The Integration of Contemporary Worship Hymns into the Church: An Analysis of Contemporary Worship Music Styles and Their Historical Development

An Honors Thesis (Honors 499)

By:

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Thesis Advisor

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Overview:

This project involved the attendance at approximately fifteen different churches to practically observe worship styles. With background historical research, I then wrote a summarizing paper and proceeded in the recording and composition of ten new worship songs. It was done to encourage the integration of contemporary music and eliminate legalistic barriers in traditional church services.

Contents:

Development of Research:

I. Paper Prospectus
II. Working Bibliography
III. Formal Honors College Proposal

Synthesis:

I. Church Visit Summaries
II. Historical Summary
III. Synthesis of Research
IV. Bibliography

Analysis of Recording:

I. Track Information
II. Process and Means
III. Analysis of Compositions

Appendix:

I. Church Bulletins
II. Influential Articles and Miscellaneous Materials
III. CD
Development of Research:

I. Paper Prospectus
II. Working Bibliography
III. Formal Honors College Proposal
For my Honors thesis, which I am registered for in the fall of 2000, I would like to do a project surrounding the topic of contemporary church music. I want to study the historical progression of more recent contemporary church worship music. This will involve gaining a foundation of 19th century worship music, but primarily focus on changes that have occurred since the 1970's that have worked to fuse the formerly forbidden sounds of rock and pop into the church. I plan to present this research in a paper that will be an integrated summary of my reactions, analysis and criticism on all that has been studied.

The bulk of my final product will take the form of a creative project. I want to record and remake 10-12 worship songs and put them on CD, to have a very tangible/creative project. I have been playing church music for about 8 years, and have taken classical guitar instruction at Ball State for four years. Along with having written and re-written many contemporary church songs that are in use now, I have played with a nationally known band “The Elms” and played at big events such as the Dove Awards, or the Christian equivalent of the Grammy’s. I will do this with the utmost professionalism. I am experienced in recording and sound synthesis techniques, and have played and recorded my own as well as others music in a home studio for over 4 years. I have all the equipment and facilities to make this recording at home in southern Indiana, as well as a wealth of talented musicians who I am happy to call my friends.

It is not as important that I receive credit in history or music for this project, but gain a broader background as to where church worship has been and where it is going in the future, as well as providing my own tangible contribution to its future. This is important because as the church changes musical formats to cater to a new, younger audience, embracing more contemporary styles and less formalism, it is important not to lose sight of doctrinal roots and do away with all tradition- therefore alienating a large number of people who are uncomfortable with such changes. In contrast “change,” with new, fresh and bold ideas, should not be feared, and can be used within the context of church. Christianity is about a balance between grace and holiness. Grace without holiness, is blind, apathetic faith, while holiness without grace is strict legalism.

I plan to work with a more than one advisor and have yet to find one who would fit as a primary one. As of now I am working and researching with Dr. Kevin Smith from the History Dept. to whom I was referred from Dr. T. Edmonds. To the extent that my project looks at contemporary music from a long-term historical perspective he has offered to be of some assistance, but to the extent that my project is more modern, he has recommended that another advisor may be more helpful, and useful. He has offered to serve as a supplemental advisor as of now, but recommends I talk to two of his colleagues: Professor (Lori) Rhoden in Music and Professor (Kerry) Jones in Math. I have also been referred to Dr. Doug Amman and Dr. Kirby Koriath. All of them are actually involved in music ministries at their respective churches, and may be more useful because they have had professional musical training. I am open to any suggestions and looking to nail down a primary advisor within a few weeks, but as of now will continue to work on a primary, working bibliography and do preliminary research.


Osborne, Mary Pope. *One world, many religions : the ways we worship.* New York : Knopf, c1996. BRACKEN CALL NUMBER M2110 .P735


HONORS COLLEGE PROJECT PROPOSAL

As a member of the Honors College, you are required to complete an Honors project. This project permits you to build on your experiences throughout your college career and develop a unique product (paper or creative work). The project qualifies for three credits of Honors 499, and is graded. In addition to presenting your work, successful completion requires an abstract for the Honors College. See the Guide for the Senior Honors Thesis available from the Honors College.

The first step in undertaking an Honors project is to identify a topic and a BSU faculty member, who will serve as your project adviser. If you need help developing your proposal, finding a topic, or identifying a project advisor, you are welcome to discuss possibilities with Dean James Ruebel or Assistant Dean Joanne Edmonds before submitting the proposal. When your proposal is ready for approval, sign up for an interview with Dean Ruebel or Edmonds in 104 Carmichael and bring this completed form with you. Make appointments by calling the Honors College at 5-1024.

Please provide the following information:

Name: William W. Riggs  ID #: 315-82-0544  E-mail: billy_riggs@hotmail.com
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Major(s): History  Graduation date: Spring 2000
Academic Advisor: Dr. Anthony Edmonds  Project Advisor: Dr. Doug Amman
Title of Honors Project: The Historical Progression of Contemporary Church Music

1. The Honors project should broaden your educational experience through independent work that adds to your knowledge and develops your talents. How will your project help you accomplish these objectives and add to your personal goals? Why, in short, do you want to do this particular project?

   For my Honors thesis, I want to study the historical progression of contemporary church worship music. This will involve gaining a foundation of 19th century worship music, but primarily focus on changes that have occurred since the 1970's that have worked to fuse the formerly forbidden sounds of rock and pop into the church. I am very active within my own church music department, and see this as a topic that inspires me and feeds my desire for creative expression. I want to combine my musical abilities with my thirst for historical knowledge, and have an interactive learning experience that will culminate my time here at BSU.

2. What will be the outcome of this project? (Be specific—e.g., a paper, finished piece of research, creative activity...)

   The outcome of the project will include a summarizing paper of outlining my reactions, analysis and criticism as well as the historical background. The bulk of my final product will take the form of a creative project- a sound recording of contemporary church songs.

   William W. Riggs  5-18-00
   Student's Signature  Date

   Dr. Anthony Edmonds  5-5-00
   Project Advisor's Signature  Date

*Your signature indicates that you have read and approved this proposal.
Please type all information requested. Write clearly and concisely. Explain all abbreviations and technical terminology. Check your spelling! (You may do this on a separate form if you wish, and you may combine answers to the questions below.)

1. **Objective or Thesis** (include target audience, purpose):

The purpose of this project will be to analyze the current and past church worship music and offer explanation, to both church members and clergy, for why changes have taken place recently to make music in many churches more modern and upbeat. This will implicate strengths of styles as well as weaknesses, and try to initiate unity and harmony across church and denominational lines.

2. **Project Description** (please be specific--approximately two paragraphs):

Working with Dr. Doug Amman and Dr. Kirby Koriath, I will look at contemporary music with a lens from the past, from a long-term historical perspective. This will involve using a working bibliography and doing a lot of preliminary library research, into music as well as theology. But to the extent that my project is more modern, it will involve discussion with music leaders at different churches, and attendance at churches with different styles of worship. I will write short evaluations of all the church worship services I attend and use this information for my final write up.

Then I will record and remake 10-12 worship songs and put them on CD, to have a very tangible creative project. I have been playing church music for about 8 years, and have taken classical guitar instruction at Ball State for four years. Along with having written and re-written many contemporary church songs that are in use now, I have played with a nationally known band “The Elms” and played at big events such as the Dove Awards, or the Christian equivalent of the Grammy’s. I will do this with the utmost professionalism, recording to a 4-track analog recorder at first and then dubbing the music down into digital format. I am experienced in recording and sound synthesis techniques, and have played and recorded my own as well as others music in a home studio for over 4 years. I have all the equipment and facilities to make this recording at home in southern Indiana, as well as a wealth of talented musicians who I am happy to call my friends.

3. **State what the importance or implications of this project is (or are). I.e., what do you expect to learn, or what would others learn from knowing about your anticipated results?**

As a result of my research I want to gain a broader background as to where church worship has been and where it is going in the future, as well as providing my own tangible contribution to its future in the form of a CD. This is important because as the church changes musical formats to cater to a new, younger audience and embraces more contemporary styles with less formalism, it is important not to lose sight of doctrinal roots. Doing away with all tradition would alienate a large number of people who are uncomfortable with such changes. In contrast “change,” with new, fresh and bold ideas, should not be feared, and can be used within the context of church. I expect to learn more about traditional worship and offer explanation for current changes.
Synthesis:

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Church Visit Summaries:

Muncie Christian Alliance (CMA)

Relaxed worship, with no pressure to do much of anything. Singing and some clapping. Casual dress and no use of hymnals, but there is a sort of format to the use of songs. A five piece band composed of 2 guitars, keyboard, bass and drums along with 3 singers made this a raw intimate sort of feel to worship. Attendance seemed quite diverse, from elderly to college age and youngsters. There were even a fair number of international residents and students.

St. Francis (The Newman Center)

I know it is not a typical Catholic Church, when there is no organist and I can hear the drummer throwing down a jazz beat in the background. While this church stuck to the basic format of the mass, the band did very interesting things with traditional music, which made the service much more contemporary and alive feeling. There were a variety of instruments in sync together, yet a strict path was followed. There was no deviation from written word or music as it was seen in the books in front of us.

First Presbyterian (Riverside)

The organ music that the St. Francis lacked was provided at Riverside, a church that seemed to cater to a different audience than other churches I have attended. It seemed to be a wealthy church population, and the service was based out of hymnals and the handouts given before the service. I was a bit turned off, because it seemed like the
limited orchestration (an organ) and adherence to tradition, gave the service a dry and melancholy feel. I started to daydream and didn’t get much out of this service.

Westminster Presbyterian

This church seemed pretty formal to me, but while this formality was similar to Riverside’s music, there seemed to be a different style or attitude about it. The music was from written hymnals and there was a definite focus on the organ as the primary instrument, but there seemed to be more open participation than other formal churches I have visited. People seemed to feel more comfortable expressing themselves in different ways, yet still there was a reverence about the service.

Union Chapel

Sort of a zooty, celebration-style service, with people from many different backgrounds it appeared. There was lots of action and animation, with the music director jumping around on stage, but I couldn’t help but smirk, considering I didn’t know the guy and his actions looked sort of fake. He reminded me of a used car salesman. The music was tight and slick, probably very rehearsed but giving the appearance of ease and non-chalantness. All could be read from the screen overhead, with a lot of technology/powerpoint involved in the “production” of the service. People were dancing around, clapping and raising their hands, expressing themselves to God in a multitude of different ways. This was distracting and made feel a little uneasy but overall it was a good experience.
Student Center Church (Abundant Life/Revolution etc....)

This was a very relaxed worship service in a coffeehouse style setting. It was nice, and the music was good, but it felt unprepared and the mood didn’t seem to be focused totally on God rather on “the band” trying to play some nifty tunes. Again, powerpoint was used to project the words on to screens and TV’s.

The crowd, composed mainly of college students, seemed to enjoy it though.

University Christian Church (On Nebo)

A moderately informal service- the music was composed mainly of praise choruses with virtually no hymns at all. The people were all very warm and receptive and very into the music, which never the less was poor in quality. The instrumentalists in the band appeared poorly trained and the sound was awful, but people didn’t seem to notice or mind. It did little to inhibit the avid, enthusiastic participation. As for me, I was annoyed by the sour notes etc. and found it very distracting.

College Avenue United Methodist

There was a series of two services in the morning one at 9 and one at 11. The second service at 11 was probably the more conventional for this church. It had beautiful hymn music that was very organized directed and rehearsed. The choir was spectacular and I was truly amazed at some of the simplicity of the pieces, which consisted only of their harmonizing voices. The congregation was mainly elderly from my vantagepoint, although there were some younger couples. Overall, it was a “graying” crowd, but the
music seemed to satisfy them well. Participation wise, there was involvement, in singing, sitting and standing at appointed times, as directed by the pastor or bulletin.

On the contrary the first service at 9 was in a recreational hall and much less formal than the second. It was composed mainly of younger couples and a surprising number of young people, even those under 18. The music was informal in performance and I felt it was a bit sloppy, yet I felt it still fell in a category with hymnal music. There was little clapping, or singing along for that matter. While the service had a different feel than the later service, the differences were trivial.

Graceland Baptist Church- New Albany, IN

The service was very modern, with computerized words displayed on a rear projection TV in the front and back of the very modern looking sanctuary. The music could almost be described as country-western, because many people looked and acted like it was the neighborhood ho-down in their Sunday bests. The instruments included a guitar, bass, drum set, digital grand piano as well as a keyboard player, percussionists, along with multiple feature singers, and a choir (in robes that matched the carpet never-the-less). It was very similar to the style of worship done at union chapel, although I got less of the used-car-salesman feel and the fact that there appeared to be a pretty well organized choir. The choir bobbed and clapped and swayed to the music while singing, and even sang a “special” at one point in the service. Still the service drew more from praise choruses than it did from traditional hymns, although midway through the singing time there was a new rendition of “Amazing Grace” that could have “struck a chord” with older members. Overall the experience was good and I enjoyed myself.
Meeting with Dr. Koriath

Meeting with Dr. Koriath was very productive for me. After getting to know one another for a while, we talked about the scope of my research, and what I can do to both focus and narrow it. Right now my topic and field of study is very in depth and far-reaching. We talked about focusing it down to a particular geographic region or possibly a specific denomination. The main reason I was interested in Dr. Koriaths' input was for research purposes. He is well versed in knowledge about organ music and teaches a course on church music. When questioned about where to start research-wise though, he did not necessarily think that Bracken would be my best resource. He commended me for my church attendance and provided suggestions for more, because of the practical value it will have to research. In his opinion my best starting place for research is the internet and current journals. He recommended Church Musician Today, as well as a multitude of internet sites devoted to church music- all found on his recommended search engine “google.com.” I feel the meeting went well and look forward to meeting with him again. My topic will need to be narrowed eventually but I want to make sure I start out getting a broad sense of where church music has been so I can attempt to foresee where it is going.

Grace Episcopal Church

This was a unique experience with vague similarities to my attendance to Saint Francis or Saint Mary’s Catholic churches in Muncie. It was altogether very formal, people bowing or lowering their heads before they entered the pew, and with very traditional church hymns. There was very little, if any, amplification and the worship venue was very small, intimate and in my opinion looked a bit old and European and slightly dilapidated.
The hymns they sang were simple with only organ music and the human voice, some dating back to Martin Luther or Thomas Aquinas in the Protestant Reformation. One thing I found interesting, as I looked through the hymnal while singing was that some of the Latin used by European monks was still printed in it. I have admired the phrase “kyrie eleison” which means “Lord have mercy”, since I recently read a book about Irish monks and the Book of Kell, and this phrase was found in the hymnal right next to some really old dates.

The congregation seemed very knowledgeable and involved in the strict almost systematic service. Among them there seemed to be more diversity than I anticipated, and for the most part, people appeared to be intellectual and middle aged or older.

Although it was very different from the type of church I am used to or grew up in, I enjoyed it very much. The people were very warm and after the service I could not “escape” without many handshakes, smiles, introductions and an offer for “pastoral counsel” from the priest. (I may have been dressed a bit too casually.) It solidified my belief that the church is not the building or place, but the people.

**Christ Temple Church, Muncie**

Wow! The worship in this church was amazing. Honestly I did not know what to expect when thinking about going to a “black” church, but was pleasantly surprised. I am slightly embarrassed too for falling into the stereotype of labeling this church “black.” Not only was it rude, it was wrong, considering the pastor was Caucasian and the congregation, while predominantly African American, also contained white people. They appeared to be from all different age and social levels as well. I thought all of this was
the message. There was so much happening that it distracted my focus away to actuallyworshipping and I became more of an active listener...i.e. concert-go-er. Is it bad to like
the music so much- to focus on it more than the actual God it deifies? When I think back
to the song that has touched me most in my life, I do not remember anything beautiful or
highly produced. It was a song by 8-10 mentally handicap children- “Jesus Loves Me.”
It did not sound good at all, yet the shear simplicity and earnestness of it broke my heart.
They gave all they had to worship, to make a joyful noise that sounded, awful to my ears.
But it must have been such a sweet tune to God, because they were true worshipers, not
like me, the invariable music critic.

The worship session ended as the pastor took the stage an gave a flurry of “Alleluias.” I
did not care for his preaching much. My friend that came with me said that he was “not
your typical black pastor.” I thought that this was a fairly plaintive observation-
considering he wasn’t black. He talked very quickly and used words I thought that the
majority of the congregation could probably not understand- more wordy, heady and
intellectual that I expected. He also made poor use of dramatic pause, failing to breathe
for minutes on end. I wondered how he was not out of breath, because he just never
slowed down and allowed me to process what he was saying. Aside from this minor
complaint my overall experience was positive and I would not hesitate to go back if given
the chance.
more personal level- departing from high church ideals where the pastor or priest alone had the means of approaching the throne room of God. Isaac Watts was a pioneer in this area, composing many hymns sung by churches from almost every denomination. (110) Watts used a style that did its best to identify with the actual life of Christians within the church. He felt that using only Psalms in the church was "not entirely appropriate for Christian worship, as it contained no new covenant themes." (Dietor-Hartley, 20) He used honest, heartfelt text to relate to their experiences, and bring in aspects of the New Testament not covered in the Psalms.

Watts wrote over 400 hymns that were continually changed and rearranged throughout their performance and use. (Wilson-Dickson, 110) The words and tunes were modified many times making the hymn similar to a "folk art," where simple expressions of feelings are modified colloquially. John Wesley is known to have changed one from "O God our Help" to "O God." Watts stayed humble and let others adopt his songs in their own context and manner. He was quoted as saying, "...I would neither indulge any bold metaphors, nor admit of hard words, nor tempt the ignorant worshipper to sing without his understanding." (110)

Along with Watts, people such as the staunchly Calvinist John and Charles Wesley, and George Whitefield, wrote many Protestant hymns and began to bring worship music from the city to more rural areas. (116) They were beginning to tear down dividing walls and many high church ideals. This music became even more familiar and accessible to common people, gathering its roots in songs from places such as bar rooms and dance halls. (Dietor-Hartley, 21)
This led the way into the nineteenth century. Dwight L. Moody helped with this new awakening speaking, holding revivals and writing a book of songs called *Sacred Songs and Solos*. This book contained more than 1200 songs by 1903. (Wilson-Dickson 138) The United States was a hotbed for such a shift away from conventional, and sometimes elitist, high church ideals. Having been established by people in search of religious freedom, they embraced these fresh new ideas that related to real people in real situations. This spiritual awakening continued to transition the churches focus from a perspective of religious obligation to a more personal relationship of faith, eventually effecting the Catholic Church with Vatican II, which made the Roman Catholic church more contemporary— even eliminating the use of Latin by the priest during the services.

Over the past century, music and popular music interests have changed drastically, and while it is important to remain firmly grounded with a historical perspective of classic anthems and hymns, it is also important to respond to newer music. Composers such as Aaron Copland, Benjamin Britten, and John Rutter, who composed “For the Beauty of the Earth,” fused and synthesized modern, experimental styles with that of church and choral music. (240) Beginning in the late 1940’s, rock and roll music charged onto the scene and changed the way we think about music in Western culture. These new waves made music readily available to the masses and brought a new life and passion back into music that people were able to understand.

This new energy of rock and pop was first tapped as composers in the 1960’s began to make numerous “Youth Praise” albums catering to the interest in secular music at the time. Graham Kendrick composed “light rock or ballads that adopted the sound of commercial music,” yet had a Christian foundation. (242) The 1970’s Jesus movement,
Analysis of Recording:

I. Track Information
II. Process and Means
III. Analysis of Compositions
**Track Information:**

**Track 1:**
*I Could Sing of Your Love Forever*
Words and music: Martin Smith
© Furious Music 1997

**Track 2:**
*Come Now is the Time to Worship*
Words and music: Traditional

**Track 3:**
*I Believe*
Words and music: Billy Riggs
© 1997 Hermit Music

**Track 4:**
*Feel*
Music: Billy Riggs
© 2000 Hermit Music

**Track 5:**
*Don’t Preach*
Words and music: Billy Riggs
© 1999 Hermit Music

**Track 6:**
*Lord You Have My Heart*
Words and music: Martin Smith
© Furious Music 1997

**Track 7:**
*Take My Life*
Words and music: Scott Underwood
© Mercy/Vineyard Publishing 1995

**Track 8:**
*Leave You*
Words and music: Gabe Riggs
© Hermit Music 2000

**Track 9:**
*Lord I Give You My Heart*
Words and music: Author unknown
Track 10:
Sovereign God
Words and music: Billy Riggs
© 1999 Hermit Music

Track 11:
You're Inside Me
Words and music: Gabe Riggs
© 1999 Hermit Music

Track 12:
Virtue
Words and music: Billy Riggs
© 2000 Hermit Music

Track 13:
My Love and My Life
Words and music: Billy Riggs
© 2000 Hermit Music

Track 14:
I Believe (stripped down version)
Words and music: Billy Riggs
© 1997 Hermit Music

Process and Means:

All pieces recorded and performed by Billy Riggs
Recorded and edited with a Yamaha MT4X 4track recorder & N-Track Studio in Billy’s room.

Musicians:

Billy Riggs: guitars, vocals, synthesizers, & drum programming
Gabe Riggs: guitars, vocals, & drum programming
Jessica Beymer: vocals

Track 1 was produced in an experimental, Dadaist method, embracing the idea of randomness in musical pieces. The vocal track was spliced into pieces of varying length, then mixed up and layered back onto the rhythm track in no particular order.

Thanks to:
Dr. Douglas D. Amman for guiding me through this thesis, and always suggesting musical events I could attend and recruiting me to sing at College Avenue United Methodist Church.
My family, little angel Gabriel especially—“You are my inspiriation.”
My friends and roommates who put up with me when I was crotchety this semester, and helped me around campus on my crutches.
My Savior Jesus Christ, the reason that I sing.
Analysis of Compositions:

_Don’t Preach_
Words and music: Billy Riggs  
© 1999 Hermit Music

C       Em       C       Em
Temptation...buzzing cauldron of my head
C       Em
Frustration...swimming round the living dead
C       Em
Speculation...want you want yeah it will pass
C       Em
Jubilation...(I'm sure that it won't last) behind the velvet looking glass

C7

C       Em       C       Em
What you did it hurt so bad but now it feels so sweet
C       Em       Dm
I want to scream but I'm not mad I'm standing on your feet
C       Em       C       Em
Find a line and pick me up are we "still out of reach"
C       Em       Dm
Buzzing cauldron of my mind, the pain. but please don't preach.
(I'm chained to your feet)

Em       C       G       D
Came to find your pulpit rather high
Em       C       G       D
Don't preach to me from way up in the sky
Em       C       G       D
Don't lie to me you know where I'll be found
Em       C       G       D
Standing (crying) at my falling place, or lying on the ground.
*Don't preach to me I know where you'll be found
High above it all with no-one around

(Same as verse above)
Contemplation...(tribulation) in this deep dark hole
speculation...oh what you think you know
Instigation..show me(you) what I can be
consultation..behind the glass menagerie

_I Believe_
Words and music: Billy Riggs  
© 1997 Hermit Music

E-B-A
I believe you’re the Son of God,
You have risen from the dead.
I believe you’re the trinity,  
You’re the lifter of my head.

E-B-A  
Praise to the holy one,  
Who has made the blind to see.  
Praise to the holy one, who has,  
Saved and delivered me.

B-E-A  
We praise you Lord,  
For castles in the sky.  
We praise you Lord,  
For giving up your life.  
We praise you lord,  
For the bright and foamy sea.  
We praise you lord,  
For creating you and me.

E-F♯-A  
We will have no fear in this hiding place.  
For the Lion watches near, he’s saving your place.  
We will shout for joy in this holy place.  
We will love the Lord for redeeming grace.

**Leave You**

Words and music: Gabe Riggs  
© Hermit Music 2000

E-C  
Looking out my broken window  
At the years gone by.  
Lonesome memories that have always stained my life

E-C  
I see the road we took to get back  
I take only one step  
For it’s courage I lack  
And I don’t want to leave you alone  
But there’s no way to get back home

D A  
I don’t want to leave you here  
D A  
I just want to get back home  
D A  
I don’t want to leave you  
G  
Leave you all alone

E-C  
I see you every time I close my eyes  
The beauty of your face  
Can’t get you out of my mind
Special newborn children, not capable of wrong;
Vocals of a prophet;
Listen to his song.

One life, two lives, three lives to live.
Not about what you receive, but what you give.
Falling down, use, abuse, crying shame it’s the greed.
A life made to bless, a creation can’t you see.

(same as above)
Spring comes, it goes, and autumn leaves fall down.
Seasons pass, you grow the grace it still abounds.
A life made to bless, a creation can’t you see. (a gift from up above.)
A sin and crying shame, won’t you fill your life with love.
(Won’t you live your life, for him and not for me.)

You’re Inside Me
Words and music: Gabe Riggs
© 1999 Hermit Music

I’ve traveled too far for you and I’m the only one to blame.
I wishing on time we spent and I’m horse from calling you’re name.
I’ve seen the weeks go by and they seem to be,
Nothing but a mirage, in this fatal reality.

And I’ve mistaken my heart for you.
And still we’re all alone.
I miss you and it’s all I can do.
I hate to call this home.

My life is nothing, empty and torn, never reborn.
Thoughts of ending this pain, making it through today.
(Today)
And I don’t want to leave you
I don’t want to deceive you
Cause you’re the heavens making my sun shine

Bm-A-Em-G
Take me in
Take me in
I’m coming down again
(repeat)

My Love and My Life
Words and music: Billy Riggs
© 2000 Hermit Music

G-C-D
I had the most glorious time today.
You came and took my whole life away.
My pride took three steps back today.
I had already planned it my way.

(chorus)
You are my hope and my light.
You mend my eyes and restore my sight.
Three days was all that it took for your might.
Now I give you my love and my life.

Climb the mountains and echo the sea.
Lead me on paths that are closer to thee.
Like the dear panting for water just there.
I need you more than water and air.

My motorcar racing across the divide,
You came and filled me up inside.
This engine burns only for with fire for you.
Like internal combustion never could do.

Em-D-C
They held you down and they beat you up.
You did not sin. You even blessed them.
Cause you conquered death and you stole the keys,
And you broke the chain, then you rose again.

Sovereign God
Words and music: Billy Riggs
© 1999 Hermit Music

A-D
Sovereign God alive in me.
Sovereign God has made me free.
Sovereign Lord you are King.
Sovereign God alive in me.

A-E-D-A
I wait on you to save me.
I wait on you alone.
You protect and save me.
For you live on the throne
Sovereign God.

A-D
Only mercy makes me clean.
Spare your judgment arm from me.
From the wrath I owe undeserving.
With all power I give to thee.
Chosen a selective breed
All by you and none by me.
Your power and faith have conquered greed.
Sovereign King alive in me.

_Virtue_
Words and music: Billy Riggs
© 2000 Hermit Music

E B A E
One life, two lives, three lives gone.
E B A E
Blood flowing down the drain, with no water on.
E B A E
A sin and crying shame, won’t you fill your life with love.

E A B
Hey fill your life with virtue, virtue and don’t back down.
E A B
Hey be a man of virtue, virtue and don’t back down.
E A B
Hey live your life with virtue, virtue and don’t back down.
E A B
Hey be a man of virtue, virtue and don’t back down.

G A G A
Blessed holy temple, sanctity of life;
G A
Fine and gold laced silver;
C
Perfect without strife.

G A G A
Innocent of ages, and apples made of gold;
G A
Come and drink the water;
C
And never grow old.
(Same as Above)
And I’ve mistaken my heart for you.
And still we’re all alone.
I miss you and it’s all I can do.
I have to call this home.
And I’ve mistaken my heart for you.
And still we’re all alone.
I miss you and it’s all I can do.
I have to call this home.

Am      B      F      C
We’ve come too far to be someone we cannot believe.
Am      B      F      C
I’ve come to really see a new love it’s inside of me.
(Repeat to End)
Appendix:

I. Church Bulletins
II. Influential Articles and Miscellaneous Materials
III. CD
The Question for Worship Leaders

The question is raised

It wasn't long ago that I sat across the table from one of the most loved, and well known, foreign missionaries of our time. A leader of an international missions organization, published author, and sought after speaker. The same man had just a few weeks prior--in a Sunday morning address--broked my heart.

In the stirring address the appeal was made to the congregation to consider their call to missions, and then an illustration followed that featured a young musician who felt God was calling him to lead a worship band in the States. In a nutshell the following point was made clear: aspiring to be a worship leader in the States is a waste of time, and if God speaks to your heart it will be to go overseas and use your skills to capture the un-reached peoples of the world.

I knew I had to speak with him personally because of my position as a worship leader, a missionary, and a former member of the congregation he was speaking to. And what was my problem? Well, if the logic for this kind of missions call holds true for aspiring worship leaders, then it must hold true for aspiring accountants, architects, bus drivers, and American clergy as well. It was easy, in that moment, for the whole congregation (except the worship leader, of course) to say "amen" as the symbol of the selfish, American musician was chastised and sent to the missions field. No one realized, however, that the finger was firmly pointing at them as well. After all it would follow that a Christian wanting to be an accountant in the US is not hearing God either, because of all the missionary causes that need accountants overseas...and on and on through every vocation and "call".

We simply can not "run the numbers" on "lost" versus "saved" in a region or profession and then appoint people to the personnel need. Keith Green came close in his pointed statement (loosely quoted): "If you are waiting on God to tell you to "Go" then you are praying the wrong prayer... you should be asking the Lord if you should stay!" The encouragement here should be to pray, but it is not for us to "Go" without praying and hearing from the Lord first. When we force people into foreign missions by a sense of obligation--when they may indeed be called to "stay"-- we only generate slaves to the Law... the Law of Evangelism. And we know that evangelism under the Law is not a blessing for the messenger or for the recipient. The Lord and our love for others must nurture our passion to "go" or "stay". We may command Christians to pray, we may challenge others to hear God, but we can not remove from them the ability to receive direction from God, personally.

While co-leading a missions conference this leader and I had a chance to speak with one another. We accepted one another's issues and convictions, apologies, and commitments...then we had some Middle Eastern food together. It is true: sometimes it feels as though the end justifies the means when the stakes are high. In the case of motivating people to missions this is often the case, but don't misunderstand, I am definitely not complaining about aggressive missions recruiting. As a matter of fact, I am thankful that the he made point about reaching out to the lost (however flawed) because it raised a question I had yet to ask:

Just where are the worship leaders with a heart for the lost?

The soil of my experience

My wife and I have been full-time musical missionaries for over 7 years now. Some people know us by our evangelistic group called 100 Portraits. Some, more recently, have met us through our first worship recording entitled "Enter the Worship Circle". The vast majority of our concerts every year are strategic evangelistic events focused on capturing the pre-Christians on the college campus. We travel, on average, about half the year performing about 150 concerts in theaters, clubs, coffeehouses, campus quads, and just about anywhere we can interact with "lost" university students. Our strategy is to intercept students with innovative musical performance while we weave a clear picture of the Gospel into the conversation. It is cross-cultural, prophetic ministry.

My start in performance music was like many other young Christians. It was in the context of worship meetings, youth services, and retreats that I first played my guitar, sang songs, and learned the "ropes" of communicating Christ through the arts...to Christians. My freshman year in college, however, I stumbled onto a singing role in a university ministry "ensemble" and something new happened to my heart for music. Much to my surprise I found that part of our work was to perform in local juvenile detention centers and prisons! From clean, southern Protestant church settings to dirty, profane, holding cells full of angry people I found myself reeling from the culture shock. These people had different backgrounds, beliefs; they were different colors; they did not know the Bible;
They did not like "puffy" Christian music. The Holy Spirit did not seem to notice that I was thoroughly prepared. Quite the opposite, He churned my "safe Christianity" up in a cloud of tears as I looked into the faces of people who were desperate to know God...but didn't know where to begin. My prayers changed, my music, and my role changed as I fell into love with reaching the hurting with the Gospel...and I knew that music was my bridge to their world. Now, more than 15 years later, I am still obsessed with reaching the forgotten. Sharing Christ through music is my life work and privilege.

I am very thankful for the people who paved the way for me to pursue my music missionary calling. The past 30 years have brought sweeping change to the way Christians have approached the performing arts. Thanks to artists like Larry Norman, Keith Green, and Dallas Holm, Christians now have a huge buffet of message and music. I was first introduced to Christian music in the early 80's. Steve Camp, Mylon LeFevre, and DeGarmo and Key were giving us their heart for God...their impassioned challenges to reach the lost, and, they were inspiring musicians to consider their role as missionaries. When Christian music grew into a worthwhile financial industry, we were inundated with every possible combination of "musical style meets Christian truth" that we could have ever imagined. Soon Christian radio stations learned the magic of promoting songs and products to market niches, bookstores learned how to promote Artists along with Ryrie, and we couldn't wait until Christian bands had light shows as big as the "world's" bands. In the mid-nineties, however, there was a growing fatigue from cookie cutter, Christian "lite" music and many people started looking for something else. Lucky for us the Church renewal in Great Britain was revving up to unleash some music that would meet the need. The New wave was worship music: modern and passionate. And, much to our surprise, it was even more fun than finding Christian music that didn't sound like Christian music. Along with some great worship leaders/writers from the States like Doerksen, Prosch, and Ruis, the "Delirious" wave of powerful worship music began to pour in to the Church. Everyone group in America went bananas, and every "rewind" church made sure there was an acoustic guitar in the worship band. Even the "Enter the Worship Circle" CC release with no promotional budget and no "label" backing, outsold all other independent Christian releases through GrassRoots Music in 1999 and 2000, and has broken all their sales records to date. The Christian music industry was shocked: worship music outselling quality Christian flavored bands? It didn't take long before every label in Nashville had a "worship" music start-up and a promo budget to match. Don't get the wrong idea—this is not a protest. Anointed, modern worship has been the best thing to happen to Christian music in the last two decades.

Today, however, I am plagued by a nagging issue. Since 1996, during our outreach efforts at the Summer Olympic Games in Atlanta, my wife and I have made a concerted effort to offer "internship" style experience to developing Christian artists. Our desire has been to inspire and train other Christian artists to use their skills to reach the lost. Basically, we have been trying to recruit music missionaries. Our method was to allow people to go on concert tours with us, perform beside us, work in our office with us, and spend time in our home so that they could get a clearer picture of "arts missions." Now, after several formal internship programs, months of cumulative training opportunities, lots of conference and workshop teaching, and quite a bit of propaganda we are faced with failure. Our internships have not produced any other music evangelism teams or solo efforts on behalf of the lost. Sure, we have helped some wonderful people grow in arts ministry, but where is the multiplication of our missions work? Lord, is it me? Are we doing it totally wrong? In the middle of my introspection I still have the confidence to state some facts. Today, I can honestly say that we are finding it harder and harder to find artists who aspire to do career evangelism at all. After interacting with hundreds of aspiring Christian artists from all over the country in the past few years we have arrived at an interesting conclusion: almost every Christian artist in America is now called to lead worship. Everyone is starting a worship band, recording worship songs, and leading worship conferences. Everyone has a passion to lead Christians into a deeper experience with God, and to "redeem" the arts for the Church. Again, don't get me wrong. I am not complaining. The wave of new worship has brought life and passion back to our Family. But the question that was planted in me earlier has found fertile soil:

Where are the worship leaders, where are the musicians, where are the performing artists...with a heart for the lost?

A Biblical foundation

The reason we find it necessary to ask this question of worship leaders is because of the official role that they hold in Christian ministry. Music ministry was not invented in our lifetime...or after the invention of the guitar...it was actually organized and commissioned along with the first full-time ministry community under the reign of King David. In brief, God set apart the entire tribe of Levites for the work of proclaiming His will to the nations, and maintaining the sacred ministrations at the Temple in Jerusalem. The tribe was divided into different ministry groups. Some became priests, some scribes, and one division (of the five total) were the Musicians and Singers! They lived, supported from the Tithe, to do full-time music ministry. So just what did they do?
We know they led worship. They filled the Temple in Jerusalem with songs of praise to God. They wrote songs for different festivals and worship occasions. They wrote music, they trained at leading, they organized choirs, they divided responsibilities, and they wanted to give the people the music and words to express themselves in worship before God. Practically all of the Old Testament is filled with the sound of the worshiping songs of the Levites. Worship; for those of us who love God, is like breathing. And leading worship was the natural task of the music ministers “responsible for the service of the house of God” (Nehemiah 11:22 NIV). Though the phrase “worship leader” is never found in Old or New Testaments its position was made clear in the ministry of the Levites. The Levites led worship like the sky is blue.

But did the Levites exclusively serve the believing community? If they did, then our evangelistic challenge to worship leaders could fall flat. Here are a few insights, however, that may help us in our discovery. A quick study of the design of the Temple in Jerusalem reveals that the mass choirs and music of the Levites could be easily heard all over the Temple platform. The music performance area was open to the court of the Gentiles via the open roof and the large open entryways. People from every nation, gathering on the Temple platform for trade or tourism, could hear the awesome songs of worship to God! But there is something else to consider as we look for the Levites role in evangelism.

In 1 Chronicles 25: 1 we find that “David, together with the commanders of the army, set apart some of the sons of Asaph, Heman and Jeduthun for the ministry of prophesying, accompanied by harps, lyres and cymbals.” These were Musicians and Singers who were to prophesy? Before we jump to the conclusion that this was some mysterious, future-telling skill set to music, let’s consider a couple of basic passages. In understanding prophecy we should first note that the word simply means “to speak a divinely inspired message”. Prophecy is simply communicating the heart and will of God to people. Revelation 19:10 says it this way, “the spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus” in other words, the essence of prophecy is exploding the reality of Jesus into the world. Sure, there is future vision and mystical insights to prophetic communication, but the foundation of the work is making God clear. There is no better place to see this than in 1 Corinthians 14. After we are all encouraged to pray for the gift of prophecy we are told in verse 3 that "everyone who prophesies speaks to men". I had always assumed that this prophetic gift was for believers...but hold on...after a chapter of illustration Paul makes it very clear for us in verses 24 and 25. “But if an unbeliever or someone who does not understand comes in while everybody is prophesying, he will be convinced by all that he is a sinner and will be judged by all, and the secrets of his heart will be laid bare. So he will fall down and worship God, exclaiming, “God is really among us!” Is this not evangelism? Is prophecy not for unbelievers? If we prophesy the lost will see God clearly! To the point, some of the Musicians and Singers were set apart for the work of prophesying: making God known to unbelievers!

I am reminded of the promise to Abraham that kicked the whole adventure off: “and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me.” (Gen. 22:18 NIV) We have always been called to be a light to the nations. “Give thanks to the LORD, call on his name; make known among the nations what he has done.” (1 Chronicles 16:8 NIV) God didn’t hide his worshipers away in a closed-door building—He put them in an open air building in the center of a public square. God didn’t want the Musicians and Singers to just sing privately to Him, or to His Family—so He formally commissioned some to be His mouthpiece to the lost. If we fall on the scripture for all of our ministry models, and, if indeed, it provides the foundation for building our work, then it has raised the question again:

Where are the worship leaders...the career ministry musicians and singers...with a heart for the lost?

Lord here am I

The distance between where we are and where we want to be is usually covered in small, determined steps. If we want to become a missions-minded family then each of us must make a single step...a single, determined step toward reaching someone with the love of Christ.

There is a challenge in this short treatment that is pointed at every creative person who aspires to ministry. This challenge is focused specifically on the tender, teachable hearts of the worshiping artist. It is a challenge to press beyond the boundaries of “safe Christian activity” into the lives of the broken and the hungry. It is a challenge to change. However, a challenge to change might be illegitimate without a model to follow. I think we can discover some very practical steps for change through the Biblical model for music ministry, and as we search, we will also gain insights through the proven experience of others. I would like to submit a few points, “guideposts” maybe, for your new journey into the Isaiah 61 of arts ministry...
1. Do a mobile team.
Take your performance team outside of your regular church schedule into the lives of people who do not attend your meetings. This is so simple. Call your local prison chaplains, drug rehab centers, halfway houses, inner-city shelters, and juvenile detention centers and book a concert. It will change your life forever. It will change your team forever. Book a recurring schedule when you find a good fit...maybe once a month...at least once a quarter. Require your team to participate. Playing at a Christian conference, a Christian coffeehouse, or special church "outing" does not count.

I will never forget my friend Mark McCoy's heart for outreach on the boardwalk's of San Diego. I met Mark as he was leading worship for a large Christian conference. He was very good, and a lot of people wanted him to come do the big things. What caught my attention, however, was that Mark talked mostly about reaching the unsuspecting, broken people of his city. He recounted his desperation of trying to capture this boardwalk culture with music. At one point he had devised a portable sound system consisting of a speaker, and amp, a few mics, and a huge battery...all tied into a grocery cart. They would push around the grocery cart on the boardwalk and as they did improvisational worship, dance, mime, etc...people would stop and engage them...and discover a new picture of God! When I think of Mark I think of a "big" guy with a heart for the "small" things...the people of his city.

2. Focus your music.
Purge your worship repertoire of mysterious, "Christianese" songs that the average person in Wal-Mart would not understand. This is so easy. Don't lecture me about preserving classic Christian hymnology for the post-moderns if non-Christians (and most believers) think it sounds like Beowulf lyrics set to Jewish accordion music. There is some great, old music that communicates, and some that does not. There is a whole pile of modern, worship music that is nothing more than "club metaphor" and religious colloquialisms set to music. Just because it is on a CD copyrighted the year 2000 does not mean that it is appropriate for reaching people with the heart of God. What makes sense? What touches the simple, broken heart? Use it!

The biggest fear in changing, focusing, and purging music repertoire in a "church" setting is the fear of losing the sheep when they lose their club favorites. "After all", the story goes, "if we don't do that song at least once every two weeks then the tithe will disappear and God move on to another building!" Well, pledge your allegiance to whom you must, but remember that God is not in the business of preserving His sheep's fashion preferences. God is in the business of preaching good news to the poor, bandaging up the brokenhearted, proclaiming the message of the cross, and release from darkness for the prisoners. What will reach these people in your city? What message will put a smile on the face of God as it puts an answer into the heart of a lost person?

3. Write new music.
Write new worship music with the door open to non-Christians. In other words, try to make every word, every line, accessible to the average person. No more theo-mysterious words that go undefined. No more lofty tunes about how great we are and how much we really love God. Write songs that confess your sins (Psalm 51). Write songs that look for God (Psalm 39). Have a very direct, non-religious person critique your song writing.

One thing I have noticed as we travel around the nation and the world is that God is speaking to His family. He speaks through sermons, through books, through dreams and visions, and He speaks through worship. It only makes sense that for God to speak specifically and effectively to your community that you might need to write songs that reflect what He is saying in the Now! Ephesians 5:19 commands us to "Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord". Can you hear the immediacy in this command? We must speak to one another with truth and life...now! What is God saying in your family? To you? Put it down on paper and find away to put it to melody...and lead your family in singing it out! If it is true that some songs bear repeating for centuries, then it is equally true that some songs need to be written today that would explode the immediate Word of God for our time into the lives our world! Maybe these new songs will find a place in the lives of our grandchildren as well, but God forbid that they would settle for our revelation, and our expressions alone.

4. Lead with the average "Joe" in mind.
When we lead worship let's imagine the needs of the non-Christian as they might be trying to follow along. Do they know what we are saying? Can they follow along with us? Have we simplified the content so that the point can make it to the heart?
The temple in Jerusalem was an "open air" event on behalf of the nations who came to the sacred site, even for non-sacred purposes. The choirs and bands were assembled and the songs were sung before the Lord, but they knew that "others" were listening. Every time we assemble a group for worship we should open the doors for the world to hear. And every time we open our mouth to lead we should be aware that "others" are listening. What do they hear?

5. Go overseas.
No kidding. Pray about where God might want to use your creative team. Build your relationships with missions leaders. Set a date, raise the money, and go serve a country less fortunate than yours. The arts are one of the best tools for doing cross-cultural ministry. We can encourage national leaders and other arts ministers while we affect the lives of thousands of hungry people with message of Jesus through performance art. You and your team will never be the same again.

It is on these short experiments that we often hear God’s voice as it relates to doing mission work in other parts of the world. It is much easier to catch a missions call than to be taught a missions call. Our desire to see people recruited for missions endeavors will always be best served by offering practical experience. It is a simple thing to take a creative team to another "world" and share the Gospel, but it does take vision and commitment. In this model we can allow God to speak to His people as they go, as they try, and we can allow His timing and His call to draw people onto the field as He needs them! Did you ever think that being a worship leader could serve a dual role as a "Missionary Training Director"?

The Question Answered

Where are the worship leaders with a heart for the lost? We believe the question is ringing out through the Church right now. We believe that it must not be passed by as though someone else will answer it. The question is not for someone else. It is for me. It is for you. And the answer will not be found in an article, or a song. The answer will be found in a life...a life lived on behalf of the "others" who have yet to meet our wonderful Savior. A worshiper who aches for the lost. A musician who stretches out towards the hurting. A songwriter who gives lyrics like bread to the hungry. This is the answer to the question...the person who will choose to embrace the prophetic call...

Are you the answer?

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I'm a Southern Baptist, but, more importantly, I'm a New Testament Christian who has been born again. What I am is what I have been for 55 years. But the styles of worship I have experienced have varied from year to year and place to place through all of life.

Where I'm Coming From

As a bit of context, I'll tell you that I was born into the Cradle Roll of First Baptist Church of Midland, Texas, during the Depression. At age seven, I was born again on the seventh stanza of "Just As I Am." I know there are just six stanzas; but for some reason we sang all six and started over that Sunday night. It was on the seventh stanza that I gave my heart and life to Christ as the only public decision of the night.

In West Texas, our style of worship wasn't very fancy but was quite traditional. We had a prelude, prayer, choral interlude, greeted the visitors, made announcements, sang the Doxology, took up the offering, heard the sermon, sang the invitation, and prayed an amen to the service. There were variations all right, but that was pretty much the style of worship. And until after World War II, Southern Baptists from all over the country would probably have felt very much at home in our church. Worship styles were pretty much the same, except for a few regional considerations.

Mother is still a member of First Baptist Church, Midland, some 60-plus years later and has gladly participated in all the varied worship styles that great church has experienced. However, Dad liked the traditional. And whenever something different came along that he didn't like, he would say with chagrin, "I wasn't raised that way." I remember one night after a church concert of rather classical music that he called me. When he told about the concert, he said, "I've heard bulls bellow better than that." Then he added, "By the way, I'm sending you a tape of the concert." When I asked why he was doing that, since he didn't like the music, Dad said, "Well, folks have different tastes in music and I thought you might like it." Dad and Mother probably have represented the opposite poles of how most folks react to variety in worship styles.

Where I've Been

When I left home to go to college in the 1950s, I began a pilgrimage of Christian calling that led me across boundaries of nations, cultures, denominations, generations, and worship styles. The journey has led me to the conviction that the most important thing about worship style is that it be Christ-style, regardless of the outward expression.
In Communist Russia in the 1980s, I worshiped with Greek Orthodox Christian Yuri Tabak and he said, "Johnnie, the walls that divide us are high, but they do not reach to heaven." In post-Communist Slovakia, Maria Kistnerik said, "When the heavy hand of Communism was on us, we didn't focus on the differences between us; we looked at what we had in common." And I have recently found this same kind of focus as I have worshiped in Communist China—both in house churches and in Three-Self-Churches.

With both Mother's and Dad's genes in me, I have accepted or rejected changes and newness in worship styles. But I have come to appreciate rather than depreciate the varied ways Christians feel led to worship. This unifying conviction underlies what I'm sharing with you about worship styles. Today I find joy in worship styles with which I identify and am reluctant to criticize those styles that don't fit me.

Where We Are

As we end one millennium and begin another, our varied worship styles reflect the plurality of our nation and our times. We tend to know what we like and don't like in worship styles. Our churches have tried to market themselves to meet the needs of a fragmented society while maintaining their own integrity of Christian worship. That effort has led larger churches to plan and announce (1) traditional worship services, (2) contemporary worship services, or (3) a mix of the traditional and the contemporary.

The first two options seem to work fairly well in large churches with multiple services. But, regardless of church size, the choice to mix traditional and contemporary styles rubs most everyone the wrong way part of the time. When this approach seems best for the given circumstances, worshipers have the opportunity to be charitable and do their best to participate fully in the whole service.

We have three deacon-sons who are married and have children from ages 4 to 19. They were all raised the same way in our home and experienced the same worship styles, but today each of the three families belongs to a church with a different worship style: one is traditional, one is cutting-edge contemporary, and another is a blend of the traditional and the contemporary. All three sons and their families seem happy with their choice of church and worship style.

Churches choose a worship style, and worshipers need to choose a church that best fits their own needs for corporate worship. That's where we are. Although churches change, there's something satisfying in having a mother who's been in the same church for 64 years and for my wife and me to have been members of the same church for 30 years. Rather than church hopping as a result of every change of worship style, it's Christian maturity to be part of why a church changes and then to participate as a member of the body of Christ. That's where we need to be.

Perspectives on Worship Styles

A moment ago, I said that we tend to know what we like and don't like in worship styles. That's true. But it's important to know what others like and don't like in worship styles if we hope to grow in our ability to lead and participate in public worship. So I asked some senior adults, some Baby Boomers, and some Generation-Xers what they like and don't like in worship. And it was refreshing to get their perspectives.

A Senior Adult's Perspective. A musically talented friend of mine, named Linda, has lived in different parts of the world and, therefore, necessarily belonged to churches with quite varied worship styles. She likes to participate in lots of singing with a mix of hymns and choruses. But she said she does not like to sing the same thing over and over again: "My thoughts are, let's sing 14 choruses rather than one chorus 14 times." She added, "The churches that discard the great hymns are doing themselves and their membership a disservice and are robbing themselves of wonderful music and worship."

Linda showed her maturity when she concluded, "I will not leave a church because of worship, unless it is not edifying. Lots of people do, and that is very sad."

A Baby Boomer's Perspective. Jane and her family have just
moved to a new city and are praying for leadership to the right church. They visited a formal church, where the pastor wore a robe; the order and length of the service were fixed-liturgical; and the ornate auditorium exuded reverence and quietness. Jane said, “Every sound was echoed because of the high ceilings so one was afraid to even sneeze for fear of drawing attention to oneself.”

Jane went on to say that she and her family prefer a smaller sanctuary, a service that seems more Spirit-led, and a godly pastor who doesn’t feel closed in by the clock. She likes a variety of styles of music and instruments. She enjoys the praise choruses but feels “there should also be a good dose of the beautiful old hymns” with all the stanzas sung. She recalled from her childhood that once a month during the summer the evening service consisted totally of singing hymns. She summed up by saying, “So the atmosphere, the pastor, and the music all play an important role.”

**Generation-Xer Perspectives.**

Leslie said that music is the top thing that turns her heart toward God—whether the music is traditional hymns or the latest choruses. She told me, “Speaking as a Generation-Xer, I resent being told that one particular style of worship (or music or church) should appeal to me because of my age. Sure, I enjoy upbeat songs and lively preaching that grab my attention, but I also need quiet reverence so that my needs never surpass the true reason I come to church. I want the focus to be on God, not on my enjoyment.”

Leslie commented that she likes to worship in contemporary services that include praise bands, choruses, drama, and other expressions; but then she underlined, “I do not like the trend of the Gen-X seeker churches to entertain audiences.

Worship isn’t for our entertainment; it should reach the heart of God.”

Jennifer, another Generation-Xer, said that she likes a worship style that is highly participatory, intergenerational, and includes laity, as well as clergy. She yearns for a style that maintains reverence while including warmth and fellowship and is sincerely worshipful rather than entertaining.

**From Both Sides of the Pulpit**

Before a career in Christian publishing, I was a pastor for 11 years; but I’ve spent most of the years since then sitting in the pew. So I know what it’s like to be on both sides of the pulpit. And I suppose I’m more tolerant, appreciative, and empathetic with worship leaders and worship participators than ever before. My convictions, opinions, and preferences have come out of personal experience, and I’m still trying to grow in worship.

Having said all that, I have a few personal observations to make.

**About the worship leadership team.** It is not a platitude to say that the Holy Spirit should be the worship leader. But on the human side of the picture, I hear the minister of music referred to as the worship leader and, also, continue to hear the pastor referred to as the worship leader. To me, it’s not an either/or thing about who the worship leader is. Rather, I prefer to think of all the worship leaders teaming together with the Holy Spirit to plan and share in the best worship experience possible.

**Worshiping through music.** I’m certainly no musician. After five years of piano lessons, my main accomplishment was that I could turn my back to the piano and play the C major scale backward.

Nevertheless, I do know some things about worshiping through music. Both in college and in seminary, I had what I lightly refer to as arm-waving courses.

Although singing preachers are not any more in demand than preaching singers, they each need to know something about the other’s discipline. Euell Porter (Baylor University) taught me to plant my thumb in the hymnbook, give a good preparatory beat, look the congregation in the eye, and lead the music. He taught me some other things too; namely, how to study hymn texts and their histories, how to work with the accompanists, how to be considerate of the congregation, how to team with the pastor in matching music to message, and how to blend it all into a worshipful approach to God.

I’m grateful to Dr. Porter and others who have taught our ministers of message and music in worship styles—and grateful to those who practice what they were taught.

On my own, as a pew member, I’ve learned a few other things. When the last note of a fast-paced stanza ends, the next beat of the next stanza doesn’t have to occur immediately. Many of us are still
trying to catch our breath regardless of what is musically correct. So on rare occasions when I lead a hymn, I insert a "Baptist fermata" at the end of each stanza—actually, it's a "Godwin" fermata. May the musically correct take note and consider doing likewise.

When I was a teenager, we could sing choruses all evening without needing to repeat one—unless we just wanted to. After a generation without much chorus-singing, I welcomed a renewal of choruses that were fresh, contemporary, and worshipful. It's biblical to "Sing unto the Lord a new song, and his praise from the end of the earth" (Isa. 42:10).

But there is a problem with a lot of the chorus-singing I've observed lately. My introduction to a new chorus has often been just the words in the bulletin—no preview of the tune or tempo. And the music leader has often gotten away from the microphone and looked ethereal as he mouths the words, the choir chugs along, and the congregation participates in almost uniform silence. If the congregation is to participate, it needs a preview of the words, tune, tempo, and strong leadership to follow.

**Worshiping through the sermon.**

What people like in preaching styles is about as varied as what they like in music.

**Volume**—There are preachers and people who feel like a sermon hasn't been delivered unless it is loud enough to knock out the back wall. Others of us have very good hearing and we need an energetic sermon, but in a conversational tone.

**Time**—I've noticed that the Spirit-led sermon tends to be shorter when the preacher is well-prepared. The first time I heard patriarch Herschel Hobbs preach was in seminary chapel, and his sermon lasted 45 minutes—ended 15 minutes after the bell had rung. Some time later Hobbs had a heart attack; as he recovered, his doctor told him not to preach longer than 20 minutes. The next time I heard Dr. Hobbs preach, he preached 20 minutes; he commented that he wished he had had the doctor's prescription 40 years earlier.

Once when I was the main speaker at an all-night religious gathering, my time to speak came just about my bedtime—9:15 p.m. We had started with a reception, had dinner, multiple long-winded participants, and three hours without a bathroom break. I rose to speak and told the crowd I had a topic, text, three roman numerals, subpoints, a poem, and a conclusion. Then I announced, "And I'll save all that for another occasion." The crowd gave me a standing ovation. Fellow platform guest Landrum Leavell put his arm around me and said, "Johnnie, there ain't no such thing as a bad, short sermon."

**Response**—I agree with all of the people I've recently talked to in feeling that the best worship style is participatory. Certainly this is true of singing, praying, and giving; but it's also true during the message. In my home church, I knew we could count on Everett Smith to give a bold amen when the music or pastor were on target. In worship styles, amen has largely given way to clapping. I'm basically not a clapper, but I don't really mind it if it is worship toward God and not entertainment response. And in Baptist churches we've got a lot of people raising their hands these days. I wasn't raised that way, but I've come to appreciate that expression which others extend toward God. In fact, from the other side of the pulpit, I was grateful for any crumb of response—an amen, heads nodding up and down or even from side to side, clapping, or raised hands.

Why, one Easter Sunday I preached a 20-minute sermon in the church I pastored. That afternoon at an African-American church, the same sermon went 40 minutes. What made the difference? You know: "un-huh," "that's right," "amen," "preach on." And I did.

**Invitation**—Both in the sermon and in the invitation, the preacher and congregation need to be led by the Holy Spirit. I say that as one who was saved on the seventh stanza of "Just As I Am" in an evening service that had no other public decisions. It is only humane for the pastor to recognize how long the folks have gone without a bathroom break. And it is prudent to recognize that a call for standing with closed eyes is an invitation to vertigo. These human considerations are part of planning a worship style.

**Conclusion**

Varieties of worship styles are a fact we need to appreciate rather than depreciate. What is right is determined most by being Christ-centered rather than man-centered in every kind of worship style.
Hebrew words into English language...so we may sing in Sion the Lord's songs of praise according to his own will.1

While many supported the commitment to scriptural accuracy in song, they did think that perhaps still an improvement in poetry was warranted. It was said that the wooden translations combined with plain, uninteresting music was such that, "two hammers on a smith's anvil would make better music." Isaac Watts, often considered the father of English hymnody, complained that, "to see the dull indifference, the negligent and thoughtless air, that sits upon the faces of the whole assembly while the psalm is on their lips, might tempt even a charitable observer to suspect the favour of inward religion."2 It was Watts' observation to his father, about having only poor renderings of the Psalms with which to sing to God, that inspired his father's suggestion to come up with something better. The following Sunday, at the age of 20, Watts introduced "Behold the Glories of the Lamb," a tune sung even today, hundreds of years later. While many felt that the only acceptable words with which to worship God were His own as revealed in Holy Scripture, and particularly in the Psalms, Watts felt that Psalms, being an old covenant book, was not entirely appropriate for Christian worship as it contained no new covenant themes. He felt that lyrics should reflect such specifically new covenant issues as salvation and grace, while being of high poetic quality and reflective of the author's own spiritual insights. This freeing idea resulted in such marvels as "Joy to the World," "O God, Our Help in Ages Past," and "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross." Today we would consider the outpourings and reflections of a Christian author so obviously acceptable as to be a given, but it was a revolutionary concept in its time. Many churches likely felt that the introduction of human-inspired hymns was close to blasphemy—as though God's own words were not sufficient for His praise. The new music advocates countered that "out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks,"—that they were only giving voice to the stirrings of the Holy Spirit within them. Nonetheless, resistance to hymns was fierce. In his A Fine Picture of Enthusiasm (1740), John Scot saw the early hymn advocates to be singing songs that: "are not of rational Compositions, nor do they accord with the first Principles of all Religion, but like their Prayers, dwell upon a Word, or are immediate addresses to the Son of God, as the Supreme Object of Worship. And do represent him as much more friendly and compassionate to the human World than God the Father ever was."4

Those who are familiar with the current controversy are well aware that all of these lyrical objections—paraphrase of Scripture, undue familiarity with the Lord, and presumption of what God prefers—are still being heard today, though this time in favor of hymns rather than opposed to them.

But it was not only objections over lyrics that fueled the disputes. Many were appalled by the enthusiasm with which several hymn-loving groups sang these new songs. For those accustomed to the ponderous, repetitive intonations of the psalm books, free-flowing tunes must have sounded a bit shocking, especially as it was often noted that the followers of the Wesley's teachings (later, the Methodists) were known to approach their singing with great gusto. This seemingly barely-restrained ecstasy and fervor was disapproved of not only for the perceived assault on propriety, but for socio-political reasons,
as well. The Evangelical Revival of the early 18th century had brought into the church a great number of believers, many of whom were from the lower reaches of society. This great unwashed mass was seen as potentially violent and prone to mob tendencies, a perception further reinforced in the minds of some observers by the fact that many of the new believers were led by dissenting pastors, several of whom were trying to change not only the style of singing in the church, but also advocated the replacement of the monarchy with democratic government (in spite of Cromwell’s failure in the previous century), and actively argued against the restrictions placed on their lives because of their refusal to join the official Church of England. For some, fear of far-reaching consequences of change, the thought that giving into hymns would signal a surrender of not only their music, but also an acceptance of radical politics, made the transition to hymns difficult, especially in England.

The tunes and instruments used were another severe point of contention between advocates of the old and new songs, just as they are today. In order to ease the transition of those newly saved, many songs were composed that set biblical truths to tunes commonly known by the people. Folk melodies, theatrical compositions, even popular music tunes were pressed into the service of instructing the new believers and teaching them to praise God. One evening, an evangelistic meeting led by Charles Wesley was interrupted by drunken sailors loudly singing the lewd song “Nancy Dawson.” Determined to win them, or to at least protect his flock, Charles composed a new set of lyrics for the melody that same evening so that at the next meeting, the congregation drowned out the sailors with lyrics that exhorted sinners to repent, set to “Nancy Dawson.” One can imagine that those with at least a passing familiarity with the original “Nancy Dawson” were uncomfortable with this embracing of the world’s music. But Wesley was not alone. “Why should the devil have all the good music?” is not a new sentiment. Stuart C. Henry wrote about the great evangelist George Whitefield: “Thinking it wrong for the ‘devil’s house to have all the good tunes,’ [Whitefield] had appropriated some popular airs from favorite stage operas of the day and set sacred words to them...[T]he strains of such music-hall ballads as ‘Love in a Village’ or ‘Maid of the Mill’ floated from the Moorfields tabernacle... What kind of person is Whitefield, and what sort of religion does he teach?”

Whitefield and Wesley were not the only ones appropriating tunes for a higher purpose. “How Firm a Foundation” was set to a southern folk melody, “The Battle Hymn of the Republic” was a lyrical variant on the politically incendiary “John Brown’s Body,” and the tune for “Onward, Christian Soldiers” was composed by Arthur Sullivan of Gilbert and Sullivan fame (Pinafore, The Mikado, etc.). Even the popular “We Praise Thee, Oh God, Our Redeemer, Creator” was set to a rather shocking dance hall number about a woman of easy virtue. But even appropriations of tunes from such masterful composers as Handel (The Messiah) were open to criticism. Many believed that these “transient” popular songs were but grass, destined to quickly wither, while their faithfulmetrical psalms had stood the test of time. One must wonder, too, if the sheer newness of, and unfamiliarity with, these new songs was part of the reason for the resistance. Still, the thousands of new believers of the Evangelical Revival embraced these tunes and through the new words set to familiar music learned the timeless truths of the Bible.

But it was not just new music that was causing problems; there were instruments to deal with as well. While many today would consider the upright bass (bass viol) an instrument of fine beauty suited for great classical compositions, they were initially popular in less formal congregations who were often looked down upon as ‘catgut’ churches (referring to the strings of the instrument). And while many a believer today can scarcely imagine worship without a piano, the “pianoforte,” introduced around 1710, was not initially well-received by the church. It was a new instrument of novel construction not specifically mentioned in the Scripture, and therefore it was doubtful to many that it was appropriate for worship.

While there was opposition to the introduction of hymns, caused in part by objections to hymns extra-spiritual lyrical, enthusiastic performances, and use of new instruments and popular melodies, the acceptance of hymns gradually occurred as they continued to spread and to grow in popularity. In fact, Edward Miller wrote near the end of the 18th century encouraging the Church of England to adopt the singing of hymns as had the Methodists: “It is well known that more people are drawn to the temples of Methodists by their attractive harmony, than by the doctrine of their preachers...Where the Methodists have drawn one person from our communion by their preaching, they have drawn ten by their music.”

The Church of England eventually agreed, finally allowing the singing of hymns in corporate worship in 1820, nearly 100 years after Watts'
first composition. The Puritans of Spencer, Massachusetts, were quicker, but more unsure in their acceptance of new music. After making a trial of an updated book of Psalms, they voted in 1761 to return to the tried and true Bay Psalm Book. Eight years later they tried a form of combined worship utilizing both the old and new books. Then in late 1769 they adopted Watts' hymns and abandoned the Psalms entirely. Jonathan Edwards' Northampton congregation was more decisive: in 1742 they embraced hymns wholeheartedly and had to be persuaded to continue singing the psalms in addition to their new music. While there is little doubt that many of the more conservative members were not entirely happy with the usurpation of psalms by hymns, hymns' introduction and acceptance occurred at a time of great religious revival in the English speaking world, a convergence of situations that is hard to dismiss as mere coincidence.

Knowing all of this about the struggle for hymns to be accepted in the past, it is both amusing and exasperating to see that human nature is so consistent. Arguments made 200 and 300 years ago to quell the influence and acceptance of hymns are being used today by advocates of hymns against the influence and acceptance of contemporary worship. Far too many are presuming to know God's taste and happily finding that His coincides with their own. It would be a great relief if all believers would accept that innovation is inevitable, but much of our past is valuable; there are no melodies set apart as especially acceptable or forbidden in the Scripture; and dissension does a great deal of harm to both the Body and our outside witness—we are to be known by our love.

It is this author's fervent desire that, whether you prefer the music of Wesley and Watts or Paris and Green, you will show forbearance and grace toward those of different tastes and that you will allow both the time-tested truths of the classic hymns and the fresh compositions of the newcomers a place in your local body's worship. Let us resolve to learn from the mistakes of the past regarding the introduction of new music and celebrate the great variety of melodic expressions from which believers can choose in order to worship and praise their mighty and loving Creator.

The author wishes to express her appreciation for the following resources:
101 Hymn Stories, Kenneth W. Osbeck (1982),
Forty Gospel Hymn Stories, George Sanville (1943),
The Wesley Hymns, John Lawson (1987),
2. Hymns and Spiritual Songs, Isaac Watts (1740).
A Fine Picture of Enthusiasm, John Scot (1740).
6. Ibid.

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THE CHANGING SOUND OF MUSIC

In worship, choruses are beating-out traditional hymns; but the organ plays on.

Two surveys conducted by CHRISTIANITY TODAY'S sister publication YOUR CHURCH show that the number of American churches using predominantly nontraditional music in their worship services has more than doubled from 1993 to 1996. The studies, appearing in the July/August 1997 issue, were conducted by John C. LaRue, Jr., executive director of research and development for Christianity Today, Inc.

Churches fell into three easily defined music styles (see Graph 1). The largest group currently is "nontraditional" or contemporary and includes four out of every ten churches. The worship music in these congregations is mainly contemporary. This group is rapidly growing, being up 14 percentage points in the past three years, and it is the only one that has seen an increase.

The next largest group of churches is "traditional." At least three-fourths of the music performed in these churches on Sunday morning is traditional (using hymns and organ) in style. Of the three classifications, this one has declined the most (down 12 percentage points).

"Moderately traditional" churches are the smallest and most steady group. Approximately one-fourth of all American churches are in this category. Between half and three-fourths of the music used during Sunday morning worship in this group is traditional.

Despite the shift toward contemporary music, 60 percent of the music used during Sunday morning worship in the typical American church is traditional. Four years ago, the figure was 75 percent.

Churches with predominantly contemporary worship music stand out in the following ways:

Average Sunday morning attendance in contemporary churches (314) is nearly twice that of more traditional congregations (172).

More contemporary churches (69%) experienced attendance growth in the past five years than traditional churches (47%).

Pastors in contemporary churches are five years younger, on average.

A wider variety of musical instruments is now used in services than three years ago (see Graph 2). Nearly twice as many churches are using digital pianos, drums, brass, woodwinds, and strings.

The most widely used instrument is the piano. Nearly every church uses a piano -- acoustic, digital, or keyboard -- at least once a month. However, churches are exchanging the use of the more traditional acoustic piano for the modern digital piano or keyboard.

The organ is the only instrument that has remained virtually unchanged in usage between our two studies. It is the second most commonly played musical device in worship services. More than seven out of ten churches (72%) use an organ at least once a month.

Just three years ago, guitars were frequently used in only three out of ten churches. Now, close to half of all churches use a guitar on any given Sunday.

Other church music trivia include:

Eighty-eight percent of churches place hymnals in their pew racks, 39 percent use chorus books for worship, and 37 percent project words or music on a screen or wall.

Three-fourths (73%) have a choir, which typically is made up of 20 members who sing 39 weeks during the year. Twenty-five percent own handbells, 20 percent own a carillon, chimes, or electronic bells.

GRAPH 1

TYPE OF SUNDAY MORNING WORSHIP MUSIC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Music</th>
<th>1993</th>
<th>1996</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Traditional</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately Traditional</td>
<td>50-74%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nontraditional</td>
<td>50% or more</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

GRAPH 2

WORSHIP INSTRUMENTS (used at least monthly)
Organ 73 72
Guitar 29 46
Acoustic piano 79 58
Digital piano/keyboard 19 38
Drums 16 28
Brass/woodwind 11 21
Strings 9 16

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