

An Introduction To CCM

(Contemporary Christian Music)

Or,

Should We Be Introduced To It At All?

By Pastor David Moss

Part I

Music will never die as an issue in the church because it is too much a part of what we do in worship. We must, therefore, keep ourselves informed as to the trends, philosophies, and influences which are constantly being pressed upon Christian music in our modern world. Otherwise, our ignorance may allow us to be led down a path that irritates God.

Contemporary Christian Music is the industry that predominantly determines those trends and philosophies that influence Christian music today. Its primary emphasis is to produce and promote secular music that has been Christianized. Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary defines the word "contemporary" as meaning in one sense "happening, existing, living, or coming into being during the same period of time, simultaneous." But the same dictionary gives another sense to this word as "marked by characteristics of the present period, modern." It is in this second sense that promoters of Contemporary Christian Music (CCM) identify their product. In other words, CCM is not just Christian music that has been written in our times, but it is "Christian music" that is characterized by the culture of our times.

This is exactly what CCM claims for itself. In a statement taken from an internet website titled "The Almost Definitive Contemporary Christian Music Hot Page," the promoters of this industry put this definition in their own words.

WHAT IS CONTEMPORARY CHRISTIAN MUSIC?

Christian Music has been around in some form for almost 2000 years, since the time of Christ. But what exactly is **Contemporary Christian Music**? Before the early 1970's, Christian Music could be categorized as either *Traditional Hymns*, *Southern Gospel* or as *Traditional Black Gospel* styles. From the *Peace Movement* of the late 1960's came a time of Christian revival for young people across the country. This concurrent movement was known as the **Jesus Movement**. From the *Jesus Movement*, came many new Christians who were anxious to tell others about Jesus, but found the traditional methods of sharing and worshiping restrictive and out-dated. Many of these *Jesus People* started developing new worshiping and witnessing styles. An effort was made to write music which was *culturally relevant* or *contemporary*. The desire was to create music that would appeal to the current *searching* generation. Thus was born *Contemporary Christian Music*. From the early days of the *Jesus Movement*, new *Christian singers* such as Larry Norman, Randy

Stonehill and Chuck Girard emerged to reach their generation. The name **Contemporary Christian Music** was coined to distinguish this style of music from the more traditional forms of *religious* music. The word *contemporary* has proven to be an appropriate description of this music over the last twenty years, as the styles have kept up with its *secular* counterpart. The ever evolving state of C.C.M. includes such diverse and contemporary styles as **rock, jazz, blues, dance, metal, rap, alternative, new age, grunge, punk, thrash, death, gothic and industrial** [etc.]. Yet regardless of the form, the essences of all *Contemporary Christian Music* is the same – to share God's love to the current generation in a way that can be both understood and enjoyed. This **Contemporary Christian Music Hot Page** is designed to be a current guide of the different C.C.M resources on the *Internet*. Any current information would be welcomed and encouraged to help keep this place, **contemporary**. As far as whether or not you agree or disagree with the particular spiritual condition of some of the artists listed here --Sorry – **Deal with It!**
[*Emphasis theirs.*]

Thus, CCM consists of taking whatever style of secular music is currently popular in the world and attaching “Christian” words to it. As a result, we have people adorned in 1960's dress and attitudes [you just have to deal with their lack of a spiritual testimony which is not relevant to the music] playing drums and electric guitars leading the worship services in our churches.

The promoters of CCM argue that all styles of music are morally neutral. By this argument they seek to nullify the traditionalists' objections based on the biblical principles of not loving the world (1 John 2:15-17) and not touching the unclean thing (2 Corinthians 6:17).

For too many well meaning Christian people this rationale has worked. They have given in to the pressure and either have provided an alternative contemporary service for those who desire it, or have incorporated contemporary elements into the regular worship service. Once again, the word contemporary is used in this context not as meaning chronologically concurrent, but as meaning culturally relevant. Thus church worship services have come to look and feel exactly like secular or worldly gatherings and events.

For those of us who recognize that loving not the world, neither the things that are in the world includes worldly music, what can we do to prevent this from happening to us? We must have a commitment to the sacred traditions of hymns and gospel songs. We must draw the line earlier rather than later, and stop the incremental change in our music before it gets started.

Granted this is not easy because the change is usually unnoticeable in the beginning. You do not usually show up for services one Sunday and find out that your local church has completely converted to contemporary worship. It generally comes about in small steps. It begins with the introduction of a very lightly pop styled song. The difference between the new song and the traditional gospel song is sometimes so slight it is nearly imperceptible even to those who have some knowledge of music. This new song is enjoyable and seems harmless. No one gives it a thought. But then comes another song that is a little more pop styled. It is not much different than the first new song. It is, however, a little more noticeably different from the traditional gospel song than the first new song was, but the conditioning process has already begun. So the second new song is readily accepted also. Then another new song comes along that goes a step further. And so the process continues, gradually conditioning a congregation to accept ever increasingly worldly songs into their worship services. Then one day, someone

wakes up and says, "How did we get where we are?"

We have gotten where we are because we did not draw the line early enough. It is not easy to draw the line early in the process because at that point there does not seem to be a problem. It is just like the frog who was set in cold water and very gradually boiled to death. When was the water too warm? When was it too late for him to jump out? But perhaps a better question is, Why was he in the pot in the first place? &

Choosing Our Values for Music and Worship

Part 2

The issue of music is a never ending one among Christians and it is being discussed everywhere. Recently, there was an article published in a newsletter from a Christian health care concern stating that their staff had not been able to reach a consensus on the subject even after hours of wrangling. It is quite interesting that such an organization would print a statement like this. It is not a local church or even a para-church ministry, but the differences in music values among their staff had become a hot issue and for some reason they wanted everyone to know about it.

Because music is so important to the life of the church, it is imperative that we understand the issues involved in this continuing debate so that we are able to make wise choices in the music we use to worship the LORD. We need to lay a foundation of good biblical values in music and learn how to apply these values in specific practical ways as we mold the worship services of our local church.

Competing Models For Worship

A model is a pattern of something to be made or copied. For example, developments often have model homes. No one actually lives in the model home, but it is built exactly like a home someone could build for themselves. It is provided as an example or pattern for prospective home buyers to observe. This term "model" is used also for patterns by which programs or organizations are structured. It is used in this article to refer to different types or styles of worship.

There have always been different worship models in the church. Some models are very ritualistic while others are much freer and spontaneous. Some worship models are very orderly and reverent, while others encourage the expression of unreserved emotions. Among evangelical churches there are two basic worship models being used today.

The Traditional Worship Model

The traditional worship model came out of the Reformation. Prior to the Reformation, the Catholic church had placed the "altar" as the central feature of the platform in church buildings.

This made ritual and liturgy the most important element of worship. But the most significant development in worship during the Reformation was the replacing of the “altar” with the pulpit. The purpose of giving the pulpit this place of honor was to elevate preaching to the most important part of worship. To this day, preaching continues to have a significant part in the traditional worship service. Sermons are Bible based and teach doctrine and godly lifestyle principles. Other elements in this worship model include Scripture reading, prayer, congregational singing from a hymn book of traditional hymns and gospel songs as they were originally written, choral music of traditional hymn arrangements and scriptural anthems, and special music by individuals or small groups, vocal and instrumental, typically with live accompaniment on the organ or piano, consisting of traditional Christian music.

The characteristic atmosphere of this worship model is reverence. The belief is that as Christians gather to worship God, He is to be revered in a manner that shows deferential respect in an orderly manner.

1 Corinthians 14:26-33 - How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying. ...Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge. If any thing be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace. For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted. And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.

For a traditional worship service, people generally dress up in their “Sunday best” as a gesture of honor to God. While there are times of quietness in the service as the congregation bows before God together, there are times of great passion as well as the hymns are sung from the heart and the preaching is heard with a teachable spirit.

The traditional worship model holds to the belief that the purpose of the assembly of believers is to honor God for all that He is as God and all that He has done for us through His Son Jesus Christ, and to edify and fortify believers for their daily walk in Him. The lost are always welcome, but the hope is that through what they observe they will be brought to conviction and call on the name of the Lord to be saved.

1 Corinthians 14:23-25 - If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad? But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all: And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth.

The Contemporary Worship Model

There is a new worship model that has rippled through Christianity, crossing all denominational lines including evangelical and fundamental churches. This worship model is called contemporary worship. Sometimes you will see the notices on the church bulletin board as you drive by announcing a time for a traditional service and a time for a contemporary service.

The contemporary service has several unique elements. There is often a worship team which stands on the platform, with microphones in hand, and leads the congregational singing. Songs are generally of a style called "praise and worship" consisting of choruses and other songs of lively tempo. The words are shown on an overhead screen and are learned by listening to the worship team sing them over and over. Usually, no written music is provided and no hymn books are used. This song service may last for a considerable period of time. It may include clapping, waving of the arms, and swaying body movements. The music is often accompanied by a "praise band" consisting of drums, electric guitars, tambourines, and other such instruments. Special music is often accompanied by pre-recorded music on cassette tape and consists of songs from the Contemporary Christian Music (CCM) repertoire. Interpretive movement (dancing) is becoming a common element of this worship model. (As spirited music naturally generates body movements, this is a logical outcome.) Drama may at times replace preaching, and the preaching that does take place is often abbreviated. The content of sermons generally consists of social issues and relationships matters rather than Bible content and doctrine.

The characteristic atmosphere of this worship model is one of entertainment. The pulpit is either made portable or removed altogether and the focus is on a great deal of activity on the platform which the congregation comes to watch. Every performance is applauded. Many attend these services in casual clothes. The stated objective is to be "seeker friendly." This means the "worship service" is constructed in such a way as to be non-offensive and inviting to those who are not yet Christians. It is considered spiritually incorrect to call them "lost," so they are called "seekers." It is considered a bad thing to offend seekers with direct gospel preaching, so they are lured into Christianity by nice entertainment.

This worship model has several sources. The so called "praise and worship" music came out of the charismatic movement. The use of contemporary music and drama grew out of Willow Creek Community Church in Chicago, a large church founded on the desire to appeal to the interests of young people and the unchurched rather than biblical principles. This worship model has also been fostered by new-evangelical pragmatism that rejected separation and adopted assimilation as a preferred approach to Christianity.

Basic Values In Music

These differing worship models are based on extremely different values.

Traditional Values

1. Music comes directly from the heart of God. God Himself delights in singing and He encourages His people to sing.

Zephaniah 3:17 The LORD thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing.

Ephesians 5:18-19 *...but be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.*

2. Thus music is an important subject to God. He has definite thoughts about the subject which He has communicated in His Word.

References to music can be found in at least 393 verses of Scripture in 43 different books of the Bible.

3. Music contains moral elements. It is therefore necessary for us to understand what those moral elements are so that we can include in the music of our worship services and our Christian lives only those forms of music that are acceptable unto God.

God gave us a principle of primary importance in Ephesians 5:10 - *Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord.*

David played music that drove away an evil spirit from King Saul. The moral elements of David's new song could not be tolerated by the evil spirit. This illustrates the existence of moral elements in instrumental music apart from the words of a song.

And it came to pass, when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took an harp, and played with his hand: so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him. (1 Samuel 16:23)

The Bible speaks of:

The song of drunkards (Psalm 69:12)

The song of fools (Ecclesiastes 7:5)

The song of derision (Lamentations 3:14)

The song to a heavy heart (Proverbs 25:20)

The song of vanity (Job 35:13)

The song of an harlot (Isaiah 23:15-16)

The Bible then speaks of:

The New Song. The new song stands in contrast to the old songs of the flesh listed above. It is a song that has the capacity to praise God.

And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD. (Psalms 40:3)

Praise ye the LORD. Sing unto the LORD a new song, and his praise in the congregation of saints. (Psalms 149:1)

4. The words of a Christian song should be biblically accurate, doctrinally sound and edifying for believers.

First of all we are to maintain soundness in our doctrine.

Titus 2:1 - *But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine:*

Secondly, every element of a church service, including the music, is to provide edification to those who attend.

Psalms 47:7 - For God is the King of all the earth: sing ye praises with understanding.

1 Corinthians 14:15 - What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.

5. The musical message of a Christian song should agree morally and spiritually with the message of the words.

2 Corinthians 6:14-17 - Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.

Psalms 144:9 - I will sing a new song unto thee, O God: upon a psaltery and an instrument of ten strings will I sing praises unto thee. Note: The new song would lose its effect if the old music was the vehicle used to convey the words.

6. Music is an important part of worship. While the purpose of worship is to honor God and glorify Him, all music used in worship services should contribute to that goal.

Isaiah 12:4-5 - And in that day shall ye say, Praise the LORD, call upon his name, declare his doings among the people, make mention that his name is exalted. Sing unto the LORD; for he hath done excellent things: this is known in all the earth.

7. It is the Spirit of God that directs us to sing God honoring music. Being filled with the Spirit and with the word of Christ comes first, then comes the musical response.

Ephesians 5:18-19 - And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; 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.

Contemporary Music Values

1. God made music and everything God made is good. Man is, therefore, free to enjoy all forms of music as a gift from God.

Note: When God created the earth, he saw that it was good. But when sin entered the world, a curse was placed upon creation that will be eliminated only by the making of a new heaven and new earth. Man has perverted many of the good things God made and music is one of them.

2. Music is morally neutral. There are no moral elements in music.

Note: This is often illustrated by playing one note on the piano and asking, what can possibly be immoral about that note? The rationalization then is that all music is merely the compilation of individual notes that are morally neutral. However, consider a contrasting illustration. If you point to one letter in the alphabet, you can say that one letter is morally neutral by itself. Following the above logic, it would then be impossible to have any immoral literature, because all writing would be merely the compilation of individual letters that are morally neutral. It is possible, though, to take the same group of letters and arrange them into entirely different messages. For example, the letters e, i, l, and v can be arranged to say "live" which is good, or "evil" which is bad. The same is true about the arranging of individual musical notes. Depending upon how they are arranged they can convey a moral or an immoral message.

3. All forms of music are acceptable unto God in our worshiping Him. Because I am His child, whatever I do glorifies God.

Note: The Israelites learned that God did not accept everything they did in worshiping Him (Isaiah 58). It was the lesson of Cain all over again. Cain brought his offering to God in a very sincere manner, but God rejected it. Just because we say we are worshiping God does not mean that God accepts our worship. Whatever we do is not acceptable unto Him simply because we are doing it.

4. Music is a means by which we can be drawn into the spirit.

Note: When music is used as a means to draw people into the "spirit," all it does is create an emotionalism that is called spiritual, but in reality is not. True worship can be very emotional, but emotions are to be the result of and not the cause of true worship. The proper approach to worship will produce godly emotions. The improper approach will produce fleshly emotions.

5. Contemporary Christian music is a good thing because it draws young people to church and some even get saved.

Note: This is classic pragmatism in which the ends justify the means. But in God's eyes it is never right to do wrong, even if the goal is a noble one.

6. The purpose of worship is to bring people into fellowship with one another.

Note: This makes worship man centered. However, the Bible never suggests that worship is about man. Worship is about God and ascribing to Him the worth of which He is worthy.

Making Choices

In light of these values, what are some of the choices we must make in order to preserve the traditional worship model in our local church? Some churches do still use the traditional worship model exclusively, but they are becoming fewer all the time. The pressure is on to change and change is occurring everywhere. Some churches use the contemporary worship model exclusively. Some churches have two different services, one traditional and one contemporary. And some churches seek to blend the two worship models together using some elements of each in the same service. What is the right thing for us to do?

We must desire first and foremost to please God and not men. Contemporary thoughts on music and worship make worship to be man centered. Worship services, they say, must appeal to those who participate. However, worship is not about us as humans; it is about God. If we can keep our focus on pleasing God and not men, our choices in worship will become much clearer.

We must choose values in music and worship that are biblical and acceptable unto God. These will serve as our foundation in making good choices regarding how we worship God. This requires a constant reminder of what God says about music, to keep our senses exercised in discerning both bad and good.

We must maintain separation from the world. Since the basis of contemporary Christian music is the assimilation of worldly music, if we can keep our commitment to remain separate from the world, a lot of musical choices will automatically be eliminated. This principle includes separation from music companies which make a great deal of profit from the production and sale of worldly music on "Christian" labels. If we do not purchase music from those who produce contemporary Christian music, we will also protect ourselves from the influences of that industry.

Those who participate in the music of the church should be those who are walking in the Lord and growing in His Word. Their testimony outside the church should be in harmony with the testimony of their participation in the worship of our Holy God and Precious Savior who bled and died and rose again to rescue

them from sin and the world. The desire of the heart of every participant must be to please God and not men.

We must determine the limits beyond which we will not go in specific musical selections. Sometimes this may be difficult to maintain. Sometimes questions are raised which seem to suggest gray areas where compromise is reasonable. For example, is a particular song by a particular song writer which is produced by a particular recording company and sung by a particular musical artist okay as long as this particular song seems to meet our music policy even if other songs from the same source are not okay? Do we throw a "good" song out just because of its associations? Is a particular song not okay just because a few notes are a little over the line? How many notes does it take to make a song bad? Besides, aren't there some songs in our hymn book that go a little over the line? Do the words of every song have to be absolutely from the Bible? Granted the details of musical

elements can become very involved and complicated and tedious at times to consider. But our rationalization should never be – how far can we go and still be okay. Rather it should be – what are the choices we must make to insure that we are never guilty of compromising the glory of God.

Some simple choices like these will preserve a traditional worship style that honors God and shows Him true reverence. It will encourage a worship style that will edify believers and bring true conviction to those who have ears to hear, eyes to see, and hearts to understand. As time goes by, making these choices will be increasingly difficult. But as the contemporary Christian music and worship movements gain momentum, we must be ever more conscious of the care we must take in preserving that which is acceptable unto God. 📖