

Servant is a Christian Rock band that features "edgy, rhythmic, treble rock and an aggressive stage performance..." Not only is their show "filled with the salvation message," but it is augmented with smoke-bombs and flash-pots. Their 1983 national tour was billed as "The Largest Christian Rock-Gospel Show in America." Such a contradictory testimony immediately suggests an irony. Imagine the salvation message punctuated by smoke-bombs, and presented a la P.T. Barnum. The frivolity of a "show" detracts immensely from the gravity of the Gospel.

Barry McGuire has recorded a song about his conversion and his new life in Christ entitled, "Cosmic Cowboy." It does not present the way of salvation nor the walk of faith. It demeans the Person and Work of God the Son. Christian youth are afflicted with the "Cosmic Cowboy Syndrome" when it comes to a real understanding of who Jesus Christ is and what He has accomplished. The character of Christian music is easily adopted by listeners and will draw them away from the firm foundation of the Word.

The effect music has on the listener is obviously related to the nature of the music. While Ephesians 5:19 reveals three aspects which comprise the nature of music, Colossians 3:16 addresses the effects music should have upon its hearers:

Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs...

When we sing or when the believer sits under the ministry of song, it is the Word of Christ which is to be spoken among ourselves and which is to dwell richly in us.

There are two areas suggested by the words "teaching and admonishing." First, the Biblical requirement that Christian music be a channel for correct doctrine is presented by the word "teaching." Spiritual music will lead the saint into increasing knowledge of his God and Saviour.

Does the song present a spiritual truth from God's Word and then explain, clarify and apply it? There is much false teaching to which unwary Christians are subjected hour after hour as they sit between a pair of headphones. As the lyrics, score and character of Contemporary Christian Music is absorbed, there is little consideration given to the correctness of the teaching of the music.

Amy Grant's "Walking in the Light" illustrates a popular but fatal doctrinal error:

**The sun woke me up real early,
It's a beautiful morn.
'Cause I'm goin' down to the river
To be reborn.
Now me and Jesus did some heavy
Talkin' last night.
So I'm goin' down to be dipped and
Come up walkin' in the light.**

Contrary to the biblical teaching regarding salvation from the penalty and power of sin, "Walking in the Light" teaches that baptism is essential in salvation as well as personal sanctification.

Spiritual Christian music should not only teach but also admonish the believer. An admonition is a warning given to remind. Day after day the child of God needs to be reminded to go on in the things he has been taught from the Word. It is only a Scriptural admonition which will have the effect upon the spiritual man that the Holy Spirit intends. Emotionalism has no place in the heart of a saint as he purposes to do the Word of God. A commitment to biblical principles which is based on human emotion will fade and perish. It is the Word of the living God which endures for ever and which induces by the operation of the Holy Spirit a genuine conviction in the Christian's inner man. Only this Spirit wrought conviction will bring about a lasting change in the saint's life.

Contemporary Christian Music is generically deficient when considered in the light of God's holy Word. It is established upon the false notion that "you can't go blaring hymns...to someone who only understands rock." The Bible makes it plain that the conversion of a sinner results in the creation by God of a new nature. It is critical to nurture that new born babe in Christ in order that he may grow. To cater to the appetites and habits of the old man is deprecating the power of the Holy Spirit and the effectiveness and value of the Word of God.

This basic defect is aggravated by the way in which Christian Rock is marketed. Shiela Walsh is unabashedly presented as the Christians' equivalent of the "sexy 'secular' rock 'n' roll Grammy winner," Pat Benatar. Amy Grant is compared to secular soft pop-rock stars Carole King and the late Karen Carpenter. Christians have their own hard rockers as well — Steve Taylor, Rez Band and Petra to name a few.

The attitude which is so prevalent in Contemporary Christian Music — we are just like them — ensures the failure of Religious Rock to be truly spiritual. The Christian is called out of the world, but "more and more Christians are dropping their old 'demonic beat' misgivings and deciding rock is an acceptable and effective medium" for evangelization and edification.

Christian Rock has weaseled its way into churches where the older, more spiritually mature saints had previously resisted its intrusion. It has left a pall of carnality hanging over the younger generation of believers through the incessant barrage of shallow lyrics and worldly music presented in the character of the secular rock culture. That carnality is being perpetuated through a lack of sound scriptural teaching and Spirit-empowered admonition. True children of God are rendered impotent in the warfare of this Age. There is little understanding of the Christian life, the Person and Work of Christ or the believer's judgment.

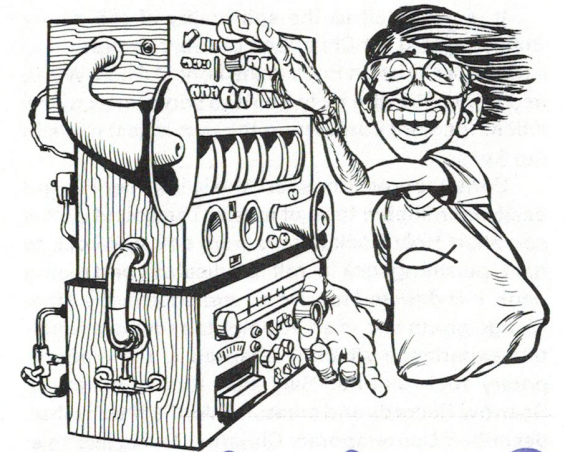
The results of this compromise are degenerative. The situation within the churches will get worse and worse as more and more religious people are brought in who have no concept of biblical salvation. Christian Rock encourages sinners to "give [Jesus] all of your love." But the Bible says "that Christ died for our sins **according to the Scriptures**; ...and that He rose again the third day **according to the Scriptures**" (1 Corinthians 15:3 and 4). The lost must believe this testimony and receive Jesus Christ as Saviour.

Christian, it is time to take your stand against the onslaught of the world as it is embodied in Contemporary Christian Music. Let us not be ashamed at the Lord's return!

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Christian? Rock

Music plays an important role in Christianity. It always has; it always will; it should. Ephesians 5:18 and 19 reveal that music is instrumental in realizing the Spirit-filled life. Colossians 3:16 amplifies this fact by emphasizing the way in which music should enrich the spiritual life of every believer.

Today there is a musical movement away from this biblical standard among Christian youth called rock 'n' roll. Our young people have grown up with this rock music, and now see no reason to give it up. The idea that rock music is a valid biblical tool for the evangelization of the lost and the edification of believers is also becoming more accepted by older saints, and more popular with pastors and Christian leaders. In the past, older believers withstood the intrusion of the world into the Church. But now many of the saints are also clamoring for the music their sons and daughters want — ROCK. Youth leaders and pastors are facing increasing pressure to incorporate rock 'n' roll in their programs for young people, because "more kids can be reached." Out of this movement and with this acceptance and popularity, Contemporary Christian Music was born.

It is essential to the spirituality of the whole Body of Christ for Christians of every age group to scrutinize Christian Rock in the light of God's Word, and then allow the Holy Spirit to conform us to the will of the Lord concerning the part music plays in our lives.

Contemporary Christian Music is a specific and easily identifiable form of music. The sound of this so-called Holy Rock ranges from soft pop-rock to hard, pulsating rock 'n' roll to ridiculous and raging punk. It is directed toward an audience in the 18 to 35 age group and is an attempt to provide a Christian experience which is adapted to the contemporary rock culture. Billy Ray Hearn, owner of Sparrow Records and creator of ABC's Myrrh label, described Contemporary Christian Music like this: **"We take the music of the street and apply Christian lyrics to it."**

By considering two areas which are suggested by the texts mentioned previously it may be observed that Religious Rock poses a threat to the vitality of the Body of Christ. Christian young people are being saturated with a biblically deficient, superficial, religious emotionalism and the older believers are being bullied into surrendering scriptural values which make up the basis for building strong Christian lives.

And since there is only one Gospel which is able to save a sinner and by which the Christian is kept (1 Corinthians 15:1-4), the lost who are influenced by Christian Rock are only assuming vain religious trappings.

Contemporary Christian Music is neither evangelistic nor edifying. Something must be done! But are you willing to trust the Lord and do it?

The Word of God says:

"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..."

Ephesians 5:18 and 19

"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."

Colossians 3:16

The areas of consideration which are suggested by these two passages are: 1) the NATURE OF THE MUSIC and 2) the EFFECT OF THE MUSIC. It is important to address the lyrics, the score and the character of music when considering its nature. And when assessing the effect music has on its listeners the doctrinal aspect and the personal impact it makes should be considered.

Ephesians 5:19 alludes to the three components of music which comprise its nature when we are exhorted to speak to one another in "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." Of course, the most overt method of communicating ideas, emotions and values is through the lyrics. This particular ingredient of spiritual music is suggested by the word "songs." Irrespective of the musical score and the character of the music, the lyrics should be spiritually oriented, sufficiently clear so as to convey spiritual truth plainly. The lyrics must also be consistent with biblical revelation. Most Contemporary Christian Music must be rejected at this point for its lack of true spirituality.

Words can preach a message of purity, despair or nihilism. Lyrics of Christian music should be spiritual not merely religious. John Styll, an entrepreneur of Christian Rock, recognizes the cliched and simplistic lyrics which characterize this music. But his remedy is to make "more poignant and truthful statements about the human condition." The primary focus of a spiritual song, however, should certainly be the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. It is He who is our life if we have been risen with Him (Colossians 3:1-4). Our hearts, heads and hands should be directed heavenward — not in our profession alone, but in our manner of life as well.

The music to which we listen should be fostering this attitude of heavenly affection. And the words of a song should encourage practical submission to God's order in all our personal affairs. In family relationships (Colossians 3:18-21), in work relationships (Colossians 3:22-24), in all our interpersonal relationships (Ephesians 5:21), the saints must be sensitive to the Spirit and ready to do the Lord's will. Having Jesus Christ as ones Saviour should truly make a difference in ones life.

Too often this is not the attitude fostered by Contemporary Christian Music. "What a Difference You've Made," written by Archie Jordan and recorded by Amy Grant, is typical of the shallow view of the new life in Christ which is characteristic of Christian Rock. The difference Christ makes is that

"[He is] my sunshine day and night," and "[He] replaced all the broken parts [in my heart]." This caricaturization of the Christian life is woefully short of the glorious practical differences the Christ of the Bible has wrought for His children.

One might argue that music is an art form. But as Christian musicians become more and more "artistic" the lyrics of Contemporary Christian Music become more and more obscure until they retain virtually no spiritual value. Lyrics become so allegorical that a truly spiritual lesson is imperceptible. This indefiniteness opens the door to many incorrect understandings concerning the point of a particular song, which fosters the acceptance of teachings which are unbiblical and even antibiblical.

"Fairytale," written by Brown Bannister, vaguely represents life without Jesus Christ as a Peter Pan fantasy, which obliterates the biblical teaching of the reality of living moment by moment under the wrath of God. Likening salvation to the kiss of a Prince given to Sleeping Beauty, there is room for any "Christian" concept of the new birth. The Corinthians were encouraged to speak plainly in order to edify the church (1 Corinthians 14:6-12). That exhortation is as valuable today as it was 1900 years ago.

The lyrics of Christian music must conform to Biblical truth as well. A Christian musician has no valid claim to artistic liberty when handling God's Word and the truths revealed in it. Don Francisco's "Too Small A Price" freely paraphrases the conversation of the thieves who were crucified with the Lord (Luke 23). This results in substantial variations from the biblical account. The record that God has left us may indeed be too inconvenient to sing or perhaps less than marketable in our contemporary rock culture. Nevertheless, a Christian musician who claims to be singing for the Lord must be careful to avoid any appearance of conflict between his LP record and the Divine Record.

From the text in Ephesians the word "psalms" suggests the second component which a Christian should consider when choosing music — the score. The arrangement of the musical notes is a no less important ingredient in spiritual music. Studies have concluded that the score will affect the listener physically, emotionally and spiritually. This same principle may be observed in the Scriptures in 1 Samuel 16:14-23. David played cunningly before Saul and he experienced physical, emotional and spiritual revival (verse 23).

The arrangements which characterize soft rock cause emotional and psychological responses which may not be perceived by the listener. The loud, driving syncopation of hard rock 'n' roll causes involuntary physical responses over which the hearer has no control. Just as the natural man can be soothed by music (as exemplified by Saul), these natural aspects of man can be bombarded and manipulated until adverse spiritual effects are wrought. It is not that Christian Rock has contributed to the perpetration of suicide or mass murder, as with secular rock music, but that spirituality is being eroded and carnality is being propagated.

As the Christian is approached from the carnal nature, that is, the natural man, true spirituality is discouraged. Rather than setting the affections on things above, the saint is spiritually sabotaged. The arrangement of the musical notes should not overshadow the message conveyed by the lyrics but should compliment it. But when the style which is characteristic of secular pop and soft rock is employed, emotionalism takes over and essentially supercedes that which is truly spiritual.

The style of hard rock known as heavy metal is primarily loud. "Headbangers" is a more than suitable nickname for the heavy metal bands. Stryper epitomizes this facet of Religious Rock as they market their music as an "attack." One secular music magazine noted that Stryper was a credible metal band "from the first thunderous guitar riff to the last holy scream." Bobby Sweet, drummer for Stryper, conceded in *ROCK* magazine that "rock'n' roll is about making powerful music and touching people's lives." When these Christian musicians subordinated the message of Jesus Christ to the heavy metal sound, the musical notes, their arrangement and performance superceded the message of the band.

The final and most obscure component in the nature of music is its character. This is suggested by the word "hymns" in Ephesians 5:19. While it is more difficult to define the character of music, it is no less discernable. Irreverence, universalism, a superficial religiousness, new-evangelicalism or a charismatic character may be presented. And because the character of music is not always readily apparent to the listener, it has the most insidious effect on believers. As the saint is slowly anesthetized spiritually, tolerance or acceptance of false doctrine can arise from constant subjection to deficient and improper attitudes in music.