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WHY I DON'T SING PROTESTANT SONGS

The following are some of the reasons why I don't sing the Protestant songs in the new Church Hymnal:

1) In the Foreword to the old Hymnal Mr. Armstrong explained WHY he did not include the Protestant songs in the Church's hymnal. Mr. Armstrong agreed with the elderly Bible scholar back in 1933 who had said: "It is just as sinful to sing a lie as to tell one." Mr. Armstrong realized that many of the standard hymns other churches sang were not just "unscriptural", but even clearly contrary to the Scriptures.

THAT IS STILL TRUE TODAY, EVEN THOUGH MR. ARMSTRONG IS DEAD!

2) The religious customs of this world are "vain", meaning useless, futile and meaningless to God. And I don't want to be associated with them in any way! God instructs us:

Thus saith the LORD, LEARN NOT the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them. For the customs of the people [are] vain: for [one] cutteth a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the axe. (Jeremiah 10:2-3)

God says: "DON'T COPY THE WAYS AND CUSTOMS OF OTHER RELIGIONS. The songs we are talking about were written specifically to be sung in other churches.

3) It is not only a matter of looking at the words themselves. Sometimes the words themselves may be "harmless", and still it is not appropriate for us to sing them.

For example, you can often hear somebody praying on the radio or on television. Now I am not prepared to be associated with that prayer ... I will neither close my eyes nor say 'Amen' to such a prayer. Why do I react this way? Is it because there is something wrong with the actual words in such a prayer? No, the problem is not the words that are used. They may be perfectly good. The problem is that the person praying is not talking to the same God that I pray to.

The same goes for the songs. The Jesus they sing about was born on December 25th, had long hair, died on a Friday and was resurrected on a Sunday, did away with the necessity to obey His Father's laws, etc..

I don't want to be associated with prayers or songs (some songs are just prayers put to music) that were composed with such a "god" in mind.

In whom THE GOD OF THIS WORLD HATH BLINDED THE MINDS of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. (2 Corinthians 4:4)

My mind is not blinded by Satan, at least not in this particular area, and I am not prepared to sing the same words and the same melodies that some of his people composed to sing in his churches.

4) Would you sing the Christmas song "Silent Night, Holy Night"? If not, WHY not? What is the difference between this song and those in our hymnal? Is there anything wrong with "THE WORDS" in "Silent Night ..."? So should you sing it?

The problem is THE OVERALL ATMOSPHERE that such a song creates. In this case that atmosphere is conducive to Christmas observance. With other religious songs the atmosphere created is often one conducive to the typical protestant religion.

5) Deuteronomy 12:30 says:

Take heed to thyself that thou be not snared by following them, after that they be destroyed from before thee; and that thou enquire not after their gods, saying, HOW DID THESE NATIONS SERVE THEIR GODS? even so will I do likewise. (Deuteronomy 12:30)

These songs were written with the obvious intention of serving "THEIR" god, the one I described above. Again, I don't want to be associated with that.

6) There is a saying that also applies to this question, and that is:

"What you ARE speaks so loudly, that I cannot hear what you are SAYING."

For example, the words of "Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus" on page 188 of the new hymnal are just SO MUCH WAFFLING WITHOUT ANY REAL MEANING. It is just plain nonsense. Just look at the words!!

Luke 6:46 clearly applies here:

And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? (Luke 6:46)

Another example, Charles Wesley's songs on pages 218, 260, 261, etc. sing about ... "the triumphs of His grace", etc. ... but the church founded by the author doesn't even believe that obedience to God's laws is required by God. I simply do not believe in "the triumphs of His grace" that Charles Wesley had in mind.

Another example is the text of "All Creatures of Our God and King" on page 162, which comes from "Francis of Assisi", a well-known Catholic monk. I don't want, in a religious sense, to be associated with anything that "Francis of Assisi" was associated with.

Another example is the song and music by Martin Luther "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God" on page 34. When you look into Luther's life and teachings (I grew up in the Lutheran Church!) you have to conclude that it is hard to find a more vile and evil individual in the last 2000 years of human history! His teachings were utterly perverse. I am simply not prepared to be associated in any way with Martin Luther.

It boils down to Amos 3:3.

"CAN TWO WALK TOGETHER EXCEPT THEY BE AGREED?"

How can we possibly "walk" with Francis of Assisi and Charles Wesley and Martin Luther and ... (a hundred other Catholic or Protestant authors)? I don't express myself religiously in the words and tunes

that they have authored.

7) Would you eat "hot cross buns", "chocolate Easter bunnies" and "christmas cakes"? Is there anything wrong with the flour and milk and eggs and chocolate and raisins in those products? No, there isn't, and I guess that's why some people in the Church DO eat these things. But what do those things picture to those who attach a religious meaning to them? They tacitly acknowledge pagan rituals and pagan customs.

But I [say], that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. (1 Corinthians 10:20)

What items of food with "religious overtones" are to eating, the Protestant and Catholic-composed religious songs (hymns) are to Church services, "and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils". The religious songs are dedicated to exactly the same "god" to whom the "christmas cakes" and "hot cross buns" are dedicated. And I want no part in that!

The main point that sums it all up is shown in 2 Corinthians 6:14-17.

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what FELLOWSHIP hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what COMMUNION hath light with darkness? And what CONCORD hath Christ with Belial? or what PART hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what AGREEMENT hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in [them]; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore COME OUT FROM AMONG THEM AND BE YE SEPARATE, saith the Lord, AND TOUCH NOT the unclean [thing]; and I will receive you, (2 Corinthians 6:14-17)

If I sing their songs, then I certainly have at least SOME "agreement, part, concord and communion" with them ... i.e. we agree on which of THEIR songs should be sung at Church services to worship the true God.

TOUCH NOT THE UNCLEAN THING!

8) Further, the thing that really concerns me with these new Protestant songs in our hymnal is this:

THE MOTIVE FOR INCLUDING THESE SONGS IN OUR HYMNAL!

All of the doctrinal changes that the Worldwide Church of God has initiated are intended to give the Church some "agreement ... part ... concord ... and communion" with the churches of this world. The idea is to show what we have "in common" with other churches. That is precisely what is meant by "lukewarm" in Revelation 3:16, accepting and combining aspects of both, hot and cold. It is a compromising attitude.

The Protestant songs that have been added to our hymnal were added with exactly the same motive, to demonstrate to other churches what we have in common with them. These songs are one more attempt to pressure us to seek agreement with the world's churches.

I REFUSE TO BE PRESSURED INTO DOING THIS!

9) I want to elaborate a bit more on the point I raised earlier about being concerned about more than just the "right words". You can have the right words, and yet use music to create the wrong atmosphere. It

really isn't enough to just have the right Biblical words.

For example, in the new Hymnal we have FIVE songs based on Psalm 23. They are all found on pages 38 to 43. The fact that we have FIVE different ones all by itself shows that this is a popular subject in the Protestant churches! While it could be argued that the words are scriptural (i.e. they are taken out of the Bible), THE ATMOSPHERE these songs create, the emotional content, is very OBVIOUSLY Protestant. So correct biblical text can be used to create an undesirable mood and atmosphere. Therefore I don't sing these songs based on Psalm 23.

I could elaborate further, but this explains the main reasons why I don't sing the songs of Protestant authors, which have been added to our Hymnal. Some have asked about the few Protestant songs that were already included in our old Hymnal. My response is that those few songs actually provided the foot-in-the-door for all these new Protestant songs to be added now. Thus I now don't sing those songs either ... I now realize that I was conned, and that I should not have sung them all along!

10) There are many songs in the new Hymnal that have been composed by members of God's Church. As a general guideline, I have no objection to singing most of them. Many of them are Scriptures put to music. Here are some guidelines that I myself follow with these songs.

When we examine all of them, we find the following things: most of them are based on text from the Bible. As I pointed out in regard to Psalm 23 above, that in itself isn't necessarily enough. They still should be closely evaluated if they are going to be used in worship to God.

Most of these songs composed by church-members fall into one of the following groups:

A) There are a number of songs that basically follow the style of songs that Dwight Armstrong composed. An example would be Ross Jutsum's song "Come Before His Presence" on page 114. It is the text of Psalm 11. I have no difficulties with such songs.

B) Then there are a number of songs that were written specifically to be sung by children. An example, also by Ross Jutsum, would be "Won't It Be Great!" on page 174. While there is nothing wrong with these songs per se, they do sound a little awkward when sung by an ADULT congregation, as is usually the case when adults sing children's songs.

C) Then there are a number of songs that have a very modern musical style. While such a style would not traditionally be associated with religious music, it isn't necessarily automatically inappropriate. We don't have to worry about what is "traditionally" acceptable. Of more concern though, is the mood and atmosphere such modern music creates. If the musical style is one that is generally associated with light ENTERTAINMENT music, then the effect of such a song would present a problem to me, and I would have a hard time putting my heart into such a song. Such an assessment is obviously very personal and subjective, and in those cases we should be true to our own conscience, without judging other people who respond differently.

D) A fourth group of songs written by church-members are written in what I would call "Protestant Emulation Mode" ("PEM"). They use the right words, usually diverse biblical passages joined together. But the overall musical effect isn't right.

Mr. Armstrong used to say that he had a one-tracked mind. When it came to music, he said, he could only concentrate on either THE WORDS or else THE TUNE. That is a very useful approach to use in evaluating the songs in this PEM category. If you listen to THE WORDS ONLY, it sounds right and proper and good. But if you concentrate on THE MUSIC ONLY and mentally shut out the words, then it sounds identical to many of the popular Protestant songs. That is THE MOOD these songs elicit from an

audience (i.e. the congregation). And that is a mood I do not identify with! For that reason I will not sing such a song, even if it is written by a church-member and even if it has biblical words.

This is obviously also a very personal and subjective assessment, which will vary from person to person. It will also be influenced by our previous religious background. In such circumstances each individual person should be true to his/her own conscience, without judging other people who respond differently.

A large number of the songs I would place in this category sing about "LOVE". Yes, love is certainly a biblical topic. But it is woefully misunderstood in this world today.

When the Bible speaks about "love" it is not speaking about an emotion or a feeling for other people. Love has to do with commandment-keeping! The commands explain both, love towards God and love towards fellow-man. Jesus Christ Himself DEFINED love towards enemies (i.e. towards fellow-man) as being composed of three things. That's right, you can present it as an equation as follows:

LOVE TO FELLOW-MAN = 3 THINGS!

The three things are:

- SAY GOOD THINGS TO AND ABOUT OUR NEIGHBOUR;
- DO GOOD THINGS TO AND FOR OUR NEIGHBOUR;
- SINCERELY PRAY FOR OUR NEIGHBOUR.

That's what Christ explained in Matthew 5:44.

But I say unto you, LOVE your enemies, BLESS them that curse you, DO GOOD to them that hate you, and PRAY FOR them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; (Matthew 5:44)

(The word "bless" in Greek just means "say good words to".)

When people in religious songs sing about "love", they inevitably mean an emotion. But in the Bible the word "love" doesn't mean an emotion at all! Therefore the authors of songs have given the word "love" a meaning that is not biblical at all, and they then use the song to make an emotional appeal. That is a way of circumventing the concept of love that GOD wants us to have. When "love" is used in a song to refer to an emotional feeling for God or fellow-man, then I simply do not identify with that idea, and for me Mr. Armstrong's principle of "it is just as sinful to sing a lie as to tell one" would apply! Therefore I then cannot sing that song!

Compare the use of the word "love" in these two songs:

A) "O how LOVE I Thy law! It is ever with me ...", the first line from the hymn on Page 136. The word "love" is sung quickly and crisply. The emphasis is on the word "law", which is drawn out.

B) "That you are my disciples if you LOVE one another", the last line from the hymn on page 226 entitled "By This Shall All Men Know". The emphasis here is on the word "love", which is drawn out to make an emotional appeal ... that should be easy enough to see.

The first example conveys the correct meaning of the word "love", by focusing on God's law; that's what love is all about. The second example leaves you clueless as to what "love" really means and allows you

to drift off into an emotional feeling, "feeling good about God", as the Protestants might say. I can't sing something like that in good conscience towards God.

One last point about songs written by church-members: there are a few themes that I feel are INAPPROPRIATE TO PUT TO MUSIC! For example, the song "Christ, Our Passover" on page 240. To sing the words:

"This bread is my body broken for you ...

This cup, the new covenant is my blood ..."

... would detract from this most solemn of occasions. Those are very serious words which portray a very serious event, which I simply cannot picture Jesus Christ wanting us to sing about!

Again, in this sort of situation one must be true to one's own conscience because ... "whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (Romans 14:23).

Well, that about sums up my feelings about the new songs in our new hymnal.

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