

# THE CONTEXT OF SACRED MUSIC IN EPHESIANS

Manfred E. Kober, Th.D.

## 1A. THE CALLING OF THE CHURCH: 1:1-3:21

- 1b. The salutation: 1:1-2
- 2b. The praise for divine redemption: 1:3-14
  - 1c. The work of the Father as the planner: 3-6
  - 2c. The work of the Son as the executor: 6-12
  - 3c. The work of the Spirit as the guarantor: 13-14

The threefold doxology: “for the praise of his glory” 6, 12, 14

- 3b. The prayer for spiritual illumination: 1:15-23
- 4b. The provision for human reconciliation: 2:1-22
- 5b. The proclamation of Paul’s revelation: 3:1-23

## 2A. THE CONDUCT OF THE CHURCH: 4:1-6:24

- 1b. Conduct in unity: 4:1-16
  - God **gives** unity; man **preserves** unity; peace **maintains** unity.
- 2b. Conduct in holiness: 4:17-5:2
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  - 2c. A mind understanding God’s will: 17
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**See Col. 3:16 “let the word of Christ dwell in you richly”**

**The Spirit-filled Christian is a Word-filled Christian.**

“The word of Christ”—only here in the N.T.—refers not to the words of Scripture as such but to the word that Christ speaks in the heart of the believer.

**4c. A heart overflowing with praise: 19**

"A heart washed by the Word instead of brainwashed by the world"

**1d. Psalms of David:** inspired by God

--biblically inspired psalms: originally with musical accompaniment

**2d. Hymns of praise:** directed to God

--festive lyrics in praise of deity

**3d. Odes of worship:** prompted by God

--a short poem easily adaptable

"The same song can have all three words applied to it" (A. T. Robertson)

**5c. A spirit giving thanks to the Father: 5:20**

**5b. The conduct in the home: 5:21-6:9**

**1c. The conduct of the wife: 5:21-24**

**2c. The conduct of the husband: 5:25-33**

**3c. The conduct of children and parents: 6:1-4**

**4c. The conduct of servants and masters: 6:5-9**

**6b. The conduct amid warfare: 6:10-20**

**7b. The conclusion: 6:21-24**



**EPHESIANS 5**

18 And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;

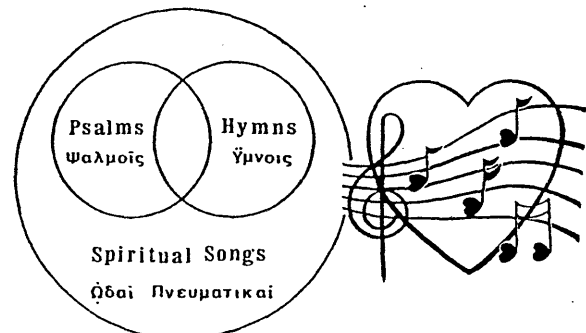
19 Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;

20 Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;

**COLOSSIANS 3**

16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

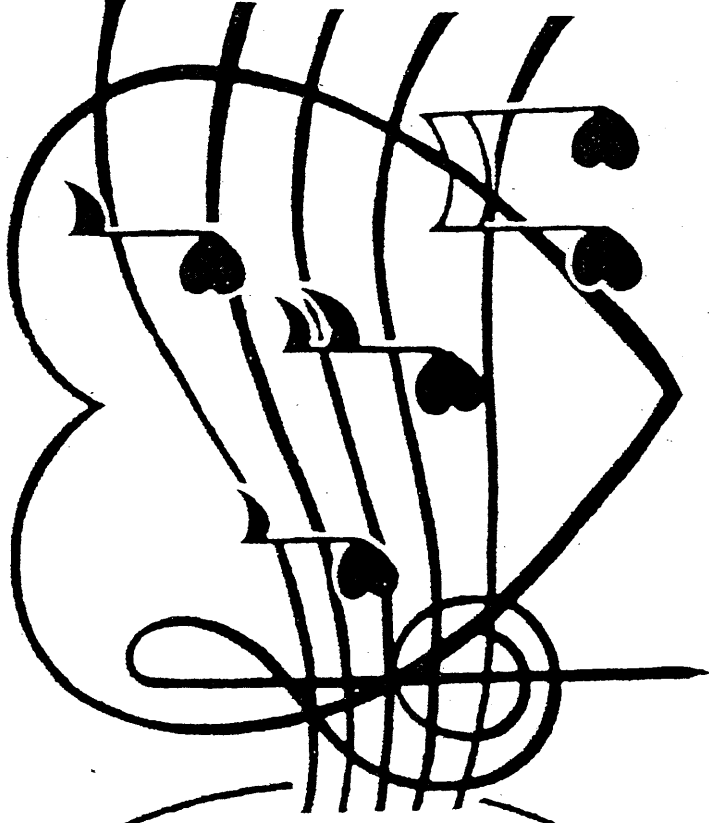
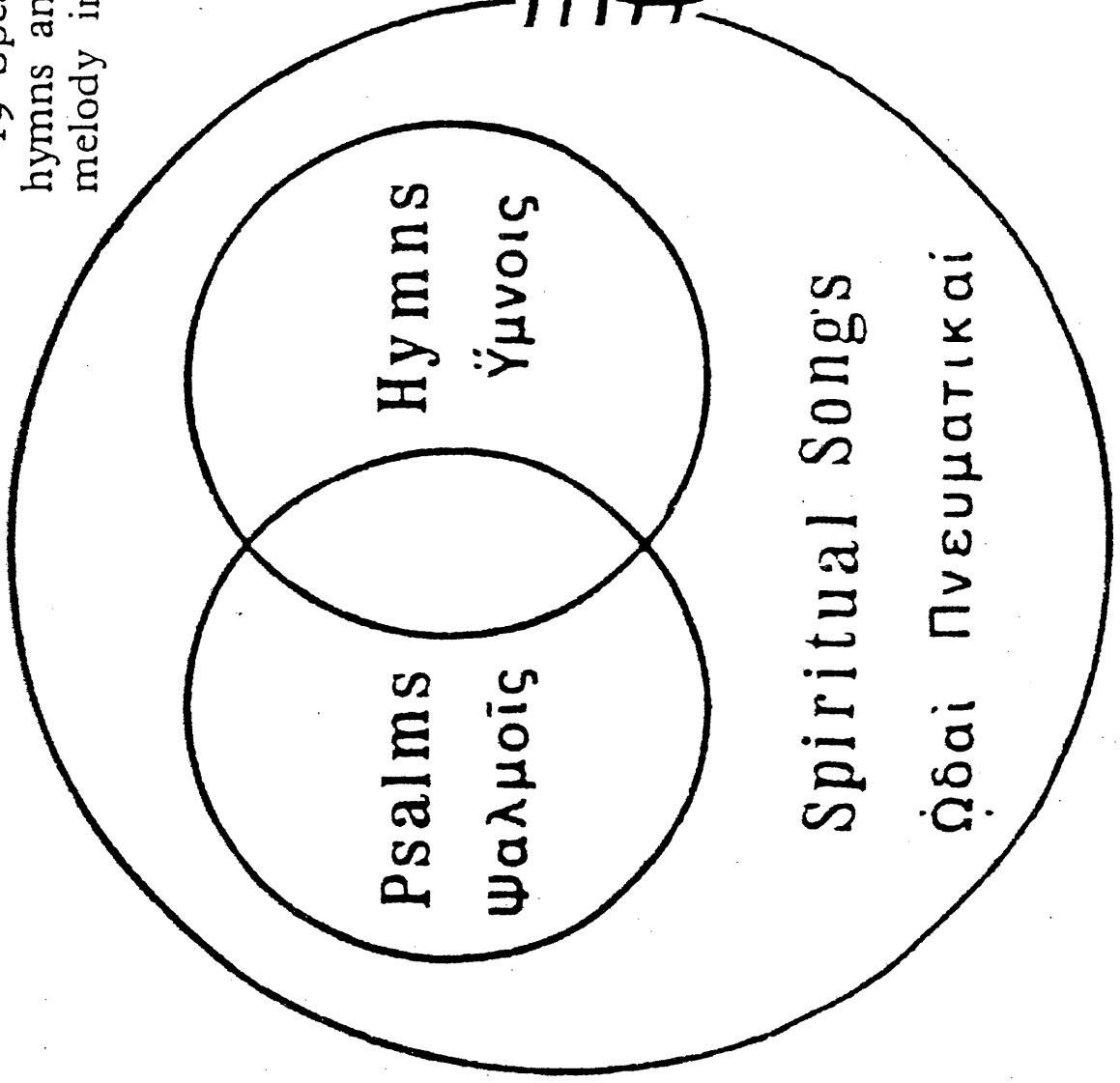
17 And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.



## EPHESIANS 5

18 And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;

19 Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;



## Helpful Literature in Evaluating Music in Worship:

Lucarini, Dan. *Why I Left the Contemporary Christian Music movement*. Webster, N.Y: Evangelical Press, 2007. 141pp.

The book's sub-title is, "Confessions of a Former Worship Leader." The author draws on personal experience and biblical data to demonstrate the dangers to true worship of the varieties of contemporary Christian music.

Makujina, John. *Measuring the Music: Another Look at the Contemporary Christian Music Debate*. Salem, Ohio: Schmul Publishing Co., 2000. 303pp.

Makujina presents skillfully basic principles which help the conscientious and discerning believer to differentiate between good and evil music.

Pickering, Ernest. *The Kind of Music that Honors God*. Decatur, AL: Baptist World Mission, 2004. 14pp.

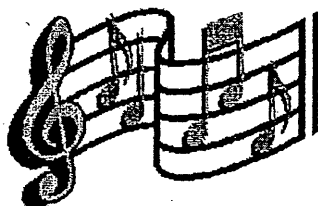
The respected fundamentalist leader shows the erosion of musical standards among contemporary Christians and lays down sound biblical principles for the God-honoring music.

Smith, Kimberly. *Oh, Be Careful Little Ears*. Enumclaw, WA: WinePress Publishing, 1997. 142pp.

Smith helps the reader identify carnal Christian music, shows why it is carnal and answers most of the emotional excuses given in defense of contemporary Christian music.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Let Those Who Have Ears Hear*. Enumclaw, WA: WinePress Publishing, 2001. 202pp.

Smith demonstrates the reasons for the controversy about contemporary Christian music and adds fifty more "excuses" given to defend CCM.



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## Music in the New Testament Church

### Content Author:

Reagan, David

Someone asked me about the use of stringed instruments in church services and I want to give some of my thoughts on music in the church today. I am very much a believer in using musical instruments as aids to worship. Even in the perfect worship of heaven they use harps to aid their praise to God (Revelation 14:2-3). And, "the anointed cherub that covereth" (Ezekiel 28:13-14) was created with the music-making aids of tabrets and pipes in him (v.13) to be used for the praise of God.

Unfortunately, when Satan (the anointed cherub) fell, he brought his musical ability with him. Since that time, music has been a powerful force in man whether used by God or by the devil. This forces us to use all of our spiritual discernment and God-given judgment to determine what is and what is not proper worship music.

### Old Testament Practice the Standard?

We could just go back to the Old Testament standards for music for the Jewish people. Certainly these standards were quite liberal. Psalm 150 encourages the use of the trumpet, the psaltery, the harp, the timbrel, stringed instruments, organs and various kinds of cymbals--something that sounds to me a bit like Alexander's Ragtime Band. Many declare this as the standard for church worship today. However, if you carefully read this passage, you will see that it also encourages us to praise God with the dance. (Many churches are also beginning to do this.) Perhaps there is a reason that the churches of Jesus Christ have for 2,000 years rejected the national music of Israel as the standard for the New Testament church.

### Music in the New Testament

Instead of listing instruments (the NT passages on the church never mention any musical instruments), God gives His churches a statement of purpose for music in this dispensation. It is found in Ephesians 5:19 and again in Colossians 3:16.

- Ephesians 5:19 "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord"
- Colossians 3:16 "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."

### Three Kinds of Church Music

In these verses, God establishes three kinds of music proper for New Testament worship.

- I. Psalms are God's words (usually from the Psalms but not always) put to music.
- II. Hymns are formal expressions of praise or declarations of God's truth.
- III. Spiritual songs are songs that deal with the spiritual life and are the most personal of the songs.

English hymnody has emphasized these forms one at a time instead of balancing the three as God planned. The English reformers of the 16th and 17th centuries followed the lead of John Calvin and allowed only Psalms to be sung in the churches. The 18th century saw the introduction of hymns into the churches through the powerful poetry of Isaac Watts, John Newton and John and Charles Wesley. In the the last half of the 19th century, spiritual songs were made popular by people like Ira Sankey, Philip Bliss and Fanny Crosby. However, by this time, the singing of psalms had become a thing of the past. The 20th century witnessed the ascendancy and adulteration of the spiritual song and the decline of the hymn. Today, hymns are quickly becoming a relic of history. There needs to be a movement to bring godly, scriptural balance back to our music.

### The Purposes of Church Music

These two verses (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16) also give the purposes of Christian music.

First, our songs should teach us since we are to be "teaching...one another" with them. In order to do this, they should be doctrinally sound and should teach the basics of biblical doctrine. We use songs to teach the alphabet to our children and God used the song of Moses to teach Israel of their relationship with God (Deuteronomy 31:19-21). We should use music to teach as well. As such, they should be speakable; that is, of sufficient quality that they can be spoken (Ephesians 5:19). They should be good poetry with good content so that the words without the music still have a great message.

Second, our songs should "admonish" us. This means they should warn of sin or danger and urge to proper action in our Christian lives. I see very little of this in our music today. As a rule, modern church music neither teaches nor admonishes--a direct affront to the command of God in Colossians 3:16.

Third, our songs should praise and exalt God. We sing them to the Lord and they are an integral part of our worship of Him. With them, we make melody to the Lord and sing to Him.

Fourth, our songs should speak to our hearts. We sing them with grace. That is, they help us. We make melody with them. They stick with us because they are a pleasure to sing. We sing them as we go about our business of the day. Modern music has emphasized (and perverted) praise and popularity while ignoring the teaching and admonishing ministries of proper church music.

### Instruments in Church Music

### Instruments in Church Music

With this as a backdrop, I want to make some comments about instruments in church music.

- Musical instruments are superfluous to proper New Testament church music. By that, I mean that church music can be just as pleasing to God without any musical instruments (other than the human voice) as it can be with a hundred-instrument orchestra. There is no inherent spiritual value in any musical instrument—including the piano.
- Neither are musical instruments prohibited (as the Church of Christ and Mennonites teach). And, since they were used in the Old Testament, there is obviously nothing inherently evil in them.
- However, the New Testament commands us to sing, not play. By the way, it also commands us to sing, not listen to others sing. The only required part is the singing (well, for some people God does allow "speaking" – Ephesians 5:19). God designed New Testament singing for all believers. It is not to be relegated to a few professionals.
- Therefore, musical instruments should be used only inasmuch as they enhance the biblical purposes of music in the church.

### Musical Instruments Not Spiritually Neutral

However, this is not to say that musical instruments are spiritually neutral in a total sense. Those who are deeply involved in music know the powers of specific instruments more than I. The drums can easily create a dance mood. This is much more difficult to do with a flute (though not impossible). The banjo has little capacity for sadness or meditative moods. The saxophone tends towards the sensual.

Yet, much of the power of the instruments is found in how they are played by the musicians themselves. I have seen all three of the above instruments used in godly music—though not often. I think the banjo may be limited to happy, upbeat songs, but there is a place for that in the "spiritual songs" of the church. Some instruments have a wider range of moods than others. The piano can match any mood. Perhaps the banjo cannot. But that does not necessarily keep it out of the church.

### Some Dangers of Instrumental Music

Let me mention some of the dangers concerning instrumental music in the church as I see it:

1. Music has the ability to speak to every part of man: his spirit, his mind, his emotions, his will, his body and his flesh. I distinguish the body from the flesh in the biblical sense. My physical body is not evil in and of itself but my fleshly nature is. Music is fleshly when it makes me more open to sinful temptations and when it actually encourages me to partake of my lusts. It is possible for my body to react favorably to music without my flesh being incited to sin. However, the distance from the one to the other is dangerously small. Many churches defend the physical appeal of their music by making this distinction. The body likes it but that is not the same as the flesh so it is all right. But where in the New Testament does the church have a call to entertain the body? Perhaps the tapping of the foot is not sin but do we know how to keep the music from going on to the flesh? With spiritual insight, perhaps we can. But there are no scriptural grounds for reaching out specifically to the physical in our music. It should never be targeted in the music of the church. If music glorifies God and teaches good doctrine and incidentally, is a joy to listen to, perhaps this is fine. But we should always be wary of the danger of fun music becoming fleshly music.
- A second danger comes in the exaltation of talent. How many secular musicians got their start in the church? Modern church music tends to exalt the talented and not the godly. I fear that the average church and pastor is not strong enough to take a stand against a talented but unfaithful musician.
- Another danger I see is a longtime pet peeve of mine. Church music is more and more becoming a division between the spectators and the performers. As I said earlier, the New Testament emphasizes the singing of the believer, not the performance of an artist. We must get back to an emphasis on congregational music if we are to be biblical. Special music may have a place as a change in pace, but God wants to hear all His children sing praises to Him. Use instruments, but make sure that the message of the song and the singing of it by the congregation is king.

The use of music in the church is very dear to my heart. This is one area in which I wish I had enough influence to start a movement—a movement back to the Biblical pattern of church music. Perhaps God will send a man.

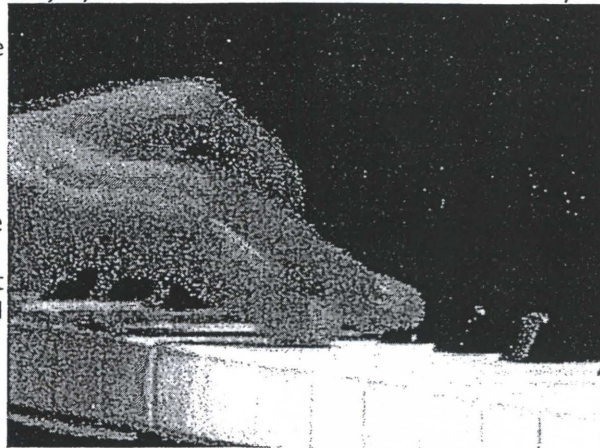
Reagan, David

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## A Philosophy of Worship Music

Posted By [Chris Anderson](#) On 6th January 2009 @ 00:00 In [Worship](#), [Music](#), [Christian Living](#) | [No Comments](#)

Few words are as apt to elicit a passionate response as the words *worship music*. Churches, institutions, and homes have been rocked (pun intended) by debates over what is—and more often, what is *not!*—acceptable music. While I understand the debate and tend to land on the conservative side of it, the fact that the term *worship* is heard by many as a call to arms instead of a call to prayer grieves me. I fear that one casualty of the “worship wars” of the last generation has been worship itself. We have focused more on style than on substance. We have spoken loudly and often regarding what we are *against*, but we have said and thought too little about what we are *for*. We have given more thought to the *manner* of worship than to the Object of it. I’d like to see that changed, and therefore I ask, *What are we for? What should we be aiming at as we produce or select worship music?* I believe that the following six principles can provide some help as we work toward an answer.



### Worship Music Should Be Intentionally Scriptural

Worship music, like the rest of the worship service, should be filled with biblical quotations, imagery, and allusions (Col. 3:16). In some cases (as with the metrical psalms), that means that the hymn lyrics should essentially be thought-for-thought paraphrases of the biblical text. Even in cases when hymns pursue a biblical theme or doctrine, however, the biblical content behind the lyrics should be clear. We should be singing the Scriptures! Further, worship music is able to both *express* and *advance* the singer’s theological understanding. Thus, what we value in hymn texts is not merely creativity or artistry, but biblical and theological accuracy. The songs we sing in worship should be doctrinally rich and meaty. People should meditate on spiritual truths as they sing, both in public worship and in private, so we should be endeavoring to provide fuel for such meditation through theologically astute texts, especially regarding the doctrines of God, Christ, and salvation.

### Worship Music Should Be Intentionally God-Glorifying

Worship music—and the rest of our lives!—takes place for the glory and pleasure of God. As the Westminster Catechism states so well, our chief end is “to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.” More importantly, Scripture teaches that just as all things were *created* by and for Christ (Col. 1:16; Rev. 4:11), all believers are *saved* by and for Christ (Eph. 1:6, 12, 14). Thus, we should strive to produce music that encourages the Lord’s people to “magnify” and “exalt” Him (Ps. 34:3) by reminding them of His titles, attributes, words and deeds—by helping them to see Him as He has revealed Himself in the Scriptures. While songs should be enjoyable and edifying for the Lord’s people, they should be intentionally focused upward so that the church might fulfill its purpose of glorifying God by singing directly of Him, for Him, and to Him (Eph. 1:12; 3:20-21; Rom. 11:36).

### Worship Music Should Be Intentionally Christ-Centered

Worship music should be distinctly *Christian*. Our songs should make much of Jesus Christ and the glorious gospel. Because we believe that Christ crucified is the centerpiece of human history (1 Cor 1:23a; 2:2) to which the entire Old Testament prophesied and to which the entire New Testament bears witness (Luke 24:47), we should be determined to produce music that will point people Christ-ward and help them appreciate in fresh ways the glory of Jesus’ person and work. We should want to sing about Christ—His perfect life, sacrificial death, victorious resurrection, intercessory

ministry, and glorious return!

## Worship Music Should Be Intentionally Congregational

Worship music should encourage every-member ministry. While we should appreciate purposeful and appropriate special music, we should believe that God is uniquely glorified by congregational singing. Worship belongs not just to those who are specially trained or gifted, but to every believer in Jesus Christ. Further, singing praise is the *responsibility* of the entire body and not of a select few (Eph. 5:18; Col. 3:16). These truths should motivate us to produce music that is accessible, both textually and musically. We should not try to be academic or classical. While we may genuinely admire oratorios by Handel or cantatas by Bach, we should write music that will be useful for the average, musically untrained church member. The text and music may and sometimes will *stretch* the worshiper, but it shouldn't be "beyond" him.

**(Editor's Note:** For more about the centrality of congregational singing, please see Chris's article [1] "*Congregational Singing Is Special Music.*")

## Worship Music Should Be Intentionally Fervent

Worship music should have texts and tunes that affect the entire person—mind, will, and emotions (Matt. 22:37-38). At times, that will require musical scores that are quiet and meditative, inspiring wonder or sorrow. More often, I believe, it will require musical scores that are joyful and celebratory, inspiring a heartfelt and exuberant response consistent with the many "Shout to the Lord!" commands of the psalms and the worship of Nehemiah 12:43 that was heard from afar! We should strive to produce texts and tunes that stir the imagination and affections, encouraging appropriate emotional responses to the grand truths being sung. We should help congregations engage biblical truth and respond with thoughtful, wholehearted fervency (John 4:24).

## Worship Music Should Be Intentionally Distinct

Worship texts and music should reflect the character of God in His holiness, glory, weight, majesty, love, grace, joy, and other perfections (Ps. 96). Though I recognize that the implications of this point to musical styles is necessarily somewhat subjective, I believe that we should desire our music to promote a biblical reverence (Heb. 12:28-29) and have a sound that is distinct from most of what is heard outside the church. We should also desire that our music be distinct in its quality. Of course, God accepts praise because of Christ (Heb. 13:15; 1 Pet. 2:5), not because of our abilities. However, I believe that one way in which we demonstrate God's glory and our esteem for Him is by offering Him that which is excellent. Our songs, like the Old Testament sacrificial lambs (Ex. 12:5), should be choice offerings, not the "lame" or "blemished" (Mal. 1:8, 13-14). To that end, we should strive to produce music that is excellent artistically as well as doctrinally—that is "skillful" (Ps. 33:3; 47:7). Hopefully, the result will be Christ-honoring music that will point Christ's people to Him for years to come.

To God alone be glory! (Ps. 115:1)



[2] **Chris Anderson** is the founding pastor of [3] **Tri-County Bible Church** in Madison, Ohio. He enjoys writing, and his writing projects include hymns ([4] [www.churchworksmedia.com](http://www.churchworksmedia.com)), a blog ([5] <http://mytwocents.wordpress.com>), articles ([6] <http://obfvisitor.wordpress.com>), and Buckaroo Bible Club. Chris and his wife, Lori, have been blessed with four lovely daughters. This article is cross-posted from [7] **ChurchWorksMedia.com**, a new site providing resources for intentional local church ministry. At this point, [7] **ChurchWorksMedia.com** is primarily focused on providing fresh worship music, including metrical psalms that are being used in local churches across the country.

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# "Christian" Rock Music

## *Christian or Satanic?*

- **Christian Rock?**, by Ric Llewellyn, published by Fundamental Evangelistic Association: This tract carefully details the Biblical screens any music must pass before it can be labeled as "Christian" (Eph. 5:18,19; Col. 3:16); i.e., the music must contain correct doctrine, and (a) its lyrics should be edifying, spiritually oriented, clear, conforming to biblical truth, and point our focus to Jesus Christ, (b) its score (the arrangement of the musical notes) should not overshadow the message conveyed by the lyrics, but should compliment it, and (c) its character (the "attitudes" in the music and of the performers) should be consistent with the purity of the message it claims to convey (reverence, worshipful, etc.). (Each of the above screens must stand on its own; i.e., one "good" aspect of the music's nature cannot sanctify any of the others.) (Please refer to Eph. 5:18,19 and Col. 3:16 at the end of this report.)

(a) **Lyrics** - Our *spiritual songs* must be sufficiently clear so as to convey the truth plainly, and must be consistent with biblical revelation (i.e., sound doctrine)-the words should focus upon the Lord Jesus Christ and encourage practical submission to God's order in all our personal affairs. Most contemporary Christian music can be rejected on the basis of **lyrics alone**-even when the **lyrics** are audibly clear, the predominance of false doctrine and/or the shallow view of the person and work of Jesus Christ is often appalling.

(b) **Score** - The meaning of the word *psalms* originally denoted a striking or twitching with the fingers (on musical strings); only later did it come to mean a sacred song sung to musical accompaniment (*Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*). Our *psalms*, or the arrangement of the musical notes, is a vital ingredient of the all-encompassing term we call "music." This is because it is the area in which we are usually the most ignorant; i.e., medical research clearly supports the contention that musical tones and rhythms in and of themselves (i.e., without lyrics) can cause physical and "emotional" reactions over which the listener may have little or no control. Since the **score** of contemporary Christian rock music, with its syncopation and slurring of notes, is virtually indistinguishable from its secular counterpart, one has to wonder if spirituality is being eroded and carnality is being propagated. (One should always assess "Christian" music thusly: does it stir the flesh to "boogie," or the spirit to praise the Lord?)

(c) **Character** - Our *hymns*, or the **character** of the music, is its most obscure component. The **character** of much of what is called "Christian" music may best be characterized as charismatic, irreverent, universalist, socialist utopian idealistic, superficial religiousness, neo-evangelical, expressionistic, ostentatious, or in a myriad of other contexts (e.g.; What is the **character** of the music at a so-called Christian rock concert when whatever message is presented is punctuated by screaming guitars, smoke bombs, and a general atmosphere of frivolity?) And because the **character** of the music is not always readily apparent to the listener, it can have the most insidious effect on believers; i.e., tolerance or acceptance of false doctrine can arise from constant subjection to deficient and improper attitudes in music. The **character** of "Christian" music is easily adopted by listeners, which can then draw them away from the firm foundation of the Word. Music worthy of the name "Christian" ought to stimulate and simulate emotions compatible with true spirituality-the appropriate response to God and His Word.

- Larry Norman is frequently dubbed "the father of Christian rock." Norman makes the incredulous statement that rock 'n' roll music originated in the Church hundreds of years ago, and that the devil stole it!! Therefore, Norman's battle cry is to 'take rock music back for Jesus' sake!' (Since rock 'n' roll music did not even come into being until the early 1950s, Norman is obviously unable to provide one shred of evidence for this claim). Norman titles one of his songs, "Why Should the Devil Have All The Good Music," and in another song he refers to Christ (at His return for His Church) as an "Unidentified Flying Object." In still another song, he pitifully trivializes the Gospel of the Resurrection with the following **lyrics**:

They nailed Him to a cross,

They put Him in the ground,

Just goes to show you,

**Can't keep a good Man down.**

- The origin of rock music and the term "rock 'n' roll" are interesting ones. In the early 1950s, a disk-jockey named Alan Freed

was one of the first white people to be involved in "rhythm & blues" music, which was the direct forerunner of rock 'n' roll. (The complete genealogy of rock 'n' roll music is: voodoo to jazz to blues to rock 'n' roll [David Tame, *The Secret Power of Music*, pp. 187-204].) Rock 'n' roll was a kind of fusion between rhythm & blues and country & western music. Freed was one of the first white people to play this new rhythm & blues/country combination on his radio program, and was perplexed as to what to call it since it obviously needed a new name. Freed had been receiving bizarre reports concerning kids' reactions to this new music, so decided to name it after a ghetto term that black people used for **pre-marital sex in the back seat of a car-hence, the term "rock 'n' roll" was coined.**

Contrast the above true account of the origin of rock 'n' roll music with that told us by the so-called "Christian" rock band Petra in the lyrics of one of their songs; i.e., that God was the source of rock 'n' roll!:

God gave rock 'n' roll to you,  
Put it in the soul of everyone,  
If you love the sound,  
And don't forget the Source,  
You can turn-a-round,  
You can change your course.

- There appears to be a parallel between the attempt today to "Christianize" rock music and the "Christianization" of various pagan religious practices in fourth century Rome. The Babylonian mystery religions were introduced into Christianity by Constantine in 313 A.D. as he tried to incorporate the pagans into the newly constituted "Holy" Roman Empire. The Constantine-led Roman church was willing to adapt and adopt pagan practices in order to make Christianity palatable to the heathen. The heathen festivals were adopted into Christianity, and then eventually, many of the associated pagan symbols and actions were reinterpreted in ways acceptable to Christian faith and practice. "Christianization" of pagan customs, symbols, etc., occurred as Christianity had to undergo a transformation so that pagans could "convert" without giving up their old beliefs and rituals.

Has not the modern church of today done much of the same adoption, reinterpretation, and "Christianization" of what is called "rock music" in order to make Christianity more palatable to the "teenaged" lost? And does not this approach smack of the traditional Roman Catholic method of making converts from pagans?-first adopt the pagan practices, and then reapply biblical meaning to them. In this manner, the former pagans can retain their pagan idolatrous heritage by merely renaming the idols and changing the terminology used in the worship of them.

- Those today who are able to clearly see the error and futility of "Christianizing" secular psychology and its psychotherapies by merely relabeling them as "Christian" psychology and "Christian" psychiatric clinics, somehow are unable to see that they have incorporated the same erroneous relabeling process by taking secular rock music, adopting "Christian" lyrics, and renaming it "Christian" rock. **Since when does something become Christian by merely "Christianizing" the terminology and placing Christ's name in front of it?** Are we not to call the lost out of the culture to repentance and righteousness, rather than imitate the culture?:

(a) "Christian rock [music] is the daughter of worldly rock. It tries to make the Christian message more appealing to the world by using a worldly medium. ... Charismatics & New Evangelicals have tried to Christianize demonic rock music, mixing holy with unholy, to reach today's young people. They said, 'To win them, we must speak their language.' **But when they won them, what did they win them to?** Whatever weak Gospel message [might be there] is lost in the process. May we similarly "Christianize" liquor by putting a Gospel message on the bottle label, and have Christians buy and promote it to reach drunks for Jesus? A good goal does not justify unscriptural methods" (8/15/89 *Calvary Contender*).

(b) "For those whose eyes have not seen and whose ears have not heard, Contemporary Christian Music, or CCM as the insiders call it, is essentially conventional rock or pop music with the lyrics changed to protect the innocent" (James Chute, *The Milwaukee Journal*).

(c) "... what many in the church today seem to believe: you must have an angle to present the gospel to a hostile world ... It has opened the door to some bizarre evangelistic strategies. The church apes nearly every fad of secular society. Heavy metal rock, rap, graffiti, break dancing, body building, brick smashing, jazzercise, interpretive dance, and stand-up comedy all have been added to the evangelical repertoire. ... It is nothing but hedonism under the guise of religion. Many assume that without some gimmick, the gospel message just won't reach people, and unless we accommodate it to the fashion of our day, we can't hope for it to be effective. ... Thus modern churches feel they must plan and program for attracting unbelievers who cannot be persuaded with revealed truth ..." (John MacArthur, *Our Sufficiency in Christ*, pp. 145-146). (Emphasis added.)

- The advocates of the "modern sound" declare themselves to be in good company: "Did not the great church father, Martin Luther, take the tavern songs of the day and fit them out with Christian words, thus sanctifying the Devil's tunes for the Lord's work?" This argument, often heard, borders on the ridiculous if one has any understanding of the situation in Luther's time. Carl Johansson, in a very fine and scholarly work, makes this observation (*Music and Ministry: A Biblical Counterpoint*, p. 50):

"But the thrust of the popular music of Luther's time and the thrust of our pop music is as different as night is from day. There was a systematic unity in the sixteenth century musical world which no longer exists in today's music. ... The popular music of the time had a folk-like character far removed from modern-day pop."

Says another authority concerning those sixteenth century times: "A difference between sacred and secular music hardly existed" (Eric Bloom, ed., *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 5th edition, I, p. 848).

- "Christian" rock groups almost always state that the purpose of their music is for evangelism and/or entertainment. Although Scripture records various folk songs, work songs, battle songs, etc., the Bible teaches that the God-approved purpose or use of music is primarily for worship, praise, edification, and the teaching of doctrine (e.g., Exo. 15:1,2, 20:21; I Chron. 15:27,28; 16:9,23; II Chron. 20:21,22; Psalms 95:2; 105:2; Acts 16:25; Eph. 5:18, 19; Col. 3:16). Over fifty psalms were dedicated to the chief musician to be used in worship, and in heaven the 24 elders and angelic beings will also be using music in worship (Rev. 5:8 ff).

Although godly music can have an evangelistic purpose or result (e.g., Psalms 96:1-3; 108:3), it is not used primarily for this in Scripture. In fact, nowhere in the Bible does it say, "Sing the gospel of Christ." It says to *preach* it! God can certainly use music to bring somebody to Christ, but there has to be a presentation of the gospel somewhere along the line. Our music is primarily an expression of a Spirit-filled life, not really intended for the world's consumption. We seem to want so much to sing our songs to the world that we put them in the world's vernacular and think it's going to be evangelistic.

So even if one could find nothing wrong with the lyrics, the score, the character, and/ or the effect of "Christian" rock music, one would still have to question why the modern day, self-proclaimed musical evangelists/entertainers persist in using their music in endeavors where there is no clear biblical precedent; i.e., although mentioned over 800 times in Scripture, music is never used for entertainment or for direct evangelism or for any end within itself. Music in the Bible is used primarily in praise and in worship, either to God (e.g., I Chron. 16:9,23; II Chron. 29:30; Psalms 9:11; 30:4; 33:2,3; 47:6; 135:3; etc.) or to Satan (e.g., Dan. 3:4,5,7, 10,15; Exo. 32:17,18).

- Since the religious rockers almost always maintain that they are simply trying to reach people for Jesus, then why not go totally secular, and leave out the appeal to the church altogether? Why bother with the crowd that's already saved? (Of course, since about 80% of religious rockers' income is derived through Christian bookstores, we already know the answer to that question.) It is our conviction that the religious rockers are not reaching the lost, but are instead making disciples to their rock music from the church kids attending their concerts or playing their recordings. In fact, there is a good chance that the church could be losing the so-called "found" by bringing rock music into the sanctuary.

Jesus said that when He was lifted up, He would draw all men to Himself. Why then would the Holy Spirit need help today from the world's music in drawing people to Christ? Why do the "musical soul-winners" think they can attract people for God by using the world's standards and the world's music, when the net effect of the music is to basically stir the flesh and the emotions rather than stir a love for God?

- When people generally speak of the evils of secular rock music, they often refer to the supposedly evil and/or satanic messages that are covertly placed in the minds of the listeners through a method called "back-masking." The theory behind back-masking is that messages that are below the audio level (reversed messages in this case) will be received by the "unconscious mind," thus by-passing conscious evaluation, and then at some time in the future, are able to affect the behavior of the listener. This idea of the unconscious receiving messages directly through finer perceptive mechanisms than available to the conscious mind is based upon Freud's thoroughly discredited theory of the unconscious-discredited because the theory has not been supported either neurologically or practically. Moreover, the Freudian unconscious is in direct conflict with the Word of God, which is consciously and volitionally oriented.

We do not doubt that back-masked messages have in fact been recorded, but since there is no proof that the human mind is capable of even receiving these messages, their effect on human behavior must obviously be zero. (In fact, in a court case a few years ago involving the British rock band Judas Priest, the band was accused of culpability in the suicide deaths of two teenagers who had allegedly killed themselves as a result of acting upon the back-masked "subliminal" messages on the band's recordings. The band was found not guilty, not because the subliminal messages were not recorded (they *were* recorded), but because the scientific evidence presented at the trial was overwhelmingly convincing that subliminal messages just don't work!)

Therefore, it is quite disturbing to hear that so-called Christian musicians have also been getting involved with the

back-masking of "Christian messages" on their recordings, under the guise of "subliminal evangelism." Some have even made the incredulous claim that, unbeknownst to them, the Holy Spirit Himself did the back-masking!! Even assuming their ignorance of the non-efficacy of back-masking, are not these musicians in effect saying that the Holy Spirit needs to resort to trickery in order save sinners. Do they believe that the Word of God, preached clearly and without deceit, is no longer capable of convicting men and calling them out for salvation? (See *PsychoHeresy Update*, Winter 1991, for a more thorough discussion of subliminals and back-masking.)

- That music can be used for evil is clear from Scripture. Lucifer was created with a wealth of musical talents, which were evidently to be used for directing the angelic host in the worship of God (Ezek. 28:13 [KJV]). Lucifer's fall (Ezek. 28:11-19) evidently led to the perversion of music, so that its improper use could actually be offensive to God (Amos 5:23; 6:5). That music can have a powerful influence on ones emotions, mood, or state of being is clearly taught in Scripture (e.g., I Samuel 16:15-17, 23; II Ki. 3:15).

Nevertheless, some biblicists continue to say that music is amoral (rather than moral or immoral), and that it can have no power to cause one to sin. Everyone is entitled to their opinions, but the scientific research indicates just the opposite to be the case (not to mention the biblical record cited above). Even Allan Bloom (an unbeliever), in his book *The Closing of the American Mind*, makes some interesting observations concerning the moral effects of music on people (pp. 68-81):

(a) "Nothing is more singular about this generation than its addiction to music. ... Today, a very large portion of young people between the ages of ten and twenty live for music. ... Rock music encourages passions and provides models that have no relation to any life the young people ... can possibly lead. ... **I suspect that the rock addiction, particularly in the absence of strong counterattractions, has an effect similar to that of drugs.**"

(b) Plato had quite a bit to say about the morality of music from a philosopher's standpoint. In the *Republic*, Plato devotes considerable time to the role of music in political and moral life: "Plato's teaching about music is, put simply, that rhythm and melody, accompanied by dance are the barbarous expression of the soul. Barbarous, not animal. Music is the medium of the human soul in its most ecstatic condition of wonder and terror ... Music is the soul's primitive and primary speech and its *alogon*, without articulate speech or reason. It is not only not reasonable, it is hostile to reason. Even when articulate speech [lyrics] is added, it is utterly subordinate to and determined by the music and the passions it expresses. ... Armed with music, man can damn rational thought. Out of the music emerge the gods that suit it, and they educate men by their example and their commandments." (Emphasis added.)

(c) "Hence, for those interested in ... [spiritual] health, music is the center of education, both for giving the passions their due and for preparing the soul for the unhampered use of reason."

(d) "This is the significance of rock music. I do not suggest that it has any high intellectual sources. But it has risen to its current heights in the education of the young on the ashes of classical music, and in an atmosphere in which there is no intellectual resistance to attempts to tap the rawest passions ... **rock music has one appeal only, a barbaric appeal, to the sexual desire-not love, not *eros*, but sexual desire undeveloped and untutored.**"

In fact, in ancient Rome, Plato once demanded strict censorship of music because he feared "citizens would be corrupted by weak and voluptuous errors and led to indulge in immoralizing emotions." (Note that Plato was talking about the score, not the lyrics.)

- David Tame (another unbeliever), in his 1984 book, *The Secret Power of Music*, not only further demonstrates the moral nature of music, but he also reveals extensive medical research demonstrating the destructive effects of rock music (on both the mind [emotions] and the body): [See the attached abbreviated bibliography for additional reference materials that details some more of the extensive research (including scientific) that has been conducted concerning the effects of music.]

(a) In commenting on the origin and the morality of rock music, Tame says, "... a certain cross-fertilization was becoming apparent between the 'new music' and the general jazz and rock style. It came to be seen that the technical differences between 'serious' music, jazz, rock, or any other form of modern music were less important than the underlying factor that their philosophical basis was more or less one and the same: hedonism and anarchy" (p. 103). (Emphasis added.)

(b) "In the rock industry, money is basically what it is all about; and thus music is directed, not upward ... but to the lowest common denominator. The question of questions is *Will it sell?* The standard of artistry could not be less relevant" (p. 116).

(c) "Were we to scour the globe in search of the most aggressively malevolent and unmistakably evil music is existence, it is more than likely that nothing would be found anywhere to surpass voodoo in these attributes ... as the rhythmic accompaniment to satanic rituals and orgies, voodoo is the quintessence of tonal evil. ... Its multiple rhythms [score], rather than uniting into an integrated whole, are performed in a certain kind of conflict with one another. ... What is certain is that to hear this music is to become instantly encompassed by the sound of its raw, livid power. ... Musicologists and historians are in no doubt that the drum rhythms of Africa were carried to America and were transmitted and translated into the style of music

which became known as jazz. Since jazz and the blues were the parents of rock and roll, this also means that there exists a direct line of descent from the voodoo ceremonies of Africa, through jazz, to rock and roll and all the other forms of rock music today" (pp. 189-190). (Emphasis added.)

(d) "In the one corner: the ancients and traditionalists; the conviction that music affects character and society, and that therefore the artist has a duty to be responsibly moral and constructive, not immoral and destructive. In the other corner: the materialists; disclaiming responsibility and the need for value judgments, paying no heed to the outcome of their sounds. The second camp contains not only the radical avant-garde, but the entire mass of the much more popular and culturally significant jazz and rock musicians. Who, then, is correct? ... *Do life patterns follow music patterns or do they not?* " (p. 136). Tame goes on to cite extensive research that overwhelmingly supports the contentions of the traditionalists: that music in general can be, and rock music specifically is, a negative influence on both the physical body and moral nature of man.

(e) "To the question, 'Does music affect man's physical body?' modern research applies in the clear affirmative. There is scarcely a single function of the body which cannot be affected by musical tones [score] ... Investigation has shown that music affects digestion, internal secretions, circulation, nutrition and respiration. Even neural networks of the brain have been found to be sensitive to harmonic principles" (p. 136). (Emphasis added.)

(f) "Researchers have discovered that consonant and dissonant chords, different intervals, and other features of music [score] all exert a profound effect upon man's pulse and respiration-upon their rate and upon whether their rhythm is constant, or interrupted and jumpy. Blood pressure is lowered by sustained chords and raised by crisp, repeated ones. [It has also been found that the tension of the larynx is affected by melodies, that sound stimuli can have a negative effect upon the skeletal muscles, that rock rhythms cause the heart beat to lose its perfect rhythm, and **that certain rhythms can even cause a rare malady known as "musicogenic epilepsy" (76 documented cases as of 1984), with which some of its victims have been tormented to the point of committing suicide or murder.**] ... We can see, then, that music affects the body in two distinct ways: directly, as the effect of sound upon the cells and organs, and indirectly, by affecting the emotions, which then in turn influence numerous bodily processes" (p. 137). (Emphasis added.)

Julius Portnoy has also found that not only can music [score] "change metabolism, affect muscular energy, raise or lower blood pressure, and influence digestion," but "It may be able to do all these things more successfully ... than any other stimulants that produce those changes in our bodies" (p. 138). Musicologist Alice Monsarrat points out that it "is precisely at this point that rock 'n' roll ... becomes potentially dangerous. This is because, to maintain a sense of well-being and integration, it is essential that man is not subjected too much to any rhythms not in accord with his natural bodily rhythms" (p. 199).

(g) Extensive research has also been conducted on the effects of music upon non-human life, both animals and plants. Paradoxical as it may seem, plant experiments concerning the effects of music upon life are even more convincing than human experiments: that music does affect life, including human life. This is because in plant experiments the effect of the mind's subjective preconditioning and subjective reaction to the music, or one's "feeling" for the music, or one's personal tastes in music have obviously all been removed; i.e., if music [score] can be shown to affect plants, then such effects have to be due to the objective influence of the musical tones and rhythms directly upon the cells and processes of the life-form itself. (It is also easier to set-up a valid, scientifically controlled experiment with plant life than with human life.)

The plant research findings are solidly in the traditionalist camp: not only did rock music stunt the growth of a wide variety of plants, but if played long enough, the plants actually died. And even more startling were the findings of Dr. T.C. Singh, head of the Botany Department at Annamalia University, India. His experiments demonstrated that not only did certain forms of music and certain musical instruments (specifically, classical music and the violin) cause plants to grow at twice their normal speed, but that later generations of the seeds of musically stimulated plants carried on the improved traits of greater size, more leaves, etc.! Presumably, the same effect can result in the negative sense, from bad music. The possible significance of Dr. Singh's findings to human life is evident, and should be at least a little disconcerting to rock music fans (pp. 141-145).

(h) "**Like human nature itself, music cannot possibly be neutral in its spiritual direction** ... ultimately all uses of tone [score] and all musical lyrics can be classified according to their spiritual direction, upward or downward. ... To put it plainly, music tends to be of either the darkness or of the light" (p. 187). In his famous work, *Laws*, Plato lamented the musical revolution of his time and its "unmusical anarchy": "Through foolishness they deceived themselves into thinking that there was no right or wrong in music-that it was to be judged good or bad by the pleasure it gave. By their work and their theories they infected the masses with the presumption to think themselves adequate judges. ... As it was, the criterion was not music, but a reputation for promiscuous cleverness and a spirit of law-breaking" (p. 189).

(i) In his closing comments on the roots of music styles and rhythms, David Tame, with a keen "spiritual" insight often lacking in many believers today, takes particular offense with rock music: "More than any other form of the misuse of sound, it is rock with which we must deal today. ... It is a global phenomenon; a pounding, pounding destructive beat which is heard from America and Western Europe to Africa and Asia. Its effect upon the soul is to make nigh-impossible the true inner silence and peace necessary for the contemplation of eternal verities. ... How necessary is it in this age for some to have the courage to be the ones who are 'different', and to separate themselves out from the pack who long ago sold their lives and personalities to

this sound. ... **I adamantly believe that rock in all its forms is a critical problem which our civilization *must* get to grips. ... if it wishes long to survive"** (p. 204). (Emphasis added.)

For the world, it is impossible to separate from the lure of the pleasures of the flesh; they have no desire to do so nor do they have the power to do so if they did desire. But what reasons do we as Christians have to ignore our Lord's command to come out and be separate? Instead, we adopt the world's music in all its destructive forms [**score and character**], add Christian lyrics to it, and think we are being pleasing to the Lord and are a testimony of holiness to an unbelieving world.

- More recent medical research (than that cited by Tame) also disputes the notion of the supposed "neutrality" of music:

(a) Dr. John Diamond, a medical doctor, has conducted extensive research on the medical effects of music. He has noted that man is rhythmic in respiration, heartbeat, pulse, speech, and gait, and when the rhythm of music corresponds to the natural body rhythms, it produces feelings of ecstasy, alertness, and peace, and it energizes the mind and body, and facilitates balance and self-control. (These secular medical findings are also supported by Scripture [I Samuel 16:15-17,23]).

(b) Dr. David Nobel, another medical doctor and an authority on music, has done extensive research on the value of music rhythms [**score**] corresponding to body rhythms. He writes that, "None of these qualities accrue to the rock sound. Instead, rock contains harmonic dissonance and melodic discord while it accents rhythm with a big beat. In fact, the anapestic beat [two short beats, a long beat, then a pause] used by many rock musicians actually is the exact opposite of our heart and arterial rhythms [thereby causing an immediate loss of body strength]."

[Dr. Diamond confirms Dr. Nobel's findings and adds that the stopped anapestic rhythm "heightens stress and anger, reduces output, increases hyperactivity, and weakens muscle strength." (Admittedly, the technological ability to objectively measure stress and anger is problematical at best, while the measurement of muscle strength is quite precise and meets all the requirements of scientific reliability and statistical significance.))]

(c) The power of music to communicate is demonstrated in an article "Music's Surprising Power to Heal," by David Mazie, in the August 1992 *Reader's Digest*: "Music reduces staff tension in the operating room," says Dr. Clyde L. Nash, Jr. ... "and also helps relax the patient." [He uses classical music such as Vivaldi and Mozart.] Nash is one of many physicians around the country who are finding that music, used with conventional medical therapies, can help the sick in the healing process.

(d) Clinical researchers at the U.C.L.A. School of Nursing in Los Angeles, and at Georgia Baptist Medical Center in Atlanta, found that premature babies gained weight faster and were able to use oxygen more efficiently when they listened to soothing music mixed with voices or womb sounds. At Tallahassee (Fla.) Memorial Regional Medical Center, premature and low-birth-weight infants exposed to an hour and a half of soothing vocal music each day averaged only 11 days in the Newborn Intensive Care Unit, compared with 16 days for a control group. At Baltimore's St. Agnes Hospital, classical music was provided in the critical-care units. "Half an hour of music produced the same effect as ten milligrams of Valium," says Dr. Raymond Bahr, head of the coronary-care unit.

How does music help? Some studies show it can lower blood pressure, basal-metabolism and respiration rates, thus lessening physiological responses to stress. Other studies suggest music may help increase production of endorphins (natural pain relievers) and S-IgA (Salivary immunoglobulin A). S-IgA speeds healing, reduces the danger of infections, and controls the heart rate. Studies indicate both hemispheres of the brain are involved in processing music. Dr. Sacks explains, "The neurological basis of musical responses is robust and may even survive damage to both hemispheres" ("Music's Surprising Power to Heal," 8/92 *Reader's Digest*).

"In conclusion, we can say that insofar as the physical body is concerned, the notion that music has no effect upon man, or that all music is harmless, is **ABSOLUTELY IN ERROR**" (Tame, p. 141). (Emphasis added.) "No longer [can] modern musicians possibly claim that music is a matter of 'taste,' or that the musician should be allowed to perform anything he chooses ... *Every moment of music to which we subject ourselves may be enhancing or taking away our ... clarity of consciousness, increment by increment*" (Tame, p. 144).

In essence, what the medical experts are saying is that today's rock sound (irrespective of the lyrics tacked-on to it in order to classify it as either secular or "Christian") fights against the rhythmic nature of man's creation. In the face of such evidence, it is difficult to understand how anyone can maintain that the music itself is neutral.

- In his 1985 book, *Set the Trumpet To Thy Mouth*, charismatic David Wilkerson (of *Cross & the Switchblade* fame) said: "One of the reasons God's Spirit was lifted from the Jesus Movement [not that It was ever there] was their refusal to forsake their old music. They gave up pot, heroin, alcohol, promiscuous sex, and they even gave up perverted life-styles. But they refused to give up their beloved rock. ... **Amazing! I say its hold is stronger than drugs, alcohol, or tobacco. It is the biggest mass addiction in the world's history. Rock music, as used and performed in Christian circles, is of the same satanic seed as that which is called punk, heavy metal, and is performed in devilish rock concerts worldwide.**"

- By attending Christian rock concerts, does not one identify oneself with their false doctrines and become a partaker of their evil deeds? (The Bible clearly teaches a theology of "guilt by association"-see 2 John 10,11.) And since we will all be accountable to the Lord at the Bema Seat for our stewardship with the resources He has entrusted to us while on this earth, how can anyone possibly justify allocating any resources to the support of rock music?

- "Christian" rock music offers no hope-since it is Spiritless, it can give none. It does not offer heaven, for the music within itself produces a vacuum-full of sound and fury, but no substance. It provides no foundation to the believer because its birth came from secular rock 'n' roll, which has no basis in God. The approaches of religious rockers all seem to suggest that, "We must become the world to win the world." That method will not work simply because it is outside of God's plan for the proper balancing of biblically-ordained modes of evangelism with biblical principles of separation. If one believes at all in the Bible doctrine of "separation" from the world (Rom. 12:2), is it not logical to include the Christian's music?

- Gordon Sears, in his booklet, *Is Today's Christian Music "Sacred"?*, asks six questions of those who think that CCM is indeed acceptable to God: If the new style and sound of music is of God then: (1) Why is it causing so much confusion and division among Christians?; (2) Why is it not received by all fundamental Bible-believing churches?; (3) **Why is it readily accepted by the non-Christian world?** The ungodly never accepted the old Christian hymns; (4) Why is it that Bible-denying universities and popular secular TV entertainment shows invite well-known Christian artists to give concerts with CCM? This never happened with the great spiritual hymns; (5) Why are there hundreds of churches with godly pastors across America that strictly reject it and forbid it in their services?; and (6) Why does it have such a strong affect upon the physical body?

- What kind of music truly honors God? Ernest Pickering lists ten primary guidelines for Christians to follow (*The Kind of Music That Honors God*, pp. 11-12):

1. Its message is Scriptural (Col 3:16). Good Christian music must present a message that is true to the Word of God and doctrinally sound.
2. It should lead us to think in Biblical patterns and not be suggestive of evil either in message or in musical arrangement (Phil. 4:8). The text and music should not be cheap or tawdry.
3. It should help us to honor God with our bodies (I Cor. 6:19-20). Music which tends to imitate the effects of godless rock upon the human body or which either destroys or impairs one's hearing is not Christian music.
4. It will maintain a balance between "spirit" and "understanding" (I Cor. 14:15). Music that is primarily emotional froth would not fulfill this requirement.
5. It will contain words that are full of beauty, dignity, reverence and simplicity, words that are worthy of the worship of a holy God (Isa. 6:1-6).
6. It will be free of mental association with worldly musical styles and evidence a holy consecrated character (Rom. 12:2; I Jn. 2:15). Music that seeks to "copy" the worldly approach is not honoring to God.
7. It should be expressive of the peace that accompanies the Christian life, not the clamor, confusion, din, and turmoil of the world (Col. 3:15-16). The various forms of rock music do not contribute to peace of heart but partake of the constant jangle of the sinful world. Christ promises peace to His people (Jn. 14:27).
8. It should be characterized by musical preciseness, finesse of poetic technique and should evidence a structure of harmony and order. God is a God of order and not disorder (I Cor. 14:40).
9. It should promote and accompany a life-style of godliness, modesty, and holy quietness, and not modish fashion, suggestive acts, or sexual aggressiveness (I Pet. 1:16; Tit. 2:11-12).
10. It should not contribute to the temptation of new or weak believers (Rom. 14:13,21; 15:2). Music that reminds newly-saved converts of their old life of sin is to be abhorred and rejected.

The erosion of musical standards among contemporary Christians parallels the erosion of convictions and practices in other areas as well. It denotes a spirit of compromise with the world which must be vigorously opposed by strong Christian leaders. As in all areas of our lives believers should ever follow the admonition of Paul: "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (I Cor. 10:31).

- It is our conviction that rock music cannot be used to communicate spiritual truth. (Often the melody in the "Christian" version of rock music is obscured and overpowered by the heavy beat-the accompaniment is so predominant that it completely overpowers any message that might be present.) **How can rock music, with its origins in demonic activities, and with its proven adverse medical and "emotional" effects, apply to the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ?**

Convictions must be based on the Word of God and not personal tastes, likes, and dislikes. Since most of religious rock, or so-called contemporary Christian music, has its roots in, and draws its inspiration from, secular rock 'n' roll, the result is worldliness in the music, and even worse, worldliness *through* music invading the church. Further, it authenticates the rock sound by having professing Christians playing the music. When one applies the standards of Scripture to this form of worldliness (e.g., II Cor. 6:17; I Thes. 5:21, 22; Rom. 12:2; I Jn. 2:15,16; Js. 4:4; etc.), the wrongness of such music should be obvious to all who truly desire to please their Lord.

**Titus 1:9 - "Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. "**

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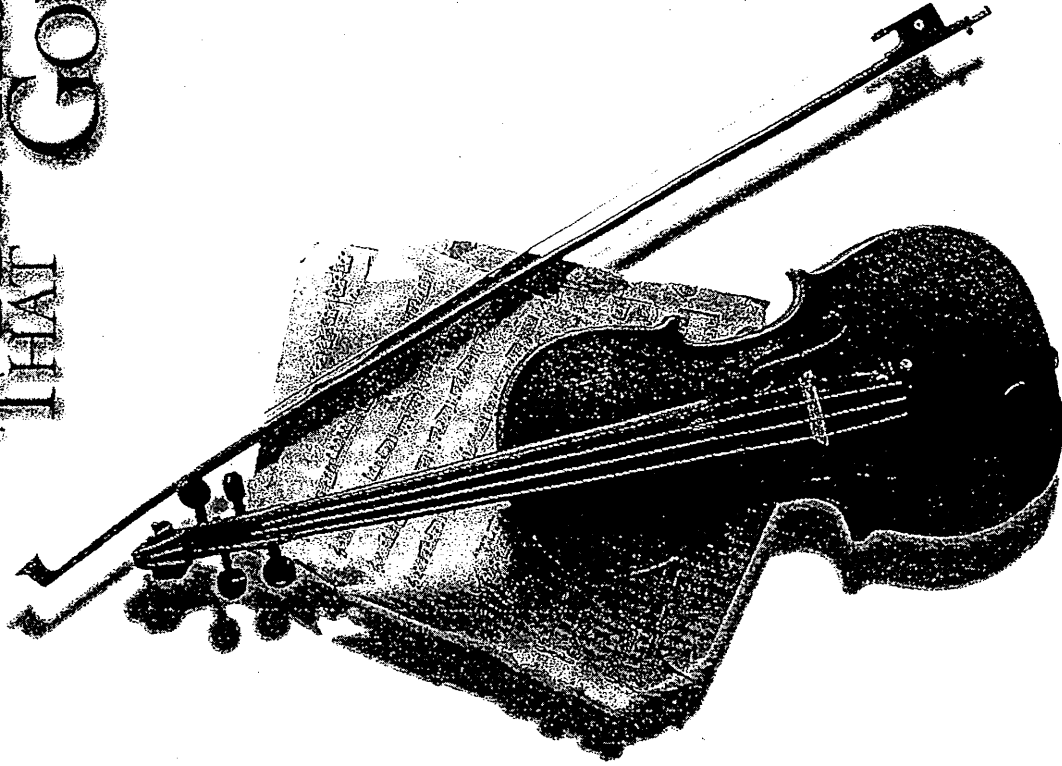
**Ephesians 5:18** - And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; speaking to one another in psalms [score] and hymns [character] and spiritual songs [lyrics], singing and making melody [music] in your heart to the Lord;

**Col. 3:16** - Let the word of Christ richly dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms

[score] and hymns [character] and spiritual songs [lyrics], singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

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# KIND OF THE MUSIC HONORS THAT GOD



ERNEST D. PICKERING, TH.D.

There is a great deal of "bad" Christian music. This fact needs to be acknowledged and believers need to be taught how to discriminate between what is bad and what is good. Someone has paraphrased a portion of 1 Corinthians 13 thusly:

If I sing clever arrangements and flowery anthems, but fail to communicate the words, I am become an ineffectual noise. And if I exhibit superior vocalism so that I strain not upon the high C's, but fail to interpret the words, I am nothing. Words clearly sung reach the understanding and incite thinking: words properly interpreted stir the emotions and lead to action. And now abideth music and words, these two, but the greater of these is words.

## MUSIC SHOULD EVIDENCE THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD

Immediately following his exhortation for believers to be "filled with the Spirit," Paul writes, "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Eph. 5:19). For a musician to honor God with his music, he must be controlled by the Spirit of God. The Lord is pleased with "spiritual songs." How could such be described?

**MUSIC RENDERED BY A SPIRITUAL PERSON.** Sadly, one must recognize that many of the leading recording and performing artists of the professedly "Christian" music world do not have lifestyles that conform to the standard of holiness required in the Bible. Many of them are very worldly in their dress, language, deportment, and attitudes. If anyone should be living close to God, it should be a musician who stands before crowds of people to present to them biblical truth in musical form. So many, however, have become "performers" enamored with the material rewards of this life. Some of them do not attend a good local church on any regular basis, and many are not even members of a sound church. Their attempts to imitate the worldly rock stars are nauseating and blasphemous. One female star, attired in body-hugging clothing and supposedly "singing for the Lord," was said to have "artfully mixed the sacred and the sexy" (*Christianity Today*, August 19, 1985, p. 70).

**MUSIC EMPHASIZING A SPIRITUAL THEME.** As has already been noted, much contemporary music is very shallow in its message, and, in some cases, downright confusing or erroneous. A "spiritual song" is one that speaks in a proper and biblical manner of some great truth of Scripture. It is more than merely a recitation of one's experience.

The world is full of "unscriptural" songs. Songs that include the name of Jesus and purport to be "Christian" songs may be very unscriptural. A popular album by a noted "heavy metal" group, professedly Christian, is entitled, "To Hell With

the Devil." It is typical of the worldly and flippant manner in which these groups approach their profession.

It has been noted by some Bible preachers that the combination of the gospel and rock music is a union made in hell. A noted "Christian" rock musician replied to this by saying, "Music cannot be possessed by demons" (*Christianity Today*, August 19, 1985, p. 71). How little spiritual discernment a person has who makes such an observation! The devil and his demons most certainly do employ music and have done it down through the ages. They enjoy nothing more than corrupting music which is ostensibly rendered for the purpose of honoring God.

His hair is gelled up in a new-wave pompadour. A tiny silver cross dangles from one earlobe. In his gray leather jeans, tight "muscle shirt" and oversize cotton jacket, singer Tom Miner looks every inch the rebellious rocker. He grabs the microphone in one hand and lifts a clenched fist. "Fight on!" he shouts to an audience of 3,000 evangelical Christians beyond the colored floodlights. "Shake it in the Devil's face, and say, 'Fight on!'"

So began the recent Christian music festival in Estes Park, Colorado, an annual rave-up for evangelical kids—and pastors—that never berates with sounds which many preachers still damn as the Devil's own. But to its young fans, the new religious music is literally a godsend. Not turned on by oldtime spirituals, evangelical youngsters are embracing what they call "contemporary Christian music"—played by flashy performers whose moves may be wild but whose message is worshipful ("The New Christian Minstrels," *Newsweek*, August 19, 1985, p. 70).

How Bible-believing Christians could possibly see anything of spiritual value in something like this is beyond understanding.

**MUSIC PRODUCING SPIRITUAL GROWTH.** In seeking to correct certain excesses in public worship in the church at Corinth, Paul wrote, "How is it then, brethren? When ye come together, everyone of you hath a psalm.... Let all things be done unto edifying" (1 Cor. 14:26). The "psalm" should be one that "builds up" (edifies) the people spiritually. Music should build up the people of God and make them stronger in their faith and life. "Christian rock," for example, would not qualify here. Nor would much modern contemporary Christian music. Appealing as it does to the flesh and the baser nature of man, it tends to tear down, weaken, and harm the spiritual life rather than nurture it in wholesome growth. Instead of concentrating the mind and heart upon holy things, much of the

contemporary Christian music scatters the thoughts, disrupts the meditative processes, and promotes disintegration rather than integration in the life of those who listen to it.

A poorly-taught Christian public does not grasp the meaning of biblically centered hymns. Hustad's comments are perceptive:

Many church leaders say traditional hymns are too hard to understand, too theological in language. Some have discarded their hymnals in favor of simply worship choruses sung from memory or with the help of an overhead projector. But these uncomplicated songs may mirror the video age in which they were born: as short and encapsulated as news stories, and as repetitive as fast-food commercials.

An increasing number of church musicians admit they have reluctantly added this music style to their worship services. They felt compelled to do so by the large number of folk who heard "praise and worship" music in another "successful and rapidly growing" church, and came home with glowing reports of its significance. Competition, after all, is a factor in church life today. If you don't have the church music they want, they may go down the street where they can get it (Donald Hustad, "Let's Not Just Praise The Lord," *Christianity Today*, November 6, 1987, p. 28).

This is not to say, of course, that there is no place at all for choruses or short musical renditions, but to make such the "staple fare" of church music life to the neglect of "meatier" hymns is short-sighted indeed. If music is to promote spiritual growth, it must have good content.

What spiritual growth will occur in the lives of teenagers who feed constantly the worldly presentations of current "Christian music stars"? Dale Crowl describes Amy Grant, a very popular figure on the current music scene:

Her interviews are often spiced with preppy slang and crude vulgarisms. She has performed for Billy Graham Crusades, the Bill Gaither Trio, Oral Roberts University, and secular rock shows. She dances to the hard-driving rock beats of an eight-piece band, with sizzling electric guitars, computerized lights, and smoke bombs .... Adolescent girl fans love her lifestyle message that it is all right to be sexy and Christian (*Capital Voice*, November 1, 1986).

A secular music critic writes:

Grant, who offers just as rousing and noisy a show as many current rock groups, is so successful that she has become the first contemporary Christian artist to cross the world of mainstream pop and rock (Gene Stout, "New-Fashioned Christian Singer Stars in a Modern-Day Revival," *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, August 15, 1986, p.7).

The same critic notes that Grant's songs "are mostly about love, marriage, and temptation, not Jesus" (loc. cit.).

Young people will "grow" by listening to such musical "artists," but they will not grow in the right way. They will grow in their desire for more of the same. This kind of music does not feed the soul; nurture a desire for Bible truth, and point the hearers upward toward God.

## CONCLUSION

What kind of music truly honors God? If one were to say of a given song, "This is good Christian music," what would be its characteristics? What are summary guidelines that will help us as believers to distinguish the good from the bad? Following are some guidelines to be considered:

1. Its message is scriptural (Col. 3:16). Good Christian music must present a message that is true to the Word of God and doctrinally sound.
2. It should lead us to think in biblical patterns and not be suggestive of evil either in message or in musical arrangement (Phil. 4:8). The text should not be cheap or tawdry.
3. It should help us to honor God with our bodies (1 Cor. 6:19-20). Music which tends to imitate the effects of godless rock upon the human body or which either destroys or impairs one's hearing is not Christian music.
4. It will maintain a balance between "spirit" and "understanding" (1 Cor. 14:15). Music that is primarily emotional froth would not fulfill this requirement.
5. It will contain words that are full of beauty, dignity, reverence and simplicity, words that are worthy of the worship of a holy God (Isa. 6:1-6).

6. It will be free of mental association with worldly musical styles and evidence a holy and consecrated character (Rom. 12:2; 1 Jn. 2:15). Music that seeks to "copy" the worldly approach is not honoring to God.

7. It should be expressive of the peace that accompanies the Christian life, not the clamor, confusion, din, and turmoil of the world (Col. 3:15-16). The various forms of rock music do not contribute to peace of heart but partake of the constant jangle of the sinful world. Christ promises peace to His people (Jn. 14:27).

8. It should be characterized by musical preciseness, finesse of poetic technique, and should evidence a structure of harmony and order. God is a God of order and not disorder (1 Cor. 14:40).

9. It should promote and accompany a lifestyle of godliness, modesty, and holy quietness, not modish fashion, suggestive acts, or sexual aggressiveness (1 Pet. 1:16; Tit. 2:11-12).

10. It should not contribute to the temptation of new or weak believers (Rom. 14:13,21; 15:2). Music that reminds newly-saved converts of their old life of sin is to be abhorred and rejected.

The erosion of musical standards among contemporary Christians parallels the erosion of convictions and practices in other areas as well. It denotes a spirit of compromise with the world which must be vigorously opposed by strong Christian leaders. As in all areas of our lives, believers should ever follow the admonition of Paul: "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31). May God ever grant His people the knowledge and the courage to stand up for what is pure, right, honorable, and reverent in the musical offerings which they render to their God.

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# SCRIPTURAL SINGING

## EPHESIANS 5

18 And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;

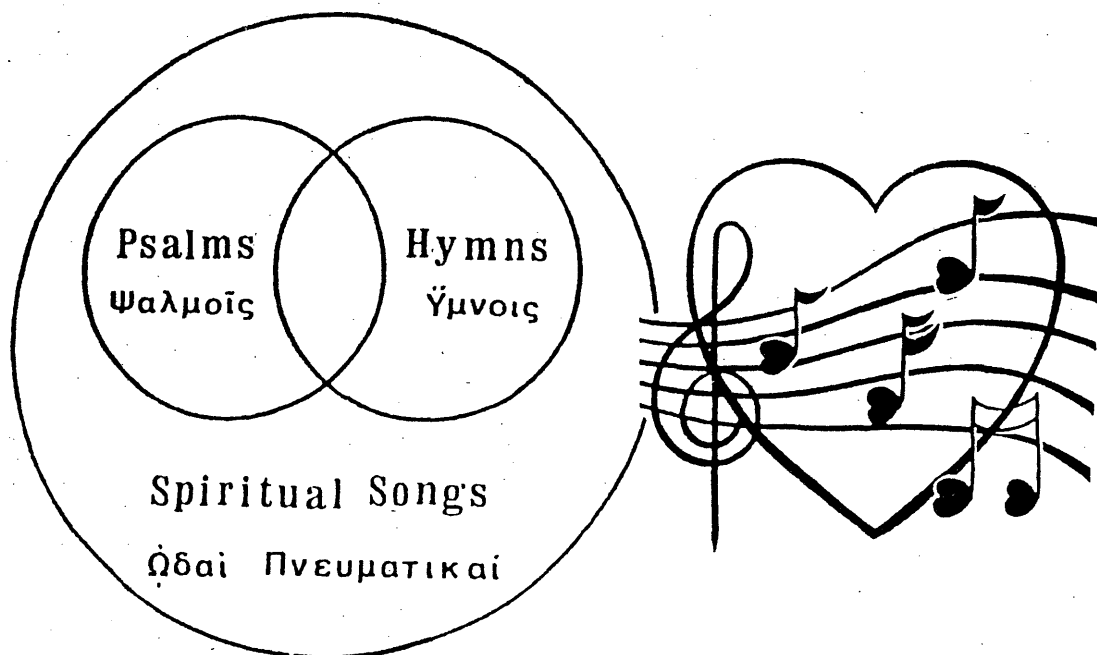
19 Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;

20 Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;

## COLOSSIANS 3

16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

17 And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.



# PSALMS, HYMNS, AND SPIRITUAL SONGS (Definitions)

## PSALM

ONE OF THE 150 THAT FORM A PART OF THE BIBLE

DISTINCTION - Authored by the Holy Spirit

PUREST USE - Word for word (as in a solo or anthem, sacred art song)

OTHER USES - Metrical Psalms (those set in modern poetic form with  
rhyme and even meter)  
- Fragments (as in the hymn "Thy Word Have I Hid In My Heart")

POINTS OF INTEREST - There are Psalms which express practically every emotion and deal with practically every subject.

EXAMPLES: Prayer (56:1)  
Praise (146:1)  
Testimony (34:6)

- The Hebrew word for Psalm is mizmor which literally means "song". The ancient Hebrews called the collection which we now call the book of Psalms tehillim which literally means "songs of praise".
- The Greek word for Psalm is psalmos which is used in the New Testament as a translation of the Old Testament word. This Greek word carries with it the idea "to pull, twitch, play upon a stringed instrument". Why did the Holy Spirit choose a word which implies instrumental accompaniment?

## HYMN

A SONG OF HUMAN AUTHORSHIP WHICH IS DIRECTED TO GOD

POINTS OF INTEREST - Hymns may express: Prayer

Praise  
Thanksgiving  
Worship  
Adoration

- The Greek word for Hymn is hymnos which literally means "song of praise".
- Some authorities feel that Paul, James, and John, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, embodied some fragments of early Christian hymns in their writings. (1 Cor. 13; Eph. 5:14; 1 Tim. 3:16; 2 Tim. 2:11-14; James 1:17; Rev. 1:5,6 and 15:3)

PSALMS, HYMNS AND SPIRITUAL SONGS

SPIRITUAL SONG

A SONG OF THE SPIRIT OR A SONG IN WHICH A CHRISTIAN'S NEW NATURE EXPRESSES ITSELF

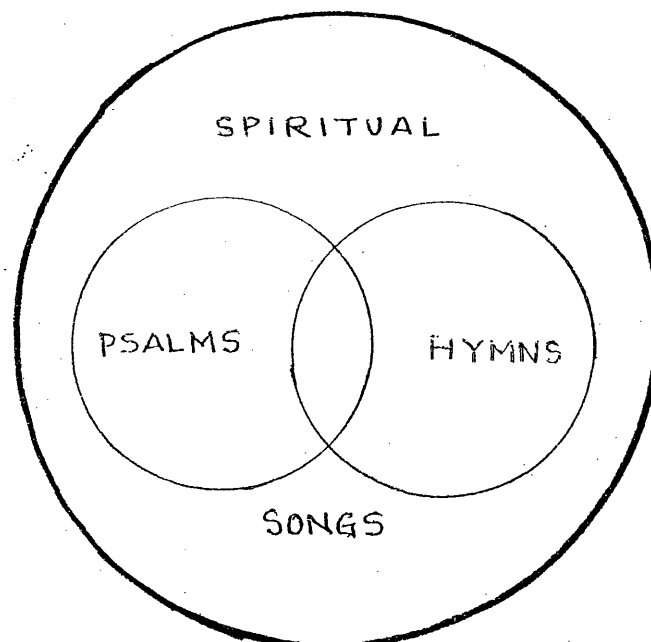
- POINTS OF INTEREST - A more literal rendering of the Greek would be "spiritual ode". The word transliterated ode here was the generic term for song. The accompanying adjective "spiritual" was added to differentiate from all other songs.
- The word "spiritual" comes from the Greek pneuma which means "wind, breath, or the vital principle".
  - A spiritual song may be a Psalm, a hymn, or a type of song not included under these categories.

EXAMPLES: Songs of Testimony (Gospel Songs)  
Songs about God, His attributes

- In direct contrast to spiritual songs (songs expressing the Christian's new nature) are those songs which express the old nature, whether they be the raucous and rowdy renderings of the world or the "gospel jazz" thumped out in some Christian circles.

HYPOTHETICAL INCIDENT - Imagine two people singing the same words and melody. One is singing from the heart and spirit while the other is just going through the motions of singing.

IS THE SONG A SPIRITUAL SONG TO BOTH?



# SCRIPTURAL SINGING

## EPHESIANS 5

18 And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;

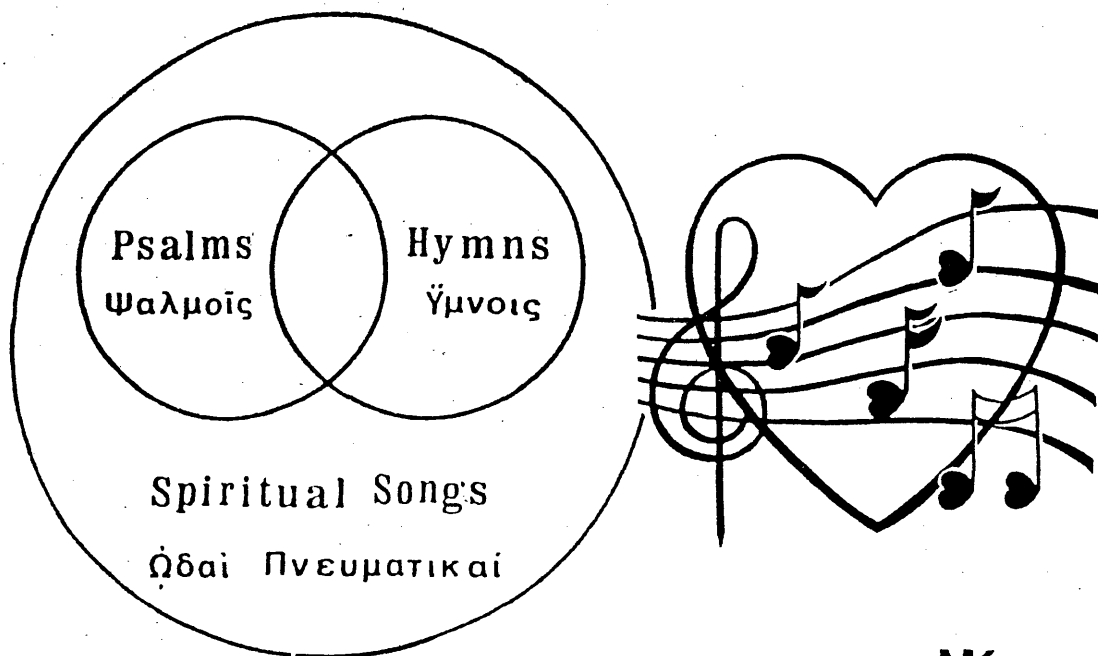
19 Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;

20 Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;

## COLOSSIANS 3

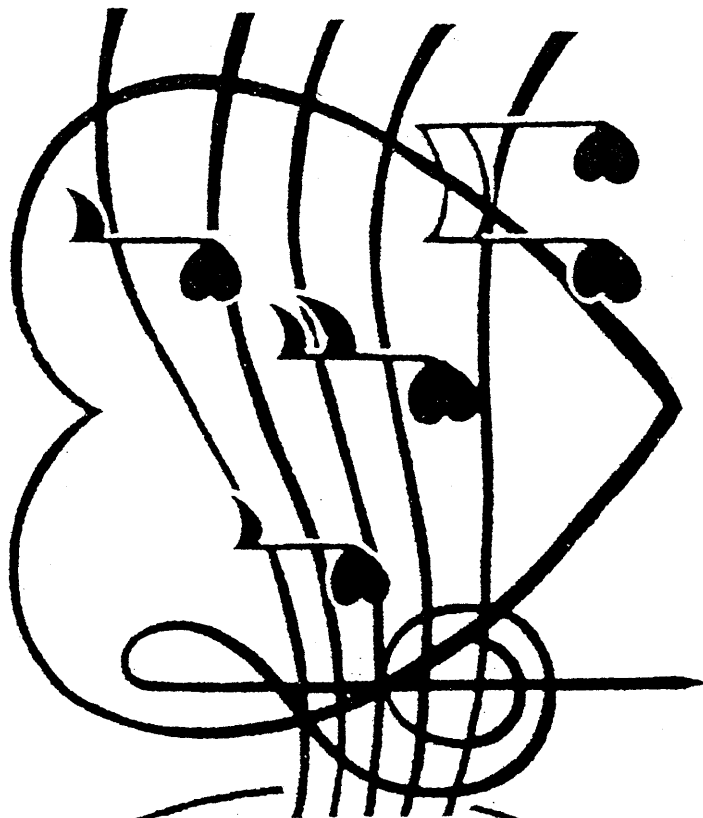
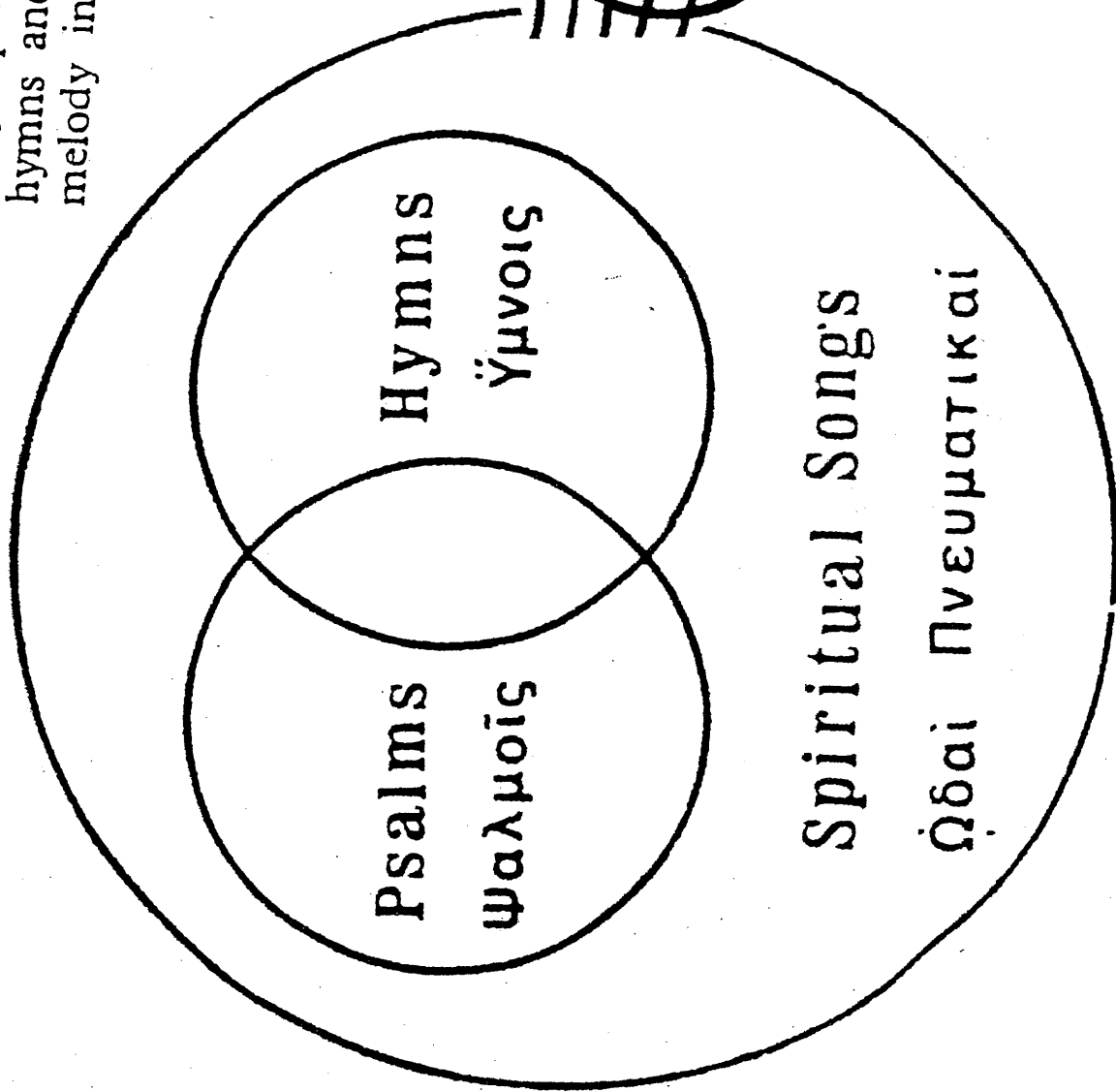
16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

17 And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.



18 And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;

19 Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;



Christ Paul  
(3:8). The  
a oiktirmou,  
Luke 1:78;  
humility

WORD PICTURES  
IN THE  
NEW TESTAMENT

BY  
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15. *The peace of Christ* (*hē eirēnē tou Christou*). The peace that Christ gives (John 14:27). *Rule* (*brabeuetō*). Imperative active third singular of *brabeuō*, to act as umpire (*brabeus*), old verb, here alone in N.T. See I Cor. 7:15 for called in peace. *In one body* (*en heni sōmati*). With one Head (Christ) as in 1:18, 24. *Be ye thankful* (*eucharistoi gineste*). "Keep on becoming thankful." Continuous obligation.

16. *The word of Christ* (*ho logos tou Christou*). This precise phrase only here, though "the word of the Lord" in I Thess. 1:8; 4:15; II Thess. 3:1. Elsewhere "the word of God." Paul is exalting Christ in this Epistle. *Christou* can be either the subjective genitive (the word delivered by Christ) or the objective genitive (the word about Christ). See I John. 2:14. *Dwell* (*enoikeitō*). Present active imperative of *enoikeō*, to make one's home, to be at home. *In you* (*en humin*). Not "among you." *Richly* (*plousiōs*). Old adverb from *plousios* (rich). See I Tim. 6:17. The following words explain *plousiōs*. *In all wisdom* (*en pasēi sophiāi*). It is not clear whether this phrase goes with *plousiōs* (richly) or with the participles following (*didaskontes kai nouthetountes*, see 1:28). Either punctuation makes good sense. The older Greek MSS. had no punctuation. There is an anacoluthon here. The participles may be used as imperatives as in Rom. 12:11f., 16. *With psalms* (*psalmois*, the Psalms in the Old Testament originally with musical accompaniment), *hymns* (*humnois*, praises to God composed by the Christians like I Tim. 3:16), spiritual songs (*ōidais pneumatikais*, general description of all whether with or without instrumental accompaniment). The same song can have all three words applied to it. *Singing with grace* (*en chariti āidontes*). In God's grace (II Cor. 1:12). The phrase can be taken with the preceding words. The verb *āidō* is an old one (Eph. 5:19) for lyrical emotion in a devout soul. *In your hearts* (*en tais kardiais humōn*). Without this there is no real worship "to God" (*tōi theōi*). How can a Jew or Unitarian in the choir lead in the worship of Christ as Saviour? Whether with instrument or with voice or with both it is all for naught if the adoration is not in the heart.

17. *Whatsoever ye do* (*pān hoti ean poiēte*). Indefinite relative (everything whatever) with *ean* and the present active subjunctive, a common idiom in such clauses. *Do all* (*panta*).