became afraid to go to Brewster’s services. Brewster always looked to the future, and though he was greatly distraught by the effects of King’s assassination, he refused to let it defeat him.

“Whether the world is heading for destruction or a golden day depends on how we look at it. I do not believe that the great big God of the universe will permit man to ruin his world irreparably. There are battles yet to be won, but they can’t be

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45 Gregory, 119.
46 Ibid.
47 Thornton, “Gospel Composer Honored.”
won by black power or white power. They can’t be won by Molotov cocktails. They must be won by men walking together.”

**Brewster Today**

Brewster’s music continues to be performed by gospel groups today, though in comparison to Brewster’s contemporaries like Thomas A. Dorsey and Lucie Campbell, he is relatively unknown. Much of the existing literature about Brewster’s life and music comes from a handful of gospel scholars, who will occasionally cross-reference each other. Information about Brewster’s life and music also comes in small blurbs in works about the greater music arena in Memphis. In books about Elvis, especially, Brewster will typically receive at least a few paragraphs of recognition regarding his influence on the then unknown singer. Though it is almost always mentioned in passing, there is very little detailed writing about Brewster’s work in civil rights.

Most of Brewster’s physical scores of music remain in obscure places, and they are not readily available for purchase. One such source is a book written as a tribute to Brewster, which was self-published by East Trigg Baptist Church. Brewster’s music is regarded by most modern gospel performers as existing in the public domain. That is, Brewster’s songs are typically seen as comparable to traditional gospel songs or spirituals. When songs like these are performed, no one person in particular is credited with authorship, and Brewster’s music is often treated in the same regard. As a consequence, this contributes to the lack of Brewster’s recognition.

Brewster is most certainly remembered at East Trigg Baptist Church. Though now in a new building, many people in the current congregation can remember Reverend Brewster, not the least of which is Gigi who has administrative duties in her great-

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48 Cortese, “‘Walk Together’, Wise Man Says.”
grandfather’s church. There are songs by Brewster that have yet to be notated. They exist only in the minds of East Trigg congregation members who sang in his choir. To date, there are still special tributes held at his church in his honor. Dr. Brewster was recognized by the Smithsonian Institute in 1982 for his contributions as a gospel composer. His drama *Sowing the Wind, Reaping the Whirlwind* was performed as part of an African-American composers showcase. In February 2007, the Dr. William Herbert Brewster Elementary School on Sam Cooper Boulevard in Memphis, Tennessee was named in his honor, and it has brought some attention, at least in the regional area, to who he was. When confronted with the frustrations of her great-grandfather’s relative obscurity and the difficulty of putting into words exactly who her great-grandfather was and how he thought about the world, Gigi had this to say: “He was great. He did great things… but nobody could ever really figure him out.”

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49 See Appendix for Smithsonian Institute program.
### A List of Brewster’s Known Works with Copyright Pending

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<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;Faith that Moves Mountains&quot;</td>
<td>©1954*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Farther on up the Road&quot;</td>
<td>©1953</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;God's Amazing Love&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;Have Faith in God&quot;</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;I Want the Lord to Use Me&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;I'll Press On&quot;</td>
<td>©1949</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;I'm Leaning and Depending on the Lord&quot;</td>
<td>©1941*</td>
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<td>&quot;I'm Getting Nearer to My Home&quot;</td>
<td>©1949*</td>
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<td>&quot;I'm Still on Glory Road&quot;</td>
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<td>&quot;I've Never Heard of a City Like Jerusalem&quot;</td>
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<td>&quot;Jesus Is All&quot;</td>
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<td>&quot;Let Us Go Back to the Old Landmark&quot;</td>
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<td>©1961</td>
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<td>&quot;The Lord Gave Me Wings&quot;</td>
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<td>&quot;Lord I've Tried&quot;</td>
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<td>&quot;Make More Room for Jesus in Your Life&quot;</td>
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<td>&quot;Move on up a Little Higher&quot;</td>
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<td>&quot;Oh Gabriel!&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;These Are They&quot;</td>
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List of Brewster’s Songs and Available Recordings

This is not an all-inclusive list of every Brewster song, and this is only a partial list of recordings that are available. Some songs are listed where there are no recordings available. In many cases, there are songs with multiple recordings listed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Song</th>
<th>Available Recordings</th>
<th>Recording Artist(s)</th>
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<tr>
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<td>&quot;Anwhere In Glory&quot;</td>
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<td>Bless My Bones: Memphis the Gospel Radio The 50s</td>
<td>The Brewsteraires</td>
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<td>Jessy Dixon</td>
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<td>&quot;How I Got Over&quot;</td>
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<td>Mahalia Jackson</td>
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<td>&quot;I Just Can't Make It by Myself&quot;</td>
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<td>Marion Williams</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;I'm Getting Richer&quot;</td>
<td>Mahalia Jackson</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;I'm Still on Glory Road&quot;</td>
<td>Mahalia Jackson</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;I've Hear of a City&quot;</td>
<td>Mahalia Jackson</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;I've Never Heard of a City Like Jerusalem&quot;</td>
<td>It's Amazing</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;It's Amazing&quot;</td>
<td>The Brewsteraires</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Jesus Is All&quot;</td>
<td>Best of King Gospel</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;Jesus Is All the World to Me&quot;</td>
<td>Gospel Vol. 4: Sisters and Divas 1943-1951</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;Jesus the Perfect Answer&quot;</td>
<td>A Portrait of Mahalia Jackson</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;Just Over the Hill&quot; parts 1-2</td>
<td>Great Gospel Women</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;King's Highway&quot;</td>
<td>The Brewsteraires</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;Let Us Go Back to the Old Landmark&quot;</td>
<td>Mahalia Jackson</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;Life Is Just One Step&quot;</td>
<td>Mahalia Jackson</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;The Lord Gave Me Wings&quot;</td>
<td>Mahalia Jackson</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;Lord I've Tried&quot;</td>
<td>Mahalia Jackson</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;Make More Room for Jesus in Your Life&quot;</td>
<td>Amazing Grace (Cattish)</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;Move on up a Little Higher&quot;</td>
<td>How I Got Over: The Apollo Recording Session</td>
<td></td>
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<td>&quot;Oh Gabriel&quot;</td>
<td>Mahalia Jackson</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;The Old Landmark&quot;</td>
<td>Mahalia Jackson</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;Our God Is Able&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;Out on a Hill&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;Pay Day&quot;</td>
<td>Mahalia Jackson</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;Packing Up&quot;</td>
<td>The Coleman Brothers</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;Peace Be Still&quot;</td>
<td>Great Gospel Women Vol. 2</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;Pure Gold&quot;</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;Shall I Crucify My Lord Again&quot;</td>
<td>It's Amazing</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;So Glad&quot;</td>
<td>Bless My Bones: Memphis the Gospel Radio The 50s</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;So Glad I've Got Good Religion&quot;</td>
<td>The Brewsteraires</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Table:**

- **Selection of Mahalia Jackson**
- **Mahalia Jackson**
- **It's Amazing**
- **Best of King Gospel**
- **Gospel Vol. 4: Sisters and Divas 1943-1951**
- **N/A**
- **A Portrait of Mahalia Jackson**
- **Great Gospel Women**
- **N/A**
- **The Brewsteraires**
- **Mahalia Jackson**
- **King Louis H. Narcisse**
- **Margie Joseph**
- **The Coleman Brothers**
- **N/A**
- **The Brewsteraires**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Song Title</th>
<th>Artist/Album</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Speak to Me Jesus”</td>
<td>Sounds Like a Sunday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Surely God Is Able”</td>
<td>Janet Paschal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Talk It over with the Lord”</td>
<td>South Bound Gospel Train</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“(The Lord Gave Me) Wings for My Soul”</td>
<td>The Brewsteraires</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“These Are They”</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>“Trading the Wine Press Alone”</td>
<td>Bless My Bones: Memphis the Gospel Radio The 50s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Wait Until My Change Comes”</td>
<td>The Brewsteraires</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Weeping May Endure for a Night”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“When They Crown Him Lord of All”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“When We Walk thru the Waters”</td>
<td>Sun Gospel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Where Shall I Be?”</td>
<td>South Bound Gospel Train</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Where Should I Be (When That First Trumpet Sounds)”</td>
<td>The Brewsteraires</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I JUST CAN'T AFFORD TO FAIL MY JESUS NOW

Arrangement by Virginia Davis
Josephine Daniels

CHORUS Sing with spirit

I just can't afford to fail my Jesus

now, I just can't afford to fail my Jesus

One day when I was lost, He died on Calvary's cross, And I just can't afford to fail my Jesus now.

Copyright 1946 by Theodore H. Frye and Rev. W. Herbert Brewster
VERSE

He brought me all the way, ______ Thru dark, rough, rocky ways.
He is my way provider, My head in a starry sky.
He is my mighty tower, My rock in a weary land.
When I think of how He's brought me, A long this old cross.

He leads me day by day, Be my land. My leader, my provider.
My comfort in my sorrow, My Thy.

He's been so good to me, His burden share. He held me in His hand.
Helped me every hand, A wheel begins to turn.

Just can't afford to fail my Jesus now.
MOVE ON UP A LITTLE HIGHER

Arrangement by
W. O. Hoyle

Words and Music by
Rev. W. Herbert Brewster

CHORUS

One of these mornings (soon one morning) one of these
One of these evenings (late one evening) one of these

VERSE

cross and get my crown and get my crown. Now just as soon as I
live on high (to live on high) 2. Going sight seeing when I

get over Jordan (And I'm going to) lay down my heavy
get up higher (And I'm going to) walk and never

burden (then I'm going to) put on my robe in glory.
tire (then I'm going to) march all around the after.

Copyright 1946 by Bowles Music House and Rev. W. Herbert Brewster
Then I'm going to live up there with Jesus
Then I'm going to live on in glory after white ways howdy, howdy never good-bye (never good-bye,)

(Coda to be sung after last chorus)

Now won't you meet me up in glory (now, won't you? meet me up in)

up in the Kingdom, (ch, won't you?) meet me up in

Return-sing 2

I'll be waiting (I'll be watching)

I'll be waiting (at the alter)

I'll be waiting at that beautiful gold en gate.
JESUS IS ALL

Arrangement by
Virginia Davis
Solo & Chorus
Moderate

Jesus is all, my all and all.

Yes, Jesus is all, my all and all.

I know He'll answer, when I call.

Walking by His side, I'm satisfied.

Yes He's my all, my all, and all.

Copyright 1949 by Rev. W. Herbert Brewster and Bowles Music House
Verse Lively

1. When I went out to seek the Lord I walked out on His blessed
   way, I re-mem-ber when I prayed that last pray'r the Holy ghost
   came to me right there I stepped on the rock, the rock was
   sound, The love of God came stream-ing down. The reason I
   know He saved my soul, I dug down deep and found pure gold
   all my all, my all and all, all my all and all.

2. Yes I re-mem-ber that day well, My soul was snatched from the gates of
   hell. I nev-er felt such love be-fore. It made me
   need. He is my rock in a wea-ry land. Right by my
   feet. He is my Lily of the val-ley fair. He walks with
   me my bur-dens bear. He is my cap-tain on the
   field. My breast plate, buck-ler, and my shield. He bids my
   all the way. You can be-lieve me when I say. He's my
   sor-row's all to cease. And makes my en-e-mies to de-crease.

3. He is my friend, my friend in deed. He helps me out in time of
   need. He is my rock in a wea-ry land. Right by my
   feet. He is my Lily of the val-ley fair. He walks with
   me my bur-dens bear. He is my cap-tain on the
   field. My breast plate, buck-ler, and my shield. He bids my
   all the way. You can be-lieve me when I say. He's my
   sor-row's all to cease. And makes my en-e-mies to de-crease.

4. That's why I bow down at His
HOW FAR AM I FROM CANAAN

Arranged by
Virginia Davis

Verse
Ad lib slow with feeling

1. I am standing on the Jordan, gazing across the stormy
   tide. Here I'll rest my weary burden, till all doubts and fears subside.

2. I can see the walls of Joppa, gates of pearl, indwelling of the
   wise. Passed the desert of sorrow, Can dis-turb not peace

3. I've left Egypt land of sorrow, crossed the red sea of deep down and
   fire by night. Heavyly man, na He has fed me. dresseth in my
   rain. I have seen so much in my day, He has changed me, as
   I am.

4. I have traveled on this highway, in the midst of storm and
   pain. I can hear the angels singing, I can see them round the throne,
   cease from troubling, And the weary be at rest, when I rest He gave
   me pure water, flowing from the

5. I can hear the saints all singing, hail to the job row-vio done,
   Trying to pry up all I'm bounding in that land that's always blue.

6. There the mount of illsial lying, in that land that's always blest.
   From sinking and He came to save me, On my way to Ca-naan land.

Copyright 1949 by Theo. R. Frys and Rev. W. Herbert Brewster
Supplementary Verses

I've left the land of sorrow,
Crosed the Red Sea of despair;
Passed the Deary lands of horror,
Leaning on the Staff of prayer.
I can look back and see me,
Saw old Sutan and his band,
Trying to overtake and bind me,
On my way to Canaan land.

I have followed as He led me,
The cloud by day and fire by night;
De heavenly manna He has fed me,
And drowned our Pharaoh in my sight;
When I was famishing, He gave me
Pure water from the Smitten Rock,
From sinking sand, He came to save me.
He leads me with His precious flock.
Song Journey

A Retrospective of
Gospel Music Composer
Rev. William Herbert Brewster

Sponsored by Smithsonian Performing Arts,
Program in Black American Culture
### Program of Events

**Song Journey**
A Retrospective of Gospel Music Career Rev. William Herbert Brewster

#### Concert Performances
Friday, December 17, 8:00 p.m.
Saturday, December 18, 8:00 p.m.

**Narrator**
Rev. William Herbert Brewster

**Singers**
Sweet Honey in the Rock

**Accompanist**
Pearl Williams-Jones

**Produced and directed by**
Bernice Johnson Reagon

**Assistant Directors**
Pearl Williams-Jones
Rev. William Herbert Brewster

**Concert repertoire to be selected from:**
- How Far Am I From Canaan
- Climbing Higher and Higher
- How I Got Over
- Move On Up a Little Higher
- I Found the Keys to the Kingdom
- Jesus Is All
- Sailing and Depending On the Lord
- Lord I Tried
- Just Over the Hill
- Out on a Hill
- The Old Landmark
- Our God Is Able
- Peace Be Still
- Treading the Wine Press Alone
- Weeping May Endure for the Night
- Have Faith In God/Faith Moves the Mountains (Medley)
- I Feel Something Drawing Me On
- Never Heard of a City
- Without a Murmur
- Payday
- Jesus Is All

#### Colloquium
Saturday, December 18

**Opening Remarks**
Bernice Johnson Reagon, Director, Program in Black American Culture
*Rev. William Herbert Brewster: A Cultural Biography*

**Rev. William Herbert Brewster: His Music and its Impact—**
- Compositional Analysis
  - Horace C. Boyer

**"From Auction Block to . . . Canaan": An Analysis of Reverend W. Herbert Brewster's Religious Dramas.**
  - William H. Wiggins, Jr.

**A Survey of Recorded Brewster Compositions**
  - Anthony Heilbut

**Lunch**

**Working with the Composer—A Demonstration Workshop**
  - The Brewster Ensemble, East Trigg Baptist Church
  - Memphis, Tennessee

**Closing Remarks**
Rev. William Herbert Brewster

**Schedule**
- 9:30 a.m.: Opening Remarks
- 10:00 a.m.: "From Auction Block to . . . Canaan": An Analysis of Reverend W. Herbert Brewster's Religious Dramas
- 12:30 p.m.: Lunch
- 2:00 p.m.: Working with the Composer—A Demonstration Workshop
- 4:00 p.m.: Closing Remarks
Program of Events

ARTISTS

Holland 48
Bibliography


