

The Nature Of Rock Music From A Historical Perspective

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Dear Members of the Endtime Issues Newsletter:

The few remaining hours to 1999 are ticking away. As we stand at the threshold of the year 2000, may I express to all of you my best wishes for a blessed new year. Let us resolve together to make the new year a time of growth, not only in knowledge, but also in grace. The Endtime signs are fast fulfilling. Each passing day is bringing us a day closer to Advent day. Let us pray that we may be ready TODAY and EVERY DAY until that glorious DAY.

Words fail to express my appreciation to all of you who have taken time to read my last newsletter on THE WORLDVIEW OF ROCK MUSIC. Your constructive criticism has made it possible for me to make significant improvements to that chapter. I come from Rome but I do not claim infallibility. Though I put my heart and soul in all my research projects, I know that there is always room for improvement.

I am pleased to be able to email you with this newsletter chapter 3 of the symposium on THE CHRISTIAN AND ROCK MUSIC. I worked hard on this chapter for the past three weeks an average of 15 hours a day. I feel that this is a very important chapter because it unmasks the fallacies of the popular assumption that there is nothing immoral about rock music per se. It is alleged that rock music is just another musical genre that Christians can legitimately adopt to worship God and proclaim the Gospel, after changing its lyrics.

This chapter shows that this popular assumption is based on a gross misconception of the intrinsic nature of rock music. A careful analysis of the historical development and ideological characteristics of rock music shows that rock is not a generic musical genre, but a revolutionary music of rebellion. It is a revolutionary "religious" countercultural and anti-Christian movement which uses its rhythm, melodies, and lyrics to promote, among other things, a pantheistic/hedonistic worldview, an open rejection of the Christian faith and values, sexual perversion, civil disobedience, violence, satanism, occultism, homosexuality, and masochism.

The findings of this historical investigations make it abundantly clear that rock music cannot be legitimately transformed into Christian music simply by changing its lyrics. Such a split is not feasible because "Christian" rock of whatever category, is still rock music—a music that embodies a spirit of rebellion against God and the moral principles He has revealed for our lives. If you do not have time to read the whole chapter, please read the conclusion where I submit four basic reasons why any attempt to sanitize secular rock music by changing its lyrics will ultimately result in the prostitution of the Christian faith and worship.

TWO SPECIAL REQUESTS

First request. If you find this chapter enlightening and helpful, would you pass it on via email or in printed form to your friends, especially our pastors and youth leaders. It is unfortunate that some of our leaders who are promoting "Christian" rock at youth meetings and church services, are grossly misinformed about the true nature of rock music. They have never had the opportunity to investigate what rock music is all about. Reading this chapter may be an eye-opening experience for them as the investigation was for me. Let your friends know that they also can receive these timely studies free of charge, simply by requesting them. As a result of your efforts over 8000 persons already receiving this newsletter.

Second request. If you are a graphic artist and are interested to design the cover of the forthcoming symposium THE CHRISTIAN AND ROCK MUSIC, please contact me via email or phone (616) 471-2915. I will be glad to pay for your service. The cover of my last book THE SABBATH UNDER CROSSFIRE was designed by a student missionary serving in China. He learned about the book from this newsletter and he did a magnificent job.

WEBSITE UPDATE

You will be pleased to know that all the ENDTIME ISSUES NEWSLETTERS up to number 34, have been posted in my website. If for any reason you have lost any of the previous newsletters, please download them from my website: <http://www.biblicalperspectives.com> Thank you for saving my time. You can also access sample chapters from all the 15 volumes I have authored. We have posted about 2000 pages of Biblical research in the website.

The SHOPPING CART service of the website is now fully operational. You can order any of my books and tapes directly at the website. Your credit card is fully secured by a special security service. We guarantee to process your order on the same day.

THE NATURE OF ROCK MUSIC FROM A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

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In the best-seller *The Closing of the American Mind*, University of Chicago Professor Allan Bloom examines some of the factors which in recent years have impacted negatively on the intellectual, cultural, and moral development of American young people. The book stayed on the best selling-book-list of *New York Times* for over six months, selling over a million copies. It is evident that many people appreciate the insightful analysis Bloom provides of what he calls "the closing of the American mind."

In the chapter entitled "Music," Bloom describes rock music as "junk food for the soul" which gives vent to the "rawest passions" and against which there is "no intellectual resistance."¹ We could add also that there is no significant resistance against rock music on the part of many Christian churches which have adopted a sanitized version of such music for their worship service and evangelistic outreach.

Bloom bases his conclusion on the observation of his students during the past thirty years. He notes that in the previous generation, when his students were raised on classical music, they had a greater interest for higher learning about truth, justice, beauty, friendship, etc. By contrast, the students of this generation, who are raised on rock music, show less interest for higher learning, being more interested instead in business and immediate pleasures.²

Classical music, according to Bloom, is essentially harmonic, while rock music is rhythmic. Harmonic music appeals more to the mind and makes its listeners more contemplative. Rhythmic music appeals more to the emotions and makes its listeners more passionate. The effect on the brain of prolonged exposure to electrical amplification of rhythmic music is "similar to that of drugs."³ Bloom's thesis is supported by scientific studies cited by Juanita McElwain, Ph. D., a musical therapist, who has contributed an essay (chapter 5) to this symposium. One study reported by the Scripps Howard News Service states that "exposure to rock music causes abnormal neuron structures in the region of the brain associated with learning and memory."⁴

In an interview Bloom said that he agrees with Plato that "music expresses the dark chaotic forces of the soul and the kind of music on which people are raised determines the balance of their souls. The influence of rock music on kids today reasserts a central role of music that had fallen into disuse for almost a hundred years. Once we recognize this new centrality, however, we have to discuss which passions are aroused, how they are expressed, and the role this plays in the life of society."⁵

In recent years there has been a considerable discussion on the revolutionary impact of rock music on the mental, moral, spiritual, and social behavior of people. Yet there are still significant questions that remain unanswered.

What is there about rock music that has attracted so many people worldwide and has made it such a revolutionary social phenomenon? Why is it that Jazz or the Blues, for example, did not have the same revolutionary impact on society? Is rock music just a musical style like many others, or does it embody certain "religious" beliefs, hypnotic powers, and values system that are countercultural and anti-Christian?

Objective of this Chapter. This chapter seeks to answer the above questions by taking a closer look at the historical and ideological evolution of rock music. The purpose of this survey is not merely to inform the reader about the history of rock music. Such information is readily available in far more comprehensive studies. Rather our concern is to help the reader understand the real nature of rock music by tracing its ideological evolution and by focusing on the values that have emerge during the course of its history. This analysis will continue in the following chapter, which examines more closely the nature of rock music.

This study will show that rock music has gone through an easily-discernible hardening process. What began in the fifties as plain rock, it gradually became mellow rock, folk rock, soul rock, funk rock, psychedelic rock, disco, hard rock, heavy metal rock, punk rock, thrash metal rock, rave rock and rap rock. New types of rock music are constantly appearing, while the old ones are still acclaimed.

A popular assumption is that these various types of rock music are just another musical genre that people may like or dislike, depending on their musical preferences or culture. Thus, there is nothing immoral with rock music per se. It is only its improper use that is morally wrong. Thus, by changing its lyrics, Christians can legitimately use rock music to worship God and proclaim the Gospel.

This study is designed to help readers understand the fallacies of this popular assumption, which is based on a gross misconception of the intrinsic nature of rock music. Unfortunately most people fail to realize that there is more to rock music that meets the eye. They ignore that rock is not a generic musical genre, but a music of rebellion. It is a revolutionary "religious" countercultural and anti-Christian movement which uses its rhythm, melodies, and lyrics to promote, among other things, a pantheistic/hedonistic worldview, an open rejection of the Christian faith and values, sexual perversion, civil disobedience, violence, satanism, occultism, homosexuality, and masochism.

The above characteristics of rock music will become evident as we trace its historical development and ideological characteristics in this and the following chapters. The findings of this study give us reasons to conclude that rock music is not a neuter (amoral) musical style, but a music of rebellion which defies God, rejects accepted morality, and promotes all sorts of perverted behavior. No other music has ever appeared during the past twenty centuries which so blatantly rejects all the moral values and beliefs that Christianity represents.

As this conclusion becomes increasingly evident during the course of our historical survey of rock music, we shall pose this probing question at crucial points of our investigation into its characteristics during the sixties, seventies, eighties, and our time: Can rock music be legitimately adopted and transformed into a fitting medium to worship God and proclaim the Gospel? A preliminary answer to this question will be given at the conclusion of this chapter. A more comprehensive response will be submitted in the conclusion of the book itself, which will bring together the findings of all the scholars who have contributed to this symposium.

For the sake of clarity the chapter is divided in four parts. The first part traces the roots of rock music to the African rhythmic music, which was adopted in various forms by the Negro Spirituals, the Rhythm and Blues, and later by the rock and roll music. Special consideration will be given to the role of Elvis Presley in the promotion of rock music and of its values.

The second part considers the development of rock music during the sixties, focusing especially on the influence of the Beatles. These "fantastic four" English young men, as we shall see, played a major role in promoting through their rock music the use of drugs and the rejection of Christianity.

The third part looks at music during the seventies. During this decade several factors contributed to the rise of superstitious and satanic types of rock music, which promoted various forms of satanic worship and occult activities. This alarming aspect of rock music is obviously ignored by those who see nothing wrong in the intrinsic nature of rock music.

The last part focuses on the hardening process of rock music which has occurred since 1980. During this period new types of rock music appeared which superseded the previous ones loudness of beat, vulgarity and profanity. The information gathered by this historical survey will provide the basis for addressing the fundamental probing

question of whether or not rock music can legitimately be adopted and transformed into a fitting medium to worship God and proclaim the Gospel

PART I: THE BEGINNINGS OF ROCK MUSIC

In chapter 2 we noted that rock music draws its inspiration from its original home in Africa where religious worship is often a bodily celebration of the supernatural through rhythmic music. As Michael Ventura points out, "The metaphysical goal of the African way is to experience the intense meeting of the human world and the spirit world. Spurred by the holy drums, deep in the meditation of the dance, one is literally entered by a god or goddess. Goddesses may enter men, and gods may enter women. The body literally becomes the crossroads, human and divine are united within it—and it can happen to anyone.

"In Abomey, Africa, these deities that speak through humans are called *vodun*. The word means 'mysteries.' From their *vodun* comes our *Voodoo*, and it is to Voodoos that we must look for the roots of our music. . . . Voodoo is not so much Africa in the New World as it is Africa meeting the New World, absorbing it and being absorbed by it, and reforming the ancient metaphysics according to what it now had to face."⁶

The popular acceptance of African rhythmic music has been facilitated by the convergence in our time between the immanent conception of "God within us" prevailing among Evangelicals, and the humanistic/pantheistic view of God pervasive in our society. We noted in chapter 2 that since both groups are seeking to fulfill their inner urge for a pleasurable experience of the supernatural, African rhythmic music provides an attractive medium to approach the infinite through its hypnotic rhythm.

A unique characteristic of African music is its rhythms which to the Africans is the spice of life. English musicologist A. M. Jones explains that "He [the African] is intoxicated by this rhythmic harmony or rhythmic polyphony, just as we react to chordal harmony. It is this remarkable interplay of main beats that causes him irresistibly, when he hears the drums, to start moving his feet, his arms, his whole body. This to him is real music."⁷ The beat is indeed the defining characteristic of rock music. We shall see that its unique rhythm, which impacts directly on the body, distinguishes rock music from all other forms of music.

A popular assumption is that the music rhythm of the African Voodoo is associated with Devil worship. This is not necessarily true. African culture sees supernatural beings as being inherently neither good or evil, but capable of going either ways, depending on the skills of those musicians who practice their arts for good or evil. The presence of the occult, satanism in some types of rock music discussed later in this chapter, do not represent the original intent of the Voodoo beat, which was to communicate with the supernatural, whether good or evil.

Negro Spirituals. The roots of rock music are generally traced to the Negro Spirituals which developed in the deep South of the United States. These simple songs deserve our respect because they express the sufferings and oppressions of the American Negro. Though rhythmic in music, the Spirituals always contained a message of hope to be found in God's deliverance of His people. The sufferer finds the solution and ultimate hope in God, who will exchange their tattered clothing for a white robe and delivered them from death through a fiery chariot. The theology of the Spirituals may not always be accurate, but the faith and trust in God is unmistakable.

In time there were those blacks who rejected the message of hope of the Negro Spirituals, and developed another musical form to express their suffering and despair. Their music, which is known as "Rhythm and Blues," became the expression of the blacks who rejected any divine solution to their plight. The mood of the Blues is one of sadness and despair, punctuated by a regular, heavy beat.

Hubert Spence observes: "The 'Blues' feeling was strongly evident but there was a clear rejection of any solution outside of man. Its message described man either drowning in his suffering, taking his life in the suffering, or partaking of some pleasurable act (such as fornication); through these actions the 'blues' were relieved. And by the 1930s in the field and shanties of the delta country, there mutated this earthly, hard-driving style of music. It was played by blacks for the blacks (at that time called Negroes). Cured

in misery, it was a lonesome, soul-sad music, full of cries and punctuated by a heavy regular beat."⁸

The Birth of Rock Music. After World War II, the beat of the Blues became intensified with electric guitars, bass, and drums. The first recordings were made by Chuck Berry, Bo Diddley, and John Lee Hooker. These "race" records, as they were then known in the recording industry, were played in 1952 by disc jockey Alan Freed, on his late afternoon *Moondog Matinee* radio program in Cleveland. Borrowing a phrase occurring in several Rhythm-and-Blues songs, Freed dubbed the style "rock and roll." This phrase was used in the ghetto as an euphemism for promiscuous sexual intercourse engaged in the back seat of a car. In this perspective, how does "Christian rock" sound?

Freed went on to New York City to play his tunes on WABC, one of the largest radio station at that time. The accented beat began to take hold of American youth. Freed's popularity was not to last. In 1959 a payola scandal caused Freed to resign. He had been taking kickbacks from rock singers and groups that he promoted. He died five years later at the age of forty-two drunk and broke. The man who named the rock and roll era was its first victim.

The scandals which rocked the rock music did not diminish the interest for it. Singers like Bill Haley, Chuck Berry, and Buddy Holly contributed to popularize rock music. Especially influential was a movie entitled *Blackboard Jungle*, which featured a song by Bill Haley and the Comets called "Rock Around the Clock."

The real breakthrough came when nineteen-year-old Elvis Presley began singing the "race" songs in the black style. Presley cut his first professional record for Sam Philipps on July 6, 1954—a date which many see as the real birthday of rock music—that is, when rock music began to capture national and international attention. After his first hit "Heartbreak Hotel" Presley established himself as the "King of Rock and Roll."

Rock music in many ways was similar to what was popular before, since it was marked by guitars, pianos, trumpets, and other instruments. Yet, as Hubert Spence explains, "the sound was quite different: a constant drum beat permeated the music which made it very conducive to dancing. The back-beat or syncopation became the dominant characteristic in its rhythm."⁹ This distinguishing characteristic of rock music deserves careful consideration, because of its unique impact on the physical aspect of body. We shall examine the rhythm of rock music in the next chapter.

The Influence of Elvis Presley. The broad impact of Presley in shaping the rock movement is concisely stated in the *Dictionary of American Pop/Rock*: "Presley represented not only a new sound but a new look (sideburns and ducktail haircut), new dress (blue suede shoes), new sensibility (the sneer), new mores (a more sensual approach to love), new speech ('all shook up'), and new dances. His hysterical acceptance was the expression of a young generation in conflict with and in rebellion against the older generation."¹⁰

Presley's stage techniques were strongly visceral in movement and they drew out of his audiences not only adulation but also a salacious response. Every girl wanted Elvis for a boyfriend and lover. The lawless impact of his music soon became evident in the destructive behavior and riots of his fans during his rock concerts in London, San Paulo, Brazil, Atlanta, and San Jose, California.

"The older generation woke up. This snortin', snarlin' stallion of a singer was changing the way young people looked at life. Suddenly the triumvirate of school, family, and church had lost meaning. All that mattered was looking, acting, listening to, and being like Elvis. Pastors, parents, and newspapers editors took notice and began preaching against the rebelliousness that Presley symbolized. Something had to be done."¹¹

Unfortunately not much could be done, because Elvis had set in motion a movement that not even his death (caused by drug addiction) could stop. He died on August 1977 with fourteen different drugs pulsating through his body. His death became

for his fans his apotheosis, that is, the deification of their idol. His Graceland estate has become a multimillion-dollar industry and a virtual shrine for the pilgrimage of many Elvis-worshippers. This important "religious" dimension of rock music will be examined in the next chapter.

A paradoxical aspect of Presley's musical career is his obsession for religious fetishism. He spent hours reading the Bible aloud and forced the visitors to the converted church building house in Graceland to sit and listen to his readings. Throughout his career Presley had Gospel quartets backing his music. In his younger years Presley attended a black Baptist church in Memphis (East Trigg), Tennessee, where he studied the responses of the people to rhythmic music. Presley was steeped in the Gospel style of singing. He unsuccessfully auditioned to join the Blackwood Gospel Quartet. Rock and Roll was born when Presley recorded Rhythm and Blue songs as a white country boy sounding like a black Gospel singer.

Presley and the Charismatic Movement. Presley's interest for Gospel music, suggests the possible influence of the latter in the production of his rock music. Hubert Spence perceptively asks: "Dare we state that the birth of today's rock music was in collaboration with the Neo-Pentecostal fleshly movements? Movements supposedly under the power of the Holy Spirit became wedded to the visceral part of man. Truly, the flesh and the "Spirit" were made one in man's thinking. This was a union the Devil had been trying to deceptively bring about for many centuries in the church. We read of this dialectical desire in the Corinthian church. Today, the Charismatic Movement has come from the same visceral womb."¹²

The suggestion that the Charismatic Movement which has its tentacles in practically all denominations, including some Adventist churches, comes from the same visceral womb of the rock music movement, deserves serious consideration for two reasons. First, the popularity of "Christian" rock in Charismatic churches points to a common origin. Second, the commitment of both movements to use the stimulus of rhythmic loud music to induce an ecstatic "spiritual high" suggests also a common origin. In chapter 2 we noted that the search for an ecstatic "spiritual high" has been facilitated by the gradual shift in Christian history from a predominantly transcendent view of "God beyond us" to an unmistakably immanent conception of "God within us." The latter makes the personal and emotional experience of God, more important than any intellectual apprehension of God through His revealed Word.

In his book *At the Cross Roads*, Charlie Peacock, an award-winning artist and producer of Contemporary Christian Music, acknowledges that "Charismatic experience has come to be perceived as a more personal, tangible, and valuable encounter with God than the encounter which comes by reading and meditating over the Spirit-inspired Scriptures. The fallout from this view of life in the Spirit has been substantial."¹³

During the course of this study we will have occasions to reflect on the extent of the fallout. We shall see that the Charismatics' attempt to experience a direct encounter with God by means of the artificial stimulation provided by the rhythm of "Christian" rock, ultimately manipulates God Himself into an object for self-gratification.

In the light of the facts we have just uncovered about the origin of rock music in the sixties, let us pose again our probing question: Can rock music, which traces its roots in the Voodoo's beat as mean to experience a direct contact with the spirit world, be legitimately adopted and transformed into a fitting medium to worship God and proclaim the Gospel? The answer awaits the conclusion of this historical survey.

PART 2: ROCK MUSIC IN THE 1960s

Several factors contributed to the popularization of rock music in the 1960s. This was one of the most tempestuous decades in modern American history. The carnage of the Vietnam War, the "God-is-dead" movement, the rise of the hippies' movement, political assassinations, the spread of mind-altering drugs, the fear of nuclear war, the violent protests in many college campuses, suspicion of conventional institutions, and other factors made this a time of great disillusionment among young people

The Jesus Music. The seedbed of turbulence of the sixties facilitated the rapid growth of secular rock music on the one hand and of the Jesus movement on the other hand. Many young people who became disenchanted with the drug culture and the political establishment, began seeking for something deeper. Since they had long abandoned the traditional churches of their parents, they began developing their religious study groups. It became cool for young people to "try Jesus" as previously they had tried drugs.

To support the new religious experience, the Jesus movement introduced the so-called "Jesus Music," which later became known as Contemporary Christian Music. This music was a sanitized version of secular rock to which Christian lyrics were added. Larry Norman is regarded as one of the first innovators. He formed the rock band called "People," and recorded his first album *Upon This Rock*, which is considered by many as the first recording of "Christian" rock music. Norman became controversial among evangelical because of its outspoken lyrics which do not speak well for the Christian faith. The so-called Christian rock music was largely inspired by the secular rock, which at that time was successfully promoted, especially by the Beatles.

The Role of the Beatles. The Beatles are considered as the major players to hit the rock scene during the sixties. They were four English young men in high-heeled boots, undersized suits, and with bowl-shaped haircuts. When they appeared on the Ed Sullivan Show in February 1964, sixty-eight million people (one of the largest TV audiences in history) tuned in to watch their performance. Initially they did not come across as vulgar and immoral as they had become known in England. Their songs like "Love Me Do," "She Loves You," and "I want to Hold Your Hand," appeared innocuous enough. Parents felt that they could trust them with their daughters for all what they wanted to do was to hold their hands.

The Beatles were overwhelmingly received in America. Their songs had a lock on the charts both in America and England. All ages opened their hearts to the fabulous four who seem to be an innocent, fun rock group. But it was not long before the Beatles revealed their true colors.

In the Summer of 1966 John Lennon made his controversial statement: "Christianity will go; it will vanish and shrink, I need not argue about that; I am right and we will be proved right. We are more popular than Jesus right now."¹⁴ From this time on the Beatles became heavily involved into drugs and Eastern transcendentalism.

Lennon admitted that for three years he was constantly on LSD. He believed that LSD could lead people to the utopia for which they were looking. The Beatles often would spend the whole night on the influence of drugs during their recording session. Out of these recording sessions came the album called *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club*, which made manifest the Beatles' commitment to drugs.

By the end of 1967, most rock musicians were on LSD, commonly referred to as "acid." The list included John Lennon, Paul McCartney, George Harrison, Mick Jagger, Keith Richards, Brian Jones, Pete Townsend, Steve Winwood, Brian Wilson, Donovan, Cat Stevens, Jim Morrison, Eric Clapton, and Jimi Hendrix.

In his history of rock music entitled *Hungry for Heaven: Rock and Roll Search for Redemption*, Steve Turner writes: This [LSD] was the Damascus Road tablet. People

started out on trips as hard-nosed materialists after a bit of fun, and emerged with their egos ripped and mauled, unsure at first whether they'd see God or whether they were god."¹⁵

The association between rock music and the drug culture was influenced especially by Harvard University Professor Timothy Leary, the author of *The Psychedelic Reader* and *The Psychedelic Experience*. He was a close friend of the Beatles whom he called "The Four Evangelists." Leary interpreted the effects of LSD on himself as "his deepest religious experience" of his life and founded the League of Spiritual Discovery, which campaigned for the legal use of LSD as the "sacramental catalyst to the new consciousness." At a convention of psychologists in Philadelphia he stated: "Drugs are the religion of the twenty-first century. Pursuing religion without drugs is like studying astronomy with the naked eye."¹⁶

The impact on the American public was astonishing. Suddenly marijuana, speed, and LSD were "cool," the "in" thing to do. Songs like *Lucy in the Sky of Diamonds*, allegedly an acronym for LSD, could best be listened to if a person was zonked. Tripping on LSD became the passage way to the rock scene. The music of Jimi Hendrix, The Grateful Dead, and Cream resonated with LSD consciousness.

For some rock groups LSD became more than a trip to a vague 'psychedelic experience. It was "disarranging minds by hauling demons and monsters from what appeared to be the depths of the sub-conscious."¹⁷ Eric Clapton recalls an hallucinating experience in San Francisco while playing on stage with the group Cream. He felt "his guitar apparently resonating with the spirit world."¹⁸ Drugs and rhythm became a staple of the rock movement, because they both function as stimulants to experience a "spiritual high."

Rejection of Christianity. The theological views of the Beatles became clearer during the last five years of their writings (1965-1970). When they returned from India in 1965, they behaved as if they had some sort of "conversion" experience. Their "conversion," however, took place not on Damascus road, but at the Ganges river. There they discovered that LSD allegedly reveals a truth hidden to people, namely, that the whole world is a massive heavenly divinity and we are all potentially divine. This meant that monotheistic religions such as Christianity, Judaism, and Islam were out; instead, pantheistic religions like Hinduism, Buddhism, and New Age were in.

"In the song 'I Found Out,' the lyrics are very bold: 'There ain't no Jesus gonna come from the sky. Now that I found out I know I can cry.' Throughout the song Lennon states that he has seen through religion 'from Jesus to Paul' and that religion was simply a form of drug. In the same song he declares, 'God is merely a concept by which we measure our pain.'

In another song 'God,' Lennon declared that he did not believe in the Bible, Jesus, magic, Buddha, Yoga, or even the Beatles; 'I just believe in me, Yoko [his wife] and me, and that's reality.' In the closing lyrics of the song 'God,' he instructed his millions of listeners, 'And so dear friends, you just have to carry on, the dream is over.'¹⁹ It is evident that for Lennon Christianity is only a fanciful dream with offers no hope for the future. The truth is that his songs have no message of hope—only an invitation to experience the fleeting pleasures of the moment. At times Lennon was brutally blasphemous, openly attacking Christ, Christianity and the clergy.

Paul McCartney, a member of the Beatles, publicly announced in 1965: "None of us believes in God." Their official press officer, Derek Taylor said: "It's incredible! Here are four boys from Liverpool. They're rude, they're profane, they're vulgar, and they've taken over the world. It's as if they'd founded a new religion. They're completely anti-Christ. I mean, I'm anti-Christ as well, but they're so anti-Christ they shock *me*, which isn't an easy thing."²⁰

When the rock people turned their back against Christianity, they swallowed Hindu teachings, especially those of the guru Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, the founder of the Spiritual Regeneration Movement. In Hindu teaching, rhythmic music releases souls

trapped in the world of delusion, enabling them to experience a "god-consciousness." The rock group The Who, who adopted Hindu teachings, used their music as an allegorical description of a journey from spiritual darkness to "god-realization."

The attraction of the Indian gurus did not last long for rock musicians. The fabulous wealth of the gurus, the number of Rolls-Royces, and their abusive treatment of women, all revealed that they were less than gods. This disillusionment may have contributed to the obsession with Satanism, which became characteristic of the 1970s.

It is impossible to estimate the impact of the Beatles' music on western civilization. Their music and lyrics promoted philosophies characterized by atheism, nihilism, rebellion, mystical surrealism, instant gratification, and a life built on the ups and downs of drug culture.

An article on *Time* magazine rightly points out that there is more to the Beatles' music that meets the eyes: "The battle lines involved much more than their music. It involved a drug culture, an anti-God theme, an anti-America, pro-revolution stand. It involved recognizing that Lennon was more than a musician."²¹ As in the case of Elvis Presley, Lennon became for the rock fans a superhuman icon, a demigod. The cult of rock heroes is a significant aspect of the rock scene to be considered in the next chapter.

Drug Craze and Acid Rock. The phenomenon of the drug craze gained momentum in the latter part of the sixties and has continued to our times. From 1966 to 1970, the drug scene and the hippies influenced the driving, hypnotic beat of rock music. A new form of rock music, known as Acid Rock, began hitting the airwaves by 1967. The idea of this music was to recreate the illusion of the LSD (lysergic acid diethylamine) drug "trip" by means of music and the use of lights.

Acid rock was slower and more languid than hard rock and it was used both to induce the "psychedelic trip" and to enhance such an experience for those taking drugs. The drug culture of the rock music of the time took its toll of victims. An overdose of drugs accounts for the death of such famous rock stars as Elvis Presley, Jimi Hendrix, John Bonham, Jim Morrison, Sid Vicious, Janis Joplin, Bon Scott, Keith Moon, Bob Marley, and others.

The death of Jimi Hendrix on September 17, 1970 caused a worldwide outpouring of grief. For some rock fans the death of Jimie as like the death of Jesus Himself. He was regarded as the most influential, dynamic, and musically competent player of the time. To gain the attention of the crowd, Hendrix would raise his guitar to his mouth, pluck the strings with his teeth and then sensually fondle the guitar. He would pantomime an act of copulation by using the guitar as his sexual partner.

At the height of the performance, Hendrix would smash his guitar and amplifier, dousing them with lighter fluid. Amidst the smoke and flames he would walk off the stage. His stage manager carried spares amplifiers, guitars, and speakers, because Hendrix would destroy at least two speakers at every show.

Hendrix was especially known for his drug-oriented life style expressed in such songs as "Purple Haze." He was arrested on narcotics charges on numerous occasions. The use of rock music and drugs were for Hendrix a kind of spiritual experience—a way to plug into a fake spiritual world. The drugs that he glorified eventually took his life. He had just performed at a huge Isle of Wight concert in Great Britain. On the night of September 17, 1970, he stayed in the flat of a German girl Monika. They smoked grass together until 3:00 a. m. when they went to bed together. At 10:20 a. m. Monika found Hendrix face down, suffocated in his own vomit from a drug overdose.

The lesson from the death of such rock stars as Presley and Hendrix is plain. The wealth and fame heaped upon the superstars of the rock culture do not provide inner peace and purpose in life. The reason is that inner peace and harmony are to be found,

not through magic drugs or exciting rock music, but through the Rock of Ages who invites us to come to Him and find rest in Him (Matt 11:28).

During this era drugs became the means to bring the rock culture into the realm of religion. Unfortunately it was a godless religion, dominated by the Prince of Evil. The seeds sowed in the sixties bore fruit in the seventies, as satanic music was produced by numerous rock musicians.

In the light of the facts we have just uncovered about rock music in the sixties, let us pose again our probing question: Can rock music, which in the sixties rejected Christianity, glorified sexual perversion, promoted drugs which claimed the lives of some of their heroes, be legitimately adopted and transformed into a fitting medium to worship God and proclaim the Gospel? The answer awaits the conclusion of this historical survey.

PART 3: ROCK MUSIC IN THE 1970s

The open rejection of Christianity, the disillusionment of Hindu teachings, and the use of drugs to induce a "psychedelic experience," each in its own way contributed to the rise of a superstitious and Satanic music which dominated the 1970s and has continued to our times.

The Decade of Satanic Music. In his book *Confronting Contemporary Christian Music*, Hubert Spence, Professor and President of the Foundations Schools, provides an informative list of the groups and titles of songs that came out during the 1970s and early 1980s with clear references to Hell and Satan. He writes: "First in the titles, there were 'Go to Hell' by Alice Cooper; 'Highway to Hell' by AC/DC; 'Hell Ain't a Bad Place to Be;' 'Good Day in Hell' by the Eagles. Some song titles concerned Satan, Lucifer, or the Devil: 'Their Satanic Majesty's Request;' 'Dancing with Mr. D;' 'Sympathy for the Devil'—all by the Rolling Stones. In this last song, 'Sympathy for the Devil,' Lucifer himself speaks and requests 'courtesy' and 'sympathy' from all who meet him. Other song titles indicate a theme of witches, wizards, and sorcerers, all of which are centered in the occult. Other songs included 'The Wizard' by Black Sabbath, and 'Rhiannon' by Fleetwood Mac (dedicated to a Welch witch of the same name). . . . Other songs deal with human sacrifice, such as the one by AC/DC entitled 'If you Want Blood, You've Got It.' It was again seen in Black Sabbath's song, 'Sabbath, Bloody Sabbath.'" ²²

Some of the rock music is directly addressed to Satan. Brian Johnson of AC/DC sings of Satan's pitiless killing of people in the song "Hell's Bells," saying: "I am a rolling thunder, pouring rain, I'm coming like a hurricane; my lightning's flashing across the sky; you're only young but you're gonna die. I take no prisoners, won't spare no lives; nobody's putting up a fight. I've got my bell, gonna take you to hell; I'm gonna get you, yea. Satan will get you, Hell's bells, yea, hell's bells." Another AC/DC singer, Bon Scott, sings about Satan in the hit "Highway to Hell," saying: "Hey, Satan look at me, I'm on my way to the Promise land, I'm on a highway to hell." The song "Bohemian Rhapsody" recorded by the homosexual group "Queen," has a line which says: "Beelzebub has a devil set aside for me."

Rock historian Steve Turner describes this period, saying: "Like no Rock group before them the Rolling Stones invoked the devil, entitling an album 'Their Satanic Majesty's Request.' They even took on the person of Lucifer and, on many occasions, played on occult association. On a TV special Jagger ripped off his black shirt to reveal a tattoo of the devil on his chest." ²³

The rock music of this period dealt also with occultic activities. These included conscious life after death in the Jefferson Starship's song "Your Mind has Left Your Body," and Gary Wright's song "Dream Weaver." Sun worship is present in such songs like "Light the Sky on fire" by the Jefferson Starship. There was also a song called "God the Sun" sung by the group America.

The Satanic influence of rock music can be seen also in those songs which encouraged suicide. For example, there was the song "Don't Fear the Reaper" sang by the Blue Oyster Cults; "Why Don't You Die Young and Stay Pretty" by the Blondie; and "Homocide" by the Group 999 (the inverted 666).

Other songs promote the abuse or even the murdering of children. The Dead Kennedy recorded a song called "I Kill Children." Part of the lyrics say: "God told me to skin you alive, I kill children, I love to see them die. I kill children and make their mamas cry. Crush them under my car, I want to hear them scream; feed them poison candy, to spoil their Halloween." The same theme is found in the songs "Children of the Grave" by Black Sabbath and "Hell is for Children" by Pat Benatar.

Perhaps one of the most disgusting Satanic themes to be found in the rock music of this period, is the idea of having sex with demons. "Many believed that a demon in female form had the powers of sexual union with men in their sleep. The 1978 hit 'Undercover Angel' dealt with this belief. Terry Gibb's 1980 hit 'Somebody's Knocking'

promoted homosexual relationships with demons. And even Alice Cooper's song 'Cold Ethyl' promoted necrophilia or cohabitation with a corpse kept in the freezer."²⁴

Satanic Symbols. The deep involvement of some rock stars in the occult and Satanic worship is reflected in their use of satanic symbols. As the Cross and water serve as symbols of Christianity, so Satan's worshippers have developed their own symbols which some rock stars use especially on the jacket of their albums. A perusal of all the Satanic symbols would take us beyond the limited scope of this chapter. We shall mention only few of them.²⁵

One of the prominent satanic symbols used by rock groups is the "S," depicted as a jagged lightning bolt. This symbol is derived from Luke 10:18, which says: "I beheld Satan like a lightning fall from heaven." The "S" printed like jagged lightning bolt, appears in the name of the rock group KISS and repeatedly on the album *We Sold our Soul to Rock 'n' Roll*, produced by the group called Black Sabbath. David Bowie is pictured on one of his albums covers with the same jagged "S" painted on his face.

An inverted cross has been a symbol of Satanism through the centuries. It is used as a background to some of the performances of Madonna. It was a feature of the Rolling Stones' 1981 world tour and it has appeared on the cover of a Duran Duran album.

Another satanic symbols is the *pentagram*, a five-pointed star-shaped figure symbolizing Satan worship. The rock group Rush use this symbol extensively on their album covers. The satanic symbol "Winged Globes" which consists of a solar disk, is used by such rock groups as Aerosmith, Journey, Reo Speedwagon, and New Riders of the Purple Sage.

Other satanic symbols used by rock groups include the serpent, the Egyptian pyramid, the goat's head, the skull, and the hexagram. The rock group Santana has an album *Abraxas*, which is named after a powerful witchcraft demon. In another album, *Festival*, they feature a Hindu idol on the cover with two serpents on either side of the idol. The two serpents represent the duality of good and evil that can live in harmony with each other.

Satanic Involvement. The satanic symbols used by rock stars is reflective of their involvement in the occult and satanic worship. Some of them have expressed openly in interviews their involvement in occult activities. Hubert Spence reports some examples: "The lead singer for Meat Loaf stated: 'When I go on stage, I get possessed.' Their composer, Jim Steinman said, 'I've always been fascinated by the supernatural and always felt rock was the perfect medium for it.' The lead singer for Queen, Freddie Mercury, said, 'On the stage I am a devil. I think I may go mad in several years time.' David Bowie, who had drawing of pentagrams on his walls, said, 'Rock has always been the Devil's music because it lets in the baser elements.' Ozzie Osborne, formally of Black Sabbath, is a professing devil worshipper. He said, 'I know that there is some supernatural force using me to bring forth my rock and roll.'"²⁶

"The Rolling Stones outdid themselves in one concert years ago at Altamont, California. While they sang 'Sympathy for the Devil,' several members of Hell's Angels (a motorcycle gang hired to be security force for the Stones) went to the front of the stage and beat a young black boy to death in front of thousands of screaming fans. Such actions inspired Don McLean to write his rock hit 'American Pie.' In the song he depicts the hideous scene of that concert: 'As I watched him [Mick Jagger] on the stage, my hands were clenched in fists of rage. No angel born in hell could break that Satan spell. And as the flames climbed high into the night, to start the sacrificial rite, I saw Satan laughing with delight. The day the music died.'"²⁷

Another example of the total disrespect for human life is provided by the rock group known as The Who. In 1979 they presented a concert in Cincinnati, Ohio, at the Riverfront Coliseum. At the opening of that concert eleven people were trampled to death by the crowd fighting to get inside. What was the response of Townshend, the band-leader, to these tragic deaths? Plain cynicism. In an interview published by *The Rolling Stone* magazine, he said: "We're a Rock and Roll band. You know, we don't ___ around,

worrying about eleven people dying."²⁸ Such callous indifference toward the loss of eleven human lives can only be inspired by Satan himself, who, as Jesus said, "was a murdered from the beginning" (John 8:44).

In his book *Dancing with Demons*, Jeff Godwin gives startling evidence on a number of popular rock musicians who have studied the ancient beat of satanic worship. These rockers include Brian Jones (Rolling Stones), John Phillips (The Mamas and the Papas), Paul McCartney (The Beatles), Mick Fleetwood (Led Zeppelin).²⁹ These men have studied with satanic masters in order to learn how to use effectively the hypnotic power of the rock beat in their songs.

The presence of satanic influence in the rhythm and messages of many rock songs, remind us of Satan's objective to promote not only sin and confusion, but also the *worship* of himself. This was true before he was cast out of heaven (Is14:12-16), it was true when he tempted Christ by offering Him all the kingdoms of the world in exchange for worship (Matt4:8-9), and it is still true today. Satan knows that rock music a most effective device that he can use effectively to lead millions to worship him rather than God. He wants worship and this is exactly what he is receiving through the medium of rock music.

Summing up, the rock scene of the 1980s is truly a moral and social wasteland which defy description. It seems that the more depraved were the lyrics and the more albums were sold. The Motley Crue sold two million copies of "South of the Devil" which says: "Out go the lights; in goes my knife; pull out his life; consider the bastard dead." The popularity of such outrageous rock music which blatantly promote murder, violence, and satanic worship, provide one of the most compelling evidence of the sacrilegious and depraved nature of rock music.

In the light of the facts we have just uncovered about the rock music of the seventies, let us pose again our probing question: Can rock music, which promotes defiance against God, rejection of accepted moral values, and glorification of Satan, be legitimately adopted and transformed into a fitting medium to worship God and proclaim the Gospel? The answer awaits the conclusion of this historical survey.

PART 4: ROCK MUSIC SINCE THE 1980s

In tracing the history of rock music from its origin through the seventies we have already detected an easily-discernible hardening process. We shall now see that this hardening process continues through the eighties to our time. What began in the fifties as plain rock, it gradually became hard rock, heavy metal rock, punk rock, thrash metal rock, and rap rock, to name a few. New types of rock music are constantly appearing, superseding the previous ones in beat, loudness, vulgarity and profanity.

David Marshall notes: "Rock, Hard Rock, and Heavy Metal contain lyrics. Kerrang, Thrash Metal, and Rave are just wild, iterative, mind-bursting loud noises with no obvious lyrics but, according to some sources, containing subliminal messages here and there."³⁰

"Rock and Roll will never die," its devotees say. They are right, but if the past is any guide, the current rock music fads will be superseded by new types of rock music which will be more outrageous in glorifying sexual perversion, violence, drugs, and satanism. The reason is not difficult to find. Rock music is addictive like drugs and those addicted to it, are constantly seeking for stronger types of rock music in order to satisfy their craving. With this in mind let us briefly look at some of the most significant developments in the rock scene since the 1980s.

Sex Pistols. The 1980s brought sexuality and satanism to a new high in performances by The Sex Pistols and Madonna. The Sex Pistols is one of the basest rock bands for immorality of lyrics, music and stage performance. They were catapulted into the rock limelight by the production of their song "Anarchy in the U. K." They were banned from Britain. Their music extolled homosexuality, bestiality, lesbianism, sodomy, masochism, transvestism, and other forms of perversions.

An indication of their insanity can be found in their album "God Save the Queen, She Ain't No Human Being." The song insults Queen Elizabeth as a nonhuman being at the very time of her Silver Jubilee anniversary celebration. Malcolm McLaren, the founder of this rock group states their philosophy, saying: "Rock and Roll is not just music. You're selling an attitude too. The kids need a sense of adventure and Rock and Roll needs to find a way to give it to them, wham out the hardest and cruelest lyrics and propaganda."³¹ A music that sells an attitude of open defiance against all accepted moral values, should have no place in the Christian life and worship.

Madonna: The "PR" of Sexuality. Next to Michael Jackson, the most popular product of the rock culture of our times is undoubtedly Louise Ciccone, better known by her assumed name of Madonna. She was raised in a middle class Italian American family in Bay City, Michigan. In view of her Catholic upbringing, it is incredible that she would take on the name of "Madonna" to parade her sexuality. After all for Catholics the Madonna represents the virginity and purity of Jesus' mother. By assuming a name that represents virginity and purity, to promote her immoral sexual antics, she revealed her determination to profane sacred symbols through her rock songs. A more appropriate Biblical name she could have chosen for her seductive appeal, is "Jezebel,"—the woman who in Biblical history became the symbol of seduction (Rev 2:20). At this late date any attempt to change her name to "Jezebel" is a fruitless endeavor.

In some performances Madonna uses a cross as a background for her sexual posing. In others she uses the inverted cross, which historically has been a symbol of satanism. When she sang her unbecoming songs, such as "Like a Virgin" and "Vogue," she wore a brass-spiked bra at her concerts, flaunting her sexuality and taunting the crowd with a smooth come-on. She has peddled pornography through the tens of millions of records sold.

In the *Rutherford Magazine* John Whitehead states: "Madonna is trying to provoke us to re-examine the traditional definition of what is permissible and what is or nor pornographic or erotic. . . . The only thing left is hedonism. But it is not a hedonism anchored in 'secular humanism' or secularism. It is a hedonism anchored in a new form of paganism"³²

In her book *Hole in Our Soul, The Loss of Beauty and Meaning in American Popular Music*, Martha Bayles, a television and art critic, notes that "Madonna is most at home in decadence. Her most convincing work, in terms of form expressing content, celebrates gay male life-style at its most hedonistic. For example, her video 'Vogue' sets a spare, Chic-influenced sound against a deadpan display of black-tie preening as practiced in gay clubs. More recently, 'Justify My Love' and some of the songs on the album *Erotica* use a whispery vocal and chicken-scratch beat to underline a deliberately vacuous celebration of sadomasochism. . . . 'Justify My Love' received a major sales and rental boost after being banned by MTV, and the X-rated book *Sex* was sold coyly shrink-wrapped in Mylar plastic."³³

Madonna stands out for her ability to manipulate in a cynical fashion religious imagery to promote her immoral agenda through her rock songs. The immense popularity that she enjoys is a sad commentary on the moral decadence of our society. Hubert Spencer writes: "We as a country have gone so long without examples of true, honorable culture, we believe the glitter and extravaganza of a rock performance are the standard for the serious, artistic ability. And remember, she [Madonna] makes her money at peddling pornography as a cultural event."³⁴

Madonna's sacrilegious attitude toward Christian symbols, is shared by numerous rock musicians who, like her, interject religious elements in their names and performances. Some of them appeal to the public with such names as Jesus Jones, Faith No More, and MC 900 FT Jesus. In the album "Born Again" by the rock band Black Sabbath, there is a line which says: "The only good Christian is a dead Christian." In another album called "Welcome to Hell," the rock group Venon, says: "We're possessed by all that is evil. The death of You, God, we demand."

The audacity of some rock musicians to call even for the death of God, is indicative of the depth of their depravity, communicated through their rock music. Let us pose again our probing question: Can rock music, some of which blatantly profanes and blasphemes God and the Christian faith, be transformed and adopted as a medium to worship God and to proclaim the Gospel? The answer awaits the conclusion of this historical survey.

Michael Jackson: The Human Deified. The 1980s brought to the forefront the grown-up Michael Jackson, who first made a national debut in 1969 as a member of the Jackson Family. He stepped out as a single artist in the mid-1970s and was soaring in popularity by the 1980s. His two albums "Off the Wall" and "Thriller," made him an international celebrity.

The "Thriller," which has sold over forty million copies, reveals Jackson's fascination with the supernatural and the lurid. Both the album and the video deal with the occult, specifically the horror of living with corpses. To pacify the leaders of the Jehovah's Witness church, to which he belonged at that time, he placed a disclaimer at the beginning of the video, saying: "Due to my strong personal convictions, I wish to stress that this film in no way endorses a belief in the occult—Michael Jackson." The disclaimer does not detract from the fact that the album and video do definitely promote the occult.

In the two videos "Bad" and "Dangerous" Michael Jackson lives up to the message of the titles. Martha Bayles, a TV and art critic, notes that "After witnessing these videos, in which Jackson ceaselessly grabs his crotch, smashes car windows, and zips up his fly (in that rather unconvincing order), most people shake their heads and say he's out of touch."³⁵

The truth of the matter is that Jackson is not merely out of touch, but sometimes out of control. The accusations of homosexual relationships with children, his strange marriage to Elvis Presley's daughter who soon left him, the child he has fathered with another woman out of wedlock, are all indications of his moral decadence. Yet "he has carefully staged himself throughout the world as an icon of deity. His videos regularly display him giving erotic gestures to the camera; his extravagantly-rendered stage productions present strong implications of his godhood (manifested in his entrances and exits), lauding him as the savior of the world."³⁶ The sad reality is that Jackson

desperately needs a Savior to cleanse him from all his depraved sinful living, reflected in his rock music.

Heavy Metal Rock Music. The crave for more aggressive, noise-dominated, obscene, violent lyrics, has contributed to the rise of more harsh types of rock music, such as "Heavy Metal" and "Rap Music." We will take a brief look at each of them in closing our historical survey of rock music.

All observers, friend and foes, agree that Heavy Metal bands not only play one of the most strident forms of rock music, but also create an imaginary world for its fans, which glamorizes sex, drugs, and violence. Stephen Davis, the biographer of Led Zeppelin, the leading star of Heavy Metal, describes such music as "creating its own private universe for its fans. The music is only part of it. Something else is going on."³⁷

The "something else" which goes at Metal rock concerts is mentioned by Tipper Gore, the wife of Vice-President Al Gore. She writes: "In [Metal rock] concerts, the most strident bands not only play their music at the highest decibel levels, but perform what they describe as 'vaudeville acts' that glamorize explicit sex, alcohol and drugs use, and bloody violence. Some depict the most extreme antisocial behavior imaginable."³⁸ We might say that metal rock bands not only scream, but they also provide reasons for screaming.

From its beginning in the seventies Heavy Metal rock music has become increasing more loud, vulgar and sadistic. Martha Baytes describes this trend saying: "Good old promiscuity went the way of the dodo bird, as 'speed metal' and 'death metal' groups beefed up their act with bloody sadism. The mid-1980s were the heyday of rock videos depicting female victims chained, caged, beaten, and bound with barbed wire, all to wet the appetites of twelve-and-thirteen-year-olds for on stage performances such as the famous one in which the group W. A.S. P. sang its hit song, 'F___ Like a Beast,' while pretending to batter a woman's skull and rape her with a chain saw."³⁹ Metal rock stars brag about having intercourse during performances, recording sessions, and video tapings.⁴⁰

Observers of the rock scene note that the young people most deeply involved in heavy metal, are angry, troubled adolescents such as dropouts and runaways.⁴¹ "These youngsters display a grotesque combination of vaunting ambition and drooping despair, based on the conviction that the only alternative to rock stardom is death in the gutter."⁴² Nor do the stars provide much guidance. They are just as nihilistic as their followers, only instead of getting punished for self-destructive behavior, they get rewarded."⁴³

It is hard to believe that even Heavy Metal rock music, known not only for its thundering beat, but also for glamorizing sex, drugs, and violence, has been adopted by "Christian" bands to praise God and reach the unsaved. For example, "Christian" heavy metal bands like Stryper have shared the same concert stage with secular bands, have recorded their music on the same secular labels, which are sold in the same retail stores. The four members of Stryper look a lot like the members of the KISS band. They wear tight leather and spandex clothing, use a lot of makeup and chains, and have wild hair. The group wants to be known as "a metal band for Christ."⁴⁴

Again we need to pose our probing question: can Heavy Metal rock music, which blatantly promotes some of the worse types of violent and destructive behavior, be transformed and adopted as a medium to worship God and to proclaim the Gospel? Can the world of Metal rock be legitimately and effectively be infiltrated by sheep in wolves' clothing? The answer awaits the conclusion of this historical survey.

Rap Music. Closely related to Heavy Metal and largely dependant upon it, is "Rap Music," which incorporates many of the sounds and styles of Heavy Metal rock. The term "Rap" refers to rhyming of words chanted or "rapped" according to a heavily rhythmic musical accompaniment known as hip-hop. In other words, Rap music consists of chanted rhyme backed by heavy rhythms. It is seen as part of the Afro-American

tradition. It is produced on "a particular part of sound montage: Afro-American speech fitted to Afro-American rhythms, and addressing the problems of growing up black."⁴⁵

Rap music is widely denounced by journalists, religious leaders, and black opinion-makers, for its shocking indecency, especially for promoting the abuse and exploitation of women. In his article on "The Corruption of Rock," British journalist Michael Medved points out that "the worst attitudes toward women are displayed by some of the Rap musicians. In Rap culture, terms like 'my bitch' or 'my whore' are habitually used to describe girlfriends. One of the worst offenders among the Rap musicians is NWA."⁴⁶

The album in which NWA is most abusive of women is called "Nasty as they Wanna Be." Its central theme is the mutilation of the genitals of female partners. In Florida a judge ruled this album too obscene for young people. In spite of its abusive and obscene language the album sold 1.7 million copies.

In his article "How Rap's Hate Lyrics Harm Youngsters," Bob Demoss analyses the same album where he found that in less than sixty minutes there were 226 uses of the "F" word, 163 uses of the word "bitch," 87 descriptions of oral sex, and 117 explicit references to male and female genitalia.⁴⁷ Numerous writers and church leaders have strongly condemned the violence promoted by cult rappers through their lyrics.

Hubert Spence notes that "Although crime and hate have been an ongoing side effect of the rock music, the Rap sound has mushroomed crime in the areas of the gang concept. Even small towns are now being affected, and Rap stars have become the teachers of these gangs. This type of music is one of the largest reasons for the recent upsurge of racial tension and fear in the streets. Such social fires are being fed by these rhythmic proclaimers of hatred and violence."⁴⁸

The widespread denunciation of Rap music for its shocking indecency by many civil and religious leaders, has not prevented Christian bands to adopt such music to praise God and reach the unsaved. Numerous "Christian Rap" bands advertise their services and offer their albums on the web. It is evident that no matter how shocking the new types of rock music are, there are Christians who are prepared to sanitize them by changing the lyrics,

CONCLUSION

The time has now come to answer our introductory probing question which has been repeated several times during the course of our survey: Can rock music be legitimately adopted and transformed into a fitting medium to worship God and proclaim the Gospel?

The answer is self-evident. The investigation of the worldview of rock music conducted in chapter 2 and of its historical development in this chapter, strongly indicates that any attempt to sanitize secular rock music by changing its lyrics will ultimately result in the prostitution of the Christian faith and worship. Four major reasons support this conclusion.

(1) Rock Music Can Alter the Mind. Our study has shown that what distinguishes rock music from any other music is its hypnotic beat that can alter the mind, weakening moral sensitivity and inhibitions, and causing people to write, see, and do the most hideous things. No other musical genre is known to have the same mind-altering capacities. This point will become clearer in the next chapter where we take a closer look at the rhythm of rock music.

At this juncture it suffices to cite few testimonies to support what we have already found.. Joseph Crow, professor at the University of Seattle, did an interesting study on the impact of rock music on the human mind. He concludes: "Rock is a use of music based on mathematical formulae to condition the mind through calculated frequencies (vibrations), and it is used to modify the body chemistry to make the mind susceptible to modification and indoctrination. Rock music can be (and is) employed for mindbending, reeducation and re-organization."⁴⁹

The hypnotic power of the rock beat is acknowledged even by rock superstars. For example, Jimmy Hendrix, who is regarded as the best rock guitarist who ever lived, said: "Music is a spiritual thing of its own. We can hypnotize people with music, and when they are at their weakest point we can preach into their subconscious what we want them to say. That is why the name 'Electric Church' flashes in and out. The music flows from the air; and that is why I can connect with a spirit."⁵⁰

On a similar vein popular rock star Little Richard openly acknowledges the demonic power of the rock beat, saying: "My true belief about Rock 'n' Roll—and there are a lot of phrases attributed to me over the years—is this: I believe this kind of music is demonic . . . A lot of the beats in music today are taken from voodoo, from voodoo drums. If you study music rhythm, like I have, you will see that is true."³¹

To think that one can sanitize rock music just by changing its lyrics is like believing that poison can be made harmless just by administering it with love. Poison kills no matter how it is administered. By the same token the rock beat alters the human mind, making it susceptible to wrong feelings and practices, whether the lyrics are sacred or secular.

In the next chapter we will see that rock music makes its impact *musically rather than lyrically*. As sociologist Simon Frith points out in his book *Sound Effects, Youth, Leisure, and the Politics of Rock 'n' Roll*, "A word-based approach is not helpful at getting at the meaning of rock . . . The words, if they are noticed at all, are *absorbed after the music has made its mark*."⁵²

The capacity of rock music, in whatever version, to alter the human mind through its hypnotic beat, irrespective of its lyric, makes the adoption of such music for Christian worship morally wrong. Christians must avoid any substance or medium that can alter their mind, because it is through the mind that we serve God (Rom 12:2) and that we are renewed into the image of God (Eph 4:23-24; Col 3:10).

(2) Rock Music Embodies the Spirit of Rebellion. Our historical survey has shown that rock music promotes, among other things, a pantheistic/hedonistic worldview, an open rejection of the Christian faith and values, sexual perversion, civil disobedience, violence, satanism, occultism, homosexuality, and masochism. No other music has ever

appeared during the past twenty centuries which so blatantly rejects all the moral values and beliefs espoused by Christianity.

The spirit of rebellion of rock music is acknowledged even by the media. For example, *Newsweek* writes: "It is not just the earsplitting sound and relentless beat—kids at a heavy-metal concert don't sit in their seats, they stand on them and move—it is the spirit of rebellion . . . The fans imitate the heavy-metal dress of their idols—sleeveless T-shirts, leather jackets, studded leather wriths bands—and in concert, they will shake their fists in unison above their heads as they scream the lyrics along with the band."⁵³

As the embodiment of the spirit of rebellion of our times, rock music can hardly be adopted to express the spirit of Christian devotion and commitment to God. As Gary Erickson perceptively observes, "a sheep dressed in wolf's clothing is a strange way to approach the sinner or the saint. The whole scenario is confusing to the world and to the church."⁵⁴

Our Christian commission is to communicate the Gospel not through confusing signals, but through a clear and direct message. Paul states this principle, saying: "Even in the case of lifeless things that make sound, such as the flute or harp, how will anyone know what tune is being played unless there is a distinction in the notes? Again, if the trumpet does not sound a clear call, who will get ready for battle?" (1 Cor 14:7-8; NIV).

Rock music, even in its "Christian" version, does not give a clear call to "come out of her my people, lest you take part in her sins" (Rev 18:4). Young people who watch Christian rock bands performing, whether in a open-air concert or in a youth rally at church, can easily fantasize that they are at a secular rock concert.

This is especially true when professional Christian rock bands mimic the secular rock scene with long hair, freakish dress, light effects, smoke, incessant drumming, vulgar gesticulations, and shrieking vocal sounds. With so much visual and auditory stimulation coming directly from the rock culture, young people can easily be led to believe that the music of Babylon must not be that bad after all. Ultimately, some will be tempted to go back into the music of Babylon, rather than heeding God's summon to "come out of her my people."

(3) Rock Music Compromises the Church's Stand for Separation. The Christian mandate is not to conform to the world, but to confront the world with God's revealed truths (Rom 12:2). Scripture explicitly admonishes us to "take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them" (Eph 5:11). John admonishes us not to "love the world or the things in the world" (1 John 2:15).

God's people have always been separated from the world by refusing to participate in the ungodly practices of the secular society. The early Christians turned the pagan world upside down, as we have seen in chapter 2, not by sanitizing the pagan forms of entertainment (the circus, theater, music), but by abstaining from them altogether.

To preserve our Christian identity, we must understand our culture and refuse to accept what violates the moral principles God has revealed. "If we are blind to the spirit of our age, innocently sopping up the mores and cultural patterns of an unchristian society, our character and witness becomes weakened. Defenses break down and before we realize it we are believing, saying, doing, understanding, and acting like the unregenerate."⁵⁵

As Christians we can hardly be the "children of the light," exposing the deeds of darkness, when we conform too closely to the world by adopting a music that embodies the very worldly spirit of rebellion. Such a close identification with the spirit of the world, can only leave many confused as to the power of the Gospel to change the old nature into a brand-new life.

(4) Rock Music Distorts the Message of the Bible. Rock music, in whatever forms, distorts the message of the Bible. It compromises the Biblical call to "worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness" (Ps 96:9; 29:2; 1 Chron 16:20; 2 Chron 20:21), "by using combinations of sounds which are violent, mind-numbing, vulgar, raw, mesmerizing, rebellious, grossly repetitive, uncreative, undisciplined and chaotic sounding. If listeners do not hear these things, it is because rock has dulled their aesthetic sensibilities."⁵⁶

The Biblical call to "worship the Lord in beauty and holiness" is also compromised by the casual dress and interactive behavior encouraged by the rock music played during the church service. In my itinerant ministry around the world I have noticed that in those churches or youth rallies where rock bands play, some members dress casually as if they were attending a rock concert. Moreover, as soon as they hear the beating of the drum they start swinging. In one particular church the swinging got out of control. The members filed out of the pews and started dancing on the isles and some even on the platform. It is evident that by creating a night club atmosphere, the rock beat caused people to forget that they were in church.

Rock music, in whatever forms, distorts the Biblical view of worship, by making people believe that the church is a place where they can have fun with God. The purpose of worship in the Bible is not self-centered excitement, but God-centered adoration (Ps 96:2; 57:9; 47:6; Rom 15:9; Acts 16:25). In his book *Putting and End to Worship Wars*, Elmer Towns acknowledges that we live today in an entertainment oriented society where "America's Protestants choose churches on the basis of what entertain us, satisfies us, or makes us feel good about God and ourselves."⁵⁷

Christians who choose to attend those churches that offer them exciting "Christian" rock music during the service, they show by their action that they are more interested in what pleased them, than in what honors God. For them God has become an object to be used for personal gratification.

Calvin Johansson perceptively observes that "when the methods and material shaping our worship are chosen on the basis of pleasing the worshipper, then we have broken the first commandment: 'Thou shall have no other gods before me.' Worship which purposes to make people feel good is an activity whose purpose points back to them. Even though words might be given in praise to God, actions which selfishly point to private pleasure tell a different story. The individual idolatrously becomes the focus of worship."⁵⁸

Summing up, rock music cannot be legitimately transformed into Christian music simply by changing its lyrics. Such a split is not feasible because "Christian" rock of whatever category, is still rock music—a music that embodies a spirit of rebellion against God and the moral principles He has revealed for our lives.

Much of the discussion about rock music focuses today on its effects on humans rather than on its offensiveness to God. The result is that many are more interested to define what God might permit, rather than what pleases God. It is imperative to shift our focus from self to God and to listen to His call to holiness. This word is seldom used today, yet the Bible repeatedly calls us to be a holy people among a secular minded and perverse generation (Ex 19:6; Deut 7:6; 14:2; Ps 1:1; Is 64:12; 1 Pet 2:9; 1 John 2:2-6). When we accept God's call to be a holy people, and to come out of Babylon (Rev 18:4), then the rock music of Babylon will no longer be an attraction for us.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 3

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8. Hubert T. Spence, *Confronting Contemporary Christian Music* (Dunn, North Carolina, 1997), p. 62.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 92.
10. Arnold Shaw, *Dictionary of American Pop/Rock* (New York, 1982), p. 287.
11. Steve Peters and Mark Littleton, *Truth about Rock* (Minneapolis, 1998), p. 15.
12. Hubert T. Spence (note 8), p. 63.
13. Charlie Peacock, *At the Cross Roads. An Insider's Look at the Past, Present, and Future of Contemporary Christian Music* (Nashville, 1999), p. 44.
14. As cited by Hubert T. Spence (note 8), pp. 79-80.
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16. Quoted by David Marshall, *Occult Explosion* (Alma Park, Grentham, England), p. 42.
17. Steve Turner (note 15), p. 86.
18. *Ibid.*
19. As cited by Hubert T. Spence (note 8), p. 83.
20. Quoted by David Marshall (note 16), p. 84.
21. *Time* (September 22, 1967).
22. Hubert T. Spence (note 8), p. 98.
23. Steve Turner (note 15), p. 81.
24. Hubert T. Spence (note 8), p. 94.
25. For a description of the various satanic symbols used by rock bands, see Hubert T. Spence (note 8), pp. 96-97.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 98.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 99.
28. *The Rolling Stone* (June 26, 1980), p. 3.
29. Jeff Godwin, *Dancing with Demons* (Chino, California 1988), pp. 126-128.
30. David Marshall (note 16), p. 56.
31. Quoted by Hubert T. Spence (note 8), p. 70.
32. *Rutherford Magazine* (January 1993), quoted by Hubert T. Spence (note 8), p. 70.
33. Martha Bayles, *Hole in Our Soul. The Loss of Beauty and Meaning in American Popular Music* (Chicago, 1994), p. 334.
34. Hubert T. Spence (note 8), p. 71.
35. Martha Bayles (note 33), p. 332.
36. Hubert T. Spence (note 8), p. 72.
37. Stephen Davis, *Hammer of the Gods: The Led Zeppelin Saga* (New York, 1985), p. 116.
38. Tipper Gore, *Raising PG Kids in an X-Rated Society* (Nashville, 1987), pp. 50-51.
39. Martha Bayles (note 33), p. 254.
40. See Tipper Gore (note 37), p. 94; also David Mandelman, "The Devil and Sam Kineson," *Rolling Stones* 543 (February 23, 1989), pp. 24-25.
41. See Lionel Trilling, "From the Notebooks of Leonel Trilling," selected by Christopher Zinn, *Partisan Review* 54:1 (January 1987), p. 17.
42. See Janet Maslin, "The Personal Side of Heavy Metal," *New York Times* (June 17, 1988), p. 7.

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58. Calvin M. Johansson (note 55), p. 57.

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