This narrative chronicles the dissemination of sacred music from the eastern seaboard to the West and South spanning a time frame from the colonial era to the latter part of the Early Nationalist Period (1700-1820). Musical culture in its migration away from the eastern seaboard also parallels the greater western and southern expansion of the United States from its initial configuration of localized regional subgroups to the beginnings of a larger national identity. From this conceptual base, sacred music becomes a vehicle for understanding not only religious and musical changes over time, but also the broader maturity of a nation. Focusing on this period allows for inquiries both into the development of hymnody in the Middle Atlantic, and the subsequent developments of the West and South. These chronological delimitations allow for a discussion of musical practice beginning with formative sacred music developments and continuing to the incorporation of techniques shaped by reform-minded musicians from the eastern seaboard.

The following topics guided the construction of this thesis: explicating how the Middle Atlantic region shaped compositional trends, aesthetic, and performance practice of the American West and South; identifying the various southern cultures as understood by eighteenth and nineteenth-century southerners and their application to sacred music practice; understanding how nineteenth-century Americans distinguished between the West and the South; understanding how southern and western music relates to individual denominations and cultures within these areas; and understanding performance practice common to the evangelical and non-evangelical branches of individual sects.

Identifying patterns of development in American sacred music of the South and West involves documentation of performance practice, denominational aesthetics, and tunebook bibliography. The study of eighteenth-and-nineteenth-century material by twentieth-and-twenty-first-century writers has falsely defined cultural borders of this region according to a post-bellum conceptualization of the boundaries of the North and South. Prior to 1850, writers defined their borders according to a different set of
geographic boundaries than today. Consequently, this thesis differs in terms of geographic and cultural definitions of the North and South from current scholarship because of this writer's application of colonial and Early Nationalist understandings of American culture.