

### Christian Music

Christian Music (as all Christian Art forms) is defined as overtly Christ-centered and normally involves lyrics, accompanied by instrumentation, about Christ or the Gospel, Salvation (testimonies), Christian life and witness. Christian music focuses especially on our personal relationship with Christ. An old favorite is a classic illustration of this theme: "In the Garden" (I walk with Him and I talk with Him and He tells me I am His own. Oh the joy we share ...) Some Christian music includes words about God Himself ("Holy, Holy, Holy") but such words are not the primary content of most singing or of music among many Christians. Very few Christian songs are addressed directly to God. If He is mentioned, it is in the third person, even as the Doxology is.) Many Christians will insist that their music is spiritual and makes them aware of God's presence and they become touched, maybe overwhelmed, by that presence when they sing it or hear it. It is, they say, both worshipful and edifying. I have enjoyed and used Christian music of all types all my life.

Christian Music can stir normal human emotions and can be exciting or enjoyable, making the body move (clapping, toe-tapping and dancing). It can also be meaningful and satisfying on some level. But by my definition, it does not accomplish what Sacred Music does [see post below] Is this difference important? Yes! This is not a matter of cultural and personal preference and taste. The Question is: Who is the God we worship? What kind of Music harmonizes with who He is? That is the issue. The differences in the music used in Church is a consequence of different understandings of the God we are worshipping.

Theology determines how we worship, including the type of music we use. The real issue is who we understand God to be. That is what determines how we respond to Him, i.e.- how we worship Him, even if we do not realize it! Our worship "style" and the type of music we use reveals what we believe about God. If a church wants to study its Worship, this is the place to begin: "What do we believe about God?"

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God is both transcendent and immanent. In general, contemporary churches of all kinds emphasize Immanence. They also emphasize the corollary that knowing God is subjective, based on feelings. Heart Religion is prevalent these days This coincides with the decline of interest in doctrine and the elevation of faith as experience rather than as intellectual knowledge. This emphasis is directly connected to the evangelical revivals of the 18th Century in England and America and the development of Pietism in the Scandinavian and European Lutheran churches in the 17 and 18th Centuries. Faith as experience of the heart has been a

## CHRISTIAN MUSIC OR SACRED MUSIC? [revised]

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dominant influence is both worship and Christian living in most American Protestant evangelical churches and liberal churches since the late 19th Century.

The belief that God is primarily experienced in a "personal love relationship" with Jesus leads to a preference for a certain kind of Christian music/lyrics and worship. The belief that God and His Kingdom are all about love and community leads to a Worship that reflects that belief.

My growing appreciation of who God is has brought me to seek a different kind of Worship than all of these others. In the last 6 years my understanding of God has broadened due to the amount of time I spend in the Old Testament and particularly in the Psalms. This has effected my worship. I have become far more focused on the transcendent God. I see more clearly that it is the Transcendent God who is immanent (or the Risen Christ, rather than the human Jesus). The way I understand God now (my Theology) is behind my desire for Worship which features Sacred Music (and Sacred Liturgy), indeed such Theology requires it. In Theory, I find the Risen Christ, the transcendent God, revealed in Liturgical Worship, revealed-to-be-received, in both the invisible and visible Word, in the Word read and preached and in the Sacrament. And in Sacred Music