

# *The Christian Worship Music Industry*

## *Bringing Secular, Worldly, things into the Worship of God*

This page has been written to cause you to think about the whole humungous worship music industry that has developed over some years inside of what most people would see as Christianity.

Before you beat me over the head with your bassoon, shave me into pieces with your saxophone and synthesiser, pulp me with your piano, or kill me with your keyboard, did you actually hear what I said? I said **Worship Music Industry**. I did not say **Christian Music Industry**.

"What's the difference?", you may ask.

Well, actually, there's heaps.

The Christian Music Industry is an industry that has grown up to support, encourage and promote Christian vocal and instrumental musicians who earn their living at singing and playing songs with a Christian focus. It is a thoroughly biblical principle that the "labourer is worthy of his hire" and if we apply that thought to any form of work performed by any person, whether Christian or not, then it is right and fair that those who work should be rewarded appropriately.

As a corollary to that statement, it is obvious that any musician who creates new music of any sort, or performs music of any sort - for a living - should be paid. I have absolutely no objection to that statement, in fact I fully support it. In fact I am a 100% supporter of the concept of eradicating all piracy of anything that rightfully belongs to someone else, whether a musical creation, a software creation, a written creation, or whatever and however created, payment should be made by the user for his or her use of the product.

However, when we come to stuff specifically written for use in worship of Almighty God, then I believe we have a grossly large problem that has worked itself insidiously into our society.

## *Worship and Worship Music Origins*

While many Christians feel that the Old Testament is largely irrelevant, I would like to gently point out that first of all it is there that we find the start of Christian tradition, because Christianity in itself came out of Judaism, and was (for a number of years) a sect of Judaism.

Secondly, although there are some who would say that Christ "did away with the Old Testament", Jesus never said that. Both He, and His apostles who taught and wrote for most of the rest of the first century of this era stated that Jesus Christ came to **FULFILL** the scriptures which already existed - the Old Testament. There's an enormous difference.

In this connection, we should realise that what is called the "canon" of scripture, the composition of the books of the Christian Bible, were more or less agreed on by the individual churches in existence late in the 1st century and on into the fourth century when around 3xx, Eusebius, who was an elder (also known as presbyter, or bishop, or overseer) in one of the churches, and who was accepted by all the churches as an acceptable historian for them, listed all the 66 books of the current (Protestant) bible. The extra books the Roman Catholics have - known as the apocrypha - were frequently included and then excluded up to that time, and indeed subsequently too.

Let us also realise that when Jesus Himself was asked to preach in the synagogues, and the apostles later, an Old Testament text was always used in conjunction with the topic being preached. The Old Testament has immense value to Christian beliefs and practice, but as a Christian one needs to place it in context of being the "shadow" of the real thing taught by Jesus Christ

## ***Worship in the Temple***

While this is not the place to discuss the sacrificial aspect of temple worship, it is, however, the place to discuss the musical side. The temple musicians were a body of experts trained in the art and we can read the instructions about their training in the Old Testament. However, it is just as important to read that they were supported financially from the tithes of the people, the remainder supporting the other Levites doing other temple tasks. They, and the other Levites, through their tithes, in turn financially supported the priests. This is a biblical system that works in some churches these days, too, very effectively.

It is interesting to discover that as the Christian church changed its structure through the dark ages, through the middle ages, through the Reformation, through the 20th Century, that the psalms which David wrote in praise to God, and the hymns that were added over the centuries are regarded very much as music to be sung in praise of God, not just on Sunday mornings, but at other times too. Let's face it, when I lived in Wales 30 years ago, it is a well known fact that the hymn with the chorus line "Bread of Heaven" was sung by more people on the rugby football grounds of Cardiff Arms Park and Twickenham, and in the pubs (hotels) than in the chapels in the valleys! Why? Because there were more people there. However I doubt that the descendants of William Williams and John Hughes - who wrote the hymn - ever thought about claiming copyright royalties!

This brings me to the point of this article. A song of praise to Almighty God is precisely that. It is not "owned" by the person who sang it and then wrote down the words and the notation. It belongs to God. It is an offering, something given to God for His glory, isn't it? Offerings are of greater value, we are told, if there is a sacrificial aspect, too.

So then, it might be said that I am contradicting a remark made earlier, where I wrote that it is a principle that one should be paid for one's work. I do not believe it is a contradiction, because if you are suddenly inspired by God to write something in His praise, shouldn't God then get the copyright? Okay, the reply to that might be that the author was "employed by the church" at the time that he or she wrote it. Again my response is "so what?", if it was God's inspiration, it is His by right. If it wasn't God's inspiration, one has to wonder, therefore, by what right it could possibly be used in praise of Him by anybody.

I believe we have missed the point of worship music entirely in the last few decades. I do not believe it has anything to do with recouping the cost of electronic instruments. I believe it is purely a matter of personal greed, if we really examine the whole business of copyright on music composed for the worship of Almighty God, to His greater glory. As I said before, music composed to be performed at concerts at which tickets are sold to put bums on seats in order to cover the horrendous costs of staging concerts in the 1990s plus returning sufficient income to the artists is a totally different matter.

I think we can take a very close look at the relationship between the secular music publishing industry, the secular music recording industry, and the secular musicians copyright industry and then realise that their equivalents have been established inside Christianity. A prime example is, of course, organisations such as "Hillsongs Australia", originally the brainchild of musician Geoff Bullock and his fairly small Hills Christian Life Centre at that time. Geoff himself, told me and three other musicians in the foyer of Paradise Assembly of God in Adelaide, at a cross-denominational music in worship seminar in about 1993 that he personally was perfectly happy that anybody should use any of his compositions at any time for worship or similar purposes. This demonstrated to me his integrity as a musician anointed of God.

Don't get me wrong, there are genuine costs associated with using someone's composition. The music notation has to be scored, either painstakingly by hand, which takes time, and sure time is money in that respect. But why should a publishing company like EMI or Festival Records get a massive cut from God's inspiring Geoff Bullock or any other composer to write praises to Almighty God?

### *A Practical Example*

Some years ago, I communicated with those who administer the ongoing ministry of **Keith Green**, a secular musician/songwriter who had a most dramatic conversion to Jesus Christ and Christianity in 1972 after searching for "something" and finding it via the original Vineyard church in a lounge room in one of the USA's west coast cities. His story is eloquently described by his widow, Melody (Keith died in a light aircraft accident) in a book titled "**No Compromise**". All of Keith's gospel and worship music was handled by the owner of Sparrow Records, who was a personal friend of Keith's & Melody's. It was all made available to the public for just the bare publishing cost, and if you couldn't afford even that, then Keith would give it to you. I was told by **Last Days Ministries** a couple of years ago that EMI, the enormous music giant, had now bought Sparrow, and that the previous arrangements had **ALL BEEN CANCELLED**.

The practical onflowing of the take-over of Keith Green's music means that if the singing group I participate in were to chose to sing **any** of his songs of worship, specifically written as such, at **any old peoples' home** - and old peoples' homes are by definition **EXCLUDED** from classification as worship situations under copyright law - **both we and the owners would be liable to pay royalties to EMI for every one we sang...**

**Have I successfully made my point? I believe so...**