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The Structure of Discourse in Hymns in Latter-day Saint Hymnals

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Analysis of hymns as speech events reveals certain patterns involving the ADDRESSER/ADDRESSEE relationship. These patterns are consistent with and part of the MESSAGES of the hymns.

Consider a hymn as an act of verbal communication, a speech event. As a speech event a hymn has all the factors involved in any act of verbal communication:

- The ADDRESSER sends a MESSAGE to the ADDRESSEE.
- To be operative the message requires a CONTEXT referred to ("referent" in another ... nomenclature) ... ; a CODE ... common to the addresser and addressee (or in other words, to the encoder and decoder of the message); and ... a CONTACT, a physical channel and psychological connection between the addresser and the addressee....

Jakobson 1981:21-22.1

In the "universe of discourse" of LDS hymns, the CODE from which a particular hymn is encoded or written includes the religion, beliefs, practices, traditions, literatures, history, cultures, and language of its author. The MESSAGE is the text (and music) of the hymn.2

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1Van Schooneveld 1988:413 prefers "receiver" to "addressee" because a person not targeted by the addresser can hear or read the message and decode it.

2The music of a hymn bears a communicative message which relates to and adds to the message of the text. Singing a text with different music emphasizes the connectedness, independence, and mutual transitivity of music and text. Unfortunately, the music of hymns is beyond the scope of this presentation.
The CONTEXT is what a hymn refers to. The context can include things distant in time and space from the singing of the hymn, such as historical events or prognostications in narrative hymns like "Adam-ondi-Ahman" (Hymns 1985:49). Or the context of a hymn may be much closer to its performance when referring, for example, to the meeting in which the hymn is sung, such as "Thy Spirit Lord Has Stirred Our Souls" (Hymns 1985:157), or to the actual singing of the hymn itself, as in "Sing We Now at Parting" (Hymns 1985:156).

The CONTACT involves the singing or reading of the text of the hymn, and its contours vary depending on who the addressers and addressees are.

There are several levels on which the relationship of ADDRESSER-ADDRESSEE operates in a hymn. First, the author of a hymn is the ADDRESSER sending the message that is the hymn to the reader or singer of the hymn, who is the ADDRESSEE. On another level, in the performance of a hymn, the singer(s) is (are) the ADDRESSER(S) and the listener(s), including fellow singers, is (are) the ADDRESSEE(S). Hymns serve important functions for latter-day saints in worship, in which the worshiper is the ADDRESSER and God is the ADDRESSEE. Hatch 1968:12-15, 56-57, 162. God acknowledges that "my soul delighteth in the song of the heart; yea, the song of the righteous is a prayer unto me, and it shall be answered with a blessing upon their heads." D&C 25:12.

Finally, the ADDRESSER-ADDRESSEE relationship may be expressed in varying degrees of explicitness in the text of the hymn itself. For example, "Master, the Tempest Is Raging" (Hymns 1950:106; Hymns 1985:105) is structured by and around the ADDRESSER-ADDRESSEE relationship.

Master, the Tempest Is Raging

Master, the tempest is raging!
The billows are tossing high!
The sky is o'ershadowed with blackness.
No shelter or help is nigh.
Carest thou not that we perish?
How canst thou lie asleep
When each moment so madly is threat'ning
A grave in the angry deep?

The winds and the waves shall obey my will.
Peace, be still.
Whether the wrath of the storm-tossed sea
Or demons or men or whatever it be,
No waters can swallow the ship where lies
The Master of ocean and earth and skies.
They all shall sweetly obey my will.
Peace, be still; peace, be still.
They all shall sweetly obey my will.
Peace, peace, be still.
Master, with anguish of spirit
I bow in my grief today.
The depths of my sad heart are troubled.
Oh, waken and save, I pray!
Torrents of sin and of anguish
Sweep o'er my sinking soul,
And I perish! I perish! dear Master.
Oh, hasten and take control!

The winds and the waves shall obey my will.
Peace, be still.
Whether the wrath of the storm-tossed sea
Or demons or men or whatever it be,
No waters can swallow the ship where lies
The Master of ocean and earth and skies.
They all shall sweetly obey my will.
Peace, be still; peace, be still.
They all shall sweetly obey my will.
Peace, peace, be still.

Master, the terror is over.
The elements sweetly rest.
Earth's sun in the calm lake is mirrored,
And heaven's within my breast.
Linger, O blessed Redeemer!
Leave me alone no more,
And with joy I shall make the blest harbor
And rest on the blissful shore.

The winds and the waves shall obey my will.
Peace, be still.
Whether the wrath of the storm-tossed sea
Or demons or men or whatever it be,
No waters can swallow the ship where lies
The Master of ocean and earth and skies.
They all shall sweetly obey my will.
Peace, be still; peace, be still.
They all shall sweetly obey my will.
Peace, peace, be still.

This hymn alludes to the New Testament story of Jesus and his disciples on the Sea of Galilee when he calmed the storm.
Matthew 8:23-27; Mark 4:36-41. In the verses the disciples address themselves to the Master, asking for his help. In the choruses the Master responds with his assurance of peace. In the first verse the ADDRESSERS are the disciples ("we") in the boat calling for protection from the storm. The Master responds, "The winds and the waves shall obey my will. Peace, be still." In the second verse, the ADDRESSER is a single disciple ("I") calling to the Master for salvation from the storm of sin. Again the Master responds, "The wind and the waves shall obey my will. Peace, be still." In the third verse, the single disciple ("I") praises and thanks the Master for the sunny calm in her life following the Master's banishment of the sinful storm and expresses her happy anticipation of
making the blest harbor. The Master responds and promises, "The winds and the waves shall obey my will. Peace, be still."

In the 1985 hymnbook "Master, the Tempest Is Raging" was completely restructured by simply changing the word "my" to "thy" in the chorus. Now the chorus reads "The winds and the waves shall obey thy will. Peace, be still." (Hymns 1985:105, see Appendix) The call and response or dialog is gone from the 1985 version of this hymn because the words of the chorus were shifted to the mouths of the disciples. This creates an anomalous situation. Now it is the disciple who says, "Peace, be still," while claiming that "the winds and the waves shall obey thy will." This changes "Peace, be still" from the Master's command it was in the 1950 hymnbook (and in the New Testament) to the disciples' supplication in the 1985 hymnbook.3

Few hymns have dialog as explicitly and fully developed as "Master, the Tempest Is Raging," but a variety of discourse patterns are manifested in the hymns.

Some hymns, like lyric poems, direct attention to the ADDRESSER. For example, "I Stand All Amazed" (Hymns 1985:193, see Appendix), expressing the ADDRESSER's feelings about the Savior's atonement, begins with "I" and ends with "me."4 In "I Know that My Redeemer Lives" (Hymns 1985:136, see Appendix) the ADDRESSER worships the Redeemer by lovingly describing his relationship to the ADDRESSER. There are numerous references to the ADDRESSER: "I know," "my everliving Head," "to bless me," "to plead for me," "my hungry soul," "to grant me," "to comfort me," "my ... Friend," "loves me," "I'll sing," "my ... King," "grants me," "I shall conquer death," "my mansion," "to bring me ... there." See also "I Believe in Christ" (Hymns 1985:134). Because they direct attention to the ADDRESSER, these hymns often function as emotive expressions of the ADDRESSER's attitude about (her relationship with) Deity or some other gospel subject.

Other hymns direct attention to the ADDRESSEE. Two main varieties of hymns are oriented toward the ADDRESSEE, exhortative and supplicatory hymns. In supplicatory hymns the ADDRESSER is subordinate to the ADDRESSEE, while exhortative hymns are unmarked for subordination in either direction.5

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3Neither the former dialogic structure nor this change was mentioned by Karen Davidson in her discussion of this hymn. Davidson 1988:133.

4"I stand all amazed ... wonderful to me."

5Compare Jakobson 1981:26, "poetry of the second person is imbued with the conative function and is either supplicatory or exhortative, depending on whether the first person is subordinated to the second one or the second to the first."
Some supplicatory hymns are "Jesus, Lover of My Soul" (Hymns 1985:102), "Jesus, Savior, Pilot Me" (Hymns 1985:104), "Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah" (Hymns 1985:83), and "Come, O Thou King of Kings" (Hymns 1985:59). "Come, Come, Ye Saints" (Hymns 1985:30), "Did You Think to Pray?" (Hymns 1985:140), "Do What Is Right" (Hymns 1985:237), and "Keep the Commandments" (Hymns 1985:303) are exhortative hymns.

An unusual hymn directing attention to the ADDRESSEE is "Reverently and Meekly Now" (Hymns 1985:185, see Appendix). In this hymn Jesus is the ADDRESSER and the ransomed one is the ADDRESSEE. When this hymn is sung, the singer (the ransomed one) is the delivery ADDRESSER but the textual ADDRESSER. In most supplicative and exhortative hymns the singer is the ADDRESSER both in the delivery and in the text.  

Another hymn with this same unusual aspect is "Love One Another" (Hymns 1985:308, see Appendix). For some reason singers of this hymn are less markedly aware of the unusualness of singing Jesus's words to themselves than they are when they sing "Reverently and Meekly Now."  

Hymns combine attention to the ADDRESSER and orientation toward the ADDRESSEE in a variety of ways. Some hymns begin as lyric expressions of the ADDRESSER's feelings and modulate into supplications to the object of the ADDRESSER's emotions. "My Redeemer Lives" (Hymns 1985:135, see Appendix) starts with the ADDRESSER singing about his relationship to the Redeemer ("I know that my Redeemer lives ... my King, my Leader, and my Lord ... my one sure rock of faith") and the final verse is a prayer, a supplicatory focus on the ADDRESSEE ("Oh, give me thy sweet Spirit still, the peace that comes alone from thee"). Likewise, "Sing We Now at Parting" (Hymns 1985:156, see Appendix) has a first verse that emphasizes the feelings of the ADDRESSERS ("sing we now ... praise ... sweetest songs we'll raise ... our songs of gladness"), an exhortative second verse that addresses other worshipers ("Praise him ... praise him ... praise the Lord ... our happy voices ... our sweetest song"), and a supplicatory third verse addressed to Jesus himself ("Jesus ... hear ... we bow before thee ... lend a list'ning ear ... save us ... watch us ... help us to serve thee"). See also "Testimony" (Hymns 1985:137).

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6Davidson 1988:200-01 is intrigued by this aspect of this hymn.

7Davidson 1988:308-09 does not remark on this similarity between "Love One Another" and "Reverently and Meekly Now."
The hymn "Be Still, My Soul" (Hymns 1985:124, see Appendix) directs attention to the ADDRESSER while written as though oriented toward an ADDRESSEE. The ADDRESSEE is the ADDRESSER's soul, that is, the ADDRESSER herself. This hymn strongly and beautifully conveys the ADDRESSER's opposed emotions of grief, pain, and fear on the one hand and hope, trust, confidence, and joy on the other.

"Have I Done Any Good?" (Hymns 1985:223, see Appendix) is partially a dialog and partially just oriented toward the ADDRESSEE. The first verse directs attention to the ADDRESSER ("Have I done any good in the world today?"). The chorus responds, "Then wake up and do something more." The second verse directs attention to an ADDRESSEE, apparently the ADDRESSER of the first verse, as a continuation of the chorus because it is in the same voice as the chorus that precedes and follows it.

"Because I Have Been Given Much" (Hymns 1985:219, see Appendix) alternates attention between ADDRESSER and ADDRESSEE. "Because I have been given much, I too must give" ~ "Because of thy great bounty," "my gifts" ~ "from thee," "Because I have been sheltered" ~ "fed by thy good care," "Because I have been blessed" ~ "by thy great love, dear Lord," "I'll share" ~ "thy love ... according to thy word." The alternation between ADDRESSER and ADDRESSEE is not an equally balanced opposition. The ADDRESSER functions as grammatical subject and the ADDRESSEE as grammatical object. Thus this hymn has a lyrical quality because the preponderance of the attention is directed to the ADDRESSER, notwithstanding the "I" and "thee" alternation.

8The word 'I' of course is always a grammatical subject. The word 'my' modifies an object of a giving verb the subject of which is 'I.' "I shall divide my gifts from thee With every brother that I see." "I cannot see another's lack and I not share My glowing fire, my loaf of bread, My roof's safe shelter overhead." In the last line of the hymn the word 'my' modifies a grammatical subject which is syntactically in the object position. "Thus shall my thanks be thanks indeed." This 'my' connects the ADDRESSER with the action of thanking to the ADDRESSEE in contrast with the other 'my's that connect the ADDRESSER with giving to fellow human beings. The word 'me' in the line "Who has the need of help from me" is the object of a preposition but also has the semantic function of connecting the ADDRESSER with the action of giving to another person. In each verse in the first two lines the ADDRESSER is in a passive grammatical relationship to the ADDRESSEE and in the last three lines the ADDRESSER is in an active grammatical relationship with her fellow human beings. The word 'thee' or 'thy' always is or points to (modifies) an object of a preposition or of a verb.
"Teach Me to Walk in the Light" (Hymns 1985:304, see Appendix) has a dialog that modulates into the interlocutors' joint supplication of Deity. The first verse is the child supplicating its parent(s) or teacher(s) to "teach me." In the second verse the parent or teacher responds "come little child." In the third verse they pray together, "Heavenly Father, we thank thee this day."9 Each verse directs attention to the ADDRESSEE, but each one is focused on a different ADDRESSEE.

We have seen several ADDRESSER-ADDRESSEE patterns in the texts of the hymns. These patterns are an integral part of the messages of the hymns. To the extent that hymns direct attention to the ADDRESSER they encourage the singers and hearers to reflect on their own feelings and the effects of the gospel in their own lives. Orientation toward the ADDRESSEE in hymns can help focus latter-day saints on worshipping God and on encouraging one another. Awareness of these patterns can enhance the use of the hymns for worship and for perfecting the saints.

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9Davidson 1988:305 observed that this hymn "conveys its message through a dialog."
APPENDIX

MASTER, THE TEMPEST IS RAGING (Hymns 1985:105)

Master, the tempest is raging! The billows are tossing high!
The sky is o'ershadowed with blackness. No shelter or help is nigh.
Garest' thou not that we perish? How canst thou lie asleep
When each moment so madly is threat'ning A grave in the angry deep?
The winds and the waves shall obey thy will. Peace, be still.
Whether the wrath of the storm-tossed sea Or demons or men or whatever it be,
No waters can swallow the ship where lies
The Master of ocean and earth and skies.
They all shall sweetly obey thy will. Peace, be still; peace, be still.
They all shall sweetly obey thy will. Peace, peace, be still.

Master, with anguish of spirit I bow in my grief today.
The depths of my sad heart are troubled. Oh, waken and save, I pray!
Torrents of sin and of anguish Sweep o'er my sinking soul,
And I perish! I perish! dear Master. Oh, hasten and take control!
The winds and the waves shall obey thy will. Peace, be still.
Whether the wrath of the storm-tossed sea Or demons or men or whatever it be,
No waters can swallow the ship where lies
The Master of ocean and earth and skies.
They all shall sweetly obey thy will. Peace, be still; peace, be still.
They all shall sweetly obey thy will. Peace, peace, be still.

I stand all amazed at the love Jesus offers me,
Confused at the grace that so fully he proffers me.
I tremble to know that for me he was crucified,
That for me, a sinner, he suffered, he bled and died.
Oh, it is wonderful that he should care for me Enough to die for me!
Oh, it is wonderful, wonderful to me!

I marvel that he would descend from his throne divine
To rescue a soul so rebellious and proud as mine,
That he should extend his great love unto such as I,
Sufficient to own, to redeem and to justify.
Oh, it is wonderful that he should care for me Enough to die for me!
Oh, it is wonderful, wonderful to me!

I think of his hands pierced and bleeding to pay the debt!
Such mercy, such love, and devotion can I forget?
No, no, I will praise and adore at the mercy seat,
Until at the glorified throne I kneel at his feet.
Oh, it is wonderful that he should care for me Enough to die for me!
Oh, it is wonderful, wonderful to me!

I know that my Redeemer lives... He lives, my everliving Head.
He lives to bless me with his love. He lives to plead for me above.
He lives my hungry soul to feed....
He lives to grant me rich supply. He lives to guide me with his eye.
He lives to comfort me when faint. He lives to hear my soul's complaint.
He lives to silence all my fears. He lives to wipe away my tears.
He lives to calm my troubled heart....
He lives, my kind, wise heav'ly Friend. He lives and loves me to the end.
He lives, and while he lives, I'll sing.
He lives, my Prophet, Priest, and King.
He lives and grants me daily breath. He lives, and I shall conquer death.
He lives my mansion to prepare. He lives to bring me safely there....
He lives, my Savior.... I know that my Redeemer lives!

REVERENTLY AND MEEKLY NOW (Hymns 1985:185)

Reverently and meekly now, Let thy head most humbly bow.
Think of me, thou ransomed one; Think what I for thee have done.
With my blood that ransomed thee, With my body on the tree I have ransomed even thee.

In this bread now bless for thee, Emblem of my body see;
In this water or this wine, Emblem of my blood divine.
Oh, remember what was done That the sinner might be won.
On the cross of Calvary I have suffered death for thee.

Bid thine heart all strife to cease; With thy brethren be at peace.
Oh, forgive as thou wouldst be E'en forgiven now by me.
In the solemn faith of prayer Cast upon me all thy care,
And my Spirit's grace shall be Like a fountain unto thee.

At the throne I intercede; For thee ever do I plead.
I have loved thee as thy friend, With a love that cannot end.
Be obedient, I implore, Prayerful, watchful, evermore.
And be constant unto me, That thy Savior I may be.

LOVE ONE ANOTHER (Hymns 1985:308)

As I have loved you, Love one another.
This new commandment: Love one another.
By this shall men know Ye are my disciples, If ye have love One to another.

MY REDEEMER LIVES (Hymns 1985:135)

I know that my Redeemer lives, Triumphant Savior, Son of God,
Victorious over pain and death, My King, my Leader, and my Lord.

He lives, my one sure rock of faith, The one bright hope of men on earth,
The beacon to a better way, The light beyond the veil of death.

Oh, give me thy sweet Spirit still, The peace that comes alone from thee,
The faith to walk the lonely road That leads to thine eternity.

SING WE NOW AT PARTING (Hymns 1985:156)

Sing we now at parting One more strain of praise.
To our heav'nly Father Sweetest songs we'll raise.
For his loving kindness, For his tender care,
Let our songs of gladness Fill this Sabbath air.

Praise him for his mercy; Praise him for his love.
For unnumbered blessings Praise the Lord above.
Let our happy voices Still the notes prolong.
One alone is worthy Of our sweetest song.

Jesus, our Redeemer, Now our praises hear.
While we bow before thee, Lend a list'ning ear.
Save us, Lord, from error. Watch us day by day.
Help us now to serve thee In a pleasing way.

BE STILL, MY SOUL (Hymns 1985:124)

Be still, my soul: The Lord is on thy side;
With patience bear thy cross of grief or pain.
Leave to thy God to order and provide;
In ev'ry change he faithful will remain.
Be still, my soul: Thy best, thy heav'nly Friend
Thru thorny ways leads to a joyful end.
Be still, my soul: Thy God doth undertake
To guide the future as he has the past.
Thy hope, thy confidence let nothing shake;
All now mysterious shall be bright at last.
Be still, my soul: The waves and winds still know
His voice who ruled them while he dwelt below.

Be still, my soul: The hour is hast'ning on
When we shall be forever with the Lord,
When disappointment, grief, and fear are gone,
Sorrow forgot, love's purest joys restored.
Be still, my soul: When change and tears are past,
All safe and blessed we shall meet at last.

HAVE I DONE ANY GOOD?  (Hymns 1985:223)

Have I done any good in the world today? Have I helped anyone in need?
Have I cheered up the sad and made someone feel glad?
If not, I have failed indeed.
Has anyone's burden been lighter today Because I was willing to share?
Have the sick and the weary been helped on their way?
When they needed my help was I there?
Then wake up and do something more Than dream of your mansion above.
Doing good is a pleasure, a joy beyond measure,
A blessing of duty and love.

There are chances for work all around just now,
Opportunities right in our way.
Do not let them pass by saying, "Sometime I'll try."
But go and do something today.
'Tis noble of man to work and to give; Love's labor has merit alone.
Only he does something helps others to live.
To God each good work will be known.
Then wake up and do something more Than dream of your mansion above.
Doing good is a pleasure, a joy beyond measure,
A blessing of duty and love.

BECAUSE I HAVE BEEN GIVEN MUCH  (Hymns 1985:219)

Because I have been given much, I too must give;
Because of thy great bounty, Lord, each day I live
I shall divide my gifts from thee With ev'ry brother that I see
Who has the need of help from me.

Because I have been sheltered, fed by thy good care,
I cannot see another's lack and I not share
My glowing fire, my loaf of bread, My roof's safe shelter overhead,
That he too may be comforted.

Because I have been blessed by thy great love, dear Lord,
I'll share thy love again, according to thy word.
I shall give love to those in need; I'll show that love by word and deed:
Thus shall my thanks be thanks indeed.

TEACH ME TO WALK IN THE LIGHT  (Hymns 1985:304)

Teach me to walk in the light of his love;
Teach me to pray to my father above;
Teach me to know of the things that are right;
Teach me, teach me to walk in the light.

Come, little child, and together we'll learn
Of his commandments, that we may return
Home to his presence, to live in his sight --
Always, always to walk in the light.

Father in Heaven, we thank thee this day
For loving guidance to show us the way.
Grateful, we praise thee with songs of delight!
Gladly, gladly we'll walk in the light.