

The Fellowship of Psalms, Hymns and Spiritual Songs

Introduction

There are many models of corporate worship for the Body of Christ. Different styles of music are used with approaches ranging from the very conservative to that which is at the opposite end of the spectrum and which some may even see to be eccentric. While each may have a validity a *balanced* approach is necessary. Only then can we experience a full expression of what music was intended to be in the life of the Church.

Fellowship

In approaching our subject we will emphasise the place and function of our corporate worship in the unique fellowship of the Body of Christ.

In the heavenly¹ example of corporate worship in *Rev 4 & 5* we see a gathering of God's people to the Lamb who is slain, yet standing. All are arrayed around and gathered to Him, casting their individual crowns down in worship. The best expression of this on earth is seen as God's people, seated with Christ in heavenly places, are gathered together for worship and communion. On these occasions the worshippers gather to the Lord's table to partake of the slain yet living Body of Christ. In a very real sense the Lamb is central to these gatherings and it is only as we come with the same lamb like nature of humility and surrender, laying down our personal crowns in submission to Christ, that a true communion of the Body of Christ can occur.

This communion extends beyond the partaking of the bread and the cup to involve the participating, sharing and commitment to each other of the individual members (*1Cor 11:17 – 14:40*). This

¹ Rev. 4:1-2

participation and sharing is the ministry of the Body to itself in love, building itself up in the faith.² More and more we must move towards this ideal whereby the Body ministers it itself in love. This is not to rest upon the ministry of just one man, or even a few, but each member is to recognise their importance in their unique gifting and calling and minister and share with the other members of the Body as the Lord, the Head of the Body, directs.

'Body' Perspective

It is from this 'Body' perspective that we need to approach all aspects of our worship, making room for the Holy Spirit to lead and for those with appropriate giftings in the Body to minister.

We can experience the fellowship of the Body of Christ in many ways. We could say there is a fellowship in the 'Word', or a fellowship in the Spirit, or in love. When it comes to worship and music there is clearly is a fellowship in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs that is an important part of the overall "koinonea" (communion, fellowship) of the Body of Christ.

The Scriptural Basis

New Testament

Ephesians 5:17-21 & Colossians 3:16-17

The Old Testament was the only Scripture which the early Church possessed. While Paul and others relied on the inspiration of the Holy Spirit as they wrote the Epistles of the New Testament, they were able to draw from the shadows

² Eph. 4:14-16

and patterns of the Old Testament Scriptures.³

In the following Scriptures music in worship is clearly seen in the New Testament Church in Paul's time.

1. It is the will of the Lord. The instruction to sing comes out of the statement, "*be not unwise but understanding what the will of the Lord is*" (Eph. 5:17).
2. The music of the Church is to be inspired, led and anointed by the Holy Spirit in all its forms and expressions. It is to be ministered on the basis of a Spirit filled life. "*...be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs...*" (Eph. 5:18,19). This is of paramount importance.
3. The music of the Church must be 'Word based'. It must be ministered by individuals out of a rich storehouse of the Word of Christ working within them. "*Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.*" (Col. 3:16). The Word of Christ, as it comes to us, is not to be understood as being a matter of simply an individual in isolation reading the Bible. It is His Word as it comes to us in and through the Body of Christ, that is the Word in the context of a committed relationship with other members of the Body of Christ. The term "*speaking to yourselves*" is used to indicate the communication and sharing of this Word one with another in musical form.
4. It is "*in the Name*" (Col. 3:17) "*Whatever you do, do it all in the Name...*" This is not merely an

invocation of the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ over all that we do, but more importantly, to do all from a position of being in a living, committed, faith relationship in the Body of Christ.⁴

Matthew 26:30 & Mark 14:26

Here the singing of a hymn is seen at the first communion service. In the life of Jesus on earth, this is the only reference to singing

Revelation 5:9-14

In this passage the words "*they sing*" are present. Tense in the original. Here in this scene around the throne of God is unceasing worship and singing. The elders have harps and sing a new song; all those present are caught up in this chorus of worship. The NIV uses the words "sing" or "sang" throughout the rest of the chapter.

In Christ we have access to boldly enter in to this same worship setting by faith. We are seated with Christ in heavenly places. The Lamb is at the centre and we gather to Him as we gather to partake of the communion table in each city.

This has the particular significance in relation to the end of time. Eph. 1:10 "*... that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth – in Him.*"

As we get closer to the end of time and the completion of God's purpose, we will experience more and more here on earth, the expression of what we see in Rev. 4 & 5. Music and worship play an important part and the whole Body participates

³ Col 2:17; Heb 8:15; Heb 10:1

⁴ 1 Cor. 1:30; Gal. 3:26-29; Eph. 2:14-16

1 Peter 2:9

The heart of a nation or culture is its music. Within each culture, throughout generations, its sons and daughters have sought to find expression of their deepest feelings. They have also endeavoured to celebrate the landmarks by which they live. Music has often been the vehicle of these expressions and celebration. So it is with the “*holy nation*”⁵ of which we are part.

From both the New and the Old Testaments, in present reality or in the shadow we can see clearly that we are a chosen nation of worshippers, chosen to proclaim His praise. Singing is the expression which Scripture most often encourages us to use in our praise of God. Song and music are an essential expression of our life in God.

Old Testament

Exodus 15

These Scriptures record the song of Moses and the Children of Israel after their deliverance from Egypt. This experience has its counterpart in the New Covenant in our deliverance from the bondage of sin.⁶

1 Chronicles 6:31-48

Here we read the order of worship established by King David. The many Scriptures regarding this are rich in application to the Church in our time. The music and worship of the Church in our day is clearly foreshadowed.

The Psalms

These are a record of inspired songs with, in some instances, instructions on how they were to be sung.

⁵ 1Pe 2:9

⁶ 1Cor 10:1-4

Nehemiah 12

Here we see the return to the music and worship of King David during a time of great restoration. We are living in the time of the restoration of the Church.

The Prophets

There are many references to music and worship throughout the prophets. These also have application today.

The remainder of the Old Testament references are too numerous to mention. It is sufficient to say that there is much to be understood about the place, administration and function of music in the Church from these Scriptures.

Psalms, Hymns and Spiritual Songs

From the Scriptures in Ephesians and Colossians previously mentioned, we see the above **three** expressions of music in the New Testament Church. Although authorities have differed in their opinions, many agree that there was no reason for Paul to use the three terms other than to specify three differing types of song in the corporate worship of the Church. What these terms meant to the early Church is uncertain, however, we may use several different approaches in coming to an understanding of them.

Original Greek word Meanings

1. Psalms = Psalmos/Psallo = “to pluck”.
Def. ‘A sacred song accompanied with the voice, harp or other instrument.’⁷

⁷ Strong’s Concordance: Ref #5567 & 5568, or Young’s Concordance – A song of praise (on an instrument)

2. Hymns = Humnos/Humneo. 'A religious song'. The thought of celebration is implied, that is, to celebrate in song.⁸
3. Spiritual Songs = 'ode pneumatikos'. Songs of the pneuma – the breath of God. The same word as is used for spiritual gifts in 1 Cor. 12:1. "Non-carnal, or (divinely) supernatural, regenerate, religious – spiritual."⁹

All of these types of song are 'spiritual' in the sense that they must all come out of 'being filled' with the Spirit (Eph 5:18), nevertheless this one is particularly designated as such.

Usage in Scripture and in Church History

It will be helpful to our understanding if we examine the way in which these particular types of song are used in Scripture and in the history of the Church.

Psalms

It is appropriate to sing the Scriptures, including the written Psalms in the Word of God. These were arranged and rearranged, divided up and sung by different groups in a wide range of styles.¹⁰ Some were even set to popular tunes of the time. We are not limited to using only these 'psalms' of Scripture as such.

By example, the Psalms recorded were songs of living experience, songs of praise and worship, sometimes prophetic, sometimes doctrinal; they covered a wide variety of expression. There are many such songs currently being composed and sung throughout the Body of Christ. Choruses, solo and group items and choir songs would

⁸ Strong's Concordance – Ref. #5254 & 5215

⁹ Strong's Concordance – Ref #4152

¹⁰ E.g. The titles at the beginning of many Psalms.

seem to fit within this category. By the use of such present day 'psalms' we continue to 'speak to one another.'

In order to have a full expression of 'psalms' singers need to be encouraged in their various roles. In considering the example of worship under David we can see that in his time there were degrees of singers and musicians, with different voicings, groupings and styles; e.g. The sons of Korah (Ps. 88), Alamoth,¹¹ Sheminith,¹² the courses of 1 Chron. 25.

Hymns

Matt 26:30 & Mark 14:26. From the usage here it is evident that a hymn was a known Christian song of the time. Whilst many Christian writers emphasise praise to God as an essential element of a hymn, early Church history shows us that it was not unusual to employ verse or rhythm in the form of hymn for theological teaching or statement.¹³ There are numerous examples of this and it is felt by some authorities that Paul embodies fragments of hymns in his epistles.¹⁴ Ralph P. Martin¹⁵ gives significant evidence of this¹⁶ and makes the point that "Hymns and Creeds meet and overlap".¹⁷ Later Church history is filled with glorious examples of doctrinal truths set to music which served to instruct Christians in the way of righteousness and called to remembrance these landmarks of the Christian faith throughout the ongoing restoration of the Church. The Scripture bears this out in Col. 3:16, "... *teaching an*

¹¹ The soprano or female voice.

¹² "On a stringed lyre."

¹³ Vincent's Word Studies of the New Testament on 1Tim. 3:16.

¹⁴ Vincent's Word Studies of the New Testament on Col.3:16. Examples given are 1Cor 13; Eph 5:14; 1Tim 3:16; 2Tim 2:11-14 & James 1:17.

¹⁵ Professor of New Testament, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena California.

¹⁶ Worship in The Early Church by Ralph P. Martin, Pages 47 – 52.

¹⁷ Worship in The Early Christian Church by Ralph P. Martin, Page 53.

admonishing one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs.” One emphasis of the music of the Old Testament psalms was that they be used “to teach”.¹⁸

It seems that although the three types of song mentioned in many ways overlap, there are aspects that are more particularly associated with each. With these thoughts in mind and in the interests of a balanced approach, it does not seem unreasonable to suggest that the hymn is characterised by its content and not by its age or musical style, since musical styles change from generation to generation and all religious songs had to have a beginning at some time. However, on the question of style, the words must be set in appropriate music and it may be that due to the foundational content that some hymns carry, they should be set in a more traditional or solemn sound.¹⁹

There are hymns that have stood the test of time. The enduring ones in the history of the Church are songs that celebrate foundational truths that have been an encouragement to the faith of generations of Christians in the past and continue to do so today. These statements of faith and worship are timeless, inspired and well put. They can be seen as ‘dead’ in comparison to the modern chorus. In a setting where there is no ongoing faith, commitment to the Body of Christ and moving of the Spirit of God, they can be ‘traditional’ in the worst sense. However, when sung with a living faith they can be awe inspiring and faith building. There is a positive aspect to tradition also. The heritage of faith from Abraham through all the saints and reformers of history is our heritage. The tradition of faith is the tradition that we **do** retain.

These hymns of old are a part of our worship in ‘heavenly places’ and our voices are joined with men of faith of all times as we sing them. We have *come* “to the spirits of just men made perfect...” (Heb. 12:23),

¹⁸ Title – Psalm 60; Deut. 31:19

¹⁹ Psalm 92:3, KJV

that is, to the fellowship in heavenly places that embraces all the overcomers who have entered in through faith and patience.

As the truth of God is progressively revealed in the ongoing restoration of the Church, new hymns that celebrate these truths must be written and sung. *Col. 3:16* instructs us to “*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*”.

From Church history we interpret a hymn, whether new or old, to be a song containing praise to God and/or doctrinal content. It describes our timeless foundations in faith as these have been progressively revealed.

Having said this, it is useful to add that the importance lies not so much in being dogmatic about what a hymn is and what it is not, but rather, it is important to agree that *hymn content* is vital to our worship repertoire. New hymns with this type of content should be coming now and in the future as the word and path of perfection becomes clearer. At the same time we should continue to celebrate and not destroy the old landmarks of faith.

The attitude in some renewal circles has often been that “we are the move of God”. As a result of this there has been a severing from all tradition, as if everything old is in “bondage”. There has been in many a reaction against hymns with the emphasis totally on what the Spirit is doing now. This is not a balanced approach.

As there is often a lack of the ‘hymn’ aspect in the charismatic stream, so there is also a lack of ‘spiritual songs’ in many mainline Churches, where often the immediate voice of God in spontaneous song has been lost.

Spiritual Songs

“In the midst of the church will I sing

praise unto Thee" (Heb. 2:12). **God Sings.** Singing is an expression of His joy.²⁰ This Scripture tells us that in the midst of the Church, Jesus will sing in praise. How does this take place? No doubt one expression of this is as He inspires believers in a spontaneous '*spiritual*' song.

Spiritual songs are those which answer in the life and fellowship of the Body of Christ in the New Testament to the inspired, spontaneous, prophetic songs in the Old Testament (*1Chron. 25*). They could also be termed 'new songs',²¹ 'prophetic songs', or the 'song of the Lord'.²² These songs are not previously composed but spontaneous, inspired by the Holy Spirit.²³ They are offered up in praise to God, but, as with psalms and hymns, may have content that will be encouragement, teaching or admonishment. There are many expressions of this, e.g. praise, prayer, victory, direction, edification, exhortation, comfort, etc., and many musical styles may be used. There is a corporate expression as well as an individual expression.

The corporate expression is heard when in a congregation, all lift up their voices in free worship, each singing his or her own words in a spontaneous melody of worship, yet at the same time blending in harmony and rhythm with others who together endeavour to 'flow' with the leadership given by the musicians or other singers. This phenomenon is now heard around the world and across many denominational boundaries in varying degrees of expression.

In the individual articulation, a person may be inspired to sing alone the song that the Holy Spirit gives for the occasion, so that the whole Church may benefit. It may

be accompanied or unaccompanied as the setting requires, however, if it is accompanied there must be a certain 'flowing together' between the musician and the singer.

As with all other giftings of the Spirit it must be done in a proper manner.²⁴ The Scripture suggests that order is necessary. In the time of David there was an order of instruction and administration of the prophetic song that allowed it to be of great benefit to the nation of Israel.²⁵ In areas of spiritual function, 'the trumpet must make a certain sound' or else the hearers cannot 'prepare for battle', i.e. they cannot make a response since the message is not *clear* (*1 Cor 14*). Training and instruction are needed. This instruction involves many and varied aspects from the need of vocal training through to the need of the individual to choose that vehicle of expression which will best carry the message.

With the gift of prophecy we are instructed that 'all may prophesy' and yet there is a 'gift of prophecy' and also the ministry of the prophet. So in song and indeed the 'new song', 'all may sing' and occasionally (not all that often) all of us should feel free to enjoy the privilege of opening our heart in individual song in our fellowship gatherings.

There is also a 'gift of song' and further, a 'ministry in song'. These giftings and callings should not be confused.

Unless song enhances and empowers the spiritual message, it should not be employed. Many messages cannot be brought sharply in song and should be exhorted or prophesied. Leaders need to urge members to function toward an effective expression.

In seeing the spiritual song used as it

²⁰ Zeph. 3:17.

²¹ Ps. 33:3; 40:3; 96:1; 98:1; 144:9; 149:1; Isa. 42:10

²² "The Prophetic Song" by LaMar Boschman, Page 3. See also 2Chron. 29:25-28.

²³ Worship in the Early Church by Ralph P Martin, Pg. 47

²⁴ 1Cor. 13:26

²⁵ 1Chron 25.

should be, the instruction about two or three prophesying is helpful.²⁶ Mostly, only two or three are needed to confirm and focus the voice of the Spirit with clarity. Then there may need to be a response of some kind before we proceed to two or three others who have a different ministry and message to bring.

Because music is so expressive of the deepest feelings within, the role of a singer is to express the heart of His people to the Lord, and His heart to us. This should bring a sense of opening (access) and a sense of leadership being exercised toward the rest of the Body. A true 'singer' is known by his/her capacity to 'open' and to 'lead' in these ways. This 'opening' may not be detailed or complex. It is probably better expressed in simplicity, with others bringing more detail and clarity.

Examples of Inspired Song in Scripture

As previously mentioned,²⁷ Paul would have had much Old Testament Scriptural background to support his teaching on psalms, hymns and spiritual songs as seen in *Eph 5:19* and *Col 3:16*. We will now consider some of the examples of the place of singers, musicians and inspired singing in the Old Testament, followed by examples in the New.

The Song of Moses. *Ex 15:1*

This is the first recorded, inspired song of Scripture. Its words are thought to be the oldest known poem in the world²⁸ and it is thought to have been sung on the morning after the passage through the Red Sea. It is obviously inspired of the Lord and given for that occasion. As such it becomes an example of what a *spiritual* song can be like in our day as the Holy Spirit inspires a

person to sing a *new* song for the edification of the Church.

Moses' song came after the event of Israel's deliverance from Egypt, so clearly typical of our deliverance from the bondage of sin and our experience of the new birth.²⁹ David writes of a similar experience in Psalm 40:1-3 (KJV):

"To the chief musician, A psalm of David. I waited patiently for the Lord; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. 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."

Just as the "*Church in the wilderness*"³⁰ experienced inspired singing as part of its worship, expression of joy and the communication of God's voice to them, so also should this be the experience of the Church in our day.

When considered in the light of many other examples of inspired singing, the content of this song helps us to understand what the content of a spiritual song might be today.

Thanksgiving and praise. Not surprisingly on this occasion, the song of Moses is filled with this (Psalm 40:3).

Victory. The Bible shows us that there are elements of spiritual warfare that are part of the Christian life (Eph 6:12). This song was a celebration of the victory provided by the Lord and no doubt an inspiration to others experiencing later difficult times.

Prayer. Much of the song is directed to the Lord. Many inspired songs of

²⁶ 1Cor. 14:29-33

²⁷ Page 1

²⁸ Jamieson, Fausset and Brown Commentary on Ex. 15.

²⁹ See 1 Cor 10:11.

³⁰ Acts 7:38

Scripture are designated as prayers (Ps 142 title;³¹ Hab 3:1-19).

Teaching. This song would no doubt have been used through the generations following to teach of the deliverance of Israel from Egypt. Some psalms are designated as being for the purpose “teaching” (Ps 60 & 78 title; Deut 31:19) and we are so admonished in Col 3:16.

There was also this element of leadership present as this song was sung. This is firstly seen in Moses and then later with Miriam the prophetess (*Ex. 15:20*).

It is not known exactly how Moses and the children of Israel sang this song. Perhaps it was sung responsively with the leadership coming from them in that way. Though we may call some expressions of the spiritual *song* “free worship”, it is always to be orderly, with elements of leadership present.

Lastly, the opening words of the first song are important if we are to experience spontaneous inspired singing in the Church today. These words are “I will sing”. There must be a willingness within us to express for all to hear, the message in song that the Lord gives.

Jehoshaphat’s Battle. 2 Chr 20

This is an amazing story of deliverance from a seemingly impossible situation in the time of Jehoshaphat. It is often quoted and familiar to most Christians. It shows us the role of the singers in the task of spiritual warfare.

Jehoshaphat put appointed singers ahead of the army to sing praise unto the Lord. The effect of this was to see the Lord move on their behalf and their enemy defeated. God chose to bring victory through this unusual means.

³¹ “Maschil” = “teach”.

These singers were no doubt descendants of the singers established in the time of King David. They were set apart for a specific ministry in song, being trained for this purpose. As they ministered victory came and the army didn’t even have to fight.

David’s Order of Worship. 1 Chr 13-16

These chapters are concerned with the restoration of the Ark of the Covenant³² to a place of prominence in the worship of the nation of Israel after losing it in the time of Eli, the priest, many years before.³³ This has a special import for the Church in our day.

The restoration of the Ark speaks to us of a restoration of the glory and presence of God with His people. We have known throughout history, many times of restoration and refreshing in the Church, however, we have yet to see the Church restored to what it was in the time of the early Church and the apostles. We may say that we are in times of restoration now.

If we compare *1 Chron 13* with *1 Chron 15* we will find that David made two attempts to bring back the Ark of God. The first effort failed; the second was successful. There were a number of reasons for failure in the first attempt. Clearly, one of the major changes that David made was to set the worship of Israel in order with appointed singers and musicians to lead in the worship.³⁴

All these singers were of the tribe of Levi, the priestly tribe. Once they were established they continued to minister in worship during the time of David. Their descendants were called upon to resume

³² The Ark of the Covenant was an item of furniture in the tabernacle of Moses. It was where the glory of the Lord was amongst His people Israel.

³³ 1 Sam 4.

³⁴ 1 Chr 15:13.

their duties in times of subsequent spiritual restoration.

Although David delivered a psalm into the hands of these appointed singers to perform on the occasion of the Ark's return, their role is more clearly presented at a later date when king David set them in order in preparation for temple worship. In *1 Chr* 25 their function is seen as ones "who should prophesy with harps". We also see that they were skilful, being instructed in their work under the hands of their fathers. Some of their inspired songs are recorded in the book of Psalms.

These Scriptures in 1 Chronicles are rich in example for today, giving us some valuable insight into the place of music in Church worship.

Elisha and the Minstrel. 2 Ki 3:15

Elisha was called upon to prophesy direction for the king. He called for a musician to come and play. As the musician played, inspiration came and Elisha was able to bring the word of the Lord. Anointed music has a place in releasing God's immediate word to His people today.

The Well of Gathering. Num 21:16

Isaiah speaks of the "wells of salvation".³⁵ The wells that Israel dug mark particular points on their journey to the promised land and foreshadow experiences of the Christian walk. This one is of particular interest since it was the well where the Lord said, "Gather the people together, and I will give them water". The gathering of God's people together into one is surely a priority today.

The work of opening the well was accompanied by inspired song. Some commentators give the sense that the work of digging to open this well went forward in

³⁵ Isa 12:3.

time to the rhythm of the song, thus making the labour easier.

Water, elsewhere likened to the Word of God (*Deut* 32:2) or the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit (*John* 7:37-40), was released to quench the thirst of the people. See also Ps 133.

Paul and Silas. Acts 16:25

Paul and Silas were bound hand and foot in the stocks in prison. Not only were they set free as they began to sing praises, but they were also able to see others who heard them singing, won to Christ.

The Opening of the Sealed Book. Rev 5:1 – 6:1

The chapter begins with John weeping because the book sealed with seven seals could not be opened. In *chapter 5, verse 9*, the elders sing a new song in worship to the Lamb. All those in this scene around the throne are participating in this worship. It is in this context of worship and the new song that the Lamb then opens the seals.

Areas of Ministry in Song

To God

This is the highest level – to minister to Him. It is often neglected and its importance not realised. It is the first responsibility of singers and musicians. *Psalm 101:1*, "Unto Thee will I sing"³⁶

To the Church

Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, and all that this comprehends.

³⁶ Psalm 47:1-6; Heb 2:12; Psalm 150.

To the Unbeliever

*Psalm 126:2. "Then said they among the heathen".*³⁷ Music can often be a means of attracting people to hear the Word of God.

Musical Styles

Popular and Traditional

Note the following comments by Murray Wylie on the balance needed between popular and traditional styles.

“‘Popular’ style, i.e. ‘of the people’ has always existed in every age. King David employed popular styles (some psalms were set to popular tunes of the day); it seems that David’s wife was offended by the liberty of expression in which he moved.

Although we mostly grow up with the musical style that is popular at the time, we must be aware and foster the awareness that popular music is not the only music. In God’s ‘holy nation’ Israel, unskilled popular music was essential, so also was the devotion to training singers and musicians to be skilled. The study of traditional style always requires training and skill, more so than that of the popular styles.

Popular style will always tend to link itself with reaction to tradition, desire for power, immodesty, cultism and elements of excess that are larger than life. The Christian must take care in the use of popular styles that he does not run to these same excesses in the search for identity and expression. The problem that older worshippers often experience when such styles are employed, is not the popular music style itself, but the elements of self-projection, desire for expression and feelings of power, etc., if indeed these are present.

Popular music that is employed must not become worldly or secular. Our praise and worship can be of the popular style without being worldly. Music must be sacred (i.e. separated) no matter what the style.

No particular style, popular or traditional, is worldly of itself. Traditional music can be and is often worldly also, e.g. the performance of hymns and sacred music is very often a worldly performance by performers who are not committed to the worship of Christ. We should avoid bias in our distinction between styles; a generation gap, whether in music or relationship, is unacceptable in the Body of Christ. Older worshippers should participate in popular styles; the young should also participate in traditional styles.

Church history shows the endeavour to eliminate worldliness by the removal of instruments which were used in heathen revelry – until there were no instruments left.”

Summary

In the sharing and participating of each member we are encouraged to “speak to one another” – to “teach and admonish” one another (Eph. 5:19 and Col. 3:16) in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. There are many and diverse expressions of this in all our gatherings and outreaching. We need to open our hearts to comprehend the largeness of God in this, that there may be a rich and full expression. Many times we are closed to what God is wanting to do because our attention is focussed on what now is, or what has been the case in the past. We are usually more comfortable when we are not facing change; however God often wants us to do something new in our lives or in the Church. We must be prepared to walk by faith as he leads us on.

³⁷ Rom 15:9; Psalm 18:48-49; Psalm 57:9; Acts 16:25

