
FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE IN WILLIAM KIRKPATRICK'S SELECTED HYMNS

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Abstract

This study investigates figurative language used in William Kirkpatrick's selected hymns. The data is derived from the lyrics of the hymn. The most suitable and frequently used in this thesis is descriptive qualitative method. The writer uses Perrine's theory of figurative language in analyzing the data. Perrine (1982: 61) states that figurative language is any way of saying something other than ordinary way. According to Perrine (1982: 61) tells that figurative languages consist of metaphor, personification, simile, hyperbole, metonymy, symbol, allegory, synecdoche, apostrophe, understatement, irony and paradox. The results show that (1) there are four kinds of figurative language that used in William Kirkpatrick's selected hymns, such as: metaphor, simile, personification, and hyperbole, (2) the most frequently used is metaphor, (3) the contribution of figurative language is to emphasize the message of each hymn.

Keywords: Figurative Language; Hymn; William Kirkpatrick.

INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia, some church services are conducted in English, where people sing and pray using English. One of the most common forms of songs used in worship is the hymn. A hymn is a type of song specifically written for prayer and devotion. However, hymns are often considered difficult to understand because they were written more than a century ago and contain dense poetic language as well as archaic and historical expressions that may be unfamiliar to modern audiences.

The term hymn originates from the Greek *hymnos*, which means a song of praise. Similarly, Gunkel (1967: 10) defines a hymn as a song of praise. Therefore, a hymn can be understood as an expression of worship and gratitude to God, celebrating both His nature and His divine works. Christian hymns are often written for specific occasions such as Christmas and Easter, but they are also sung regularly in weekly church services. According to Leckebusch (2012), there are several types of hymns, including traditional hymns, contemporary hymns, praise and worship songs, modern hymns, Taizé songs, and children's songs.

Hymns contain figurative language that makes their lyrics more meaningful and expressive. The hymnodist uses figurative language to create beautiful and artistic expressions, while the listener or reader must actively interpret these expressions to understand the deeper spiritual message conveyed in the hymn. Figurative language involves saying something beyond its literal meaning and requires imagination in interpretation. Perrine (1977: 61) defines figurative language broadly as any way of saying something other than the ordinary way, and more narrowly as saying one thing while meaning another. Similarly, Rozakis (1995: 28) states that figurative language is saying one thing in terms of another. Furthermore, Tajali (2011: 11) explains that figurative language serves three main purposes: clarity, force, and beauty. In addition, Abrams (1999) describes figurative language as a departure from standard language to achieve specific artistic effects which is particularly relevant in analyzing the poetic structure of hymns.

In the context of hymn analysis, figurative language plays a crucial role in expressing abstract religious ideas, emotions, and spiritual experiences in a more vivid and relatable way. Without understanding these figurative expressions, the deeper meaning of hymns may be difficult to grasp. Therefore, analyzing figurative language becomes essential in uncovering the intended message of hymn lyrics.

Previous studies have examined figurative language in song lyrics using descriptive qualitative methods. Yeniati (2003) analyzed Westlife's songs and identified seven types of figurative language. Mochamat (2004) examined Celine Dion's songs and found five types of figurative language. Meanwhile, Listiani (2015) analyzed Taylor Swift's *Speak Now* album and identified seven types, with hyperbole as the dominant form. These studies indicate that figurative language is widely used in modern song lyrics; however, research focusing specifically on hymns remains limited, especially those composed by William Kirkpatrick.

William Kirkpatrick (1838–1921) was an influential hymnodist and composer who made significant contributions to Christian music. He was born in Ireland and later moved to Philadelphia, where he studied music and became actively involved in church ministry. He served as an organist and Sunday school teacher in the Methodist Episcopal Church. Throughout his career, he composed and published nearly 100 major works, including hymns for Christmas, Easter, and children's choirs. He also independently wrote and composed approximately 30 hymns. His life experiences and deep involvement in religious activities strongly influenced the themes and messages of his hymns.

Based on the background explained above, the writer is interested in analyzing the figurative language found in William Kirkpatrick's selected hymns. This study specifically addresses the problem of how figurative language is used within hymn lyrics and how it contributes to conveying spiritual meaning, which is often difficult for modern readers to interpret.] The focus of this research is to identify the types of figurative language used in the selected hymns and to interpret their meanings in context. [Furthermore, this study seeks to examine how these figurative expressions enhance and support the overall message of the hymns, particularly in expressing religious values and emotional depth.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach. According to Nazir (1988), this method focuses on describing situations or events by collecting information from available references related to the object of the study.

Sources of Data

The research analyzes the lyrics of ten selected traditional praise and worship hymns by William Kirkpatrick:

1. "Beautiful day lovely thy light"
2. "I have found a precious Friend"
3. "Lord I'm coming home"
4. "More Like Thee"
5. "Like a lost sheep on the mountain astray"
6. "Wilt Thou be Whole?"
7. "Beautiful Land"
8. "Jesus my Savior is all things to me"
9. "Let the Redeemed"
10. "Come Home"

Procedures

The research process was divided into two phases: Data Collection:

1. Downloading the hymns.
2. Listening to the hymns.
3. Grouping the hymns based on Leckebusch's (2012) classifications.
4. Selecting hymns containing figurative language.

Data Analysis

1. Identifying figurative language in the lyrics.
2. Contrasting literal and non-literal meanings for each identified figure.
3. Classifying the data into Perrine's types.
4. Elaborating on each category.
5. Interpreting the meanings using Biblical and dictionary sources.
6. Formulating conclusions.

Data analysis procedures

Figurative Language Classification

Although Perrine (1982) identifies 12 types of figurative language, the analysis of Kirkpatrick's selected works revealed four specific types: Metaphor, Simile, Hyperbole, and Personification.

Metaphor is a direct comparison between two unlike things that share common characteristics.

- "Beautiful day, lovely thy light": "Christ is the light." According to the Oxford Dictionary, light is the energy that makes it possible to see. Biblical reference John 8:12 (NKJV) supports this, stating Jesus is the "light of the world."
- "Jesus, my Savior, is all things to me":
 - Life's rolling sea: Life's problems are compared to turbulent waves.
 - He is my Refuge, my Rock, and my Tower: According to Oxford Dictionary, "refuge" is a place/person providing shelter, and "rock" is a hard solid

material or a reliable person. "Tower" is a tall building used for safe refuge. Biblical support is found in Psalms 62:7 (NKJV) and Psalms 61:3 (KJV).

- He is my Fortress: According to Merriam-Webster, a "fortress" is a place protected against attack. This aligns with Psalms 18:2 (NKJV).
- He is my Bread of Life, Fountain and Spring: Oxford Dictionary defines "bread" as food and "fountain" as a structure from which water is sent. "Bread of Life" refers to spiritual nourishment (John 6:51 KJV), and "Fountain" refers to the source of life (Psalms 36:9 KJV). "Spring" refers to Jesus pouring out blessings (Psalms 84:6 NKJV).
- "Let the Redeemed": "Blood of the Lamb." This refers to the purifying blood of Jesus (Revelation 7:14 KJV).
- "Like a lost sheep...": "Christ, the good Shepherd." Christ is compared to a leader who protects his followers (John 10:11).
- "Lord, I'm Coming Home": "Thine arms of love." Jesus is metaphorically described as welcoming the repentant sinner with open arms.
- "Come Home": "My heart was cold and stony." This describes spiritual emptiness and a lack of feeling.

Simile is an explicit comparison using "like" or "as."

- "Beautiful day": "Nothing like night." The holiness of Christ's presence is compared to the total absence of darkness (John 1:5).
- "Let the Redeemed": "Peace like a river." The abundance of peace is compared to a flowing river (Isaiah 48:18).
- "Like a lost sheep": "Like a lost sheep on the mountain astray." The author compares his sinful state to a lost animal (Psalms 119:176).
- "Come Home": "Like dew at even falling." The sweetness of the Father's voice is compared to the softness of dew.

Hyperbole is an exaggeration used for emphasis.

- "Like a lost sheep": "Mountains of sin." This emphasizes a vast, uncounted quantity of sin, which is physically impossible.
- "Beautiful Land": "Streets are of gold" and "Pearly gates." These descriptions are impossible in the real life; they are used to emphasize the unimaginable beauty and grandeur of heaven.

Personification attributes human qualities to objects or concepts.

- "More Like Thee": "My shrinking soul would flee." Fleeing is a human action. The text conveys that the author realizes all his mistakes and feels ashamed of himself, desiring to run away from his old life.
- "Wilt Thou be Whole?": "Sin-sick soul." Sickness is a physical human trait attributed to the soul to show a need for healing (Mark 2:17).
- "I have found a precious friend": "My crush'd heart was sinking down." Sinking is a physical action attributed to the heart to express deep regret for living in sin.

FINDINGS

The analysis of ten hymns by William Kirkpatrick yielded the following results:

- Of Perrine's 12 types, only four were present: metaphor, simile, personification, and hyperbole.
- Metaphor is the most frequently utilized figurative language.
- A total of 21 lyrics containing figurative language were identified.
- Meanings were found to be derived from both the author's personal creativity and direct references to the Holy Bible.

DISCUSSION

The following tables detail the contribution of these expressions to the message of each hymn.

1. Beautiful day, lovely thy light

| Figurative Expressions | The Message of Hymn |
|--|--|
| Christ is the light of this beautiful day (Metaphor); Holy each ray, nothing like night (Simile) | Everyone should live in Jesus because He is the light that illuminates the human's life. |

2. Jesus, My Saviour is all thing to me

| Figurative Expressions | The Message of Hymn |
|---|---|
| life's rolling sea (Metaphor); He is my Refuge, my Rock, and my Tower (Metaphor); He is my Fortress (Metaphor); He is my Bread of Life, Fountain and Spring (Metaphor); Daystar is He (Metaphor); Jesus, my Treasure (Metaphor) | People should rely on Jesus because He is the refuge, fortress, and the source of human's life. |

3. Let the Redeemed

| Figurative Expressions | The Message of Hymn |
|---|--|
| the blood of the Lamb (Metaphor); Peace like a river (Simile) | People should rejoice in Jesus because they have been redeemed by His blood. |

4. Wilt thou be made whole?

| Figurative Expressions | The Message of Hymn |
|---------------------------------|--|
| sin-sick soul (Personification) | Jesus is the healer for the sickness and weakness. |

5. Like a lost sheep on the mountain astray

| Figurative Expressions | The Message of Hymn |
|------------------------|---------------------|
| | |

| | |
|---|---|
| Christ, the good Shepherd (Metaphor); Like a lost sheep (Simile); the mountain of sin (Hyperbole) | Christ is a good shepherd who always guides and protects His sheep (the sinful man) to the right way. |
|---|---|

6. Lord, I'm Coming Home

| | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Figurative Expressions | The Message of Hymn |
| Thine arms of love (Metaphor) | God is love. He will open His loving arms to welcome the sinful man and He will recover them. |

7. I have found a precious friend

| | |
|--|--|
| Figurative Expressions | The Message of Hymn |
| My crush'd heart was sinking down (Personification) | Jesus is faithful. He never leaves everyone walks alone. He always there in joy and sorrow times. |

8. Come Home

| | |
|---|---|
| Figurative Expressions | The Message of Hymn |
| My heart was cold and stony (Metaphor); Like dew at even falling (Personification/Simile) | Jesus is love. He is looking for the lost and sinful man and bring them back to His great love. |

9. Beautiful Land

| | |
|--|--|
| Figurative Expressions | The Message of Hymn |
| streets are of gold (Hyperbole); pearly gates (Hyperbole) | Heaven is the beautiful place where good people go when they die. |

10. More Like Thee

| | |
|---|--|
| Figurative Expressions | The Message of Hymn |
| My shrinking soul would flee (Personification) | Everyone was created as the portrayed of God. Therefore, they should live like Jesus who is full of love and kindness. |

These expressions serve to emphasize the message of each hymn, allowing the listener to achieve a deeper understanding of the spiritual intent through vivid, non-literal imagery.

CONCLUSION

The study identifies 21 lyrics containing figurative language within Kirkpatrick's hymns, limited to metaphor, simile, personification, and hyperbole.

These tools are essential for the hymnodist to emphasize the nature of Jesus and the Christian experience. Metaphor remains the most frequent device used to convey these truths.

The meanings of these expressions are two-fold: some are a product of Kirkpatrick's own artistic creativity, while others are rooted firmly in the Holy Bible. These expressions collectively clarify the identity of Jesus as Savior, Refuge, and Shepherd.

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