

MUSIC IN CROSS CULTURAL WORSHIP: HOW MUCH INFLUENCE SHOULD  
WESTERN WORSHIP MUSIC HAVE IN CROSS-CULTURAL MISSIONAL  
STRATEGIES?

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Summary:

This paper outlines an approach to the use of indigenous music from an ethnodoxological perspective. The related dangers of simply transplanting Western music are also discussed. Included is significant field research in Peru. The final section of the paper gives practical advice and application for contemporary cross cultural mission workers.

Length: 62 pages

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## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. Statement and relevance of the problem

For many years Western missionaries have gone to foreign mission fields and taken with them worship music from their home culture. With different cultures come many very different musical styles and instruments. As missionaries, is it right to impose our ‘Western’ melodies, rhythms, harmonies and instruments on other cultures? Is this the most effective way for missionaries to teach new believers to worship—in a musical style that is foreign to their own and which they have to learn before they can be free to worship? Or would it be more effective to encourage them to use worship music in their own indigenous style using their own indigenous instruments—a style and sound with which they are already familiar and as a result are freer to offer up genuine, heartfelt worship?

I believe that music is a very important part of mission because it is something that almost every missionary encounters in one way or another on the mission field. Although I recognize that many missionaries would not claim to be musicians or have much musical knowledge or ability, I believe that every missionary should have at least a basic understanding of the tension that exists between using indigenous music or imported Western music, and the implications of using one of these styles over the other. T. W. Hunt writes, “One of the most infructuous problems missionaries face is the problem of indigenous music.”<sup>1</sup>

In this project I plan to research the question, ‘How much influence should Western worship music have in cross-cultural misional strategies?’

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<sup>1</sup> T. W. Hunt, *Music in Missions: Discipling Through Music*, (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1987), 112.

## B. Objectives

In looking at this question of how much influence Western worship music should have in cross-cultural misional strategies, my aim is to clearly set out the positive and negative implications of using ‘imported’ Western worship music in cross-cultural contexts, and the implications of encouraging and facilitating the use of indigenous worship music. As a result I hope to come to a clear and firmly grounded personal conclusion on the issue, which I will be able to take with me and utilise in future ministry.

My purpose at the outset is to establish the relevant theological foundations before continuing to examine the research question more specifically. I will examine what the Bible has to tell us about our mandate for mission, music in worship, the use of arts and creativity in worship, and the importance of a contextualized church.

## C. Assumptions and Limitations

One of the main limitations in this study was the fact that I am not working (and have never worked) in the field which I am studying. To try and compensate for this as best I could I made contact with a number of people who are currently working on the field in this area.

Concerning indigenous Christian music, over 600 items have been published in English over the last 150 years.<sup>2</sup> Missionaries in many parts of the world have been debating the use of culturally-appropriate music in church for a long time. A few years ago, the term “ethnodoxology” was coined to represent the study of worship and culture in a wider sense, not just music. Since this term is so new, very few writers have used it yet. However, the term is due to reach a wider audience since it was the word recently chosen for the professional organization of people involved in contextualized worship and music, the

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<sup>2</sup> Dianne Palmer-Quay, *Developing Indigenous Hymnody: Key Resources for Cross-Cultural Workers* 1999. (See [http://ethnodoxology.org/reviews/Sample-e\\_Developing.htm](http://ethnodoxology.org/reviews/Sample-e_Developing.htm) for a summary).

International Council of Ethnodoxologists. My main resource for material specifically related to Ethnodoxology was journal articles.

As I progressed through my study its breadth had to be limited because of the scope of the subject and the many possible focuses this project could have had. As a result I deal more specifically with music in worship, rather than worship as a whole or music as a whole (and the endless potential it has in mission work).

I have made the assumption that the reader recognizes the distinction between the terms ‘music’ and ‘worship’. At no time do I equate them or consider them to be interchangeable. When I am specifically referring to music used in worship, I will say so.

#### D. Definitions of Key Terms

**Ethnomusicology:** This is the study of music in the context of its surrounding culture.

Mantle Hood defines it as follows: “Ethnomusicology is an approach to the study of *any* music, not only in terms of itself but also in relation to its cultural context.”<sup>3</sup>

**Ethnodoxology:** The basic meaning of this term is ‘ethnic worship’. It is made up of two words, “ethnos” meaning all people groups and nations, and “doxology” meaning worship.<sup>4</sup>

**Ethnocentric:** To be ethnocentric is to view one’s own culture as the highest possible, and one to which every other culture should strive to imitate. Webster’s dictionary defines it as “inclined to regard one’s own race or social group as the center of culture; the ethnocentric view that the rest of the world must become worthy of us...by imitating our way of life.”<sup>5</sup>

**Culture:** When talking about culture I am referring to the unique society, traditions, customs and way of life surrounding and shaping each individual. It is “The total pattern of human

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<sup>3</sup> Mantle Hood, “Ethnomusicology” in Harvard Dictionary of Music, *Ethnomusicology*, Kay Kaufman Shelemay, *Ethnomusicology: History, Definitions & Scope* (New York & London: Garland Publishing Inc., 1992), 134.

<sup>4</sup> Frank Fortunato, (ed.), “The International Council of Ethnodoxologists,” *Global Worship Report* (vol. 2, #25-November/December 2003).

<sup>5</sup> Noah Webster, *Webster’s third New International Dictionary*, (Springfield, Massachusetts: G. & C. Merriam Company Publishers, 1971).

behaviour and its products embodied in thought, speech, action, and artifacts and dependant upon man's capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations through the use of tools, language, and systems of abstract thought.”<sup>6</sup>

**Indigenous:** Indigenous is that which is from a particular society or region and is native to them. It is not something that has been introduced from another culture or society.

#### E. Research Methodology

The majority of my research was conventional research, using books and journal articles. I accessed a number of websites that dealt with the topic I was researching. I also conducted a few interviews with people working in the field (of Ethnodoxology) and others working on the mission field. I had e-mail correspondence with a number of people who are working specifically in the field of Ethnodoxology, and had some other missionaries (not working in this field) answer questionnaires. I also spent five weeks in Peru last summer and during that time I was able to research the issue myself, observing how music was used in worship and talking to nationals about their feelings on issues related to indigenous music in worship.

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

## II. THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

### A. The Biblical Mandate for Mission

We need to begin by answering the question ‘Why missions?’ Why do we even need to bother reaching people with the gospel of Jesus Christ? We must look at what the Bible has to say about the church’s role in mission.

Mission is an important theme running throughout the New Testament. It is not as common a theme in the Old Testament, though the book of Jonah is often interpreted as having a missional theme. Therefore I intend to focus specifically on what the New Testament has to teach us regarding mission. Possibly the most widely known New Testament text with a missions theme is God’s words to his disciples in ‘The Great Commission’ of Matthew 28:16-20: “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations” (v. 19a). Although Jesus was speaking to his 12 disciples when he said this, I believe that this is a command not only to his disciples, but to all believers.<sup>7</sup> It is therefore our responsibility to follow Jesus’ command. However, this is not the only text we have been given, but there are numerous others which reinforce the same command over and over again. I will mention only a few here.

It is recorded in Acts 1:8b that Jesus told his disciples, “You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” From this verse it is clear that not every Christian is called to missions in a cross-cultural context, but some may be called to make disciples right where they are (their ‘Jerusalem’), among the family and friends they already have. However, there is still no doubt that we are all called to missional work in some capacity, whether at home or overseas.

In Mark 16:15 we again read Jesus’ command to “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.” A few verses further on, in verse 20, we see that the disciples

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<sup>7</sup> Many commentators agree that this commission is applicable for contemporary Christians—see commentaries on Matthew by John MacArthur, C. H. Spurgeon, Douglas R. A. Hare & W. Hendriksen.

*obeyed* this command: “Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere.” It is our duty to follow the example of the disciples recorded in Mark and go out and preach the gospel everywhere, as we are commanded to do.

In Luke 10:1-24 we read the account of Jesus sending out the 72. These verses make it clear that Jesus’ command to spread his name and all that he has done for us was not only for the 12 disciples. I believe that it was for every follower of Christ.

Another well-known passage is Romans 10:14-17, which asks how people can call on the Lord’s name (and be saved) if they have not heard the message preached, and how can it be preached if none are sent to preach it to them? This passage presents us with another clear mandate for missions. It reminds us of the necessity of preaching the gospel and of ‘sending’ others to other parts of the world, to which we ourselves are not called, to tell people who have never heard the good news about Christ. God makes it clear to us in the Bible that *all* of humanity is sinful (Romans 3:23), and that our sin results in death and eternal separation from God (Romans 6:23). *Every* Christian has the duty to tell others of God’s gift of salvation and eternal life.

We should not only see it as our duty to reach people with the gospel, but also our privilege to be given such a task. In John 20:21-23 Jesus tells his disciples, “As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you.” Then we read that he breathed his Holy Spirit on them. We are not left to fulfil this incredible task on our own, but we have been given the Holy Spirit who will work through us as we witness to others. On our own strength we can do nothing, but with the help of the Holy Spirit the Great Commission is possible.

We also see many examples in the New Testament of believers following Jesus’ command to spread the Good News. In Acts 11:19-20 we read that “those who had been scattered by the persecution” told the Good News not only to the Jews (in Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch), but also to the Greeks in Antioch. In Acts 10:34-46 we read the story of how

Peter shared the message of the gospel with Cornelius and as a result “the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message.” In Acts chapter eight we read about how Philip the Evangelist proclaimed Christ in Samaria (v. 4-8) and then travelled south where he met an Ethiopian Eunuch on the road and shared the Good News about Jesus with him. Throughout the book of Acts we read about the missionary journeys of the Apostle Paul. There is no better Biblical example of a missionary than Paul.

From these passages and many others in the New Testament we can clearly see that mission is not an option for the people of God. It is a command, and like any command from God we *must* obey it. Individual perspective on the doctrine of election does not negate the Biblical mandate for missions. If we believe that God did not choose before time who would receive salvation, but rather it relies entirely on the free will of man, then we must follow His command to reach people with the gospel. On the other hand, if we believe in the doctrine of election, that God has already chosen who will be saved, we still have the same responsibility to reach people for Christ, and in that way be used as God’s instruments in bringing salvation to the elect.

I believe that the mission which we are called to be involved in should be a holistic ministry. We see Jesus himself demonstrating a holistic ministry—he quite clearly took care of people’s physical needs as well as their spiritual. In Matthew 11:4-5 we see how he gave sight to the blind, made the lame walk, cured lepers, made the deaf hear, raised the dead and preached good news to the poor. In Mark 6:30-44 we are told the story of Jesus satisfying the need for food of 5000 people. In Matthew 11:28 Jesus says, “Come to me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.” In 25:31-46 He talks about how when we feed, clothe and shelter someone in this world we are doing it for Him.

We also see examples of the disciples following Jesus’ model of being part of a holistic mission. In Acts 4:32-35 we read that the believers sold all their possessions and gave the

money to the apostles who distributed it all to those in need. In Acts 3 we read the account of how Peter and John healed the cripple. In Romans 15:23-33 Paul talks of how he was collecting money for the poor believers in Jerusalem. These passages (and there are many more besides) clearly teach us that our ministry as believers should be a holistic ministry, looking the whole person, and not only their spiritual needs.

As individual Christians and as the wider church of Christ we have no choice but to be involved in missions work. It is a clear command from God. Costas sums this up well in the following quote: “Mission is intrinsic to the very life of the church. There is no other church than a missionary church.”<sup>8</sup>

### B. Music in Worship in the Old Testament

Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Missions exists because worship doesn't. Worship is ultimate, not missions, because God is ultimate, not man. When this age is over and the countless millions of the redeemed fall on their faces before the throne of God, missions will be no more. It is a temporary necessity. But worship abides forever. Worship, therefore, is the fuel and goal of missions.<sup>9</sup>

(Psalm 86:9 and Revelation 15:4 both tell us that one day all nations will come before God in worship).

As important as missions is, it is not the ultimate goal of the church. More important than missions, and of eternal value, is worship. Our aim through missions, then, is to bring people from all parts of the world in worship before God in the way that He alone deserves. We can express our worship to God in many different ways. One of these ways, through which Christians around the world express their worship, is in music and song. “Throughout its history, Christianity has been a singing religion...Christianity has never been without

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<sup>8</sup> O.E. Costas, *Theology of the Crossroads in Contemporary Latin America*, (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1976), 7.

<sup>9</sup> John Piper, *Let the Nations be Glad: The Supremacy of God in Missions*, (Michigan: Baker Books, 1993), 11.

music.”<sup>10</sup> We must be careful not to equate music and worship, but rather recognize that music can be used as one of many ways of offering our worship to God. So why does music play such an important role in Christian worship? It is important to look to the Bible to answer this question and to evaluate the place of music in worship. We will begin with a look at what the Old Testament teaches us about the use of music in worship.

Music was an important and prominent part of everyday life for the Israelites. (We see examples of this in passages such as Numbers 21:17; Judges 11:34-35; Joshua 6).

Even though Yahweh was to be worshipped in his sanctuary, the earth and all its fullness was also his; and as human habitat, of which humanity was to be the steward, the world was to be an arena of praise. Accordingly, the use of music is as much an integral part of the gathering of harvest as the worship in the sanctuary. The uniqueness is that while harvest songs are sung, they are sung to the Lord of the harvest.<sup>11</sup>

It is helpful to recognize the importance of music in the everyday life of the Israelite community, and how they often used this music to worship God in their daily lives.

The Bible is full of examples of how God’s people used music to praise and worship Him. It was an important aspect of temple and synagogue worship. Richard C. Leonard writes, “Music, both vocal and instrumental, played a central role in the worship of Israel.”<sup>12</sup> The most commonly used words in the Old Testament to refer to sung praise are *zimmer* and *shir* (and these often appear together, e.g. Psalm 47:6; 104:33).<sup>13</sup> The word *zimmer* means “make melody” and refers to singing accompanied by an instrument (or instruments).<sup>14</sup> Examples of this are found in Psalm 47:6 and Psalm 66:2. The word *shir* is used when speaking of singing or intention to sing (e.g. Psalm 13:6; 57:7; 101:1).<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> T. W. Hunt, *Music in Missions: Discipling Through Music*, (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1987), 11.

<sup>11</sup> Harold M. Best & David K. Hutter, *The Complete Library of Christian Worship, vol. I: The Biblical Foundations of Christian Worship*, ed. Robert E. Webber (Nashville, Tennessee: StarSong Publishing Group, 1994), 227.

<sup>12</sup> Richard C. Leonard, *The Complete Library of Christian Worship, vol. I: The Biblical Foundations of Christian Worship*, ed. Robert E. Webber (Nashville, Tennessee: StarSong Publishing Group, 1994), 7.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 7

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

Another term sometimes used in *maskil* which means “skillful song” (e.g. Psalm 47:7).<sup>16</sup> *Anah* means “to pronounce with a loud voice” or “to answer” and is usually translated in English as “sing”.<sup>17</sup> *Shir hadash* is used a number of times in the Old Testament and means “sing a new song” (e.g. Psalm 33:3; Isaiah 42:10). Leonard suggests that this may have referred to “spontaneous song under prophetic anointing”.<sup>18</sup>

The word *selah* is found frequently throughout the Psalms (and also in Habakkuk 3). Although the meaning of this word is not clear, Leonard suggests that it may have meant “free-flowing praise with instruments”.<sup>19</sup>

We see many examples throughout the Old Testament of how music was used to worship and glorify God. In 1 Chronicles 15:16-24 we learn that musicians accompanied the Ark of the Covenant when it was brought to Jerusalem. The Levites sang joyful songs, accompanied by lyres, harps and cymbals (verse 16). In 2 Chronicles 5:11-14 we are told that the Levite musicians played cymbals, harps and lyres, accompanied by singers and 120 Priests playing trumpets. The singers and instrumentalists joined together in one voice in praising God, and the glory of God filled the temple. What an incredible picture of the potential power of using music to worship God.

Music and prophecy were often closely associated in the Old Testament.<sup>20</sup> We see an example of this in 1 Chronicles 25:1-7 where we read that some of the sons of Asaph were appointed as musicians at the temple of the Lord to accompany prophecy on their harps, lyres and cymbals. (We also learn, in verse 7, that they were all trained and skilled musicians). We see many other examples of the close association between music and prophecy in passages such as 1 Samuel 10:5 and Isaiah 5:1-7.

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 221.

There are also many references to the use of musical instruments in the Old Testament: the tambourine (Psalm 81:2; 150:4), the harp (Psalm 98:5; 150:3), the trumpet (Psalm 98:6), the horn (Psalm 98:6), the lyre (Psalm 150:3), strings (Psalm 150:4), the flute (Psalm 150:4) and cymbals (Psalm 150:5). This is by no means an exhaustive list, but it gives a picture of the Biblical use of musical instruments in Israelite tradition. One thing we learn about the use of musical instruments is that they were not used for the sake of entertainment, but rather they had specific functions. Leonard writes, “In Scripture, musical instruments serve a purpose within and for the life of the covenant community; their function was not a matter of individual self-expression, as is often the case today.”<sup>21</sup> Best and Huttar also observe that Biblical music, in general, is inseparable from its function. Music for its own sake is a relatively new idea in Western culture and it would seem that this concept is unique to Western culture.<sup>22</sup>

From this brief look at the use of music in worship in the Old Testament, we see that it was an important part of the Israelites’ worship of God. Music served particular functions and was not used to exhibit virtuoso musicians (though it appears that the musicians were indeed trained and skilled). Nor was music used in the temple or synagogue for the sake of performance or entertainment. Much Old Testament music was, however, presentational, but it was presented to God on behalf of His people (rather than presented to the people which is often the case today). Music was used as a means of offering worship to God.

### C. Music in Worship in the New Testament Church

“Although the New Testament says little about music making, it is clear that the worship life of the early church was characterized by the use of psalms and other forms of

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<sup>21</sup> Richard C. Leonard, *The Complete Library of Christian Worship, vol. I: The Biblical Foundations of Christian Worship*, ed. Robert E. Webber (Nashville, Tennessee: StarSong Publishing Group, 1994), 234.

<sup>22</sup> Harold M. Best & David K. Hutter, *The Complete Library of Christian Worship, vol. I: The Biblical Foundations of Christian Worship*, ed. Robert E. Webber (Nashville, Tennessee: StarSong Publishing Group, 1994), 226.

songs.”<sup>23</sup> There are a number of verses in the New Testament where we see evidence of the use of hymns in various contexts. In Matthew 26:30 (and Mark 14:26) we read of Jesus and his disciples singing hymns at the conclusion of the Last Supper. Then in Acts 16:25 we see Paul and Silas “praying and singing hymns to God” when they were imprisoned. We only need to read on a few verses to see the powerful results of their singing hymns to God.

There are also a couple of verses that mention the use of music in other contexts. In Matthew 9:23, in the story of the dead girl who Jesus brought back to life, we learn that music was a part of the mourning process. In the parable of the Prodigal Son we learn that music was used for celebration (Luke 15:25).

There are a number of other passages in the New Testament that teach more specifically about the use of music in worship. In 1 Corinthians 14:26 Paul is describing orderly worship, and in his list of the various components of worship he mentions hymns. In this case he is emphasizing their importance for the edification of other believers. In 1 Corinthians 14:15 Paul writes, “I will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing with my mind.” Best and Huttar suggest that in this passage Paul was “calling for a balance between ecstasy and discipline in music making...by asking that singing be done with the mind (or understanding) as well as in the spirit.”<sup>24</sup>

In Colossians 3:16 Paul writes, “Let the word of Christ dwell richly in you as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.” Here we see the importance of song for teaching doctrine and for admonishing one another. In this passage we also see that the singing of psalms, hymns and spiritual songs appear to be evidence of Christ’s dwelling in a believer. In Ephesians 5:19 Paul again instructs the believers to “Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord.” Just before this,

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 231.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 231.

at the end of verse 17, he writes, “Instead, be filled with the Spirit.” In these verses Paul is indicating that the singing of psalms, hymns and spiritual songs is a sign of the filling of the Holy Spirit. The “psalms” in these passages most likely referred to the Biblical Psalms used in Israelite and Jewish worship. The “hymns” may have meant the Biblical Psalms and other prophetic hymns from the Scriptures (e.g. Luke 1-2; Philippians 2:5-11; 1 Timothy 3:16).<sup>25</sup> The “spiritual songs” possibly referred to spontaneous free-flowing songs.<sup>26</sup>

These verses, along with many others from both the Old and the New Testaments, make it clear that music was an important aspect of worshipping God. Surely, then, music should still be an important part of our worship today. As God’s people, called to “Go and make disciples of all nations,” it is our responsibility to teach those who we reach with the gospel to worship God in the ways that the Bible teaches are appropriate. “When the flame of worship burns with the heat of God’s true worth, the light of missions will shine to the most remote peoples on earth.”<sup>27</sup>

#### D. Biblical Foundations for the use of the Arts and Creativity in Worship

It is important that we look more closely at the issue of creativity in worship. Is creativity a human design, or is it a characteristic intricately woven into our beings by God? I believe that it is a remarkable characteristic which God has intricately woven into our being to glorify himself. I believe that God has given us all a gift of creativity, some to a greater or lesser degree than others. God is a creative God, and we can reflect his image, in which we are made (Gen. 1:26-27), through our use of this God-given gift of creativity. Larry Nyberg writes,

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<sup>25</sup> Philippians 2:5-11 and 1 Timothy 3:16 are thought by some scholars possibly be fragments of early hymns. (See Geoffrey W. Bromiley, *The Complete Library of Christian Worship, vol. I: The Biblical Foundations of Christian Worship*, ed. Robert E. Webber (Nashville, Tennessee: StarSong Publishing Group, 1994), 107.

<sup>26</sup> Richard C. Leonard, *The Complete Library of Christian Worship, vol. I: The Biblical Foundations of Christian Worship*, ed. Robert E. Webber (Nashville, Tennessee: StarSong Publishing Group, 1994), 18.

<sup>27</sup> T. W. Hunt, *Music in Missions: Discipling Through Music*, (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1987), 11.

By producing new forms, new artifacts, new expressions that communicate truth in fresh ways, artists function as ‘creators’, in finite measure, to the glory of the infinite Creator...The creative impulse, then is one of the greatest natural gifts of God to humanity, and has everything to do with being created in the image of God.<sup>28</sup>

Nowhere do we see as awesome an expression of creativity as in the creation of the world. Nowhere will we see the depth creativity as can be seen in the work of the Creator. Psalm 19:1 attests to his creative work: “The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.”

So is there really any question of whether or not it is appropriate to use creativity in worship? I do not believe so. “Throughout the history of the Christian church, worship has made use of the fine arts as vehicles for bringing glory to God and for augmenting the worshipper’s awareness of the presence of God.”<sup>29</sup> Different forms of art can reach people’s innermost being and help them express worship to God in ways that words cannot. “The arts are uniquely capable of expressing the nonrational element in the worship experience.”<sup>30</sup>

We must now determine what exactly it means for the Christian to use creativity in worship. Nyberg suggests it is all about using God-given gifts to produce order, beauty, and meaning.<sup>31</sup> One of the mediums through which we can express this creativity is music. “Music plays an integral part in biblical worship. As one of the arts most accessible to the ordinary worshipper, it became important in the expression of the faith of the corporate community.”<sup>32</sup>

So what should we conclude? Are the arts acceptable in worship? Should the Christian community be free to express creativity in worship? Is music an appropriate expression of

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<sup>28</sup> Larry Nyberg, *The Complete Library of Christian Worship, vol. I: The Biblical Foundations of Christian Worship*, ed. Robert E. Webber (Nashville, Tennessee: StarSong Publishing Group, 1994), 114.

<sup>29</sup> Robert E. Webber (ed.), *The Complete Library of Christian Worship, vol. I: The Biblical Foundations of Christian Worship*, (Nashville, Tennessee: StarSong Publishing Group, 1994), 113.

<sup>30</sup> Richard C. Leonard, *The Complete Library of Christian Worship, vol. I: The Biblical Foundations of Christian Worship*, ed. Robert E. Webber (Nashville, Tennessee: StarSong Publishing Group, 1994), 113.

<sup>31</sup> Larry Nyberg, *The Complete Library of Christian Worship, vol. I: The Biblical Foundations of Christian Worship*, ed. Robert E. Webber (Nashville, Tennessee: StarSong Publishing Group, 1994), 114.

<sup>32</sup> Richard C. Leonard, *The Complete Library of Christian Worship, vol. I: The Biblical Foundations of Christian Worship*, ed. Robert E. Webber (Nashville, Tennessee: StarSong Publishing Group, 1994), 220.

this creativity in worship? Leonard writes, “The most numinous of the arts is music, which speaks most directly to the intuitive capacities of the worshipper, bearing a sense of majesty, wonder, mystery, and delight, and bringing a release of the soul even without recourse to words...Art is not only permitted in biblical worship, it is mandatory.”<sup>33</sup> I believe that God has given us all a gift of creativity and it is our responsibility to use this gift to the glory of God. Whether this is expressed through music or through other forms of art is not the issue. The issue is that it is used to worship and glorify God, and not ourselves.

#### E. The Importance of a Contextualized Church

“Culture is at once our greatest opportunity and our most stubborn problem.”<sup>34</sup> I believe that we need to consider the question of whether or not the Christian church (and the gospel message it seeks to proclaim) should be culturally accessible or culturally distinct, before we look at whether or not music used for worship should be culturally appropriate. Gerald Arbuckle writes about how we have treated this issue of cultural relevance in the past. He says, “The church has related to cultures in a variety of ways over the centuries. Sometimes, it has fostered a dialogue relationship. But, more frequently, it has demanded of cultures that they conform, not just to the heart of Christ’s message, but to the dominant, Western cultural way of expressing the Good News.”<sup>35</sup> Is this the Biblical approach to cultural issues? Do we have a right to impose our Western church culture on others who we are trying to reach with the Good News? Alternatively, should Christianity be made culturally relevant (contextualized) or is this a compromise of our faith?

I believe that the most important thing to remember is that *our* understanding of the gospel has already been contextualized into our own culture. The culture of Jesus’ time is

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 218.

<sup>34</sup> T. W. Hunt, *Music in Missions: Discipling Through Music* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1987), 118.

<sup>35</sup> Gerald A. Arbuckle, *Earthing the Gospel: An Intercultural Handbook for the Pastoral Worker*, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1990), 10.

very far removed from what our Western culture looks like today. I believe our understanding of Christianity has already been contextualized because we would find it very difficult to relate to and understand a religion based in a culture so different from ours if it were not. We understand Scripture and the gospel in *our* cultural context. So why would it be any less appropriate to help other cultures understand the message of the gospel in *their* cultural context? Is our culture more holy than or superior to others? I think not, though this seems to be the ethnocentric view of many Western Christians today. Why is it that so many Westerners feel that other cultures will be so much better off if we bring them some of our Western culture? In fact, the exact opposite is often true—we frequently do more damage than good by introducing to foreign cultures the ways of the Western world. The same is true in the way we do church. What ever made us think that other people groups would be better off doing church the way we do it? This is a distorted and damaging ethnocentric view held by too many Christians today. T. W. Hunt believes that Christianity survives in so many different cultures today because “*it is accultural and its demand is otherworldliness.*”<sup>36</sup>

“Carrying the gospel cross culturally forces us to peel off culture so that only the core gospel remains.”<sup>37</sup> It is imperative to realize that, even though our aim in missions should be to contextualize our message, the root of Christianity, the gospel, must not change. The *means* by which we communicate it may change, but the core message never changes. Robert Webber presents us with the image of finding new wineskins for an unchanging wine.<sup>38</sup> It is quite appropriate, and indeed necessary, for the wine skins to be changed, but not the wine. In other words, the style and structure of Christianity may change in different cultures and at different times, but the content must never change. No matter what culture we live in, we must not let that culture affect the content of our faith, and we must not be

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<sup>36</sup> T. W. Hunt, *Music in Missions: Discipling Through Music* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1987), 118.

<sup>37</sup> Thom & Marcia Hopler, *Reaching the World Next Door: How to Spread the Gospel in the Midst of Many Cultures*, (Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1993), 18.

<sup>38</sup> Robert E. Webber, *Planning Blended Worship: The Creative Mixture of Old and New* (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1998), 26.

controlled by it. We need to remember that culture is not absolute, but the Christian message *is*. Not every aspect of *any* culture is going to be appropriate for Christianity to embrace. Arbuckle reminds us that we must make Christ the measure of which cultural attitudes, values and structures are suitable for us, as Christians, to adopt.<sup>39</sup> Some of these we will accept, and some of these we will reject. (It is important to remember that this principle applies to every culture in the world, even our own). Jesus himself made the choice to accept the limitations that his adopted culture here on earth would place on him. However, he was still lived a life fully obedient to God's will.<sup>40</sup> We must follow Jesus' example and reach out to others in their cultural context without conforming to the evil ways of the world. "There is nothing in the New Testament to suggest that the evangelized need adopt the cultural ways of the evangelist."<sup>41</sup>

A vivid example of Jesus reaching out cross-culturally is found in John 4 when he talks with the Samaritan woman. Hopley highlights why this was such a significant cross-cultural meeting.<sup>42</sup> Jesus was on his way from Judea to Galilee, and although the quickest way was through Samaria, this was not the usual route for the Jews of that day. Instead they would travel the long way, to the east of the Dead Sea, because they believed that the Samaritans were an unclean, semi-pagan people and travelling through their land would make them unclean too. It was a different culture from their own. In verse 4 we read that Jesus "had to go through Samaria." Why this was the case is not made clear to us, but one possibility is that he was living what he preached and was showing his disagreement with this particular Jewish prejudice.

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<sup>39</sup> Gerald A. Arbuckle, *Earthing the Gospel: An Intercultural Handbook for the Pastoral Worker*, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1990), 20.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, 52/3.

<sup>41</sup> Vida Chenoweth, "Spare Them Western Music!" *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 20 (January 1984), 31.

<sup>42</sup> Thom & Marcia Hopley, *Reaching the World Next Door: How to Spread the Gospel in the Midst of Many Cultures*, (Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1993), 56-61.

The woman Jesus met at the well was probably a woman of bad reputation, cast out by society.<sup>43</sup> So not only was Jesus talking to a Samaritan woman, but he was also talking to a woman who had probably been outcast by society because of her immoral lifestyle (verses 17-18 inform us that she has had five husbands and the man with whom she is presently living is not her husband). In verse 27 we see that even the disciples were surprised that Jesus was talking with a woman.

To Jesus, none of these cultural differences mattered. He put aside all cultural differences and told her the Good News, through which many Samaritans believed (verses 39-42). We too need to set aside cultural differences and break down cultural barriers if we are going to successfully reach people with the gospel of Christ. Jesus told the Samaritan woman this news using a symbol with which she was familiar—water. He said, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst” (verse 13-14). However, even though He contextualized the message, the content of His message did not change. We need to constantly be careful that in reaching out and being culturally relevant we do not water down the essence of Christianity.

Other examples of cross-cultural outreach in the Bible are Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8:26-39 and Philip in Samaria in Acts 8:4-8. We also see Paul, a Jew, preaching cross-culturally throughout his ministry to the Gentiles (Galatians 1:13-17). Justo L. Gonzalez looks at another example:

When the Spirit let the various people in Jerusalem hear the message in their own tongues, the Spirit also paved the way for a church that would no longer be controlled by the original disciples in Jerusalem or their cultural successors. The Spirit was saying that the language and culture of Cappadocian, Phrygian, or Mesopotamian were just as capable as the language and culture of the disciples of bearing and expressing the message of the gospel.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> We come to this conclusion because she was at the well in the heat of the day instead of the usual time in the cool of the morning.

<sup>44</sup> Michael Hawn, *One Bread, One Body: Exploring Cultural Diversity in Worship*, (Bethesda, MD: Alban Institute, 2003), xii.

Michael Hawn talks about the Nairobi statement on worship and culture which has four primary views on the relationship of worship and culture:

1. Worship as transcultural—the theological truths of Christianity are true regardless of the cultural context.
2. Worship as contextual—*all* worship, set in a specific place and time.
3. Worship as countercultural—every culture has evil in it and therefore we must reject some aspects of culture (Romans 12:2).
4. Worship as cross-cultural—the statement says that “Jesus came to be the Saviour of all people. He welcomes the treasures of earthly cultures into the city of God.”<sup>45</sup>

I believe that if we want to connect with non-churched people today, in *any* culture, we must *understand* their surrounding culture. However, we must also be careful not to let the culture take control of our churches or our lives. T. W. Hunt makes the important point that Christianity does not need culture for survival, but for communication.<sup>46</sup> Our worship needs to use cultural forms that connect with the people in that particular culture. God is sovereign over *all* things, including the culture. Therefore, Christians may participate in it, but the church (and every individual Christian) must also be set apart from and distinct from culture. I like how Eugene Peterson has translated Romans 12:2: “Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out.” We must carefully evaluate the culture in which we live. Pop culture (in any country) must not dictate to our churches. We must be careful not to let our churches be ruled by culture, but we also have to be careful not to go to the opposite extreme and alienate ourselves and our churches from the average non-churched person.

Marva Dawn, in her book *Reaching Out without Dumbing Down*, writes:

To maintain this dialectical tension of being *in* but not *of* (*the world*), the Church's worship must be *upside-down* (at least in the world's eyes)—turning the culture's perspective on its head (thinking from God's revelation rather than human knowledge), teaching an opposite set of values (loving God and others instead of self), enabling believers to make authentic differences in the world.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 12-18.

<sup>46</sup> T. W. Hunt, *Music in Missions: Discipling Through Music* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1987), 118.

<sup>47</sup> Marva Dawn, *Reaching Out Without Dumbing Down: A Theology of Worship for the Turn-of-the-Century Culture*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1999), 17.

Hunt suggests a number of principles for missionaries to apply to the whole issue of the church and culture:

1. Everything good in a culture should be retained. “God has provided more than adequate resources for picturing himself in the culture of the people he is working with.”
2. Everything obviously and inherently evil should be discarded.
3. One may trust the Holy Spirit in the gray areas, especially as He guides a new believer if that believer is being carefully disciplined.
4. Missionaries should carefully and prayerfully evaluate how much of their message and how many of their standards are biblical and universal and which are conditioned by their own cultural background—they must give up what is cultural and hold tightly to what is Biblical.
5. The missionary should regard the tools of culture as an important means of communication, second only to language.<sup>48</sup>

It is clear that we must contextualize the message of the gospel in different cultures. We must remove cultural barriers that make the church inaccessible to outsiders. We must facilitate worship in a way that is understandable to the people, and therefore every aspect of worship must be contextualized. “Our task as a church, it would seem, is to get some perspective on the whole of the gospel and allow our music to reflect that wholeness and authenticity on behalf of the world.”<sup>49</sup> The music that we use in worship needs to be culturally accessible. However, it must not be *so* culturally accessible that it neglects the core truth of the gospel.

“The gospel is like a seed and you have to sow it. When you sow the seed of the Gospel in Palestine, a plant that can be called Palestinian Christianity grows. When you sow it in Rome, a plant of Roman Christianity grows. You sow the Gospel in Great Britain and you get British Christianity. The seed of the Gospel is later brought to America and a plant grows of American Christianity. Now when missionaries came to our lands they brought not only the seed of the Gospel, but their own plant of Christianity, flower pot included! So, what we have to do is break the flower pot, take out the seed of the Gospel, sow it in our own cultural soil, and let our own version of Christianity grow.”<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> T. W. Hunt, *Music in Missions: Discipling Through Music* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1987), 121-122.

<sup>49</sup> Paul Westermeyer, *The Complete Library of Christian Worship, vol. IV: Music and the Arts in Christian Worship*, ed. Robert E. Webber (Nashville, Tennessee: StarSong Publishing Group, 1994), 164/5.

<sup>50</sup> Michael Hawn, *One Bread, One Body: Exploring Cultural Diversity in Worship*, (Bethesda, MD: Alban Institute, 2003), 5.

### III. LITERATURE REVIEW

#### A. The Role of Music in Missions

The earth is...full of a variety of musics, musics that can be as different as men are from men, or societies from societies, or the frozen ice lands of the north from the steaming tropical jungles, yet that are somehow tied together by that wonderful common denominator, the human being...For art, and music is an art, concerns a depth of expression which somehow reaches beneath the surface of our being and touches on mysteries that seem to us very, very important, one might even say essential, to the core of what we are.<sup>51</sup>

There is no doubt in my mind that music touches people's souls in a way that nothing else can. Music, I believe, is a part of our inner being. Paul Neeley says that "Music has a unique capacity to get to the depth of the human heart, and to express those depths in outward form."<sup>52</sup> We can often express our feelings and emotions through music and song better than we can through words and vocal communication. All around the world people are expressing themselves through music and respond to all different kinds of music in many different ways. Alan Merriam believes that "Music is clearly indispensable to the proper promulgation of the activities that constitute a society; it is a universal human behaviour—without it, it is questionable that man could truly be called man, with all that implies."<sup>53</sup> Perhaps this is not so much true for every individual person, but rather for every people group.

Although music is certainly universal and a part of our very human nature, it is by no means a universal language.<sup>54</sup> In fact, "there are many musics, just as there are many languages."<sup>55</sup> John Blacking writes, "What turns one man off may turn another man on, not because of any absolute quality in the music itself but because of what the music has come to

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<sup>51</sup> David Benedict Reck, *Music of the Whole Earth* (New York: Scribner, 1997), 1.

<sup>52</sup> Paul Neeley, "Noted Music: Scripture Set to Local Music Aids in Adoration, Evangelism," *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 35 (April 1999), 161.

<sup>53</sup> Alan P. Merriam, *The Anthropology of Music* (Northwestern University Press, 1964), 227.

<sup>54</sup> Vida Chenoweth & Darlene Bee, "On Ethnic Music," *Practical Anthropology* (volume 15, no. 5, Sep.-Oct. 1968), 205.

<sup>55</sup> Cory Cummins, "Indigenous Music in Missions," personal e-mail (October 21, 2003).

mean to him as a member of a particular culture or social group.”<sup>56</sup> Music itself is a common denominator around the world, but the sound of that music may vary greatly from one culture or society to another. “Our own personal taste and culturally-determined musical values should not be confused with any worldwide aesthetic absolutes.”<sup>57</sup> He continues that ethnomusicologists who have been researching this for over 100 years have discovered that there are no aesthetic musical absolutes.

Music, and how each individual perceives it, is largely shaped by the surrounding culture. This includes a number of different features, as David Reck writes,

And what we call music—the way we make it, the way we listen to it, what we expect of it—is shaped, too: by our relationships, attitudes, value systems, religions, languages, ways of counting and categorizing, even philosophical abstractions, as well as by our inheritance of particular musical languages (scales, instruments, forms, etc).<sup>58</sup>

Alan Merriam says that the discipline of Ethnomusicology “involves much more than the structural analysis of music sound, for music is a human phenomenon produced by people for people and existing and functioning in a social situation.”<sup>59</sup> Therefore not only the musical sound is examined, but also the influence of and effects on the surrounding society and on individuals. Music needs to be analyzed and understood in its cultural context if it is to be understood at all. John Blacking also highlights this concept. He writes, “People’s responses to music cannot be fully explained without some reference to their experiences in culture of which the notes are the signs and symbols.”<sup>60</sup>

Music not only has the ability to reach people at a very deep level, but it also has the potential ability to bring people together and unite them. “Music is the common ground for

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<sup>56</sup> John Blacking, *How Musical is Man?* (Seattle & London: University of Washington Press, 1973), 33.

<sup>57</sup> Paul Neeley, “Some Social Factors in the Failure and Success of Indigenous Hymns.” *Ethnodoxology Sample Issue*, 4.

<sup>58</sup> David Benedict Reck, *Music of the Whole Earth* (New York: Scribner, 1997), 4.

<sup>59</sup> Alan P. Merriam, *The Anthropology of Music* (Northwestern University Press, 1964) 187.

<sup>60</sup> John Blacking, *How Musical is Man?* (Seattle & London: University of Washington Press, 1973), 52.

illiterates and intellectuals, believers and unbelievers.”<sup>61</sup> Music has the potential to bring different people together as one.

In many tribes and people groups, such as the Baouli and Agui tribes in the Ivory Coast, music is a part of everyday life.<sup>62</sup> It is a part of village games, funerals, cultivating the soil, and much more. Therefore getting to know a people’s music is an important way of getting to know their culture. Chenoweth and Bee suggest it can in fact “unlock valuable anthropological data which is often inaccessible in any other way.”<sup>63</sup> We must also recognize that no matter how poor a country may be economically, it does not mean that they are poor or suffering musically as well. Steven Pierson writes, “I had expected the physical poverty of eastern Europe to be accompanied by artistic and spiritual poverty. I found just the opposite to be true.”<sup>64</sup> What defines wealth and poverty? In the West they are very strongly related to financial and material wealth. Perhaps different cultures have different understandings of what these mean.

We can look at our own Western society to see a widespread use of music in a society where it is assumed that everyone has some capacity to understand music. However, at the same time, in Western society most people would believe that only *some* people are musical.<sup>65</sup> The Venda people of Africa that John Blacking studied do not think it is possible to have an unmusical human, though they would recognize that some people do perform better than others.<sup>66</sup> Blacking writes,

“My” society claims that only a limited number of people are musical, and yet it behaves as if all people possessed the basic capacity to listen to and distinguish patterns of sound. The makers of most films and television serials hope to appeal

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<sup>61</sup> Phil Anderson, “Body, Soul & Spirit: Malian Evangelicals Worship to the Beat of their Hearts,” *The Gospel Message* (1999, issue 3), 3.

<sup>62</sup> Louis L. King, “Indigenous Hymnody of the Ivory Coast,” *Practical Anthropology* (volume 9, no. 6 Nov-Dec 1962), 268.

<sup>63</sup> Vida Chenoweth & Darlene Bee, “On Ethnic Music,” *Practical Anthropology* (volume 15, no. 5, Sep.-Oct. 1968), 208.

<sup>64</sup> Steven Pierson, “We Sang Ourselves Free: Music Lessons from Estonia,” on line, <http://www.gospelcom.net/bgc/emis/2002/sangfree.html> (accessed December 3, 2003).

<sup>65</sup> John Blacking, *How Musical is Man?* (Seattle & London: University of Washington Press, 1973), 8.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid*, 46.

to large and varied audiences; and so, when they add incidental music to the dialogue and action, they implicitly assume that audiences can discern its pattern and respond to its emotional appeal, and that they will hear and understand it in the ways that its composer intended. They assume that music is a form of communication.<sup>67</sup>

This would suggest that music, although it may be part of our inner being as humans, is also a learned behaviour. We learn, within our cultural context, how to respond to different musical sounds.

If music is such an important part of our very human nature and if it can truly reach people on a level that no other medium can, then surely it is an indispensable tool for use in missionary work (in the same way as the native language is). Brian Schrag suggests that if missionaries “are able to share in the musical life of those to whom they are ministering, they have access to the deepest levels of human emotion.”<sup>68</sup> Therefore, “Our choice, if we are to be effective missionaries, is not *whether* we will use music in our work. Our choice is *how* we will use it: effectively, efficiently, spiritually, or slovenly and carelessly.”<sup>69</sup> It is this question of how we use music (effectively or carelessly) in mission that I want to continue to look at in more detail in following sections, recognizing that much mission work that has happened in the past has been content with exporting our Western musical language. Now, however, I want to look at the various functions that music can have in mission.

T. W. Hunt suggests that there are four general categories of the functions of music in mission. The first of these he suggests is the natural or characteristic functions inherent in music.<sup>70</sup> Although music is not a universal language as such, it *is* universal, in that all tribes, nations and clans have their own different styles of music. He writes, “Music is one of the

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid, 8.

<sup>68</sup> Brian E. Schrag, “Becoming Bi-Musical: The Importance & Possibility of Missionary Involvement in Music,” *Missiology Journal* (17.03), 313.

<sup>69</sup> T. W. Hunt, *Music in Missions: Discipling Through Music* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1987), 33.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid, 13.

most characteristic expressions of humanity.”<sup>71</sup> He suggests that the spiritual life in particular generates song and that song is a natural expression of faith.<sup>72</sup>

The second role that Hunt believes music has in mission is the functions of music with various kinds of social groups.<sup>73</sup> He says that music is both psychologically and spiritually unifying, and is therefore particularly important in worship because it shows a common purpose and expresses common emotion.<sup>74</sup> (It is interesting to note that music can also be disunifying and, in our culture at least, is the root of many conflicts). He also believes that music is important socially in the following ways: it often breaks barriers against women’s expression in cultures where women do not have the right to express themselves vocally; it gives the reticent and the timid a vehicle for personal expression; it is especially valuable in reaching children; it may attract people who are hostile to the gospel; when organized around common-interest activities it can offer appeal and incentive; it can help establish the Christian group in the community.<sup>75</sup>

The third category includes the functions of music in missionary activity. A Japanese missionary suggests that “if you know music, you will be able to communicate through this medium at least two years before you will be able to communicate effectively by speaking, preaching, or teaching in Japanese.”<sup>76</sup> Not only does music aid communication, it is also a useful medium for teaching theological concepts (often more easily memorized with music).<sup>77</sup>

The final categories Hunt discusses are the functions of music in the Christian life.<sup>78</sup> He lists eight of these:

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid, 13.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid, 14.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid, 17.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid, 18-21.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid, 22.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid, 23.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid, 26.

1. Music is a useful and effective medium for worship
2. Christian musical expressions sometimes supplants a heathen practice
3. Music enhances, deepens, and gives expression to Christian fellowship
4. Music encourages and heartens the Christian in discouraging circumstances
5. Music integrates the Christian message and orientation with daily life
6. Music functions as a stabilizing element in the lives of new believers
7. Music furnishes the Christian community a common, shared opportunity to witness
8. Music attracts the talented and provides outlets for believers with leadership abilities.<sup>79</sup>

Music is an important and therefore necessary part of the church worldwide, and so must be in a form that is understandable to each individual society.<sup>80</sup> Music is an important part of both the gathering of God's people and the reaching out of God's people. Justice Anderson writes, "Music is a fluid and highly effective missionary strategy which demands a more important place in missiological disciplines."<sup>81</sup>

Steven Pierson, working with Christians in Estonia, can attest to the importance of using music in mission. "Most (Estonian Christians) said they learned theology primarily through singing rather than preaching...Others said that insights into applications of scripture came to them through singing. Virtually all said their personal relationship with the Lord was greatly enhanced and deepened through singing."<sup>82</sup>

### B. The Influence of Western Music on Non-Western Cultures

There is no doubt that Western music has had a significant influence on many other cultures across the world. During my time in Peru I was amazed to see that even in the remote areas of the sierra, hundreds of miles from any major cities, churches were using electronic keyboards and sound systems—very clearly trying to imitate the sound of Western

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid, 26-31.

<sup>80</sup> Friesen, Albert W. D., "A Methodology in the Development of Indigenous Hymnody," *Missiology Journal* (10.01: 83-96), 84.

<sup>81</sup> Justice C. Anderson, "Music In Missions," *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 30 (Spring 1988), 55.

<sup>82</sup> Steven Pierson, "We Sang Ourselves Free: Music Lessons from Estonia," on line, <http://www.gospelcom.net/bgc/emis/2002/sangfree.html> (accessed December 3, 2003).

music. In fact, in many areas around the world traditional music is dying out due to globalization and the seemingly inevitable influence of Western music.

### General (Popular Music)

Terry Baldrige, in his article “Musicologist Experiences a Cultural Awakening” talks of how, in the Philippines, the influence of American and Spanish culture has severely damaged the Philippine culture. He writes, “Filipinos were conditioned (by the Spanish and American) that their culture was inferior and that what had been imported was better.” He continues, “I became keenly aware of how strongly implanted this anti-indigenous conditioning had become.”<sup>83</sup> Once beliefs like this have been engrained into a society it will take many years to change. “Putting aside hundreds of years of conditioning will not be an easy process.”<sup>84</sup>

When we look at the influence of Western music on other cultures we must remember that very few areas of the world (urban areas in particular) are untouched by other cultures. A good number of developing countries are indeed familiar with Western culture and, more specifically, with Western music. Does this mean we should introduce Western styles to the worship context? I believe that we should use the music with which the people are most familiar and which they can relate to and understand best, and in some urban areas this may be Western styles. Neil Coulter comments on the influence that Western “pop” music has had on Papua New Guineans:

In Papua New Guinea, Western pop music is one small part of the musical landscape. People can hear it via radio stations, most of which (that I’ve heard anyway) play a mix of music directly imported from Australia and America, along with Papua New Guinean pop bands. Some people I’ve known in villages listen to it because they really do enjoy it, but many seem to listen because it is a symbol of prestige. Since the Western “pop” sound is what plays on the radio, it has become an ideal for people. If a local band manages to get to a city, record a

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<sup>83</sup> Terry L. Baldrige, “Musicologist Experiences A Cultural Awakening,” *Ethnodoxology* (Sample Issue), 2.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid*, 3.

cassette, and have it played on the radio, it is a source of great pride for all the people of that area.<sup>85</sup>

However, Bruno Nettl suggests that musical styles may not be as powerfully influenced by Western culture as other elements of the culture are. He writes, “There is evidence that in at least some cases, music changes less rapidly than do other aspects of culture. Thus, most primitive cultures which have had close contact with the West have taken on more European material culture, economic organization, and religion than European music.”<sup>86</sup>

Many cultures have developed new styles of music that have been heavily influenced by Western styles while still holding on to some element of their own indigenous styles. “Ghana has Highlife music, the Yoruba in Nigeria have juju music, people in Kenya and Ethiopia have their own styles, people in Central Africa have their own styles. Each one is a hybrid of Western pop idioms and local music/dance styles.”<sup>87</sup> Paul Neeley says that although the Western influence is instantly recognizable, “you could also instantly tell that no-one in America makes songs like that.”<sup>88</sup> Therefore, in many urban situations, missionaries may find that that the style of music that the people can best relate to is actually a mixture of their traditional music and Western music.

Mervyn McLean believes that the rich styles of world music “are a dwindling resource, vulnerable to the impact of an ever-encroaching Western way of life. Concern is mounting that they may soon be extinguished altogether.

### Worship Music

To start with, I think we need to admit that as wonderful and dedicated as the early missionaries to China, Korea, etc. were, the preponderance of translated hymns in many of these countries suggests that they made some serious mistakes.

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<sup>85</sup> Neil R. Coulter, “Indigenous Music in Missions,” Personal e-mail, (8 October 2003).

<sup>86</sup> Bruno Nettl, “Historical Aspects of Ethnomusicology,” *American Anthropologist* (58, 1956, 457-463), taken from Kay Kaufman Shelemay (ed.), *Ethnomusicology: History, Definitions & Scope*, (New York & London: Garland Publishing Inc., 1992), 47.

<sup>87</sup> Paul Neeley, personal e-mail (January 5, 2004).

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

I don't think we should condemn them because, in large part, they were operating under a set of false presumptions regarding culture. (Cultural evolutionism, now disproved, was the "hot" theory of the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century). It seems a bit incredible to me that with the richness of both classical and folk traditions in these regions, somehow the missionaries failed to utilize these tremendous resources.<sup>89</sup>

Morgan Jones suggests that the reason Western music has been imposed upon other cultures for so long is because of the ethnocentric view that so many Westerners hold of their own culture. He writes, "They (Western missionaries) supplant the native music with their own because of wrong value judgments—because of unsound ethnocentric prejudice."<sup>90</sup>

We can see in some countries that churches have for so many years been using Western music styles in their worship services that it has become almost like their own. Writing about Western worship music in Japan, Bobbie Toner, who spent 40 years there church-planting, writes, "This style of worship (Western) wasn't in any way difficult for the majority of people. The Japanese have been exposed to Western music for many decades and have imbibed it into their culture...The Japanese don't seem to have any problem worshipping in Western style."<sup>91</sup> Maybe they have no problem worshipping in Western music styles, but the more important question is whether they would be *better* facilitated to worship through their own indigenous styles.

Paul and Linda McIlwain give the following example of a mixture of worship styles that exist together in the Ata tribal area of Papua New Guinea:

Today, 1500 believers in ten Ata churches sing with joy whenever they meet together. And the words of their songs are deeply meaningful. The believers still use their traditional instruments, but have incorporated guitars and keyboards. In fact, two distinct styles of music are used—traditional and modern. During services, the announcement of a particular song includes mention of which style it represents.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Tom Avery, (with input from Paul Neeley), "Musical Ministry in Areas Where Western Music has Penetrated," *Ethnodoxology* (Sample Issue), 9.

<sup>90</sup> Morgan W. Jones Jr., "How One Tribe Got Its Own Music," *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 11 (no. 1, January 1975), 40.

<sup>91</sup> Bobbie Toner, personal e-mail (October 2, 2003).

<sup>92</sup> Paul & Linda McIlwain, "The Gift of Song," *NTM@Work: Celebrating His Goodness*, 6.

Another example of two distinct styles of worship music being used in one context comes from the Mofu people of Cameroon. “The Protestant Mofu churches have a tradition of using European hymns translated into the regional language alongside songs in a regional African style in both the regional language and Mofu.”<sup>93</sup>

These examples show the possibilities of two styles of music existing alongside one another and *complementing* one another in the worship service.

We must also remember that there is nothing wrong with us cherishing our heritage of Western hymns and worship songs, but as Chenoweth and Bee write, “they belong to our faith through our culture.”<sup>94</sup> This is a tension that missionaries need to learn how to balance, and without giving up all their own cultural roots, they must recognize that their music may not be at all appropriate for the indigenous people with whom they are now working.

#### The Problems of Introducing Western Worship Music to Non-Western Cultures

One of the many problems that develop with the use of Western hymnody in non-Western cultures is that it adds to the view that Christianity is the white man’s religion.<sup>95</sup> Brian Schrag, an active ethnomusicologist whose primary work is in Africa, says that since the beginning of Western European missions Western music was viewed as more civilized and therefore more godly.<sup>96</sup> It is sad to see cultures that have come to believe that their indigenous language or musical style is not appropriate for worship. McArthur and Cruz have witnessed this in Guatemala: “The vast majority of Mayan evangelicals consider their mother tongue inappropriate for worship...Singing is in Spanish, and many assume that their

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<sup>93</sup> Ken Hollingsworth, “Christian Music In & Out of Church: There is a Difference!” *Ethnodoxology* (vol.1, no.2, 2002), 15.

<sup>94</sup> Vida Chenoweth & Darlene Bee, “On Ethnic Music,” *Practical Anthropology* (volume 15, no. 5, Sep.-Oct. 1968), 209.

<sup>95</sup> R. LaVerne Morse, “Ethnomusicology: A New Frontier.” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 11, no. 1 (January 1975), 32.

<sup>96</sup> Brian E. Schrag, “Becoming Bi-Musical: The Importance & Possibility of Missionary Involvement in Music,” *Missiology Journal* (17.03), 312.

language cannot be sung in church.”<sup>97</sup> If we introduce believers from another culture to Western hymns too quickly then they will come to see this style as the only one appropriate for worship and it may stifle any chance of indigenous worship songs.<sup>98</sup> “If Western music is seen as the only correct form for Christian music, and thus retained on the ‘theological’ basis that everything else is non-Christian, one can only evaluate this ‘theology’ as not only culturally stultifying but also theological heresy.”<sup>99</sup> Heresy is often difficult to define, especially when it relates to something like culture. However, I would suggest that any cultural practice that goes against biblical teaching is heresy. This matter of theological heresy is a very serious matter that missionaries who are taking Western worship music across cultures need to consider. Schrag suggests that Western music has become a barrier rather than a bridge to communicating the message of the gospel.<sup>100</sup>

Neil Coulter, working in the area of Ethnodoxology in Papua New Guinea, highlights this difficulty of trying to help cultures realize that their own music is every bit as valid and appropriate for worship as Western music. He writes, “After all these years of being told that Western musics are the right ones (not just in a church context, but in the general culture as well), it can be difficult for Westerners to now come in and encourage them to go back and use their own musics instead.”<sup>101</sup>

Another huge problem caused by introducing Western worship music cross-culturally is the sheer difficulty that many other people groups experience in singing Western music. Schrag says that in places such as Thailand and Laos people find it nearly impossible to sing

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<sup>97</sup> Rick McArthur & Jose Abel De La Cruz, “Empowering Mayan Musicians,” *Ethnodoxology* (vol. 1, no. 3, 2002), 1.

<sup>98</sup> Vida Chenoweth & Darlene Bee, “On Ethnic Music,” *Practical Anthropology* (volume 15, no. 5, Sep.-Oct. 1968), 210.

<sup>99</sup> Albert W. D. Friesen, “A Methodology in the Development of Indigenous Hymnody,” *Missiology Journal* (10.01), 92.

<sup>100</sup> Brian E. Schrag, “Becoming Bi-Musical: The Importance & Possibility of Missionary Involvement in Music,” *Missiology Journal* (17.03), 33.

<sup>101</sup> Neil R. Coulter, “Indigenous Music in Missions,” Personal e-mail, (October 8, 2003).

our diatonic and chromatic scale music.<sup>102</sup> In fact, he goes so far as to say that some people are actually repelled by Western hymnody.<sup>103</sup> This, however, is not always the case. There are many cases when Western music has been well received in churches. But this still does not mean that it is the best means for indigenous people to worship. W. J. Wallace, writing about hymns in Ethiopia, says that many Western hymns were translated idiomatically for the Ethiopian people. He says that they have generally taken well to these. However, when they are heard singing them alone (e.g. at home), the tune is often subconsciously adapted to fit into the five-tone scale used in their indigenous music (as opposed to the western octave scale).<sup>104</sup> So although many people may adapt well to Western styles, this example makes it clear to us that this is not their soul music, and therefore not the music that will touch them most deeply.

“When Western songs are translated into the native tongue often the translations are poor due to the fact that some English words and phrases cannot be translated literally into other cultures, e.g. “as white as snow” would mean nothing to someone who had never seen snow. Also, some languages are tonal and this has to carry into the songs or the meaning can be lost. Tom Avery writes regarding this issue, “Chinese is a tonal language, but tone was ignored when the translations were made. Thus, the meanings of the songs were obscured by the melody.” He continues, emphasizing the seriousness of poor translations, “There is a real danger of trivializing a vital message by presenting it in translated versions that sound like doggerel.”<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Brian E. Schrag, “Becoming Bi-Musical: The Importance & Possibility of Missionary Involvement in Music,” *Missiology Journal* (17.03), 34.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>104</sup> W. J. Wallace, “Hymns in Ethiopia,” *Practical Anthropology* (volume 9, no. 6, Nov-Dec 1962), 271.

<sup>105</sup> Tom Avery, (with input from Paul Neeley), “Musical Ministry in Areas Where Western Music has Penetrated,” *Ethnodoxology* (Sample Issue), 10.

Morgan Jones, whose work is among the Trio Indians in Surinam, says “As we saw among the Trios, Western hymnody is never an adequate functional substitute.”<sup>106</sup>

Chenoweth and Bee say that because music is such a vital part of a person’s identity, “it cannot be replaced without damage to the individual and to the society.”<sup>107</sup> Paul Neeley writes, “Western music will often draw a crowd, but I don’t think it’s usually the most effective form of Christian communication.”<sup>108</sup>

When foreign cultures attempt to imitate Western musical styles without the skills of understanding required, it often results in a “unique” style that really is not very pleasing to the ear (not only from the perspective of a Westerner, but also in the opinion of the natives). Hunt comments, “Often a national church will be attempting to worship in forms originally intended to imitate something in the West but produced by mentalities trained in other modes. The result is often a curious mismatch of Western mode with non-Western practice, producing a form which is unpleasant at best and positively distracting at worst.”<sup>109</sup>

Neil Coulter suggests that the question is not so much if people can *use* Western music to worship, but rather if they can *create* new music in this style. He writes:

The question that I ask in any place I work is: Can the people in this community *create* new music for themselves in a Western style? And that’s where a difference between enjoyment and practical use come into play. People can enjoy it, but if they can’t understand it (connotations such as emotions, times of day, seasons, etc.) then is it useful for worshipping the true God, who requests authentic worship in spirit and in truth? If they can’t create new songs on their own then they will be tied forever to importing songs from other countries, at best translating the lyrics into their own language (and even that is complex).<sup>110</sup>

Coulter continues to talk about some of the other problems of using Western worship music cross-culturally:

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<sup>106</sup> Morgan W. Jones Jr., “How One Tribe Got Its Own Music,” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 11 (no. 1, January 1975), 40.

<sup>107</sup> Vida Chenoweth & Darlene Bee, “On Ethnic Music,” *Practical Anthropology* (volume 15, no. 5, Sep.-Oct. 1968), 206.

<sup>108</sup> Paul Neeley, personal e-mail (January 6, 2004).

<sup>109</sup> T. W. Hunt, *Music in Missions: Discipling Through Music* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1987), 83.

<sup>110</sup> Neil Coulter, personal e-mail, October 8, 2003.

An issue I've found in every place I've been in Papua New Guinea is the decay and death of traditional cultural practises. In every village I've visited, there have been at least a few people who have expressed deep regret and shame about how people have traded their traditional ways for Westernism. In most cases these are not people who are opposed to Christianity. Rather, they want the church to be more like their own culture. They recognize that the current generation of old men is the last generation that still has the knowledge that used to be passed down. They're losing that knowledge, and they're sad. If the church becomes a place of only Western music, then when the traditional music has been lost forever, there will likely be bitterness against the church, possibly resulting in division and conflict between Christians and others.<sup>111</sup>

Cory Cummins summarizes his main reasons for not translating Western worship songs for use in cross-cultural settings as follows:

1. It gives Christianity a foreign sound
2. Local people may not be able to perform the music
3. Local people may not have guitars or pianos
4. The melodies don't always fit the nature of the local language
5. The creative gifts that God has given to the people are suppressed or ignored<sup>112</sup>

The following example, which highlights the seriousness (and often ridiculousness) of imposing Western church music on foreign cultures, comes from Steven Pierson:

Estonia has a deep and prophetic music culture. Many Estonian Christians are highly trained professional musicians who perform and compose at very high levels within the general Estonian music culture. When the Soviet Union collapsed, many Western Christian groups sought to visit Eastern Europe to minister with good intentions. However, the results were often overwhelming. Estonians began to view their culture as quite small and insignificant in light of powerful, well-organized and highly financed Western Christian music groups. From a musician's point of view, the situation appeared almost ridiculous. Untrained, often over-emotional, Western Christian musicians were communicating either directly or indirectly to highly trained Estonian musicians that Western Christian music was somehow spiritually superior to Estonian Christian music, and by implication, changes were needed in Estonian music. The tragic part is that the message was heard and is being acted upon in some circles, resulting in a change in Estonian Christian music to more generic commercial Western forms.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Cory Cummins, personal e-mail, October 21, 2003.

<sup>113</sup> Steven Pierson, "We Sang Ourselves Free: Music Lessons from Estonia," on line, <http://www.gospelcom.net/bgc/emis/2002/sangfree.html> (accessed December 3, 2003).

He continues, later in his article, by saying, “It would be far better to allow mature local Christians to develop their own hymnody and artistic language apart from Western influence whenever possible.”<sup>114</sup>

#### The Benefits of Introducing Western Worship Music Cross-Culturally

Although I have highlighted the negative side to introducing Western worship music into other cultures, it must be noted that there are some positives to it as well. Neil Coulter observes that “Western music can be a way of cultural exchange, whereby non-Western cultures can feel a connection to Christian brothers and sisters in other parts of the world by sharing worship styles.”<sup>115</sup>

Another reason for using Western music in cross-cultural worship contexts may be because in some urban areas Western music may actually be the common musical language. Brian Schrag suggests that to aid unity and corporate worship Western-influenced worship music may actually have a place in such contexts. However, he also says that there is a danger: “The danger is if it becomes the primary musical language, the locally-based musics get drowned out.”<sup>116</sup>

Another reason that many non-Western churches may use Western music may be because they cannot afford to purchase indigenous music. Terry Baldrige discovered this in the Philippines. He writes, “I began to discover other reasons why indigenous music was not being used in Protestant churches. For one thing, many Filipinos are extremely poor and they simply cannot afford to purchase the indigenous music that has been published. Instead they use whatever music is sent from American churches.”<sup>117</sup> Perhaps, then, Western churches would be doing non-Western churches a much bigger favour if they sent them the money to

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Neil R. Coulter, “Indigenous Music in Missions,” Personal e-mail, October 8, 2003.

<sup>116</sup> Brian Schrag, personal e-mail, February 2, 2004.

<sup>117</sup> Terry L. Baldrige, “Musicologist Experiences A Cultural Awakening,” *Ethnodoxology Sample Issue*, 2.

purchase indigenous music or invested their money in training them to write and publish their own music rather than sending them Western music.

Although I think it is important to highlight the benefits as well as the negative effects of introducing Western worship music cross-culturally, it is clear that the negatives by far outweigh the positives. Therefore I want to continue now by examining the value of indigenous music in worship.

### C. The Value of Indigenous Music in Worship

A trend has been spreading among cross-cultural missionaries since the 1960's to facilitate the use of indigenous music in churches. "The general trend has been to abandon the belief that translation of Western hymns and tunes are sufficient and appropriate. A new desire has arisen to understand the music of other cultures and accept various struggles for a truly indigenous identity in the Christian church of many lands."<sup>118</sup> However, I believe that one issue that many missionaries face is the belief that indigenous music cannot be redeemed because of its pagan associations. Therefore I want to begin by looking at this issue.

#### Can indigenous music be redeemed?

Neil Coulter comments on the renewed interest in indigenous music, specifically referring to Papua New Guinea:

Where I'm working, in Papua New Guinea, it's a really interesting time for the Christian church. In some places, the people have been told by missionaries and church workers for over a hundred years that their instruments, rituals, and song styles are evil and must be destroyed by anyone who truly wants to be part of the church. Now, almost 30 years after independence, there is a movement in many places for Papua New Guinean Christians to reclaim their unique cultural heritage and find ways to use it in church...There is a real hunger among Christians for their faith to become something more real and more Papua New Guinean.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Albert W. D. Friesen, "A Methodology in the Development of Indigenous Hymnody," *Missiology Journal* (10.01), 83.

<sup>119</sup> Neil Coulter, personal e-mail, October 8, 2003.

A problem exists in redeeming indigenous music because for many years Western missionaries told native people that their music and their instruments were evil and had no place in the church. “Missionaries often burned traditional instruments in public and banned traditional tunes from church services because they were felt to be too associated with the culture’s pagan beliefs,” says Neeley. “But they were in effect communicating ‘Your culture has no value’.”<sup>120</sup> The early missionaries were trying to make Christianity a distinct religion, evidently different from other religions and cults in each culture. “The problem for pioneer and church planting missionaries was...that the old traditional styles of Japanese music...had connections with the Shinto religion and the early missionaries would have wanted to avoid association with it.”<sup>121</sup> Was this the correct line to take, or could traditional indigenous Japanese music (and other such music from around the world) have been redeemed for use in the church?

Music, I believe, is morally neutral. Music, itself, is not inherently good or evil, though the way it is used may be, and this all depends on how the receiver hears and processes it.<sup>122</sup> It is extremely important for us to recognize that music is all about how it is perceived by the hearer. What one song may mean to one person could be completely different to what it means to another, due to its associations and the memories/emotions it conjures up. Hunt says that “Both taste and meaning are conditioned by past associations.”<sup>123</sup> This is crucial to remember when Christians are deciding what music is appropriate for worship and what music they need to reject. (It is especially important if Christians want to use pre-existing melodies set with different words). Paul Neeley observes that there are many different social factors that influence whether a particular style of music or a certain melody or rhythm will be accepted or rejected for use in the church:

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<sup>120</sup> Andres T. Tapia, “Musicianaries,” *Christianity Today* 40 (October 7, 1996), 52.

<sup>121</sup> Bobbie Toner, personal e-mail, February 2, 2004.

<sup>122</sup> Neil Coulter, personal e-mail, February 2 2004.

<sup>123</sup> T. W. Hunt, *Music in Missions: Discipling Through Music* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1987), 133.

These factors go beyond the sound of the songs to include such issues as individual and community attitudes toward various music systems, prestige and status of the music systems and musicians, context of the songs' creation, influence of Western music, involvement of recognized authorities (in the church and in the music system), and aspects of cultural change.<sup>124</sup>

There is no doubt that indigenous song styles, melodies, instruments, etc. need to be evaluated within each cultural context to determine if they are appropriate for Christian worship. Friesen suggests that the following elements need to be analyzed in light of their previous associations:

1. Song types
2. Instruments
3. Singers and instrumentalists
4. Technical characteristics<sup>125</sup>

Perhaps after such analysis it becomes evident that there are too many associations with some indigenous styles of music for the believers to be able to worship God through them. Mary Key suggests that "If the indigenous musical style (or some category of it) is intended to be seductive or invariably stirs up emotions that are not compatible with the purposes of Christianity (such as erotic rhythms or the aggressively wild musical expressions that end up in violence), then there is no doubt that such music would not be appropriate for building a hymn heritage."<sup>126</sup> What is compatible with Christianity and what is not will be determined by each individual society. These are decisions that missionaries coming from another culture are not qualified to make. Rather, such decisions must be made by the nationals themselves, who know what is appropriate and what is not within their own culture. The following example comes from Manfred and Barbara Kern who work with the Pacaas Novos people of Brazil:

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<sup>124</sup> Paul Neeley, "Some Social Factors in the Failure and Success of Indigenous Hymns," *Ethnodoxology Sample Issue*, 3.

<sup>125</sup> Albert W. D. Friesen, "A Methodology in the Development of Indigenous Hymnody," *Missiology Journal* (10.01), 85.

<sup>126</sup> Mary Key, "Hymn Writing with Indigenous Tunes," *Practical Anthropology*, volume 9, no. 6 (Nov-Dec 1962), 260.

The Pacaas Novos people love to sing. We encouraged the believers to write their own words to their tribal tunes, but they rejected this. They said their tribal music was too tied in with their animistic beliefs before they believed in Jesus, and they wanted to put all that behind them. So we have translated many traditional (Western culture) hymns and choruses from Portuguese into Pacaas Novos. Some of the Pacaas Novos believers are quite musically inclined and have composed songs themselves, based on ‘Western music.’ They are very adept at singing two- and three-part harmony.<sup>127</sup>

It is important to note in this field example that it was not the missionaries who told the native people that their music was not worthy to be used in the church. Rather, it was the native people themselves who decided that it had too many negative past associations to be used now to worship God. Coulter writes, “If, after prayer and examining the scriptures, church members decide that certain musics cannot be freed from their pagan connotations in the minds of people, then that can be the end of the matter.”<sup>128</sup> Regarding this same issue Paul Neeley says:

Certainly not all ‘pagan’ music can be redeemed. Associations must be considered and judged in the light of Scripture. In my method, we make a list of song genres and instruments, and their associations, and discuss what the Bible says about music and instruments. The local Christians (if there are any) then decide which song styles and instruments they feel comfortable with, and which they prefer not to use.<sup>129</sup>

Coulter, who believes that *all* indigenous music can be redeemed, also notes that there is no command that *all* musics *must* be redeemed.<sup>130</sup> Schrag echoes him, “Every instrument and every music CAN be redeemed and used in worship to God, at any moment. Negative associations are never a sufficient reason in themselves for rejecting a type of music forever. God can rip an instrument directly out of Satan’s hands and use it for His glory.”<sup>131</sup> Vida Chenoweth also writes, “The Lord can bring any language or music system into captivity.”<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Paul & Linda McIlwain, “The Gift of Song,” *NTM@Work: Celebrating His Goodness*, 7.

<sup>128</sup> Neil Coulter, personal e-mail, February 2 2004

<sup>129</sup> Paul Neeley, personal e-mail, February 1, 2004.

<sup>130</sup> Neil Coulter, personal e-mail, February 2 2004

<sup>131</sup> Brian Schrag, personal e-mail, February 2, 2004.

<sup>132</sup> Vida Chenoweth, “Spare Them Western Music!” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 20 (January 1984),

Another point we need to recognize is that if a decision is made that one style of indigenous music is not suitable for worship, it does not rule out *all* indigenous music. There may be other music that is not so strongly associated with paganism that would be appropriate for use in churches. Also important for missionaries to grasp is that perhaps as new believers continue to grow and mature spiritually and their old way of life is further behind them, then maybe some more of their indigenous music will be able to be redeemed—music that initially they felt reminded them too much of their old, pagan way of life. Different music may have the potential to be redeemed at a later time.

#### Dangers of Rejecting Indigenous music

A good example of the damage that can be done by missionaries who enforce Western music styles on other cultures can be seen in the book “Seize the Dance” by Michelle Kisliuk. Kisliuk spent a number of years researching the musical performance of BaAka pygmies in the Central African Republic (Centrafrique). She lived there for a two year period and researched the BaAka’s song, dance and culture. Not a Christian herself, she watched the effect Western missionaries were having on this people group and how they were gradually throwing away their culture. She writes, “Then I said outright that I thought the nzapa (God) followers were throwing away their own culture...and future, that they would become like the Bolemba pygmies who aspire to be like bilo (white people).”<sup>133</sup> She says that they had come to believe that their cultural practices were satanic because some of the Christian evangelists were preaching against such things.<sup>134</sup> She believes that the people were “culturally unprepared to resist or control missionization,” and as a result were throwing away their entire rich cultural heritage.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> Michelle Kisliuk, *Seize the Dance: BaAka Musical Life & Ethnography of Performance* (Oxford University Press, 1998), 155.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid, 160.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid, 166.

I believe that if missionaries use musical styles that are foreign to the people with whom they are working, it will not only give them the message that their music, and indeed their culture, is worthless, but it will also build barriers between the missionaries and the native people. Hunt writes, “If I adjust the frame to the receptor’s mentality and world view, then the music is not a block to the information I am attempting to convey.”<sup>136</sup> The frame must be comprehensible, intelligible and meaningful to the recipient, otherwise it will merely function as an obstacle.

Musical styles and tastes vary so much from culture to culture, that there is also great potential for misinterpretation. “Some Indian friends who listened to a recording of one of our famous gospel singers, one who has an exceptionally fine and well-trained voice, in all sincerity, they asked, ‘Is he dying?’”<sup>137</sup> This only adds to emphasize the point made by William Smalley that “every church needs music and...the music of a church should be intelligible in terms of the musical tradition and forms of a particular culture.”<sup>138</sup>

Our aim should be for each culture to feel that their faith is their own, not a foreign religion. If we reject their indigenous music and impose Western music upon them, then we are already giving them the message that Christianity is a foreign religion.

Vida Chenoweth suggests three dangers in rejecting a culture’s music:

1. The tradition becomes extinct altogether
2. Syncretism may be encouraged as a result of people secretly continuing some rituals
3. It can alienate the mission field from the people and composers from the church<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> T. W. Hunt, *Music in Missions: Discipling Through Music* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1987), 51.

<sup>137</sup> Mary Key, “Hymn Writing with Indigenous Tunes,” *Practical Anthropology*, volume 9, no. 6 (Nov-Dec 1962), 258.

<sup>138</sup> William A. Smalley, “Music, Church & Ethnocentrism,” *Practical Anthropology*, volume 9, no. 6 (Nov-Dec 1962), 272.

<sup>139</sup> Vida Chenoweth, “Spare Them Western Music!” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 20 (January 1984), 33.

Viña, a non-profit ministry organization working in the Guatemalan highlands, seeking to reach people in their own language through videos, music, etc, believe that people have three responses to singing in a language they only partially understand:

1. They may assume they understand even when they don't
2. They may change the words into something they do understand—even if it doesn't make sense
3. They may not ascribe importance to the lyrics<sup>140</sup>

Western music can make many non-Western Christian feels unworthy because they are unable to worship God in a style so foreign to them. A Kuna of Panama said, “I used to feel sad that I couldn't make music to God. I don't know how to play a keyboard or guitar. But I do know how to play our pipes and flutes. I can take them with me and praise His name anywhere I go.”<sup>141</sup> Is this not one of our delights as Christians, to have access to God at all times everywhere, and to be able to praise Him with the gifts He has given us?

### Benefits of Indigenous Music in Worship

Paul Neeley recounts the story of a man in Ghana who heard fellow-believers worship in their indigenous style for the first time:

The first time Pastor Phillip, a Valga blind man (from Ghana), heard believers worshipping for the first time in their own indigenous style, he said: “You can't see my eyes because of these dark glasses, but when I started hearing these new songs, tears came to my eyes. For many years we could have used our music to worship God and reach our people. Instead, the music has been used by the devil.”<sup>142</sup>

Another Kuna of Panama, by the name of Yanuris, said, “This music just makes me happy deep inside. It is using the things that make me Kuna and making God's name great (praising God).” The soul music of each individual has the ability to touch their innermost being in remarkable ways. “Music touches the very depths of the human soul. Even

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<sup>140</sup> Rick McArthur & Jose Abel De La Cruz, “Empowering Mayan Musicians,” *Ethnodoxology*, (vol. 1, no. 3, 2002), 2.

<sup>141</sup> Joyce McDaniels, “Happy Deep Inside,” *NTM@Work: Celebrating His Goodness*, 9.

<sup>142</sup> Paul Neeley, “Noted Music: Scripture Set to Local Music Aids in Adoration, Evangelism.” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 35 (April 1999), 156/7.

someone who would never listen to a sermon, will give his attention to a song sung in ‘his’ language and played in ‘his’ style of music—and such a song could be the vehicle for many spiritual truths.”<sup>143</sup> Paul Neeley suggests that “Redeeming part of a culture’s music for God can be an important part of redeeming people for God.”<sup>144</sup>

“It has been said that we need to get the ‘foreign’ act out of foreign missions.”<sup>145</sup> We can begin this process by encouraging and facilitating indigenous musical expression. It is not a matter of personal preference, but of understanding. “Music can express social attitudes and cognitive processes, but it is useful and effective only when it is heard by the prepared and receptive ears of people who have shared, or can share in some way, the cultural and individual experiences of its creators.”<sup>146</sup> How music is perceived is so strongly influenced by the surrounding culture that an understanding of the culture in which it was produced is required if we are to really understand the music. Paul Neeley says that, “People always worship most freely using the type of music they feel the most comfortable. Usually that’s not something that comes from outside their culture.”<sup>147</sup> Therefore, in light of this, “Surely there can be no question that the only viable music for unreached peoples is their own.”<sup>148</sup> Chenoweth says that if the musical language of the people is used to express their Christianity, then the message will be reinforced at the greatest possible depth.<sup>149</sup> She believes that it is all about true understanding: “Each culture should produce its own songs, pray its own prayers, and thus worship with true understanding.”<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Frank Fortunato (ed.), “The Gospel Spreads Through Music,” *Global Worship Report* (vol. 2, #25-November/December 2003).

<sup>144</sup> Paul Neeley, “Noted Music: Scripture Set to Local Music Aids in Adoration, Evangelism.” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 35 (April 1999), 161.

<sup>145</sup> David Nelson, “Crossing the Musical Threshold: Culturally Attuned Music Fosters Communication with God,” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 35 (April 1999), 154.

<sup>146</sup> John Blacking, *How Musical is Man?* (Seattle & London: University of Washington Press, 1973), 54.

<sup>147</sup> Paul Neeley, personal e-mail, February 1 2004.

<sup>148</sup> T. W. Hunt, *Music in Missions: Discipling Through Music* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1987), 113.

<sup>149</sup> Vida Chenoweth & Darlene Bee, “On Ethnic Music,” *Practical Anthropology* (volume 15, no. 5, Sep.-Oct. 1968), 207.

<sup>150</sup> Vida Chenoweth, “Spare Them Western Music!” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 20 (January 1984), 32.

In the same way, music used for evangelism is certainly more effective if indigenous music is used. “Indigenous expressions will evangelize more successfully, and the results will be longer lasting.”<sup>151</sup> This is simply removal of an unnecessary cultural barrier that makes the message all the more difficult for the people to understand.

Rice, who worked in developing indigenous hymnody among the iKalahan people of the Philippines, noted how much they preferred their own indigenous music: “Few desired to go back to Western tunes when they discovered that their own music was capable of expressing the Christian faith so delightfully.”<sup>152</sup> This is what we need to help people discover—that their music *is* capable of expressing their praise, adoration and worship of God.

Neeley highlights the freedom that people experience when they are able to worship God in their indigenous musical language: “What an incredible experience, to see people set free to worship God with their unique cultural resources, to worship him with full understanding because they used the language and music of their hearts.”<sup>153</sup>

An example of the use of indigenous music to reach people, close to home, is the work of Jonathan Maracle and his band Broken Walls (based in Canada). Maracle is a Mohawk and his primary goal is to reach native North Americans for Christ. The vision of Broken Walls is to deal with issues of the past and help the church to re-establish relationships with a people who have been disenfranchised and circumcised from culture.<sup>154</sup> His desire is to see self-respect restored in the lives of First Nations people, a people who have a unique gifting and calling.

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<sup>151</sup> T. W. Hunt, *Music in Missions: Discipling Through Music* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1987), 88.

<sup>152</sup> Delbert Rice, “Developing an Indigenous Hymnody,” *Practical Anthropology* volume 18, no. 3 (May-June 1971), 112.

<sup>153</sup> Paul Neeley, “Noted Music: Scripture Set to Local Music Aids in Adoration, Evangelism.” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 35 (April 1999), 158.

<sup>154</sup> Jonathan Maracle, personal interview, October 4, 2004.

After he became a Christian, Maracle was an ‘average’ Euro-American worship leader for a number of years, putting his Mohawk heritage behind him. Then in 1995 God gave him a vision of redeeming his culture and of being a Mohawk and a Christian at the same time. This began a movement of self-identity, of being able to embrace the person God created him and other First Nations people to be. For many years the colonial gospel, as it has been presented, has taught them that they are evil beings that need to be cleaned up through the cultural preference of the Euro-American people. They have been told, ‘You have to be different—you can’t be who God created you to be.’ Broken Walls Ministries want to bring First Nations people a message of freedom.

Maracle believes that instruments and musical styles can be redeemed for use by Christians. He says that it is not the instrument or style that is evil, but the person behind it. For example, he does not believe the drum is any more or less spiritual than any other instrument, but rather it depends on the drummer. If he has an evil heart and sits down to play the drum, then evil will prevail. On the other hand, Maracle says that, “If I have a heart of worship, then the enemy will be driven back.”<sup>155</sup> He emphasizes, however, that he does not embrace all aspects of his culture. He says he does not want syncretism, nor does he want to embrace anything that goes against God’s Word. He only wants to redeem the good things of their culture for God. The first Nations culture has aspects that are evil, just like any culture, but they also have good things that need to be taken back.<sup>156</sup>

Maracle says that for his people it is very freeing being able to worship through indigenous instruments and worship. It is “being set free to walk in a new liberty.”<sup>157</sup> He says, “It’s like coming home, because it’s been denied to us for centuries.”<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

Not only are the results of indigenous worship seen within individual cultures, but according to Chenoweth the results can be seen worldwide. “The fruits of indigenous musical leadership in the church has resulted in a wealth of worship styles all over the world.”<sup>159</sup> She asks the question, “Why would anyone want to capture all the birds of the forest, paint them grey and give them all the same song? God made each one, and each has its own song to sing for him.”<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> Vida Chenoweth, “Spare Them Western Music!” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 20 (January 1984). 35.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

#### IV. APPLICATIONS—IMPLICATIONS FOR MISSIONARIES

So what are the implications for missionaries, both musical and non-musical? Hunt suggests that missionaries have four approaches to worship in a cross-cultural setting:

1. Introduce Western music translated into their own language
2. Introduce Western music translated into their own language and adapt it musically (e.g. into the pentatonic scale, if that is what they use)
3. Use already existing folk tunes and set them to different words
4. Encourage/facilitate nationals to write their own indigenous music<sup>161</sup>

Hunt continues by saying that the only suitable music to use in cross-cultural situations is their own, indigenous music. Neeley writes:

Indigenous hymns should be fully integrated into a local church, and not merely used as an addendum. Even in Western churches, music is often used for peripheral purposes such as to uphold tradition, promote relaxation, or merely to “set the mood” for preaching. But when a full biblical understanding of “music ministry” is gained, church musicians and singers can function in the roles of prophet, evangelist and teacher as well as ‘worship leader’. Culturally-appropriate Christian music can have major impact on both building up the believers *and* reaching the non-Christians in a culture—let’s not limit its usefulness.<sup>162</sup>

He says that to facilitate and encourage this successfully missionaries must learn indigenous music in the same way they learn a language—not only the vocabulary and grammar, but also how it is used in culture. To really get to know the music, they need to learn not only the different styles and rhythms used, but also when various melodies and forms are used—how each style of music is used within that culture.

We must also remember that most missionaries lack the training to develop indigenous worship songs, even those with some sort of musical training. However, they can still encourage the development of indigenous worship music among the people with whom they are working. This, I believe, still requires having some understanding of their music within their culture. Blacking believes that the most important issue in understanding the music of

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<sup>161</sup> T. W. Hunt, *Music in Missions: Discipling Through Music* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1987), 112.

<sup>162</sup> Paul Neeley, "Some Social Factors in the Failure and Success of Indigenous Hymns," *Ethnodoxology Sample Issue*, 4.

another culture is to look at the relationship between subject (man) and object (sound).<sup>163</sup>

“Functional analysis of musical structure cannot be detached from structural analyses of its social function.”<sup>164</sup> Friesen suggests that the methodology of developing indigenous music for use in churches consists of two parts: “the ethnomusicological (the study of the forms and functions of song types, instruments, singers and instrumentalists, and technical characteristics of any culture); and the psychoethnomusicological (the study of the person’s relationship to the native music).”<sup>165</sup>

Merriam suggests six areas of study to get to know indigenous music:

1. Musical material culture (study of musical instruments and any other implements used)
2. Study of song texts
3. Study of the categories of music
4. Role and status of the musician in that society
5. Functions of music in relation to other aspects of culture
6. Study of music as a creative cultural activity<sup>166</sup>

Tom Avery suggests that the main obstacle in developing indigenous worship music is not our musical ability and training in the area (or lack of it), but rather, our attitude and pride as Westerners. He writes, “Perhaps the main barrier is our attitude and pride. Isn’t it time to leave behind the colonialist view of the nineteenth century—the idea that *The West Always Knows Best?* As Cross-cultural “musicianaries,” let us come to people first as students—the master musicians of the world have much to teach us if we have ears (and hearts) to hear.”<sup>167</sup> We must recognize that when it comes to music, we do not know it all—far from it in fact. Such a rich and diverse range of music exists across the world, each one just as worthy of being used in worship as another.

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<sup>163</sup> John Blacking, *How Musical is Man?* (Seattle & London: University of Washington Press, 1973), 26.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>165</sup> Albert W. D. Friesen, “A Methodology in the Development of Indigenous Hymnody,” *Missiology Journal* (10.01), 85.

<sup>166</sup> Alan P. Merriam, “Ethnomusicology: Discussion and Definition of the Field,” *Ethnomusicology* (4:3 1960, 107-114), taken from Kay Kaufman Shelemay (ed.), *Ethnomusicology: History, Definitions & Scope*, (New York & London: Garland Publishing Inc.), 67-68.

<sup>167</sup> Tom Avery (with input from Paul Neeley), “Musical Ministry in Areas Where Western Music has Penetrated,” *Ethnodoxology Sample Issue*, 12.

Mary Key believes that it is all about our perspective and our attitude toward the other culture. She says, “If we can keep a right perspective and think in terms of *building up* the culture of the people we have come to minister to rather than taking away or destroying, then we can safely help them to build up a rich and beautiful hymn heritage.”<sup>168</sup> Indigenous people groups need to be taught that their music is valuable and worthy of being used in worship. Friesen suggests that there are some good elements of our Western culture that can be given to other cultures, but they should never replace indigenous practices. He writes, “Some of the good elements of the Western culture can be given to other cultures, but only as an addition, not a substitute.”<sup>169</sup>

For those who have some musical training, Hunt suggests that music missionaries should not teach music or songs, but rather theory and notation so that the people can notate their music and disperse it to other churches (and they would then also have the ability to read and use music from other native churches and broaden their repertoire). For those without ethnomusicology training and practice, a music missionary will only be able to teach Western music theory, not the theory of the local people.<sup>170</sup> He also suggests that missionaries should not lead music (as long as there are nationals available to do so) or perform musically (or this may be seen as a more “Christian” way or style).<sup>171</sup> The ultimate goal of missionaries should be to train the nationals to take on all leadership roles and put the missionaries themselves out of jobs. The important decisions that have to be made as to which music is suitable for use in the church are decisions that should be made by the nationals themselves (with guidance from the missionary where necessary).

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<sup>168</sup> Mary Key, “Hymn Writing with Indigenous Tunes,” *Practical Anthropology*, volume 9, no. 6 (Nov-Dec 1962), 262.

<sup>169</sup> Albert W. D. Friesen, “A Methodology in the Development of Indigenous Hymnody,” *Missiology Journal* (10.01), 90.

<sup>170</sup> For a great example on teaching notation that is culturally relevant see <http://www.sil.org/anthro/articles/AnExpmntlApprchTDvlyInCntrlZr.htm>

<sup>171</sup> T. W. Hunt, *Music in Missions: Discipling Through Music* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1987), 123-124.

Decisions regarding music in church are completely dependant upon the people who attend and participate in that church. Such decisions should not be made by ‘outsider’ missionaries, or even by broader church denominations. A local church should reflect the individual character of its community while still, of course, holding to the essentials of the Christian faith (of which musical style is not one).<sup>172</sup>

It may be difficult to find indigenous people with the gift of song-writing, so this is where encouragement and training are essential. There may be many people with this gift who have just never recognized it, or who never had the opportunity to use it before. As Hunt writes, “The best solution of all, of course, is to encourage nationals to produce their own music. This is one of the most serious challenges facing missionaries who work with music.”<sup>173</sup>

Chenoweth and Bee suggest that in the same way as one learns a language to overcome a language barrier, we must learn the music system of a people to communicate effectively.<sup>174</sup> Schrag talks about becoming *bi-musical*: “A person is bi-musical insofar as he or she is able to differentiate between two music systems, and able to participate creatively within them.”<sup>175</sup> He also suggests that a person may also be tri- or poly-musical. He says that “all missionaries have both the capacity and the responsibility to become bi-musical to some degree.”<sup>176</sup> However, this is no easy task. In fact, it is a substantial and unique challenge. Mervyn McLean says, “It is no easier...for a bi-musical performer to become a ‘master’ of a style not his own then (sic) it is to master (say) English as a second language.”<sup>177</sup>

Even though many missionaries are not bi-musical, they can still encourage indigenous worship music. Hunt says, “There have been cases where missionaries were able to function

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<sup>172</sup> Neil Coulter, personal e-mail, February 2 2004.

<sup>173</sup> T. W. Hunt, *Music in Missions: Discipling Through Music* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1987), 104.

<sup>174</sup> Vida Chenoweth & Darlene Bee, “On Ethnic Music,” *Practical Anthropology* (volume 15, no. 5, Sep.-Oct. 1968), 206.

<sup>175</sup> Brian E. Schrag, “Becoming Bi-Musical: The Importance & Possibility of Missionary Involvement in Music,” *Missiology Journal* (17.03), 312.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid*, 311.

<sup>177</sup> Mervyn McLean, “Preserving World Musics: Perspectives from New Zealand and Oceania,” *Studies in Music* (17, 1983: 23-37), taken from Kay Kaufman Shelemay (ed.), *Ethnomusicology: History, Definitions & Scope*, (New York & London: Garland Publishing Inc., 1992), 335.

effectively even when they carried certain disabilities in the language.”<sup>178</sup> Morgan Jones believes that ethnomusicologists are essential for the growth of the worldwide church. However, he also believes that Western missionaries with no musical training can still be effective in encouraging indigenous music in churches. A good example of Western missionaries with no musical training but who still helped to develop indigenous hymnody is found in the Trio Indians in Surinam. Here is Jones’ account of the story:

As more Trios began to write lyrics, the missionaries’ eyes were opened to the great opportunity that lay before them. Without a background in ethnomusicology these missionaries could not analyze the Trio’s music and tell them what kinds of music to use. Instead, they let the Trios be their own guides, praying that their choices would be made well.

One by one the indigenous songs by indigenous composers began to be written and introduced. These were words by the Trio; this was minor, pentatonic music by the Trio, and the enthusiastic response by the people was enough to encourage the composers to continue...New life had begun! This is the end for which every missionary should strive.<sup>179</sup>

There is nothing to stop non-musical missionaries from encouraging musical creativity. Neeley suggests that “It is possible for a non-musical missionary to learn the attitudes and some skills to serve as a facilitator in a fairly short time.”<sup>180</sup> Wycliffe Bible Translators offer courses in this area, from as short as one-day seminars or five-day courses. “Anybody can find a way to encourage somebody else to worship more deeply and authentically, regardless of their musical ability or training.”<sup>181</sup>

One of the most crucial points for all missionaries to remember is that they cannot let their personal taste influence what style of music is used in the church. Often the musical sounds of other cultures will sound untuneful to our Western trained ears, but we must not let this get in the way. It is not about how the music *sounds* to our ears, but how well it facilitates worship. It is essential to note the lack of musical absolutes discussed earlier. We

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<sup>178</sup> T. W. Hunt, *Music in Missions: Discipling Through Music* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1987), 150.

<sup>179</sup> Morgan W. Jones Jr., “How One Tribe Got Its Own Music,” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 11, no. 1 (January 1975), 40.

<sup>180</sup> Paul Neeley, personal e-mail, February 12004

<sup>181</sup> Brian Schrag, personal e-mail, February 2, 2004.

must remember that we judge and value music according to taste and how we have been conditioned (in our culture) to perceive different musical sounds. We must, therefore, remember that our opinion of different music styles is completely subjective. This lack of absolutes mirrors post-modern thought in the West, so perhaps this is a significant time for missionaries to go across-cultures—missionaries, that is, who have this post-modern lack of absolutes mindset. Perhaps the modern mindset that we must be presented with absolute truths was a part of the reason that so many Western missionaries in the earlier years of mission believed that *their* music was the only style of music suitable for worship.

Many more Christians need to get on board this effort to develop indigenous worship music. Missionaries need to be held accountable for the music they introduce into foreign cultures. “There are too few advocates for traditional musics, and when they die, there is a great loss to the worldwide church of unique musical languages that God has created.”<sup>182</sup> Missionaries need to be made aware of this truth, and trained in how to appropriately tackle the issue, before musical languages are lost forever.

I have highlighted throughout this paper the importance of analysing music within its cultural context. Music cannot be separated from culture, otherwise its meaning and significance will be considerable altered. Cultural analysis is, essentially, a prerequisite to musical analysis. This emphasizes the importance of going *into* a culture and getting to know it well in order to facilitate and encourage the use of indigenous music in worship. The effects of music on culture need to be examined, as well as the effects of culture on music.

With the immense influence of Western music on so many other cultures around the world, it is crucial for missionaries (particularly in urban areas) to realize that the heart music of the people with whom they are working may well sound similar to our Western sound. Is it their job, then, to go into such a situation and encourage them to return to their traditional

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<sup>182</sup> Ibid.

musical roots? Not necessarily. There may be situations when this is the best direction to go, but I believe that, generally, if this hybrid style has become *their* music, then this is the musical style through which they will best be facilitated to worship. Although it may be heavily influenced by Western music, it will most likely be influenced by their traditional style of music also, and so it is still unique to them. Neil Coulter writes,

Trying to get rid of all Western music is, in most situations, a bad idea. In many places, Western music had become a part of Christian, and even more broadly cultural, identity. Where early missionaries may have tried to substitute Western music for local styles (and we believe that such actions were based at the very least on ignorance, if not deliberate insensitivity), contemporary missionaries coming into a situation with ideas of radical cultural revivalism are not much more thoughtful...If Western music has been used in a Christian church setting for a couple of generations, then I think it more likely that people will want to retain some of that heritage, as well as work on developing something new.<sup>183</sup>

The International Council of Ethnodoxologists have a set standard of values that they affirm:

- That music is a universal phenomenon, but not a universal language; i.e. our response to music is learned and not intrinsic
- That music systems differ in structure, function, use, and even the concept of what is music
- That if foreign music is used for evangelism or in the church it may strongly stamp Christianity as being a foreign religion
- That in using the culturally appropriate music system we are tapping into a system of communication that is already recognized, appreciated and understood.<sup>184</sup>

Their encouragement of heart music includes:

- Showing appreciation for the various forms of heart music found in our region
- Participating in singing/playing local music whenever appropriate
- Studying local heart musics
- Suggesting alternatives to hymn translation
- Encouraging culturally appropriate music styles in the life of the local church. Biblical criteria will be suggested to local believers who can then discuss and select appropriate styles.<sup>185</sup>

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<sup>183</sup> Neil Coulter, personal e-mail, February 2, 2004.

<sup>184</sup> International Council of Ethnodoxologists, *Standards of Values*. On line. <http://worldofworship.org/>

<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

## V. CONCLUSIONS AND EVALUATIONS

As I have researched and studied the use of Western music and the use of indigenous music in cross-cultural mission, I have come to the conclusion that it is far more advantageous for the people of different cultures if we do not impose our Western musical language on them but encourage and facilitate the use of worship songs in their own indigenous style.

So to answer the research question I posed at the beginning, 'How much influence should Western worship music have in cross-cultural misional strategies?', I would answer 'As little as possible'. It is the responsibility of the missionary who enters another culture to encourage and help the nationals to make Christianity their own. Nationals need to be able to worship God in their own language and with their own musical styles. Only then is there the potential of reaching their deepest being. Christianity is not a 'white man's religion', rather, it is available for every tribe and people group to claim as their own. For too many years now missionaries have gone across cultures with an ethnocentric mindset, believing that the culture will be better off if they are westernized. Perhaps some of the damage that has been done is irreversible (that is an assessment that needs to be made in each individual context). It is our job now to stop this continuing. God has given every culture unique qualities that can be used to bring glory to Him. We need to help the nationals of other countries discover these qualities, one of the most beautiful of which is music.

I feel that I have been successful in what I set out to study and have answered many of my own personal questions. Through doing so, however, many more questions have resulted which I would like to continue to research. Throughout this paper I focused on the role of Western music and the role of indigenous music in misional contexts. I came to a definite personal conclusion on this matter (which I have expressed above). However, I have not dealt in much detail with how missionaries go about encouraging and developing indigenous

music in churches in other cultures.<sup>186</sup> This is the area that I would like to explore further, through further research and study. I believe that this would best be accomplished on the field, working in this discipline. I would like to look in more detail at how to facilitate the writing of indigenous music, and the practicalities of studying music within a cultural context different from my own.

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<sup>186</sup> The following articles found on <http://www.heartmusics.org/Articles/ArticlesWokshops.htm> deal with this issue: Paul Neeley, *The Handy Guide to Choosing Song Genres for Indigenous Hymnody* and *Making New Music as Community Development*.

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