

American Gospel Music

by Hilary Clay Hicks
The American Gospel Arts News Service



Somebody Cares About The Heritage Of Black Gospel

several major goals and set others. In 1986, it produced the first "Mahalia Jackson Gospel Music Festival" in Los Angeles which drew 50,000 people and which will become a syndicated TV Special in 1988.

In 1987, with the help of Congressman Mervin M. Dymally and the Congressional Black Caucus, A.G.A.F. persuaded Congress to pass legislation creating "American Gospel Arts Day, June 19th." A presidential proclamation was made and observances held in about 50 cities. This is a new annual day honoring Gospel and other American Black Sacred Music.

A.G.A.F. has succeeded in networking with dozens of folklorists, ethnic music experts and historians for the first-ever gathering of teachers and experts of the roots of American Black Sacred Music to be held in Los Angeles late next year.

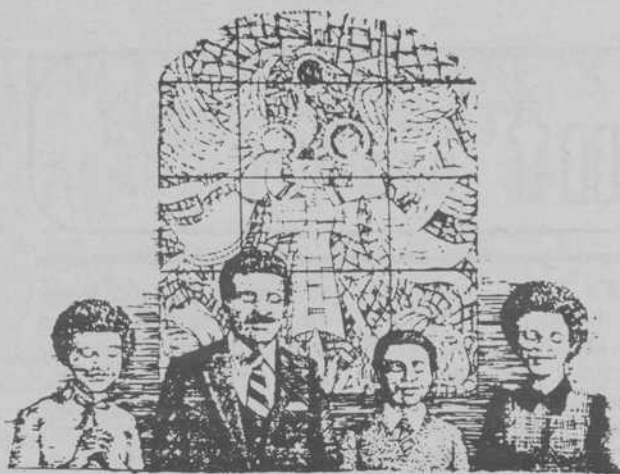
And last but not least, A.G.A.F.'s petition for a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame for Mahalia has been granted. It will be dedicated next year just before the second Mahalia Jackson Gospel Music Festival.

The work continues. A.G.A.F. accepts donations. The address is 1605 East Elizabeth Street, Pasadena, CA 91104.

In The News: I AM Records of Chicago has signed with Word for distribution. This means that such artists as Pop Staples, The Barrett Sisters and Arthur Scales will be more widely available in record stores and Christian retail outlets....

....Secret Records of San Francisco is now distributed by Sound of Gospel, bringing artists like Vincent Merriwether, Wanda Nero Butler, Anthony Wigham and Carol Walker to the fore....

....And Jesus is still the King of Glory and worthy to be praised!



WORDS OF LIFE

"Think."

—PHILEMON 4:8

I. There is no substitute for thought. Without thinking, we cannot even contemplate God. Nor can we assess — and so feel — the beauty of nature, the warmth of companionship, the true love of ones near and dear to us. Think!

II. Thought and growth go together. The measure of a person's true stature is determined by the measure of that person's mind. Those who discipline their thought along creative lines become the world's chief benefactors. Those who "use their head" bring order, stability, peace, prosperity, health and happiness to our homes. Think!

III. Thought and freedom are one. "As a person thinks, so is he or she." So the celebrated adage or saying goes. A beautiful poem regarding freedom and our own thoughts concerning ourselves ends with the exquisite lines:

"Oppression bends.
The haughty flee
Before the one
Who knows, I'm free!"
Think!

PRAYER POEM

The Quaker poet Bernard Barton (1784-1849) was a distinguished literary figure in early 19th century England. His hymn, "Lamp of Our Feet," is often sung to a familiar tune written a century earlier. Even without its fine musical setting, the hymn speaks powerfully of God's guidance of our thoughts.

*Lamp of our feet, whereby we trace
Our path when wont to stray;
Stream from the fount of heav'nly grace,
Brook by the traveller's way;*

*Bread of our souls, whereon we feed,
True manna from on high;
Our guide and chart, wherein we read
Of realms beyond the sky;*

*Word of the ever-living God,
Will of His glorious Son;
Without thee how could earth be trod,
Or heaven itself be won?*

*Lord, grant us all a right to learn
The wisdom it imparts;
And to its heavenly teaching turn,
With simple, childlike hearts.*

—Amen.

Our churches have been leaders in learning, the major pioneers in building colleges, and extensions of Him who is the Way, the Truth and the Life.

Support your church. Have you become a tither as yet? Consider doing so. Ask your pastor about it.

Today, being a Gospel artist is a struggle. If you want to get rich, Gospel is not for you. Your motivation must be primarily to minister the Gospel in music.

How much harder it must have been for those that came before today's recording contracts, radio airplay and performing opportunities!

What about the people and the music that came before the modern Gospel sound? What about the Old 100s and Jubilee and a capella quartet and metered music, shouting and "Sacred Harp?" Even the "Gospel" music created by Thomas A. Dorsey sixty-five years ago is a world away from today's Gospel sound.

"These styles are a precious heritage of the Black community that are in danger of extinction and must be saved from the trash heap of history," says Dr. W.C. Gordon, Chairman of the non-profit American Gospel Arts Fund. "Moreover, we must do something if we can for those people remaining who made this music."

Even the great international star of Gospel, Mahalia Jackson, who once had her own radio show, recorded for Columbia Records and who appeared on every TV program from Dinah Shore to Ed Sullivan, has been largely forgotten. As of this time, she does not even have a star the Hollywood Walk of Fame—but Lassie does.

"These are the kinds of things that made a foundation like the American Gospel Arts Fund a necessity," says Dr. Gordon.

Today, A.G.A.F. has a national Board of Trustees that includes Dr. Henry Ponder, the President of Fisk University in Nashville (a school that was founded on Jubilee music in the 1870s); Mrs. Ruby Chappelle Boyd, Chairperson of the Historical Commission of the Mother Bethel A.M.E. Church of Philadelphia, the oldest Black church in America; entertainer Billy Davis, Jr.; evangelist Dr. E.V. Hill; songwriter Dr. Margaret Pleasant Doroux; and many others, from all walks of life, citizens concerned with preservation of the Gospel heritage.

"Gospel is the music of the church and the church is the cornerstone institution of the Black community," says Dr. Gordon.

In just a few short years, A.G.A.F. has accomplished several

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able income for the program. Proof of income is required, along with a current rent receipt and your utility bill, to complete the application.

The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, operated by the Nevada Office of Community Services, yearly makes special efforts to assist the elderly and the handicapped. Many elderly and handicapped persons, who are returning clients and who live in one or two-person households, are encouraged to update their previous year's file by mail and need not go to their local intake center to apply. Individuals can write to the Nevada Office of Community Services, Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, Capitol Complex, Carson City, NV 89710.

Applications for the Energy Assistant Program will be accepted from November 1987 to February 1988. Renters, as well as home owners, are encouraged to apply. For further information, call the Economic Opportunity Board of Clark County, at 647-2536 or 647-1510.

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