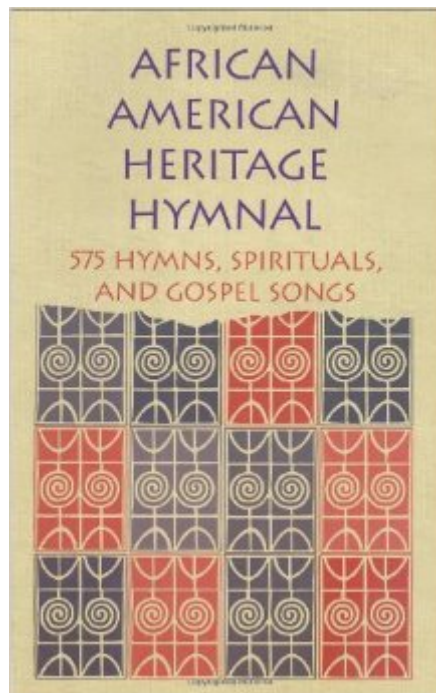


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# African American Heritage Hymnal: 575 Hymns, Spirituals, And Gospel Songs



## Synopsis

Eight years of inspired work by a committee of more than 30 musicians and pastors, all leaders in African American worship and gospel music, have resulted in this compendium representing the common repertoire of African American churches across the United States. For the first time in an African American hymnal, traditional hymns and songs are notated to reflect performance practices found in the oral tradition of the black church in America. At a time when such traditions are falling victim to modern technology, this book strives to preserve this rich heritage for future generations. Presented are litanies for "Fifty-Two Sundays of Worshipful Celebration" • outlining an African American church year, including such special days as Martin Luther King Sunday, Elders' Day, Mother's Day, and Men's Day. Also included are 52 responsive scripture readings from the Old and New Testaments and an extensive index that includes scriptural and thematic cross-references.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This collection of hymns, spirituals, and gospel songs is a total delight. As soon as I opened this book and started playing this music on my keyboard, I could hear heavenly gospel choirs singing in my head. Of course, there are many hymns and songs included here that most people would know, but what makes this hymnbook a treasure are the songs specific to the African-American tradition, with harmonies that unmistakably suggest a black gospel choir. As a bonus, there is a good quantity of responsive readings in the front of the book suitable for use in the worship service. This

book will get you into the Spirit, whether you are black, white, or anything in between. The "African-American Heritage Hymnal" zoomed right to the top of my hymnal collection list the moment it arrived. Get it, you won't be sorry!

I'm rating this book as a historian and African American Studies resources specialist rather than as someone using it in worship. With that in mind, let me say I have yet to "stump" this hymnal. No matter what song comes to my mind, there it is in the index. Citations regarding authorship & copyright are thorough, the introductory essays informative, and the "Index of Composers, Authors and Sources" invaluable. The only other book which even compares is Songs of Zion, first published by the United Methodist Church in 1981. It has half as many songs though it does include a few not found here...what a vast musical tradition this is! This is a book that belongs in every library, and on the bookshelf of anybody with an interest in African American sacred music traditions. Curator, AfroAmericanHeritage dot com

I was raised in the Baptist church, though it has been many years since I've been in one. But looking through this hymnal, on page after page I found one or another old favorite tune leaping into my head. Regardless of your denomination, you are sure to find many songs worth singing here. This hymnal contains more than 600 songs, with four-part harmony for nearly all, though no guitar chords. It sticks to the traditional lyrics, retaining archaisms like "thou" and non-politically-correct terms like "men" and "father" where the original authors wrote them. There are some songs here which seem to have been dropped from some hymnals, such as "Onward Christian Soldiers" and "Battle Hymn of the Republic". One note -- while the book includes plenty of spirituals and gospel songs, these are outnumbered by what I would consider "standard" hymns and revival songs which are not specifically associated with African-American churches. I think this is a good thing, since it emphasizes how much musical heritage all English-speaking Protestants share.

The church that I go to recently purchased these hymnals to use and I love them. The book has a wide variety of songs, from traditional hymns to childrens songs to contemporary songs that are popular in the African American church. The music director at my church would have to go through tons of music books to find the right songs for the choir, then another set for praise and worship, then another for devotionals and so on. Now it is easier to find a song.

The title of this review says it all. "The African-American Heritage Hymnal" is, literally, a GOD-send

for those churches that need a handy and comprehensive collection of songs commonly performed in the black church. Though the majority of the songs in the book are familiar to most Protestants in this country, the book features litanies and responsive readings that are singularly designed for an African-American congregation. The book also contains two invaluable historical documents: "The Ecumenical Nature of African American Church Music" and "African American Music and the Freedom Movement". Both essays are highly informative and entertaining reads.

This worship book is one of the latest offerings from GIA. It is a fine collection of hymns and worship pieces for the Protestant African American Community. If your congregation does not already have a hymnal of this type, this would be a good place to start. However, one is advised to buy from the publisher and not since the list price is \$15. Don't over pay!

Let me add my heartfelt appreciation to this magnificent hymnary. If I were stranded on a desert island and could take along with my Bible only one volume of hymns that included praise, worship and liturgy, it would most certainly be this. Yes, most of the liturgy is aimed at African-American congregations, and perhaps the male segment at that. But is there not a universality even so? The gospel-hymn element is beautifully scored, elegant and full, and (as one would expect) in terms of content its most distinguishing feature versus the more white-oriented denominational hymnals. Nonetheless, gospel songs emerge even more triumphant in the context of a cover-to-cover comprehensive hymnal that all can enjoy. The HERITAGE reader/purchaser/worshiper will encounter a fully fleshed-out representation of the Anglo-American strain, as good as any I've seen in the old Broadman-Cokesbury-Hope lineage; also something of what would today be generically be lumped as "Catholic" (perhaps better be said "contemporary"); then again up-to-date modern compositions, including songs and responses just not to be encountered elsewhere (sometimes specifically commissioned for the book). HERITAGE paid homage to, but was in no way in thrall to, the "hardshell" or Calvinist aspect of, black American worship traditions. Am I abashed or what! I had thought I already put away most of my preconceptions of what a "black hymnal" ought to be from exposure from such earlier excellent works such as GIA's "Lead Me, Guide Me." But HERITAGE isn't just a ground-breaker, it's an EARTH-SHAKER. It's a sad reflection on Mainline Protestantism that none of our denominations has had the ba-- excuse me, the guts, to have produced anything like the mass of music and meaning that is HERITAGE. Six Stars. Bless it. Buy It! What part of "all can enjoy" is misleading?smalling\_60626@yahoo.com

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