

Choral Chaos:

How CCM is Undermining and Destroying True Christian Worship

by Jeremy James



In our last paper, *The Enemy Is Working Stealthily to Replace Our Two Greatest Weapons*, we examined the strategy that Satan is using to undermine true Biblical Christianity. We identified the Bible (accurately translated) and traditional Christian prayer as the two main targets of this attack. Satan cannot forcibly remove these powerful weapons from our hands, but he *can* trick believers into accepting carefully tailored substitutes.

We referred also to the corresponding attack on traditional Christian hymn-singing, a topic which we now propose to explore in more depth. We will look in particular at the methods that are being used to redefine Christian worship and eliminate the traditional hymnal archive. We will also examine the way music is being used to condition professing Christians to accept the ecumenical philosophy of the coming One World Religion.

Understanding the nature of this attack

Many aspects of our lives are affected by the music we habitually listen to. It has a pervasive influence on our mood, our emotional state and our mental outlook. So, if we are to understand the way this attack is being conducted – with grave consequences for the church – we must first establish, beyond all doubt, that the wrong choice of music for Christian worship can affect our relationship with God.

Music of the right kind can enlarge our appetite for spiritual things, while poor quality music, or music that is displeasing to God, can have a detrimental effect, often in ways we may not recognize.

Our two greatest weapons

Every true Christian is living under wartime conditions. We have an invisible Enemy who is working hard to destroy us, although most professing Christians don't seem to accept this. Our two greatest weapons in this ongoing war are the Bible (accurately translated) and heartfelt, repentant prayer. But we also have something that combines the power of these two weapons and virtually counts as a weapon in its own right. That weapon is true Christian worship.

When we sing hymns of praise in church we are addressing our Father, just as we address him in prayer. Equally, when we sing aloud the truths written for our edification in the Bible, we are wielding the power of God's holy Word. Hymn-singing should therefore be seen by all true Christians as a potent expression of our two greatest weapons.

We can pray alone and we can study alone, but our hymn-singing normally takes place among a group of fellow believers. This brings into play two additional factors which Jesus himself identified in chapter 18 of the Gospel of Matthew. We really need to understand the implications of these factors for true Christian worship.

Regarding the first, the Lord says:

**"For where two or three are gathered together in my name,
there am I in the midst of them." (Matthew 18:20)**

When we sing hymns of praise and worship to our Father in church, gathered together in His holy name, His Son is in our midst. This turns our congregational voice into something truly special, a sound that is utterly unique. If the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man "**availeth much**" (**James 5:16**), then the same must certainly be true of songs offered in harmony before God in praise and worship.

The Lord also told us that, when two are agreed on a matter and pray in harmony before God for assistance, their prayer will certainly be heard:

"Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven." (Matthew 18:19)

This must also be true of believers who are gathered together in one mind, singing hymns of praise to God that include supplications for the well-being of the saints and the sharing of the gospel.

In light of this it is easy to see why Satan has always hated traditional Christian hymn-singing. It has strengthened the church throughout the ages and poured great blessings into the lives of individual believers. Corporate worship has enabled the body to work together as a body, whereby each of her members can express – audibly and with true feeling – the peace they have found in Christ.

The Bible warns of Music and Idolatry

The Bible warns us that the Enemy will use music to promote idolatry. When Nebuchadnezzar erected a huge golden idol around ninety feet tall in a public place, he ordered everyone to fall down and worship before it whenever they heard the sound of "**the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut** [some kind of stringed instrument], **psaltery** [zither], **dulcimer, and all kinds of musick**" (**Daniel chapter 3**). [The word 'drum' does not appear in the Bible, but the phrase "all kinds of musick" – namely other unspecified instruments – very likely included drums and percussion.] The Hebrew youths who refused to do so – Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah – were thrown into a blazing furnace, but were miraculously preserved.

When the Word of God makes a clear connection between music and gross idolatry, Christians should take it very seriously. The importance of this connection is underscored by the fact that the instrumental ensemble is mentioned no less than four times in just a handful of verses (3:5, 3:7, 3:10 and 3:15) – "**the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of musick.**"

Why would Nebuchadnezzar employ music for this purpose if it did not augment the Satanic nature of what he was doing? And why would Scripture refer to the musical instruments four times in close succession if they were not linked to the abomination?

The Word of God is revealing for our benefit the spiritual power of music, not just in heaven – as in the Book of Revelation – but right down here on earth.

Scripture also tells us something about Satan that we need to consider in this regard:

"...the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created." (Ezekiel 28:13)

The "tabrets" and "pipes" are tambourines and flutes, respectively. Since this passage describes the adornments granted to Lucifer at the time he was created, we can infer that his role in heaven before he fell was related in some way to the worship and exaltation of the LORD through music. We should hardly be surprised, therefore, if music is being used today by the powers of darkness to seduce the hearts of men and enslave their minds.

Music features also in the life of the Messiah. Recall the very last act that Jesus performed together with his apostles before his crucifixion –

"And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives." (Mark 14:26)

Recall also how Zephaniah described the return of Jesus to Jerusalem at his second coming and how he will sing with joy among the saved remnant –

"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." (Zephaniah 3:17)

It is significant that the Lord closed his first public ministry with a song and that he will celebrate with joy the commencement of his second, also with a song!

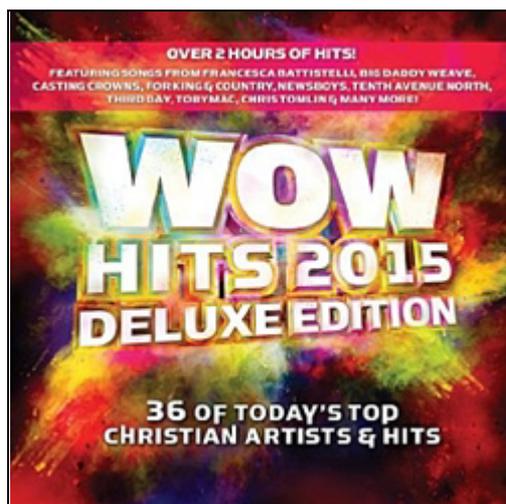
Our heavenly Father even sang a song to His Son in Isaiah 5:1

"Now will I sing to my wellbeloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard."

This is the famous *Song of the Vineyard*, which addresses the precious relationship between Christ and the children of Israel. We can only marvel that the Father should share it with us. Referring to this passage, Matthew Henry said:

God the Father dictates it to the honour of Christ his well beloved Son, whom he has constituted Lord of the vineyard. The prophet sings it to the honour of Christ too, for he is his well beloved.

These passages of Scripture demonstrate, on the one hand, the sustaining and nourishing power of music when used for a holy purpose and, on the other hand, its potentially corrupting effect – when wrongly used – on the minds and hearts of men. If nothing else they show us that, when choosing music for Christian worship, we must exercise the greatest possible discernment.



Two serious misconceptions

We'll now examine two serious misconceptions about music that are widely held by supporters of Contemporary Christian Music (CCM).

Even believers who have escaped from the CCM movement and rediscovered the joy of true Christian worship are surprised by how doggedly they held to one or both of these false ideas. While this was due in part to poor instruction, there is a pronounced supernatural element at work here. Satan is determined to overwhelm the emotions of professing believers, especially the young, and promote a culture of self-indulgence and complacency. This is why so many young people today subscribe to the maxim, "If it feels good, it must be good."

Misconception #1: If it feels good, it must be good

As Harry Ironside once noted, the word "feeling" appears only twice in the Bible – once in Hebrews and once in Ephesians – and in neither case does it have the meaning that it has here.

Scripturally speaking, we cannot judge anything by our feelings. Knowledge is essential. When the book of Judges said that "**every man did that which was right in his own eyes**" it was effectively saying that each of them did what he felt was right, with no regard to what God actually said.

If it feels good it must be good – This is the standard yardstick today for deciding which songs to use in Christian worship. But in the many articles and tributes to CCM down the years, one seldom finds a reference to the only criterion that really matters: Is this song pleasing to God?

We will return to this question later because it has devastating implications for CCM and its role in Christian worship.

Misconception #2: Music is morally neutral

The second misconception states that music is morally neutral. It is only in the 20th century that this idea has gained support. Up to then it had been widely accepted that music had its own internal structure and aesthetic laws and that the acoustic beauty that we perceived was not merely a product of cultural conditioning. Even atheists in times past acknowledged that music had an influence on our behavior.

With the rise of moral relativism, however, men of learning, as well as leading scientific institutions, began making earnest attempts to prove that the structure and order of the universe was arbitrary. They were determined to reject God. This meant trivialising anything that seemed to suggest that the world had a spiritual purpose. The visual arts came under attack, as did music. If certain musical compositions seemed beautiful or spiritually uplifting, then, they insisted, it must be due to some random factor in the mind of man. It couldn't possibly be due to a property of the music itself, since this could in turn imply that a sovereign designer had put it there.

The idea that music was morally neutral took a firm hold in academia, helped in part by the arrival of jazz and by the invention of atonal music by Schoenberg and others. The latter purported to show that the pleasing patterns or 'beauty' that we perceive in a musical work are not a property of the music itself but are a product, rather, of cultural, neurological, and equally subjective factors.

Once music was seen as a morally neutral medium, as simply a means of expressing subjective preferences through sound, the door was opened to virtually every musical genre and style. They were all now seen as morally equivalent. This quickly led to the widespread acceptance of rock-and-roll, possibly the most discordant and unsettling of all musical styles.

Christians ought to know that, despite the claims of sceptical academics and liberal scholars, music is not morally neutral. Nearly everyone has a memory of a moment in childhood when they heard a piece of music that was so beautiful and so moving that it almost made them cry. They may remember also how it aroused a genuine desire within them to discover the invisible source of that beauty. None of this was culturally conditioned, but was grounded solely in the music itself.

No regiment ever marched to the sound of a Strauss waltz, and no maiden has yet swooned to *The Flight of the Bumble Bee*. This is a basic truth that only the most obstinate contrarian can deny.

Terminology and Control

The CCM movement speaks only about worship songs, never hymns. The latter word is practically taboo in many churches today. The word *hymn* has come to mean music that is dull and boring, or irrelevant and out-of-date. Its lowly status has spread to the *hymnal*, a book which at one time stirred the hearts of all true believers but which is no longer found in many churches today. It has been replaced instead by a screen onto which the prescribed lyrics are projected. This allows the 'musical director' to control the congregation. Something new can be foisted on them at any time. A concerned member of the church is unable to pick up a hymnal and point to the many heartwarming hymns that are not being sung – because there *is* no hymnal. As a result, most believers today are completely unaware of the many beautiful hymns that our forefathers sang but which the mavericks of CCM have virtually abolished.

We rightly hold pastors accountable for the teaching delivered in their churches, but many pastors today have handed extraordinary power to their 'musical director', usually a young person with a passion for music, especially popular music, but with very little knowledge of the Bible. Their decisions greatly affect the spiritual atmosphere of the church, the attitude of participants, and the way worship is conducted. It is probably fair to say that many of these musical directors have a greater impact on prayer and worship than either the pastor or the elders. And yet the same directors can go home after church and listen for hours to secular music which is largely indistinguishable from the songs they selected for 'worship' that morning. As a consequence of this insane arrangement, most churches today are 'worshipping' in accordance with the dictates of the music industry, with little or no regard to how the LORD Himself has asked us to worship.

Worship Music

Let's define our basic term: *Worship music* is prayer and praise expressed through song. It must be prayer since it is addressed to and sung before God. If it is not prayer, then to whom are we singing? It must include praise since worship by definition glorifies God. And it must include the human voice, since only a living person can praise and worship the LORD: **"I will bless the LORD at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth."** (Psalm 34:1)

Worship music is personal because prayer is personal. This is evident from the fact that we stand before God and do what we would never do before anyone else.

We know that God loves worship music, not least because He has devoted an entire book of the Bible to song. The Psalms of David expressed, as nothing else could, his relationship with God. They are truthful, respectful, emotional, and personal. They are prayers in every sense and songs in every sense.

The Psalms are God's Hymnal. They are a model or template for the kind of songs that are pleasing to God. So too are the passages that Scripture itself describes as a song, such as the Song of Moses (Deuteronomy 32), the Song of Miriam (Exodus 15), or the Song of Deborah (Judges 5).

There are lengthy passages in Job and Isaiah that sound almost like oratorios when recited aloud. Many other passages of Scripture are structured in such a way, and filled with such joy and pathos, grandeur and depth, that they seem to pulsate with a music all of their own. Handel had only to add the simplest melody to Isaiah 9 to produce one of the most beautiful hymns of all time – *For Unto Us a Child is Born*.

What exactly is wrong with CCM?

So, what exactly is wrong with CCM?

Before trying to answer this question, we should first acknowledge that many of the old hymns *were* dull and boring, many followed a plodding pattern, and many had awkward or artificial lyrics. But the best have stood the test of time. They have proven their worth and raised thousands of sore and sorry hearts to great heights. The joy and gladness that the old hymns brought to millions of believers over the past few hundred years have been immeasurable.

In looking at CCM we will focus only on the best. The worst is so bad, so steeped in secularism, worldly sentiment and rock-style performance, that it must surely hurt the ears and grieve the hearts of most true believers.

The list we have compiled of the best CCM songs is given in **Appendix A**. It may not be every musical director's 'top 30' but the songs could reasonably be expected to figure in nearly every 'top 50.' As such they are representative of the best of CCM and provide a fair selection on which to base a critique.

We wanted to include the lyrics of all of these songs, but felt we could not do so for copyright reasons (This is a point of great importance which we will return to later).

We will now examine this top-30 selection under ten headings (The following are given in no particular order).

1. Excessive Repetition

It is natural for a song to have recurring phrases, but it is very unnatural for the same few words to be sung over and over again, with neurotic regularity. Many of the songs on our top-30 list are highly repetitive. In this respect they have much in common with pop and disco music, where certain lyrics, however inane, are repeated over and over again, purely for effect. They do not convey any meaning. In fact, after the first few repetitions any rational content has evaporated and only a sonic signature remains.

It has been noted by many concerned Christians that this repetition has a very similar effect to the mantras chanted by Eastern monks. Participants are lulled into a mild trance-like state and often sway in unison, just like attendees at a rock concert. It is well known that prolonged mantra chanting induces an altered state of consciousness and a corresponding loss of self-control.

Christ condemned repetitive prayer: "**But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.**" (Matthew 6:7). A worship song is essentially a prayer set to music, and therefore the admonition given by Jesus applies to it. Why then is excessive repetition such a prominent and broadly accepted characteristic of CCM?

Jesus also described vain repetition as a feature of "heathen" prayer. Being heathen, it was neither heard by God nor acceptable to Him. (We will return to this question later since it concerns, not just the quality of CCM music, but whether it is even acceptable to God.)

There is another serious problem with excessive repetition. It makes some spiritual truths seem much more important than others and trivializes those that are seldom mentioned. Generally speaking, if something is never mentioned, it can't be all that important, while the few things that are continually highlighted must be essential. In this way CCM is being used to tailor and shape the gospel message, to edit God's Word and focus only on those parts which the architects of CCM deem important.

This has resulted in a watered-down, ecumenical gospel which teaches, among other things, that everyone (or nearly everyone) will be saved, that all professing Christians should worship under a common ecclesiastical banner, that denominations and doctrinal distinctions are divisive, that God is love and will not punish or condemn the unregenerate sinner, and that there is some good in everyone.

2. Over-emphasis on Rhythm

Music comprises three components – rhythm, harmony, and melody. These correspond to the three components of our being – body, soul, and spirit. Rhythm appeals mostly to our body, harmony to our soul, and melody to our spirit. While we don't have time here to explore this intricate subject, it is important to understand that rhythm *directly* affects our body. The body itself is a marvellous expression of interrelated rhythms, the totality of which we call our circadian rhythm.

CCM has greatly accentuated the role of rhythm in worship music, even to the point of introducing instruments whose only function is to augment the rhythm. Drums are now a common element of CCM, whereas they had no place in traditional hymn-singing. This gives CCM an entirely new character and separates it completely from the latter. Our forefathers sang worship music that appealed almost exclusively to the soul and the spirit, while professing Christians today are engaged in a form of worship that is deliberately designed to stimulate a physiological response.

Some might say, So what? But this is not an acceptable attitude to adopt in a matter of such importance. There is a marked unwillingness to consider whether the music produced by accentuated rhythm or driving percussion is pleasing to God. Has it any Scriptural support? Has this fundamental change affected the spirituality of the church? Is it even conducive to true worship?

We will return to these questions later.

3. Ecumenical, Inter-faith Content

We have already mentioned how selective repetition allows a shallow gospel or a misleading theology to form in the minds of the congregation. This can also be achieved through the lyrics alone. Seemingly innocent words can be laden with unscriptural images and ideas. These are certain to affect the church if the individual takes their sentimental aspirations as a basis for serving God. A prime example of this is the song *Here I Am Lord* by Dan Schutte, published in 1981 [see our top-30 list].

The theology enshrined in this song is truly bizarre, a combination of New Age pantheism and Roman Catholic works-based salvation (Schutte is a Jesuit priest). It puts words into the mind of God that are not found in the Bible. The 'god' in question is the god of sea and sky, wind and flame. He calls for someone whom he can send to solve the problems of mankind. Whether intended or not, the singer will identify with the voice in the chorus, which is designed to echo Isaiah 6. He even makes a promise brimming with self-righteous ambition: "I will hold Your people in my heart."

The ecumenism in this song is obvious. The god in question sends man to do his work and create heaven on earth. Christ is never mentioned by name. The god of love wants everyone to be happy. He plans to save everyone, which is the false message of universalism: "All who dwell in dark and sin my hand will save." In fact, the ecumenism in this song is so broad that even Hindus, Buddhists and New Age gurus could sing it without qualms.

We have space to mention only a few more examples from the top-30, most of which are imbued with the same universalist, ecumenical philosophy, either stated or implied. These songs build on one another, so their ecumenical momentum grows over time.

Be Still for the Presence of the Lord	A Hindu could sing this song – the burning presence of god is shining all around. The lyrics, from start to finish, are fully consistent with pantheism. The god in question could be Indra or Vishnu.
Better Is One Day	Hindus can apply the words 'Lord Almighty' to several of their deities, such as Shiva. There is nothing in this song that is exclusively Christian.
Come, Now Is The Time To Worship	Another song for Hindus. Everyone is invited before the unknown god, just as they are – no repentance required.
Open the Eyes of My Heart	Another song for Hindus. It could have been written by George Harrison of the Beatles whose song, 'My Sweet Lord' it appears to imitate.
Indescribable	While it has many noble sentiments, this song could be sung by members of virtually any religion.
Your Love Never Fails	Another song for Hindus. A pop song for the New Age.
Our God	Hindus may have some difficulty with the opening line, but after that it's Vishnu all the way.

It is shocking to find that, among 30 of the most popular CCM songs, at least eight could be sung by pagans, yogis, shamans, and New Age gurus.

Most of the other songs are marred in a similar fashion, with large quantities of theological cottonwool and an insistent, sometimes brash, determination to feel good and heal the world. An occasional reference to 'Jesus' or 'the cross' is all that distinguishes them from Eastern religion and New Age pantheism.

4. Inappropriate Familiarity

A fear of God is seldom evident in CCM songs. This is due in part to their extravagant use of repetition and in part to their easygoing sentimentality.

The Gospel of Luke gives the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector, both of whom went to the Temple to pray. One adopted a tone of self-righteous familiarity before God and recited his good works, while the other bowed his head and said, "**God, be merciful to me a sinner**" (Luke 18:13). Jesus is telling us that, in essence, we each stand before God in one of these positions. Which do you think typifies the world of CCM?

It is one thing to know that our Father loves us and to rejoice in that knowledge, but it is quite another to address Him with an undue or inappropriate familiarity.

Naturally we all want to draw closer to God and to know Him better. Nonetheless, when we sing to Him in praise and worship, we must never forget who He is and, correspondingly, who we are – wretched sinners and tax collectors, pulled from the depths of destruction at a great price.

5. Vague Theology

The theological content generally of CCM songs is remarkably vague. It can be difficult to discern a clear gospel message in any of them, or to relate more than a handful to a Biblical text. A large proportion of the young people who are attracted to CCM have a poor grasp of Scripture and do not realize that many of the ideas in these songs have no Biblical basis.

Believers in former times were able to learn the rudiments of theology from their hymnal, but this is not possible anymore. CCM, in the main, is a collection of comforting clichés repeated over and over again. Its principal purpose, it would seem, is to push aside the great hymns of the past and replace them with sentimental chants, mystical aspirations, and tender expressions of loyalty and affection.

Here are just a few examples from the CCM top-30:

Majesty	"Kingdom authority / Flow from His throne" This falsely implies that Jesus is already on the throne of David.
Shine, Jesus, Shine	"Blaze Spirit blaze". Where in the Bible does Spirit blaze on the earth? Confusing.
Days of Elijah	This muddled mixture of End Time events rejects the Tribulation.
King of Kings, Majesty	"God of heaven, living in me." This opens a door to pantheism. A theology to fit all religions.
Here I Am to Worship	The concept of worship in this song could apply to any deity.
Beautiful One	A song with a strong strain of pantheism. It also implies that man can actually see God's beauty, as in a mystical vision.
Mighty to Save	"Everyone needs forgiveness." This song points to a false, sentimental Jesus.
Sing, Sing, Sing	"What's not to love about You?" Another sentimental portrait of Jesus.
Cornerstone	"My hope is built on nothing less Than Jesus' blood and righteousness." Whose righteousness? Not ours. Confusing.

6. False Doctrines

Despite its vague theology and its ecumenical slant, CCM still manages to promote two substantive doctrines that conflict with Biblical Christianity. The first is the Charismatic doctrine that the Holy Spirit will change the world if enough Christians, acting collectively, implore Him to do so. The majority of charismatics think of Him, not as a Person, but as an energy or force that will respond positively to their emotional invocations and faith-filled enthusiasm.

The second is the Dominionist doctrine that the world will be saved ultimately, not by the return of Christ, but by the successful evangelization of entire nations. It teaches that mankind will gradually convert to Christianity and undergo a spiritual transformation that will 'enable' Christ to return. There are many shades of Dominionism, but they all reject the straightforward Biblical account of the End Time, where **"evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived."** (2 Timothy 3:13)

These false doctrines find support in many CCM songs, including several of their top-30:

Be Still for the Presence of the Lord	"We stand on holy ground" This is a charismatic idea.
Shine, Jesus, Shine	"As we gaze on Your kingly brightness So our faces display Your likeness" This depicts the believer as a charismatic, miniature Jesus.
Days of Elijah	"Righteousness being restored" This suggests that evangelization will convert the nations.
King of Kings, Majesty	"Earth and heaven worship You" Another charismatic sentiment.
Come, Now is the Time to Worship	"One day every tongue will confess You are God. One day every knee will bow. Still the greatest treasure remains for those who gladly choose you now." This teaches universalism, the belief that almost everyone will be saved, which has many supporters among charismatics and dominionists.
Beautiful One	"Beautiful one I love you Beautiful one I adore" This is the 'Jesus' seen by Roman Catholic mystics in their 'beatific visions'.
Mighty to Save	"Shine your light and let the whole world see" This is dominionist. In reality, when the whole world sees Christ it will be a time of wrath and judgment.

7. Esteem-oriented

Many CCM songs point in a subtle way to the intrinsic worth of the individual. This attitude can be summed up in the words, 'If God Himself saved me then I was worth saving.' This sentiment lingers quietly in the background of many CCM songs. The focus is on the individual and his needs, while God is depicted as the beneficent being who has the honor of meeting those needs.

Here are just a few examples:

Meekness and Majesty	" Kneels in humility and washes our feet"
Here I Am to Worship	" You're altogether lovely, Altogether worthy"
Beautiful One	"You captured my heart with this love"
Mighty to Save	"So take me as you find me"
Sing, Sing, Sing	"What's not to love about You?"

8. A Preoccupation with One's Self

Although closely related to self-esteem, the pre-occupation with one's self, which runs like a river through the majority of CCM songs, is a category in its own right. Many are little more than a vehicle for projecting the emotions of the individual, with copious references to oneself in the first person. Some even read like extracts from the diary of a love-sick teenager. It is hard to understand how any true Christian can stand before the LORD every Sunday and sing with such passion about himself.



9. An Obstinate Avoidance of God's Word

One of the most striking features of CCM is the extent to which it avoids mentioning or quoting from God's Word. It's as though the songwriters were bound by a secret restriction – 'Under no circumstances can you quote from the Bible!' And in the few instances where an explicit reference to Scripture may be found, it is generally lifted out of context and its meaning distorted.

How far we have come from the days when Christians sang only from the Psalms and gloried in God's holy Word. By contrast, today we have insipid lyrics, error-laden paraphrases, and sentimental slogans, all penned by people who appear to have little knowledge or understanding of God's Word.

10. Melodic Weaknesses

One would have thought that, with the widespread commercialization of their work, the composers of CCM would at least have striven to produce songs with satisfying melodies, but this is not the case. Even among the top-30, there are only a handful of pleasing melodies. Many have virtually no melody at all, but are built vocally on a series of chants or incantations that have to be repeated over and over again to compensate for the absence of a clear melodic line.

In order to explore this factor more fully we will first need to examine some technical aspects of musical structure – see next section.

"I have been to different types of concerts, but I have never been to a Christian concert, so I did not know what to expect. The cheering of the fans was astounding. Their reaction made me feel like I was at Madison Square Gardens... Another thing that blew my mind was the dedicated fans. They traveled from Ohio, Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan and even Florida to come to this concert of worship. When I first walked through the tunnel and out onto the floor, I couldn't believe what I saw. Almost EVERYONE was standing on their feet singing along, and dancing with them. I was in awe."

- Hillsong 'concert of worship' attendee, September 2012



<https://bankofkentuckycenter.wordpress.com/tag/christian/>

Syncopation, Back-beat, Ostinato, and Unresolved Chords

Most readers will have heard of syncopation but may not fully understand what it means. Here is a concise definition (which you may need to refer back to later);

Syncopation: A deliberate disturbance in the rhythm, where an accent which ought to fall in one position is placed somewhere else. The flow of the music is interrupted by an unexpected beat, or a normally unstressed beat is stressed. In missed-beat syncopation a beat that the listener expects to hear is not played. When this happens the listener will tend to make a physical movement to fill the void left by the missing beat.

In short, syncopation does something to the flow of the music which our mind does not expect.

It is important to note that, regardless of the way it is produced, syncopation has a physical effect on the body. It prompts the listener to move with the music in order to restore the rhythm which the syncopation disturbed.

Studies have shown that complex syncopation can be used to generate a high level of stress and open the listener to ideas that he would not normally accept. In the hands of a skilled musicologist, syncopation can even be used for mind-control.

Syncopation can apply to a simple beat comprising only two notes. Humanly the most satisfying or natural way of accenting a pair of notes is to place the accent on the first note (DA-da). This is called the down beat. When it is done in reverse (da-DA), where the accent is on the second note, it is called the back beat.

This may seem like a fairly minor difference, but it actually affects the way we respond to the music. For example, the sequence DA-da-da is soothing and waltz-like to our ears; it harmonizes naturally with the rhythm of our mind and body. However, if the accent is placed on the third note, the effect is less harmonious – da-da-DA. This is why rock music can be stressful. Since it makes extensive use of syncopation and back-beat, it is continually hitting our mind and body with unsettling rhythms. The stress generated by rock music will not necessarily be perceived as stress by participants, but as 'excitement'. Nevertheless, it *is* stressful. For example, in his book, *Your Body Doesn't Lie* (1989), Dr John Diamond (a medical professional) outlined a series of tests which he conducted on hundreds of subjects. He found that the normal weight needed to overpower the deltoid muscle in the shoulder of a healthy person was around 40-45 pounds, but that when rock music was played only 10-15 pounds was needed (The deltoid muscle holds our raised arm away from the body).

Bill Haley was one of the pioneers of rock music. He was once asked to characterize the 'new sound', namely what it was that made rock sound so different. He said: "I felt that if I could take, say, a Dixieland tune, and drop the first and third beats, and accentuate the second and fourth, and add a beat [that] the listeners could clap to, as well as dance, [that] this could be what they were after."

Haley simply took 'ONE-two-THREE-four' and turned it into 'one-TWO-three-FOUR' and then added a beat. In fact in one of his most famous songs, *Rock Around the Clock*, he opened with a bold proclamation of what he was actually doing:

"One-two-THREE-o'clock-FOUR-o'clock-ROCK...
five-six-SEVEN-o'clock-EIGHT-o'clock-ROCK..."

Thus was born the back-beat syncopation that characterizes rock.

Another important musical term is **ostinato**, which refers to a rhythmic or melodic phrase that is constantly repeated. Depending on how it is used, ostinato can have a trance-inducing effect. It is especially effective if the practitioner is trying to enter an altered state of consciousness and 'submits' to the music.

The final concept that we want to address is the **unresolved chord**. Some combinations of notes or chords are much more satisfying to our ear than others (A chord is three or more notes sounding at the same time). When we hear a fully resolved chord we don't expect or anticipate another note to make the series feel complete or fully formed. Stable chords of this kind produce *consonance*, while unstable chords produce *dissonance*. Our ears love *consonance*, but we also like *dissonance* when it adds flavor or variation to a series of notes or chords, provided the dissonance is resolved. In other words if a dissonant chord is used, another chord must be included that makes the sequence as a whole sound consonant.

Problems arise when dissonant chords are not resolved. Let's take as an example the first two lines of the Christmas carol, 'Away in a Manger':

Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,
The little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head

The *Worship Leader Praise Awards* are given annually by *Worship Leader* magazine. The awards were created in 2000 to recognize the achievements of worship leaders and innovations furthering Christian praise and worship.

Award categories are:

Song Discovery Independent Song of the Year
Worship Project Of The Year
Song Of The Year
Worship Compilation
Breakout Artist
Gospel Project
Choral Project
Worship Tech Innovation Of The Year

- Wikipedia

The words "no crib for a bed" could be removed without harming the sense, but musically it would be a disaster. Our ears demand the inclusion of the notes that go with those words, otherwise the notes that accompany the words "Away in a manger" would not be properly resolved (Try singing it). This is a rather crude example, but it clearly shows what can happen when notes and chords are strung together without proper regard to the musical patterns and relationships anticipated by our mind.

CCM is a completely new type of worship music

If we apply what we have learned here to modern worship music we will find that CCM is an entirely new brand of music, completely different from the worship music sung by the church for the past four hundred years or more.

CCM is heavily impregnated with syncopation, ostinato, back beat, and unresolved chords. Naturally, the incidence of these elements varies from song to song, but to the extent that CCM corresponds to a secular genre, that genre is soft rock. One only has to increase the volume and add more percussion to turn it into a full-blown rock sound.

CCM is aimed at the human body. It is designed to evoke a bodily response and get participants moving in some manner. Syncopation causes the listener to fill in the missing beats by tapping out the sound or by clapping their hands. Even where no movement is produced, the necessary cues are in place, giving primacy to the rhythm in the mind of the listener and pushing the melody into the background.

Unresolved chords have a similar effect. They urge participants to engage in greater repetition in a vain effort to resolve the chord and neutralize the residual dissonance. On account of this, CCM songs are more difficult to sing and generally need a rhythmic or percussive backing to hold them together. This may explain why CCM songs are rarely sung without rhythmic instrumental accompaniment, and why we seldom hear anyone humming them – in stark contrast to the older, more traditional hymns.

Christians who truly loves the LORD should be deeply concerned that CCM has disguised itself as 'worship music' and taken over the church. It is nothing but a soufflé of Biblical words and soft rock – feel-good entertainment with no connection whatever to true Christian worship.



The Enemy uses his 'eye-in-the-pyramid' symbol to show he's in control

CCM song writers

Should we be surprised by any of this?

Most of the composers of CCM songs have grown up with and been strongly influenced by successful secular bands like The Beatles, The Eagles, The Byrds, Genesis, Fleetwood Mac, and Pink Floyd. By and large they reject traditional hymn-singing as boring and old-fashioned – having little or no syncopation, back-beat, ostinato, or unresolved chords. They have no patience with the old ways of "doing church" – an awful phrase that is used to conceal the extent to which modern churches have departed from the pastoral principles set down in the Bible.

Most CCM song writers dislike denominational distinctions and want a unified world church where 'Christians' of all kinds can come together under one roof. Most of them regard the Roman Catholic church as a Christian church, despite the rank apostasy of her teachings. In the feel-good world of CCM, the reality of sin and the prospect of hell are largely forgotten, the judgment of others is completely taboo, and everything will work out fine because God wants us to be happy. The leaders of CCM have replaced the God of the Bible with the New Age god of unconditional love, a luminous, galactic being who will not condemn anyone.



The songs in the top-30 may be bland, but they are a stepping stone to a more rebellious type of worship music, where the beat is stronger, the volume louder, the repetition greater, and the Biblical content even more insipid and misshapen than it is today.

CCM appeals to people who would prefer to 'experience' God than worship Him, who believe there is some innate goodness in everyone, and who rarely study the Bible. They simply cannot believe that God's wrath will one day come upon the world and cause more death and destruction than anyone could imagine.

What kind of Worship is Acceptable to God?

Some readers may feel that the drawbacks at 1-10 above are unduly pedantic and do not represent the sincere and heartfelt opinions of most professing believers. Perhaps they are right, but my views don't matter, and neither do theirs. All that matters is what is acceptable to God.

The Bible makes a number of statements about worship that we need to consider very carefully. If they mean what they appear to mean, then the standing of CCM before God is considerably worse than our analysis would suggest.

We could have begun our paper at this point, but if we did we would have missed the sheer scale of the disaster facing the church.

"A **Dove Award** is an accolade by the Gospel Music Association (GMA) of the United States to recognize outstanding achievement in the Christian music industry." – Wikipedia

Awards include

- Song of the Year (both songwriter and publisher)
- Inspirational Recorded Song of the Year
- Inspirational Album of the Year
- Southern Gospel Album of the Year
- Traditional Gospel Recorded Song of the Year
- Contemporary Gospel Recorded Song of the Year
- Worship Song of the Year
- Praise and Worship Album of the Year

There is ample reason to believe, on the basis of the factors at 1-10 above, that the vast majority of CCM songs are not pleasing to God. Many are vainly repetitive, devoid of God's Word, directed at a vaguely defined deity, universalist, sentimental, expressed in a rhythm that is satisfying to the flesh, and framed in a theology so barren and so pathetic that it could easily be mistaken for another religion.

Having said all that, there is one factor that we have not yet mentioned, a factor so fundamental that, if its integrity is violated, the entire foundation of CCM simply falls apart.

Consider the case of Gehazi, the servant of Elisha. When Naaman, the Syrian general, was miraculously healed of his leprosy, he offered a substantial gift to Elisha, which the prophet refused: "**As the LORD liveth, before whom I stand, I will receive none.**" (2 **Kings 5:16**). After the Syrian had departed, Gehazi hurried after him and requested just a small portion of what the Syrian had offered Elisha. Having hidden his ill-gotten lucre, he returned to the prophet but was shocked to discover that his deed was known. His master chastized him: "**Is it a time to receive money, and to receive garments, and oliveyards, and vineyards, and sheep, and oxen, and menservants, and maidservants?**" Then, in an act that was stunning in its severity, he said: "'**The leprosy therefore of Naaman shall cleave unto thee, and unto thy seed for ever.**' And he went out from his presence a leper as white as snow."

Gehazi had sought to profit from the freely given grace of God. He had tried to make money from something that was wholly of God, sanctified by His holy name, and granted unconditionally by Him "whose mercy endureth forever." In consequence he was struck down with leprosy, driven from society, and burdened thereafter with the knowledge that his descendants would also have leprosy.

Admission by CCM artist, Michael Card

"The lyrics of a good number of the songs don't portray anything specifically Christian – they may have some moral message, but not a lot of the big songs are identifiably Christian... There is an essential part of the gospel that's not ever going to sell. The gospel is good news, but it is also bad news: 'You are a sinner, and you are hopeless.' How is a multi-million dollar record company going to take that? That's a part of the message, too, and if that's taken out – and it frequently is in Christian music – it ceases to be the gospel."

– 'Can't Buy Me Ministry', *Christianity Today*,
May 20, 1996.

The Word of God is telling us that we **cannot** extract mammon from grace! If we try to do so the consequences can be severe.

The New Testament gives two similar examples. The first was that of Simon, the occult practitioner who claimed to have accepted Christ. When he saw how the Holy Spirit came upon a group new converts – after Peter and John had laid their hands on them – he offered the apostles an unspecified sum of money if he too could exercise the same supernatural gift. Peter strongly rebuked him:

"Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity." (Acts 8:20-23)

The other example, of course, was that of Ananias and Sapphira who claimed to have handed over to the church the full price of the field they had sold. They could have retained as much of the money as they wished, but they pretended to have kept nothing back. They were prepared to lie in order to boost their reputation among the disciples. For this they paid with their lives.

They were guilty of equating grace and mercy with silver and gold. They thought they could exploit the blood of Christ for material ends.

The go-to website for evangelical church worship music boasts over 200 copyrighted versions of the medieval hymn "O Come O Come Emmanuel." Christian Copyright Licensing, Inc. (CCLI) also lists 122 licensed versions of "O Holy Night" and 202 versions of "Hark the Herald Angels Sing." Most have the same tune as the public domain versions, but feature new bridges or arrangements.

Your church is likely to be singing a licensed Christmas carol this December, thanks to a cycle of convenience, CCM influence, musical skills, and church identity. Today's worship world has a distinct push for new, cheap songs written for a lead singer plus a praise band, rather than the old, free songs written for keyboard instruments and a congregation.

Most worship songs from the past 100 years are under copyright. Churches can legally use them by buying hymnals, which denominations sell nearly at cost at about \$10 per copy. Or, music directors can contact and pay copyright holders directly. Since the late 1980s, churches have also been able to buy subscriptions to licenses through companies such as CCLI, OneLicense, and LicenSingOnline.

CCLI charges an annual fee of \$50 to \$4,500, based on attendance. Since 84 percent of churches have fewer than 500 congregants, buying an annual CCLI subscription (under \$230) has been an economical choice for many congregations.

From 'Who Owns Your Christmas Carols?' by Susan Wunderink,
Christianity Today, December 21, 2009

We would be shocked if a fellow Christian tried to sell us a prayer that we could offer to God! Why then are we not shocked when the CCM industry sells to the modern church the songs that its uses to praise and worship God?

How can something so obscene be considered normal?

CCM songs are not a free-will offering to God. Rather, they seek to extract some return, however small, whether in coin or reputation or both, from something that should be wholly and completely dedicated to God and to His glory!

Is this how the LORD sees it? Of course it is!

How do we know for sure? Because he told us.

When the Israelites crossed the Jordan and conquered the great city of Jericho, they were overjoyed. But shortly afterwards, when they sent a detachment of their best men to capture the small town of Ai, they were defeated. About thirty-six men lost their lives. Joshua was devastated. He rent his clothes and fell to the ground. Both the elders and the entire nation of Israel were greatly troubled by this terrible calamity. How could they possibly overcome the seven great tribes of Canaan when they couldn't even capture a small town?

The LORD revealed to Joshua the SOLE cause of their calamity. Before they laid seige to Jericho He had instructed the Israelites that they were to retain none of the spoil from the city for themselves – it all belonged to Him:

"And they burnt the city [i.e. Jericho] with fire, and all that was therein: only the silver, and the gold, and the vessels of brass and of iron, they put into the treasury of the house of the LORD." (Joshua 6:24)

Alas, just one individual decided to disobey the LORD and kept for himself fifty shekels of gold, two hundred shekels of silver, and an expensive garment made in Babylon. He did this in secret and hid the proceeds in his tent. The LORD was very angry with Israel for this solitary act of disobedience and withdrew His mighty arm. He would not extend His favour again until they identified and punished the culprit, and returned the stolen items. When the individual was exposed he confessed his crime. His name was Achan, which means 'troubler' because he had sorely troubled Israel. In retribution, he was stoned to death and his body was burnt.

The amount he had taken for himself from among the spoil of this ancient city – one of the largest in the world at that time – was probably only a fraction of one per cent. If all the silver and gold in Jericho had been gathered into a pile, the removal of Achan's illicit portion would not have been noticed.

However, Achan had stolen what belonged to God. Even though the amount was relatively small (compared to the spoil as a whole), the act itself had devastating consequences. Man cannot take something that belongs to God. The entire nation of Israel suffered a severe setback because of this man's act of disobedience. They lost the protection and the blessing of God completely until they dealt decisively with the matter and made restitution.

Does this principle still apply today? Of course it does! God does not change.

CCM has taken something that belongs to God and turned it into a commercial activity, a source of profit, a mode of entertainment, and a training ground for would-be performers.

The prayer and worship of all true believers belongs to God and only to God! No-one has the right to take even a tiny portion of this precious offering and exploit it for his personal gain. And yet CCM does this across the entire face of the earth, generating profits and other commercial benefits for composers and performers alike.

Worse still, CCM songs were not composed to honor and glorify God in the first place! They were composed for the benefit of the song-writers, the performers, and an industry that exploits the church. They are not offerings to God and never were!

So why are professing Christians using the works of Achan in their worship? Do they not understand the sanctity and beauty of worship in God's eyes? Do they not understand the simple Biblical fact that all true worship must be offered freely and fully, with all purity of heart?

NOTHING can be held back for oneself. Our Father does not ask very much of us, but many professing Christians today are so venal, so proud, and so selfish that when it comes to making even this simple offering, they insist on soiling it with mammon.

Why is the church losing so many battles? Because it has gone the way of Achan and disobeyed the LORD.

Hymns are the prayers that we sing together to our heavenly Father. Alas, under CCM they are the raw material for an industry that steals from God. The songs are not freely given – and never were. The only object is gain. As I write this I am reminded of a verse from Malachi:

**"Who is there even among you that would shut the doors for nought?
neither do ye kindle fire on mine altar for nought. I have no pleasure
in you, saith the LORD of hosts, neither will I accept an offering
at your hand." (Malachi 1:10)**

In His wonderful mercy, the LORD has told us that He keeps before Him on a "**golden altar**" the prayers of the saints:

**"...and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it
with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before
the throne." (Revelation 8:3)**

David's psalms were prayers expressed in musical form, hymns of praise and worship. All true hymns are sung to God and only to God. They are acceptable to Him only when they are completely pure, without any worldly defilement.

How many of the sung prayers produced by CCM are on the "**golden altar**" before the LORD? How many are truly unpolluted by the world? –

**"Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar; and ye say,
Wherein have we polluted thee?" (Malachi 1:7)**

CCM makes merchandise of the church. The arrogance of these people is truly breathtaking – they still ask, "Wherein have we polluted thee?" This industry is a wolf in sheep's clothing, luring millions of sincere believers into a form of 'worship' that cannot possibly be pleasing to God. Every one of its 'products' is polluted by factors that have nothing whatever to do with the glory and honor of our heavenly Father.

The traditional hymns were given to the church by their authors for the glory of God. They may have carried a copyright mark to protect them from abuse, but they were the common property of all believers. Nobody used them for pecuniary benefit or the advancement of their careers. They did not appear on charts to strengthen their commercial appeal and boost sales. They were not sung at concerts for the financial benefit of their composers or their performers.

God blesses the old hymns and those who sing them in worship from a pure heart. The Enemy hates those old hymns and has done everything he can to push them aside. CCM has played a major role in this despicable strategy. Beginning in the early 1970s, without realizing what they were doing, professing Christians everywhere began to jettison the very songs that brought joy to their hearts and replaced them with the sickly feel-good substitutes spawned by a carnal industry.

The sung prayers that were at one time heard by God every Sunday are no longer being heard by Him. Why? Because they are no longer being offered.

The churches that use CCM have fallen into the same sin as Achan. They may not profit financially, but they are complicit in this awful perversion of something that is precious to the LORD – and which ought to be precious to all true believers:

"And [Jesus] said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise." (John 2:16)

New Hymns

Have you ever noticed how almost none of the old hymns are performed on CCM albums? The profits and sales come from new material, while the older material can be used by anyone. Besides, there is always the risk that young people today might notice just how powerful some of the old hymns really were and how much they have been cheated by the phony spirituality of CCM.

There is nothing wrong with composing new hymns. Indeed, the LORD has asked us to do this:

"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." (Psalm 40:3)

Notice how even these hymns must carry the fear of the LORD! They must convey an awesome respect for His holiness and His sovereignty, a sincere desire to please Him and seek His holy will.

Christians today need to write new hymns, songs of worship that meet the standards set by God in His Word, songs that are truly sacrificial offerings to the LORD, where nothing whatever is held back for personal gain.

Conclusion

CCM has been a monumental disaster for the church and a triumph for the Enemy. It has done immense damage to true Christian worship and stolen from churches all over the world the joy – the wonderful, flowing, healing, heart-filling joy – that comes from worshipping the LORD the way He asked.

Why is the church losing so many battles? Because it has gone the way of Achan and disobeyed the LORD. If anyone still wonders why the vast majority of modern churches are only a shadow of those that prospered a hundred years ago, they need ask only one question: Do they still worship the LORD in song as they should, or have they adopted CCM?

Jeremy James
Ireland
February 9, 2016

For further information visit www.zephaniah.eu

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A tentative list, in chronological order, of the most popular CCM songs

This list of 30 songs has been compiled by reference to three main sources:

1. The CCLI Top 100 contemporary Christian worship songs (2016);
2. The BBC *Hymns of Praise* survey (2013) of the top 100 hymns;
3. The album, *Fifty Greatest Praise and Worship Songs*, Songs4Worship, 2009.

Title	Composers	Year
Majesty	Jack Hayford	1981
Here I Am Lord	Dan Schutte	1981
The Servant King	Graham Kendrick	1983
He Is Exalted	Twila Paris	1985
Meekness and Majesty	Graham Kendrick	1986
Be Still, For the Presence of the Lord	David Evans	1986
Shine, Jesus, Shine	Graham Kendrick	1987
Lord I Lift Up Your Name On High	Rick Founds	1989
All for Jesus	Robin Mark	1990
Shout to the Lord	Darlene Zschech	1993
Better Is One Day	Matt Redman	1995
Days of Elijah	Robin Mark	1996
How Deep the Father's Love for Us	Stuart Townend	1997
King Of Kings, Majesty	Jarrod Cooper	1998
Come Now Is the Time to Worship	Philips, Craig and Dean	1998
The Heart of Worship	Matt Redman	1999
Open the Eyes of My Heart	Paul Baloche	2000
In Christ Alone	Getty, Townend	2001
Here I Am to Worship	Tim Hughes	2001
Indescribable	Laura Story	2002
How Great Is Our God	Tomlin, Cash, Reeves	2004
Beautiful One	Tim Hughes	2004
Blessed Be Your Name	Matt Redman	2005
Mighty to Save	Morgan, Fielding	2006
Sing, Sing, Sing	Tomlin, Carson, Reeves	2008
I Will Rise	Chris Tomlin	2009
10,000 Reasons (Bless the Lord)	Jonas Myrin, Matt Redman	2011
Your Love Never Fails	Anthony Skinner, Chris McClarney	2011
Our God /And If Our God is for Us	Chris Tomlin	2012
Cornerstone	Myrin, Morgan, Mote, Liljero	2012