

## General Topics :: The Relevance of Hymns In Contemporary Society

**The Relevance of Hymns In Contemporary Society - posted by HomeFree89 (), on: 2007/5/31 17:53**

The Relevance of Hymns in Contemporary Society  
by Steve Turley

Do hymns still have relevance in our contemporary culture? Many people don't seem to think so. More and more, churches are turning to contemporary praise songs as their sole musical expression of worship. But I believe there is a discussion much needed in the church about the significance of this shift.

The justification of this shift tends to focus more on style than substance. The discussion ought not to center on taste, that is organs vs. synthesizers, Sunday finery vs. casual wear, etc. A person does not become a fan of country music through an argument. The discussion must center on the content of the music and its relation to us as the recipients of God's Word in the modern world.

The significance of hymns is their clear expression of the knowledge of God. This God to whom we are singing is identified and completely distinct from all other gods and faiths. Contemporary praise songs, conversely, tend to focus more on our affections towards God. Theological confessions tend to take a back seat to shorter and simpler expressions of personal praise.

Now, why does this matter? It has great significance. A Muslim, for example, cannot sing a hymn and really mean what he is singing. That is because he would be professing statements that directly contradict his Islamic doctrine. However, a Muslim can sing many contemporary praise songs and never utter a contradiction of his faith. This is because contemporary praise songs tend to focus on our affections for God, as opposed to doctrinal distinctions.

"(Allah), is an awesome god,  
he reigns from heaven above with wisdom power and love,  
(Allah) is an awesome god."

But a Muslim cannot sing "When I Survey The Wondrous Cross", or,

"The Church's one foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord  
She is His new creation by water and the Word  
From heaven He came and sought her to be His holy bride  
With His own blood he bought her and for her life He died."

Obviously, we are not saying that we must discard contemporary praise songs. The point is discarding hymns completely for contemporary praise songs is dangerous, since contemporary praise songs tend not to define the God to whom we are singing. And if there is no doctrinal distinction, then our Christian faith loses its identification and character.

This needs to be thought through. Churches should not avoid the blending of hymns with contemporary praise songs. Our God is both the God of Mount Sinai and the Christ who put His arm around the woman at the well. For the one, "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God" codifies the event. For the woman at the well, "I Love You, Lord" speaks beautifully.

Let us joyously sing to our Lord and Savior, who is distinct and set apart from all peoples, all philosophies, and all other gods. For as we sing and profess our faith unto Him, we ourselves are set apart from the world, in His presence, and there we love to be.

**Re: The Relevance of Hymns In Contemporary Society, on: 2007/6/4 9:41**

what can i say? dead fundamentalism created the hatred for hymns. and hence first the suave clothes, then tune change s in the middle like we sing to Bach or Mozart - The intonnations of voices when singing onto the most pleasant soundin g voice. are you telling me you get so bored singing "When I survey the wonderous Cross" in one tune, that you would h ave a need of changing tune in the middle.

i have committed to not listening or singing to a song that, the singer is not singing it in the acceptable intonation dynam ic of singing from the threshold of that which would be evident when they would just speak of the words of the song with out any accompaniment or just in conversation. now, i realize naturally, there is some intonation differences. but, that do es not mean people need to abuse it. we have gone from making music to God to making music to ourselves to convinc e ourselves how pretty we do think we sing onto ourselves

If you have not understood what i have said above, and i am gathering now most here at SI don't really get what i say in my posts, this might help. i remember in one sermon, Ravenhill said, Whitefield could draw people to weep and cry for t heir souls by using his intonation (Oh!) but he never used it to bring people to Christ that way. and that's why i say, dea d fundamentalism... let's make it sound pretty. hey i am not against anything pretty- just excessiv-eness, and i have men tioned above how i measure excessive-ness. if you still haven't gotten any idea what i am talking about, -a) the Lord help you b) english is not my first language for i come from a background of music that is fast paced and full of color; and one would naturally think i would have difficulty loving hymns - nothing further away from truth than that. i learned to love hy mns, because the Spirit ministers to my spirit with hymns more than anything else

**Re: The Relevance of Hymns In Contemporary Society, on: 2007/6/4 12:06**

sb1175 said

Quote:

-----i learned to love hymns, because the Spirit ministers to my spirit with hymns more than anything else

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Amen!

I would add to the article in the leading post, that many hymns are, if you read them objectively, not just good poetry whi ch flows along the tune without the need for a bar or two or guitar before the voices come in, but many times it is an ascr iption of Who God is, or, a testimony borne out of the struggle of one individual saint.

There are very many hymns which never made it to the hymnbook, but the ones we still have are worth keeping, mostly.

Since I often post a hymn in my praise thread, I've begun to realise how they sometimes reflect a particular doctrinal sta nce. So, sometimes I change the words or miss out a verse because of that, but rarely is there *nothing* left after editing.

**Re: The Relevance of Hymns In Contemporary Society - posted by HopePurifies (), on: 2007/6/4 12:17**

Both of you are so right.

I hope that churches remain that are hymn only or mostly hymns. I would weep if they were all gone.

**Re: - posted by Nile (), on: 2007/6/4 13:39**

sb1175, you are so right about the intonation of voice! I dislike songs where the singer shows off with their voice, which is what they are doing. Music is for worship, and worship is about God - not you. Varying your tonal inflection with flouri shes sounds good, but it totally detracts attention from God and brings the attention to yourself.

CCM is about entertainment - not worship.

Nile

**Re: Relevance of Hymns and new worship - posted by heartablaze (), on: 2007/6/4 14:59**

I would not advocate traditionalism just for its sake; look at where that has gotten the RCC in many areas. But I do find that old hymns are mostly statements of who we are in Christ, and that is always good. CCM has a lot of that, too. Don't just kill something because it is different. I am glad that you my brothers have not. Want an example?

Here is one:

I want to be your hands  
I want to be your feet  
I'll go where you send me  
I'll go where you send me  
I've abandoned every selfish thought  
I've surrendered every thing I've got  
You can have everything I am  
And perfect everything  
I'm not I'm willing,  
I'm not afraid  
You give me strength when I say  
Repeat top  
-Hands and Feet by Audio Adrenaline

Many CCM artists use lyrics straight from scripture, just like their predecessors. Now, there are some that are shallow in presentation or lyrics and I wish that we would not put any attention on them.

Mostly myself, I just listen to CDs and never see these people. I think concerts are a lot of the problem.. my two cents

**Re: I have strong feelings about this... - posted by theopenlife, on: 2007/6/4 16:10**

I'm twenty-two years old and until last year I was obsessive in my search for "Christian music as *good* as secular music".

Unfortunately, I did not consider the moral connotations of the word 'good'. Because goodness is measured by how closely something reflects the design of God, music can only be as 'good' as the spiritual content therein, no matter how skillfully it is played. Secular music is created purely for the enjoyment of man, apart from the glory of God's approval. It has missed the design of God and therefore has no goodness. Likewise, much contemporary religious music has almost no ability to 'edify', which is to 'build up'. Thin as it is, it may stimulate, gratify, assuage; but it lacks clear, powerful doctrine and exhortation which alone edifies.

For years I justified my music collection with the verses from Philippians, "think on these things... whatsoever is lovely," saying to myself, 'aren't these melodies lovely!' This is much like seeing a well-dressed anorexic woman and saying, 'she's so elegant; her style inspires me!' The truth is that one can open the cover slip of almost any modern "Christian" album and find beneath the veneer of hip sounds and impressive tunes, an anemic list of lyrics that betray an inexperienced young believer thrust into the lime-light of pop worship/evangelism. What does the scripture say about "laying hands quickly" upon novices?

Hymns were once the primary music of the Church. The lyricists were often pastors, evangelists, and other deeply spiritual believers who devoted entire lives to prayer and study of God's word. Their solid lyrics were sometimes passed to musicians who would compose a memorable melody to fit the words and frame them within the general vocal range of everyday people.

The modern fickleness of musical taste has diluted and even poisoned much of what the Church fills their spiritual ears with. Western praise and worship songs are often written by guitar savvy, yet immature believers who know just enough love songs to plagiarize all the catch words. "God, I love you," is popular but certainly not "I desperately fear and respect You" as 1 Peter and 1 John require of true godly love. "Wrap me in Your arms" is never coupled with "Prepare my hands for the deadliest war" as the Psalms and Ephesian 5 would have us to pray.

Instead they write almost entirely about self-needs, self-weakness, and are resultantly self-possessed and powerless. This saturation of 'give-nothing, get-all' gospel music rewards the singer with none of the empowering grace that flows like a wake behind the waves of genuine repentance and contrition. When describing God Almighty, the limited experience of the writers offers no victory over current lusts and nothing of divinely inspired urgency for holiness. These musicians are

e then signed to mammon-greedy record labels at eighteen and given an international platform from which to spread imbalanced lyrics throughout all of the crippled church of Laodocia.

God raise up hymn writers for us!

**Re: - posted by HopePurifies (), on: 2007/6/6 14:10**

Very good post theopenlife.

I totally get what you're saying. Until a few months ago I was obsessed with gothic, trance, and heavy metal music. And so I found the Christian versions. I'd scour the internet for hours to find the "best stuff" not the "most edifying" or "most pleasing to God".

Plus, lots of people can listen to CCM for entertainment, just like I never worshiped to the unintelligible raucous I formerly enjoyed. Music should always be edifying, worshipful, humble, and encouraging.

But, I'd like to point out that like heartablaze said, not ALL CCM is bad. But I'd also say that we aren't being traditional for tradition sake. Everyone has given great reasons to appreciate hymns above the watered down lyrics of today's pop music.

Why would you want to listen to songs by a person you know is going out doing foolishness like "concerts" and "music videos"? (my text is not meant to be rude or condescending. 'voice' here is genuinely curious.)

More hymn writers would be sweet!

**Re: - posted by theopenlife, on: 2007/6/6 18:55**

Thanks Hopepurifies. It's amazing how God changes our preferences to desire purity and edification more than styles and sounds.

For anyone interested, here's some VERY edifying music by a few of my friends, Abraham and Erin:

(Free to download and share)

Abraham's...

(<http://www.theopenlife.com/music/abrahamjuliot/whodidyourell.mp3>) Who did you tell?

(<http://www.theopenlife.com/music/abrahamjuliot/rejoice.mp3>) Rejoice

(<http://www.theopenlife.com/music/abrahamjuliot/thehypocrite.mp3>) The Hypocrites (2 Timothy 3)

(<http://www.theopenlife.com/music/abrahamjuliot/NoGreaterLove.mp3>) No Greater Love

(<http://www.theopenlife.com/music/abrahamjuliot/WhenIAwake.mp3>) When I Awake

(<http://www.theopenlife.com/music/abrahamjuliot/Heaven.mp3>) Heaven

And Erin, she's edifying us too...

(<http://openlife.michaelspotts.com/erinalderson/seekyefirstthekingdomofgod.mp3>) Seek Ye First the Kingdom of God

(<http://www.theopenlife.com/music/erinalderson/emmanuel.mp3>) O Come, Emmanuel

(<http://openlife.michaelspotts.com/erinalderson/armsoflove.mp3>) Arms of Love

(<http://openlife.michaelspotts.com/erinalderson/matthew510.mp3>) Matthew 5:10

**Re:, on: 2007/6/7 8:50**

Michael,

i want to tell you i am in tears now listening to that rendition of Matthew 5, thanks so much for posting the links. by the way

God bless you my friend. be sure to touch base if God willing, you and i make it to the conference.

sam