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THE INFLUENCE OF HAROLD BEST'S *MUSIC THROUGH
THE EYES OF FAITH* AND *UNCEASING WORSHIP* ON
SELECT WORSHIP AUTHORS AND EDUCATORS

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“We praise you with our minds, O Lord, kept sharp to think your thought.”

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PREFACE

With God's calling on my life to pursue a PhD in Christian Worship at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary comes a long list of people who have aided in this journey. I am thankful for Dr. Harold Best and his graciousness in allowing me to use his writings as the topic for this project, access to his papers and unpublished materials, and the impact and influence he bears on worship literature and philosophy. I thank the authors and educators who participated in interviews for this project. I thank Dr. Mark Coppenger, chair of my dissertation committee, for his insight, enthusiasm, and wisdom graciously offered during this process. His efforts to travel for dissertation meetings as well as his help in interviews and compiling materials are so appreciated and valued. Additionally, I thank Dr. Esther Crookshank and Dr. Joseph Crider for serving as readers on the committee and offering valuable advice, suggestions, and counsel throughout the shaping, writing, and editing of this dissertation. The Research Doctoral Office staff as well as the library staff, specifically Emilie Smith in interlibrary loan, deserve many thanks for their help in tracking down and transporting sources and aiding in deadline notification and submission requirements. Special thanks to SBTS and its mission to train up leaders, pastors, educators, and missionaries for the sake of the kingdom. The training and experience I received from this institution have been tremendous.

Many people have walked with me throughout my education preparing me for my time at SBTS. A host of undergraduate and graduate professors and classmates have been remarkably influential and encouraging to me throughout my studies. However, special and deliberate thanks and appreciation must be given to Dr. Angela Easterday Holder, friend, mentor, professor, colleague, and spiritual role model. I am thankful for the way Angela selflessly poured into me professionally, spiritually, and personally. She

exemplified Christ in all areas of her life and has inspired me to invest and impact my students with the love of God. The influence Angela has had on multiple areas of my life is vast and invaluable. She recognized areas of giftedness and God's call on my life well before I did. With her passing on May 12, 2019, my family, church, and colleagues at Carson-Newman University have deeply grieved her absence. We rejoice that she is with the Father and give thanks for the time God allowed us to know her, learn from her, and love her. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints" (Ps 116:15).

My family have remained a constant source of encouragement and joy for me throughout the years, especially the years of this PhD program. I thank my parents for showing me what it means to love and follow Christ and for their support and prayers for me throughout my life. Our children, Ezra, Ephraim, and Ari Kate, inspire me daily and have taught me so much about the love of God. I thank them for recognizing the call God has placed on my life and allowing me the time to work toward this end. I would not have been able to enter into this program, let alone write a dissertation, without the love, support, prayers, and encouragement of my husband, Jonathan. I thank him for leading our family so well and modeling Christ's love to all of us. Thanks be to God the Father and to the Lord Jesus Christ for calling and guiding me in the plans laid out for me. God has sustained me, uplifted me, encouraged me, convicted me, and offered unspeakable joy and peace. To God alone be the glory.

Elissa Keck Hodge

Knoxville, Tennessee

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Introduction to the Research Problem

Over the last three decades changes in worship style, practice, and philosophy resulted in publications articulating various viewpoints within the evangelical worship spectrum. The beginnings of contemporary worship music in the 1960s through 1980s, impassioned conversations on appropriate worship music in the 1990s, and a heightened focus on a gospel-centered worship structure at the turn of the twenty-first century all influenced and shaped the direction and focus of evangelical worship literature.¹

Additionally, a rise in a Christian view of the arts articulated by Christian philosophers also influenced evangelical worship literature. For example, Francis Schaeffer (1912–1984) was a leading Christian philosopher and thinker of the twentieth century. The influence of his books *Art and the Bible* (1973)² and *How Then Shall We Live?* (1976)³ is widespread across evangelical churches. The Christian worldview and philosophy on the intersection of Christianity and the arts he presented in these works—that Christians should glorify God through the arts—helped shape the views of music and art in worship of a number of church musicians and worship scholars, including those of Harold M. Best (1931).⁴

¹ Evangelical worship literature in this study refers to literature on evangelical worship by authors who may or may not personally identify as evangelical.

² Francis A. Schaeffer, *Art and the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1973).

³ Francis A. Schaeffer, *How Then Shall We Live? The Rise and Decline of Western Thought and Culture* (Old Tappan, NJ: Revell, 1976).

⁴ Harold M. Best, “Schaeffer on Art and Music,” in *Reflections on Francis Schaeffer*, ed. Ronald W. Ruesegger (Grand Rapids: Academie), 132–33. Here, Best notes the significance of Schaeffer’s influence on the shift in thought on art and music in worship in Protestant American churches

Leading scholars on the theology and practice of worship within U. S. evangelical churches of the 1990s include Robert Webber, Harold M. Best, Marva J. Dawn, Donald P. Hustad, and Bruce H. Leafblad. The published works and conference and lecture appearances of these scholars guided much of the broader discussion or worship debates, at least in academe, during the 1990s and 2000s.

In the early 2000s, evangelical worship literature exploded. At the same time, the first scholarly works on the history and criticism of the contemporary worship movement emerged.⁵ The first decade of the twenty-first century brought with it the “retuned hymns” movement and the “modern” hymn movement, the latter spearheaded by Keith and Kristyn Getty, Stuart Townend, and leading writers of Sovereign Grace Music, most notably Bob Kauflin, and others. Also during the first decade of the twenty-first century, the study of Christianity and the arts has developed into an important interdisciplinary field as Jeremy Begbie’s publications on the relationship between aesthetics and theology gained influence in academe.⁶ Culture critic and worship scholar James K. A. Smith⁷ and others have also influenced this area of study. While the conversations that influence the progression of worship literature and practice are broad and far-reaching, a significant portion of the discourse has been devoted to the function of music and other arts in worship, and the aesthetic implications of their role for the calling of the Christian artist.

over the 1960s through 1980s.

⁵ Examples include D. A. Carson, *Worship by the Book* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002); Herbert W. Bateman, *Authentic Worship: Hearing Scripture’s Voice, Applying its Truth* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2002); John D. Witvliet, *Worship Seeking Understanding: Windows into Christian Practice* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003); Allen P. Ross, *Recalling the Hope of Glory: Biblical Worship from the Garden to New Creation* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2006); and Robert Webber, *Ancient-Future Worship: Proclaiming and Enhancing God’s Narrative* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008).

⁶ Jeremy Begbie, *Theology Music and Time* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000). See also Jeremy Begbie, *Beholding the Glory: Incarnation through the Arts* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000).

⁷ James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Spiritual Formation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009). See also James K. A. Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013).

Harold Best, in his writings, primarily his books *Music through the Eyes of Faith* (1993)⁸ and *Unceasing Worship: Biblical Perspectives on Worship and the Arts* (2003),⁹ exerted a deep and wide-ranging influence stemming from three primary arguments: (1) his understanding of human creativity as rooted in the doctrines of common grace and creation of humankind in the *imago Dei*, (2) his argument that worship (which is either biblical or idolatrous) is an inherent activity of all humans, and (3) that music is amoral, a premise upon which he builds his advocacy of musical pluralism in worship and in the Christian life.

Additionally, Best's work on the artistic capabilities and responsibilities of the church musician and worship leader has served as a major contributing factor to a paradigm shift (from a debate over musical style to an emphasis on worship as an all-of-life activity) in evangelical worship ideology, methodology, and implementation as reflected in subsequent evangelical worship literature. This study attempts to trace the influence of Harold Best's *Music through the Eyes of Faith* and *Unceasing Worship* on evangelical worship literature through his impact on selected worship leaders and authors.

Thesis

Over the last three decades, the influence of Harold Best's writings on evangelical worship literature and Christian aesthetics has been significant. Entering the scholarly conversation as the debates on worship music raged, his contribution extended beyond the worship wars to aesthetic questions addressing the work of Christian artists, worship pastors, and worshippers alike. The aim of this project is to assess specifically the reception and influence of *Music through the Eyes of Faith* and *Unceasing Worship*

⁸ Harold M. Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith* (New York: Harper-Collins, 1993).

⁹ Harold M. Best, *Unceasing Worship: Biblical Perspectives on Worship and the Arts* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003).

within the literature on evangelical worship by selected worship leaders and authors. This work will address the following questions:

1. What were the leading philosophies of worship (implied and articulated) underlying North American Protestant worship at midcentury that Best adapted or reacted against?
2. What aspects of Best's philosophy of music and art as articulated in *Music through the Eyes of Faith* and *Unceasing Worship* has most influenced evangelical authors writing on worship in the past several decades?
3. What has been the scope of influence of Best's work on the American evangelical church and on the academy (with special attention to Christian higher education and the theological and ministry training of ministers of music and worship pastors)?
4. What has Best's contribution been to the prevailing philosophies of church music education and/or worship leader training within higher education?

Scope and Delimitations

Best's career can be divided roughly into three main professional roles, those of (1) church musician, (2) music educator, administrator, and longtime music school dean within Christian higher education (ca.1970–c. 1990), and (3) nationally-known worship scholar, conference speaker, and author (c.1990–present). The scope of this dissertation primarily focuses on his last role. My examination of Best's influence in worship literature is limited to the impact of the ideas presented in *Music Through the Eyes of Faith* in 1993 and *Unceasing Worship: Biblical Perspectives on Worship and the Arts* in 2003, as these are his largest and most well-known publications. Specifically, I focus on Best's aesthetic and philosophical positions resulting in his advocacy for musical pluralism within the church. Therefore, I examine Best's impact on seven selected worship leaders and authors. These include Michael Card, Mike Cosper, Bob Kauflin, Barry Liesch, David Music, Joseph Crider, and Clark Measels.¹⁰

¹⁰ Card, Cosper, and Kauflin have been selected due to their work and writings in the areas of worship leadership and praxis. Liesch, Music, Crider, and Measels serve as professors of worship and provide insight into Best's influence on worship curriculum in academe at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

Research Methodology

In this text-based study I investigate the theological, philosophical, and aesthetic context to which Best was exposed. I examine the ideas of representative philosophical figures in the U.S. between ca. 1940 and 1990 in three successive periods of roughly twenty years each. Additionally, this study surveys the evangelical worship literature and major cultural changes chronologically in three phases: (1) sources published from ca. 1940–1992, up to the release of Best’s *Music Through the Eyes of Faith* (1993), (2) works by Best’s contemporaries, and (3) and works by subsequent authors and writers who review or engage with and respond to *Music through the Eyes of Faith* and *Unceasing Worship* in order to document the widening scope of the book’s impact. This framework will serve to establish historical and cultural parameters within which Best’s influence on and contribution to evangelical worship literature may be understood and assessed.

The methodology of this project proceeds in four stages. In the first stage I systematically examine all of Best’s primary sources currently available. These are of four types: (1) Best’s publications, (2) unpublished writings and lectures, (3) transcribed interviews, and (4) all available correspondence.¹¹

In stage 2, I survey the secondary literature on the changes in worship philosophy and praxis as reflected in the evangelical worship literature from ca. 1940 through 1990 to document the massive cultural shifts occurring in worship practices, debates, and aesthetic views during those decades. In this stage I also examine the accounts of all available histories of the praise and worship movement, the Jesus movement, the charismatic renewal movement, and the history of contemporary Christian music for evidence and references to the influence of Best’s philosophy.

¹¹ Additionally, Best graciously granted me access to his personal papers and correspondence to be included in the second type of primary sources.

In stage 3 I conduct an exhaustive analysis of the theological premises and philosophical ideas embodied in *Music through the Eyes of Faith and Unceasing Worship*. I also compile a comprehensive annotated bibliography of Best's published writings (to appear as appendix 1 in the dissertation) for the purpose of tracing the chronological development of his philosophy and ideas.

In the fourth stage of methodology I attempt to trace the reception and implementation of Best's philosophy and ideas presented in *Music through the Eyes of Faith and Unceasing Worship* in the published writings on worship and the arts of Michael Card, Mike Cosper, Bob Kauflin, Barry Liesch, David Music, Joseph Crider, and Clark Measels. I also conduct interviews with each of these plus several others including Mark Coppenger and Best himself.¹² Additionally, interviews with John Makujina (Erskine College), Scott Aniol (Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary), and Calvin Johansson (former professor at Evangel College) provide assessment of Best's philosophies from various perspectives.¹³

Personal Background

My interest in this project began after I read Best's *Unceasing Worship* during Bruce Ware's Theology of Christian Worship seminar at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. In my role as a musician, professor of music, composer, and worship student, I found that this book resonated with each area of my professional and spiritual life. With my background in music theory, historical musicology, and aesthetics, I was immediately drawn to Best's argument and aesthetic philosophy. As a music educator I teach undergraduate courses in music theory, music history, applied voice,

¹² Coppenger is a friend and former colleague of Best's and can provide insight into the biographical context of his philosophy.

¹³ These three authors and educators are the most prominent voices of opposition to Best's ideas.

composition, and music appreciation. Best's argument that music-making is an act of worship and that striving for excellence is a mark of biblical stewardship for the Christian artist are at the top of my list of important lessons that I hope my students will carry with them.

Having developed an interest in Best's work, I was moved to read more of his writings. Upon completion of *Music through the Eyes of Faith* and finding that there was neither a biography on Best nor a comprehensive study on his musical philosophy, I was led to embark on this project. My hope is that this dissertation, by exploring the impact of Harold Best within evangelical worship literature, will provide worship students, worship leaders, and Christian artists and composers a helpful resource on the function of music and art in worship and a greater understanding of the responsibility of producing aesthetically rich art for worship.

History of Research

Important methodological models for this study are the dissertations by David Outlaw on Francis Schaeffer¹⁴ and K. Scott Oliphant on Alvin Plantinga.¹⁵ Both dissertations function as methodological models for tracing the influence of a single individual on a larger body of research.¹⁶ As such, they have helped guide the delimitations of this study. Oliphant's work, a study of the development of Plantinga's philosophical positions focused intentionally on one main idea from one of his publications, aided in the structure of this dissertation. Outlaw's dissertation provides a

¹⁴ David Outlaw, "The Impact of Francis Schaeffer on Selected American Evangelical Social Thinkers" (PhD diss., Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, 2001).

¹⁵ K. Scott Oliphant, "The Apologetical Implications of Alvin Plantinga's Epistemology" (PhD diss., Westminster Theological Seminary, 1994).

¹⁶ Similarly, the dissertation by James Nathan Elliot was helpful in the organization of this project as he evaluated the selected churches before and after the "40 Days of Purpose" to reveal its influence. Nathan Elliot, "The Impact of the 40 Days of Purpose Spiritual Growth Campaign in Twelve Churches of the Alabama-West Florida Conference of the United Methodist Church" (DMin diss., Asbury Theological Seminary, 2008).

strong model with its biographical survey of Schaeffer's life, which traces the development of his philosophies, and also in his focus on the specific elements of Schaeffer's worldview in which his impact is most readily seen.¹⁷ Additionally, Outlaw's examination of Schaeffer's impact on five individuals directly informs the scope and delimitations of this project. In his dissertation, Outlaw examines Schaeffer's influence on five social thinkers by outlining each person's specific interactions with Schaeffer, noting their general contribution to evangelical social philosophy, and highlighting the similarities and differences between the social thought of Schaeffer and each individual.¹⁸

Primary Sources

The most widely-used publications of Best in the fields of worship leadership and worship education in the past few decades have been his books *Music through the Eyes of Faith* (1993) and *Unceasing Worship* (2003). In his first book he argues that music is an offering to God rather than a means to an end. Defining worship as a "complete way of life" he states that it is possible to worship without music, but for the Christian artist it is impossible to make music without worshiping.¹⁹ He emphasizes the connection of worship and music making to the creativity of God and the creativity of humans through the doctrine of *imago Dei*. He advocates for musical pluralism and

¹⁷ Additional methodological models are the dissertations by William Jeffery Jones, "Hugh T. McElrath: Music Educator and Hymnologist" (DMA diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2001), and Rhonda Speich Rogers, "The Life and Work of Donald Paul Hustad" (DMA diss., the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1988). Jones' investigation of McElrath's worship and education philosophies proves useful to this study. Similarly, in her dissertation, Rogers divides Hustad's career into the primary categories of church work, compositions and arrangements, and teaching appointments, an approach which provides guidance for the organization of this project.

¹⁸ The dissertation by Monique Salinas-Stauffer on the philosophy of Nicholas Wolterstorff proves helpful to the design of this project as she evaluates the implications of Wolterstorff's philosophy of art within music education. She broadly investigates the need for instruction in the fundamentals of philosophy within music education, then offers a brief historical survey of the development of aesthetics and high art, analyzes Wolterstorff's philosophy, and highlights the specific implications of his thought within music education. "Musical Worlds and Works: The Philosophy of Nicholas Wolterstorff and its Implications for Music Education" (PhD diss., Michigan State University, 1997).

¹⁹ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 136.

diversity based on the doctrine of creation. Second, he presents an argument for the amorality of music, noting that music cannot cause us to worship, nor can it cause us to sin. Third, he argues that excellence, success, and competition are marks of stewardship; he advocates for art in the church and celebrates the resurgence of dance and drama in contemporary worship. Best encourages worship leaders to continue to include a wide variety of styles in worship. This work has exerted a far-reaching influence (appearing in at least 10 subsequent publications) in calling Christians working within the arts to be faithful to produce aesthetically valuable, high quality art in all areas.²⁰ He notes that for the Christian, making music is an act of worship regardless of context.²¹

Best's *Unceasing Worship* was published 10 years later. This book presented Best's philosophy centered on his definition of worship: as "a continuous outpouring of all that I am, all that I do and all that I can ever become in light of a chosen or choosing God."²² He argues that all humans are created to worship—and will always be worshipping something. Building on his philosophical premises articulated in *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, he continues in this book to advocate for the inclusion of a wide variety of music and art in worship, arguing that there is no "off-limits" art for the Christian, only misdirection and wrong intention. He cautions against the pitfalls of

²⁰ Among the subsequent worship literature that directly reference Best's work are Donald P. Hustad, *True Worship: Reclaiming the Wonder and Majesty* (Carol Stream, IL: Hope Publishing, 1998); Herbert W. Bateman, *Authentic Worship: Hearing Scripture's Voice, Applying Its Truth* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2002); Barry Wayne Liesch, *The New Worship: Straight Talk on Music and the Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001); Bob Kauflin, *Worship Matters: Leading Others to Encounter the Greatness of God* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008); Bob Kauflin, *True Worshipers: Seeking What Matters to God* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015); Mike Cospers, *Rhythms of Grace: How the Church's Worship Tells the Story of the Gospel* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014); Mike Cospers, *Recapturing the Wonder: The Transcendent Faith in a Disenchanted World* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 2017); Daniel Block, *For the Glory of God: Recovering a Biblical Theology of Worship* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003); John Risbridger, *The Message of Worship: Celebrating the Glory of God in the Whole of Life* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2015); and Greg Scheer, *Essential Worship: A Handbook for Leaders* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2016).

²¹ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 15.

²² Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 18.

idolatry while encouraging Christians to ensure that their worship is centered on God in every way.²³

In addition to these books, Best's publications include numerous journal articles on topics related to worship and church music, issues surrounding music instruction, music education policies, accreditation, and assessment within higher education. Additional sources providing background, biographical, and philosophical information on Best will be transcribed interviews, email correspondence, and recorded lectures.

Secondary Sources

Neither a biography nor an autobiography on Harold Best has yet been written outside of the autobiographical information he provided in his lectures. Many authors, both contemporaries of and subsequent to Best draw upon his arguments in their own works, showing the wide influence of Best's work within evangelical worship literature. The categories of secondary sources include the histories of the worship movement,²⁴ philosophy and theology of worship,²⁵ and practical books on worship leadership and design.²⁶ These writings will be engaged in detail, chronologically in the review of the literature presented in chapters 1 and 2 (see the overview of subsequent chapters below).

²³ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 18.

²⁴ Examples include Donald P. Hustad, *Jubilate II: Church Music in Worship and Renewal* (Carol Stream, IL: Hope Publishing, 1993); Marva J. Dawn, *Reaching Out without Dumbing Down: A Theology of Worship for This Urgent Time* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995); and Swee Hong Lim and Lester Ruth, *Lovin' on Jesus: A Concise History of Contemporary Worship* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2017).

²⁵ This area includes Calvin Johansson, *Music and Ministry: A Biblical Counterpoint* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1984); David Peterson, *Engaging with God: A Biblical Theology of Worship* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002); and Block, *For the Glory of God*.

²⁶ Including Kauflin, *Worship Matters*; Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Worship: Letting the Gospel Shape Our Practice* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009); Constance Cherry, *The Worship Architect: A Blueprint for Designing Culturally Relevant and Biblically Faithful Services* (Grand Rapid: Baker, 2010); and Cosper, *Rhythms of Grace*; among others.

Overview of Subsequent Chapters

In chapter 2, I explore the philosophical and aesthetic context to which Best was exposed beginning c. 1940 until the release of *Music through the Eyes of Faith* in 1993. Specifically, I examine the various philosophical positions and ideas on musical aesthetics within the U.S. articulated in the works of representative figures including Carroll Pratt, Susanne Langer, Theodore Adorno, Leonard B. Meyer, Jacques Maritain, and Roger Scruton. Additionally, in this chapter I explore the Christian worldviews held by leading Christian philosophers, such as Francis Schaeffer, Nicholas Wolterstorff, Frank Burch Brown, Gene Veith, and Jeremy Begbie as they pertain to music, art, and worship.

Chapter 3 presents an overview of the changes and developments in worship practice and philosophy presented in the worship literature published c. 1940–1990 as a backdrop for viewing Best’s influences. I survey the worship philosophies of Evelyn Underhill, Isham Reynolds, A.W. Tozer, Eric Routley, Donald Hustad, and Calvin Johansson to represent the prominent views on worship held in these decades. Additionally, the chapter assesses the impact of the rising youth culture and a specifically Christian youth culture in the 1950s and 1960s through cultural influences surrounding debates on praise and worship music of the 1980s.

Chapter 4 focuses on the musical, philosophical, educational, and spiritual influences on Best and in the context of his career as a music educator, musician and composer, and worship scholar from the 1960s through 1980s. Additionally, this chapter will present a comprehensive account of Best’s aesthetic philosophy of worship and in the context of the Christian life viewed within a biblical framework.

In chapter 5 I provide an exposition and analysis of theological tenets and the philosophical ideas presented in *Music through the Eyes of Faith* and *Unceasing Worship*. Drawing from primary and secondary sources, I locate Best’s philosophy within

the context of music aesthetic thought by leading secular scholars as well as those writing from a Christian worldview.

In chapter 6 I examine the influence of Best's seminal ideas as argued in *Music through the Eyes of Faith* and *Unceasing Worship* on the thought and publications of seven worship leaders and scholars: Bob Kauflin, Mike Cospers, in the area of worship leadership; Barry Liesch, David Music, Joseph Crider, and Clark Measels in the area of worship education; and Michael Card in the area of Christian aesthetics and imagination.

Chapter 7 summarizes the major findings presented in this dissertation and the broader implications of Best's writings for the worship literature, the academy, American evangelicalism, and the global church.

CHAPTER 2
THE PHILOSOPHICAL AND MUSICAL AESTHETIC
CONTEXT OF C. 1940–1990

Introduction

Aesthetics, by standard definition, is “a branch of philosophy dealing with the nature of beauty, art, and taste, and with the appreciation and creation of beauty,” which is central to understanding the function and possible meanings of music. A centuries-old quest for determining the function of music, the meaning of music, and music’s relationship to human emotion and experience has produced, since the time of the ancient Greeks, various theories, positions, and arguments.

Surveying the major changes in twentieth-century music philosophies and aesthetics in the United States provides a helpful context and framework to view Best’s ideas, influence, and contributions. From the 1940s on through the 1990s, one finds a range of multiple philosophical positions on musical meaning, music and emotions, and the moral, immoral, or amoral nature of music. These movements include symbolism, formalism, expressionism, social theory, and, from a Christian perspective, theological aesthetics. This chapter seeks to highlight the major tenets of each musical aesthetic movement via selected prominent figures and voices including Carroll Pratt (1894–1979), Susanne K. Langer (1895–1985), Leonard B. Meyer (1918–2017), Nelson Goodman (1906–1998), Theodor Adorno (1903–1969), Roger Scruton (1945), Jacques Maritain (1882–1973), Francis A. Schaeffer (1912–1984), Nicholas Wolterstorff (1932), Frank Burch Brown (1948), Leyland Ryken (1942), and Jeremy Begbie (1957). This review will set the aesthetic context for Best’s formative years and career.

Symbolism

The notion that music is a symbol representing or signifying something outside of music itself traces back to ancient Greek philosophy.¹ However, American philosopher Susanne Langer, in her books *Philosophy in A New Key: A Study in the Symbolism of Reason, Rite, and Art* (1942)² and *Feeling and Form: A Theory of Art Developed from "Philosophy in A New Key"* (1953)³ further developed this view in her application of symbolism to the division between science and art, and specifically, her discussion of music and language.⁴ Situating her position largely on the groundwork laid by German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1886), Langer argues that “what is true of language, is essential in music: music that is invented while the composer’s mind is fixed on what is to be expressed is apt not to be music. It is a limited idiom, like an artificial language, only even less successful; *for music at its highest, though clearly a symbolic form, is an unconsummated symbol.*”⁵ For Langer, “Music is not the raw emotion itself, nor is it a stimulus of emotion, nor a symptom of emotions; rather, it is a symbolic presentation of how we experience feelings.”⁶ Peter Kivy writes, “Langer, following Schopenhauer, prepared the way for contemporary philosophical analysis of the musical emotions by taking the emotion out of the listener and putting it where it belongs, *in the music.*”⁷

¹ Donald A. Hodges, *A Concise Survey of Music Philosophy* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 169.

² Susanne K. Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key: A Study in the Symbolism of Reason, Rite, and Art* (New York: New American Library, 1942).

³ Susanne K. Langer, *Feeling and Form: A Theory of Art Developed from "Philosophy in A New Key"* (1953; repr., New York: Routledge, 1959).

⁴ Reid Huntley, “Susanne Langer: Unity and Diversity among the Arts,” in *The Quest for Imagination: Essays in 20th-Century Aesthetic Criticism*, ed. O. B. Hardison Jr. (Cleveland, OH: The Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1971), 116.

⁵ Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key*, 240; see also p. 219.

⁶ Hodges, *A Concise Survey of Music Philosophy*, 169.

⁷ Peter Kivy, *Introduction to a Philosophy of Music* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2002), 30.

In *Philosophy in a New Key*, Langer argues that music does not cause one to experience an emotion or emotions, but rather, music is the representation of emotions already within the listener. She states, “The function of music is not stimulation of feeling, but expression of it; and furthermore, not the symptomatic expression of feelings that beset the composer but a symbolic expression of the forms of sentience as he understands them. It bespeaks his imagination of feelings rather than his own emotional state.”⁸ In other words, musical content has been “*symbolized* for us, and what it invites is not emotional response, but *insight*.”⁹ Additionally, according to Robert Innis, for Langer, “Music is neither the cause of nor the cure of feelings. It is, instead, their logical expression. Langer thinks, rightly, that musical aesthetics will involve the whole logic of symbolism.”¹⁰

Langer expounds upon the understanding of music as symbol or icon presented in *Philosophy in a New Key* in her next and more comprehensive publication, *Feeling and Form*.¹¹ She writes, “In *Philosophy in a New Key* it was said that the theory of symbolism there developed should lead to a critique of art as serious and far-reaching as the critique of science that stems from the analysis of discursive symbolism. *Feeling and Form* purports to fulfill that promise, to be that critique of art.”¹² Additionally, in this work, she argues that the significance of music is not meaning, but rather “vital import.” She defines import as “the pattern of sentience—the pattern of life itself, as it is felt and

⁸ Here, Langer is referencing her work in *Philosophy in A New Key*, but this quote is printed in *Feeling and Form*, 28.

⁹ Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key*, 223.

¹⁰ Robert E. Innis, *Susanne Langer in Focus: The Symbolic Mind* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), 81.

¹¹ Huntley, “Susanne Langer,” 113. For a more detailed presentation and explanation of Langer’s position and influence, see also Malcolm Budd, *Music and the Emotions: The Philosophical Theories* (London: Routledge, 1985), and Edward Lippman, *A History of Western Musical Aesthetics* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992).

¹² Langer, *Feeling and Form*, vii.

directly known.”¹³ Here, she claims that the use of the term “vital import” is not vague, but rather a “qualifying adjective restricting the relevance of ‘import’ to the dynamism of subjective experience.”¹⁴

In *Feeling and Form*, Langer further solidifies her symbolic interpretation of musical aesthetics as she writes “Music is ‘significant form,’ and its significance is that of a symbol, a highly articulated sensuous object, which by virtue of its dynamic structure can express the forms of vital experience which language is peculiarly unfit to convey. Feeling, life, motion and emotion constitute its import.”¹⁵

Following Langer, aesthetic philosopher Nelson Goodman upheld the musical aesthetic of symbolism on into the 1960s with his book *Languages of Art: An Approach to a Theory of Symbols*.¹⁶ This work exists as an expansion and revision of a lecture series presented in 1962.¹⁷ In an attempt to avoid the mysterious in music, Goodman argued that the meaning of music existed within the score and its relationship to all performances (past, present, and future) of that work: “any musical work is the class of its performance; the class of compliants with its score.”¹⁸ Roger Scruton observes,

Nelson Goodman, for example, whose radical nominalism provides him with a short cut to a complete theory of aesthetic meaning, argues that works of art can express any property (or ‘predicate’). A work might express sadness, joy, or adoration. But it can also express blueness, solidity—maybe even greenness. For Goodman, a work of art expresses P by ‘metaphorically exemplifying’ the predicate ‘P.’¹⁹

To put it another way, in Goodman’s view, art can express both nominal and real feelings

¹³ Langer, *Feeling and Form*, 31.

¹⁴ Langer, *Feeling and Form*, 32.

¹⁵ Langer, *Feeling and Form*, 32.

¹⁶ Nelson Goodman, *Languages of Art: An Approach to a Theory of Symbols* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1968).

¹⁷ Lippman, *A History*, 369.

¹⁸ Kivy, *Introduction to a Philosophy of Music*, 207.

¹⁹ Roger Scruton, *The Aesthetics of Music* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997), 141.

through metaphoric representations of those feelings (whatever they may be). For example, in this view, an artwork expresses sadness by symbolically or metaphorically representing sadness. Additionally, Goodman emphasizes the idea of “exemplification” and its relation to denotation, possession, representation, and expression. He uses the analogy of a tailor’s swatch—it exemplifies the texture, color, and other properties of the material, but not the shape, size, or full structure.²⁰ “Exemplification is possession plus reference. To have without symbolizing is merely to possess, while to symbolize without having is to refer in some other way than by exemplifying. The swatch exemplifies only those properties that it both has and refers to.” Donald Hodges, professor of music at UNC Greensboro, adds that for Goodman, “not only can music refer to something else, it can actually possess qualities of the referent. Thus, music may not only refer to dance, but may contain qualities of dance.”²¹

Formalism and Expressionism

Formalism within musical aesthetics is defined by Hodges as the belief that “meaning and value come from an understanding of relationships among musical elements; the experience is primarily intellectual.”²² This position, according to author and music education philosopher Bennett Reimer, “represents an extreme view of the nature and value of art” as it “concentrates so exclusively on the internal qualities of an art work and their inherent excellence of proportion as to deny the existence of extra-artistic meaning and value.”²³ Bridging the gap between symbolism and formalism is musicologist and psychologist Carroll C. Pratt’s work, *The Meaning of Music: A Study in*

²⁰ Goodman, *Languages*, 50, 53. See also Lippman, *A History of Western Musical Aesthetics*, 369.

²¹ Hodges, *A Concise Survey of Music Philosophy*, 170.

²² Hodges, *A Concise Survey of Music Philosophy*, 85.

²³ Bennett Reimer, *A Philosophy of Music Education*, 2nd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1989), 24–25.

Psychological Aesthetics.²⁴ Originally published in 1931, Pratt's writing has experienced a number of reprints pointing to its significance well into the 1960s and 1970s. Like Langer, Pratt recognizes that music itself neither possesses nor causes emotions. Although he does not espouse symbolism with Langer, a similarity in argument between the two philosophers is prominent, as Stephen Davies notes: For Pratt, "music possesses an objective, emotional character due to the formal similarity between musical motion and the organic or kinesthetic sensations that are the correlates and determinants of emotion."²⁵ The main argument offered by Pratt on the significance of music, or musical meaning is that "*music sounds the way emotions feel*."²⁶ Paving the way for others in his field, Pratt argues, "The emotions and strivings of will and desire are embodied in music not directly, but indirectly by way of tonal designs which closely resemble in formal outline the inner movements of the spirit."²⁷ In their literary dialogues, Pratt and Langer are often found supporting and relying upon the other's works.²⁸ As Davies notes, "Pratt, like Langer, separates the listener's emotional response from the music's expressiveness to an extent that renders inexplicable the power of music to call forth such responses."²⁹

Continuing in the formalist camp, composer and philosopher Leonard B. Meyer broadens his aesthetic position to include elements of both formalism and expressionism. In his first book, *Emotion and Meaning in Music* (1956), he defines formalism as the belief that musical meaning "lies in the perception and understanding of

²⁴ Carroll C. Pratt, *The Meaning of Music: A Study in Psychological Aesthetics* (1931; repr., New York: Johnson, 1968).

²⁵ Stephen Davies, *Musical Meaning and Expression* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994), 132.

²⁶ Pratt, *The Meaning of Music*, xxv. The emphasis is Pratt's. See also, Wilson Coker, *Music and Meaning: A Theoretical Introduction to Musical Aesthetics* (London: Collier-Macmillan, 1972), 168.

²⁷ Pratt, *The Meaning of Music*, xxxiii.

²⁸ For a more detailed explanation and critique of Pratt and Langer, see Malcolm Budd, *Music and the Emotions: The Philosophical Theories* (London: Routledge, 1985).

²⁹ Davies, *Musical Meaning*, 136.

the musical relationships set forth in the work of art and that meaning in music is primarily intellectual.”³⁰ Admitting that he holds to both formalism and expressionism, he explains the expressionist view, arguing that musical relationships are “capable of exciting feelings and emotions in the listener.”³¹ The main goal of this work, according to Meyer, is to examine “aspects of meaning which result from the understanding of and response to relationships inherent in the musical progress rather than with any relationships between the musical organization and the extramusical world of concepts, actions, characters, and situations.”³² He distinguishes between an understanding of musical meaning involving “tendencies, resistances, tensions, and fulfillments embodied in a work and the self-conscious objectification of that meaning in the mind of the individual listener. The former may be said to involve a meaningful experience, the latter involves knowing what that meaning is, considering it as an objective thing in consciousness.”³³ Additionally, as Davies notes in *Emotion and Meaning in Music*, Meyer “adopts an information-theoretic approach in arguing that music has a syntax. He describes this syntax in terms suggesting that it generates an informational (semantic) content.”³⁴ This informational content is expressed either by the musical work’s fulfilling the expectation of the listener (in which no information is conveyed) or by the listener’s expectations being unmet resulting in a response. “So long as a musical work fulfills the listener’s expectations immediately, it conveys no information. Where it (temporarily) defeats the listener’s expectation, a response is produced, a response seeking a return to

³⁰ Leonard B. Meyer, *Emotion and Meaning in Music* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956), 3.

³¹ Meyer, *Emotion and Meaning*, 3. For more on expressionism, see Harold F. Abeles, Charles F. Hoffer, and Robert H. Klotman, *Foundations of Music Education*, 2nd ed. (New York: Schirmer, 1994), 70–72.

³² Meyer, *Emotion and Meaning*, 4.

³³ Meyer, *Emotion and Meaning*, 38.

³⁴ Davies, *Musical Meaning*, 27.

predictability.”³⁵ In Meyer’s own words,

Embodied musical meaning is, in short, a product of expectation. If, on the basis of past experience, a present stimulus leads us to expect a more or less definite consequent musical event, then that stimulus has meaning. From this it follows that a stimulus or gesture which does not point to or arouse expectations of a subsequent musical event or consequent is meaningless. Because expectation is largely a product of stylistic experience, music in a style with which we are totally unfamiliar is meaningless. However, once the aesthetic attitude has been brought into play, very few gestures actually appear to be meaningless so long as the listener has some experience with the style of the work in question.³⁶

For Meyer, musical meaning is directly linked to the listener’s previous experiences with a style, genre, or composer. Therefore, in his view, music has no meaning unless the listener has some previous familiarity with a similar musical work. However, Meyer’s claim seems somewhat extreme. One could argue that “expectation” exists for those who have a general exposure to any music (regardless of style) which can serve as a point of reference as new musical experiences occur. For example, one who is familiar with jazz will have some musical frame of reference (in general) when listening to a Bach fugue. Meyer does pull back and rightly argues that a general “aesthetic attitude” allows for a broader experience of musical meaning.

Following the publication of *Emotion and Meaning in Music*, Meyer released several other helpful books including *Music, the Arts, and Ideas: Patterns and Predictions in Twentieth-Century Culture* (1967), *Explaining Music: Essays and Explorations* (1973), and *Style and Music: Theory, History, and Ideology* (1989).³⁷ In *Music, the Arts and Ideas*, Meyer continues to examine musical meaning and understanding arguing that “neither memorization nor performance necessarily entail understanding It is possible to read, memorize and perform music that one does not

³⁵ Davies, *Musical Meaning*, 27.

³⁶ Meyer, *Emotion and Meaning in Music*, 35.

³⁷ See Leonard B. Meyer, *Music, the Arts, and Ideas: Patterns and Predictions in Twentieth-Century Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967); Meyer, *Explaining Music: Essays and Explorations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973); Meyer, *Style and Music: Theory, History, and Ideology* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989).

really understand.”³⁸ Meyer continues to hold to a combination of formalism and expressionism as he focuses on musical criticism in *Explaining Music*. Here, he argues that criticism “seeks to explain how the structure and process of a particular composition are related to the competent listener’s comprehension of it . . . the role of the music critic is similar to that of the literary critic.”³⁹ In his later writing, Meyer is less focused on the “parallels between music and listeners’ psychological propensities, and far more frankly interested in music ‘itself.’”⁴⁰ According to professor of music at Brandon University Wayne D. Bowman,

The listener in Meyer’s revised theory is stylistically fluent, one whose attention is always directed to ‘properly’ musical attributes and whose affective responses are presumably beside the musical point. Positioning an ideally competent listener allows Meyer to focus almost exclusively upon structures, events, and patterns objectively within the music: the ‘stimuli’ to which truly competent listeners respond.⁴¹

Rather than presenting a philosophical or aesthetic argument for the change and history of style, Meyer relies in *Style and Music* on an empirical method to observe data of the “culturally qualified behavior of human beings in specific historical/cultural circumstances” to explain and understand the “compositional choices made by individual men and women who are members of some culture.”⁴² Summing up Meyer’s work, Bowman notes that, in Meyer’s view, “humans are fundamentally predicting, patterning, structuring creatures, with an inherent passion for coherence and an abhorrence of ambiguity. Music . . . is a quest for cognitive orientation.”⁴³

Peter Kivy (1924–2017), former professor emeritus of philosophy and

³⁸ Meyer, *Music, The Arts, and Ideas*, 291.

³⁹ Meyer, *Explaining Music*, ix.

⁴⁰ Wayne D. Bowman, *Philosophical Perspectives on Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 181.

⁴¹ Bowman, *Philosophical Perspectives*, 181.

⁴² Meyer, *Style and Music*, x.

⁴³ Bowman, *Philosophical Perspectives*, 167.

musicology at Rutgers University who wrote extensively on musical aesthetics, also held to a theory of aesthetic expressivism and argued that music has the ability to express human emotion or countenance.⁴⁴ In his book, *Music Alone: Philosophical Reflections on the Purely Musical Experience* (1990), Kivy loosely and quite generally defined “pure music” or absolute music as instrumental music.⁴⁵ With this in mind, he claimed that instrumental music is able to convey “garden-variety emotions” (sadness or joy), “but not cognitively complex emotions such as pride or envy.”⁴⁶ He claimed that “garden-variety emotions have standardized behavioral responses . . . and are not necessarily about some particular thing, and our bodily and behavioral expressions of sadness have universal features that can be mimicked by music.”⁴⁷ Additionally, Kivy argued that expressive properties “must have a musical function” and that the role of an “expressive property” in absolute (instrumental) music “is no different from the function of any other *musical* property of such a work . . . for an expressive property *is* a musical property.”⁴⁸

In a later work, *Introduction to A Philosophy of Music* (2002), Kivy laid out the foundations of formalism, noting that he believed this term was “ill-chosen.”⁴⁹ He noted that many who hold to the formalist view fail to recognize the expressive and emotive nature of that form. He wrote, “There is a general consensus . . . that there *are* emotive properties in music. Are these emotive properties to play no part at all in the musical formalist’s account of the musical listening experience? Some have thought so. I

⁴⁴ See Peter Kivy, *The Corded Shell: Reflections on Musical Expression* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980); Kivy, *Music Alone: Philosophical Reflections on the Purely Musical Experience* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990); Kivy, *Sound and Semblance: Reflections on Musical Representation* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991); and Kivy, *Introduction to a Philosophy of Music* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2002).

⁴⁵ Kivy, *Music Alone*, 29.

⁴⁶ Hodge, *A Concise Survey of Music Philosophy*, 156.

⁴⁷ Hodges, *A Concise Survey of Music Philosophy*, 156.

⁴⁸ Kivy, *Music Alone*, 185.

⁴⁹ Kivy, *Introduction to a Philosophy of Music*, 67.

do not.”⁵⁰ In an attempt to show how these emotive properties can and should work within the formalist view of absolute music, Kivy returned to his argument of music’s ability to express “garden-variety” emotions.

Closely resembling Kivy’s theory of musical expressivism, University of Auckland philosophy professor, Stephen Davies also recognizes the expressive properties of a musical work as musical properties.⁵¹ In his article, “The Evaluation of Music,” Davies claims that there are three primary ways in which music, “as an abstract art form, establishes a connection with life as such. These are (1) music expresses emotion; (2) music presents patterns and forms in sound; (3) music involves the dynamic movement of sound in time an ‘aural space.’”⁵² In his book *Musical Meaning and Expression*, Davies further develops his position on the expressive nature of music clearly tying in with Kivy’s argument as he writes:

These expressive appearances are not emotions that are felt, take objects, involve desires or beliefs—they are not occurrent emotions at all. They are emergent properties of the things to which they are attributed. These properties are public in character and are grounded in public features. The sadness of music is a property of the sounds of the musical work. Sadness is presented in the musical work. There need be no describing or representing, or symbolizing, or other kinds of denoting that connect the musical expressiveness to occurrent emotions, for the expressive character of the music resides within its own nature.⁵³

Social Philosophy of Music

The social philosophy view of music claims that “we can only understand music in the social context in which it is heard and experienced” and that “music is an

⁵⁰ Kivy, *Introduction to a Philosophy of Music*, 87.

⁵¹ See Stephen Davies, *Themes in the Philosophy of Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), and Davies, *Musical Meaning and Emotion*.

⁵² Steven Davies, “The Evaluation of Music,” in *What is Music? An Introduction to the Philosophy of Music*, ed. Philip Alperson (University Park: University of Pennsylvania, 1994), 319.

⁵³ Davies, *Musical Meaning and Expression*, 228.

important agent of social change.”⁵⁴ A prominent voice in this school of musical aesthetics is German composer and philosopher, Theodor Adorno, specifically in his work *Philosophy of Modern Music*.⁵⁵ Rooted in the musical developments of the early to mid-twentieth century, Adorno develops his theory based upon Arnold Schoenberg’s (1874–1951) atonal and serialized compositions and the reactionary position of Igor Stravinsky’s (1882–1971) neoclassicism, which occurred after his experiment with twelve-tone composition. Adorno argues, “The mainstreams which Schoenberg and Stravinsky represent are inextricably bound up with the social forces which produced them and are intrinsically in dialectical opposition to one another. In essence, Schoenberg represents the more progressive forces; Stravinsky the more reactionary.”⁵⁶ Hodges observes that “Adorno believed that the role of music was to promote social progress. When people become comfortable with the music they listen to, it no longer challenges them.” Adorno uses the twelve-tone, serialized, atonal compositions of Schoenberg as an illustration of “good music because it resists the status quo. Unfortunately, the kind of music that challenges social structures is the . . . music that society tends to ignore.”⁵⁷ However, as Durham professor of music aesthetics, Max Paddison argues, Adorno’s social philosophy of aesthetics “allows for no resolution of the tensions it identifies between autonomous music and the social relations of its production and reception.”⁵⁸

In a later article, “On the Social Situation of Music,” Adorno states, “Through its material, music must give clear form to the problems assigned it by this material,

⁵⁴ Hodges, *A Concise Survey of Music Philosophy*, 194.

⁵⁵ Theodor W. Adorno, *Philosophy of Modern Music*, trans. Anne G. Mitchell and Wesley V. Blomster (New York: Seabury, 1973). For a detailed explanation of Adorno’s views, biographical information, and account of his time in the United States, see Max Paddison, *Adorno’s Aesthetics of Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

⁵⁶ Adorno, *Philosophy of Modern Music*, 9.

⁵⁷ Hodges, *A Concise Survey of Music Philosophy*, 195.

⁵⁸ Paddison, *Adorno’s Aesthetics of Music*, 2.

which is itself never purely natural material, but rather a social and historical product; solutions offered by music in this process stand equal to theories.”⁵⁹ In short, as Lippman points out, “The belief that music reflects society is fundamental to Adorno’s ideas.”⁶⁰

Additionally, *Adorno’s Aesthetic Theory: The Redemption of Illusion* (1991) by philosophy professor emeritus at the Institute for Christian Studies, Lambert Zuidervaart, serves as another helpful source in understanding Adorno’s social philosophy of aesthetics. Zuidervaart recognizes Adorno’s emphasis of the social truth of art and draws comparison between Adorno and the philosophies of Hegel and Marx: “. . . both of whom see art as a vehicle of truth . . . Adorno has an internalist and expressivist model of art’s social mediation. This model turns autonomy into a flawed but necessary precondition for art’s social truth.”⁶¹

Empiricism

Then there is British philosopher and widely published author, Roger Scruton, who approaches musical aesthetics from an empiricist point of view.⁶² According to Lippman, Scruton’s “interest is directed specifically to the meaning that is intrinsic to music, without regard to the distinction—produced by a particular historical configuration of forces—between sense and import.”⁶³ In his book, *The Aesthetics of Music* (1997), Scruton argues that “music is not a representational art, since it has nonnarrative content. It will at once be said that the meaning of a work of art is never reducible to its narrative content in any case.”⁶⁴ Additionally, he rejects the notion that

⁵⁹ Theodor W. Adorno, “On the Social Situation of Music,” *Telos* 35 (1978): 130.

⁶⁰ Lippman, *A History of Western Musical Aesthetics*, 473.

⁶¹ Lambert Zuidervaart, *Adorno’s Aesthetic Theory: The Redemption of Illusion* (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1991), xxi

⁶² Lippman, *A History of Western Musical Aesthetics*, 386.

⁶³ Lippman, *A History of Western Musical Aesthetics*, 386.

⁶⁴ Scruton, *The Aesthetics of Music*, 140.

“expression” always refers to the “relationship between a work of art and a state of mind.”⁶⁵ He defines emotions as “publicly recognizable states of an organism. They are identified in terms of their role in a cognitive system, displayed in desires, beliefs, and actions.”⁶⁶ In distinguishing between emotions and feelings, Scruton writes, “While emotions include feelings . . . it is not ‘how they feel’ but ‘what they do’ that is important. In the normal case, an emotion is a motive to action.”⁶⁷

In his article “Musical Understanding and Musical Culture,” Scruton offers a comparison of music and language that differs largely from the view held by Goodman. He recognizes that art differs from language in two ways. First, the goal of music is not the same as that of language: “Art is not concerned to present information about the surrounding world and is therefore not measured only by the standard of truth. Truth is never a sufficient condition of successful artistic utterance.”⁶⁸ Secondly, art is guided by rules rather than regulated by them, and “any attempt to create works of art entirely by generative instructions, of the kind that produce successful sentences, will end in failure. Success in art outruns both syntax and semantics.”⁶⁹

In explaining music and art as an “object of a certain response,” Scruton argues that the work of art “is therefore composed on the assumption that the response in question is possible, that it lies within the available human repertoire. Responses depend upon prevailing psychological and social conditions. And if a response is to be significant to the person who feels it, it must bear some relation to his life as a whole.”⁷⁰

⁶⁵ Scruton, *The Aesthetics of Music*, 141.

⁶⁶ Scruton, *The Aesthetics of Music*, 347.

⁶⁷ Scruton, *The Aesthetics of Music*, 347.

⁶⁸ Roger Scruton, “Musical Understanding and Musical Culture,” Alperson, in *What Is Music? An Introduction to the Philosophy of Music*, 352.

⁶⁹ Scruton, “Musical Understanding and Musical Culture,” 352.

⁷⁰ Scruton, “Musical Understanding and Musical Culture,” 353.

Christian Aesthetics

Musical aesthetics from a Christian worldview has experienced significant growth in recent decades. Jacques Maritain in the 1920s–1960s and Francis Schaeffer in the 1970s–1980s began approaching art from a biblical standpoint. Then, in the 1980s, a significant increase in writings on Christian aesthetics emerged and continues today with authors such as Gene Edward Veith, Leland Ryken, Nicholas Wolterstorff, Frank Burch Brown, and Jeremy Begbie. In addition, emphasis on the relationship between music and theology appeared in the works of Wilfred Mellers, Jaroslav Pelikan, Benjamin Shute, and most notably, Jeremy Begbie.⁷¹

French Philosopher Jacques Maritain began writing on Christian aesthetics or a Christian philosophy of art and music with his book, *Art et Scholastique* originally published in 1920 in French with reprints and English translations appearing well into the 1960s.⁷² Maritain employed the philosophy and ideas of Thomas Aquinas in music, art, science, and society: “Thus, Maritain applied the Thomistic concepts of person and community to the problem of democracy,”⁷³ and as Newton Smith writes, “Maritain structured his aesthetic on the Thomist notions of the practical intellect and the practical arts,”⁷⁴ and defined art as a “creative or producing, work-making activity of the human

⁷¹ Begbie’s work is mentioned in the following pages. For more on the use of music for theological expression, see Wilfred Mellers, *Bach and the Dance of God* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), and Mellers, *Beethoven and the Voice of God* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983); Jaroslav Pelikan, *Bach Among the Theologians* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), and Pelikan, *The Melody of Theology: A Philosophical Dictionary* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988); Eric Thomas Chafe, *Tonal Allegory in the Vocal Music of J. S. Bach* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991). Benjamin Shute, *Sei Solo: Symbolum? The Theology of J. S. Bach’s Solo Violin Works* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2016); Calvin Stapert, *My Only Comfort: Death, Deliverance, and Discipleship in the Music of Bach* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000). It should be noted that while Patrick Kavanaugh attempts to connect music and theology in *The Music of the Angels: A Listener’s Guide to Sacred Music from Chant to Christian Rock* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 1999), he does so with extreme eisegesis and disregards the philosophy and theology of composers.

⁷² Jacques Maritain, *Art and Scholasticism and the Frontiers of Poetry*, trans. Joseph W. Evans (New York: Scribners, 1962). Although Maritain was a French philosopher, his influence is prominent in the United States following his appointments at Columbia and Princeton in the 1940s.

⁷³ Thomas F. O’Meara, “Thomism,” in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, last modified November 29, 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Thomism>.

⁷⁴ Newton D. Smith, “Jacques Maritain’s Aesthetics: To Distinguish to Unite,” in *The Quest for Imagination: Essays in Twentieth-Century Aesthetic Criticism*, ed. O. B. Hardison Jr. (Cleveland, OH:

mind.”” Thus he proceeded to analyze both the pure and practical arts, particularly as they relate to beauty.”⁷⁵ Additionally, Maritain relied heavily on Aquinas’ ideas in developing his position on the use of art in the Christian life. He, like Aquinas, held that if man was unable to use an artwork without sinning, then it must be avoided. However, if people were able to use art without falling into sin, art was permissible.⁷⁶

Maritain addressed a number of theological and aesthetic issues including the morality of art, the creation of art in light of God’s creative activity, and the proper classification of “Christian art.” As Smith notes, Maritain places art and morality in the “realm of the practical intellect,” and differentiates between art and morality, arguing that while “morality is concerned with the good of man—his right action; art is concerned with the good of the work-to-be-made—the right work. Each claim everything to be under its dominion, and conflict between the two is continual.”⁷⁷ Maritain clearly separates the morality of the art from its value or beauty. Recognizing this separation in Maritain’s view, Smith argues that, for Maritain, “the artist is both a man and an artist. As a man he is responsible to himself, his state, and his God . . . he necessarily must order his actions to his own moral good. Since his art is one of his actions, it too falls in the domain of moral action. The struggle of an artist to maintain integrity and . . . the health of his soul demands a heroic effort.”⁷⁸

In his later work, *The Responsibility of the Artist*, Maritain continues to consider the relationship between the morality of humans and the moral implications for art. He

The Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1971), 137.

⁷⁵ Smith, “Jacques Maritain,” 137. For more on Maritain’s understanding of the transcendentals (specifically, beauty), see Cameron J. Anderson, *The Faithful Artist: A Vision for Evangelicalism and the Arts* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2016), 220.

⁷⁶ Maritain, *Art and Scholasticism*, 71.

⁷⁷ Smith, “Jacques Maritain,” 146.

⁷⁸ Smith, “Jacques Maritain,” 147.

claims, “A work of art conveys to us that spiritual treasure which is the artist’s own singular truth, for the sake of which he risks everything and to which he must be heroically faithful.”⁷⁹ Additionally, he addresses the responsibility of the audience in judging or evaluating art, stating, “In judging of the artistic achievements of their contemporaries, people have a responsibility, both toward the artist and toward themselves, insofar as they need poetry and beauty. They should be aware of this responsibility.”⁸⁰

In the connection between the artist as creator and God as the Creator, Maritain declares that “Artistic creation does not copy God’s creation, it continues it. And just as the trace and the image of God appear in His creatures, so the human stamp is imprinted on the work of art—the full stamp, sensitive and spiritual, not only that of the hands, but of the whole soul.”⁸¹ Additionally, Maritain defines Christian art as “art which bears within it the character of Christianity. In this sense Christian art is not a species of the genus art: one does not say ‘Christian art’ as one says ‘pictorial’ or ‘poetic’ art, ‘Gothic’ or ‘Byzantine’ art.”⁸² He elaborates on his understanding of Christian art claiming that “it is the art of redeemed humanity” and that it should “bear Christian fruit.”⁸³ He continues noting that art includes the “sacred as well as the profane.”⁸⁴

Maritain cautions against believing that the existence of Christian art is impossible. Rather, he suggests that “it is difficult, doubly difficult—fourfold difficult to be a Christian, and because the total difficulty is not simply the sum but the product of

⁷⁹ Jacques Maritain, *The Responsibility of the Artist* (New York: Gordian, 1972), 90.

⁸⁰ Maritain, *The Responsibility of the Artist*, 90.

⁸¹ Maritain, *Art and Scholasticism*, 60.

⁸² Maritain, *Art and Scholasticism*, 64.

⁸³ Maritain, *Art and Scholasticism*, 65.

⁸⁴ Maritain, *Art and Scholasticism*, 65.

these two difficulties multiplied by one another.”⁸⁵ His solution is to avoid attempting to create a Christian work and that artists who want to make something Christian should instead “*be* Christian, and simply try to make a beautiful work, into which your heart will pass; do not try to “make Christian.”⁸⁶

Additionally, he advises that a Christian artist should not try to “dissociate in [herself] the artist and the Christian. But apply only the artist to the work; precisely because the artist and the Christian are one, the work will derive wholly from each of them.”⁸⁷ Continuing, Maritain says the Christian artist should not separate faith from art because these things are so intertwined in the life of a Christian artist. He writes, “If the beauty of the work is Christian, it is because the appetite of the artist is rightly disposed with regard to such a beauty, and because in the soul of the artist Christ is present through love. The quality of the work is here the reflection of the love from which it issues, and which moves the virtue of art instrumentally.”⁸⁸

Finally, on the necessity of art within the Christian life, Maritain claims that human community is fundamentally in need of art. He states, “Art teaches men the delectations of the spirit . . . it can best lead them to what is nobler than itself. It thus plays in natural life the same role . . . as the “sensible graces” in the spiritual life . . . and unconsciously, it prepares the human race for contemplation . . . whose spiritual

⁸⁵ Maritain, *Art and Scholasticism*, 65.

⁸⁶ Maritain, *Art and Scholasticism*, 66. Best strongly echoes this position in *Music through the Eyes of Faith* as well as *Unceasing Worship*. See chap. 5 of this dissertation.

⁸⁷ Maritain, *Art and Scholasticism*, 66–67.

⁸⁸ Maritain, *Art and Scholasticism*, 67. Here, Maritain is referencing the Aristotelian doctrine of causation. These are four types: the material cause, the formal cause, the efficient cause, and the final cause. The rightly disposed appetite of the artist mentioned by Maritain is connected to the fourth type of causation—“the end or goal of a thing—that for the sake of which a thing is done.” For further explanation, see *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, s.v. “Aristotle,” accessed May 31, 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Aristotle>.

delectation . . . seems to be the end of all the operations.”⁸⁹

The Catholic Maritain crafted a Christian aesthetic drawing upon the doctrines of creation and *imago Dei*, proposing Christian standards in creating and evaluating art. Subsequently, Protestant philosopher and author, Francis Schaeffer developed a scriptural worldview connecting with these themes and issues. Although Schaeffer wrote prolifically, the most helpful of his works for this study is *Art and the Bible* (1971).⁹⁰

On the connection between artistic creation and the creative activity of the Creator, Schaeffer held that “God took the creative initiative. He created the physical world, called it good, created Man after his own image, and gave him a cultural mandate, a command to cultivate and subdue the earth, with creativity as his tool. Man’s creativity is like a stream flowing from a great river, and the river is God.”⁹¹ Additionally, the mandate for creativity placed on Man by the “chief artist” called for Man to “make all kinds of things that reveal God’s glory and mercy.”⁹² Schaeffer applied the mandate of creativity and *imago Dei* to valuing art: “As a Christian, we know why a work of art has value. First, because a work of art is a work of creativity, and creativity has value because God is the Creator. Second . . . man is made in the image of God . . . and therefore . . . has the capacity to create.”⁹³ However, Schaeffer issued a caveat based on the sinful nature of humanity: “Not everything man makes is good intellectually or morally. So, while creativity is a good thing in itself, it does not mean that everything that comes out of man’s creativity is good. For while man was made in the image of God, he is fallen.”⁹⁴

⁸⁹ Maritain, *Art and Scholasticism*, 75–76.

⁹⁰ Francis Schaeffer, *Art and the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1973).

⁹¹ Nicole Doran, “A Christian Philosophy of Music and the Arts: Contributions of the Schaeffer Family and the L’Abri Community” (DMA diss., University of Cincinnati, 2002), 76.

⁹² Doran, “A Christian Philosophy of Music,” 76.

⁹³ Schaeffer, *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer*, 2nd ed., vol. 2, book 5, *Art and the Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1982), 394.

⁹⁴ Schaeffer, *Art and the Bible*, 394.

Schaeffer's understanding of the effects of the fall on the creative processes and products of human artists invites investigation into the morality of art and its proper and improper uses. In *Art and the Bible*, Schaeffer recognizes that art is to be used to worship God. He builds his argument on Scripture passages, e.g., Leviticus 26 and John 3:14–15. He uses God's command in Leviticus that his people are not to create idols or images: "This passage makes clear that Scripture does not forbid the making of representational art, but rather the worship of it. Only God is to be worshiped. Thus, the commandment is not against making art, but against worshipping anything other than God and specifically against worshipping art. To worship art is wrong, but to make art is not."⁹⁵ Then, in John 3, Schaeffer argues that Jesus used a work of art as an illustration for his impending crucifixion. He concludes that "art can be offered up before God" and that only the misuses of representational art are wrong, not its "existence."⁹⁶ And along these lines, Schaeffer recognizes that there is no "godly" or "ungodly" style of art but cautions that "we must not be misled or naïve in thinking that various styles have no relation whatsoever to the content of the message of the work of art. Styles themselves are developed as symbol systems or vehicles for certain world-views or messages."⁹⁷

Schaeffer also advocates for an inclusion of art within the Christian life. Nicole Doran notes that Schaeffer believed "art was to be a valuable mode of expression that affirmed something of the nature of God and man, that there was room for the expression of beauty, creativity, content in artistic language."⁹⁸ Furthermore, Schaeffer argues that Christian artists should pursue creativity in a wide variety and styles and should not limit themselves to working only with religious themes or subjects. He writes, "Religious

⁹⁵ Schaeffer, *Art and the Bible*, 378.

⁹⁶ Schaeffer, *Art and the Bible*, 384, 386.

⁹⁷ Schaeffer, *Art and the Bible*, 406.

⁹⁸ Doran, "A Christian Philosophy of Music and the Arts," 47.

subjects are no guarantee that a work of art is Christian . . . some Christian artists will never use religious themes. This is a freedom the artist has in Christ under the leadership of the Holy Spirit.”⁹⁹ Schaeffer continues to emphasize a responsibility of judgment for allowing a proper place for the arts within the Christian life. He argues that “The arts and sciences do have a place in the Christian life—they are not peripheral. For a Christian, redeemed by the work of Christ and living within the norms of Scripture and under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, the Lordship of Christ should include an interest in the arts. . . . An art work can be a doxology in itself.”¹⁰⁰

Harold Best notes, “Evangelicalism stands in need of the kind of thinking about artistic responsibility that carries with it the love of culture, human creativity, and artistic excellence, which were so cherished by Francis Schaeffer.”¹⁰¹ Specifically, Schaeffer claims that an artist’s striving for excellence is a mode of expressing praise to God,¹⁰² and also uses the criterion of excellence as a category of judgment, which allows believers to recognize artistic value in a work of art while possibly disagreeing with the artist’s beliefs and worldview.¹⁰³ And, finally, Schaeffer argues that art made by a Christian artist should be current and contemporary rather than fixed on imitating antiquated or outdated artistic styles. A Christian’s art should be reflective of their worldview as it applies to their modern context.¹⁰⁴

Schaeffer discounts the claim that Christian art is religious art. Rather, like Maritain, he argues that “Christian art is the expression of the whole life of the whole

⁹⁹ Francis A. Schaeffer, “Some Perspectives on Art,” in Ryken, *The Christian Imagination: Essays on Literature and the Arts*, ed. Leland Ryken (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 96.

¹⁰⁰ Schaeffer, *Art and the Bible*, 377.

¹⁰¹ Harold M. Best, “Schaeffer on Art and Music,” in *Reflections on Francis Schaeffer*, ed. Ronald W. Ruesegger (Grand Rapids: Academie, 1986), 157.

¹⁰² Schaeffer, *Art and the Bible*, 387.

¹⁰³ Schaeffer, *Art and the Bible*, 399.

¹⁰⁴ Schaeffer, “Some Perspectives on Art,” 91.

person who is a Christian. What a Christian portrays in his art is the totality of life.”¹⁰⁵ This definition opens the door for discussion and exploration into the worldview of an artist, and how the artistic expressions of that worldview impact creativity and the production of art throughout an artist’s lifetime: “The body of a Christian artist’s work should reflect a Christian worldview.”¹⁰⁶ Additionally, Schaeffer addresses the role of the artist’s worldview in the Christian’s evaluation of his artwork. He offers three criteria for judgment: (1) excellence, (2) validity, and (3) content. Excellence allows people to recognize the value of an artist’s work even if they disagree with the artist’s worldview. Validity concerns the motive of artists—whether or not they are true “to their worldview” or simply aiming to make money or gain acceptance. Content concerns how the artwork itself reflects the artist’s worldview. Schaeffer writes, “As far as a Christian is concerned, the world-view that is shown through a body of art must be seen ultimately in terms of the Scripture. The artist’s world-view is not to be free from the judgment of the Word of God.”¹⁰⁷ Best notes that Schaeffer was not the first to raise questions on the implications of worldview in artistic judgment but was the first to raise it within evangelicalism.¹⁰⁸

Contemporary and friend of Schaeffer, H. R. Rookmaaker, was also influential in calling the church to reengage with the arts. This Dutch philosopher traveled extensively in the United States and Britain throughout the 1960s and 1970s lecturing on Christianity and modern art specifically. Eventually, his lectures were compiled into a prominent book within Christian aesthetics, *Modern Art and the Death of a Culture* (1970).¹⁰⁹ While Rookmaaker primarily dealt with the visual arts, his appeal that

¹⁰⁵ Schaeffer, *Art and the Bible*, 411–12.

¹⁰⁶ Schaeffer, “Some Perspectives on Art,” 92. See also Schaeffer, *Art and the Bible*, 396.

¹⁰⁷ Schaeffer, *Art and the Bible*, 399–400.

¹⁰⁸ Best, “Schaeffer on Art and Music,” 157–58.

¹⁰⁹ H. R. Rookmaaker, *Modern Art and the Death of a Culture* (1970; repr., Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1994).

Christians participate in the arts and in “academic discourses about the arts” was influential.¹¹⁰

Also, echoing Schaeffer, a number of Christian authors and scholars in the 1980s expressed similar views on the connection between artistic creativity to *imago Dei*, the morality of art, and the role of worldview in artistic creation and judgment. For example, Leland Ryken, professor emeritus at Wheaton College and editor of the largely influential book, *The Christian Imagination: Essays on Literature and the Arts* (1981) writes that the doctrine of *imago Dei* “affirms human creativity as something good, since it is an imitation of one of God’s acts and perfections” and that it also provides a “theological explanation for why people create. The creative impulse is an expression of human likeness to God.”¹¹¹ Additionally, Ryken raises questions on the effects of sin and the fall of humanity on art—of artistic morality. He notes that Christians must ask whether a work of art has “moral or immoral effect, as judged by a biblical standard of morality” and that Christian artists are under obligation to “express truth rather than falsehood, to add to the world’s beauty and joy rather than its ugliness and despair, and to avoid the arrogance of assuming that every manifestation of his or her creativity is automatically either truthful or moral.”¹¹²

Continuing to investigate the connection between the *imago Dei* and artistic creation and the role of worldview in artistic judgment, Frank Gaebelien, former editor of the magazines *Christianity Today* and *Eternity* and founder of Stony Brook School in New York, writes that “what the Bible says about God’s creative activity and man’s origin and fall and redemption is centrally related to a Christian aesthetic. But to

¹¹⁰ Jonathan Anderson, and William Dyrness, *Modern Art and the Life of Culture: The Religious Impulses of Modernism* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2016), 49–50.

¹¹¹ Leland Ryken, “In the Beginning God Created,” in Ryken, *The Christian Imagination*, 58, 59.

¹¹² Ryken, “In the Beginning God Created,” 66.

understand that relationship we must look closely at the concept of God as the great Maker of all things and of man as his creation.”¹¹³ Like Ryken, Gaebelein addresses the effects of sin on art. He recognizes that the result of the fall is an “innate bent toward sin” which is exposed in the actions of humanity. “Christians know how God has provided for the redemption of fallen man through our Lord Jesus Christ. They also know that the redeemed are not now exempt from sin and that, while in the inner man they have been restored, they too bear the marks of the fall in their lives—and in their art.”¹¹⁴ Furthermore, on Christian art and the morality of art, Gaebelein argues that regardless of the spiritual or religious views of the artist, “all aesthetic achievement that has integrity comes from God Therefore, it is to be enjoyed with gratitude to the great Giver of every good and perfect gift. Art, though it has tragic depths, is not in itself tragic.”¹¹⁵

Additionally, Gaebelein addresses the role of music in the Christian life as well as the pursuit of artistic excellence as an aspect of worship. He recognizes that although music has “truth and integrity,” some of it may not be “fitted for church use [yet] Christians may enjoy it, because it is part of God’s truth.”¹¹⁶ Additionally, like Best, he notes that music apart from text cannot communicate doctrine. He writes, “there is music that is innately uplifting in its appeal. To be sure, it cannot by itself convey doctrine and thus is not specifically sacred or Christian, but in its feeling and effect it is spiritually elevating.”¹¹⁷

On the pursuit of excellence for the Christian musician, Gaebelein notes that,

¹¹³ Frank E. Gaebelein, “Toward a Christian View of Aesthetics,” in Ryken, *The Christian Imagination*, 50.

¹¹⁴ Gaebelein, “Toward a Christian View of Aesthetics,” 52.

¹¹⁵ Gaebelein, “Toward a Christian View of Aesthetics,” 54.

¹¹⁶ Frank E. Gaebelein, “The Christian and Music,” in Ryken, *The Christian Imagination*, 443.

¹¹⁷ Gaebelein, “The Christian and Music,” 443. Best’s position on the function of texted and untexted artforms is addressed in chap. 5 of this dissertation.

“music is a demanding art. To achieve excellence in it requires hard discipline and unremitting work With all his devotion to it, a Christian musician must keep his priorities clear. God is the source of all talent . . . including musical talent, He gives it, not to be made an idol of, but to be used to His glory.”¹¹⁸ Additionally, Gaebelein connects excellence to Christian responsibility encouraging the Christian artist to constantly criticize themselves. He writes, “[The arts] are among God’s best gifts. But we who work in them and live with them must be very careful that they don’t completely take us over. If that happens, we confuse the gift with the Giver himself and that’s idolatry.”¹¹⁹

Calvin Seerveld, Canadian Christian philosopher and professor emeritus of aesthetics at the Institute for Christian Studies, also offers a view on art and music from a markedly Christian point of view. In his book, *Rainbows for the Fallen World* (1980),¹²⁰ Seerveld follows the Dutch reformed philosophy of aesthetics in the footsteps of Herman Dooyeweerd. Rooted in the doctrine of creation as a model, he argues that the church should not relinquish art but should deeply and creatively engage in aesthetics and calls for “greater openness to the arts in the Christian Community.”¹²¹ He defines aesthetic life as “that kind of human activity which is peculiarly and principally responsive to God’s creational ordinance of allusiveness, which holds somehow for all creaturely reality.”¹²²

Additionally, in his aesthetic philosophy of human creativity, Seerveld distinguishes between being made in God’s image and bearing his likeness. He writes,

¹¹⁸ Gaebelein, “The Christian and Music,” 448.

¹¹⁹ Frank E. Gaebelein, *The Christian, the Arts, and Truth: Regaining the Vision of Greatness*, ed. D. Bruce Lockerbie (Portland, OR: Multnomah, 1985), 106. Gaebelein’s definition of idolatry mentioned here is echoed by Best throughout *Music through the Eyes of Faith* and *Unceasing Worship*. The author addresses Best’s argument in detail in chap. 5 of this dissertation.

¹²⁰ Calvin Seerveld, *Rainbows for the Fallen World* (Toronto: Tuppence, 1980).

¹²¹ David A. Hoekema, “Elusive about Allusive,” review of *Rainbows for the Fallen Word* by Calvin Seerveld, *The Reformed Journal* 31, no. 9 (1981): 23–24.

¹²² Seerveld, *Rainbows for the Fallen World*, 49.

“Man is not God’s image, a finite parallel to an infinite Perfection. Only Christ is a spitting image of God. The fact that man is made *in* the image of God means that men and women carry inescapably around with them a restless sense of allegiance to [the Creator].”¹²³

Nicholas Wolterstorff, an American philosopher and theologian, also addresses art and the doctrine of creation. Specifically, in his book *Art in Action: Toward a Christian Aesthetic* (1980), he claims that the “basic image of the artist underlying modern Western art is that of the artist as a center of consciousness who challenges God by seeking to create as God creates.”¹²⁴ His book focuses on aesthetic delight, responsibility in art, the function or purpose of art, and artistic excellence. He claims that we are to “pursue aesthetic delight, for ourselves, and others” because it is a type of “joy which belongs to the shalom God has ordained as the goal of human existence.”¹²⁵ On responsibility in art, Wolterstorff writes,

The artist who acknowledges his responsibility to God, to his neighbor, to himself, to nature, will find that he must constantly assess priorities as a way of determining the direction in which he turns his endeavors. It would be irresponsible, though, to determine these priorities by reference simply to what the public wants—to judge that what they want is always what is most important to do. Being a responsible artist is not the same as being a pandering artist. The two are in fact incompatible. Sometimes the artist must strike out on paths of exploration which, at the time, his public does not like, in the conviction that eventually his path will yield results more rewarding and enriching to his fellow human beings than would come by his simply giving them what at the moment they desire.¹²⁶

Finally, on the evaluation of art, Wolterstorff argues that art’s value and effectiveness is found in how well it fulfills its purpose. He claims that a hymn is only considered “good” if it “serves its purpose effectively and then in addition proves good

¹²³ Seerveld, *Rainbows for the Fallen World*, 26.

¹²⁴ Nicholas A. Wolterstorff, *Art in Action: Toward a Christian Aesthetic* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 56.

¹²⁵ Wolterstorff, *Art in Action*, 169.

¹²⁶ Wolterstorff, *Art in Action*, 194.

and satisfying for this purpose, that purpose being to enable a congregation to offer praise to God.”¹²⁷ Similarly, he notes that the “quality of a concerto is to be judged first of all by its effectiveness in fulfilling its purpose, that of giving delight upon aesthetic contemplation.”¹²⁸

Prolific author and professor of literature emeritus at Patrick Henry College, Gene Edward Veith Jr. continued to build upon the conversations taking place within Christian aesthetics. In his book, *State of the Arts: From Bezalel to Mapplethorpe* (1991), he calls on Christians to apply discernment between “good and evil, truth and falsehood” and in art, the “aesthetically good and the aesthetically bad,” as he walks through various biblical accounts of artistic importance and instruction.¹²⁹ He recognizes that modern philosophies are challenging concepts of beauty and meaning with ugliness and irrationalism, resulting in a severely negative impact on creativity.¹³⁰ Additionally, Veith argues that God values the arts as evidenced through Creation, and that artists need the church just as the church needs artists. He claims that artists need the “dogmas, moral character, pastoral care, and community support” of the church just as the church needs artists “both for the sake of its own spiritual life and for the sake of its larger mission in the world.”¹³¹

Like Schaeffer, Veith addresses issues of artistic morality and art in worship: “Art should aid the worship of God, not be distracting. The best art calls attention to itself, to its own artfulness and the skill of its maker. The best liturgical art, on the other hand, calls attention to God, sacrificing its artfulness in the self-abnegation of

¹²⁷ Wolterstorff, *Art in Action*, 169.

¹²⁸ Wolterstorff, *Art in Action*, 169.

¹²⁹ Gene Edward Veith Jr., *State of the Arts: From Bezalel to Mapplethorpe* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1991), xiv.

¹³⁰ Veith, *State of the Arts*, 21.

¹³¹ Veith, *State of the Arts*, 24.

worship.”¹³² Furthermore, he emphasizes the value of both sacred and secular art and literature. In his book *Reading between the Lines* (1990), he claims that secular books are worth the Christian’s attention but that one must distinguish between morally “good” and “bad” reading. Good books, he claims, even those dealing with secular subject matter and written by non-Christians “must be written following the aesthetic law of the created order. As such, Christians can see them in light of God, who is not only the source of all truth, but also the source of all beauty and all perfection.”¹³³ However, he cautions, “Reading stirs the imagination” and “like avoiding sinful actions we must avoid sinful imaginings.”¹³⁴

In a later book, *Postmodern Times: A Christian Guide to Contemporary Art and Culture* (1994), Veith continues his discussion of Christianity and the arts but focuses more on the development of philosophical thought and worldview to see how Christian philosophy fits in with modernism and postmodernism. Specifically, he argues that the “postmodern age has room for Christianity in ways that modernism did not. Its openness to the past, its rejection of narrow rationalism, its insistence that art refers to meanings and contexts beyond itself—these insights are all useful to the recovery of a Christian worldview.”¹³⁵

Another influential author within Christian aesthetics is professor of religion and the arts at Christian Theological Seminary, Frank Burch Brown. His first book, *Religious Aesthetics: A Theological Study of Making and Meaning* (1989), connects aesthetics with theology. Brown writes, “Whatever their nature, art and aesthetic

¹³² Veith, *State of the Arts*, 201.

¹³³ Gene Edward Veith Jr., *Reading between the Lines: A Christian Guide to Literature* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1990), 28.

¹³⁴ Veith, *Reading between the Lines*, 32.

¹³⁵ Gene Edward Veith Jr., *Postmodern Times: A Christian Guide to Contemporary Art and Culture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1994), 119.

experience often are important to religion in a variety of ways and therefore invite theological reflection.”¹³⁶ Additionally, he notes that there is a theological necessity connected to doing aesthetics and that the relationship between theology and aesthetics is “mutually transformative.”¹³⁷ He continues, stating that “if at least part of what we consider to be aesthetic is analogous to . . . what we regard as distinctly religious, and if aesthetica cannot even be recognized . . . apart from taste, then taste has a unique place in religion itself. It must be seen as an intrinsic part of adequately or inadequately glorifying and enjoying God.”¹³⁸ This, he argues is the “conclusion” that allows for viewing and understanding “aesthetic taste as a part of religion.”¹³⁹

Ultimately, Brown argues that the “theologian as aesthetician” will determine the “adequacy of any particular theological aesthetic It is theology itself that must discover the extent to which theological aesthetics can actually become a thriving and religiously fruitful enterprise.”¹⁴⁰ Advocating for an interdisciplinary approach to aesthetics, he writes that this “study would suggest that the theologian must engage in dialogue with the strictly academic scholar of religions and with the philosopher since they provide the theologian with vital critical challenges . . . awareness, [and] conceptual tools, all of which any reasonably adequate theology requires.”¹⁴¹

In his second book, *Good Taste, Bad Taste, and Christian Taste: Aesthetics in Religious Life* (2000), he argues that people use taste in three ways: “In aesthetic perceiving, enjoying and judging (which, in more technical language, we can also term

¹³⁶ Frank Burch Brown, *Religious Aesthetics: A Theological Study of Making and Meaning* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), 35.

¹³⁷ Brown, *Religious Aesthetics*, 37, 42.

¹³⁸ Brown, *Religious Aesthetics*, 147.

¹³⁹ Brown, *Religious Aesthetics*, 147.

¹⁴⁰ Brown, *Religious Aesthetics*, 194.

¹⁴¹ Brown, *Religious Aesthetics*, 194.

apperception, appreciation, and appraisal). Each of these aspects of taste has practical theological implications.”¹⁴² Additionally, Brown addresses the issues surrounding enjoyment or “entertainment” in worship. He discusses the history of secular musical components used in worship stating that “much of the music already found in various of the older Christian hymnals makes use of secular tunes that provide relatively light entertainment, even as they ‘lift the heart toward the Lord.’”¹⁴³ However, he cautions that the entertaining aspects of worship must be evaluated by “balance and proportion,” making sure it does not “eclipse” the focus of worship.¹⁴⁴

Following the conversation started by Brown, the 1990s brought with them an increase of investigation into the relationship between music and theology within Christian aesthetics. One of the primary voices in this connection is that of Jeremy Begbie, professor of theology at Duke Divinity School, whose first book, *Voicing Creation’s Praise: Towards a Theology of the Arts* (1991), argued that the arts should be included in theological discussions.¹⁴⁵ Additionally, he claims that, for the Christian, a philosophy of art should be rooted in the “incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection of the Son of God.”¹⁴⁶ He also recognizes that art functions well as a platform for theological reflection because “art is quite able to disclose truth beyond itself and beyond the inner life of the artist.”¹⁴⁷ And, finally, in this work he notes that “the church should feel no

¹⁴² Frank Burch Brown, *Good Taste, Bad Taste, Christian Taste: Aesthetics in Religious Life* (New York: Oxford, 2000), 13.

¹⁴³ Brown, *Good Taste*, 21.

¹⁴⁴ Brown, *Good Taste*, 21. See also, Brown, *Inclusive yet Discerning: Navigating Worship Artfully* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009).

¹⁴⁵ Jeremy Begbie, *Voicing Creation’s Praise: Towards a Theology of the Arts* (1991; repr., Edinburgh: Clark, 2000).

¹⁴⁶ Begbie, *Voicing Creation’s Praise*, 167.

¹⁴⁷ Begbie, *Voicing Creation’s Praise*, 199.

shame in employing the arts as media of theological truth.”¹⁴⁸ Begbie has continued to advocate for an emphasis on the connection between art and theology in his subsequent writings well into the first decade of the twenty-first century.¹⁴⁹

Conclusion

The overview of philosophical and aesthetic movements within the United States presented in this chapter seeks to reveal the context of philosophical thought to which Best was exposed. From the symbolism of Langer to the expressionism and formalism displayed by Meyer to the eruption of writings on aesthetics from a Christian worldview (from Schaeffer and others), a philosophical backdrop is displayed against which Best’s own aesthetic views may be seen. An investigation of the secular theories and musical values as well as those from the Christian community is necessary in order to compile a view of the artistic philosophical landscape in which Best began to engage. In this context Best’s own views will be examined in chapters 4 and 5.

¹⁴⁸ Begbie, *Voicing Creation’s Praise*, 257.

¹⁴⁹ See Jeremy Begbie, *Beholding the Glory: Incarnation through the Arts* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000); Begbie, *Theology, Music, and Time* (New York: Cambridge, 2000); and Begbie, *Resounding Truth: Christian Wisdom in the World of Music* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007).

CHAPTER 3
EVANGELICAL WORSHIP PHILOSOPHY AND
MINISTRY IN THE U.S. C. 1940–1993

Introduction

Worship music, philosophy, and ministry in the United States underwent significant transformation during the second half of the twentieth century. These changes were largely connected to the culture of the church and of the secular world. Professor of ministry and missions at Huntington University, Thomas E. Bergler, notes the contributing factors of these revolutions:

A new Christian music tradition emerged which did not exclude or even grudgingly accept popular musical idioms, instrumentation, and performance styles, but instead embraced them. The decade of the 1960s is often cited as the launching point for this revolution, but in fact the key decades of change were the 1940s and 1950s, and among the key agents of change were leaders of the Youth for Christ movement.¹

The Youth for Christ movement and the launch of Billy Graham’s ministry in the 1940s, the rise of youth culture associated with rock ‘n’ roll of the 1950s coupled with the reaction against traditionalism and emphasis on individualism of the baby boomer generation during the 1960s, account for significant events in the timeline of the overall Protestant worship landscape of the United State during these decades. Additionally, the development of contemporary Christian music and the onset of “praise and worship” music from the 1970s through 1990s significantly influence the worship context to which Harold Best was exposed and subsequently involved. By examining these general shifts in worship philosophy and praxis as detailed in representative evangelical worship

¹ Thomas Bergler, “I Found My Thrill: The Youth for Christ Movement and American Congregational Singing 1940–1970,” in *Wonderful Words of Life: Hymns in American Protestant History and Theology*, ed. Richard J. Mouw and Mark A. Noll (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 123.

literature and figures, a context for investigating the background and development of Best's philosophy of music and worship emerges.

Evangelical Worship Context of the 1940s

The worship context of the 1940s, like more recent decades, is marked by cultural events and developments. Worship authors and educators including Evelyn Underhill, Isham E. Reynolds, and Joseph N. Ashton provide helpful first-hand accounts of the prominent worship philosophies and issues of this time period. To explore the impact of this period on Best's thinking, we will examine the works of Underhill, Reynolds, and A. W. Tozer.

The landscape of evangelical worship in the 1940s centered on congregational singing and an emphasis of congregational musical and spiritual education. The pastor of the church was considered the primary worship leader, but where financially feasible, a full-time "music minister" was employed to oversee the musical contribution to worship services, the musical training of church musicians and laity, and the development of successful church music programs for the edification of the congregation.² Additionally, the music minister was expected to be a talented, trained, and dedicated musician focused on bringing excellent musicianship to worship. Andrew W. Blackwood, Presbyterian pastor, author, and lecturer wrote that "an artist is one who conforms with certain laws in order to attain certain ends. Before the leader in worship can conform with the laws of his art, he must know these laws, and then he must keep on using them until it becomes almost a matter of second nature to do his work as it should be done."³

Specifically, the role of music in worship during this decade was one of function. Joseph N. Ashton, former professor of music at Brown University, recognized

² Andrew W. Blackwood, *The Fine Art of Public Worship* (Nashville: Cokesbury, 1939), 96–97.

³ Blackwood, *The Fine Art of Public Worship*, 226.

the functionality of music in worship noting, “To aid the soul to become more keenly and deeply conscious of itself, its supreme personal quality, its high and enduring worth, is the ideal of church music. [It] is for this purpose that music has been admitted to the sanctuary.”⁴ Continuing, he claims that the music “is an agent both for expression and for impression” in religious services.⁵

Important for this time period was the musical training provided by graded choirs culminating in adult choirs. Isham Reynolds strongly advocated for musical training of the congregation through children’s, youth, and junior choirs. The goal was for these choirs to feed into adult choirs increasing the level of musicianship and musical technical ability. Ashton noted the importance of such musical education within the church and also recognized that this training was not the ultimate goal of church music. He wrote, “But though the church may seek to gain an increased musical proficiency within its constituency in order to promote and exalt worship, it is not the function of the church to engage specifically in musical education. The church should, however, see to it that its music, as music, is never of a character below that of the community or its constituency.”⁶

Although graded choirs provided opportunity for musical growth and education, in some cases, congregational music was not given the same effort regarding training and improvement. Ashton argued, “All too commonly congregational music is highly extolled and greatly neglected. Often it receives adequate attention from no one: the minister is too exclusively concerned with the sermon and other parts of the service which are individually his; the choir is chiefly concerned with its anthems and responses;

⁴ Joseph N. Ashton, *Music in Worship: The Use of Music in the Church Service* (1943; repr., Bristol, IN: Wyndam, 2001), 6.

⁵ Ashton, *Music in Worship*, 6.

⁶ Ashton, *Music in Worship*, 79–80.

and the congregation is musically inert and without leadership.”⁷ When this was the case, Ashton suggested offering a series of sermons on the biblical instruction to sing. He also spoke of the importance of planning song or hymn services, and promoting hymn singing festivals in hopes of encouraging greater congregational involvement in worship.⁸

To be sure, musical education within the church led to an increase of musicality and technical ability among church musicians and the congregations alike. However, author and pastor, A. W. Tozer identified a danger of focusing too heavily on musical education and the development of music programs within the church. In 1948, Tozer wrote, “To great sections of the church the art of worship has been lost entirely, and in its place has come that strange and foreign thing called the ‘program.’ This word has been borrowed from the stage and applied with sad wisdom to the type of public service which now passes for worship among us.”⁹ His early account of worship as entertainment foreshadowed issues of debate in decades to come.

Underhill’s *Worship* (1936) will serve as the first influential work to be examined, for it did much to set the tone for Protestant worship beginning in the 1940s and into the post-war era.¹⁰ As a prolific Anglo-Catholic author, “Underhill was the English language’s most widely read writer on prayer, contemplation, spirituality, worship and mysticism in the first half of the twentieth century.”¹¹ In *Worship*, she explored various strands of Christianity and their worship practices. Her work reflected the state of the worship literature of the time, according to her definition and description of worship. Underhill recognized that worship functioned in a revelation-response format

⁷ Ashton, *Music in Worship*, 93.

⁸ Ashton, *Music in Worship*, 95.

⁹ Dan Lucarini, *Why I Left the Contemporary Christian Music Movement* (Webster, NY: Evangelical, 2002), 63–64 quoting the preface to A. W. Tozer’s *The Pursuit of God* (1948).

¹⁰ Evelyn Underhill, *Worship* (New York: Harper, 1936).

¹¹ Harvey D. Egan, “Evelyn Underhill Revisited,” *The Way* 50, no. 1 (2012): 23.

wherein God initiates worship through the Holy Spirit and we respond in worship to the revelation of his glory. She writes, “That awed conviction of the reality of the Eternal over against us, that awareness of the Absolute . . . is the beginning of all worship.” It “does not and cannot originate in man It is, in fact, a Revelation, proportioned to the capacity of the creature, of something wholly other than our finite selves, and not deducible from our finite experience: the splendor and distinctness of God.”¹²

Additionally, Underhill emphasized the importance and nature of corporate worship in the life of the Christian as it represents “the total orientation of life towards God; expressed both through stylized liturgical action, and spontaneous common praise. Moreover the personal relation to God of the individual—his inner life—is guaranteed and kept in health by his social relation to the organism, the spiritual society, the Church.”¹³ She was aware of the benefits of corporate worship and the accountability it provides, as she stated, “It checks religious egotism, breaks down devotional barriers, obliges the spiritual highbrow to join in the worship of the simple and ignorant, and in general confers all the supporting and disciplinary benefits of family life.”¹⁴

In addition to Underhill’s influential writings, the career and publications of Isham E. Reynolds advanced a philosophy of church music in the 1940s which fostered a desire for increased church music education in seminaries as well as in the local church. Reynolds was the founder of the gospel/sacred music program at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He believed that church music programs should be rooted in biblical doctrine and that the “music should aid in conveying the sentiment expressed in the text.”¹⁵ He advocated for “wholesome” church music rather than secular musical

¹² Underhill, *Worship*, 7.

¹³ Underhill, *Worship*, 84.

¹⁴ Underhill, *Worship*, 84.

¹⁵ Isham E. Reynolds, *Music and the Scriptures* (Nashville: Broadman, 1942), 19, and William J. Reynolds, “I. E. Reynolds: Southern Baptist Church Music Crusader,” *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 25, no. 2 (1983): 81. See also William J. Reynolds “Isham Emmanuel Reynolds: Church Musician,”

styles in worship. According to Reynolds, many in the church believed that “only the light gospel song [was] conducive to spirituality,” and the result was a “cheap and vulgar” music program “made up of rag-time and jazz.”¹⁶

Of the 1930s and 1940s, he wrote, “At the present time, one of the greatest problems confronting the leaders in the average church is the music. As a part of the worship service, it is second in importance only to the minister’s sermon. It is the most lacking when considered from the standpoint of efficiency and adequacy.”¹⁷ Calvin Johansson, author and former professor of music at Evangel College, claims that for Reynolds,

The ideals of church music . . . were no better in 1935 than they were fifty years earlier. The emphasis which American Protestant churches placed on music to ‘Bring them in’ took a turn away from musical integrity in the early stages of the evangelical revival. Poor music . . . has been a weakness of the Free churches. This weakness has never been corrected and church music, so vital at times, has in our age fallen ‘into a sleep from which there is, surely, no prospect of an early awakening.’¹⁸

Thus, Reynolds spent much energy, time, and effort promoting church music education in his role as seminary professor as well as lecturer and committee member at various denominational meetings and conventions. Consistently, he argued that the standards and ideals “for the music programs of the churches are not on par with the . . . standards promoted and maintained for the preaching, teaching, and training. The musical appreciation of the church leadership, musicians included, and the congregation, is too low. Appropriate, practical, and effective music programs are seldom found.”¹⁹ He

Baptist History and Heritage 27, no. 2 (1992): 31–41, and Ellis L. Carnett, “Isham E. Reynolds: God’s Servant in Church Music,” *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 10, no. 2 (1968): 85–93.

¹⁶ Reynolds, “I. E. Reynolds,” 82.

¹⁷ Isham E. Reynolds, *Church Music* (Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1935), 26.

¹⁸ Calvin M. Johansson, “Some Theological Considerations Foundational to a Philosophy of Church Music” (DMA diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1974), 1–2.

¹⁹ Reynolds, *Church Music*, 27.

lamented a deficiency in “intelligent and wholehearted congregational singing,” the proliferation of choirs with “unbalanced voice parts,” and the precision of “unsatisfactory” accompanists.²⁰ He observed, “Today, as never before, emphasis is being placed on the study of music. The public schools have a system of music instruction that includes every grade from the kindergarten through the high school.”²¹ He argued that church leaders needed to obtain a greater appreciation for music through the study of theory and practice, and that church music educational programs should be supported and sustained by the denomination: “There is just one solution. The church leaders, preachers, educational workers, and musicians of the future must be able to promote and maintain programs that will be commensurate with the ideals, standards, and appreciation of the young people of today who will be the adults of tomorrow.”²²

Evangelical Worship and Cultural Changes of the 1950s

As mentioned earlier, the 1950s experienced significant change within evangelical worship. U.S. Christian history scholar and professor, Mark A. Noll recognizes the significance of this decade stating, “The quarter-century or so after the Second World War marked a distinct era in American evangelical history. Convenient boundaries for this period are 1949 (and the first national publicity for Billy Graham) and 1974 (the Graham-sponsored Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization).”²³

The emergence of rock ‘n’ roll in the 1950s elicited strong reactions among evangelicals. For many, rock music was synonymous with juvenile delinquency and considered to be a vile and evil product of secular culture. This music caused “moral

²⁰ Reynolds, *Church Music*, 27.

²¹ Reynolds, *Church Music*, 30.

²² Reynolds, *Church Music*, 29–30 and 32–33.

²³ Mark A. Noll, *American Evangelical Christianity: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 18.

panics” and was seen as a “threat to society.”²⁴ Brian Wren, hymnist and professor emeritus at Columbia Theological Seminary, writes that as rock music began, so did a “chorus of condemnation.”²⁵ And, as Anna Nekola, professor of music at Canadian Mennonite University, claims, “Although published evangelical discourse against rock began in earnest in the late 1960s, there is evidence that evangelicals . . . had begun a larger U.S. campaign against the dangers of rock and roll as early as the late 1950s.”²⁶

The real fear was that music had the power to cause people to sin. Nekola argues that “These critics based their arguments for music’s inherent moral power on popular science, psychology, which they situated into a larger neoplatonic discourse of musical meaning. Music was dangerous . . . because it had the power to affect the body and the mind, but it was most threatening in the way it endangered the institutions of the family, the home, and the church.”²⁷ Critics argued that the “sound itself was inherently evil” and that at the center of “the problem of rock . . . was that rock was a *dangerous music*: rock caused bad behavior because the music itself was bad.” Christians went so far as to attempt to suppress rock ‘n’ roll by creating and engaging in “evangelical discourse” that placed it as “fundamentally outside of and antagonistic to Christianity, and by extension, the Christian American nation. So marked, rock was something that could never be brought into the church.”²⁸

The establishment and growth of the Youth for Christ movement in the 1940s provided a “setting and rationale” for the “transformation of musical tastes among

²⁴ Anna Nekola, “Between this World and the Next: The Musical ‘Worship Wars’ and Evangelical Ideology in the United States 1960–2005” (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2005), 170.

²⁵ Brian Wren, *Praying Twice: The Music and Words of Congregational Song* (Louisville, KY: Westminster, 2000), 134.

²⁶ Nekola, “Between this World and the Next,” 175.

²⁷ Nekola, “Between this World and the Next,” 154.

²⁸ Nekola, “Between this World and the Next,” 150.

American Protestants.”²⁹ This organization was founded in 1945 at a Christian campground in Indiana with Billy Graham serving as its first full-time evangelist. Ralph Carmichael, who directed the music at the 1955 annual YFC convention, used a choir comprised of 500 teenagers and an orchestra of trumpets, trombones, and percussion along with other instruments to perform gospel hymns with “upbeat arrangements and visual effects. At one point the choir sang ‘The Old Rugged Cross’ and formed a huge cross by holding colored cards. At other times colored spotlights swept the stage.”³⁰ While teenagers and YFC directors approved of and enjoyed Carmichael’s musical leadership, he was fired after the his second year because adults in attendance criticized the music labeling it a “Hollywood production.”³¹ However, the first two presidents of YFC “justified upbeat music because it attracted young people and helped them get converted.”³² Billy Graham also spoke out in favor of this musical transition, referencing the upbeat music and stating that “the young people around the world today who are having the best time are the young people who know Jesus Christ.”³³

To be sure, the music and ministry of the Youth for Christ movement greatly impacted church music and surrounding debates in the following decades. Bergler argues that “the musical revolution sparked in part by YFC provoked heated controversy which has not died down. Church music experts accuse the innovators of turning worship into a rock concert, while the innovators accuse the traditionalists of turning worship into a music appreciation class.”³⁴ Fueled in part by the general rise in youth culture, YFC

²⁹ Bergler, “I Found My Thrill,” 123.

³⁰ Bergler, “I Found My Thrill,” 125–26.

³¹ Bergler, “I Found My Thrill,” 126.

³² Bergler, “I Found My Thrill,” 128.

³³ Bergler, “I Found My Thrill,” 128.

³⁴ Bergler, “I Found My Thrill,” 124.

members and leaders helped “legitimate a new pop culture spirituality The revolution in church music must in large part be attributed to their agency.”³⁵ Bergler writes, “In the same era that Fats Domino found his ‘thrill’ on ‘Blueberry Hill’ Christian teenagers at Youth for Christ rallies lobbied for a new musical language in which to express and experience the thrill of knowing Jesus.”³⁶

The Jesus Movement and Worship Philosophy of the 1960s

Worship music of the 1960s was influenced by the baby boomer generation, the emergence of the Jesus Movement, and continuation of the charismatic renewal. The contribution of the Youth for Christ movement from the 1950s coupled with a desire to question tradition and an emphasis on civil rights serve as major factors that shaped worship philosophy and praxis of this decade.

Influenced by war and “unprecedented mobility” the boundaries of “cultural continuity” were weakened allowing the baby boomer generation to be “free to create its own youth culture.”³⁷ Michael Hamilton, history professor at Seattle Pacific University, recognizes the immense influence of this generation on worship style and surrounding debates, writing that “all of the changes that have precipitated our worship wars are in fact part of a long trail of cultural dislocations left behind by that abnormally large generation of Americans we call baby boomers. The baby boom generation was like a supertanker, tied to its cultural wharf by too-small mooring lines.”³⁸ Hamilton argues that this generation reoriented family “around the ideal of self-fulfillment and has done the

³⁵ Bergler, “I Found My Thrill,” 124.

³⁶ Bergler “I Found My Thrill,” 24.

³⁷ Michael S. Hamilton, “The Triumph of the Praise Songs: How Guitars Beat Out the Organ in the Worship Wars,” in *Worship at the Next Level: Insight from Contemporary Voices*, ed. Tim A. Dearborn and Scott Coil (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 77.

³⁸ Hamilton, “The Triumph of the Praise Songs,” 76–77.

same with religion.”³⁹ Additionally, he claims that generation’s church attendance, regardless of denominational affiliation, occurred not out of a sense of duty, obligation, or tradition, but out of self-benefit. Connecting the push toward self-fulfillment and the deemphasis of tradition to musical taste, Hamilton states that this generation “that sought its youthful identity in music searches for its religious identity in music as well.”⁴⁰ As such, “music for baby boomers is the mediator of emotions, the carrier of dreams, and the marker of social location. It is therefore bound to be an integral part of baby boomers’ connection to the eternal truth of life in God. Therefore, in worship and music, the received tradition could not be allowed to stand unaltered.”⁴¹

The influence of baby boomers on worship of the 1960s is highlighted by Swee Hong Lim and Lester Ruth. They write, “To choose a style of music was a way of declaring what your values were All contemporary worshipers have thought ‘I must sing my music.’”⁴² In addition to desiring “their music” in worship, baby boomers believed music was a tool to draw people in and to prepare them to hear and respond to the sermon. Hamilton claims, “music is treated essentially as a propaganda tool and therefore has to be immediately accessible to make people ‘feel good,’ and thereby preconditioned to receive the message we have for them to hear. Worship in many churches is a one-dimensional ‘happening’ in the present tense.”⁴³ One might ask, could this apply to more recent generations, too?

Out of the baby boomer generation of the 1960s emerged the Jesus Movement

³⁹ Hamilton, “The Triumph of the Praise Songs,” 77.

⁴⁰ Hamilton, “The Triumph of the Praise Songs,” 77.

⁴¹ Hamilton, “The Triumph of the Praise Songs,” 77.

⁴² Swee Hong Lim and Lester Ruth, *Lovin on Jesus: A Concise History of Contemporary Worship* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2017), 19–20.

⁴³ Robin A. Leaver, “Liturgical Music as Anamnesis,” in *Liturgy and Music*, ed. Robin A. Leaver and Joyce Ann Zimmerman (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1998), 396–97.

(or the Jesus People movement) originating primarily at Calvary Chapel in Costa Mesa, California.⁴⁴ This movement was largely comprised of “white, middle-class ‘teenagers’ with mainline and evangelical church backgrounds who adopted the spiritual hippie chic as a middle group between the radical [secular] counterculture and the overly cautious and often inflexible traditions of their home denominations.”⁴⁵ Monique Ingalls, author and professor of music at Baylor University, writes, “while rejecting many of the ideological currents and moral values that characterized the broader 1960s counterculture, participants in the Jesus Movement . . . adopted styles of dress, language, music, and even alternative institutions from that very counterculture.”⁴⁶ She also notes that by the end of the 1960s, “Jesus Movement-related institutions included newspapers, coffee houses and movement-friendly campus ministries, churches, and communes.” According to Lim and Ruth, the music of the Jesus People movement served as “a critical source for music in the early stages of contemporary worship. . . . As in its cultural counterpart (the late 1960s hippie subculture), this movement created new worship that reflected the sound and spirit of pop music at that time.”⁴⁷

The music of the Jesus Movement falls into two categories: “message songs” and “praise songs.” Message songs focused on the conversion of unbelievers and were geared toward those present at the worship gathering. Praise songs or choruses “consisted of either short devotional lyrics addressed directly to God or of settings of short passages of Scripture. . . . Praise songs were intended for communal singing.”⁴⁸ For example, “Little

⁴⁴ Lim and Ruth, *Lovin on Jesus*, 20. See also Monique Marie Ingalls, “Awesome in this Place: Sound, Space, and Identity in Contemporary North American Evangelical Worship” (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2008), 55–56.

⁴⁵ Nekola, “Between this World and the Next,” 127.

⁴⁶ Ingalls, “Awesome in this Place,” 55–56.

⁴⁷ Lim and Ruth, *Lovin on Jesus*, 60.

⁴⁸ Ingalls, “Awesome in this Place,” 60–61.

Country Church,” a popular song on the first Jesus music recording in 1971, is considered a message song due to its textual and musical representation of “folk ideology” and its “simplicity and truth-telling.”⁴⁹ Part of its text reads, “They’re talkin’ ‘bout revival and the need for love; That little church has come alive; Workin’ with each other for the common good; Puttin’ all the past aside; Long hair, short hair, some coats and ties.”⁵⁰ However, “Father I Adore You” serves as an example of a praise chorus with its short and repetitive text directed to each person of the Godhead.⁵¹

Another significant influence on worship of this decade is seen in the charismatic renewal movement or Pentecostalism that began in the 1950s and coincided with the Jesus Movement in the 1960s.⁵² The emergence of Pentecostalism in the United States is often associated with the Azusa Street revival in Los Angeles in 1906, led by an African American Holiness preacher, William Seymour.⁵³ This movement centered on people’s experience with the Holy Spirit, speaking in tongues, singing in the Spirit, and a rejection of formal liturgies.⁵⁴ However, Seymour’s central message was “Try to get people saved.”⁵⁵ The effect of this movement on worship, according to Lim and Ruth,

⁴⁹ Ingalls, “Awesome in this Place,” 59–60.

⁵⁰ Ingalls, “Awesome in this Place,” 59.

⁵¹ Ingalls, “Awesome in this Place,” 61–62.

⁵² James F. White, *Christian Worship in North America: A Retrospective, 1955–1995* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1997), 130. White notes that while the charismatic movement originated at the beginning of the 20th century “among the culturally dispossessed” it grew dramatically during the 1960s. See also Randall Stephens, “Pentecostalism and Popular Culture in Britain and America from the Early Twentieth Century to the 1970s,” in *Secularization and Religious Innovation in the North Atlantic World*, ed. by David Hempton and Hugh McLeod (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 192.

⁵³ Joe Creech, “Visions of Glory: The Place of the Azusa Street Revival in Pentecostal History,” *Church History* 65, no. 3 (1996): 405. See also Lim and Ruth, *Lovin on Jesus*, 17.

⁵⁴ Stephen Dove, “Hymnody and Liturgy in the Azusa Street Revival,” *Pneuma* 31 (2009), 248–49. According to Dove, singing in the spirit, like speaking in tongues, is connected to the baptism of the Holy Spirit, often occurs spontaneously, and could be done by an individual singer or the entire congregation.

⁵⁵ Grant McClung, ed., *Azusa Street and Beyond* (Alachua, FL: Bridge-Logos), 1 and 4.

“was a liturgical tradition that was expressive and exuberant.”⁵⁶ Pentecostalism experienced periods of “internal renewal” as the first half of the twentieth century was a “period for building momentum, which would mushroom after World War II” with the Latter Rain Movement (1948).⁵⁷ And, following rector Dennis Bennett’s experience of speaking in tongues in 1960, the charismatic movement began.⁵⁸ According to theologian and missionary C. Peter Wagner, “the greatest growth for Pentecostals, joined by the charismatics in 1960, has come in the latter half of the century.”⁵⁹

The impact of the charismatic renewal on the worship context and culture of the 1960s and beyond has been significant. Lim and Ruth highlight the importance of this movement on contemporary worship: “Pentecostalism’s shaping of contemporary worship has been both through its own internal developments and through an influencing of other Protestants in worship piety and practices.”⁶⁰ Physical expression and emotional intensity in worship serve as two primary areas of impact on both contemporary worship and evangelicalism. Lim and Ruth write, “Contemporary worshippers with hands raised and faces lifted should thank the Pentecostal teachers whose work noting the physicality of biblical words for worship established a sense of the propriety for such expressiveness.”⁶¹ Emotional intensity “is what leads to the outward physical expression. Whether expressed as intimacy or passion, intensity became the sought after goal in

⁵⁶ Lim and Ruth, *Lovin on Jesus*, 17.

⁵⁷ C. Peter Wagner, “Church Growth,” in *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, ed. Stanley M. Burgess, Gary B. McGee, and Patrick H. Alexander (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), 180–195, quoted in McClung, *Azusa Street and Beyond*, 11. See also Lim and Ruth, *Lovin on Jesus*, 17. For more on the Latter Rain Movement, see Richard Riss, “The Latter Rain Movement of 1948,” *Pneuma* 4, no. 1 (1982): 32–45.

⁵⁸ Don Fanning, “Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements,” *Trends and Issues in Missions* (2009): 8. Accessed April 8, 2020. https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/cgm_missions/7/.

⁵⁹ Wagner, quoted in McClung, *Azusa Street and Beyond*, 11.

⁶⁰ Lim and Ruth, *Lovin on Jesus*, 17–18.

⁶¹ Lim and Ruth, *Lovin on Jesus*, 17–18.

contemporary worship.”⁶²

In addition to the physical expression of worship brought about by the charismatic movement, Nekola highlights the musical influence of this movement noting that “despite both the secular and religious opposition to rock music,” the charismatic renewal along with the Jesus People Movement, opened the door for the music and counterculture of the 1960s to enter the evangelical church.⁶³

The civil rights movement also created opportunity for cultural events and changes to impact the music of the church during the 1960s. Known as the father of gospel music, Thomas Dorsey “crossed from blues to gospel” combining sacred texts with blues tunes as early as the 1930s.⁶⁴ This mingling of genres continued and culminated with the music of the civil rights movement. Lim and Ruth note that “within the civil rights movement came protest songs that had roots in the black music of jazz, folk, rhythm and blues as well as gospel. Such genres readily migrated between worship and civil rights movement rallies.”⁶⁵ Gospel singer, songwriter, and pastor Andraé Crouch, like Dorsey before him, “crossed between both sacred-secular genres of music making and also between the genres of gospel and songs for contemporary worship.”⁶⁶ For example, the first song Crouch wrote, “The Blood Will Never Lose Its Power,” incorporated a rhythm section of drums, bass guitar, electric organ, and vibraphone, and a “call and response vocal line” revealing the “influence of black gospel music culture” on

⁶² Lim and Ruth, *Lovin on Jesus*, 17–18.

⁶³ Nekola, “Between this World and the Next,” 181.

⁶⁴ Lim and Ruth, *Lovin on Jesus*, 67. See also, Lewis V. Baldwin, review of *The Rise of Gospel Blues: The Music of Thomas Andrew Dorsey in the Urban Church*, by Michael W. Harris, *Church History* 64, no. 4 (1995): 717.

⁶⁵ Lim and Ruth, *Lovin on Jesus*, 67. Examples of songs listed by Lim and Ruth include “We Shall Not Be Moved,” “Go Tell it on the Mountain,” and “We Shall Overcome.”

⁶⁶ Lim and Ruth, *Lovin on Jesus*, 67.

the development of “African American contemporary worship.”⁶⁷

With the changes in worship praxis of the 1960s came the development and implementation of worship philosophy voiced by authors including pastor, composer, and musicologist, Eric Routley⁶⁸; and pastor and theologian, A. W. Tozer.⁶⁹ Routley produced several books on church music in which he offered a picture of the worship philosophy of the time. In *Words, Music, and the Church* (1968) he addressed the inclusion of contemporary music in worship services. He claimed,

The church is now being confronted by many forms of music which seem alien to its long-standing traditions. There are advocates of jazz, of “pop” music, of electronic music, the twelve-tone music In all such cases controversy of a kind follows on the question whether these alien forms are legitimate.⁷⁰

He recognized the importance of discernment when considering appropriate musical style for worship noting that, regardless of style, the music must be “good.” He argued that the “one judgment that we need to make about church music is that it is good if it really is music. Let music be in the world in the same sense that the church is and that Christ is in the world. Music is subject to only one moral law—it is required to be. Defect in music, as in the church, is . . . the absence of good where good ought to be.”⁷¹ To say it another way, music that is not “good” or of appropriate quality has no place in worship. This idea

⁶⁷ Lim and Ruth, *Lovin on Jesus*, 67.

⁶⁸ Eric Routley, *Words, Music and the Church* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1968). This book was born out of a series of lectures in which he presents historical interpretations of music from the romantic and twentieth-century forms and pedagogy of music and applies them to the history of church music centering on the then current church music style debates amidst the rising tensions of hymns and traditional music versus contemporary, secular-sounding styles such as jazz, pop, and folk song. Other publications by Routley include *Twentieth-Century Church Music* (London: Herbert Jenkins, 1964), *The Church and Music* (Ann Arbor, MI: Duckworth, 1950), and *Church Music and the Christian Faith* (Carol Stream, IL: Agape, 1978).

⁶⁹ A. W. Tozer, *Whatever Happened to Worship?* edited by Gerald B. Smith (Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications, 1985); *Worship: The Missing Jewel* (Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications, 1992). These works originated as sermons during the 1960s and were published posthumously in book form.

⁷⁰ Eric Routley, *Words, Music and the Church* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1968), 108.

⁷¹ Routley, *Words, Music and the Church*, 206–7.

can be applied to aesthetics of style and genre as well as performance and preparation. Additionally, Routley encouraged the church to consider and weigh the quality of the various “new” styles of church music, writing that “Music-making in the church will suffocate in its own feather bed if music-makers in a church context are content to be a community of internal congratulation.”⁷²

Tozer’s sermons offered a theology of worship representative of the 1960s worship context. He argued that a “true fear of God” was worship, that worship was God-initiated through the Holy Spirit, and that the purpose of our existence was to worship God.⁷³ Additionally, for Tozer, worship was more than an action or offering. Rather, he claimed, “True worship of God must be a constant and consistent attitude or state of mind within the believer.”⁷⁴ And finally, Tozer taught that worship that pleases God comes from total surrender. He argued, “We please [God] most, not by frantically trying to make ourselves good, but by throwing ourselves into His arms with all our imperfections and believing that He understands everything—and loves us still.”⁷⁵

The philosophies of worship and music held by Routley and Tozer are important points of consideration and application for worship today. Routley encouraged the church to be open to new musical styles. However, through his emphasis on quality, the church can safeguard against a “new is best” pitfall. In his view, only high-quality music is appropriate for worship. Additionally, Tozer’s understanding that worship is God-initiated and must be an all-of-life action and attitude on the part of the believer remains a pertinent aspect of biblical worship.

⁷² Routley, 221–22.

⁷³ Tozer, *Whatever Happened to Worship*, 33, 45, 56.

⁷⁴ Tozer, *Whatever Happened to Worship*, 24. Harold Best incorporated this philosophy in his second book, *Unceasing Worship* which is expounded upon in chap. 5 of this dissertation. Stephen F. Winward, *The Reformation of our Worship* (London: Carey Kingsgate, 1964) also echoes the all-of-life worship.

⁷⁵ Tozer, *Whatever Happened to Worship*, 29.

The Praise and Worship Movement of the 1970s and 1980s

The Jesus Movement and charismatic renewal continued to thrive and gain momentum well into the 1970s as their music (Jesus music) entered local churches across the U.S. and emerged in the recording industry. Ingalls writes, “By the early 1970s, Jesus music was an established regional phenomenon, and new songs were produced and disseminated locally via recordings and concert tours.”⁷⁶ Additionally, she recognizes that “new praise choruses had been birthed by the youth of the West Coast Christian counterculture,” but the “evangelical youth” from the “North American heartland” served as the agent that brought the Jesus Movement influences from the “coastal charismatic margins” to “‘mainstream’ evangelical denominations.”⁷⁷

In the early 1970s, Calvary Chapel started Maranatha! Music to bring this new Jesus music into local churches. According to Hamilton, this music “soon acquired a new name—‘praise and worship’—but it began as baptized rock ‘n’ roll.”⁷⁸ Maranatha! released nearly thirty albums between 1971 and 1977. Although praise choruses were still a “phenomenon relegated to evangelical youth and to certain charismatic congregations” in the late 1970s, Ingalls notes that “institutions were quietly changing . . . paving the way for this repertory’s increased visibility and importance” during the 1980s.⁷⁹ She writes, “As the teenaged and college-aged youth of the 1960s–1970s grew, their desire to sing Christian-themed contemporary music in church did not abate.”⁸⁰

Following the founding of Maranatha! Music, other Christian recording labels and music publishing companies emerged. Mercy Publishing began in 1984 by the

⁷⁶ Ingalls, “Awesome in this Place,” 66–67.

⁷⁷ Ingalls, “Awesome in this Place,” 67.

⁷⁸ Hamilton, “The Triumph of the Praise Songs,” 81. See also Lim and Ruth, *Lovin on Jesus*, 64.

⁷⁹ Ingalls, “Awesome in this Place,” 71.

⁸⁰ Ingalls, “Awesome in this Place,” 71.

Vineyard Christian Fellowship, a group who had split from Calvary Chapel two years earlier.⁸¹ Vineyard Fellowship churches employed a new format for worship services which included a thirty to forty minutes block of music at the beginning of the service.⁸² The next year, as Ingalls notes, “Integrity’s Hosanna Music, the first major recording label and publisher of contemporary worship songs in the eastern United States” was founded.⁸³ This company started as a “direct-to-consumer subscription service” through the “independent charismatic” Covenant Church in Mobile, Alabama. Ingalls claims that “many of the practices associated with charismatic worship began to crop up in non-charismatic evangelical churches—so much so that by the late 1980s some were writing of the ‘pentecostalization’ of evangelicalism.”⁸⁴

As the Christian music industry gained momentum and the praise and worship movement continued to rise, emphasis on musical style remained a point of great importance, and at times great contention.⁸⁵ Routley recognizes this as he states, “All music stands in and is nourished by a tradition. In church music this point is even more obvious. Church music is doubly under tradition—the tradition of the church and the

⁸¹ For a detailed account of Vineyard’s development, progression, and impact within contemporary worship, see Andy Park, Lester Ruth, and Cindy Rethmeier, *Worshipping with the Anaheim Vineyard: The Emergence of Contemporary Worship* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017).

⁸² Ingalls, “Awesome in this Place,” 79–80.

⁸³ Ingalls, “Awesome in this Place,” 80.

⁸⁴ Ingalls, 97. See also Deborah Smith Pollard, “Praise is what we Do: The Rise of Praise and Worship Music in the Black Church in the US,” in *Christian Congregational Music: Performance, Identity, and Experience*, edited by Monique Ingalls, Carolyn Landau, and Tom Wagoner (Surrey, ENG: 2013), 38–39 for more on the development of the contemporary Christian music industry and the praise and worship movement.

⁸⁵ It should be noted that singer and songwriter Graham Kendrick has significantly contributed to contemporary worship in the United States. Spearheading the intersection between American and British contemporary worship music. He began writing prolifically in the 1970s and by the 1990s his songs topped charts in the United States leading the way for the Christian music British invasion. A hallmark of his writing is a clear theological message and among the best known of his massive output is “Shine, Jesus, Shine.” For more on Kendrick’s impact see Lim and Ruth, Lovin on Jesus, 74–75.

tradition of music.”⁸⁶ He claims that the quality of church music during the 1970s was lacking due to the constraints placed on church musicians. He states, “It is clear that the church musician is under limitations which do not beset the secular musicians. These [boundaries] need not be disturbing or discouraging. They are the kind of [restrictions] we all experience when in the company of people we do not know very well.”⁸⁷ This situation, Routley claims, is often that of the musician “when writing for the church.”⁸⁸

Worship Literature of the 1970s and 1980s

Changes in worship music effect and are reflected in the worship philosophies of the 1970s and 1980s. The writings of Calvin Johansson, Paul Waitman Hoon, Vic Delamont, and Donald P. Hustad represent the prominent worship philosophies within evangelicalism during these decades. Major themes expressed in these examples include the role and function of the music minister, music-style debates, and definitions of worship.

Calvin Johansson

Calvin Johansson, former music minister and professor of music at Evangel College, has written on the state of arts within the church, roles and responsibilities of music ministers, and the importance of discipleship in worship philosophy and praxis. Advocating for the arts in the church Johansson states, “God gave man responsibilities to fulfill in the artistic realm...for art, under God, has a place in our world.”⁸⁹ He also provides instruction for the church musician to ground their art on a theological base in order to avoid idolatry. He writes, “If theology is to be the foundation of our value

⁸⁶ Routley, *Church Music and the Christian Faith*, 88.

⁸⁷ Routley, *Church Music and the Christian Faith*, 89.

⁸⁸ Routley, *Church Music and the Christian Faith*, 89.

⁸⁹ Calvin M. Johansson, “Some Theological Considerations Foundational to the Development of a Philosophy of Church Music” (DMA diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1974), 61.

system, we should expect that the musician's regard for his art cannot by definition become idolatrous . . . His means will be determined by his theological presuppositions."⁹⁰ Ultimately, he argues that the church musician "will not bow at the shrine of success. There will be no conflict between artistry, spirituality, and methodology."⁹¹

Johansson ties his philosophy of art and worship to the doctrine of creation arguing, "In our use of the gifts God has given us, we are participating in the ongoing creation of one's self and the world We are his servants. As such we allow God to work through us as we fulfill our responsibility in being channels of His creativity."⁹² Additionally, Johansson builds his philosophy of worship on the image of God in humankind, biblical stewardship, and the doctrines of the incarnation and resurrection. He states, "The Church musician, then, is responsible for music that sets forth the *imago Dei* to the world. In this way he is showing care for his neighbor and is fulfilling the great commission. This imaging can only be carried out when his music exhibits creativity, integrity and care in performance, for the *imago Dei* is shown through."⁹³

Worship as an all-of-life activity and state of mind is another prominent theme in Johansson's writing. Similar to the argument put forth by Best (expounded upon in chapter 5), Johansson recognizes that for the Christian there is no sacred or secular division, but that all of life is viewed in light of Christ. He writes, "'Sacred' and 'secular' are not qualities of things; they are qualities of relationship orientation For the Christian, then, life in its entirety is sacred. He has no compartments; his work, his

⁹⁰ Calvin M. Johansson, *Music and Ministry: A Biblical Counterpart* (Peabody, PA: Hendrickson, 1984), 7.

⁹¹ Johansson, *Music and Ministry*, 7.

⁹² Johansson, "Some Theological Considerations," 190.

⁹³ Johansson, *Music and Ministry*, 21.

recreation, his relationships, his art, and his music are seen through the life in Christ.”⁹⁴

In his understanding of the responsibility of the music minister, Johansson emphasizes the importance of biblical doctrine. He claims, “The minister of music in his important task of choosing music must take into consideration the theological implications of that which he does. Choosing good music is not a matter of aestheticism. It is a matter of allowing biblical doctrine to speak in terms of music.”⁹⁵ The music minister as well as the church musician, according to Johansson, must employ biblical stewardship of the gifts and talents God has given them. He states, “Faithful stewardship, utilizing to the maximum the gifts each possesses, is the measure of success which should concern a musician in the pastoral ministry. We are called to develop and to give the best of what we have.”⁹⁶ Furthermore, Johansson argues that the Christian musician will be held accountable for how they use their gifts. He writes, “The musician then is called to give the best he has which, though never objectively good enough for God, is acceptable as the just fruit of his ability.”⁹⁷

Johansson’s preference for traditional church music—even Gregorian chant—is evident in a later book *Discipling Music Ministry: Twenty-first Century Directions* (1992).⁹⁸ Here he argues that “producing music which is pleasure driven, pop-oriented, and shallow [propels] the downward slide of our solipsistic society. Six hundred years in the making, culture’s swing from theocentricity to anthropocentricity must be resisted.”⁹⁹ His aversion to popular or contemporary musical styles in worship is rooted in the

⁹⁴ Johansson, *Music and Ministry*, 64.

⁹⁵ Johansson, “Some Theological Considerations,” 110.

⁹⁶ Johansson, *Music and Ministry*, 80. This is another central theme of Best’s writing addressed in detail in chap. 5 of this dissertation.

⁹⁷ Johansson, *Music and Ministry*, 80.

⁹⁸ Calvin M. Johansson, *Discipling Music Ministry: Twenty-first Century Directions* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1992).

⁹⁹ Johansson, *Discipling Music Ministry*, 164–65.

rejection of musical amorality which sharply opposes Best's philosophy (expounded upon in chapter 5).

Paul Waitman Hoon and Vic Delamont

Minister and author, Paul Waitman Hoon also presents a theology of music ministry of the 1970s in his book *The Integrity of Worship: Ecumenical and Pastoral Studies in Liturgical Theology* (1971).¹⁰⁰ In this work, he advocates for the importance of the relationship between Christian education and worship for the congregation's edification.¹⁰¹ He writes,

Many congregations—and many Christian educators for that matter—seem unaware of both the educative power of liturgy and the seminal meaning liturgy holds for education. Education, rather, is thought of as confined to the church school classroom or as something that comes chiefly through involvement in mission and in life situations; and the relation of these to liturgy is not realized. It is not understood that without worship “Christian education has no heart, for here is the center of participation in Christ's invitation to join God's mission.”¹⁰²

In an attempt to understand the intent behind worship reform during the 1970s, Hoon argues that the motives behind each side of debate were set on doing what was best for the church. He writes, “History can profitably teach us here: authentic liturgical reform has always been undertaken by people fundamentally concerned for the Church and her mission, even though claims of culture and the needs of their generation were prominent in their minds.”¹⁰³

Vic Delamont, author and minister, presents a philosophy of church music and ministry leading into the 1980s in his book *The Ministry and Music of the Church*

¹⁰⁰ Paul Waitman Hoon, *The Integrity of Worship: Ecumenical and Pastoral Studies in Liturgical Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1971).

¹⁰¹ Hoon, *The Integrity of Worship*, 29.

¹⁰² Hoon, *The Integrity of Worship*, 29.

¹⁰³ Hoon, *The Integrity of Worship*, 33.

(1980).¹⁰⁴ In it he offers a definition of worship, a formula for ministerial success, and an explanation of the role and responsibility of the music minister. Delamont defines worship as “giving to God the glory, praise, honor, and thanks due Him, both for who He is and for what He has done.”¹⁰⁵ Recognizing that glorifying God is man’s chief goal, he uses this as the foundation for his philosophy of music and ministry. He writes, “The glory of God must be the basis of the philosophy of ministry in music or anything else. Music must not degenerate into a manipulating device—that is, a tool to achieve other ends—by the control of people’s emotions, for instance.”¹⁰⁶ Additionally, he claims that a successful music ministry must include evangelism and discipleship.¹⁰⁷

In his description of the qualifications for the music minister, Delamont presents two categories: personal qualifications and functional qualifications. First, personal qualifications for a minister of music include above all “love for God, His Word, and the church.” This manifests itself as his “love for music; a sense of mission; a personal philosophy” based on scripture; cooperative attitude, dependability, emotional stability and social maturity, “a bent towards both professional and personal growth in his ministry and in his life.”¹⁰⁸ Second, functional qualifications include “musical expertise” and experience, “competence as a music historian,” and “training in Christian education, theology, administration, as well as in music.” Additionally, the music minister should employ “conducting skills,” an “understanding of electronic sound systems, a sensitivity

¹⁰⁴ Vic Delamont, *The Music and Ministry of the Church* (Chicago: Moody, 1980).

¹⁰⁵ Delamont, *The Music and Ministry of the Church*, 15.

¹⁰⁶ Delamont, *The Music and Ministry of the Church*, 15. Delamont’s argument that music should not manipulate emotions in worship connects to Best’s idea that music is not an aid or tool for worship. Rather, it is an offering of worship. Attempting to use music in a manipulative way may lead people to mistakenly assume that music invites the presence of God (a position that Best strongly argues against).

¹⁰⁷ Delamont, *The Music and Ministry of the Church*, 15.

¹⁰⁸ Delamont, *The Music and Ministry of the Church*, 15.

to good poetry, and to good hymn and anthem texts.”¹⁰⁹

Donald P. Hustad

Donald P. Hustad, former professor of church music at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, was arguably the leading evangelical author on both worship leadership and philosophy before Best. In his impactful work, *Jubilate* (1981) used widely as a church music textbook in the 1980s, Hustad argued that music is a gift of God to be used for his glory and to edify his people; that music is functional art used by people for the purposes of God in his church; and that worship should be holistic involving the mind, body, emotion, and will.¹¹⁰ Hustad intended the second edition of this work, *Jubilate II: Church Music in Worship and Renewal* (1993), to be a guide for worship leaders entering the twenty-first century. This revised edition, released at the height of the worship wars, contained many insights that point decades into the future. He encouraged worship leaders at the turn of the century to “communication renewal” so that they could develop “a continually-open attitude about music styles.”¹¹¹ When music styles are approached with an open mind, Hustad argued, people could worship more fully: the older generation could recognize that their traditional music preferences would not “suffice for their children and grandchildren.” And the younger generation could learn to find meaning in “singing the gospel songs with their parents.” The significance of *Jubilate* and *Jubilate II* is found in Hustad’s engagement with both sides of the music style debates without declaring a winner. An early and significant step out of the worship

¹⁰⁹ Delamont, *The Music and Ministry of the Church*, 15. For more on the responsibility of the full-time music minister of 1970s and 1980s see Gordon MacDonald, “To Find a Worship Leader: The Essential Traits of that Most Difficult Role,” *Leadership* 23, no. 2 (2002): 83–84.

¹¹⁰ Donald P. Hustad, *Jubilate! Church Music in the Evangelical Tradition* (Carol Stream, IL: Hope Publishing, 1981).

¹¹¹ Donald P. Hustad, *Jubilate II: Church Music in Worship and Renewal* (Carol Stream, IL: Hope Publishing, 1993), 545–46.

wars, his aim was “true renewal” that would transform the “lives of individual believers.”¹¹²

In his final work, *True Worship* (2000) Hustad examined the history and “prevailing cultural realities” of various areas of “God’s truth.”¹¹³ He advocated for the employment of a plurality of musical styles in corporate worship arguing that praise and worship music should not “constitute our *only* singing.”¹¹⁴ By increasing the breadth of musical tastes, Hustad argued (as in *Jubilate II*), that Christians “mature in [their] expressions of worship, [and] in so doing [are able] to worship with [those from other generations].”¹¹⁵ Furthermore, Hustad employed a similar aesthetic philosophy to Best regarding the Christian artist’s responsibility to pursue excellence.¹¹⁶

Worship Literature of the 1990s through c. 2018

Following Hustad’s work in the 1980s, evangelical worship literature exploded in the 1990s and continues to be prevalently published. In addition to Harold Best, key authors of this literature include Robert Webber, Marva Dawn, John Frame, John Witvliet, Bob Kauflin, and others. As the 1990s progressed, worship style debates as a central theme decreased and worship planning and design became a more prominent theme in worship literature. An overview of the works of the key figures listed above provides a general and representative account of the direction and development of worship literature as Best entered the scene and beyond.

¹¹² Hustad, *Jubilate II*, 547.

¹¹³ Donald P. Hustad, *True Worship: Reclaiming the Wonder and Majesty* (Carol Stream, IL: Hope Publishing, 1998), 27.

¹¹⁴ Hustad, *True Worship*, 131. Plurality of musical styles includes both traditional hymns and gospel songs as well as contemporary worship songs. The categories Hustad lists are classical music, traditional church music, folk music adapted for worship, and contemporary or popular church music. See Hustad, *True Worship*, 195–97.

¹¹⁵ Hustad, *True Worship*, 185.

¹¹⁶ Best’s aesthetic philosophy is addressed in chap. 5 of this dissertation.

Robert Webber (1933–2007), founder of the Institute for Worship Studies in Jacksonville, Florida, and general editor of the highly significant *Complete Library of Christian Worship* (1994) was one of Best’s two most influential contemporaries in worship scholarship and theological education from the mid 1990s until his death in 2007. He authored several books including *Worship: Old and New* (1994)¹¹⁷ and *Ancient-Future Worship* (2008) in which he argued that biblical worship “remembers God’s work in the past, anticipates God’s rule over all creation, and actualizes both past and future in the present to transform persons, communities and the world.”¹¹⁸ Additionally, he advocated for traditional liturgy and argued that the success of contemporary worship could be a major revitalization of historic liturgy.

In contrast, Marva Dawn argued passionately for a return to strictly historic liturgical worship in *Reaching Out without Dumbing Down* (1995). Dawn became one of the first leading authors to take a hard stand against the contemporary worship movement and its music while advocating for a rich theological and biblical substance in corporate worship. She argues that contemporary worship music is used as a church growth strategy, is superficial or weak theological content in its lyrics, and is too performance and entertainment focused. Dawn’s musical and liturgical philosophy permeated the conversations between Best and his contemporaries as she sought to return the evangelical church’s focus to the transformative nature of worship and to the spiritual formation and community engagement of the congregation.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ Robert Webber, *Worship Old and New: A Biblical, Historical, and Practical Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994).

¹¹⁸ Robert Webber, *Ancient-Future Worship: Proclaiming and Enacting God’s Narrative* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 43.

¹¹⁹ Marva Dawn, *Reaching Out without Dumbing Down: A Theology of Worship for this Urgent Time* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995).

John Frame's *Contemporary Worship Music: A Biblical Defense* (1997) was released as a rebuttal to Dawn's arguments. In this work, Frame claimed that contemporary worship music was valuable, could be theologically rich and biblical, and should be used in worship. Like Hustad, he advocated for unity in the midst of the worship wars.¹²⁰

Following the conversations on worship style in the 1990s, at the turn of the millennium, music style debate largely declined in evangelical worship literature. Instead, a focus on the role and function of the worship pastor, gospel-centered worship structure, and worship as an all-of-life encompassing act and attitude became the prevalent topics.¹²¹ Best's *Unceasing Worship* influenced and served as one of the main starting points for this new direction of worship literature.

John Witvliet's *Worship Seeking Understanding: Windows into Christian Practice* (2003), published the same year as Best's *Unceasing Worship*, worked to connect the realms of worship theology and practice.¹²² This academic and interdisciplinary approach did not seek to defend or dispute the superiority of any preferred musical or worship style, but encouraged the pastoral aspect of worship leadership.

James K. A. Smith built upon and extended Best's argument that worship is a continuous outpouring—that as human beings we always worship something. In *Desiring*

¹²⁰ John M. Frame, *Contemporary Worship Music: A Biblical Defense* (Philipsburg, NJ: P and R, 1997).

¹²¹ For examples of literature emphasizing the structure of worship gatherings see Constance Cherry, *The Worship Architect: A Blueprint for Designing Culturally Relevant and Biblically Faithful Services* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010). Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Worship: Letting the Gospel Shape Our Practice* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009). Additionally, Gregory Brewton, *A Guide to Worship Ministry: The Worship Minister's Life and Work* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2018) offers a helpful section on the various structures to worship.

¹²² John Witvliet, *Worship Seeking Understanding: Windows into Christian Practice* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003). Other books by Witvliet include Witvliet, *So You've Been Asked to Plan Worship* (Grand Rapids: Creative Commons, 1999); and Witvliet, *Biblical Psalms in Christian Worship: A Brief Introduction and Guide to Resources* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007).

the Kingdom (2009) Smith argues that we are shaped by liturgies (either sacred or secular), that we must heighten our awareness to the effect of secular liturgies, and that we must make sure that our worship is intentionally liturgical, formational, and pedagogical.¹²³

Songwriter Bob Kauflin, director of Sovereign Grace Music and music spokesman of that denomination, a prominent conference speaker, a worship leader since 2000, and an author, incorporates aspects of Best's philosophy in his ministry-oriented books for training worship pastors, *Worship Matters* (2008) and *True Worshippers* (2015). Kauflin's main premises are that the role of the worship leader is to magnify the greatness of God, increase the desire for glorifying Christ, and encourage the congregation to share the Gospel and enjoy and savor time with God on earth in anticipation of eternity. Following Best's ideas, he argues that skill is necessary and important, but should never substitute for worship.¹²⁴

Matt Boswell and Zac Hicks are notable among the new generation of worship leaders who have written non-academic, practical, ministerial guides to worship ministry. Boswell's *Doxology and Theology* (2013)¹²⁵ and Hicks's *The Worship Pastor* (2016)¹²⁶ represent the recent shift in the worship literature that focuses on the role of the worship leader and the balance between musical and pastoral skills and responsibilities.

Monique Ingalls, Church Music professor at Baylor University, has become the leader of a new wave of worship scholarship combining theological analysis and

¹²³James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009).

¹²⁴Bob Kauflin, *Worship Matters* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008). See also Kauflin, *True Worshippers: Seeking What Matters to God* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015).

¹²⁵ Matt Boswell, *Doxology and Theology* (Nashville: B&H, 2013).

¹²⁶ Zac Hicks, *The Worship Pastor: A Call to Ministry for Worship Leaders and Teams* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016). See also, Steven D. Brooks, *Worship Quest: An Exploration of Worship Leadership* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2015) for more on the responsibility of the worship leader.

ethnomusicological theoretical frameworks and methodologies beginning with her influential Ph.D. dissertation “Awesome in this Place: Sound, Space, and Identity in Contemporary North American Evangelical Worship” (2008).¹²⁷ She investigates aspects of identity, community, and spiritual formation in both evangelical worship song and practice in the U.S. in a host of subsequent publications up through her most recent book, *Singing the Congregation: How Contemporary Worship Music Forms Evangelical Community* (2018).¹²⁸ In addition to her publications, her work as a PhD dissertation advisor at Baylor expands her influence through the work of her students. Ingalls’ impact extends further as co-founder of the biennial international conference “Christian Congregational Music: Local and Global Perspectives.”¹²⁹

Additionally, Lester Ruth and Swee Hong Lim have contributed significantly to the scholarly conversation with their co-authored book, *Lovin’ On Jesus* (2017), a ground-breaking, detailed but succinct history of the contemporary worship movement and currently the authoritative single work on the subject.¹³⁰ This publication deals with the historical and cultural development of contemporary worship—including time, space, prayer, and preaching—as well as the musical aspects of the movement.

Conclusion

The developments in worship philosophy, literature, and practice outlined in this chapter reveals the worship landscape that Best was exposed to over several decades. The cultural trends and changes in music both inside and outside of the church necessarily impacted worship philosophy and practice as evident in the worship literature.

¹²⁷ Ingalls, “Awesome in this Place.

¹²⁸ Monique Ingalls, *Singing the Congregation: How Contemporary Worship Music Forms Evangelical Community* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).

¹²⁹ “Dr. Monique Ingalls,” Baylor University, accessed April 8, 2020, <https://www.baylor.edu/ccms/index.php?id=935991>.

¹³⁰ Lim and Ruth, *Lovin’ on Jesus*.

Understanding these developments provides insight into Best's own writings and philosophy of worship and music and aids in realizing the impact of his contribution to worship literature, education, and philosophy. The extent of influence these changes posed for Best will be examined and explored through the professional biography offered in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4
THE MAKING OF HAROLD BEST

Introduction

The philosophy and theology of music and worship articulated by Harold Best in his books *Music through the Eyes of Faith* (1993) and *Unceasing Worship* (2003) have had significant impact on the direction of evangelical worship literature, worship education, music education, and worship praxis. An examination of Best's professional and philosophical biography, highlighting key figures and events, proves helpful in understanding the development of his positions.

Born in 1931 in Jamestown, New York, Best received exposure to music early in his life from his parents. His father was minister and a "self-taught" violinist, and his mother was a pianist. Additionally, Best's family musical heritage goes back even further to his grandparents, who sang in church choirs and played in community bands. He recalled that "hearing them make music together and singing . . . were among my earliest musical memories."¹ Best's experience with music early in his life was in the form of piano and violin lessons, music at church worship services (often with his mother at the piano), and the records of Bach, Brahms, and Beethoven played by his father.² This variety of musical style approached with artistic judgment would later become situated squarely into dualistic roles of sacred-secular and high-low art functioning as a major point of philosophical and theological reflection for Best.

¹ Harold M. Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith* (New York: HarperCollins, 1993), 1.

² Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 2.

Best's encounter with popular music as a young person was largely from the radio and the influence of his friends. His parents' and grandparents' music, along with his own study of music, radio, and eventual exposure to ethnic music, was not naturally categorized by Best. He states, "I fell in love with this music . . . without any idea that it could be separated out into classes and hierarchies."³ Eventually, however, he learned from his father that these types of music were "of the world, therefore of worldliness."⁴ In his account of this experience, Best notes that his "one world of music became divided, not aesthetically but spiritually, into 'good' music and 'bad' music."⁵ This dualism between good and bad and sacred and secular continued and increased during Best's academic and professional career.

As Best completed a bachelor's degree in music from Nyack College, a master's degree from Claremont, and a doctorate in organ from Union Theological Seminary, his musical journey intersected with his faith journey, and continued to do so throughout his career. While studying at Union, Best made a strong impression on the faculty. Calvin Johansson, worship author who also studied at Union recalls a conversation in which a faculty member mentioned Best's intellect and giftedness. Johansson states, "At one point during my student days I had occasion to converse with a faculty member. In our discourse Harold Best's name came up. 'Harold,' he said, 'was very musicologically astute.' And as the years went by such sentiment was certainly born out as noted in Dr. Best's many lectures and writings."⁶ From here, the experiences, relationships, and spiritual convictions regarding music, art, and faith began to germinate

³ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 2.

⁴ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 2.

⁵ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 2.

⁶ Calvin M. Johansson, letter to author, January 15, 2020.

into an ever-developing philosophy of art and music rooted in biblical principles and reflecting a markedly Christian worldview.

Nyack College

Nyack College is a Christian liberal arts school with an aim to “assist students in their spiritual, intellectual, and social formation, preparing them for lives of service to Christ and His church and to society in a way that reflects the Kingdom of God and its ethnic diversity.”⁷ With a current educational philosophy centered on Philippians 4:8, this institution claims to be “dedicated to pursuing, integrating, communicating, and applying truth.”⁸ However, music at Nyack College assumed a dualism of good and bad, and high and low art, coupled with a spiritual element when Best was there as a student and later as a faculty member.

According to Best, Nyack lived out this dualism of artistry. Lee Olson established the music department in the late 1930s and “brought high art to Nyack.” This dualism permeated the music school so deeply that even some of the most widely acclaimed sacred music compositions brought controversy. Best recalled Olson’s account of the first performance of Handel’s *Messiah* (which employed verbatim Scripture as its text), claiming that “the faculty went to prayer because they were introducing secular music.”⁹ Additionally, Best noted that Bach’s Mass in B Minor “received pushback because it was a mass and was in Latin.”¹⁰ For Best, his time at Nyack was “the

⁷ Nyack College, “Nyack College School of Music Student Handbook, 2018–2019,” accessed October 28, 2019, http://www.nyack.edu/files/SOM_Student_Handbook_2018-19.pdf.

⁸ Nyack College, “Nyack College School of Music Student Handbook, 2018–2019.

⁹ Harold Best, interview by Mark Coppenger, Post Falls, ID, April 16, 2019. Mark Coppenger conducted this interview on my behalf during a visit with Harold Best. I submitted questions for the interview, and Coppenger provided me with a voice recording of the conversation.

¹⁰ Best, interview.

beginning of an aesthetic worldview, but it was also the growth of dangerous snobbery.”¹¹ To be sure, the gospel songs and hymns for which Nyack was known set against the “high art” of classical music promoted by Olson brought forth a musical, aesthetic, and spiritual tension for Best and began to frame the development of his philosophies of music and art within a Christian worldview.¹² The Christian perspective of art and music held by Best was voiced as he asked questions about the quality of music and art within the church. In a *Christianity Today* cover story (no author listed) Best is quoted asking, “Why is the Church so often the haven of the banal and the home of the tawdry? [By] what distorted decree of the human spirit must the glory of Christ be pitifully squeezed into the dry-rotted skins of a withered vocabulary?”¹³ Throughout his career and in his writings, Best questioned the quality of the arts produced by the church and urged Christian artists to pursue excellence (in their lives and in their art). Therefore, in his view the church should be at the forefront of aesthetic quality.¹⁴

Living and working within this system of dualism, musical hierarchy, and even musical morality forced intense spiritual reflection and surrender for Best during his third year on the faculty at Nyack. He described this event as a “nervous breakdown” in which he was “spiritually turned right-side up.”¹⁵ In an interview with former colleague and friend, Mark Coppenger, Best recalled it this way: “I was a believer . . . I knew it all, I was a conservative, but I wasn’t alive somehow. I was on my way to Union Seminary [while] I was working on my doctorate, and I begin to think, ‘Harold if you don’t wake

¹¹ Best, interview.

¹² Best, interview.

¹³ *Christianity Today* “Quiet Revolt in Gospel Music,” 10, no. 3 (1965): 52.

¹⁴ The Christian artist’s call to pursue excellence as a central theme to Best’s writing is addressed in more detail in chap. 5 of this dissertation.

¹⁵ Best, interview.

up, one of these days you're going to forget Jesus and not know it.' I asked God to bring me to him at whatever cost."¹⁶

This “nervous breakdown,” according to Best, was an answer to prayer. He recalls, “When I said, ‘break me at whatever cost’, [God] chose that way.”¹⁷ Following this spiritual brokenness, Best was “reintroduced . . . to the fullness of Christ and the principled wonder of the Scriptures.” He began to reunite these “musical worlds” and was able “to re-enter once more the delights of early childhood, revisiting and celebrating one world of music, by now larger and grander than ever.”¹⁸

Wheaton

Best’s Christian worldview and aesthetic philosophy continued to develop as he joined the faculty of the Wheaton College conservatory of music and became dean in 1970. During his tenure Best engaged in many conversations, debates, discussions, and lectures that worked to cultivate and refine his views. Additionally, the relationships he built with colleagues including Mark Coppenger, Vida Chenoweth, Frank Gaebelein, and Arthur Holmes, served as a sounding board for both the critique and direction of Best’s evolving arguments.

At Wheaton, the dualism that Best worked and lived within centered more on intellectualism and high art versus popular music and low art. He stated, “The view that I began to hold about Wheaton was that it was at once a highly gifted liberal arts community and also smelled like Moody Bible institute. I felt that there was something in the older constituency that reminded me of Nyack and Moody.”¹⁹ This view according to

¹⁶ Best, interview.

¹⁷ Best, interview.

¹⁸ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 4.

¹⁹ Best, interview.

Best, “perpetuated this sort of dualism, popular/classical, and people began to fight per se. At the same time, I smelled the French fries of the other side. I found out how to outweigh this with a rich intellectualism, which I eventually found to be a little bit snobbish, quite platonic, [and] dualistic.”²⁰ For example, Best recounted a conversation with Arthur Holmes, founder of the philosophy department at Wheaton, in which Best asked if it was possible to “develop a Christian worldview [and] aesthetic without going to concerts.”²¹ Holmes’s response of “absolutely” caused Best to reevaluate his approach to thinking about music.

As Best continued to engage with this intellectual dualism and musical hierarchy in a philosophical way, he investigated the difference between thinking “about” music and thinking “in” and “of” music. He claims that “thinking ‘in’ and ‘of’ became my model rather than thinking ‘about.’ Thinking ‘about’ [music] is important, but only if you can think ‘in’ and ‘of.’”²² For Best, the difference between thinking “about” and thinking “in” and “of” music is demonstrated by people who are able to engage with music by thinking about it and listening to it, but are unable to sight read a piece of music, sing, play an instrument, compose, perform, and the like.

In addition to distinguishing between thinking “about” and thinking “in” and “of” music, Best claimed that the tensions of intellectual dualism at Wheaton challenged him to grow in multiple ways. According to Best, because of his Bible education and Wheaton’s strong philosophical and intellectual richness, it became a place where he felt “unwelcomed for a long time” even until his retirement.²³ The tension Best experienced was largely the result of college president Hudson Amerding’s insistence on avoiding

²⁰ Best, interview.

²¹ Best, interview.

²² Best, interview.

²³ Best, interview.

“needless temptation.” Amerding held a position of caution toward the arts and recognizing their potential danger for temptation, insisted that his faculty keep a safe distance from certain artistic subjects. According to Coppenger, Amerding’s resistance to the arts “could make things tense for those who worked in the various disciplines; indeed, each department had to steer clear of one radioactive zone or another. For painting and sculpture, it was figure studies; for theater, profanity; for literature, coarseness and falsehood; for music, jazz and rock.”²⁴ Those involved in the arts can recognize the potential for transgression, and, “even where corruption is unintended, it can happen just the same to the weaker brother.”²⁵ However, there is also a danger for cultural disengagement and of losing the ability to “impact these essentially licit enterprises” for Christ.²⁶ Coppenger recalls, “Still, the Wheaton of our day was far more concerned with the impact of the arts culture on our souls than with the impact of our souls on the arts culture. And that's the tension Harold felt.”²⁷

The pressure Best experienced allowed him to be stretched in many ways. He notes that Wheaton “was a place where both arrogance and personal piety were welcomed.” It was also the place where Best “began to develop the model of creation, creature, creativity,” a central theme of his philosophy of music, art, and aesthetics, articulated in both of his books and various articles.²⁸

While at Wheaton, Best’s engagement with ethnomusicology through his colleague Vida Chenoweth, sparked an interest in indigenous and world music. Chenoweth, a renowned marimbist and ethnomusicologist, introduced Best to new ways

²⁴ Mark Coppenger, email to author, April 8, 2020.

²⁵ Coppenger, email to author.

²⁶ Coppenger, email to author.

²⁷ Coppenger, email to author.

²⁸ Best, interview.

of approaching world music from a Christian worldview. Best states, “At the time, there was virtually no one in music who was giving any real thought—substantively theological and culture-wise thought—to the rightness of and necessity for the union of Christianity and indigenous creativity.”²⁹ Furthermore, “Vida was one of the pioneers in putting concept and practice together on the music side.”³⁰ Best’s involvement with Chenoweth gave him an additional platform on which to encourage musical pluralism.³¹

The professional involvement Best had with Chenoweth profoundly impacted his views on the amorality of music. Best’s engagement with indigenous music through ethnomusicology caused him to wrestle with the universals (or lack of universals) in music, widening his philosophy to examine world music through a lens of appropriate worship not dominated or influenced by Western culture. Additionally, as Best began to think richer and deeper about the differences between other cultures and the West, his position on the creator-creation relationship and the lack of intrinsic musical meaning in music were also impacted. His views on world music would further develop and be revealed as he worked with the National Association of Schools of Music.

Other faculty members and guest lecturers at Wheaton were influential in the development and refinement of Best’s philosophy. Frank Gaebelein, a leader for evangelical education, was not on faculty at Wheaton, but was close with Hudson Amerding the president of the college in the 1960s. It was at Amerding’s insistence that Gaebelein led the first Faith and Learning Seminar at Wheaton in 1969. These seminars allowed Best to come into contact with Gaebelein and his philosophy of truth, education,

²⁹ Bob Goldsborough, “Vida Chenoweth, Ethnomusicologist and First Marimbist to Play Carnegie Hall Dies at 90,” *Chicago Tribune*, January 11, 2019.

³⁰ Goldsborough, “Vida Chenoweth.”

³¹ Daniel Horn, email to author, January 27, 2020.

and faith.³² The emphasis on connecting faith and learning within higher education had a major impact on Best and his approach to music education from a Christian worldview. By Best's account, "The fellowship [he] had with Gaebelein" was a significant influence in his philosophical development.³³

Mark Coppenger, former philosophy professor at Wheaton and aesthetics professor at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, is among those whom Best recognizes as influential in the refinement and expansion of his philosophy. At Wheaton, Best and Coppenger served on various committees and panels together addressing culture, art, and Christian worldview. With gratitude, Best noted, "Coppenger was the first [person] to let me understand that philosophy did not have to be an altar, but [could be] a center of work. [He] did a lot for me."³⁴

Best experienced push back and opposition to his philosophies by some of the conservative faculty members at Wheaton. He states, "They [could not] understand the study of eclecticism based on what [they believed] the Scriptures [said]."³⁵ In the midst of these gainsayers, Best found an ally in Howie Whitaker, theory and composition professor at Wheaton. Best recalls, "I went to him one day when I was really down because Hudson [Amerding] made me feel spiritually inferior. I said, 'Howie, how do you play jazz as a Christian?' He said, 'There is no other way.'"³⁶ Whitaker's response allowed and encouraged Best to think about the role and existence of Christian artists and

³² "Integrating Faith and Learning," Wheaton College, last modified October 18, 2019. <https://wheaton.libguides.com/c.php?g=853929&p=6114158>.

³³ Best, interview.

³⁴ Best, interview.

³⁵ Best, interview.

³⁶ Best, interview.

musicians and the amorality of music, as well as art and music making as an act of worship within the creation creator-hood concept.

Professor and chair of keyboard studies at Wheaton, and former colleague of Best, Daniel Horn, provides insight into Best's experience and impact at the school. Horn references Best's early Wheaton career as a time "when his enthusiasm for jazz and other vernacular musics brought him into conflict with long-standing evangelical resistance and bias, represented by President Hudson Amerding."³⁷ Furthermore, Horn notes how Best's relationships with music faculty demonstrated his position of musical pluralism. He states,

I saw this philosophy work out in the way that he sought to hire the best people he could find, and then trusted them to develop their gifts. He never micromanaged his faculty, which was a tremendous blessing for the young, insecure, fearful rookie I was when he first hired me. A micromanager breathing down my neck could have destroyed me. Harold encouraged me to blossom and would often tell me to relax and enjoy just how good I was. In what could have been a very competitive full-time piano faculty of three people with degrees from major schools and training from internationally recognized artist-teachers, he saw the need for three very different personalities. He never tried to make two of us be like his favorite; indeed, I don't think one could have determined all that easily whether or not he had a favorite.³⁸

The students at Wheaton were also an aid to Best's developing philosophy, giving him an opportunity to think through and apply his philosophy of music, art, worship, Christian responsibility, and stewardship in a practical way. He claims that with the students he "had a chance to test things out because they were hungry. [He] had been there and done that and they wanted to get there."³⁹ For many students, Best was more than a professor and musical mentor—he was also a spiritual mentor aiding them in navigating God's calling on their lives. This responsibility allowed Best to consider the role and responsibility of the Christian artist more deeply. For example, Best recalls

³⁷ Horn, email to author.

³⁸ Horn, email to author.

³⁹ Best, interview.

Douglas Yeo, a bass trombone student and Best's advisee who struggled with recognizing how his calling as an instrumentalist and performer could be used for the kingdom of God. According to Best, "We were talking one day and [Yeo] said, 'I get puzzled here at Wheaton because everybody talks about fulltime Christian service and I cannot understand where I fit into this.'"⁴⁰ Best replied, "If everybody on campus was striving to become a pastor or missionary, who would preach the gospel to those who would never darken the door of a church? Your calling is just as valuable as those. Who knows? Maybe someday you'll get to tell Leonard Bernstein about Jesus." Ten years later, Yeo was playing Bernstein's Symphony No. 1 "Jeremiah" when he had the opportunity to speak with the composer. Yeo said, "Thank you for bringing your 'Jeremiah' Symphony. You know, every word the soloist is singing is true. Can I tell you about Jesus?"⁴¹ This example is just one way that Best was developing, applying, and teaching his philosophies on Christian responsibility, stewardship, and worship as an all-of-life activity during his tenure at Wheaton.

Deanna Witkowski, another student at Wheaton, provided Best with an opportunity to demonstrate his value of musical pluralism. Horn states that Best worked with Witkowski to create "curricular opportunities where none existed. [He] developed a way of finishing her piano performance degree with a dual emphasis in classical and Jazz repertoires. [Witkowski] is now a distinguished figure in liturgical jazz."⁴²

Best summarized the impact his time and experience at Wheaton had on his philosophical development and growth in an interview with Mark Coppenger. He states that this impact was a "gradual refinement of a worldview that had its roots in the

⁴⁰ Best, interview.

⁴¹ "Why Two Families are Choosing to Endow-a-Seat in the Amerding Concert Hall," Wheaton College, last modified September 5, 2019, <https://www.wheaton.edu/news/recent-news/2019/september/why-two-families-are-choosing-to-endow-a-seat/>.

⁴² Horn, email to author.

spiritual awakening that I had, learning to think scripturally and being influenced by the Gaebeleins, the Holmes, and the Coppengers, and being caught in the tensions of the good taste bad taste of conservatory faculty.” Additionally, Best lists Rex Hicks, professor of choral music at Wheaton from the 1960s to the 1980s, as “among the greats” of the faculty who engaged these issues with him in a helpful way.

National Association of Schools of Music

Best worked with the NASM for twelve years as the chair of accreditation before serving as president. Working within music education in this way allowed Best to be exposed to various educational and musical philosophies and provided him a platform to implement his own philosophies as he worked with over a hundred schools of music across the United States. Through his presentations and subsequent publications of the NASM annual meetings, Best articulated the themes and philosophy that would later appear in his books, *Music through the Eyes of Faith* (1993) and *Unceasing Worship* (2003). These themes include the doctrine of Creation in human creativity, all-of-life continuous worship, music making as an act of worship rather than an aid to worship, and the responsibility of the Christian artist to pursue excellence.⁴³

As an accreditation organization, NASM is charged with monitoring education standards, curriculum, training, and other educational requirements for collegiate level music schools across the nation. Best’s involvement in various capacities presented opportunity for the shaping, refinement, and sharing of his philosophies of music, worship, art, and education. Coupled with his Christian background, Bible education, and experience in higher education, the time spent working with NASM significantly impacted Best and extended his impact on others beyond the student body at Wheaton. This organization gave him the opportunity to widen his views and judgment about music

⁴³ See the annotated bibliography of this dissertation for details and themes of articles and NASM lectures.

from a sacred context to a secular context. He states, “I cannot tell you how rich [this experience] was [and] what it did for me.”⁴⁴ The broadening of contexts for Best pushed him and allowed him to wrestle with the sacred-secular dichotomy in a necessary and intellectually challenging way which inevitably influenced his advocacy for musical pluralism within the Christian life. For example, Dorothy K. Payne, former dean and professor emerita of the School of Music at the University of South Carolina, recalled her experience with Best through NASM. She wrote, “[Best] has become a revered and beloved mentor of mine since I first began my work with NASM in 1986. A thoughtful and insightful administrator, he has always embraced the idea of musical diversity, even long before he understood what it meant.”⁴⁵

Strengthening his devotion to musical pluralism, NASM provided Best with the opportunity to further engage with world music following his exposure to ethnomusicology at Wheaton. His work in world music in this context was marked by professionalism and high musical standards. Best notes that the code of ethics employed in the judiciary process of NASM was impactful in refining his views on indigenous sound. He states that this rich experience was “comforting” as he was able to see people with “all kinds of worldviews coming together with world music.”⁴⁶ Throughout his time with NASM, Best began incorporating world music curriculum into the program requirements of nationally accredited music schools, revealing the value he placed on cultures and sounds beyond the familiar. He continued to develop this philosophy which began at Wheaton and connected it to his philosophy of Creator-creation in the arts. Thus, he applied these ideas to worship and argued that music is not an aid to worship, but

⁴⁴ Best, interview.

⁴⁵ Dorothy K. Payne, “In Praise of Mentors the CMS Robert M. Trotter Lecture 2002,” *College Music Symposium* 43 (2003): 7.

⁴⁶ Best, interview.

rather an act of worship in and of itself. The resulting combination of these viewpoints held in connection with Revelation 7:9–10, offered a freedom in worship unbound by style, tradition, or culture. Rather, we are presented with a picture of the global church worshipping in their respective contexts, musical heart language, and culture.

During his tenure with NASM, Best advocated for the training of whole musicians as well as for a better balance and reorientation of education for church musicians. Through presentations at NASM meetings, Best’s concern for proper intellectual, practical, and spiritual instruction is revealed. He recognized that often, music students were forced to choose performance or academics, technique or theory, praxis or philosophy, and they thus received incomplete training. In 1979 at the 55th annual meetings of NASM, Best stated,

What do our students need? If a musician is 100% ear, then let's be sure that he really hears, not just factually, not just technically, but intrinsically. If a musician is also 100% mind, then let us help him think in music. A complete musician is one who hears so completely and thinks so widely that making music and conceptualizing about it are kindred enthusiasms. Our culture needs this desperately.⁴⁷

To make his point, Best used the illustration of a student learning the Spanish language. The student begins by learning the sounds of the alphabet, then he moves on to say the words, sentences, and paragraphs of particular poems. The beauty of the student’s pronunciation, inflection, and presentation bring him fame, but when greeted in Spanish, the student cannot understand and says, “I was taught to recite Spanish. Writing and thinking in Spanish is for other people. I only perform.”⁴⁸

In the same way, Best desired church music programs to offer a complete and balanced education for church musicians. Understanding that music is not simply an aid

⁴⁷ Harold Best, “New Trends in Music Curriculum” (paper presented at the annual meeting of the National Association of Schools of Music, Philadelphia, PA, November 18–20, 1979).

⁴⁸ Best, “New Trends in Music Curriculum.”

to worship, but an act of worship, Best recognized the importance of both musical and theological training. He stated, “Excellent church music training must be embedded, not primarily in the nature of music and musical types, standards of practices, and scholarly excellence, but in a bed rock theological perspective.”⁴⁹ Additionally, Best argued that the arts and the gospel “participate in the same intermingling of mystery and familiarity” and should be viewed in the same light. Like the gospel, the arts will both “disturb and comfort, each at an appropriate time and in an appropriate way.”⁵⁰ As such, Best argues that the aim of church music curriculum is “simply the raising up of stunningly trained, widely competent musician-servants; not performers as such . . . but complete musicians, as much at home with composition, as with theology, as with worldview, as with people, as with performance.”⁵¹ A thorough church music curriculum, according to Best, should also include training in music and meaning, communication theory, and a deeper engagement with the arts beyond music. And in 1981, Best presciently suggested that those working in church music curricula “should now begin to think of preparation for ministries of fine arts, or beyond this, a ministry of artistic creativity.”⁵² Best’s statement has come to fruition as some evangelical churches now have full-time associate pastor positions focused solely on the creative arts.⁵³

Best’s Christian worldview was evident throughout his involvement with NASM. He was focused on education and upholding rigorous curricula standards with a strong ethic and at the same time was applying his views on the training of church

⁴⁹ Harold Best, “Church Music Curriculum” (paper presented at the annual meeting of the National Association of Schools of Music, Dallas, TX, November 21–24, 1981).

⁵⁰ Best, “Church Music Curriculum.”

⁵¹ Best, “Church Music Curriculum.”

⁵² Best, “Church Music Curriculum.”

⁵³ For example, Wallace Memorial Baptist Church in Knoxville, TN has a full-time “creative arts and communications pastor” position.

musicians to all musicians from his philosophy of biblical stewardship and excellence. He recognized that “church-relatedness” in musical training was not limited to church music programs only. Rather, he broadened the understanding of church from the limited view of a local institution to one with global sweep including all who are in Christ. From here, he spoke on church relatedness to the whole of music education. In 1976 his address at the annual meeting of NASM presented his philosophy of the Creator-creation relationship.⁵⁴ He also discussed his understanding of worship as a continuous directed action rather than something that begins and ends at an appointed time on Sundays. He wrote, “One does not go to church to worship, but as a *continuing worshipper*, one goes to church to worship corporately; that is, to be in league with his brothers and sisters, at one time, in one place, and with one accord.”⁵⁵ This philosophy would later become the foundation for Best’s second major publication *Unceasing Worship* in 2003.

In this same presentation, Best addressed the responsibility of Christian musicians to pursue excellence from an understanding of biblical stewardship, and he applied this to all music students and programs. He claimed that excellence is an absolute in that “it cannot be avoided or compromised. There are no substitutes for it. Its roots lie in the attitude of the heart. One is commanded to pursue it.”⁵⁶ Additionally, Best explained that excellence is also relative as it “deals with a striving, an action, . . . or a going forward from point to point and achievement to achievement. It is relative because we are unequally endowed and cannot equally achieve. Some musicians are better than others. But all musicians can be better than they once were. *This* is excelling.”⁵⁷ Applying

⁵⁴ Harold Best, “Church Relatedness, Music and Higher Education” (paper presented at the National Association of Schools of Music, Atlanta, GA, November 21–23, 1976).

⁵⁵ Best, “Church Relatedness, Music and Higher Education.”

⁵⁶ Best, “Church Relatedness, Music and Higher Education.”

⁵⁷ Best, “Church Relatedness, Music and Higher Education.”

these themes to music education standards and curriculum he wrote that without a “rigorous education and the most refined motives . . . there is no way to distinguish today’s functional trash, of which both church and culture are disturbingly replete, from functional worth, of which there is precious little.”⁵⁸ Furthermore, he urges that the artist “be given the humility to succeed, [otherwise] our churches and colleges become or remain hypocritical shambles, a chasm between high theory and careless practice.”⁵⁹ In Best’s view, the pursuit of excellence is deeply connected to artistic integrity and artistic education. Without the standard and striving for excellence neither the artist, the art, nor arts education will achieve their full potential.

NASM provided an opportunity for Best’s influence to reach all nationally accredited music schools in the United States. Because of his worldview and Christian education background, some members of NASM were displeased that he was appointed president. Best recalls his experience of working with NASM stating that “it gave me a chance in a person to person sense and as president in the speeches I gave to exercise common gracing thinking coming very close to Christocentrism without compromising anything. That was so good.”⁶⁰ Through his time with NASM Best refined and presented his philosophy of music, art, and worship from a Christian worldview in sacred and secular institutions increasing the significance of his impact beyond Wheaton. This experience allowed Best to wrestle with and articulate clearly the themes presented in *Music through the Eyes of Faith* and *Unceasing Worship* solidifying his influence within worship literature and the training of worship leaders and pastors at seminaries.

⁵⁸ Best, “Church Relatedness, Music and Higher Education.”

⁵⁹ Best, “Church Relatedness, Music and Higher Education.”

⁶⁰ Best, interview.

Changes in the Worship Landscape

In addition to his time at Nyack, Wheaton, and with NASM, the cultural changes that influenced worship philosophy and praxis also served as points of influence in the development of Best's philosophies. Specifically, his philosophies on musical judgement were refined as worship music changed with the culture of the 1960s–1980s in the United States. Settling in the dust of the Jesus People Movement and the emergence of contemporary Christian music, Best continued to wrestle with the intellectual dualism of context and art classification. He states, "I moved from that aesthetic arrogance to satisfy both myself and my faculty [and had] good taste [and] bad taste, pop and gospel over here, and Bach, Beethoven, and Brahms over there."⁶¹ Immersed in this dichotomy, Best recounts, "I rode along with that for a while because I thought it was right. I thought I was thinking correctly and developing all kinds of thoughts about entertainment and its dangers, good taste, and bad taste. Good taste [was] for the glory of God."⁶²

Additionally, Best recalls the decades of the 1960s and 1970s as an influential time for the development of his philosophy as "indigeneity broke the bounds of high culturism, Western Christianity, and Western music."⁶³ Best was at Nyack during this time and was impacted by a classmate who became a missionary to a tribe in New Guinea.⁶⁴ The missionary barrels around campus were used to collect items to send to nude indigenous people groups. Best's classmate told him a story of how these items were used. As customary for the tribe, the chief entered the worship gathering last and made his way to the front of the crowd wearing a top hat and an upside-down women's corset. This helped Best recognize the dangers of imposing Western culture onto other

⁶¹ Best, interview.

⁶² Best, interview.

⁶³ Best, interview.

⁶⁴ Best does not list the name of the classmate in his interview.

groups and simultaneously revealed the value of using these cultures' musical languages in their own acts of worship to God.

Best's realization of the Western inculturation of indigenous groups through music continued at Wheaton. Chenoweth, his friend and colleague, said that "as soon as a guitar shows up, its over" and Western instruments, tonalities, harmonies, and even hymns become synonymous with appropriate worship neglecting the instruments and musical heart language of the people.⁶⁵ Wrestling with these ideas informed Best's view on the amorality of music and that music, in and of itself, has no intrinsic meaning. Additionally, Best's creation creator-hood philosophy applies here in his argument that music making is an act of worship rather than an aid to worship. With this view, music from all tribes and nations has a place as worship and should not be forgotten in the shadow of Western musical worship practices. In addition to his experience with ethnomusicology through Chenoweth, Best noted that those working in anthropology at Wheaton who were focused on "contextualization and the worth of indigenous expression" influenced his exploration of world music and the amorality of music.⁶⁶

Best's Aesthetic Philosophy as a Composer

At Wheaton as Best's worldview developed, his understanding of culture, creation, and the creator was deepening and becoming richer. Best presented a paper for a faith and learning themed seminar for faculty, led by Art Holmes: "I remember reading a paper on what the creation teaches us about our [own] creativity, worth and function coupled together. I remember making that paper in spiritual and psychological darkness and at the same time exalting how the creation works."⁶⁷ He connects this experience to

⁶⁵ Best, interview.

⁶⁶ Best, interview.

⁶⁷ Best, interview.

the development of his worldview noting that it too began in darkness:

My worldview has been formed in a certain kind of darkness. I think a lot of Mother Theresa and what she went through. And balancing what I've come to conclude is [that] the attributes of God [are] constantly at work with each other without any one taking prominence. Whatever the situation, all of the attributes [of] the Godhead [are] completely at work doing what he's doing. Taking that down to faith, hope, and love is also a consortium. And according to Galatians 5, love is also the driver of faith. I said in *Unceasing Worship*, "what would the Reformation have been like had it been *solī caritas* instead of *solī fide*." Maybe [the Reformers] would not have burned their colleagues at the stake.⁶⁸

Rightly connecting faith, hope, and love, as Best suggests, presents a framework for not only living in Christian community but also for engaging culture. While pointed, Best's question is worth consideration: what would it look like to "imagine a 'love alone' ethic from which faith springs in complete effectiveness?"⁶⁹ How has our faith or our witness been negatively affected because of a "flawed, underestimated practice of love?"⁷⁰

Throughout his career, impacted by experiences at Nyack, Wheaton, and with NASM, Best's judgment of musical value advanced through a process of loosening and tightening. He states it involved the, "loosening of aesthetics into the breadth of human creativity and the tightening, at the same time, of my taste buds. I still hold Bach in the highest esteem. I love classical music."⁷¹ However, when Best listens to a blues musician he asks, "How did you do that?" "Where did that come from?" "How did he get that lick?" And then he asks a bigger question: "Where did the existence of music come

⁶⁸ Best, interview.

⁶⁹ Harold M. Best, *Unceasing Worship: Biblical Perspectives on Worship and the Arts* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 2003), 34.

⁷⁰ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 34.

⁷¹ Best, interview.

from?”⁷² The result is the “loosening of the aesthetics of world quality and the tightening of standards within every category.”⁷³

Best’s philosophy of music is represented within his own musical compositions. As a composer Best demonstrates his view of music making as an act of worship through the doctrine of creation. Paul Wiens, choral director at Wheaton from 1981–2012, asked Best to compose a piece for concert choir. During that time Best was fascinated by the integration of 12-bar blues with classical musical expressions. He recalls, “I decided to write a piece for Good Friday called *Lament for Good Friday*. I used nothing but Scripture and 12-bar blues. I loaded it with 20th-century classical idioms and yet infused them with a lot of blue notes.”⁷⁴ By Best’s own account, this work is not his finest composition musically or technically, but it means more to him than his other works because “it was the best offering that [he] could offer up to Jesus.”⁷⁵ He states, “When I hear this I still have tears in my eyes because of what it meant to compose it, but it may not be my best work. I take the *Lament for Good Friday* and use that as a model for working yourself with flaws.”⁷⁶

Other significant compositions representing Best’s philosophy are the nearly twenty pieces he wrote as a gift to the faculty members at Wheaton upon his retirement. In each of these compositions he used specific musical signifiers to represent the colleague for which the piece was written. For example, Margarita Evans was a voice teacher and a wonderful counselor to students, and Best wanted to reference this in his composition. He notes, “I made the decision that every vertical texture had the note c in it

⁷² Best, interview.

⁷³ Best, interview.

⁷⁴ Best, interview.

⁷⁵ Best, interview.

⁷⁶ Best, interview.

and that symbolized her work as a counselor.”⁷⁷ For the theory and composition professor, Howie Whitaker, Best wrote a set of variations. For pianists Mark and Karin Edwards, he wrote a piece in a gospel/boogie-woogie extended form. And, for Cathy Caster, with whom Best had a “set of difficulties and a great relationship at the same time,” he wrote a piece based on minor 7ths and major 2nds in a bowing down texture because of her work as a prayer warrior.”⁷⁸ Additionally, Best’s compositions provided him opportunity to live out his philosophy of musical pluralism. Horn states, “His blues-based choral arrangements of familiar hymns preserve something of what it was like to hear him sit down at the piano and start improvising a country waltz.”⁷⁹

Best categorizes his aesthetic philosophy as paradoxical because it encompasses both mediocrity and excellence in an “existential union.”⁸⁰ Using gospel hymns as an example, he explains this dichotomy in the relationship of beautiful text and rich theological meaning with mediocre music (and vice versa). He states that both the text and music of old gospel hymns come to his mind: “Not all of that is good music, but paradoxically both mediocrity and excellence are in my frame of reference and I love them somehow. And yet, I can say that this is mediocre, or that this is better.”⁸¹

In addition to his paradoxical aesthetic, Best’s analogy of the hologram outlined in *Unceasing Worship* has been a significant metaphor that has influenced his approach to various ideas including the creation creator-hood relationship, all-of-life-worship, the responsibility of Christian artists, and stewardship. He argues, “If we were to look at a hologram under intense magnification, we would find that any given

⁷⁷ Best, interview.

⁷⁸ Best, interview.

⁷⁹ Horn, email to author.

⁸⁰ Best, interview.

⁸¹ Best, interview.

fragment functions as a discrete detail of the whole but also contains a complete picture of the whole.”⁸² According to Best, this metaphor is constantly on his mind. He states, “We have to think, act, live, hologrammatically. Everything is at work in every way all the time. I think that is what Paul meant when he talks about the spirit of the world and the powers of darkness. They are very well integrated with themselves.”⁸³ He applies this to his aesthetic and philosophy of worship, using this idea to caution against idolatry noting that “you have these two opposed systems of worship: worshipping creature and worshipping creator.”⁸⁴ Aiming to avoid idolatry—worshipping creature or that which is created—Best’s engagement with these systems of worship becomes the central theme for *Unceasing Worship* as he claims that we are always worshipping something and must be sure that our worship is rightly directed toward God.⁸⁵

Conclusion

Reflecting over the course of his career and the development of his worldview, Best recognizes areas in which he both struggled and excelled. He states,

The older I get, the more I realize how average I am. My limitations, my place in the art world [is] as a very average person. My place in the intellectual world is as a purely good thinker. Intellectual growth has come. It came to me while I was at Wheaton. I was a better thinker within the arts, living artistically, than I was [at] making art as an organist. It was tough, and I have had to pass tough standards. The realization of my place in the world of creativity was more as a champion of the things I love to talk about than it was as a practitioner of those same things. Spiritual warfare has been with me ever since my nervous breakdown.⁸⁶

By his own admission, Best considers himself more of a “thinker” within the arts rather than a practitioner, and as such, his thinking is often expressed in flowery,

⁸² Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 44.

⁸³ Best, interview.

⁸⁴ Best, interview.

⁸⁵ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 26.

⁸⁶ Best, interview.

poetic text rather than concise, academic speech. And, he is quite skilled at intriguing maxims and speculative forays. It makes for an engaging writing style, but at times can be perplexing to his readers (as noted in the reviews of his books in the next chapter).

While Best values language and holds to a high view of Scripture, he wants to allow leeway for interpretation, wherein we can “separate the everlasting scriptural Truth-mountains from transient, situational molehills” and distinguish “temporary instruction for changing times and changing circumstances that may or may not turn out to be permanent, or that the writers of Scripture could have never foreseen.”⁸⁷ He wants to engage with Scripture “for what all of it is while guarding us from Docetising it, Arianising it, worshipping it in unabashed Bibliolatry.”⁸⁸ As the saying goes “the devil is in the details,” but Best “is determined to keep the devil out of his hermeneutical ventures.”⁸⁹

Best faithfully holds to two things—that language is the superior mode of revelation (as distinct from “dancing, music, painting, sculpting . . .”), but that language is more or less earthly, requiring the Lord to step down into it, much as he stepped down into the flesh—*kenosis*:

Words are able to accomplish what no other form of expression can: for they alone convey revealed Truth . . . This man entrusted Himself to an obscure Middle Eastern language, Aramaic. This man, faithing and teaching His way for thirty-three years, day after day—used humanity’s ordinary speech tools, those shifty and limited things called words—words that fail us; words that we fail; words that we haggle over and bend in a direction convenient to us. He used words the same way we do; when He played with His brothers and sisters, out in the shop, downtown taking a customer’s order; asking the time of day. That’s all He, the emptied Word of God had.⁹⁰

Coppenger recognizes the value Best places on Scripture as he states, “With fresh

⁸⁷ Harold M. Best, “Kenosis in the Godhead: The Twofold Kenosis of Jesus Christ” (Unpublished paper), 4.

⁸⁸ Best, “Kenosis,” 7.

⁸⁹ Mark Coppenger, email to author, April 6, 2020.

⁹⁰ Best, “Kenosis,” 2–3.

expression (e.g. ‘Docetising’) and unforeseen linkages (e.g., connecting ‘emptying’ with speaking Aramaic), [Best] weaves an informed, reverent, and fascinating theology to undergird his philosophizing” and gives his readers a “range of questions to sort out.”⁹¹

The reception of Best’s ideas and philosophy as presented in his books, *Music Through the Eyes of Faith* and *Unceasing Worship*, and numerous articles and lectures will be investigated in more detail in chapter 5. However, a general understanding of the response to these ideas is a helpful framework in tracing their development, evolution, and progression. According to Best, those generally in disagreement with his position on the amorality of music could be characterized as “Neoplatonists”—“those who would believe ardently on the good-evil side of music, that some music is intrinsically ‘wrong’ and should not be in the church.”⁹² Additionally, people rejecting Best’s ideas are those who hold the position that “rap is not welcome in the church. Some people in Pentecostal colleges think [fallaciously] about rock and sacramentally about ‘What a Friend We Have in Jesus.’”⁹³

From his early childhood exposure to classical music and church music to the discovery of popular music and jazz through his friends during his teenage years to his study of and professional work in music at Nyack, Wheaton, and in the NASM, Best’s philosophy of music, art, and worship gradually morphed into an aesthetic of musical pluralism from a distinctly Christian worldview. Of Best’s own admission, the progression of his philosophy was not linear nor chronological, but rather modulatory as these ideas were “merging into and out of” his experiences.⁹⁴ The culmination of these encounters professionally, academically, and spiritually occur in *Music through the Eyes*

⁹¹ Coppenger, email to author.

⁹² Best, interview. Expounded upon in chap. 5, the main figures voicing opposition to Best’s musical pluralism are Calvin Johansson, John Makujina, and Scott Aniol.

⁹³ Best, interview.

⁹⁴ Best, interview.

of Faith and *Unceasing Worship* and have been used to influence the direction of subsequent evangelical worship literature and in the training of worship leaders and Christian artists alike.

CHAPTER 5

MUSIC THROUGH THE EYES OF FAITH AND UNCEASING WORSHIP: EXPOSITINON AND SELECTED CRITICISM

Introduction

Harold Best's philosophy of art, music, worship, and aesthetics culminates in his two major publications, *Music through the Eyes of Faith* (1993) and *Unceasing Worship* (2003). By providing a summary and overview of these works, critical analysis of the positions presented therein, and an assessment of their reception through published reviews, I seek to establish a starting point by which I can examine Best's influence on selected subsequent worship leaders, authors, and educators. Building on the biographical information presented in chapter four, I will explore and analyze Best's main arguments and ideas presented in his books.

Best's Music through the Eyes of Faith

Best's first significant publication, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, emerged at a time when debates over musical style were thriving. With an aim to bring together both sides of the traditional versus contemporary style dispute, he advocates for a musical pluralism from a markedly Christian worldview with biblical support steeped in the doctrines of creation, *imago Dei*, common grace, and stewardship. Thus, Best gave voice to those working in church music, Christians who are living and working within the arts, Christian educators, music educators, and believers alike.

Best begins the work with a brief explanation of how his personal experiences in music and in faith aided the development of his views on musical pluralism and the

amorality of music.¹ He sets up the content and purpose of the book by claiming that he has “tried to keep two purposes before [him] at all times: to celebrate the uniqueness of music making as part of the larger world of human creativity, and to hold that music making is subordinate to, and informed by, the larger doctrines of creation, worship, offering, faith, grace, stewardship, redemptive witness, excelling and love.”²

The first chapter of *Music through the Eyes of Faith* places Best’s philosophy of music within the doctrine of creation. Additionally, he emphasizes the need for creativity among all people, not just artists and musicians. He defines creativity as “*the ability to imagine something—think it up—then execute or make it.*”³ Best argues that as humans we must “pursue the connection among Creator, creation, creature, and creativity. Then we can better understand why we are the way we are and why we possess this uncanny knack of coming up with things that have not been around before.”⁴ Best refined and further developed the Creator, creation, creature idea during his experiences with the faith and learning seminars at Wheaton.⁵ He uses Colossians 1, Hebrews 1, and Exodus 3 to connect the names of God to creatorhood and human creativity. He concludes, “In a way that eludes us, the triune God can be eternally at work within himself, disclosing the fullness of himself to himself and infinitely rich within these disclosures.”⁶ Asking what this trinitarian action means for music making, Best answers that “we should not make music in order to prove that we are or to authenticate ourselves. God created in us the capability for understanding that we are authenticated in him, not in what we do. . . .

¹ The impact of Best’s personal experiences with music and faith are detailed and outlined in chap. 4 of this dissertation.

² Harold M. Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith* (New York: HarperCollins, 1993), 7.

³ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 11. Italics are in the original.

⁴ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 12.

⁵ See chap. 4 of this dissertation.

⁶ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 14.

Music making is neither a means nor an end but an offering, therefore an act of worship.”⁷

Also, in the first chapter, Best adheres to the connection of *imago Dei* and the creation mandate in Genesis as presented by Francis Schaeffer.⁸ Echoing Schaeffer’s argument outlined in chapter 2 of this dissertation, Best writes, “Having made the creation and having created us in his image, God has given us a particular assignment that could not have been given to any other created beings.”⁹ Both men and women, Best notes, are made in God’s image and therefore “[possess] enormous creative powers . . . [that] are neither the same as the rest of the creation nor subject to it.”¹⁰

Influenced by Leland Ryken and Frank Gaebelein, Best addresses the effects of the fall on music making, human imagination, musical pluralism, and stewardship. Ryken and Gaebelein, colleagues and friends of Best during his time at Wheaton, investigate the results of the sin and the fall on the creation of art. Ryken contends that the fall impacts the morality of art, while Gaebelein, notes that effects of the fall exist in art, even in the work of a redeemed artist.¹¹ However, Best takes this idea further: Rather than attempting to examine music and art before the fall, he uses Jesus as a model in support for his argument for musical pluralism. He writes, “the music Jesus heard and made throughout his life [was] made by . . . fallen creatures—the very ones he died to redeem. The ramifications of this single fact are enormous.”¹² He uses this fact to contend that

⁷ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 14–15.

⁸ Francis A. Schaeffer, *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer*, 2nd ed. vol. 2 book 5, *Art and the Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1982), 394.

⁹ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 16.

¹⁰ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 16.

¹¹ See chap. 2 of this dissertation for explanation of Ryken’s and Gaebelein’s philosophies. See also Leland Ryken, “In the Beginning God Created,” in *The Christian Imagination: Essays on Literature and the Arts*, ed. Leland Ryken (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), and Frank E. Gaebelein, “Toward a Christian View of Aesthetics,” in Ryken, *The Christian Imagination*, 50.

¹² Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 18.

Christians can use, experience, and perform music and art created by Christians and non-Christians alike. Furthermore, Best claims, the “mind of Christ” and the “Creatorhood of God should guide every note composed, arranged, played and sung” for the Christian musician—this connection to and reliance upon God is stewardship.¹³ He continues, “The reason is simple: God the Creator has made it clear that function and worth, usefulness and integrity, are to be joined in every action.”¹⁴ Finally, Best discusses music making in light of the incarnation and Christian community. He uses the analogy of centripetal and centrifugal force:

Centripetal force urges things inward, toward a powerful center. Centrifugal force urges things outward. Musicians can act centripetally, expecting everything and everybody to come their way. They can be centrifugal, continually giving themselves without taking much in. Or they can be both. They can drink in from as many sources as possible, giving thanks for the rich world of musical creativity, drawing people in and serving them. Then, linked to the body of Christ and obligated to a world community, they fling themselves outward as servants, shepherds, helpers, teachers, bards, and prophets. This grand combination of drinking in and giving out is the best way Christian musicianship can be defined, whether it takes place in church, the concert hall, the home, the jazz club, coffeehouse, public school, or mission field.¹⁵

Best’s analogy of centripetal and centrifugal force works well when applied to the Christian life and to the church. Christians (artists or not) can become inward focused in many areas—soaking up Bible study and church classes without serving. They can also be outward focused, pouring themselves into ministry without taking the time or opportunity to nourish their own spirits. Or, like Best suggests, they can be both. They can absorb teachings, Bible studies, and receive the benefit of being ministered to, and they can use these sources of growth to become “servants, shepherds, helpers,” and the like. Best’s analogy is helpful in shaping a whole and complete musician and easily goes further in modeling a growing and giving Christian.

¹³ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 30.

¹⁴ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 30.

¹⁵ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 38.

In chapter 2, Best addresses the meaning of music, outlining various viewpoints and ultimately concluding that music itself bears no intrinsic meaning. Rather, music's meaning stands within context and/or text. Following aspects of Susanne Langer's symbolic theory of music, Best concludes that "art and especially music are morally relative and inherently incapable of articulating, for want of a better term, truth speech. They are essentially neutral in their ability to express belief, creed, moral and ethical exactitudes, or even worldview."¹⁶ Additionally, Best believes that "*no matter how passionately artists may believe what they believe or try to show these beliefs in what they imagine and craft, their art remains purposefully 'dumb.'*"¹⁷ To put it another way, untexted art forms cannot "speak" (i.e. are dumb or mute) or articulate the belief and worldview of the artist in the same way as texted artforms. Therefore, these artforms such as music, are morally neutral. He also notes that "*artists and their works can be separated and their works are to be understood simply as handiwork.*"¹⁸ However, artists must be held "personally accountable" for their beliefs, actions and for the "reasons they make their art and music the way they do."¹⁹ Additionally, Best proposes that believers are "biblically justified in fully celebrating artistic activity of the most diverse sort, including that which may have been created in downright unbelief."²⁰

Following Schaeffer's argument that there are neither godly nor ungodly styles of art—only misuse—Best suggests that there is no Christian or non-Christian music.²¹

¹⁶ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 41. See also Susanne K. Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key: A Study in the Symbolism of Reason, Rite, and Art* (New York: New American Library, 1942), and Langer, *Feeling and Form: A Theory of Art Developed from "Philosophy in A New Key"* (New York: Routledge, 1959).

¹⁷ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 42. Italics are in the original.

¹⁸ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 42.

¹⁹ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 42

²⁰ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 43.

²¹ Schaeffer, *Art and the Bible*, 406. Calvin Johansson also makes this point that sacred and secular are not "qualities of things," but rather "qualities of relationship orientation" in Calvin M.

Taking this idea further, he contends that there is art created by both Christians and non-Christians since music in and of itself is neutral. He connects this argument with the doctrine of common grace. “Common grace holds that God, in unmerited and unmeasured graciousness, brings gifts and provision to the whole of a world that is fallen and generally in rebellion. Common grace enables unregenerate people to perform noble deeds . . . to submit themselves to and show understanding for moral and ethical codes of behavior.” However, people who reject and oppose secular styles of art and music often neglect this idea of common grace. Best argues that rather than applying the theme of common grace to the arts, “they mix in arguments about lifestyles and lyrics [and] introduce arguments about biological changes that certain kinds of music introduce.”²² But, as Best contends, “Biological changes are not the same as moral changes, nor can they be said to cause them. There is nothing un- or anti-Christian about any kind of music. By the same token, there is no such thing as Christian music:” an argument first put forth by Jacques Maritain and addressed in chapter 2 of this dissertation.²³ Here, Best is opposing the views of Calvin Johansson and John Makujina, who argue in favor of a morality or immorality of music.²⁴ Johansson argues that Christians should not compartmentalize their lives into sacred and secular categories—all of life is to be consecrated to God.²⁵ However, he does not apply this idea to music in the same way as Best in that he removes human agency from the connection between music and behavior. Best places the responsibility of behavior squarely on the shoulders of the person, not the

Johansson, *Music and Ministry: A Biblical Counterpart* (Peabody, PA: Hendrickson, 1984), 64.

²² Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 52.

²³ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 52.

²⁴ See Calvin Johansson, *Strengthening Music Ministry in the Evangelical Church* (Bloomington, IN: Westbow, 2019), chap. 8, “Law and Grace,” para. 4, Kindle, and John Makujina, *Measuring the Music: Another Look at the Contemporary Christian Music Debate*, 3rd ed. (Fort Worth, TX: Religious Affections Ministries, 2016).

²⁵ Johansson, *Music and Ministry*, 64.

music.

Also, within the second chapter, Best differentiates between the transcendentals of truth and beauty, maintaining that the two are not interchangeable.²⁶ He suggests that “beauty is a quality, an idealized abstraction. Truth is not an abstraction or simply a quality.”²⁷ Additionally, Best argues that there may be “degrees” of beauty, but not of truth.

Finally, Best deals with musical meaning and worship arguing that music does not cause one to worship. He also addresses the issues of discernment and obedience for the Christian musician. He argues that if one can offer all of her music and art to God as a part of “personal holiness,” then God will accept it. Best states, “Whether the offering is a twelve-bar blues or a hymn tune, the Christian is free of the moral nothingness of music exactly the same way a former idolater is released from the nothingness of the idol . . . each Christian is bound to the weight of, and freed by, truth itself.”²⁸

In chapter 3, Best addresses musical pluralism and diversity using creation as a model. He argues that creation demonstrates that many species with various levels of aesthetic pleasure and function are allowed to exist; so it is with music. He writes,

Just as there are numberless species and subspecies of tree, so there are of music . . . just as certain environments may welcome many species at once . . . just as one person may consider one species of tree more aesthetically pleasing or functionally useful than another, so with music. In the meantime, the intrinsic worth of every type, along with its contextual ability to be useful, is common to all musics as it is to all trees.²⁹

Continuing in his advocacy of musical pluralism, Best examines similarities with musical pluralism and Pentecost. He argues that “musical pentecost is not one music

²⁶ Best separates beauty into two categories: aesthetic beauty, and moral beauty.

²⁷ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 43.

²⁸ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 62.

²⁹ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 66.

pitted against another. It is a sharing, a commingling, a co-celebration, a co-usage among many tongues. Artistic pentecost is community. It unifies.”³⁰ Best suggests that for the believer, “all the world is in all music making together, good and bad. Somehow, all of this music will bend its knee before God. Somehow, this great babble will turn to God’s glory, from rap to Bach to the gamelan. Until we realize this, we have not earned the right to talk about standards or quality.”³¹

Best centers his discussion of musical pluralism on aesthetics and musical quality in chapter 4. He notes that everyone enjoys music and a “sense of quality, even though it might not always be that finely tuned.”³² However, sometimes the sense of quality is heightened and musical choices are made through “very formalized and highly theoretical mechanisms . . . through the workings of ‘etiquettes’ and social codes of their particular subculture or grouping, sometimes through simple, off-the-cuff reactions, and . . . through the mixture of tradition, appropriateness, and authority.”³³ Best argues that the evaluation of musical qualities should “*take place within musical categories, not between them. In the creational model of contrasting kinds, one does not judge the aesthetic quality of a cactus by talking about an orchid.*”³⁴ Further expounding upon appropriate evaluation within categories Best applies this argument to music. He writes, “*in the narrower sense of species and species, pine trees and eucalyptus trees cannot be similarly compared. It makes sense, then, to apply these analogies to musical evaluation.*”³⁵ Approaching musical evaluation in this way helps avoid “aesthetic

³⁰ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 68.

³¹ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 82.

³² Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 87.

³³ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 90.

³⁴ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 92. Italics are in the original.

³⁵ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 92. Italics are in the original.

universalism—applying a single aesthetic to multiple musical practices” while ensuring that the judgement employs artistic or genre integrity.³⁶ However, Best cautions against aesthetic universalism as it may result in “carelessness with which we might justify the growing proliferation of musical styles.”³⁷ This means that in genres where substyles, and sub-substyles exist, we should employ specific aesthetic criteria for each substyle and sub-substyle. For example, there is jazz with substyles of free jazz, modal jazz, and fusion jazz (and numerous others): due to the variance in musical characteristics of each of these substyles, applying a universal aesthetic by which to evaluate modal jazz (which is based upon ancient church modes rather than modern Western tonality) and fusion jazz (which incorporates elements from a plethora of other styles) would result in a “careless” treatment of judgment. Still, Best believes that the “quest for quality—however formally or colloquially articulated and lived out—is universal.”³⁸ Additionally, he notes that pluralism “remains organic” amid “qualitative hierarchies” in the same way that the body of Christ functions. Connecting pluralism to Paul’s analogy of the church in 1 Corinthians 12, Best writes, “All the parts are both important and in need of each other even though some might be better than others. Intrinsic worth binds all together, even when something may be said to be better than something else.”³⁹ He continues noting that such a coexistence of various levels of quality can be practical: “Things in the creation that might be less desirable in one context become highly desirable, or better-than, in another . . . *better-than-ness may not be hierarchical but functional.*”⁴⁰

The position Best takes in favor of musical pluralism within the church and the

³⁶ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 92.

³⁷ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 93.

³⁸ Harold Best, email to Mark Coppenger, February 7, 2020.

³⁹ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 105.

⁴⁰ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 105. Italics are in the original.

life of the Christian has been an issue of debate among some reviewers. While this position is largely praised in the published reviews of *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, Calvin Johansson, professor at Evangel College, lists Best as a “relativist” in his evaluation while himself holding to a position of musical and aesthetic absolutes.⁴¹ Johansson claims that “the comprehensiveness of the Hebrew/Christian worldview is weakened by Best’s acceptance of musics in worship which compromise scriptural directives concerning separation from the world. The Christian worldview is an objective worldview and its application (to be consistent) must be objective.”⁴² Further arguing against musical relativism or subjectivity, Johansson avers that the “gradual dumbing down of church music and church discipline” parallel the “unravelling of contemporary societal life” and are “predicated upon the enthronement of amorality, denial of authority, championing unrestrained diversity [and the] dissolution of absolutes.”⁴³ However, Best’s connection of quality and judgment serves as a point of agreement for Johansson. He writes, “I think that Best’s general idea that compositional quality can be ascertained is certainly an area with which I agree.”⁴⁴

Like Johansson, Scott Aniol, professor of worship at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, fundamentally disagrees with Best’s musical pluralism and musical relativity with regard to musical amorality. He argues that when the church insists that music remains morally neutral, then “all music is permissible, and anyone who insists that one musical form is more excellent or fitting for purposes of worship

⁴¹ Calvin M. Johansson, review of *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, by Harold M. Best, *Christian Scholar’s Review* 25 no. 2 (1995): 233. See also the list comparing and contrasting Best’s and Johansson’s philosophies included in Barry Liesch’s *The New Worship: Straight Talk on Music and the Church* (1996; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker 2001), 197–98.

⁴² Calvin M. Johansson, letter to author, January 15, 2020.

⁴³ Johansson, letter to author.

⁴⁴ Johansson, letter to author. See also Monty Boyd McGee, “Serving the Body of Christ in Corporate Worship: An Apologetic for Embracing Multiple Styles of Music” (DME thesis, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2018), 94–100 for more on Johansson’s aversion to musical pluralism and contemporary popular music styles.

than another is castigated. Any amateur can write a ditty on a napkin and rise to stardom in the contemporary Christian music community.”⁴⁵ This musical neutrality, he claims, “has led to a pop marketplace of substandard church music.”⁴⁶ But, this idea of musical neutrality birthing forth an “anything goes” musical pluralism (inside of and outside of the church) must be viewed in light of Best’s insistence on pursuing excellence. In *Music through the Eyes of Faith* as in various articles and lectures, Best carefully articulates a musical and aesthetic value system that includes levels and “better-than-ness.” On the surface, Best would argue that no style is off-limits, but careful reading of his arguments reveals that he recognizes various degrees of appropriateness.⁴⁷

Makujina sides with Aniol and Johansson in opposing Best’s argument for musical pluralism rooted in moral neutrality. He claims that holding to such musical relativism and subjectivity is responsible for the negative aspects of CCM. He writes, “This kind of mentality, [referencing CCM], coupled with an almost institutionalized fear of legalism, has led to a very low view of the holiness of God and Christian sanctification.”⁴⁸

Following his discussion on the amorality of music in chapter 5, Best addresses the subject of excellence as it pertains to the Christian artist echoing Ryken and Gaebelein.⁴⁹ Rooting his argument in Scripture (Phil 3 and 4; 1 Cor 12, 13, and 14), Best defines excellence as “the process of becoming better than I was. I am not to become

⁴⁵ Scott Aniol, email to the author, December 7, 2019. See Aniol, *Worship in Song: A Biblical Philosophy of Worship and Music* (Winona Lake, IN: BMH, 2009), chap.5. “Modernism/Postmodernism,” para. 7, Kindle and Aniol, *By the Waters of Babylon: Worship in a Post-Christian Culture* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2015).

⁴⁶ Aniol, *Worship in Song*, chap. 5, “Modernism/Postmodernism,” para. 7, Kindle.

⁴⁷ Harold M. Best, “Music and Meaning: All Forms Are Valid,” *9Marks* IX (2014), <https://www.9marks.org/article/journalmusic-and-meaning-all-forms-are-valid/>. Here, Best distinguishes between “better” and “appropriate” when evaluating music for corporate worship.

⁴⁸ Makujina, *Measuring the Music*, 271.

⁴⁹ Chap. 2 of this dissertation outlines the arguments on the pursuit of excellence for the Christian artist offered by Frank Gaebelein and Leland Ryken.

better than someone else is or even like someone else. Excelling is simply—and radically—the process of improving over yesterday.”⁵⁰ From these passages, Best argues that excellence is both relative and absolute. It is absolute in that “we are commanded to pursue it.”⁵¹ In this sense, excellence is connected to the biblical principle of stewardship. It is relative “because it is set in the context of growth, of growing up into, of striving, wrestling, hungering, thirsting, pressing on from point to point and achievement to achievement.”⁵² Additionally, Best carefully addresses parameters for the biblical command to pursue excellence. He notes that the instruction to strive and work to excel is not a call to seek after perfection. Rather, he writes,

Excellence is temperance in all things. It is servanthood. It is loving-kindness. It is sojourn. It is esteeming another better than oneself. It is meekness, brokenness, personal holiness, greatness of soul. It is peaceableness, gentleness, perseverance, hunger and thirst. Wherever we are in the quest of these, there is more. Excellence is for everybody. It is commanded and we must pursue it. There are no exceptions and no stopping in the pursuit of it. It is a process, not an event. And, in the final analysis, there are no earthly measurements for it.⁵³

Following his definition and discussion of excellence, Best concentrates on succeeding and competing as effects of pursuing excellence. Like excellence, Best argues, succeeding and competing are processes also outlined in Scripture. Best recognizes that “the Scripture uses strong, everyday, often coarse language to press the messages about excelling, competing, and succeeding [These words are] scattered throughout both testaments: running, warring, wrestling, striving, walking, fighting They are there to show the gritty reality of the struggle each of us faces daily.”⁵⁴ However, Best rightly acknowledges the drive to pursue excellence, success, and

⁵⁰ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 108.

⁵¹ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 108.

⁵² Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 109.

⁵³ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 113–14.

⁵⁴ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 115.

competition within music making may result in idolatry.

The major theme of chapter 6 is that Christian music makers should strive for high standards of quality in their musical offerings. Best argues that because music making is an act of worship to a Holy God our concern with quality should be heavy and sincere. Arguing against the sacrifice of quality in the name of institutional growth, people pleasing, or attempting to stay culturally relevant, Best writes, “Good music, or aesthetic quality, must rise directly out of integrity and authenticity, and integrity and authenticity inevitably carry their own authority ‘Holy shoddy is still shoddy.’”⁵⁵

Additionally, in this chapter, Best distinguishes between musical quality and musical relevance. He claims, “One of the aesthetic tenets of pluralism is that while quality is always an issue, it can be found in many kinds of music. The same is true of profundity. Many kinds of music can be profound, as long as we understand that there is more than one kind of profundity.”⁵⁶ Building from his experience of pushing away from musical snobbery during his time at Wheaton, Best concludes, “If we are not careful, we can assume that intellectual depth is overwhelmingly important. Then we might want further to assume that because classical music is more consciously intellectual than popular music—and by all accounts it is—popular music cannot be profound.”⁵⁷ He provides three caveats for this position: (1) “Some classical music is quite devoid of conscious intellectualism, yet it is profound.” (2) “A significant amount of intellectually conceived music is shallow, because the only thing to take note of is its intellectual complexity. It is otherwise dry and academic— music written about music, technically complex but expressively mute.” (3) “Popular, folk, and jazz compositions can be quite profound, even though they may be simple, short, and relatively unpolished.” The answer

⁵⁵ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 118–19.

⁵⁶ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 122.

⁵⁷ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 123.

“lies in moving beyond structural process and complexity all by themselves. Music must finally be expressively powerful, give or take intellectualism, in order for it to be truly deep.”⁵⁸ Breaking away from formalist philosophers such as Carroll Pratt and Leonard Meyer (discussed in chapter 2), who find musical meaning in the structure or form of music, Best claims that “the ultimate force of any music lies in cumulative expressiveness. In other words, profundity may be of two kinds: that which is profound by virtue of its deep intellectual processes coupled to expressiveness, and that which probes and ponders almost exclusively because of its expressiveness.”⁵⁹ Continuing, he writes that profundity may have its roots in “the ability of the performer to move people” and that people should not be scorned when “profoundly moved by music” even if the performance falls “below sensible standards. Their love should not be questioned; their taste, quite certainly.”⁶⁰

Pushing back against the high and low art, classical and popular musical dichotomy, that saturated Best’s experiences at Nyack and at Wheaton, he notes that common or mediocre art still has worth. He writes, “Something can be vulgar, common, or coarse and still have integrity, worth, and aesthetic winsomeness.”⁶¹ From this, Best develops a philosophy of the aesthetic which he calls both exceptional and mediocre. He writes, “There is a kind of music and art making, often termed ‘corny’ (or ‘sentimental’), which is entirely legitimate and necessary in its place.”⁶² He continues, “Mediocrity and kitsch are something else altogether. And as with excellence, they know no boundaries. There is mediocre classical art and mediocre popular art. Mediocrity is simply a notable

⁵⁸ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 123.

⁵⁹ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 123–24.

⁶⁰ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 123.

⁶¹ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 126.

⁶² Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 128.

lapse of quality in any category or medium.”⁶³ However, Best acknowledges that within various categories of musical hierarchy exists the possibility for both “deep” and “shallow” examples. He notes that there are four ways this occurs: (1) high quality music with shallow content and engagement (taking in classical music in the background of a cartoon); (2) casual listening to complex music (using a Bach sonata to test the acoustics of a performance space); (3) shallow content with deep engagement (detailed theory analysis of a simple piece); and (4) deep content with deep engagement (drawing on Nicholas Wolterstorff’s concept of perceptual contemplation discussed in chapter 2).⁶⁴ Best writes, “This mode includes intense performance, study, or composition of structurally and expressively complex music.”⁶⁵ He notes that this combination of deep content and deep engagement is thought to be the way people ought to listen to music, but it “does not take place all that frequently.”⁶⁶ On the positive side, Best argues that all different types of music—good and bad—can be experienced and enjoyed “while other things go on.”⁶⁷ The negative aspect of this occurs when musical artists or listeners do not engage with deep music from a “corresponding personal depth.”⁶⁸ This downside can occur within the church as well. Best writes, “Pleasurable insignificance can be sacramentalized. Trivial engagement with trivialized content, coupled to a perception that worship is pleasure and the presence of God is its chief symptom, can be easily traced to a spiritualization of insignificant significance.”⁶⁹ However, Best argues that “for the Christian, all music making . . . is a part of a larger life of worship and offering. Whether

⁶³ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 128.

⁶⁴ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 132–33.

⁶⁵ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 133.

⁶⁶ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 133.

⁶⁷ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 133.

⁶⁸ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 133.

⁶⁹ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 134.

the content is shallow or deep, diversion, engagement, and pleasure are always at the deepest level, for it is the worship of God . . . is the crowning glory of all our actions.”⁷⁰

Best concludes chapter 6 by presenting his process for making musical choices. He suggest that one should be set on finding quality while making music “actively” rather than “passively.”⁷¹ Additionally he writes that we should look to history because the “test of time is an exemplary model for sorting quality out.”⁷² We should observe the experts—find a “Christian who does music truly.”⁷³ Furthermore, he urges that music making is a “matter of conscience” and while music is amoral, “its makers are morally accountable.”⁷⁴ Another suggestion Best offers is to practice “comparative listening” by measuring music to music rather than music to text.⁷⁵ He also cautions against following musicians who have “no sympathy for any music except what they like or do.”⁷⁶ Best notes that these musicians rarely teach; rather, they only rebuke. Finally, he writes, “Even though some or all of these suggestions might leave you feeling a bit vulnerable, I believe they work. They have worked for me, they are still working, and I expect them to continue.”⁷⁷

Chapter 7 begins with Best’s definition of worship. He argues that worship is a “simultaneous expression of dependency and worth: I am unworthy; you or it are worthy,

⁷⁰ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 136.

⁷¹ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 138.

⁷² Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 139.

⁷³ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 139.

⁷⁴ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 139.

⁷⁵ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 140.

⁷⁶ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 142. This point of criteria for making musical choices stems largely from the encounters Best experienced with what he describes as the “musical snobbery” he encountered at Wheaton. Various people employed such absolutism which inspired Best to break away from the high and low art and value dichotomy to pursue a broader musical pluralism which he shared and passed on to his students.

⁷⁷ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 142.

therefore worshiped (literally, worth-shiped). Furthermore, worship is an expression of insufficiency: I am not complete in myself.”⁷⁸ He moves from this admittedly broad definition to explaining how worship works within a Christian worldview. He acknowledges that because of the fall of humanity the worship of God is unnatural even though the action of worship in general is natural.⁷⁹ Basing his argument on Romans 12:1, John 4:23-24; and Psalm 29:2, he concludes that “our worship is not just the occasional and ceremonial, even sincere, worship of a holy God, but a striving after personal and continuing holiness, following hard after Christ, imitating him.”⁸⁰

Following his explanation of worship, Best discusses the role and function of music in worship. Referencing his earlier argument that music making is an act of worship rather than a tool or an aid to worship, Best claims that both making and listening to music are acts and offerings of worship. He writes,

Whether an act of worship issues in creating something as long-lasting as a building or as transient as a musical performance; whether the offering is simple or complex, well done or not so well done; whether it is African, Indonesian, or American; whether it takes place in a church or a kitchen or a concert hall; if it is made with all of our heart and might and offered to God by faith, it can be nothing less than an act of worship.⁸¹

Best deepens his argument against music as a tool for worship noting that a tool is designed to complete a task and sometimes tools can be used to create other tools.⁸² “If we say that the arts were one large set of tools, making worship possible, then what artistic acts comprise worship itself?”⁸³ He takes this further claiming that “If we

⁷⁸ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 143.

⁷⁹ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 145.

⁸⁰ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 148.

⁸¹ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 149.

⁸² Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 150.

⁸³ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 150.

say that the arts are tools for worship, then the arts can only precede worship.”⁸⁴ Thus, worship is limited to “praying, preaching, and hearing the Word of God. But isn’t singing a form of praying or proclamation? And isn’t it Word centered? What is a sermon, then, an act of worship or an aid to worship?” Circling back to Romans 12:1, which teaches that all aspects of life are to be offered up in worship, he asks “where do the tools fit in?”⁸⁵ Best concludes that if these tools are means to bring about worship, “then they lie outside of or come before worship. If this is so, then part of our lives is nonworship, and the tools are preworship. By contrast, true worship comprises all its actions and all of its pieces, the whole greater than the sum of the parts.”⁸⁶ He concludes that one action of worship “breeds another action. This idea is distinct from saying that an aid to worship leads to an act of worship.”⁸⁷

Additionally, in chapter 7, Best addresses the difference between being spiritually shaped and emotionally moved by music. He writes, “Those who love God and desire to worship but have not yet come to the more biblical understanding that worship is a continuing state will quite naturally cleave to any action that moves them emotionally and approximates a sense of worship itself.”⁸⁸ He furthers the distinction between musical and emotional impacts and true worship stating that “The importance of aesthetic ecstasy for the worshiper is that it should take place within an already ecstatic heart, made that way by the overwhelming love of God, whether music is present or not.”⁸⁹ This argument guards against the false assumption that music causes worship, or

⁸⁴ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 150.

⁸⁵ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 150.

⁸⁶ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 150–51.

⁸⁷ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 151.

⁸⁸ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 151.

⁸⁹ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 152.

that music invites the presence of God.

Concluding chapter 7, Best engages with the relationships between faith and music and grace and music. He writes, “True worship is not possible without faith. Faith is absolute trust in the one true God who is to be believed for everything he has said and done. Other kinds of faith are either wrong or secondary.” He continues, “Faith, in its proper scriptural definition, does away with these errors without doing away with music. It puts music in its proper place, along with every other act and offering: giver before gift and worship containing, not being contained by, acts of worship.”⁹⁰ Building on the necessity of faith in worship, Best advocates, again, for musical pluralism in the life of the Christian and in worship using the doctrines of creation and new creation. He maintains,

Because true Christianity cannot be thought of apart from new creation, there should be no kind of music, however radical, however new, however strange, that is out of place in Christian worship, *as long as it is faithfully offered. And no Christian, truly living by faith, should ever turn his or her back on and refuse to offer a musical piece simply because it is too radical.*⁹¹

The faith of Christian musicians and artists, according to Best, assures them that however surprising or “new an offering may be, it cannot out-reach, out-imagine or overwhelm God.”⁹² Additionally, Best notes that “faith is only unto faith. Just as we worship while continuing to worship, are saved while being saved . . . we are to exercise faith unto faith, not faith unto something other than faith.”⁹³ While Best is correct in the joining of specific acts and times of worship to our continuous life of worship, his example of “saved while being saved” is potentially theologically misleading. Scripture does speak of salvation from past, present, and future tenses: Ephesians 2:8, 1 Corinthians 1: 18, and

⁹⁰ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 153.

⁹¹ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 154. Italics are in the original.

⁹² Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 154.

⁹³ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 156.

Romans 5:9 are examples.⁹⁴ However, the terms “justification” and “sanctification” more clearly put forth Best’s point (which is correct). Justification occurs instantly upon placing faith in Christ and surrendering to his lordship, sanctification is the continuous transformation of the believer’s mind and heart—becoming like Christ. He continues, “We offer our music by faith unto an increase in faith, knowing that God hears and is delighted; knowing that faith will sometime be turned to sight; and that we will finally know as we are known.”⁹⁵

Best argues that grace and music are most strongly connected through redemption. He writes, “God’s saving grace produces songs in the hearts of the redeemed.”⁹⁶ He rightly notes that “Grace is passed instructionally through the text, which is celebrated musically as corporate offering to God.”⁹⁷ Best contends that just as the heart of the redeemed sings to God because of grace, God, the “all-gracious and eternally saving Father” simultaneously “sings *over* those who are singing *to* him.”⁹⁸ He builds this argument on Zephaniah 3:17: “The Lord your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you with his love; he will exult over you with loud singing.” Additionally, Best engages with grace and music from the picture of eternal heavenly worship presented in the book of Revelation. He asserts,

The eternally gathered church will finally hear the triune God singing over the entire creation; it will hear the bridegroom, Christ, singing over his bride, the church. Grace, in its final uninhibited triumph; faith having turned from trust to sight; and worship having been totally purified— these together will generate an endless song

⁹⁴ Derek Thomas, “3 Tenses of the Gospel,” *Legonier Ministries*, March 5, 2014, <https://www.ligonier.org/blog/3-tenses-gospel/>.

⁹⁵ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 156.

⁹⁶ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 157.

⁹⁷ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 157.

⁹⁸ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 157. Italics are in the original.

of which no one presently can give full account.⁹⁹

Finally, Best acknowledges that grace is not something kept to oneself. Rather, “*We sing of God’s grace; we play of God’s grace to the whole world*” through texted corporate song and through purely instrumental music.¹⁰⁰ The Christian musician makes music “graciously, whatever its kind or style, as ambassadors of Christ, showing love, humility, servanthood, meekness, victory, and good example.”¹⁰¹

Next, in chapter 8, Best offers a discussion of the pitfalls and successes of Contemporary Christian Music. He defines contemporary as “at the time of” rather than “new.”¹⁰² From this understanding he argues that Contemporary Christian music (CCM) is “less of what’s ‘new’ than ‘preferred.’”¹⁰³ Recognizing that CCM is steeped in cultural influence coupled with the then current developments of electronic media, Best seeks to examine “the extent to which Christian music has separated itself from that of the church instead of separating itself from that of the world. While CCM endorses the idea that the only viable styles are those of secular culture, the churchly styles . . . are suddenly suspect.”¹⁰⁴ He argues that “When the Christian’s most noticeable music is so stylistically and procedurally identified with the very culture it sets out to confront, something . . . is wrong. The problem is not CCM’s capability for witness The problem is its capability to witness completely.”¹⁰⁵ Best reiterates his view that there exists no Christian music, but rather music done Christianly.

Best notes that some CCM artist experience backlash and criticism for “going

⁹⁹ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 157–58.

¹⁰⁰ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 158. Italics are in the original.

¹⁰¹ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 158.

¹⁰² Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 159.

¹⁰³ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 160.

¹⁰⁴ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 165.

¹⁰⁵ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 165.

secular” or performing in “secular” places. He writes, “This criticism is entirely unfair and biblically groundless. It is an unfortunate continuation of the old sacred/secular dualism.”¹⁰⁶ He presents two reasons for supporting CCM artists who “go secular:” (1) “All truth is God’s truth even when God or Christ or salvation are not particularly mentioned in wholesome lyrics,” and (2) Some artists choose to “target” the unchurched by going directly to them with good, clean, moralizing and civilizing, gospel-ready messages.”¹⁰⁷ Best rightly notes that there is a difference “between doing secular things Christianly and becoming secularized.”¹⁰⁸

Reliance on technology to improve quality and a false sense of connectedness or intimacy are among the negative aspects of CCM listed by Best. However, he commends CCM as a picture of musical pluralism due to the variety of musical styles it encompasses. Best writes, “CCM captures the spirit of a pluralistic musical culture” and “eases the relationship between sacred and secular popular music.”¹⁰⁹ Furthermore, CCM welcomes all popular music styles including folk, punk rock, rap, and “certain kinds of jazz and on occasion delves into semi- and pseudoclassical stylings. It is a compendium, musically speaking, of everything that popular culture is. Textually, it is also a compendium of everything popular theology is.”¹¹⁰

Additionally, Best argues that there is a perceived lack of depth in the content of CCM. He connects this assumed shallowness to Christians who are doing a poor job of living Christianly within the arts. He suggests that popular music has a place within the Christian life, but we “must protest when shallowness is the chief preference. The gospel

¹⁰⁶ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 170.

¹⁰⁷ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 171.

¹⁰⁸ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 171.

¹⁰⁹ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 178.

¹¹⁰ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 178.

is heavy and deep.”¹¹¹ Best encourages Christians to seek out ways CCM can “point beyond shallowness toward deeper engagement with deepening content.”¹¹²

Returning to his argument for pursuing excellence, Best argues that CCM coupled with ministry provides a platform to strive for improvement. He writes, “In a field as variegated and stylistically proliferated and competitive as pop and rock are, ministry alone won’t cut it. Excellence and uniqueness—two normal qualities for radically gifted and reborn people—must be relentlessly pursued.”¹¹³ Best further investigates the relationship between CCM and ministry, noting that CCM ministers as God’s power is perfected in the weakness of some while benefiting others. He writes, “All musicians who understand this, employing all kinds of music, making music everywhere . . . are ministers of music. It is to this extent that CCM ministers . . . because God has decided to work in the midst of its making.”¹¹⁴

In chapter 9, Best offers five principles for music making within the church. Using Scripture, Best recognizes that we are commanded to sing (Ps 96:1) and play instruments in praise of God (Ps 147, 149, and 150). Additionally, he argues worshippers must understand that text and music have different roles and functions in the music of the church. Best relies on Ephesians 5:19, which instructs us to “speak to one another in hymns and spiritual songs” and “make melody in your hearts to the Lord,” for the basis of his argument. Expounding upon this idea, he writes that “music is made first of all to the Lord and only secondarily to each other. Music is incapable of teaching what only truth can teach.”¹¹⁵ Furthermore, Best’s notion that the best music results from the

¹¹¹ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 175.

¹¹² Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 175.

¹¹³ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 181.

¹¹⁴ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 182.

¹¹⁵ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 185.

amalgamation of “mind and spirit” comes from 1 Corinthians 14:14 where Paul refers to a type of praying where “the spirit and mind work together. He [then] couples this kind of praying to a certain kind of singing in which mind and spirit are integrated.”¹¹⁶

Ultimately, Best contends that balance is better than extremism when working with areas of mind and spirit. Taking all scriptural instruction for creating music into account, he offers a final principle for crafting music within the church. Thus, he argues that we are to make music in all situations: “joy, triumph, imprisonment, solitude, grief, peace, war, sickness, merriment, abundance, and deprivation. This principle implies that the music of the church should be a complete music, not one-sided or single faceted.”¹¹⁷ From these guidelines, Best maintains that the consequence of musical appropriateness for the church has “eternal value.” He writes, “Everything done musically must be defended or critiqued theologically and biblically. Church music does not exist for its own sake; nor is it, as some would have it, just a tool. [Rather], music is, in its own way, proclamation and as such is completely accountable.”¹¹⁸ Additionally, Best contends that musical appropriateness is an issue of wisdom rather than pragmatics and that “what is best for the worshiping community at the time” must be considered and weighed heavily.¹¹⁹

In his argument for musical pluralism within the church, Best suggests that there should be a balance between the familiar and the new and that both types must be biblically and theologically sound.¹²⁰ Additionally, he highlights the importance of silence in worship, arguing that requiring musical silence reveals that God can be worshiped without music, and that “as lean and spare worshipers . . . we make music in

¹¹⁶ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 185.

¹¹⁷ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 186.

¹¹⁸ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 188.

¹¹⁹ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 188.

¹²⁰ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 191.

exactly the right amount.”¹²¹ This idea of including silence in our worship gatherings is of great importance in an age where most people are over stimulated with technology, entertainment, music, and the like that vie for attention. Michael Mercer, author and pastor, recognizes the significance of Best’s call for silence in worship to focus our hearts and minds on Christ in his review of *Music through the Eyes of Faith*. He claims that Best’s argument “got my attention because it speaks to a broader cultural issue that many of us don’t think about enough. [This] issue makes our perspective on music, as people of the 20th and 21st centuries, different than that of any previous generation of human beings. . . . *Silence*. What a concept. . . . *that* sounds like music to my ears.”¹²²

In chapter 10, Best addresses the witness of music in the church. He argues that just as everyone worships, so everyone witnesses. Connecting worship and witness, he notes that “witness is overheard worship.”¹²³ Building upon his view that music is an act of worship rather than a means of worship, he states that music is involved in worship.¹²⁴ However, he proposes that believers should not settle for assuming that “overheard worship” and “worship music are all we need.”¹²⁵ Rather, Best suggests,

There is also a very necessary and worthwhile body of music and musicians designed and called specifically to convey the importance, the need, and the way of becoming a new creature. The gospel must be sung, not just preached. This means that some people will be called to sing the gospel. They bear heavy responsibility to sing well, clearly, uncompromisingly, simply, and humbly.¹²⁶

¹²¹ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 195.

¹²² Michael Mercer, “Harold Best on Sound and Silence,” *Internet Monk Blog*, last modified, October 5, 2012, <https://internetmonk.com/archive/harold-best-on-sound-and-silence>. The emphasis is Mercer’s.

¹²³ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 203.

¹²⁴ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 204.

¹²⁵ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 204.

¹²⁶ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 204. Witness music can be described as any song with the aim to present the gospel through its lyric. Under Best’s definition and explanation of witness music, a number of songs in Contemporary Christian Music and modern or contemporary worship meet this criterion, e.g. Stewart Townend’s “In Christ Alone” and Chris Tomlin’s “Jesus, Son of God.”

Nonetheless, Best recognizes that personal preference on musical style and an aversion to witness art causes some people to reject witnessing with music.

Next, Best weighs the values and problems of witness music. He argues that witness music—referring to the “body of music and musicians designed and called specifically to convey the importance, the need, and the way of becoming a new creature”—is an effective means for drawing people to Christ and that it serves to aid the church in an outward focus. He writes that witness music “keeps the church from the temptation of making music solely for itself in the exclusivity of corporate worship.”¹²⁷ One of the main problems with witness music that Best highlights, is that it can be misused to “soften people’s emotions” rather than to “sing truth.” This manipulation reduces the gospel to “the level of horse trading and political chicanery. This sullies the name and purpose of authentic evangelists and musical witnesses.”¹²⁸ Additionally, Best notes that “the effectiveness of witness music can mistakenly reinforce the idea that all art can witness the way texted art does.”¹²⁹ He rightly holds that without text, art “can only witness about itself.”¹³⁰ This idea is seen in Scripture as Psalm 19 shows how the creation “points to God, but [cannot] speak for Him.”¹³¹

Additionally, Best acknowledges that Scripture does not speak directly to witness music or art. However, holding to Martin Luther’s normative principle view, he argues, “This lack of evidence about witness art and music should not necessarily be taken as a sign that it should be prohibited. Instead, we can assume that if the Scriptures do not specifically prohibit something, it may be practiced.”¹³²

¹²⁷ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 205.

¹²⁸ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 207.

¹²⁹ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 209.

¹³⁰ Best, email to Coppenger.

¹³¹ Best, email to Coppenger.

¹³² Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 210–11. Best, with David K. Huttar expounds upon

Furthermore, Best recognizes that the church, like its secular counterparts has mistakenly viewed music as a tool that people submit to rather than have mastery over. He writes, “The church, having been diluted early on in its history both by systematic and unsystematic Platonism, has yet to articulate a fully biblical perspective on the way the power and beauty of music should be constantly subject to the sovereignty of its users, who are in turn subject to the sovereignty of their Creator.”¹³³ Reiterating his argument, Best proposes that Christian artists and musicians have two important tasks: (1) “make excellent art, which might or might not directly witness,” and (2) “to understand that Christian artists are witnesses, whatever they do. The lives they lead are primarily as living epistles and secondarily as artistic witnesses” communicating the gospel “with every breath, in any situation, and with every act.”¹³⁴

Finally, Best calls the church to do better in leading the way in artistic excellence and creative authenticity. He writes,

All along we have been arguing that music has no intrinsically sacred meaning or secular meaning. We have argued instead that its meaning is brought about by repeated use in a given context, which then “imputes” meaning that music does not intrinsically possess. Because it is true that music quickly absorbs meaning from its immediate surroundings, this principle should work just as effectively when music, born first in the church, develops its primary associations there. Then if any perceptual dissonance takes place, it will take place in culture as a result of what the church does, not the reverse.¹³⁵

He argues that the church displays “biblical indigeneity” when it includes new songs and produces the best music first. This is not “beauty equaling truth or art equaling holiness,

his adherence to the normative principle over the regulative principle in their entry, “The Philosophy of Music in the New Testament,” in *The Complete Library of Christian Worship, Volume 1; The Biblical Foundations of Christian Worship*, ed. Robert E. Webber (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993), 233. Additionally, Robert Austell’s dissertation engages Best’s position as he explores the differences in the regulative and normative principles within Christian Worship. “Biblical Worship through Music,” (DMin. Diss., Reformed Theological Seminary, 2008), 126–27.

¹³³ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 212.

¹³⁴ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 212–13.

¹³⁵ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 215.

but artistic creativity found in primary contextual relationship to these attributes.”¹³⁶

Music through the Eyes of Faith offers a valuable aesthetic philosophy rooted in Scripture and from a biblical worldview to aid Christian music makers in faithfully fulfilling their calling to worship as they work, create, perform, practice, and live. Reviewer Gary Williams insists that those seeking a biblical position on music in the life of the Christian should read this work.¹³⁷ Additionally, insisting that Best is not a relativist, author, pastor, and musician Leonard Payton highly recommends this book with the caveat that a careful and thoughtful reading take place to ensure the reader weighs through Best’s arguments so as to not miss his intentions with a superficial skimming of ideas.¹³⁸

Best’s *Unceasing Worship*

Building off of the ideas presented in *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, Best articulates a clear philosophy and theology of worship and the arts in *Unceasing Worship*. Divided into two main parts, worship as continuous outpouring and worship and the arts, he gears this book toward worship leaders, pastors, seminary students and professors, musicians and artists, and laity alike.¹³⁹ His emphasis on continuous outpouring serves as the basis for each chapter and allows his arguments from *Music through the Eyes of Faith* to be further developed and explained. Alan Rathe, professor of worship studies at the Robert E. Webber Institute for Worship Studies, notes that in *Unceasing Worship*, Best offers a “scriptural theology of worship” while taking a “broad-brush approach,” focusing

¹³⁶ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 215.

¹³⁷ Gary Williams, review of *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, by Harold M. Best, *Kairós* 19 (1996): 93.

¹³⁸ Leonard Payton, review of *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, by Harold M. Best, *Reformation and Revival Journal* 4 no. 4 (1995): 134 and 136.

¹³⁹ Best, *Unceasing Worship: Biblical Perspectives on Worship and the Arts* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 2003), 11.

“thematically on a single theme: the idea that humans are designed for a ‘continuous outpouring’ of praise to their Creator.”¹⁴⁰

In chapter 1, Best defines worship as the “continuous outpouring of all that I am, all that I do and all that I can ever become in light of a chosen or choosing god.” He carefully explains this definition noting that it includes the whole human race, depicts lostness, and emphasizes the endless nature of worship—worship does not begin and end.¹⁴¹ He further unpacks the words “continuous outpouring,” arguing that this phrase contains the work of humans and the work of God to “inform a biblically complete concept of worship.” He contends that “continuous” means “relentless,” writing that “faithfulness to one’s spouse is to continue as long as life itself; we are continually to love God with heart, soul, and mind . . . we are to continue our stewardship whether we work or rest; we are to continue in the truth whether we play or preach.”¹⁴² And, “outpouring” implies an overflow surpassing “measuring out or filling quotas, even to the extent that it does not matter if some of it spills out into gracious waste.”¹⁴³ Anioli agrees with Best’s argument that worship does not turn on and off, writing that

I appreciated [Best’s] emphasis that worship does not somehow “start” and “finish” in the service on Sunday morning; rather, the Sunday event is merely an extension of the unceasing worship that is already taking place. I would perhaps place a [weightier] emphasis on what does “start” and “finish” in corporate worship, but I think Best’s emphasis has implications for corporate worship that run deep. For one, no worship leader, pastor, musical style, building or anything else takes us into the presence of God. We are already there in Christ. We are already worshiping (hopefully).¹⁴⁴

Best continues to undergird his definition of worship as a continuous

¹⁴⁰ Alan Rathe, *Evangelicals, Worship and Participation: Taking a Twenty-First Century Reading* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2014), 68.

¹⁴¹ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 18.

¹⁴² Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 19.

¹⁴³ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 20. Here, Best notes that he has chosen the word “outpouring” due to its prevalent (specific or implied) use in Scripture.

¹⁴⁴ Anioli, email to author.

outpouring. He notes that worship, for anyone, cannot be “self-contained, even when it barely dribbles out” and that this continuous outpouring “is bound to change the outpourer.”¹⁴⁵ Additionally, he connects continuous outpouring with God who even before creation, “eternally pours himself out to his triune Self in unending fellowship, ceaseless conversation and immeasurable love unto an infinity of the same. [This action] is the originating outpouring for which [mere] words fail and into which our faith-not-yet-become-sight peers with intense longing.”¹⁴⁶ From the outpouring of the triune God, the Godhead outpours himself toward creation. Best writes, “God’s creation is outpouring beyond himself and yet not himself. His creation comes of abounding grace and outpouring love. [The] creation is an outpoured work, a finished work, a good work.”¹⁴⁷

Building on the discussion of *imago dei* and music making and art from *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, Best applies this doctrine to continuous outpouring. He claims, “Because God is the Continuous Outpourer, we bear his image as continuous outpourers.”¹⁴⁸ In addition, Best suggests that we were created “continuously outpouring” rather than “to be continuous outpourers.”¹⁴⁹ Unpacking this further, he asserts that if people are created *to* worship or *for* worship, then God is an “incomplete person whose need for something outside himself (worship) completes his sense of himself.”¹⁵⁰ Best’s point is important. To put it another way: If people were created to worship God means that he needed humans. This argument would diminish God’s aseity—his self-sufficiency—which detracts from his eternal autonomy and power. Best’s understanding

¹⁴⁵ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 20.

¹⁴⁶ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 21.

¹⁴⁷ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 22.

¹⁴⁸ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 23.

¹⁴⁹ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 23.

¹⁵⁰ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 23.

and careful articulation of his position aligns with what Scripture teaches about the aseity of God as seen in Acts 17:24–25: “The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.”

Furthermore, Best connects continuous outpouring to the incarnation echoing Jeremy Begbie’s use of this doctrine in establishing a theology of the arts.¹⁵¹ Best writes, “If our Christology is correct, we can view the entire sojourn of the incarnate God on earth as continuous outpouring of a three-in-one kind: continuous outpouring with his triune self as part of the Godhead, continuous outpouring as perfect man to his heavenly Father and continuous outpouring toward the world as the only savior.”¹⁵² Like his philosophy of music making, which echoes Gaebelein and Ryken, Best also includes the effects of the fall in worship. He maintains, “The Fall did not signal the end of worship or continuous outpouring. Something deeper happened, far down in our being, whereby our entirety was inverted and turned to ruin Our outpouring was falsified. But it continued, with one telling difference: we exchanged gods.”¹⁵³ Concluding this chapter, Best summarizes his argument for continuous outpouring writing that as “an intrinsic part of our nature it remains with us and is ceaselessly at work, even as we choose death in outpouring ourselves toward false gods.”¹⁵⁴

Following his discussion of the function of continuous outpouring in chapter 1, Best moves to articulate what constitutes authentic worship in chapter 2. He centers his

¹⁵¹ Begbie’s application of the incarnation to aesthetic theology was discussed in chapter 2 of this dissertation. For more on Begbie’s argument, please see Jeremy Begbie’s *Voicing Creation’s Praise: Towards a Theology of the Arts*, reprint 1991 (Edinburgh: Clark, 2000) and *Beholding the Glory: Incarnation Through the Arts* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000).

¹⁵² Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 24.

¹⁵³ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 25.

¹⁵⁴ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 26.

argument on Christ noting that because Christ has redeemed us “authentic worship can only be in Christ.”¹⁵⁵ Additionally, Best connects faith and worship. He writes,

If in making music or listening to it I assume that faith will bring substance and evidence to the music, so as making it more “worshipful,” I am getting into real trouble. If I truly love the music—that is, if I have chosen a church that uses “my music” and I am deeply moved by it—I can make the mistake of coupling faith to musical experience by assuming that the power and effectiveness of music is what brings substance and evidence to my faith. I can then quite easily forge a connection between the power of music and the nearness of the Lord. Once this happens, I may even slip fully into the sin of equating the power of music and the nearness of the Lord. At that point music joins the bread and the wine in the creation of a new sacrament or even a new kind of transubstantiation.¹⁵⁶

Moving to the connection of hope and worship, Best recognizes that the theological usage of hope is drastically different from the secular. He notes that hope, in the biblical sense, must be connected to faith. He claims, “Thus the substance and evidence that faith inherently is, is also the final substance and evidence that hope anticipates with unclouded assurance.”¹⁵⁷ In this way, Best argues that we “worship continuously in hoping continuously.”¹⁵⁸ Additionally, he explores how worship and love are intertwined contending that our worship, our outpouring, is to be “rooted in love unto continuing love. We do not love because we worship; we worship in that we love.”¹⁵⁹

Relying on the book of Romans, Best applies the idea of worship as a continuous outpouring to the whole of the Christian life. Arguing that Romans 12:1 must be read in light of the preceding eleven chapters, Best argues that we are to be “once-for-all-living sacrifices on the merits of Christ’s once-for-all sacrifice. There is no repetition,

¹⁵⁵ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 27.

¹⁵⁶ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 30.

¹⁵⁷ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 31.

¹⁵⁸ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 31.

¹⁵⁹ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 33. Best uses Eph 3:17, 1 Cor 13, and Gal 5 to support his position on the relationship between worship and love.

only continuity.”¹⁶⁰ Additionally, he notes that we are alive in the midst of our sacrifice. He writes, “Having died with Christ, we are caught up in life even as Christ himself took life back to himself, and now we place ourselves on the altar as a way of continued living and outpouring.”¹⁶¹

Demonstrating the strides taken to develop a view of worship that is utterly biblical, Best provides numerous accounts of continuous outpouring in Scripture. Relying on Romans chapters 12–16, Galatians 6, Hebrews 12 and 13, and Philippians 1, he asserts that these passages “reach toward each other and serve as models for additional discoveries” even though he recognizes that they do not “equate with unceasing worship on a strict exegetical basis.”¹⁶² Rather, “since unceasing worship takes in the whole of our living, the overall spirit and force of these passages align themselves easily.”¹⁶³

Lastly, Best concludes this chapter by connecting Spirit and truth with time and place. He acknowledges that in the Old Testament, Spirit and truth are not connected to worship. He writes, “Truth lies in the Law, and truthful living lies in the love of the commandments and the keeping of them. Worshiping in Spirit is not directly linked to God-as-Spirit. Instead it is more evident in the idea that a spirit of brokenness . . . is the true spirit that makes the physical offerings of the sacrificial system effectual.”¹⁶⁴ The New Testament, he argues, reverses the relationship between Spirit and truth and time and place. He writes, “Time and place are not swept aside but are swept up in the Spirit and truth, in continuous worship, in living sacrifice and in the verities of faith, love, and hope.”¹⁶⁵ Ultimately, Best notes that worship does not occur only at church, but rather, we

¹⁶⁰ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 36.

¹⁶¹ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 36.

¹⁶² Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 41.

¹⁶³ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 41.

¹⁶⁴ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 47.

¹⁶⁵ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 47. However, Best does not engage with John 4:24 where Jesus

attend church as “continuing worshipers” gathering ourselves “together to continue our worship but now in the company of brothers and sisters.”¹⁶⁶

Best’s experience at Wheaton and the shift from thinking about music and art to thinking in and of music and art is the foundation for chapter 3.¹⁶⁷ He speaks of mutual indwelling, which is demonstrated in the “union and communion of all believers. In Christ, we are members of one another. We not only worship, serve and participate together, we do so at one with each other, even in each other, even as we are commonly in Christ . . . spiritually we participate in each other.”¹⁶⁸ Building off of his argument of centripetal and centrifugal force in music making within the Christian community in *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, he argues that “mutual indwelling is both centripetal and centrifugal. Centripetally, the body of Christ avidly gathers truth; it welcomes and embraces the weak, the poor, the broken It is centrifugal as well. It goes out; it hunts down the lost; it scatters the truth in witness.”¹⁶⁹ Ultimately, he summarizes and further explains his idea of mutual indwelling:

The triune God dwells within himself in an infinite glory and continuous outpouring. Through uncountable mercies, we are invited and authorized to say this: Christ comes to us; Christ redeems us; Christ is in us; we are in each other; God is our sanctuary; Christ is the everlasting Temple; the body of Christ is a living temple; Christ is knit into it as chief cornerstone; each believer is a living stone and yet a

tells the Samaritan woman that God seeks worshipers who worship in Spirit and truth. Best’s use of Spirit and truth is not connected to the Trinitarian worship model (Spirit-initiated worship) presented in this passage (and others such as Phil 3, Gal 5) and used by various worship authors such as John Frame, Bob Kauflin, and Robin Parry in their definitions of biblical worship. See John M. Frame, *Worship in Spirit and Truth* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 1996); Robin A. Parry, *Worshipping Trinity: Coming Back to the Heart of Worship* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2012); Bob Kauflin, *Worship Matters: Leading Others to Encounter the Greatness of God* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008); and Graham Kendrick, “Worship in Spirit and in Truth,” in *Composing Music for Worship*, ed. Stephen Darlington and Alan Kreider (Norwich, UK: Canterbury, 2003), 92.

¹⁶⁶ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 147.

¹⁶⁷ This philosophical shift is detailed in chap. 4 of this dissertation.

¹⁶⁸ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 152.

¹⁶⁹ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 154.

temple; each believer indwells all other believers; and Christ is all in all.¹⁷⁰

Best clarifies his position of mutual indwelling in chapter 4 recognizing the close proximity of his argument to mysticism. Building on the premise of mutual indwelling laid out previously, he notes that it is “about a world full of redeemed *imago Deis* individually thinking up and doing things . . . about the body of Christ” experiencing and participating in the senses.¹⁷¹ He argues that Christians should delight in the senses just as God does. He writes, “Of all people, Christians should have the best noses, the best eyes and ears, the most open joy, the widest sense of delight. That the opposite is often the case is no fault of the Lord’s.”¹⁷² Cautioning against being of the world rather than in it, Best contends that we must resist hyperspirituality and hypermaterialism in our journey as continuous outpourers.¹⁷³ Additionally, Best notes that the corporate worship of mutually indwelling continuous outpourers is where “sight and sense are ably guided in Spirit and truth, in faith, hope and love. Here is where believers in any spiritual state are anointed together with singular Truth, are made one yet simultaneously addressed as individuals.”¹⁷⁴ From this he emphasizes the responsibility of each worshiper to guard against corporate worship becoming a distraction. He says that “for each person is the church, and it is the church that is to be at worship, individual by individual When we place the responsibility of worship outside ourselves and not inside, where Christ is, we miss the biblical point of ongoing worship.”¹⁷⁵

Also, within chapter 4, Best stresses Scripture’s instruction for people to gather

¹⁷⁰ Best, *Unceasing Worship* 157.

¹⁷¹ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 58.

¹⁷² Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 59.

¹⁷³ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 60.

¹⁷⁴ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 60.

¹⁷⁵ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 61.

together to worship.¹⁷⁶ He writes, “Christ in us demands that each of us seek out who the rest of us are. It means realizing that we actually have each other, that we are already at one with each other, greeting each other, blessing each other, settling on acceptable ways to express ourselves to God’s glory. Then we craft these into a liturgy.”¹⁷⁷ Our gatherings, Best argues, should be steeped in diversity while putting aside personal preferences.

In addition to the diversity of the church, Best contends that the gathered church should be continuously learning. He writes, “The local church, therefore, is a biblical wisdom center far more than it is a worship center, and people should be drawn there . . . to learn under the guidance and care of specially trained and called servants”—clergy and laity alike.¹⁷⁸ Furthermore, Best calls believers to be “amateur theologians and Scripture specialists” and “students of Christ.”¹⁷⁹ As students of Christ, we are to participate in “liturgical action as both individual and corporate service to God” and church leaders should be “liturgically inventive” as a way to edify the body.¹⁸⁰

Finally, Best advocates for the value of the liturgical year, opposes dividing gatherings by style, age, or preference, and argues for artistic reformation within the church. Best contends that the division of many congregations is largely tied to music. He asks, “If we took music out of worship, would we have the same problem and the same set of solutions?” This is where artistic reformation has the possibility to unify. Best claims that reforming a philosophy of arts in the church removes music from the “limelight and puts Christ and his word back into prominence” and creatively strives for a

¹⁷⁶ Best relies on Heb 10:25 and Luke 4:16.

¹⁷⁷ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 62.

¹⁷⁸ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 66.

¹⁷⁹ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 67.

¹⁸⁰ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 72. Best argues that liturgy is not worship, but a “framework for local expressions of it.”

pluralism that is “new, old, and crosscultural.”¹⁸¹

Building on *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, Best argues that, like worship, witness is a continuous, all-of-life action in chapter 5. He defines witness as “a general and a specific out-toward and outpouring testimony.” Clarifying the function of worship and witness respectively, Best notes that worship is an outpouring toward God and witness is an outpouring toward humanity. Connecting worship and witness further, Best notes that as we are created worshipping and will always be worshipping something, for “everybody, everywhere, somehow and in some way, is giving expression to what masters them”—witnessing.¹⁸²

Additionally, Best recognizes the difficulties of authentic witnessing due to the double standard held between the secular world and Christians. He writes, “while the world sees its own inconsistencies as ‘the way it is,’ it sees the inconsistencies of the Christian as condemnable disjunction between perfection and imperfection . . . rather than a radically different way of dealing with good and evil.”¹⁸³ In other words, the shortcomings of believers are often viewed by the world as hypocrisy bolstering the position that Christians do not “practice what they preach.”¹⁸⁴ The church “unequivocally calls sin, sin and at the same time, recognizing that Christians still sin, speaks of forgiveness through repentance and pressing on.”¹⁸⁵

In the corporate gathering context, Best contends that what happens corporately with worship should be the same as what happens corporately with witness. He writes, “if worship and witness are seamlessly knit, then the corporate gatherings

¹⁸¹ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 75.

¹⁸² Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 78.

¹⁸³ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 79.

¹⁸⁴ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 79.

¹⁸⁵ Best, email to Coppenger.

should proceed in its fullest prophetic condition, irrespective of the ratio between saints and sinners.”¹⁸⁶ He argues that the completeness of the gospel is for the “whole of humanity and that becoming saved and continuing to be saved demand that the entire message of God in Christ must dominate whatever topic or theme is being emphasized at a particular time.”¹⁸⁷ Again, as in *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, Best’s terminology of “continuing to be saved” could be better communicated. Justification denotes the instant one is saved, a specific point in time. Sanctification indicates the process of becoming like Christ, of “working out one’s salvation” (Phil 2:12). Nonetheless, Best is correct in his understanding that believers are both saved in an instant and simultaneously “being saved” as they follow Christ, are sanctified to look more like him, and “endure to the end” (Heb 3:14).

Continuing to investigate witness as a continuous outpouring within the corporate gathering Best suggests several reasons why nonbelievers are seldom in church services. He contends that there is a misguided idea that worship is “for believers while witness and evangelism are reserved for other times and places,” urgency to reach the lost is largely absent from the prayer life of the congregation, and “the Word of God is superficially treated and listlessly read.”¹⁸⁸ From here, Best discusses the difference between witnessing and evangelizing noting that with evangelism “the salvation message may all too easily be left to itself.”¹⁸⁹ And the church is responsible for “forgetting that its task is to deal with continuous outpouring from the full extent of its inversion to that of its conversion.”¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁶ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 80.

¹⁸⁷ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 80.

¹⁸⁸ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 81.

¹⁸⁹ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 82.

¹⁹⁰ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 82.

Additionally, Best differentiates between crusade evangelism and evangelism on the mission field. He notes that on the mission field, evangelism “deals with the dilemma of lostness by taking issue with false worship and strange gods. Crusade evangelism bypasses this and goes directly to sinfulness and Christ’s remedy for it, without recognizing that false worship and false gods are the bedrock issue.”¹⁹¹ While evangelism on the mission field may address false worship and false gods in a more literal and direct manner than crusade evangelism, Best appears to overreach in his argument that crusade evangelism “bypasses” these things altogether. False worship and idolatry exist in forms other than animist gods and are addressed in crusade evangelism as issues of selfishness, greediness, busyness, or anything people put before God.¹⁹² However, his point may be clarified noting that evangelists and missionaries deal with the sin of idolatry in different contexts. While crusade evangelists may address idolatry as “a way of sinning” it is not always dealt with “as the root of all sin.”¹⁹³ For example, “How does a proud person deal with pride? Not by burning it to ashes as with an idol but seeing it as an inherency in fallenness.”¹⁹⁴ Therefore, we “deal with pride,” but we cannot “erase it.”¹⁹⁵ The missionary, therefore must deal with two kinds of idolatry: “material and spiritual. While we tend to split the two, wondering how anybody under the sun would be so blind-dumb as to carve an idol, not realizing that material idolatry is just the tip of the iceberg. Why? Because idols are measurable, pride is not.”¹⁹⁶

Furthermore, Best recognizes ways that the gospel has been minimized. He

¹⁹¹ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 83.

¹⁹² For example, see Billy Sunday’s sermon “Broken Down Altars,” accessed January 31, 2020, <https://www.hopefaithprayer.com/books/bilysundaysermons.pdf>.

¹⁹³ Best, email to Coppenger.

¹⁹⁴ Best, email to Coppenger.

¹⁹⁵ Best, email to Coppenger.

¹⁹⁶ Best, email to Coppenger.

argues that when the *imago Dei* is neglected, it “eats away at the heart of what it means to be human; it is a direct insult to God himself, whose person is dumbed down by the way we treat his image in us tantamount to saying that God is not important, that his imprint, however wracked in the Fall, is not worth much.”¹⁹⁷ He also acknowledges the work of Satan who offers opposing, contradicting, double lies with an aim to confuse and inhibit. He tells the church that people are incapable of thinking deeply and that it should avoid talking about the “blood of Christ or realities of lostness throughout eternity.” Conversely, Satan tells the nonbeliever that he or she is “too smart for the gospel,” that he or she can find the same ideas in books and education, and that their minds are used more in their daily lives than at church.¹⁹⁸ Therefore, the church accepts the simplified, “smoothed-over approach; the world continues its assumption that there is, after all, a certain thinness to Christianity.”¹⁹⁹

As with worship and witness, in chapter 6, Best contends that everyone prays. He writes that “Life is full of prayers. Religions of all kinds thrive on prayers. In times of grief, loss and trauma, prayers break out of mouths otherwise unused to praying. [But] for the Christian, praying is a redeemed honor, an unqualified responsibility and a seamless part of continuous outpouring.”²⁰⁰ Best suggests several principles for prayer. He notes that prayer is “about God and what he wants we pray for his sake we pray in him.”²⁰¹ Best rightly acknowledges that the church’s prayers should be dominated by prayers for the increase of the gospel and the salvation of the lost. He claims, “If the church were bent over doubled in pleading for lost people near and far, we might quickly

¹⁹⁷ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 88.

¹⁹⁸ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 89.

¹⁹⁹ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 90.

²⁰⁰ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 94.

²⁰¹ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 99.

discover how little fuss we need to make over worship styles and church growth methodology.”²⁰² Additionally, as continuous outpourers, service and sanctification should be other prominent subjects of prayer. Lastly, Best encourages those leading in corporate prayer to study the prayers of Scripture to aid in preparing and crafting appropriate prayers for the gathered church.

Also, within chapter 6, Best addresses the role of preaching in worship. He argues that “preaching is not the high point of worship to which all prior actions are meant to point or for which they prepare.”²⁰³ While Best holds tightly to the necessity of the Word, he argues that preaching is one of many elements of worship. Here, he pushes back against the notion that singing, prayer, and Scripture reading (as well as other parts of worship) are “warm ups” for the main event—the sermon. He rightly centers in on the importance of the Word and thus, the sermon, by recognizing the preacher as the primary (but not the only) worship leader. The high point, he rightly notes, “is the very presence of the Triune God, passing all understanding.”²⁰⁴ Furthermore, he places the responsibility of spiritual growth on the individual believer rather than on the preacher but encourages pastors to preach as if “there were no other way to get the full truth of the gospel across. Hence, there should be a parallel responsibility between laity and the pastoral team.”²⁰⁵

In chapter 7 Best addresses the relationship of the arts to continuous outpouring, arguing that a Christian understanding of the arts must be born out of a Christian worldview that concerns the whole life. He connects authentic worship with creative freedom on the basis of artistic intent rather than “artistic license.” He writes,

²⁰² Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 100.

²⁰³ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 102.

²⁰⁴ Best, email to Coppenger.

²⁰⁵ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 104.

“Christian artists first of all understand that making art is indistinguishable from worshipping Jesus their art joins up and is made common with everything else in their daily round for which they are responsible as continuous outpourers.”²⁰⁶ Furthermore, Best rightly notes that the artist’s direction and intent “are fully known only to God through Christ, while content is known both to God and to people Thus, to the Christian artist, there are no off-limits subjects even though there are off-limits intentions and directions.”²⁰⁷ And, on artistic judgement under the same premise, Best contends, “No person has a right to lay an accusing hand, even if it means that the artists, along with Christ, may be accused of consorting with sinners, gluttons, and winebibbers.”²⁰⁸ However, he recognizes the potential dangers of such artistic freedom and distinguishes between freedom and artistic license. He writes that the theologically “pinched-up” public will “confuse artistic content and the artist’s intent and arbitrarily accept or reject both art and artist on that ground. Ultimately the artist must stand before Christ and answer for every artistic action taken.”²⁰⁹

Continuing with exploring artistic freedom for the Christian artist, Best emphasizes the need and role of wisdom in ensuring quality and excellence. Understanding that the work of a Christian artist is “action toward God, before God, and under God’s protection[and] should be the guarantor of . . . excellence, honest response and redemptive resolution, even if it means that the artist is rejected, and the so-called Christian public seeks a lesser good and a foreshortened aesthetic.”²¹⁰ However, Best cautions against the assumption that “high intent” guarantees “better content.” This

²⁰⁶ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 113.

²⁰⁷ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 113.

²⁰⁸ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 113.

²⁰⁹ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 113.

²¹⁰ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 115.

in no way justifies “shoddiness.” He argues that “it does no good to say that because God sees bad art through Christ we are absolved of responsibility for quality.”²¹¹ Additionally, he urges that the Christian artists not attempt to spiritualize each gesture, tone, or texture. To do so would be aesthetically dreadful and theologically misguided. That from the moment of surrender, the Christian artist—the whole of her life, art, work, and worship—is in Christ. Therefore, all her “outpouring [and] action is *in* him and *to* him.”²¹² Furthermore, when the Christian artist attempts to broadcast our “homemade versions of God working in us” saying that it was God who sang, painted, or spoke through us, we “pervert any biblical concept of our humanity, namely that God created us to do things fully, exhausting our capabilities as good stewards. Christ in us does not mean that he replaces us as if we no longer existed or as if he were the better half of a two-part construct.”²¹³ Rather, Best points to Philippians 4:13 as he rightly argues, “Christ in us will surely strengthen us and dignify what we do by blessing our work and bringing his power down as we work.”²¹⁴

In this same chapter, Best returns to his argument that music and the arts are not aids or tools for worship but are in and of themselves offerings of worship. Here, he cautions against misunderstanding this function claiming that “as powerful and wonderful as the arts are, faith alone, not art, is substance and evidence, and it is by this kind of faith that we offer the arts to the Lord even as we continue our worship. This is what is meant by artistic action.”²¹⁵ Thus, for the Christian artist, all actions “toward God are faith based and not content based,” but creating art “by faith does not substantively change the

²¹¹ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 116.

²¹² Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 117.

²¹³ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 117.

²¹⁴ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 118.

²¹⁵ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 121.

art.”²¹⁶ From an understanding of common grace, he argues that “artistic content is [simply] the result of a particular kind of work. Faith is what the artist lives by, their art is made within that overall condition.”²¹⁷ Best means that making art toward God is not limited to certain content: “for the Christian artist there is no off-limit subject.”²¹⁸ Instead, making art by faith “spells the difference as to whether God receives it or rejects it.”²¹⁹ He also applies this idea to experiencing art. The Christian has a responsibility to make an offering to God in her listening, viewing, and reading equally as much as in her performing, creating, and writing. Furthermore, Best is correct in recognizing the tendency for people to equate musical experience with the presence of God. However, as another point of contention, Aniol notes that Best “puts his finger right on the problem [but he] refuses to put any blame in the means and methods themselves; he only blames the motives and expectations.”²²⁰ Aniol writes,

[Best] insists that it is [all right] to take the world’s means and methods that they use to manipulate crowds and create exciting atmospheres as long as we don’t intend for these methods to create worship. But in my estimation this is like saying that we can use a hammer that was created to pound nails and use it to turn screws as long as we don’t intend to just pound the screw in with the hammer. The music the world uses to artificially stimulate people and give them immediate feelings is designed to do just that; it cannot do anything else than what it was created to do. In order to turn screws, we need a different tool; and in order to give people a language for worship that is no[t] manipulative, we need another tool, no matter the intent. Best’s advice for what to do when one is “moved” by this music is to simply reinterpret the feeling as love for the Lord.²²¹

Aniol’s claim is valid in that giving people a manipulative language for worship is dangerous, regardless of intent. But that is not to say that intent does not have weight.

²¹⁶ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 121–22.

²¹⁷ Best, email to Coppenger.

²¹⁸ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 133.

²¹⁹ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 122.

²²⁰ Aniol, email to author.

²²¹ Aniol, email to author.

This is why Best takes such care to articulate that music making is an act of worship rather than a tool. Furthermore, Best clarifies the manipulative methods of music that Aniol mentions as he differentiates between manipulating and manipulativism. In a panel discussion on worship with Carl “Chip” Stam and Mike Cospers, Best stated, “I do not have a problem with manipulating. I have a problem with manipulativism. It can be argued that any good musical composition will shift our emotional track. That is simply manipulation in the classic sense of the word,” where we intensify things through rearrangement.”²²² He continued, “That is a wonderful idea on the role of music in the shift of our intellectual emotional and social behaviors as we listen. The rub comes when we equate that with a spiritual experience, and, without that, the spiritual high can’t be reached.”²²³

Chapter 8 builds off of the argument for creativity found in the doctrine of creation laid out in *Music through the Eyes of Faith*. Here, Best again articulates a call to excellence for the Christian (both within and outside of the arts). He writes that we cannot “afford to talk about quality and beauty as if they were the responsibility only of artists [Rather] our lives must be commonly graced with the wholeness of doing everything with an eye to quality. Christians, of all people should know this best, but it is often we who practice it worst.”²²⁴ God is the creator and is therefore above “being an artist and above our definitions of art.”²²⁵ However, God’s creatorhood teaches us much about how we should imagine and create. Best writes that this set of lessons teaches us “how we should go about imagining and making things in all of our work and all of our living” and ends with a petition for a sound “courageous effort on the part of the body of

²²² Mike Cospers, Harold Best, and Chip Stam, “Worship Discussion: Session three,” video, March 5, 2009, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GMc5_2_xpps.

²²³ Cospers, Best, and Stam, “Worship Discussion: Session 3.”

²²⁴ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 127.

²²⁵ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 128.

Christ to go beyond the usual, the static and the overly simplistic approaches to artistic diversity in the worship of the gathered assembly.”²²⁶ Centering on God’s diverse work, Best revisits his argument for stylistic pluralism calling composers and songwriters of music for the church to “explore the whole counsel of God, the extreme width and depth of the human condition, to leave no doctrinal stone unturned and to make sure that the body of Christ is fully equipped to sing its way through the entire catechism of the works of God.”²²⁷ He recognizes that the history and tradition of Christian hymnody has been successful in this, but the contemporary worship movement has not engaged in such diversity. While this may have been the situation in the late 1990s and early 2000s, the recent contemporary hymns movement has more intentionally approached congregational songwriting in this way. For example, contemporary hymnwriters Keith Getty and Kristyn Getty, write songs for corporate worship to purposefully encompass the whole counsel of God and the whole of the Christian life. They write, “If we are to be prepared to live for Christ in the whole of life, we need to be singing about the whole of life. In this, the only divinely authored hymnal in history is both our guide and our challenge.”²²⁸ Using the Psalms as inspiration, the Gettys, along with Stewart Townend, have written songs to reach the breadth of the human condition and the fullness of God.²²⁹

Centering on the specific and the distinctive role of music in chapter 9, Best argues that the voice is the only musical instrument God explicitly crafted and through this has offered opportunity for all to experience music making. He rightly identifies the only instrument that exists and is created from within the human body. “Further, the

²²⁶ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 142.

²²⁷ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 139.

²²⁸ Keith Getty and Kristyn Getty, *Sing! How Worship Transforms Your Life, Family, and Church* (Nashville: Band H, 2017), chap. 4, “Every Season of Life,” para. 5, Kindle.

²²⁹ Some examples of the diversity of songs include “Father We Have Sinned” (repentance), “When Trials Come” (suffering), “Across the Lands” (missions), “How Good, How Pleasing” (unity), and a number of songs on thankfulness, salvation, the cross, communion, and others.

human body is the only artistic instrument God created: dancing, acting, mime.”²³⁰ While God also created the hand that paints, paint is the medium of art. The medium of song is the human voice, created by God. He contends that “song is the music of the human voice” and that Scripture commands believers to sing.²³¹ The book of Psalms instructs us to sing “a new song,” “sing to the Lord,” and sing a new song to the Lord (Ps 96). Using Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16, Best crafts a philosophy on the function of text and music. He writes, “First, we are told that we are to teach and admonish with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs We teach truth, and music cannot teach truth. Only truth can teach truth [I]t is the text, the Word, that teaches and admonishes.”²³² On the role of music, these passages instruct us to “sing and make melody in our hearts to the Lord.”²³³ Best recognizes this as a vertical direction while the role of text in admonishing and teaching takes a horizontal direction from believer to believer: “Music is not truth telling, and God does not need truth; he is the Truth. But he wants to hear us use his truth prophetically even while we make music to him lovingly and praisefully.”²³⁴ Building on the different tasks of music and text, Best cautions against holding that music is emotional or spiritual. He writes that “some teach that music empowers text, or that text without music has less emotional significance do the words of songs . . . have the same spiritual and emotional carrying power when taken without the music?”²³⁵ Considering the “flow-chart concept” and how some worship leaders have attempted to use music to guide emotional response, Best addresses the arguments made in favor of

²³⁰ Best, email to Coppenger.

²³¹ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 144–45.

²³² Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 147.

²³³ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 147.

²³⁴ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 147.

²³⁵ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 149. Best lists “Shine, Jesus Shine” and “Lord I Lift Your Name on High” as examples. However, I encourage the reader to consider “Amazing Grace,” “In Christ Alone,” and “Is He Worthy?” as more recent examples to prove Best’s point.

music as a tool for worship concluding that these arguments are lacking. He writes,

If [music] is a tool, this must mean that people come to corporate worship unprepared for worship, or at least neutral, expecting worship to be initiated, and the music segment becomes the tool for this. If music is a tool for worship, it defies logic to say that it is an act of worship, yet who would disagree with the latter? As harsh as it sounds, an analogy would be that if an unbeliever went to a rock concert unprepared to misbehave . . . the music would be the tool of influence. Then we are back to square one: music has power over people in spite of themselves. The argument doesn't wash, then, that "God made music and he's smart enough to understand its power over us." That's like saying that God made the stars and trees and he is smart enough to understand their power over us.²³⁶

Concluding chapter 9, Best offers suggestions to balance emotion, beauty, and tradition. He writes that we are to ensure that in every gathering, "God is supreme above all," recognizing that we are under his authority.²³⁷ Additionally, we must acknowledge that we are "sovereign over what we make" just as God is sovereign over his creation.²³⁸ Best also notes that "we must understand that joy, pleasure and adoration are neither valid nor complete unless they can be shown and lived out in a variety of circumstances."²³⁹ And lastly, he insists that we must detach "ourselves from music as the primary social glue in the secular world and spiritual glue in the ecclesiastical world."²⁴⁰

Chapter 10 addresses the proper role and function of all types of art within the church. Here, Best acknowledges that the arts are enjoying fresh interest in the church, and this is good. He writes, "Assuming that the church keeps its theology straight about the relationship of artistic action to continuous outpouring, and assuming that every congregation couples continuous excelling to a fearless desire to imagine and craft after the manner in which God imagines and crafts" culture may learn from the church rather

²³⁶ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 149.

²³⁷ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 150.

²³⁸ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 150.

²³⁹ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 150.

²⁴⁰ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 151.

than the inverse.²⁴¹

Churches seeking to increase the arts in their gatherings should consider two things. Best argues that they should “avoid the mistake of leaning on sophisticated artistic labels to give luster or prestige to what are otherwise basic activities” and should not “try to keep up with the church down the street” when making artistic choices.²⁴² Noting that articulating a theology of the arts is the correct path, Best argues that “the Word is to be preeminent” in all corporate gatherings. Rightly maintaining that not all art forms use text, Best suggests that some forms will be better suited for accurately proclaiming the Word than others. Because of this, he argues that “dramatic presentations come first and music last.”²⁴³ Additionally, Best notes that there is a major difference between cultivating a “theology of the arts” and “creating theology from the arts.”²⁴⁴ He also advises churches to allow all art forms to function in their own specific way rather than pushing them “beyond their limits.”²⁴⁵ To do otherwise would “denigrate the Word.”²⁴⁶ He writes, “When we try to make certain art forms do what they are incapable of, or undertake what other art forms more easily do . . . we are giving the impression that the Word needs help from every quarter possible, when it is actually the other way around—everything we know of needs help from, and is informed by, the Word.”²⁴⁷ What he means is that texted artforms are able to communicate truth in ways that untexted

²⁴¹ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 153.

²⁴² Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 153–54.

²⁴³ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 155. In this way, Best argues that music is the most abstract of all the art forms.

²⁴⁴ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 154–55.

²⁴⁵ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 159.

²⁴⁶ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 156

²⁴⁷ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 156.

artforms cannot. “The only art forms that can propositionalize clearly are text ones.”²⁴⁸ For example, dance is unable to communicate this proposition, “‘There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.’ I can attempt to dance about it using some sort of choreography that might symbolize how I feel when uncondemned” but the choreographer must provide program notes to explain what is being expressed, then the spectator “can then choose or not choose to apply this to the choreography.”²⁴⁹ This connects to Best’s argument for the amorality of music—that music cannot be Christian or non-Christian (rather, music is done Christianly). It is the text that makes this distinction, not an intrinsic meaning within the elements of the artform (pitch, meter, melody, and the like). Therefore, Best contends that art should not replace “direct proclamation.” Rather, he writes, “Let preaching take over. Let it unwind the truth carefully and clearly, allowing the Spirit [and with prompting from the sermon] to make application appropriate to each heart.”²⁵⁰

Following the direction to allow art forms to be used in the ways they best function, Best addresses idolatry and the subtle (and overt) ways it can creep into our worship and our lives. In chapter 11 he writes that “The subject of idolatry is not something from which Christians are excused once they come to Jesus and begin to worship authentically. Authentic worship is not perfect worship. It stands in continual need of examination, repentance . . . as well as outpouring meekness and humility.”²⁵¹ Referencing Isaiah 44:9-20, Best emphasizes two ways that idolatry is the result of “the heart of our human condition,” contending that it “is the act of shaping something that we then allow to shape us” and that “we are blinded by a simple contradiction: what we serve

²⁴⁸ Best, email to Coppenger.

²⁴⁹ Best, email to Coppenger.

²⁵⁰ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 159.

²⁵¹ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 162.

is made out of the same stuff that in other circumstances serves us.”²⁵² When idolatry is simplified to these definitions “we are confronted with a subtlety that, like water, will find the slightest crack in an otherwise solid wall and leech through.”²⁵³

Additionally, Best recognizes three ways that idolatry can be categorized. The first is replacing the worship of God with false gods or religions. The second, Best calls syncretism or emulsion where “the centralities of one religion are folded into the most acceptable components of another system.”²⁵⁴ The third category differentiates between “false worship and falsity within authentic worship,” both of which are idolatrous.²⁵⁵ Furthermore, Best lists ways idolatry can emerge when living and working within the arts. He writes that we have begun to slide into idolatry when we falsely presume that art facilitates the presence of God. He also notes that beauty, quality, and style can become idols.²⁵⁶ He explains that some think that “if art is beautiful, it has to be used whether it is effective or not. This is the idol of quality . . . if art is effective, it must be used, irrespective of quality. This is the idol of effectiveness . . . [I]f art has worked well, don’t change it. This is the idol of stasis.”²⁵⁷ However, Best recognizes that God’s grace can “take an idol and without destroying it, turn it into nothing in order that it can be changed into merely something to be offered back to him through Christ”—if art becomes an idol, God can preserve its “integrity and elegance” while putting it in its “proper place.”²⁵⁸

Following his discussion on the dangers of idolatry, Best discusses the role of culture and the church. He notes that because being human necessarily involves the

²⁵² Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 163.

²⁵³ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 163–64.

²⁵⁴ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 164.

²⁵⁵ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 165.

²⁵⁶ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 166–68.

²⁵⁷ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 169.

²⁵⁸ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 171.

existence of culture, “it is impossible for the body of Christ to ignore culture or to assume to be Christian is to be above, separate from or against culture.”²⁵⁹ Additionally, he emphasizes that throughout history, the church has been involved with “more kinds of thought and creativity and more kinds of art than any other body.”²⁶⁰ Likewise, Best writes that the issue for the church is not “culture or no culture but one of a liberated and authoritative engagement with culture, in what it means to be human, to be redeemed and to think up and make art that would not have otherwise come to being in that way.”²⁶¹

Furthermore, building upon his experience with the National Association of Schools of Music in advocating for the inclusion of world music courses in accredited programs, and from the influence of his friend and colleague, Vida Chenoweth, Best contends that Western culture and Christianity should not be so linked that their division is muddled. He writes that “no one should expect another culture to change its art into ‘our art’ but instead to continue to generate its own authentic ‘heart song.’ This is because a culture’s creative signature is unique and inherently dignified.”²⁶² In addition, Best claims that there are two ways Christian artists can produce art: in corporate worship and in general culture. He writes that in general culture, it is their “responsibility to engage culture in a no-holds-barred continuum of creative action . . . as a redeemed invader or (more gently) as artist-in-residence, a citizen of heaven and a continuous outpourer visiting the archives of culture.”²⁶³ Moreover, Best calls Christian artists to make art and music “Christianly, wherever they make it from the most artistically impoverished assembly to the most richly appointed venue. Artistic action is first of all authored before

²⁵⁹ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 174.

²⁶⁰ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 175.

²⁶¹ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 177.

²⁶² Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 178.

²⁶³ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 179–80.

God by faith and joins all actions in authentic worship.”²⁶⁴

Best notes that we should seek to avoid classifications of “popular and classical, high and low culture.” Rather we should examine pairings within categories: “shallow to deep,” “simple to complex,” “strange to familiar,” “ornamental to developmental,” and “entertaining to engaging.”²⁶⁵ He also urges the Christian to employ a “complete artistic diet.” He writes that Christians “are intellectually and artistically incomplete until they engage as fully as possible in every combination represented in the spectrum. We must explore the full range of human creativity, avoiding the perpetual shallowness, not so that we can say we are cultured but because we are fully human,”²⁶⁶ desiring to be connected to the “breadth and extent of human creativity.”²⁶⁷

Continuing to engage with culture and the church, Best addresses the issue of language in chapter 13. He argues that often our culture has misused, overused, and degraded language into a type of profanity in which empty and exaggerated speech becomes “vain repetition.”²⁶⁸ He connects our use of language to the *imago Dei*, arguing that just as God has revealed himself through language of the “prophets, poetry, wisdom, and proposition,” we must take seriously our use of words ensuring that our words and actions are rightly aligned.²⁶⁹ He calls the church to be “speech-rich” to a “speech-degraded culture” by rescuing our language to “see rich, precise, authoritative and temperate use of it, not for linguistic or aesthetic reasons, but because the magnificent reach of the gospel demands it.”²⁷⁰ Additionally, Best recognizes the absence of a moral

²⁶⁴ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 180.

²⁶⁵ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 182–84.

²⁶⁶ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 186.

²⁶⁷ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 186.

²⁶⁸ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 193.

²⁶⁹ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 194.

²⁷⁰ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 195.

center in mass culture leading to mass relativism, experientialism, and shallowness. He urges that leaders should investigate how these aspects of culture are present within their churches and ministries.²⁷¹

Finally, Best returns to a discussion of quality and excellence for the Christian artist in chapter 14. However, this time, he connects quality and excellence to faith, hope, and love. He applies faith, hope, and love to three levels: (1) the existence of art; (2) quality as an “upward sojourn,” and (3) the pursuit of excellence beyond the arts—in the whole of life—because of faith, hope, and love of God. From this argument, he suggests that a Christian aesthetic allows room for “hierarchy.” He writes, “Differences in kind allow room for differences in quality among kinds.”²⁷² From here, Best returns to the concept of continuous outpourers and applies it to the local church urging believers to be continuous outpourers individually and corporately while engaging in the arts and intellect.²⁷³

Conclusion

Much overlap exists between *Music through the Eyes of Faith* and *Unceasing Worship* in articulating a philosophy and theology of the arts and worship. The themes first presented in *Music through the Eyes of Faith*—God’s creatorhood and the creation mandate for humans connected to *imago Dei*; Christian responsibility in pursuing excellence in the name of biblical stewardship in music making; the amorality of music, and an advocacy for musical pluralism within the church—all reappear in *Unceasing Worship*. The primary difference between these publications rest in the fact that the latter book is explicitly tied to worship throughout, and, according to some reviewers, is easier

²⁷¹ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 195.

²⁷² Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 207.

²⁷³ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 209–10.

to digest than the first. Additionally, *Unceasing Worship* goes deeper into artistic judgment and the church-and-culture relationship. Aniol says it this way, “[*Unceasing Worship*] reads to me like Best was frustrated with how people were applying the principles he set forth in [*Music through the Eyes of Faith*] and was seeking to counteract that.”²⁷⁴

Among the strengths of *Music through the Eyes of Faith* is an articulation of aesthetics from a Christian worldview that resonates with many evangelicals. Reviewer Morgan Simmons notes that there is much value to this volume, primarily in its “probing questions, its plea for high standards in all forms of art, its admonition to be open to diversity.”²⁷⁵ However, he notes that the book would benefit from a “tighter presentation of ideas, greater consistency, and clarity” of prose.²⁷⁶ Additionally, he contends that division of musical and theological issues as well as “journalistic style” are cause for concern.²⁷⁷ Simmons rightly notes the difficulty of Best’s writing style—poetic rather than grammatical or concise. The result is the danger of missing Best’s point or misunderstanding his argument. A careful reading (or several careful readings) is needed to wade through and navigate the paths of Best’s prose.

Moreover, Leonard Payton’s review of the work is also largely positive noting the special value of Best’s examination of Contemporary Christian Music and his generous treatment of all musical styles. However, he cautions against a superficial reading of the book: “I fear that a casual reading will yield results completely out of phase with Best’s intentions. Because he is so conciliatory, the casual reader could easily take his book as a pat on the back, an encouragement to continue doing music exactly

²⁷⁴ Aniol, email to author.

²⁷⁵ Morgan Simmons, “A Plea for an Open Mind,” review of *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, by Harold Best, *Christianity and the Arts* 2 (1997): 41.

²⁷⁶ Simmons, “A Plea for an Open Mind,” 41.

²⁷⁷ Simmons, “A Plea for an Open Mind,” 41.

how we have been doing it.”²⁷⁸ However, for the vigilant and alert reader, Payton claims, “there is a unique understanding to be found in this book which I have not seen elsewhere.”²⁷⁹

Abraham Bos, associate academic dean at Dort College, recognizes the value of *Music through the Eyes of Faith* for educators in all levels, including those in church education and those involved in worship ministry. Broadening the ideas Best presents to the whole of education, Bos notes the importance of educators meeting students “where they are.” He argues that all teachers should “be open to students and their world in order to open up students to an understanding of their music, the diversity of music, and the diversity of the creation as it is presented in the various disciplines of the curriculum.”²⁸⁰ Ultimately, Bos concludes, “This book, our students, and our disciplines deserve our attention, our critical empathy, and our best effort.”²⁸¹

Like *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, *Unceasing Worship* has proven to be a difficult book to digest upon a shallow or surface-level reading. Camille Hallstrom, communications professor at Covenant College, argues that Best has difficulty in “translating his points of view—useful and sometimes original though they be—into very readable prose.”²⁸² Although Hallstrom does acknowledge various positive aspects of the work, including the discussion the book sparks within the church, the main thrust of his review is that Best’s presentation of ideas is typically unclear and steeped in “the private musings of an old teacher and not a theological text written with a view to absolute

²⁷⁸ Leonard R. Payton, review of *Music through the Eyes of Faith* by Harold M. Best, *Reformation and Revival* 4, no. 4 (1995): 136.

²⁷⁹ Payton, review of *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 136.

²⁸⁰ Abraham Bos, review of *Music through the Eyes of Faith* by Harold Best, *Christian Educators Journal* (1994): 31.

²⁸¹ Bos, review of *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 31.

²⁸² Camille J. Hallstrom, review of *Unceasing Worship: Biblical Perspectives on Worship and the Arts* by Harold Best, *Presbyterian: Covenant Seminary Review* 32 no. 1 (2006): 60.

accuracy.”²⁸³ Similarly, Johansson notes that “Best’s writing is complex. It contains layers upon layers of thought each of which is intended to cover all contingencies but may, in fact, make it somewhat difficult for a reader to come to a definitive and concrete understanding of what is being said.”²⁸⁴ There for, we must “take the macro view in attempting to articulate Best’s thought.”²⁸⁵

Contrarily, Vernon Charter, professor of music at Prairie College, hails the work as “a beautifully written and eminently winsome call to artistic action that is rooted in a radical, holistic vision of worship. Its complexities amply reward thoughtful reading and re-reading, whether or not one agrees on every point.”²⁸⁶ Moreover, Eric Ankenman, reviewer and digital content producer at Crossroads Church in Ohio, claims that Best offers “a solid biblical foundation for a position on the arts that not only accords to them the appropriate duties and expectations but also frees them from the necessity to be the conveyors of all revealed truth.”²⁸⁷ And finally, although he disagrees with Best on the morality of music and musical pluralism, Aniol notes that he “greatly resonated with Best’s discussion of true experience versus experientialism, particularly that worship is not something that can be worked up or ‘motivated;’ it must come from the heart of one who is already worshipping. No techniques, forms, liturgies, arts, or engaging leadership can create worship.”²⁸⁸ He continues, “We desperately need to return to an understanding of worship that is truly rooted in truth and a life experience, rather than an event that

²⁸³ Hallstrom, review of *Unceasing Worship*, 61.

²⁸⁴ Johansson, letter to author.

²⁸⁵ Johansson, letter to author.

²⁸⁶ Vernon Charter, review of *Unceasing Worship: Biblical Perspectives on Worship and the Arts* by Harold Best, *Ethnodoxology* 3, no. 2 (2005): 24.

²⁸⁷ Eric Ankenman, review of *Unceasing Worship: Biblical Perspectives on Worship and the Arts* by Harold M. Best, *Stone-Campbell Journal* 7, no. 2 (2004): 289.

²⁸⁸ Aniol, email to author.

takes place when the atmosphere is just right.”²⁸⁹

While not all agree on the efficacy of Best’s writing style and argumentation, most appreciate *Music through the Eyes of Faith* and *Unceasing Worship* for their articulation of a biblically grounded philosophy and theology of the arts and worship. Urging Christians who work within the arts to approach their art and music making as an act of worship rather than as an aid to worship while striving to excel for the sake of the One they worship, these books bear great significance and influence on subsequent worship literature, worship leadership, and worship education. This influence will be examined through representative figures in the next chapter.

²⁸⁹ Aniol, email to author.

CHAPTER 6

THE INFLUENCE OF *MUSIC THROUGH THE EYES OF FAITH* AND *UNCEASING WORSHIP* ON SELECTED WORSHIP LEADERS AND EDUCATORS

Introduction

Harold Best's publications have a far-reaching impact in the evangelical worship literature of the last two and a half decades. In this chapter, the permeation of Best's ideas, as presented in *Music through the Eyes of Faith* and *Unceasing Worship*, will be examined in the writings, experiences, and philosophies of selected worship leaders, educators, and authors serving as representative examples of the larger body of evangelical worship literature and worship training. Through interviews and email correspondence with Bob Kauflin, Michael Card, Barry Liesch, David Music, Joseph Crider, and Clark Measels, as well as the through the examination of their writings (including those of Mike Cospers), I seek to demonstrate the significance and effect of Best's philosophy and ideas.¹

Bob Kauflin

Bob Kauflin, a classically trained pianist, worship leader and worship trainer has had extensive involvement and experience with music and worship in various capacities since the 1970s. Beginning with his work with the contemporary Christian band GLAD, through his appointment as director of worship for Sovereign Grace Church

¹ It should be noted that Bob Kauflin, Michael Card, Barry Liesch, David Music, and Scott Aniol graciously agreed to be interviewed either via zoom meeting, in person (with Mark Coppenger conducting the interview in my absence), or email. Mike Cospers was not available for interview. The impact of Best's philosophy seen within Cospers's work comes through examination of his publications as well as the observation of those interviewed.

in 1997 (then Sovereign Grace Ministries), Kauflin’s experience in music, worship, and theology is extensive and diverse.²

Kauflin began to approach worship from a scholarly standpoint following his exposure to Gene Peterson’s *Engaging with God* and D. A. Carson’s *Adoration and Action*. Kauflin received these books as gifts from his pastor, C. J. Mahaney, during his first three months with Sovereign Grace in 1997.³ At this point, Kauflin began seeking out more academic sources on worship and theology and found Best’s *Music through the Eyes of Faith* in 1998. According to Kauflin, this book, along with Peterson’s *Engaging with God* “rocked [his] world” and drastically changed his understanding and practice of worship.⁴

Following Kauflin’s exposure to *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, he first met Best through professor Carl “Chip” Stam (1953–2011), founder of the worship degree programs at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, who had invited both Best and Kauflin to co-teach a seminar on worship in 2005. By this time, according to Kauflin, he had already been influenced by Best’s writing. This impact would continue to permeate Kauflin’s teaching and ministry.⁵

In addition to the influence Best’s writings exerted on Kauflin, similarities existed between their personal journeys of faith and aesthetic philosophy. Like Best, Kauflin describes having experienced a nervous breakdown or emotional crisis point which lead to spiritual renewal in his life. This breakdown allowed Kauflin to further

² Bob Kauflin, *Worship Matters: Leading Others to Encounter the Greatness of God* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 15–18. Sovereign Grace Church originated in Maryland under the title People of Destiny International. This organization experienced several name changes including PDI, Sovereign Grace Ministries, and most recently, Sovereign Grace Church.

³ Bob Kauflin, interview by author, zoom meeting, April 26, 2019.

⁴ Kauflin, interview.

⁵ Kauflin, interview. Best’s nervous breakdown is discussed in detail in chap. 4 of this dissertation.

identify and relate to Best on a personal level. Kauflin states that Best points “us to Christ” not just in his philosophy, but in his “mission and aim.” This aim, he argues, “developed from a breakdown [Best encountered] in his early thirties. It had a massive impact on my life.”⁶ Kauflin recalls the experience of his own breakdown: “I came out of my breakdown a different way than he did. He would still very much feel that brokenness. I feel my brokenness, too but it has made me more aware of the sufficiency of Christ.”⁷

Additionally, Best’s philosophy of worship, music, and theology immensely impacted Kauflin’s own beliefs: Kauflin states, “[It] has so shaped my thinking on how music works in the church [that] there is not a message I have given in the last twenty-three years that does not contain [ideas] from Harold—either directly quoted or so worked into my system that I think it is mine.”⁸ Perhaps the strands of Best’s philosophy that have exerted the greatest influence on Kauflin are (1) music as an act of worship rather than an aid to worship; (2) the absence of a universal aesthetic; (3) the idea that one must be intimately familiar with a form of music before he or she can adequately critique it; (4) Best’s notion of the meaning of music; (5) the amorality of music; (6) the value of musical pluralism in the Christian life; and (7) the pursuit of excellence.⁹ Kauflin notes that Best’s chapter on personal excellence, success, and competition in *Music through the Eyes of Faith* was particularly helpful to him. The definition of excellence presented by Best—“the process of becoming better than I once was”—helped Kauflin navigate the typical struggles musicians often experience with ego, aiding him in his

⁶ Kauflin, interview.

⁷ Kauflin interview. Kauflin describes his breakdown experience in detail in *Worship Matters*, 22–25.

⁸ Kauflin, interview.

⁹ Kauflin, interview.

ministry and training of worship leaders.¹⁰ Additionally, Kauflin claims that Best's argument that our offerings are simultaneously humbled and exalted by the saving work of Christ has been something that drastically changed his approach and philosophy of worship. Kauflin also claims that Best's position on the role of faith in music bears great influence:

For someone choosing songs every week the tendency is to choose the latest and the greatest or the oldest and the most familiar. Harold tells us that we do not have to be limited to those categories because what we do is by faith. When faith is involved it makes old songs new. When we do things by faith we are trusting in the finished work of Christ. The way he is able to hold . . . healthy tensions of newness and repetition is brilliant and biblical and roots us in the word of God.¹¹

Furthermore, Best's examination of Contemporary Christian Music in *Music through the Eyes of Faith* greatly resonates with Kauflin. He resonates with Best's description of the issues surrounding CCM, agreeing with Best's assessment of the shallowness of this style and industry and of its role in the local church's "losing our corporate singing voice."¹² Kauflin states, "It was so prophetic. I began to see the role the church plays in raising up the next generation. Reading [Best's] book led me to develop a music academy . . . [that] seek[s] to develop a culture where children are taught to sing for the glory of God because of Christ. That was primarily Harold's influence."¹³

Regarding *Unceasing Worship*, Kauflin was particularly appreciative of the idea that worship is a continuous, all-of-life action, and of Best's emphasis on valuing both the word of God and the spoken word. According to Kauflin, Best's reference to the church as the "last guard of the spoken and written word" significantly shaped his own

¹⁰ Kauflin interview.

¹¹ Kauflin, interview. See also Kauflin, *Worship Matters*, 153–212.

¹² Kauflin, interview.

¹³ Kauflin, interview. In this interview, Kauflin notes that the academy was started at a larger church. However, Sovereign Grace Church of Louisville, KY where he now serves also uses children's choir to achieve the same goal of music education within the church for the glory of God.

position.¹⁴ Best's assertion that "even though every nonverbal expression is unique . . . the word remains preeminent" is one that Kauflin deliberately reiterates and emphasizes to young leaders under his training.¹⁵ He states, "'Your music will never be as great as the word of God.' If we do not direct people to the written and living word of God with our music, it is useless. Every aspect of what I teach has been influenced by what [Best has] written in these books."¹⁶

The influence of Best and his writings clearly emerges in Kauflin's books, *Worship Matters* and *True Worshippers: Seeking What Matters to God*, as well as in his numerous blogposts. In *Worship Matters* and *True Worshippers*, Kauflin relies heavily on Best's ideas and often cites him specifically.¹⁷ At other times, he does not cite Best but the similarity in thought is unmistakable. For example, Kauflin writes, "Good theology helps us keep music in its proper place. We learn that music isn't an end in itself but rather a means of exploring the worship already present in our hearts through the new life we've received in Jesus Christ."¹⁸ In this case, Best is not mentioned or referenced, but the central theme of Kauflin's statement parallels Best's argument that music making is an act of worship rather than an aid to worship.¹⁹ Furthermore, Kauflin claims that "the Lord in his mercy has allowed me to write *Worship Matters*, that has gone throughout the world and been translated into nearly ten languages. I know whose shoulders I stand on and Harold's is one of them. I quote him directly and many of the thoughts come from his writings."²⁰

¹⁴ Kauflin, interview.

¹⁵ Kauflin, interview.

¹⁶ Kauflin, interview.

¹⁷ See for example Kauflin, *Worship Matters*, 58 and 74–75.

¹⁸ Kauflin, *Worship Matters*, 30.

¹⁹ Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, 10.

²⁰ Kauflin, interview.

Kauflin recognizes the effect Best’s writings have and will continue to have on the local church. He states that his desire is to see Best’s publications read more widely by worship pastors and worship leaders through his recommendation of *Music through the Eyes of Faith* and *Unceasing Worship* at the worship conferences and training events he leads. He claims, “I think [Best’s writings have] helped the [leaders] who are listening see music more as an act of worship than an aid to worship. I think it has helped churches understand our union with Christ and Christ perfecting our offerings. It has helped churches understand the goodness of breaking out of one style.”²¹ Additionally, Kauflin argues that the concept of all-of-life worship, or worship as a continuous outpouring presented in *Unceasing Worship*, is among the “most quoted” of Best’s arguments in recent worship literature.²²

In addressing the trajectory of Best’s influence within worship literature and practice, Kauflin contends that his own writings, as well as those by the younger generation of worship leaders and scholars, and teaching at worship conferences, will continue to put forth Best’s ideas. He states, “I’m an older [member] of the younger [generation of worship leaders] saying ‘go back to the source.’ I do not know of another book that explains the relationship between music and the congregational gathering as thoroughly.”²³ According to Kauflin, “No one has approached [music and worship] as comprehensively theologically as [Best].”²⁴ He recognizes that the arguments and ideas presented in Best’s writings are practical and that the entirety of his own ministry and

²¹ Kauflin, interview. Kauflin also notes that he is unsure of how many churches are practicing a biblical pluralism of music and notes the dangers that come with an aim to increase variety of style without biblical grounding.

²² Kauflin, interview. He also connects the all-of-life worship to John Piper and Mike Cosper noting their support and agreement with this argument.

²³ Kauflin, interview. Kauflin is referencing *Music through the Eyes of Faith*.

²⁴ Kauflin, interview.

writings have been significantly affected by Best.²⁵

Expounding upon Best's impact, Kauflin recognizes the value of Best's writings in putting forward a philosophical approach to worship and the arts which points to Scripture. He claims, "Even though [Best] would not put himself up as a scholar and he does not use a ton of Scripture in his books, the philosophical way he talks about things drives you back to the Scriptures, and he will make you root what you are saying in the word of God."²⁶ Finally, on Best's influence, Kauflin contends,

There have been more books written on the theology of worship in the last twenty years than there were in the last fifty or one hundred years. But it is true that unless you understand theologically what God is requiring of us in our worship of him, you have no idea what to make of the styles and options and environments and technology. We very often uncritically adopt what the biggest churches are doing. I see myself as a small but incessant voice, relentless voice that says no matter how good it looks or how big it gets or how many people are saying 'this is great,' we have to keep coming back to Scripture. And that is what Harold helped me do. He helped me keep coming back to Scripture.²⁷

Barry Liesch and Biola College

Much similarity exists between Barry Liesch and Harold Best in their theological, musical, and professional backgrounds. Both have pursued careers professors of music in Christian colleges, had backgrounds in the Christian Missionary Alliance church, are gifted keyboardists and composers, and desire to see Christian worship grounded in biblical truth. Liesch, professor and founder of the worship arts program at Biola University and author of *People in the Presence of God: Models and Directions for Worship* (1988)²⁸ and *New Worship: Straight Talk on Music and the Church* (1996),²⁹

²⁵ Kauflin, interview.

²⁶ Kauflin, interview.

²⁷ Kauflin, interview.

²⁸ Barry Wayne Liesch, Joseph Comanda, and Michael G. Smith, *People in the Presence of God: Models and Directions for Worship* (Grand Rapids: Ministry Resources Library, 1988).

²⁹ Barry Wayne Liesch, *The New Worship: Straight Talk on Music and the Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996).

met Best at Nyack College. By 1965 Liesch knew of Best and decided to meet with him in person at Nyack while traveling to New York from Vancouver. Later, in 1974, while Best was serving as dean of music at Wheaton College, he invited Liesch to audition for a teaching position. Although Liesch chose to accept employment at Biola, his path crossed with Best's over the years, as Wheaton College and Biola College are sister institutions, and through Best's work with the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM). In the mid-to-late 1970s, Liesch began engaging with some of Best's early articles in which Best argued that music is an act of worship rather than an aid to worship. Additionally, the creatorhood of God and human creativity rooted in *imago Dei* and Christian responsibility in music were also important themes of Best's writing for Liesch.³⁰ On occasion, Liesch attempted to introduce Best's writings and philosophy to fellow faculty members but was met with some resistance due to the strong philosophical nature of Best's arguments. Furthermore, the articles Best was publishing in the 1970s caught Liesch's attention and became a point of interest and influence for him. He claims, "[Best] was the only one I knew of doing anything in this area. I am a lot like Best in that I am interested in ideas, but I'm also more interested in the practical side than he is."³¹

Additionally, the that Best outlined in *Music through the Eyes of Faith* were influential in the music department at Biola. According to Liesch, the music program was deeply rooted in classical music and performance with little room for improvisation or popular music. During visits to Biola with NASM, Best consistently emphasized the importance of improvisation as a performance skill—an argument Liesch recalls from *Music through the Eyes of Faith*. Liesch claims that “we were a classically oriented

³⁰ See for example, Harold Best, “Music: Offerings of Creativity,” *Christianity Today* 21, no. 15 (1977): 12–15, and Best, “There is More to Redemption than Meets the Ear: An Inquiry into Christian Responsibility in Music,” *Christianity Today* 18, no. 21 (1974): 12–18.

³¹ Barry Liesch, interview by author, zoom meeting, May 24, 2019.

school and [Best] had these other ideas about improvisation.”³² Jack Schwarz, former chair of the music department at Biola, knew Best and his writings through NASM accreditation visits and through his support of Best’s ideas the music department experienced a change in curriculum. Liesch states that because of Best “we [now] have a keyboard improvisation class required by all of our classical pianists. He had enough personal clout that Schwarz (and others) felt he had permission to [add this requirement to the degree program]. That helped open things up.”³³

Furthermore, Liesch largely credits Best with the development of the worship arts program at Biola: “I was wanting to do the worship program for years, but I had to wait almost 15 years to launch ours (in 2004) that was because of [Best’s] influence as well.”³⁴ Some faculty showed great concern that the addition of a worship arts program could potentially compromise the high musical standards of a classically oriented curriculum. Liesch recalls, “There was a lot of dissonance. When we began our worship program it was almost under the table. We never talked about it, we just kept developing it.”³⁵ Of the twelve full-time faculty members in the music department, only a few were outspoken in support. Thankfully, according to Liesch, “That has changed these days. We have also started a commercial music program. That would fit in with *Music through the Eyes of Faith* and [Best’s advocacy for] a broad range of styles.”³⁶ Attributing this addition to the music program to Best, Liesch claims that the worship program “was an impetus from [Best], and it did not come easy. This was something I had wanted to do. I had written two worship books but could not get any traction. He is probably behind

³² Liesch, interview.

³³ Liesch, interview.

³⁴ Liesch, interview.

³⁵ Liesch, interview.

³⁶ Liesch, interview.

getting these things to happen whether directly or indirectly.”³⁷

Although Best’s writings and ideas were influential in the development of the worship program as well as elements of the keyboard curriculum at Biola, his publications themselves have not necessarily been adopted as required course readings. Liesch attributes this to the difficulty and depth of Best’s writing style. He contends that reading Best thoughtfully “requires patience. I have a first-year course in which I teach worship through the whole Bible and I use the Kauflin book because it is more accessible. We do have a capstone course where I would consider using *Unceasing Worship*.”³⁸

This is important as a testament to the reach of Best’s impact. Mentioned earlier in this chapter, Kauflin’s writing relies heavily on Best and many times presents Best’s ideas in a simpler, more concise fashion. As Kauflin has observed, Best’s influence will continue through the writings of subsequent authors who are building upon and implementing his arguments.

Best’s impact on Liesch’s writing, teaching, and philosophy of music and worship extends Best’s influence Biola. Liesch notes that although he does not often vocally refer to Best in his teaching, “[Best] has been there in my mind the whole time. A lot of the things [Best] has been talking about—creativity, improvisation—I have been wanting to develop materials on, to flesh it out [and] apply his ideas.”³⁹ In Liesch’s own publications, Best’s fingerprints are seen as he quotes directly from his articles and from *Music through the Eyes of Faith*.⁴⁰ For example, in *The New Worship*, Liesch relies

³⁷ Liesch, interview.

³⁸ Liesch, interview.

³⁹ Liesch, interview.

⁴⁰ In Liesch’s *People in the Presence of God*, he quotes Best’s article “There is More to Redemption than Meets the Ear,” and “Church Relatedness: Music and Higher Education” (paper presented at the annual meeting of the National Association of Schools of Music, Atlanta, GA, 1976), 209–16.

heavily upon Best's *Music through the Eyes of Faith* for the arguments put forward in favor of musical pluralism, for music is an act of worship rather than an aid to worship lest it become idolatry; and for the importance of the pursuit of excellence. Liesch also goes to great lengths to show how Best fits in with worship philosophy and practice by providing a detailed list of Best's views contrasting those of Calvin Johansson.⁴¹ Also, Liesch lists Best among the authors from whom Liesch has greatly benefited.⁴²

Ultimately, Best's writings give voice to the views on worship and music that Liesch holds due to both his classical music background, and his experimentation with improvisation, and his church music compositions. Liesch states, "When I was twenty years old I was the keyboardist for the Vancouver Billy Graham Crusade. I was already heading in this direction from the very start, so I found a friend immediately with Best. I had an identification with him."⁴³

David Music

David Music has served as professor of church music at Baylor University since 2002 and was formerly a professor at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (1990–2002) and California Baptist College (1980–1990). Throughout his career, Music has worked in various churches as music minister and worship pastor. Having previously read Best's *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, Music's first personal involvement with Best occurred while teaching at Southwestern Seminary. Part of Music's responsibilities at Southwestern Seminary included planning and organizing workshops and conferences for the church music program. Best attended one workshop as the principal church music philosophy lecturer. Additionally, Music notes that he and Best have remained in touch

⁴¹ Liesch, *The New Worship*, 195–98.

⁴² Liesch, *The New Worship*, 11.

⁴³ Liesch, interview.

over the years and worked together in obtaining copyright for several of Music’s compositions.⁴⁴

Music recognizes the value of Best’s writing and its impact on worship leaders throughout the United States. He contends that Best’s works “broadened everybody’s minds to what was essential and what was nonessential [in worship and in music].” He also notes that the breadth of Best’s “appreciation for all types of music was an important thing for all of us—those that came out of the classical tradition and those who came out of the pop tradition as well. I think it was those from the classical tradition who read the book.”⁴⁵ He states that Best made excellent points about retaining the value and benefit of tradition while seeking newness but notes that “his approach is not what I would call ‘middle of the road.’ It was open to different perspectives, points of view, and different musical idioms and styles.”⁴⁶

Moreover, Music recognizes Best’s passion for and commitment to Jesus as a strong and personally important influence. He describes Best’s openness in expressing his devotion to Christ as experienced in personal interaction with him as being very impactful. Best is a “very intelligent, very learned and smart man who is absolutely in love with Jesus Christ. The depth of his devotion was a real model for me as well as his scholarship and deep thinking. I tend to think in terms of concretes and absolutes and he thinks in a much more philosophical way.”⁴⁷

Best’s influence on the development of Music’s philosophy of worship and music primarily stems from *Music through the Eyes of Faith*.⁴⁸ According to Music,

⁴⁴ David Music, interviewed by author, zoom meeting, May 28, 2019. Music does not recall the name of the committee on which Best was serving regarding copyright rules but notes that he was instrumental in properly obtaining and applying copyright license for several of his works.

⁴⁵ Music, interview.

⁴⁶ Music, interview.

⁴⁷ Music, interview.

⁴⁸ Music, interview. He notes that the impact from *Unceasing Worship* personally is less than

Best's writings significantly shaped his worship philosophy by giving him an appreciation for styles and aspects of music he had not considered beforehand. He claims, "I came out of a pop tradition, but then I fell in love with art music. This, with gospel music as well, pushed me away from my roots. It was Best's work, some others, and my own growing up that led me to embrace multiple genres."⁴⁹ Primarily, this influence comes from Best's philosophy of "not throwing the baby out with the bathwater—giving up everything that we have learned before."⁵⁰

Moreover, Music uses Best's writings as textbooks for the graduate level courses he teaches at Baylor. Music states that he has used *Music through the Eyes of Faith* for a number of years in his church music philosophy courses. However, due to the revision of the church music program curriculum, he is uncertain who will be teaching that course in the future or what texts they will employ.⁵¹ He also used this book for an introduction to church music course at Southwestern Seminary which was designed primarily for preachers and religious educators and focused largely on the philosophical aspects of worship.⁵² He also affirms Best's influence on his education philosophy. Music maintains that even in his academic music courses he seeks to encourage students to "always strive to do your best [because] God deserves the best we have to offer him." Particularly working with undergraduates, he urges them "look at what God has done for you. [He has] given you life, plus all the blessings that come along with that. I think that may surmise with Harold's philosophy."⁵³

that of *Music through the Eyes of Faith*.

⁴⁹ Music, interview.

⁵⁰ Music, interview.

⁵¹ Music, interview. Music states that at the time this interview was conducted, the church music curriculum was under revision, courses were being reassigned, and some requirements may be modified.

⁵² Music, interview.

⁵³ Music, interview.

In addition to Best's impact on the teaching tools and philosophy of worship Music employs, he recognizes the significance of Best's ideas within the local church. He notes that there is a current trend in many contemporary churches to return to a liturgical format in following the Christian year. He states,

[In] the last church I served, I was actually the one who introduced chorus singing to that congregation and some contemporary songs as well. People think that is odd because I am basically a hymnologist. It was an interesting position because I wanted to do some experimentation as we introduced the Christian year. I wanted to see how it meshed together. Following the Christian year while singing hymns and choruses—part of that was Best's philosophy at work, and it worked fairly well.⁵⁴

Finally, Music recognizes the immense benefit of Best's writings for subsequent worship literature and leadership. He believes Best's impact in worship literature "will be ongoing and thus, through that, still impacting the practice of church music."⁵⁵ However, he notes that an "openness to philosophy should be a two-way street, but right now I see it more as a one-way street in many places. That is changing somewhat. I think the idea of throwing out everything we have done for the sake of newness is on the wane, and the suspicion of the new is on the wane as well." Music contends that Best's work will continue to be important: "[*Music through the Eyes of Faith*] is still a landmark book that will find usefulness. Some of its arguments will become dated, examples will become dated, but the core principles will still be relevant."⁵⁶

Michael Card

Best's influence is also seen in the work of Michael Card, musician, composer, and author, through his book *Scribbling in the Sand: Christ and Creativity* (2002), and in the application of Best's philosophy to his own journey as a Christian artist.⁵⁷ Card

⁵⁴ Music, interview.

⁵⁵ Music, interview.

⁵⁶ Music, interview.

⁵⁷ Michael Card, *Scribbling in the Sand: Christ and Creativity* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 2002). Card has authored a number of other books, including *A Sacred Sorrow: Reaching out*

visited Wheaton College to perform a concert of contemporary Christian music and while there, he met Best, who was dean of the music conservatory at the time. In testament to Best's value of all musical styles, Card recalls that the two quickly developed a relationship in spite of their musical backgrounds. An unlikely friendship developed between a Christian rock and folk musician and the department head of a classically oriented institution. Card notes, "I would go to Wheaton and we would hang out [in the late 1980s and early 1990s]."⁵⁸ On occasion, Best even travelled on the tour bus with Card's band. He states, "[Best] was not what I expected at all. I was playing at other Christian colleges, and the department chairs were not my friends [in the way Best was]."⁵⁹ Further noting the impact of Best's musical pluralism, Card states that he orchestrated a meeting between Best and guitarist Phil Keaggy (whom Best admired). During this meeting, Keaggy's guitar performance was interrupted by Best who exclaimed, "That's Mendelssohn's favorite chord!" leaving Card impressed by the depth of engagement Best held with all musical styles. He claims, "Harold [truly] likes everything."⁶⁰

After reading *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, Card was further exposed to Best's philosophy of music and the arts from a Christian worldview. He writes that when he first read Best's book, he was "deeply moved by his confessional transparency. [Best] validated every word of his insightful book by the way he lived out his life before his students who still love and revere him."⁶¹ Also, in the first chapter of *Scribbling in the*

to God in the Lost Languages of Lament (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2005).

⁵⁸ Michael Card, interview by Mark Coppenger, Franklin, TN, November 18, 2019. Mark Coppenger conducted this interview based on questions I previously submitted. Card and Coppenger graciously emailed me the audio recording of this meeting.

⁵⁹ Card, interview by Coppenger.

⁶⁰ Card, interview by Coppenger.

⁶¹ Card, *Scribbling in the Sand*, 120.

Sand, Card lists Best, along with Calvin Seerveld, as “faithful brothers” who “represent a lifetime of pondering” the issues of Christian creativity, imagination, art, music, and the like.⁶² Best’s argument that human creativity is a command, and the responsibility of the Christian artist (and pastors) are clearly seen in Card’s book. Following Best’s understanding of *imago Dei*, God’s creatorhood, and human creativity, Card writes, “We are driven to create at this deep wordless level of the soul because we are all fashioned in the image of a God who is an Artist. When we first encounter God in the Bible, it is not as the awesome Lawgiver or the Judge of the universe but as the Artist.”⁶³ It should be noted, however, that Best cautions against labeling God as the consummate Artist, rather he is the Creator. He argues that if we view God as a consummate Artist, “a special justification and otherness are too easily imputed to art. Because we have named God as the ultimate Artist, we imply that our artistic creativity is a cut above other kinds of human creativity.”⁶⁴ The thrust of Card’s statement aligns with Best’s idea in that Card is using “Artist” interchangeably with “Creator.” However, at other points in Best’s writings he refers to God as the first abstract artist.⁶⁵

Furthermore, in *Scribbling in the Sand*, Card includes a letter from Best to Christian artists and pastors admonishing them to strive for excellence in their craft and to employ musical stylistic pluralism. He also encourages them to live with artistic responsibility, taking note of the influence they bear on the younger generation. And, he urges them to value the artist above the art because God is greater than his creation.⁶⁶

Most importantly for Card, Best’s greatest impact occurs not through his

⁶² Card, *Scribbling in the Sand*, 20.

⁶³ Card, *Scribbling in the Sand*, 39.

⁶⁴ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 39.

⁶⁵ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 130.

⁶⁶ Card, *Scribbling in the Sand*, 120–28.

writings necessarily, but through his life. While he notes that Best’s writings have shaped his own philosophy, Best’s person, his Christlikeness, his openness, affected Card more deeply.⁶⁷ He states,

What impacted me was that [Best] could have swung a lot of authority because of his position. I was visiting, playing music on his campus, and he was nothing but encouraging [to me]. [He was] encouraging [to the point that if I] had any records he would have] already listened to it and [would tell me his favorite song] and why he liked it. I remember thinking, “[If I ever have that type of authority], I want to be like that guy.” That unusual, over-the-top openness was very much like Jesus.⁶⁸

Finally, Best’s impact for the local church also stems from the way he lived and his investment in and encouragement of younger artists. Card notes that the reach of Best’s influence for the church “would be the generations of musicians that he poured his life and his value system into—not just the excellence in music that he was really passionate about, but quality in content comes out of a life.”⁶⁹ Card claims that in *Unceasing Worship* Best “took the boundaries away in terms of what worship is when it had previously been defined pretty narrowly.”⁷⁰ Continuing, he further highlights the impact of Best’s love for Christ:

What did Jesus leave? He left his people in his wake. The thing about [Best] is that he is never going to be famous because he pointed away from himself. One of the things interesting about Jesus’ miracles, with one exception, [the crowds] never praised Jesus, they only praised God. They worship him on the sea of Galilee, that’s the only time he is worshiped for doing a miracle. Every other time they worship God because he points away from himself. Harold is very much that way.⁷¹

The imprint of Best’s philosophy and ideas presented in *Music through the Eyes of Faith* and *Unceasing Worship* as well as (and most importantly) through his love for Christ and investment in people is carried on through Card’s work. In addition to his

⁶⁷ Card, interview by Coppenger.

⁶⁸ Card, interview by Coppenger.

⁶⁹ Card, interview by Coppenger.

⁷⁰ Card, interview by Coppenger.

⁷¹ Card, interview by Coppenger.

music and written publications, Card also leads the Biblical Imagination Conference around the United States extending the reach of Best's work.

Mike Cospers

Mike Cospers, founder of Harbor Media in Louisville, KY, a founding pastor of Sojourn Community Church and Sojourn Music, and writer on worship, the arts, and culture, has been greatly influenced by the writings of and personal relationship with Best. In his books (*Rhythms of Grace: How the Church's Worship Tells the Story of the Gospel*⁷² (2013), *The Stories We Tell: How TV and Movies Long for and Echo the Truth*⁷³ (2014), *Recapturing the Wonder: Transcendent Faith in a Disenchanted World* (2017),⁷⁴ *Faith Among the Faithless: Learning from Esther How to Live in a World Gone Mad* (2018)⁷⁵ Cospers directly quotes and often paraphrases Best's ideas. Additionally, the impact of Best on Cospers's philosophy is seen through his blogposts and numerous articles published online through The Gospel Coalition.⁷⁶

Cospers encountered Best through Professor Carl "Chip" Stam, then Director of the Center for Biblical Worship at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.⁷⁷ At Stam's invitation, Best and Cospers participated in a number of panels on worship, delivered lectures, and developed a relationship of friendship and mentoring. In *Rhythms*

⁷² Mike Cospers, *Rhythms of Grace: How the Church's Worship Tells the Story of the Gospel* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013).

⁷³ Mike Cospers, *The Stories We Tell: How TV and Movies Long for and Echo the Truth* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014).

⁷⁴ Mike Cospers, *Recapturing the Wonder: Transcendent Faith in a Disenchanted World* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 2017).

⁷⁵ Mike Cospers, *Faith among the Faithless: Learning from Esther How to Live in a World Gone Mad* (Nashville: Nelson, 2018).

⁷⁶ For example, see Mike Cospers, "On My Shelf: Life and Books with Mike Cospers," The Gospel Coalition, August 28, 2014, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/reviews/shelf-life-books-mike-cospers/>. See also, Mike Cospers, "Art For, From, and Facing the Church," The Gospel Coalition, November 12, 2010, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/art-for-from-and-facing-the-church/>.

⁷⁷ Cospers, *Rhythms of Grace*, 23.

of *Grace*, Cospers offers special thanks to Best, noting that he has been a faithful friend and “guide.”⁷⁸ Cospers expressed specific gratitude to Best in *Recapturing the Wonder*. Cospers notes that Best is “the brightest mind, most honest critic, and most generous soul [he] know[s].”⁷⁹ Additionally, Cospers dedicates his book, *Faith among the Faithless* to Best.

The impact of *Music through the Eyes of Faith* and *Unceasing Worship* emerge in Cospers’s writing as he picks up and develops several of Best’s ideas. For example, the role of faith in music making presented by Best in *Music through the Eyes of Faith* is represented in *Rhythms of Grace*. Cospers writes, “Our best efforts to worship in spirit and in truth, feeble and confused as we may be, ascend to heaven through faith in Jesus. They’re cleansed by his blood and they arrive at God’s throne a perfect, pure, and fragrant offering.”⁸⁰ Best’s concept of worship as a continuous outpouring and God as a continuous outpourer is also emphasized in Cospers’s writing, as is Best’s emphasis on freedom in Christ pertaining to art and culture, outlined in *Music through the Eyes of Faith*.⁸¹ Recalling a conversation with Best, Cospers notes that as Best grew older he became more aware of his “freedom in the gospel to engage with culture, and his own sinfulness. The result was that while he believed in a great wide and freedom in Christ, he exercised his freedom in a far more limited way than when he was younger.”⁸² Best realized, as he got older, that there could be some real dangers if this concept was approached too casually. Cospers identifies with Best’s experience, claiming to have encountered a similar shift during the research for his book, *The Stories We Tell*. He

⁷⁸ Cospers, *Rhythms of Grace*, 23.

⁷⁹ Cospers, *Recapturing the Wonder*, 165.

⁸⁰ Cospers, *Rhythms of Grace*, 115.

⁸¹ Cospers, *Rhythms of Grace*, 30 and 35. Here Cospers is directly building on (and quoting) Best, *Unceasing Worship*.

⁸² Cospers, *The Stories We Tell*, 55.

writes,

Researching this book has had a similar effect on me. Examining why we tell stories and thinking about the formative effect they have on our lives has caused me to be less enthusiastic about certain shows and movies, and more enthusiastic about others. I'm more sensitive to what I think is exploitive and dehumanizing, and less enamored with certain writers, directors, and actors. What remains, though, is a love of stories and a love of the medium of TV and movies. It's an amazing gift we have today [Such] an ability has always existed. God, in his wisdom, chose to give his image-bearers imagination, so that anytime we get together, we can sit down, tell a story, and be carried away.⁸³

Furthermore, this example suggests that Cospers has applied Best's idea of Creation and *imago Dei* with regards to the arts, to imagination connected to story-telling.

The role of Best's friendship and writing in shaping Cospers's philosophy is also seen in the latter's work with The Gospel Coalition. Cospers relies heavily on Best in his article, "Art For, From, and Facing the Church." He writes, "I had the joy last weekend of spending some time with Harold [He] is one of the sharpest thinking people I know."⁸⁴ According to Cospers, this article is the result of assistance from and conversations with Best. He explains, "Harold laid out a framework that has helped us immensely in clarifying the relationship between the arts and the church. We spent much of our time together this weekend talking through it."⁸⁵

Finally, through his books, articles, blogs, and ministry, Cospers continues to build on and employ Best's philosophy and ideas, extending the reach of Best's influence. Specifically, crediting the impact of Best's work, Cospers contends that reading *Unceasing Worship* "was a pivot point for my thinking as a pastor. There was before, and there is after. Best uses the concept of 'all of life is worship' and helps us see its roots in the gospel and its implications for the church, for culture, and for personal holiness."⁸⁶

⁸³ Cospers, *The Stories We Tell*, 56.

⁸⁴ Cospers, "Art For, From, and Facing the Church."

⁸⁵ Cospers, "Art For, From, and Facing the Church."

⁸⁶ Cospers, "On My Shelf."

D. Clark Measels and Carson-Newman University

Carson-Newman University (CNU) is a liberal arts school in Jefferson City, Tennessee. Donald Clark Measels, author and editor of *Music Ministry: A Guidebook* (2004)⁸⁷ and recent chair of the CNU music department, runs the school's Ball Institute for Church Music, which hosts conferences and workshops for area worship pastors and church music students. Measels's involvement with Best is multifaceted with *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, NASM, and workshops held by the Ball Institute. From these points of interaction, Best has impacted the music department at CNU in a number of ways, in addition to his influence on Measels personally.

Measels and Best first met at a conference where Best was speaking. At the time, Measels was in the early stages of considering appointment as the head of the music department. Thus, in preparation for this new task, he began compiling information and articles on the direction of worship music programs in the 1990s. Best gave Measels an unpublished article in which he observed current happenings in church music and offered his estimation of the direction of church music for the future.⁸⁸ Also, in the early 1990s, Best was a guest speaker at the Ball Institute workshops, where he spoke about the future of music ministry and church music.⁸⁹ In addition, Measels worked with NASM on numerous accreditation visits around the United States. His involvement with Best in this capacity led to significant changes within the music program at CNU. Primarily, Best's emphasis on musical diversity and pluralism, as well as the value he placed on indigenous sound and world music, helped increase the required amount of non-Western music in the degree curriculum at CNU and at other accredited music schools across the

⁸⁷ Donald Clark Measels, *Music Ministry: A Guidebook*, ed. Donald Clark Measels (Macon, GA: Smith and Hewlys, 2004).

⁸⁸ Donald Clark Measels, interview by author, Jefferson City, TN, December 10, 2019.

⁸⁹ Measels, interview.

nation.⁹⁰ Furthermore, Best's argument for the pursuit of excellence as a mark of biblical stewardship, coupled with his esteem for a wide range of musical styles for study, enjoyment, and performance, helped shape the music program at CNU.⁹¹

On a personal level, Measels acknowledges Best in the shaping and solidifying of his philosophy of music and worship: "In my life so many things have been a search for order—a structure on which to hang things. Harold Best was one of [the people] who began to give some of that [structure]. I remember hearing him say things that caused me to say 'yes!' And I began to understand things in a certain way."⁹² Additionally, he claims that Best is "a conservative thinker, steeped in the Bible, and a good person . . . and [I] want to hear what he has to say because it makes sense. He really [is] quite impressive."⁹³

In addition to Best's influence on Measels, *Music through the Eyes of Faith* has been used in the music department through Jeremy Buckner, provost and professor of music at CNU. Buckner encountered *Music through the Eyes of Faith* while teaching a graduate music education course on the psychological foundations of musical behavior. Already familiar with the philosophy of music and meaning offered by Leonard Meyer and others concerning music education, Buckner had yet to find a source that thoroughly addressed the meaning of music from a markedly Christian worldview.⁹⁴ Measels recommended the book in conversation with Buckner, who found it gratifying: "I started to read portions of the [the book] and thought 'this is really what I have been looking for.' I have been looking for something that explains music from a Christian perspective. A

⁹⁰ Measels, interview.

⁹¹ Measels, interview.

⁹² Measels, interview.

⁹³ Measels, interview.

⁹⁴ Jeremy Buckner, interview by author, Jefferson City, TN, December 9, 2019. Leonard Meyer's philosophy was outlined in chap. 2 of this dissertation. In addition to Meyer, Buckner lists Dorothy Sayer, David Elliot, and Bennett Reimer as familiar philosophers and music educators.

few years later I started adapting it to the project that I use for my current class for undergraduates.”

Buckner uses *Music through the Eyes of Faith* as a required textbook for his undergraduate course, Teaching General Music⁹⁵ a course that encourages students to connect their faith and learning to music through an historical survey of philosophies of music. Buckner specifically assigns the second chapter of Best’s book because it addresses music and meaning as well as the transcendentals of truth and beauty. As part of this assignment, students are asked to address the question: “How does reading this chapter inform your own faith in regard to music?”⁹⁶ In Buckner’s estimation, the chapter is particularly strong in that “he makes a strong propositional statement that the arts are morally neutral . . . He makes the argument that beauty in itself is not truth . . . Truth has an expressive quality that is communicated in words and ideas and beauty does not have it. I want students to think on how this [idea] ties into how we can teach redemptively.”⁹⁷ Moreover, Buckner identifies a strong tendency to “deify music to a certain degree” with reference to “music’s redemptive qualities” which he sees as a problem that exists within the field of music education.⁹⁸ He, like Best, recognizes that people must “choose to respond or [not to] respond to music. There is agency involved. Music does not have this power over people unless they choose to respond to music in that way. Best was the first person I had come across that could encapsulate that in a Christian worldview.”⁹⁹ In addition to the neutrality of music to cause human (moral) response, Buckner also agrees with Best’s argument that the word must be preeminent in worship. Buckner asserts that

⁹⁵ Teaching General Music was formerly called Teaching Music to Children.

⁹⁶ Buckner, interview.

⁹⁷ Buckner, interview.

⁹⁸ Buckner, interview.

⁹⁹ Buckner, interview.

text (along with context) give meaning to music and that worship music must be theologically examined for its text rather than musical style.

Joseph Crider

Joseph Crider, dean and professor of church music and worship at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (SWBTS) since 2019, and former professor of church music and worship at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (SBTS) for nine years, extends the reach of Best's influence through his own teaching, using *Music through the Eyes of Faith* as a required primary text for graduate courses in music and worship philosophy.¹⁰⁰ He notes that this book helped "shape class discussion, writing assignments, and ultimately student assessment."¹⁰¹ Best's argument for musical pluralism in corporate worship gatherings and the biblical grounding of his aesthetic philosophy bore notable impact on the worship curriculum at SBTS under Crider.¹⁰²

Additionally, Crider recognizes the impact of Best's writings and philosophy of music and worship within the local church. He states, "Best has helped music and worship ministry leaders give objective, biblically-based clarity and vocabulary to music and worship conversations once fraught with deeply personal, subjective, and ultimately emotionally-charged divisiveness."¹⁰³ And, from personal experience, Crider claims that "Best helped me find my own voice to express my personal aesthetic philosophy. But by his own example, Best modeled for us his own quest for clarity by continually asking difficult questions and wrestling with them in light of Jesus Christ and the gospel."¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ Joseph Crider, email message to author, November 30, 2019. Scott Aniol also teaches at SWBTS. He encountered *Unceasing Worship* during his doctoral work, but due to his fundamental disagreement with Best's position of musical pluralism and amorality, he does not use Best's books in the courses he teaches.

¹⁰¹ Crider, email to author.

¹⁰² Crider, email to author.

¹⁰³ Crider, email to author.

¹⁰⁴ Crider, email to author.

Conclusion

As seen in the writings, conversations, and interviews with selected worship authors and educators, the reach of Best's influence is extensive and continues to be perpetuated. The ideas and philosophy articulated in both *Music through the Eyes of Faith* and *Unceasing Worship* have been carried forward in the writings of Bob Kauflin, Michael Card, Mike Cospers, Barry Liesch, and Clark Measels as well as many other worship educators. And, according to Scott Aniol, Best's idea on the amorality or neutrality of music has become the "default evangelical view."¹⁰⁵ Moreover, the impact of Best's love for Christ coupled with his desire to think deeply about and within music and the arts from a Christian perspective has significantly shaped worship and music curriculum at Baylor University, Biola College, Carson-Newman University, the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Some of these institutions employ his texts as required readings; others have modified course requirements as a result of Best's work with NASM. Each of these institutions propels Harold Best's philosophy forward to the next generation of Christian musicians through his personal impact on these educators.

¹⁰⁵ Scott Aniol, email to the author, December 7, 2019.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

In this dissertation I have attempted to show the extent of Harold Best's impact on worship literature, philosophy, and the local church through the examination of the influence his ideas have had on selected worship authors and educators. Through his books, *Music through the Eyes of Faith* and *Unceasing Worship*, Best articulated a theology and philosophy of worship, music and the arts, and aesthetics, all from a Christian worldview. In the writings and lectures of many subsequent authors of evangelical worship literature, Best's primary arguments (regarding musical neutrality and amorality, *imago Dei*, Creator-creatorhood and human creativity, as well as Christian responsibility within the arts, and the call to pursue excellence) are quoted, paraphrased, and heavily relied upon.

Chapter 2 offered an overview of significant points of aesthetic philosophical development in the United States throughout the twentieth century as a backdrop against which Best's own philosophy may be viewed. The secular philosophers of the last half of the twentieth century (Carroll Pratt, Susanne Langer, Leonard Meyer, Nelson Goodman, Theodor Adorno, and Roger Scruton) represent a shift away from the ancient philosophies of music directly connected to moral affect (Platonism). Rather, musical symbolism, formalism, expressionism, and even musical empiricism became foundations upon which to investigate musical meaning and function. Best's aesthetic philosophy represents this shift away from Platonian aesthetics as he argues that music's meaning resides within its context. Furthermore, Best's philosophy holds space for human agency as he recognizes that, although music can cause biological or physical response, it does

not have the ability to initiate moral response.¹

Additionally, Jacques Maritain, Francis Schaeffer, Nicholas Wolterstorff, Leyland Ryken, Frank Gaebelien, Calvin Seerveld, and others, connect aesthetics to theology and Christian doctrine. These Christian philosophers approach music and the arts from biblical principles, including *imago Dei*, Creation, the Fall, redemption, and musical judgement based on views of morality, freedom in Christ, Christian responsibility and stewardship, these all serve as points of influence in Best's philosophical journey.

An overview of the evangelical worship landscape of the twentieth century was offered in chapter 3, noting significant changes in worship philosophy and practice, development which Best observed and experienced. The 1940s saw an emphasis on congregational singing, hymns, and graded choirs. In the 1950s, the environment of worship changed with the development of rock 'n' roll and the rise of the Youth for Christ movement. These shifts, along with the onset of the Billy Graham Crusades, which combined rock music and sacred texts, sparked division and debates about appropriate music styles for worship. These debates constituted the so-called worship wars and continued into the 1990s and beyond.

Divisiveness increased in the 1960s with the charismatic renewal movement and the Jesus Movement born out of the baby boomer generation. This decade also brought about the beginnings of contemporary worship music with the emergence of "message songs" and "praise choruses" which led into the praise and worship movement of the 1970s and 1980s. Eric Routley, Calvin Johansson, Vic Delamont, and Donald Hustad are among the prominent voices in worship literature of these decades, giving insight into the worship praxis and philosophies of the time. Johansson centered his philosophy of worship on the doctrine of creation and *imago Dei* as well as stewardship.

¹ Harold M. Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith* (New York: HarperCollins, 1993), 52.

Additionally, he, along with Delamont, wrote on the role and responsibility of the music minister.² However, Johansson served as an opposing voice to Best as he argued against musical neutrality and resisted musical pluralism in worship, especially in his later publications. Like Johansson, Delamont also included a description of necessary qualifications for music ministers.³ Rather than engaging in style debate from one position, Hustad attempted to speak into the worship wars with an aim to unify rather than divide.⁴ The same can be said of Best and his advocacy for musical pluralism, which allows for popular, contemporary, and traditional music styles.

Best and Hustad overlap in their experiences of musical tension as well as in their philosophies of music and worship. Specifically, the nervous breakdown Best endured bears significant similarity to Hustad's self-label of "schizophrenic musician." Where Best grappled with musical and intellectual dualism of high/low and sacred/secular art, Hustad, likewise, had one foot in art music (classical) and the other in church music. Hustad wrote, "Through the years as my musical roles grew to include teacher, composer, and editor, the tensions between those two worlds have occasionally produced an inner conflict that bordered on aesthetic schizophrenia."⁵

The 1990s experienced a surge in evangelical worship literature as style debates continued and gradually declined when an emphasis on worship as an all-of-life activity emerged. Prominent authors of this decade included Harold Best, Marva Dawn, David Peterson, John Frame, and Robert Webber. Like Hustad, Robert Webber, served as

² Calvin M. Johansson, *Music and Ministry: A Biblical Counterpart* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1984), and Johansson, "Some Theological Considerations Foundational to the Development of a Philosophy of Church Music (DMA diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1974).

³ Vic Delamont, *The Music and Ministry of the Church* (Chicago: Moody, 1980).

⁴ Donald P. Hustad, *Jubilate! Church Music in the Evangelical Tradition* (Carol Stream, IL: Hope, 1981).

⁵ Donald P. Hustad, *Jubilate II: Church Music in Worship and Renewal* (Carol Stream, IL: Hope, 1993), v.

a significant contemporary of Best. Webber's career as an educator, editor, and author was a prominent influence in the worship philosophy, praxis, and in the style debates (arguing in favor of traditional liturgy) of the 1990s. And, he founded the Institute for Worship Studies in Jacksonville, Florida.

Where Hustad sought to step beyond the worship wars into a focus on spiritual renewal, Dawn and Frame built cases and sharply articulated their side of the worship debates. Dawn, rejecting any presumed benefit or value of contemporary worship music, promoted traditional liturgical worship for its rich theological and biblical substance.⁶ Frame, however, countered Dawn's claims and supported contemporary worship styles noting arguing that it, like traditional worship, could have theological depth and edificatory value.⁷

The rise in the amount of worship literature has continued throughout the first two decades of the twenty-first century, now addressing worship structure in addition to life-encompassing worship. Prominent authors include John Witvliet, James K. A. Smith, Bob Kauflin, Constance Cherry, Bryan Chapell, and more recently, Monique Ingalls, Lester Ruth, Swee Hong Lim, and Zack Hicks. Ingalls's significance, however, extends beyond her publications into her work in academe as a dissertation advisor to numerous doctoral students at Baylor University.

Chapter 4 presents a professional biography of Best detailing his primary influences while tracing the development of his philosophy. His experiences at Nyack as a student and professor, at Wheaton as the dean of the music conservatory, and his extensive work with the National Association of Schools of Music shaped his aesthetic philosophy significantly and, at the same time, provided him a platform to work out his

⁶ Marva J. Dawn, *Reaching Out without Dumbing Down: A Theology of Worship for this Urgent Time* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995).

⁷ John M. Frame, *Contemporary Worship Music: A Biblical Defense* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P and R, 1997).

ideas. Additionally, through these organizations and institutions, Best built relationships with Vida Chenoweth, Frank Gaebelien, Mark Coppenger, and countless students who also served as significant points of influence in the development of his philosophy as he continued to engage with music, art, and faith.

Chapter 5 offered an exposition and analysis of *Music through the Eyes of Faith* and *Unceasing Worship*. Detailed summaries of the main ideas in each work as well as accounts of their reception from various reviews and interviews situate these books within the larger evangelical body of literature. In *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, Best argued that music was intrinsically amoral, that faith connected to music making, and that freedom in Christ allowed believers to engage in and experience all musical styles. Furthermore, he advocated for musical pluralism in worship and argued that music is an act of worship rather than an aid to worship. He also emphasized the importance of pursuing excellence, competition, and success as marks of biblical stewardship. *Imago Dei*, God's creatorhood and human creativity are also among Best's main interests. As noted in various interviews, this book engaged deeply with aesthetics from a distinctly Christian perspective, thus giving voice to the philosophy of music held by many evangelical worship leaders, authors, and educators. The main point of disagreement found with this book concerned Best's musical relativism articulated through his support of musical pluralism and the morality of music. Johansson, Scott Aniol, and John Makujina are among Best's strongest critics. Johansson notes that while he holds great admiration for Best, he fundamentally disagrees with the amorality of music and thus does not hold to the same musical pluralism for worship as Best. He writes, "The fact that God in His sovereignty can work through anything is no license for empowering music in worship which has as its *modus operandi* fun, frivolity, and entertainment."⁸ Additionally, the density of Best's writing style has proven to be a point of difficulty.

⁸ Calvin M. Johansson, letter to author, January 7, 2020.

Unceasing Worship builds off of the ideas outlined in *Music through the Eyes of Faith* but focuses more intently on worship. The main argument Best makes in this book is that worship is a continuous outpouring; it is not something that occurs *only* at a designated time on Sunday mornings.⁹ It is an all-of-life endless action that must be properly and biblically directed toward God. *Unceasing Worship* received more favorable review by some of Best's critics due to its easier readability and heavier reliance on Scripture. However, musical pluralism and the morality of music are still areas of contention between Best and Aniol, Makujina, and Johansson.

Best's aesthetic philosophy as presented in *Music through the Eyes of Faith* and *Unceasing Worship* draws specifically upon the groundwork laid by Schaeffer, Seerveld, Wolterstorff, and Gaebelein. Schaeffer's use of the doctrine of creation and *imago Dei*, as well as his scriptural support for the use of art in the church and the responsibility of the Christian artist, is seen in Best's advocacy for musical pluralism.¹⁰ Additionally, Seerveld's argument for Christians to participate in aesthetics as an act of obedience and Wolterstorff's argument that the value of art rests in its ability to fulfill its purpose can also be seen in Best's argument for the pursuit of excellence and in his criteria for artistic evaluation.¹¹ Furthermore, direct connection between Gaebelein and Best exists in their respective arguments for Christian responsibility and artistic judgement as well as the call to pursue excellence.¹²

⁹ Aniol lists this as a point of agreement for him. Scott Aniol, email to author., December 7, 2019.

¹⁰ See Francis A. Schaeffer, *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer*, 2nd ed. vol. 2, book 5, *Art and the Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1982), and Calvin Seerveld, *Rainbows for the Fallen World* (Toronto: Tuppence, 1980).

¹¹ Nicholas A. Wolterstorff, *Art in Action: Toward a Christian Aesthetic* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980).

¹² See Frank E. Gaebelein, *The Christian, the Arts, and Truth: Regaining the Vision of Greatness*, ed. D. Bruce Lockerbie (Portland, OR: Multnomah, 1985), and Gaebelein, "The Christian and Music," in *The Christian Imagination: Essays on Literature and the Arts*, ed. Leland Ryken (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981).

The impact of Best on selected worship authors and educators is put forward in chapter 6. Best's influence on Bob Kauflin, Mike Cospers, Michael Card, and Barry Liesch as demonstrated in their writings, reveals the significance of his ideas. Each of these worship authors have had personal interactions with Best, and they present and further develop his ideas and philosophy in their own writings. The philosophies articulated by these subsequent authors is heavily steeped in Bestian arguments for musical amorality, pluralism and diversity in worship, music as an act of worship rather than as an aid to worship, and the doctrines of creation and *imago Dei*.

Furthermore, the reach of Best's influence now extends into music and worship education at many evangelical institutions through the work of Liesch at Biola College, David Music at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and Baylor University, Joseph Crider at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (and now at SWBTS), and Clark Measels and Jeremy Buckner at Carson-Newman University and the school's Ball Institute of Church Music.

Additionally, Best's influence reaches further through the lectures and training sessions presented at worship conferences where Kauflin and Cospers are frequent speakers, e.g.: *Doxology and Theology*, and *Together for the Gospel*, held biennially in Louisville, Kentucky. Card also leads the *Biblical Imagination* conferences across the United States, extending Best's ideas and impact. Thus, we see Best's influence reach not only into worship education, worship leadership, and music education, but also into the local church as numerous students and conference attendees sit under the instruction and training of these representative worship authors and educators.

That Best's publications have been widely accepted by evangelicals across the United States is testament to his impact. While his arguments for musical neutrality experienced pushback by Johansson, Makujina, and Aniol, his work has aided worship educators and authors in articulating their own philosophy of music, art, worship, and aesthetics. Joseph Crider notes, "Best has helped students find their own voices and

vocabulary in developing their own aesthetic philosophy. While . . . some students change their initial philosophy after reading Best, most of them appreciate Best because he gives objective clarity to what they have only been able to deal with on a subjective level.”

Aniol says it well:

I think Best represents the majority of evangelical opinions on [pluralism and musical neutrality], which is fitting since his writings and teachings have significantly contributed to perpetuating this thinking among evangelicals. You [will] find that most evangelical leaders who defend musical relativism—everyone from John Piper to Bob Kauflin to [Mike] Cospers and others—quote Harold Best’s classic *Music through the Eyes of Faith* as support for their views. In fact, I am unaware of anything else that defends the sort of musical pluralism that has come to be the default view of evangelicals.¹³

In addition to the influence of Best’s writings, the impact of his life is seen in the relationships he held with the worship authors and educators listed above. That Best lived out his worldview and applied his philosophy and ideas to his vocation and relationships bears great significance. Referencing his role as a mentor and educator, Best claims,

The best thing I can do for individuals is to be an example for them that they will remember, irrespective of the music I taught them. Or, to put it another way, the music I teach them will be all the more contextually appropriate because of who I try to be in their presence. So the word “mentor”—not “mandator”—is incredibly important to me. And in the process of wanting to be a mentor, I cannot go home and grieve over the ways in which I might have failed during the day, because a number of people were not converted to my point of view. If the person I am trying to be, if that can make a mark, on a child or on a sophomore [or colleague or friend], then my musicality will have found its place.¹⁴

Best took full advantage of his tenure as an educator to pour into the lives of those around him both musically and spiritually. For example, Daniel Horn, chair of keyboard studies at Wheaton recalls his experience working under Best’s leadership: “I worked with [Best] for 13 years (1984–1997). I regard him as being a pivotal figure in my life—

¹³ Aniol, email to author.

¹⁴ Harold M. Best, “The Personhood of Music Education,” in *The Education of the Professional Musician: Towards a Change of Attitudes Regarding Goals and Values*, ed. Siglind Bruhn (Nedlands, Western Australia: The University of Western Australia, 1995), 25.

professionally, personally, and spiritually. [He was] in many respects a father-figure to me.”¹⁵ Horn witnessed Best live out his philosophy of musical pluralism by engaging in a wide range of musical passions “wherever they might lead, and without [apology].”¹⁶ Noting Best’s love of Bach, Brahms, jazz, and a plethora of other genres, Horn states, “To me, one of the most important pieces of the puzzle is his contention that a place like the Wheaton College Conservatory of Music should operate out on the principle of centered diversity. [He] believed that one could not understand the music and artifacts of other cultural traditions without understanding one’s own native cultural tongue.”¹⁷ Horn, like many others at Wheaton, NASM, and countless other schools of music, were shaped in various ways by Best’s philosophy, passion, personality, and love for Christ articulated in his writings.

Due to the delimitations of this project only seven selected worship authors and educators were interviewed as representative figures to show the reach of Best’s influence. However, further research is needed in this area over time in order to investigate the ways in which authors subsequent to Best have propelled his ideas forward, creating a ripple effect. In my estimation, and in that of Kauflin, Measels, Music, and Horn, Best’s influence will continue to grow in the larger body of evangelical worship literature as the younger generation of worship leaders and authors who have relied upon and employed his arguments (even if they fail to reference Best) propel his philosophy forward in new scholarship and conference lectures. Horn writes, “His influence can be seen in the work of former colleagues like myself, former students (Douglas Yeo and Deana Witkowski), and people like you who have been attracted to his work without having experienced face-to-face the irresistible sway of his unique

¹⁵ Daniel Horn, email to author, January 26, 2020.

¹⁶ Horn, email to author.

¹⁷ Horn, email to author.

personality.”¹⁸

An additional area of suggested further study is a full biography of Best highlighting his unique use of language and style of communicating and his colorful and intriguing personality (among other engaging traits). As seen in chapters 4, 5, and 6, Best’s personality, interesting (and at times perplexing) literary techniques, in addition to his love for Christ, are essential components of who he is and of his impact and warrant further investigation and attention. In the meantime, let us give thanks to God for those like Harold Best who seek to develop and articulate a biblical theology of worship, music, and aesthetics while living and loving like Jesus for the sake of the artist, the local church, and the Kingdom.

¹⁸ Horn, email to author.

APPENDIX

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY OF BEST'S PUBLISHED WORKS

Best, Harold. "The Arts and Evangelicalism: Questions, Dilemmas, Prospects." *Seattle Pacific University Review Archives* 5, no. 1 (1986): 6–18.

This article was presented at a the Schoenhals Symposium on the campus of SPU. Best presented the paper and Timothy D. Malm, professor of visual arts, and George A. Scranton, professor of theater offered responses. In Best's contribution to the symposium he addresses the diversity of worship and music noting that the hymn "Oh for a Thousand Tongues to Sing" written by the Wesleys, has been answered over and again through culture and time. He addresses contemporary Christian music noting its strengths and weaknesses. He also differentiates between the transcendentals of truth and beauty. He recognizes that there are various levels of beauty, but not various levels of truth (a theme presented in more detail in *Music through the Eyes of Faith*). Additionally, he argues in favor of deeper contextualization of evangelism and worship highlighting the value of indigeneity. The duality of classical and popular styles in connection with Christian arts education is also a point of discussion. Here, Best cautions against viewing art and music as tools. Rather, he urges that the arts be viewed from the doctrines of creation, *imago Dei*, and stewardship in the pursuit of excellence (all of which are expounded upon in great detail in *Music through the Eyes of Faith* and *Unceasing Worship*).

———. *Art and the People of God*. Unpublished book manuscript.

Best builds upon his arguments of Creator, creation, and human creativity, the pursuit of excellence, music as an act of worship, and musical neutrality as the basis for musical pluralism. However, in this book, he takes a deeper look at aesthetics and broadens his writing to include the whole of the art world. He advocates for arts and music education for children within the church, provides some biographical information, reintroduces his hologram analogy from *Unceasing Worship*, and argues that the inner workings and inner worship among the Trinity serves as a model for complete, biblical worship as related to human worship of God, self-love, and neighborly love (without the hierarchical structure between God and his image-bearers). Additionally, he introduces the concept of "anybodyness" from *imago Dei* and applies it to the arts: anybody creates, sings, paints, and the like, as an "in-created human capability." Finally, he argues in favor of the church engaging with a broader view of the arts rather than from a narrow, liturgical, sacred, or church art division. To do this, he says, results in art for the church, art from the church, and art toward the church: a concept quoted by Mike Cosper in his blog article, "On My Shelf: Life and Books with Mike Cosper," The Gospel Coalition, August 28, 2014, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/reviews/shelf-life-books-mike-cosper/>.

———. “The Art of New Music.” *Contemporary Christian Magazine* 6, no. 9 (1984): 10–11.

In this article, Best articulates several arguments which later appear in *Music through the Eyes of Faith* and *Unceasing Worship*. He claims that we are commanded to make music, and that the music made by Christians is first directed toward God in worship rather than entertainment. Additionally, he argues that music is not a means of worship but an offering of worship. He also presents the theme of witness as overheard worship that later surfaces in his books. And, his case for musical pluralism is clearly evident in this article along with his insistence on the pursuit of excellence as a mark of biblical stewardship.

———. “Arts Education: Culture, the Media and the Church.” *Design for Arts in Education* 90, no. 1 (1988): 2-10.

Best addresses the lack of artistic value and training within the national education policy prevalent in the 1980s. He advocates for the inclusion of multicultural study within the arts and calls those working within the areas of multiculturalism, media, and the church to combine their efforts to improve and strengthen public arts education and policy.

———. “Arts, Words, Intellect, Education Part 1: Cultural and Intellectual Contexts.” *Arts Education Policy Review* 101 (2000): 3–9.

Best addresses the role of intellect within K–12 arts education. He identifies speech logic exclusivism as an intellectual shortcoming of education. He distinguishes between thinking “of” and “about” and thinking “in,” noting that such speech logic exclusivism results in inapplicable abstractions. Additionally, he differentiates between musical experience and experientialism: experience is “something we so completely go through that it can be described in multiple ways and from different perspectives, each of which is incomplete without the others” and experientialism is “short lived immediacies and satisfactions driving a world view” (4–5). He also claims that there is an intellectual humility of music. The receiving intellect (listener), performing intellect, and the intellect of the composer are intertwined in music. Ultimately, he attempts to recognize ways that confusion about intellect in the arts has impacted arts education curriculum and policy. He offers answers to these problems in the second installment of the article in the following journal issue. See the entry below.

———. “Arts, Words, Intellect, Emotion Part 2: Toward Artistic Mindedness.” *Arts Education Policy Review* 102, no. 1 (2000): 3–10.

This article answers and expounds upon the questions presented in part 1 (see the above entry). Best begins by delving into a definition of intellect: “Intellect is not only to see deeply and connect fully, but also to see that these depths and connections are not yet fully accomplished by themselves” (3). He argues that musical mindedness requires three components: creativity, valuing, and spirit which must not be separated. Holding these together results in an “intriguing inquiry into wholeness” (4). The comprehensive intellectual education in music allows students to deepen their engagement with music from thinking about music to thinking in music. He offers seven suggestions for policy reform to accomplish this comprehensive musical education and ultimately calls educators and policy makers

to encourage musical instruction and training that aids students in responding to an art form within that art form itself. “Let this be the cornerstone of arts education policy” (10).

———. “A Stirring Charge: Dear Professor Shashberger, from Harold Best.” *Theology, News, and Notes* (Spring 2006): 4–5.

Best wrote this charge to Michael Shashberger upon his appointment as the chair of Music and Worship at Westmont College. In this address, Best calls all worship leaders and educators to teach faithfully with humility by addressing issues of musical style and quality within congregations and corporate worship. Additionally, he calls leaders and educators to intentionally include children in their “educational company.”

———. “Authentic Worship and Faithful Music Making.” *Worship Arts* 45, no. 3 (2000): 3–6.

This article was presented at the Music and Worship Interest Session of the American Choral Directors Association National Convention in Chicago, IL in 1999. Best addresses both Christians and those of the Jewish faith as he argues that part of authentic worship is to make music. Rooting his argument in Psalm 33:3 Best instructs that we are to sing to God in worship while with new songs or by singing “old songs newly” (4). Additionally, he argues that we are created to continuously worship God, but our worship become misdirected as a result of the fall. Additionally, he cautions against believing that music has the power to invite the presence of God and clearly contends that music is not an aid to worship. These themes are central to both *Music through the Eyes of Faith* and *Unceasing Worship*.

———. “Christ our Hope.” *Church Musician Today* 1 (1997): 5.

That Christ is Hope Incarnate serves as the basis for this brief, one-page article. Leaning into the emphasis of hope during Christmas, Best argues that for the Christian, hope is a word with heavy connection to salvation. Noting that people often use the word hope in a flippant way, he urges believers to focus on Christ as our only hope and how this hope functions within faith and love.

———. “Christian Responsibility in Music.” In *The Christian Imagination: Essays on Literature and the Arts*, edited by Leland Ryken, 401–14. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981.

Best outlines the responsibility of the Christian artist in this chapter contribution. He begins by connecting the doctrines of creation and *imago Dei* to human creativity and music making. Turning to responsibility in worship, Best notes that we are created worshipping and exist as continuous worshipers (a theme later to appear in *Unceasing Worship*). Then, he connects music making and creativity to witness, arguing that witness is simply “overheard worship” (414). This chapter first appeared as an article: “There is More to Redemption than Meets the Ear: An Inquiry into Christian Responsibility in Music.” *Christianity Today* 18 (1974): 12–18.

———. “Church Music Curriculum.” Paper presented at the annual meeting of the National Association of Schools of Music, Dallas, TX, November 21–24, 1981.

Best argues, in this paper, that a strong church music curriculum is built upon theologies of creativity, worship, communication and response, and excellence. He also suggests that this curriculum should include an investigation of musical meaning, invite all of the arts to be viewed in light of the gospel, and should equip musicians in sight-reading, composition, and conducting. Furthermore, he claims that a good curriculum brings forth “competent musician-servants.”

———. “Church Relatedness, Music, and Higher Education.” Paper presented at the annual meeting of the National Association of Schools of Music, Atlanta, GA, November 21–23, 1981.

In this lecture, Best argues that church relatedness requires a broader definition of the word “church” in order to go beyond church music curricula to include all music in higher education. He articulates the connection between the doctrine of creation and God as creator to human creativity. He addresses music and worship noting that we are always worshiping something and must direct our worship toward God. And, he argues that music is neither a tool nor an aid for worship, but rather, an act of worship—an offering to God. As in other articles and in his books, *Music through the Eyes of Faith* and *Unceasing Worship*, he defines excellence as the process of becoming better than one was and urges Christian artists to pursue excellence from the standpoint of biblical stewardship.

———. “Creative Diversity, Artistic Valuing, and the Peaceable Imagination.” *Arts Education Policy Review* 95, no. 5 (1995): 2–7.

This article was first presented at the International Society of Music Education. Here, Best advocates for the pursuit of excellence, creative diversity, artistic valuing, and the creation of peaceable art, creativity, and imagination. His arguments for musical pluralism, diversity, the pursuit of excellence first exist in *Music through the Eyes of Faith* and later resurface in *Unceasing Worship*. However, in this article he focuses on the need for peaceable imagination. He provides a helpful illustration of a triangle of artists, teachers, and children in creating and receiving peaceable imagination rooted in the art of *shalom*.

———. “Creativity—Human and Divine.” *Evangelical Review of Theology* 11 (1987): 157–68.

Appearing also as a chapter contribution to *The Reality of Christian Learning* edited by Harold Heie and David L. Wolfe (see below), Best connects various aspects of the doctrine of creation, God as creator, and the Incarnation to human creative action: imagining, making, and doing. Predating *Music through the Eyes of Faith* by five years, his argument on the doctrine of creation as a model for Christian artists is presented. Additionally, rich with scriptural examples, Best delves into the doctrines of creation and the Incarnation and applies them to the calling of Christian artists, Christian judgment and value of art, and the intrinsic worth of art and music.

———. *Dumbfounded Praying*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2011.

Building upon the emphasis of prayer (written and spontaneous) first presented in *Unceasing Worship*, Best describes the nature of prayer as “a continuing sign of hunger and wonder—and the inborn desire to talk.” Following his introduction and discussion of prayer, he offers eighty prayers accompanied and begun by a scripture verse. Some of these prayers are personal containing stories of Best’s experiences, but all are geared toward refining the craft of thinking through, crafting and drafting written prayers.

———. “Educational and Curricular Proceedings.” Paper presented at the annual meeting of the National Association of Schools of Music, November 18–20, 1984.

Best calls for a national revision of music curricula in this paper. After articulating his definition of excellence as becoming better than one once was (later articulated in *Music through the Eyes of Faith* and *Unceasing Worship*) and emphasizing the importance of providing musical training for children, he suggests ways to expand music curricula into a continuous studies format. This continuous studies model should broaden curricula to include musical cultures beyond classical Western styles, focus on performance and pedagogy, and require that students compose, train their ears, and engage with music in a cross-cultural context.

———. “God’s Creation and Human Creativity.” In *The Reality of Christian Learning: Strategies for Faith-Discipline Integration*, edited by Harold Heie and David L. Wolff, 249–67. St. Paul, MN: Christian College Consortium, 1987.

Best’s chapter contribution to this book addresses the doctrine of creation and God as the creator in connection to human creativity. Predating *Music through the Eyes of Faith* by five years, his argument on the doctrine of creation as a model for Christian artists is presented. Additionally, rich with scriptural examples, Best delves into the doctrines of creation and the Incarnation and applies them to the calling of Christian artists, Christian judgment and value of art, and the intrinsic worth of art and music. Following this chapter, Mark Coppenger offers a rebuttal to Best’s essay (“Creativity and Analogy: Some Limitations” 268–89) in which he largely agrees with Best. However, of note is the presuppositions of Best’s normative principle and Coppenger’s regulative principle.

———. “Healy Willan: A Rich Musical Mixture.” *Christianity Today* 20 (1976): 18–21.

In this article, Best discusses the personal and compositional contributions of Healy Willan to church music in the twentieth century. Best argues that Willan is among those who stand in the gap of issues or concerns of debate and musical appropriateness and quality. Additionally, Best lists several of Willan’s church music compositions noting that they are written in a way that involves all of corporate worship but can also work as a “stand alone” offering.

———. “Heritage, Cultural, and Curricular Policy.” *Design for Arts Education* (1985): 6–10.

Best advocates for multiculturalism within music education. He notes that there has been a tendency to negatively refer to non-Western cultures as less than or in a negative light. He argues that while Westernism contains aspects of multiculturalism, it is insufficient to stop there within arts education. Rather, he

argues for a world arts education noting that one can be “artistically multicultural without becoming multiideological or multipolitical” (10). And ultimately, he urges that art educators avoid confusing culture, heritage, artifact, and worldview.

———. “Hymn Tune Writing.” *Hymn* 28 (1977): 183–85.

This article appears two years later in the *Church Musician* (see the subsequent entry). Best offers suggestions for composing good hymn tunes in this article. His suggestions include keeping an eraser close, stay (largely) within diatonic scales, limit the range to an octave, employ slower harmonic rhythm or canon, work for rhythmic excitement rather than expected and superficial syncopation. Overall, Best urges composers of hymn tunes to work for a “generic simplicity” that will showcase excellence.

———. “Hymn Tune Writing.” *Church Musician* 30 (1979): 45–47.

Originally published two years prior in *Hymn*. Please see the previous entry.

———. “Lemonade or Merlot? Authentic Multiculturalism and High Culture.” *Arts Education Policy Review* 104, no. 1 (2002): 3–8.

Building off of his two-part article published in 2000, Best brings the idea of teaching with a focus on intellect to multiculturalism in this article. He briefly discusses his musical upbringing with exposure to many styles and cultures through radio, gramophone, and live concerts. From here he discusses the rise of political multicultural discourse in the late 1970s shifting arts education policy away from “the simple, comprehensive, transcultural wonder of human creativity” even within higher music education (4–5). He claims that true multiculturalism should avoid prejudice and requires engagement before critique. He urges arts educators to teach art before culture and to teach a multiculturalism that includes multiple cultures without denigrating Western art and culture.

———. “Leo Sowerby: His Life a Psalm.” *Christianity Today* 19 (1975): 25.

Best provides a brief overview of the musical career and church music compositions of Leo Sowerby. Best describes Sowerby’s instrumental compositional style as well as mentions some of his noteworthy church anthems. Ultimately, Best claims that Sowerby was an exemplary artist for the church and that we should “pray for gifted artists and fearlessly welcome those whom God leads into the width and celebration of [our] worship” (25).

———. “Making Giraffes 101: A New Model of Creativity and Excellence for Christian Artists.” *Contemporary Christian Music Magazine* 21, no. 1 (1998): 102–4.

In this article, Best urges Christian musicians to hold an accurate view of the importance of music in light of God’s glory. He advocates for diversity, calling contemporary Christian musicians to seek diversity beyond genres, styles, and ages. He encourages artists to aim for creativity rather than popularity and to acknowledge the shallowness of popular styles. Additionally, he implores Christian artists to “make giraffes”—being made in God’s image, we are to “make new things out of older things.”

———. “Music and Meaning: All Forms are Valid.” *9Marks* IX (2014).
<https://www.9marks.org/article/journalmusic-and-meaning-all-forms-are-valid/>.

Comprised of Best’s answer to three questions, this article addresses musical value, judgment, and guidelines determining a music’s appropriateness for use in gathered worship. First, Best was asked “Can God employ musical form [for redemptive purposes]?” Best claims that God can use musical form but clarifies the question and his answer. He notes that God is the creator and declared his creation “good.” Therefore, no musical style bears more intrinsic worth than another but there may be variety of quality or “better-than-ness.” The second question Best addresses further explains variety of quality. Finally, Best was asked if there were forms of music better suited for corporate worship than others. Here, he distinguishes between “better” and “appropriate” noting that “appropriate” has a moral and biblical reference. Best concludes by recognizing that focusing on forms, moral content, and taste misses the mark. Rather, he urges that we return to the “wonder of the sheer fact of music, offered temperately, humbly, imaginatively, servingly, discerningly, and in complete surrender to the sovereign Word of God.”

———. “Music Curricula in the Future.” *Arts Education Policy Review* 94, no. 2 (1992): 2–6.

This article was originally adapted from two of Best’s previous lectures with NASM, “New Trends in Music Curricula: What Do They Need?” Proceedings: The 55th Annual Meeting; and “Music Curricula in the Future,” Proceedings: The 64th Annual Meeting (Reston: National Association of Schools of Music, 1980, 1989). Here, he addresses issues with music curricula of the late 1980s and early 1990s noting that there was too much emphasis on chronological development of music, centered on music theory than musicianship and creativity, and was too performance driven. Additionally, he notes that at the time most music majors were instructed on technique rather than musical engagement. Furthermore, Best presents three things musicians do: write music, present music, and contextualize music. Rephrasing these he writes that musicians can think up music, think in music, and think about music.

———. “Music: Offerings of Creativity: An Interview with Harold Best.” *Christianity Today* 21, no. 15 (1977): 12–15.

This article is an interview conducted by Cheryl Forbes. Best argues that music should be important to all believers because Scripture instructs music making. He claims that the role of the Christian musician is first and foremost of make music to God. He defines a theology of creativity centering on *imago Dei* and the creation mandate. Additionally, he addresses musical pluralism and relativism noting that some Christians attempt to empower music with moral power discussing the pushback many evangelicals presented against jazz and rock music. Furthermore, Best distinguishes between being an artist and performer. Delving into many themes that later appear in *Music through the Eyes of Faith* and *Unceasing Worship* Best emphasizes the amorality of music, that music making is an offering to God, urges the church to encourage its artists, and offers suggestions on developing a church music program.

———. “Musical Perception and Music Education.” *Arts Education Policy Review* 96, no. 4 (1995): 2–8.

Best, in this article, advocates for teaching children to listen actively, engage and appreciate music deeply in multiple ways. Reiterating his argument for judging within categories rather than between them (*Music through the Eyes of Faith*), Best addresses some assumptions about high and low art, shallow and deep engagement, kitsch, and entertainment. Ultimately, he calls for music education to “expand” and “enrich” the musical cannon through “artistic imagination.”

———. “New Trends in Music Curriculum.” Paper presented at the annual meeting of the National Association of Schools of Music, Philadelphia, PA, November 18–20, 1979.

Best cautions against music programs that only focus on performance and fail to emphasize theory and composition. He recognizes that many music programs present students with either a performance or academic track within music resulting in an incomplete music education. He argues that undergraduate curriculum must train the “complete musician” who is able to deeply think and work in music. “A complete musician is one who hears completely and thinks so widely that making music and conceptualizing about it are kindred enthusiasts” (131).

———. “Oh for a Thousand Tongues, but Whose?” *Church Musician* 48 (1996): 8–11.

Best begins this article with a paraphrase on the Genesis account of creation to frame his argument for musical pluralism. He argues that amid the numerous styles, genres, languages, and the like, Christians often lack “musical authenticity” (10). He urges Christians to seek musical authenticity because it centers on diversity, is humble, “is the spirit of Jesus in pitches, colors, and textures: prophetic, loving, serving, childlike [and] redemptive” (11). Ultimately Best encourages the church to lead the way in the best art, music, and creativity.

———. “Personhood of Music Education.” In *The Education of the Professional Musician*, edited by Siglind Bruhn, 13–25. Nedlands, Western Australia: The University of Western Australia, 1995.

This paper was presented at the International Society for Music Education and was born out of a then forthcoming article published in *Arts Policy Review*, entitled “Creative Diversity, Artistic Valuing and the Peaceable Imagination.” However, in addition to the central themes presented in the article, a transcription of a question and answer session following the presentation is offered in pages 22–25. Here, Best emphasizes the importance of children as the future generation and argues that music educators therefore must receive priority in training. Additionally, he advocates for creative diversity, the pursuit of excellence, and artistic valuing as in *Music through the Eyes of Faith* and in *Unceasing Worship*. He provides a helpful illustration of a triangle of artists, teachers, and children in creating and receiving peaceable imagination rooted in the art of *shalom*.

———. “Ralph Vaughn Williams: The Glow of Tradition.” *Christianity Today* (1975): 41–42.

In this short article, Best discusses the musical output of British composer, Ralph Vaughn Williams. He recognizes the value of Vaughn Williams’s to the

musical heritage of the church due to his love for congregational singing “shown in the compositions that combine . . . the chorus and instruments” (41). Additionally, Best notes that much of Vaughn Williams’s music was intended for church use crossing a broad spectrum from hymn arrangements, new hymn tunes, to large choral and orchestral works. Additionally, Best praises Vaughn Williams for his creativity and artistry in “freshening an older tradition” (42).

———. “Response to Hustad Paper.” *Ex Auditu* 8 (1992): 17–21.

This article is Best’s reaction to Donald Hustad’s article “Doxology: A Biblical Triad” published in the same volume (pages 17–22) which looks at Scripture’s teachings on music and praise and also addresses the changing landscape of worship in the late 1980s through early 1990s. A primary point of disagreement for Best is in his acceptance of the normative principle rather than Hustad’s acceptance of the regulative principle. Here, Best presents his argument later articulated in *Music through the Eyes of Faith* wherein he distinguishes between being moved by music and morally effected by music. Best agrees with Hustad’s understanding of praise being more than adoration.

———. “Schaeffer on Art and Music.” In *Reflections on Francis Schaeffer*, edited by Ronald W. Ruesegger, 131–96. Grand Rapids: Academie, 1986.

In Best’s chapter of this book, he addresses Schaeffer’s philosophy of art and music and assesses its impact: primarily his influence on the use or appropriateness of art within the church. Best notes that in Schaeffer’s *Art and the Bible* Christians are urged to engage with culture and the arts. Best analyzes Schaeffer’s aesthetic theology articulated in *Art and the Bible, How should we then Live?* and *The God who is there*. Additionally, Best draws on Schaeffer’s arguments of creation and human creativity and common grace in his books, *Music through the Eyes of Faith* and *Unceasing Worship*.

———. “Theology, Music, Seekers and Sensitivity.” In *On the State of Church Music V: Church Music in the Twenty-First Century A Symposium*, edited by Louis and Mary Charlotte Ball, 26–40. Jefferson City: TN: Center for Church Music and Carson-Newman College, 1997.

In this published lecture, Best cautions against the trend of seeker sensitive services in the 1990s arguing that often, churches focus on or get caught up in the label and forget that all churches at all times have been “seeker sensitive.” He notes that seeking God is God initiated and those who seek him are, in fact, responding to him. He differentiates between policy theology (vertical, God-centered theology) and operations theology (horizontal theology, depending on culture rather than God’s deeds). He argues that these theologies “must be of one cloth, woven by the master weaver” (33). Seeker sensitivity is also connected to the *imago Dei* and music and the arts. He argues that common ground is found in worship, witness, and prayer as we “follow hard after the Incarnate Sensitive Seeker into our sensitive, prophetic, and empowered seeking” (40).

———. “There is More to Redemption than Meets the Ear: An Inquiry into Christian Responsibility in Music.” *Christianity Today* 18 (1974): 12–18.

In this article, Best addresses the responsibility of the Christian (and Christian artist) through the biblical doctrines of creation, worship, and witness: themes that later appear in his books *Music through the Eyes of Faith* and *Unceasing Worship* as

central arguments. Beginning with creation, *imago Dei*, and the fall, Best argues that we are to exhaust our gifts “in the pursuit of excellence.” Moving on to worship, he recognizes that common definitions of worship are severely limited. Rather, he notes that worship encompasses an all of life action and attitude: a theme developed in detail in *Unceasing Worship*. Additionally, he presents his argument that music and the arts are not tools for worship, but rather acts and offerings of worship. He uses Pentecost as an illustration for variety and diversity in the arts noting that we “worship the Lord of all and witness to his Gospel in provincial artistic forms.” Our witness, he argues, is to pursue excellence in whatever our calling. This article later appears as a chapter contribution: “Christian Responsibility in Music.” In *The Christian Imagination: Essays on Literature and the Arts*, edited by Leland Ryken, 401–14 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981).

———. “Toward a Concept of Musical Literacy: K–12.” *Design for Arts in Education* 92, no. 1 (1990): 2–10.

In a plea for curricula reform, Best calls music educators in higher education to consider what and how students are experiencing in music education in elementary through high school levels. He recognizes the difficult task laid before music educators noting that they are required to teach children how to think in, think up, and think about music: a theme that resurfaces in *Music through the Eyes of Faith*. And, he contends that teachers of music must be diverse in their understanding and teaching within both classical and popular styles. Additionally, he emphasizes the importance of children to be taught active listening through “true hearing” and “aural literacy.” Also, he advocates for the value of improvisation in music education and the need for singing. Here, he also discusses aesthetics using the centripetal and centrifugal model and the call to pursue excellence later discussed in *Music through the Eyes of Faith* and in *Unceasing Worship*. Ultimately, he argues that students who experience such a comprehensive music education that includes these aspects, will successfully be able to major in music and go on to any variety of fields due to the principles of literacy Best outlines.

———. “Traditional Hymn-Based Worship.” In *Exploring the Worship Spectrum: Six Views*, edited by Paul A. Basden, 57–96. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004.

Best, in this chapter, rearticulates his definition of worship found in *Unceasing Worship*: worship is continuous, informed by the outpouring of the Godhead and rooted in *imago Dei*. He then offers a definition of hymn-based worship as linked with congregational singing, responsorial or instructional statements, Scripture readings, various types of prayers, sermon, offering, and the Lord’s Supper. Additionally, he argues that the hymnal is a servant of the word and connects hymns and liturgy. However, he carefully notes that he does not seek to put forward hymns over other styles. Furthermore, he advocates for a proper use of the organ in support of the human voice. Ultimately, he contends that music in church services should be treated with sensitivity and a welcoming attitude toward musical diversity.

———. “What’s Ahead for the Evangelical Church?” *Church Musician* 47 (1996): 8–13.

This article originated from a lecture presented at Carson Newman University in 1993 and appears under a modified title in the publication of the lecture series (“What’s Ahead for the Church in the 1990’s?” In *On the State of Church Music*. Edited by Thomas B. Milligan, 10–19. Jefferson City, TN: Center for Church Music and Carson-Newman College, 1993). In this article, Best offers a list of what he

believes may be in the future of evangelical worship heading into the twenty-first century and highlights comparison between the church and contemporary culture in America. His list includes, but is not limited to, a shift toward more liberal stances on culture and doctrine, continuation of simplicity in the arts, availability of music will increase resulting in a need to “theologize for silence,” popular music will continue to eclipse musical training in school and church, church music programs will need to be revised to include pluralism. Ultimately, he argues that the church must preach Christ in truth, worship in all of life, then the church of the new century “will bring one sweet, resplendent, and long-lasting smile to the face of a very patient, long-suffering, and victorious God” (13).

———. “When is Worship, Worship?” In *On the State of Church Music V: Church Music in the Twenty-First Century A Symposium*, edited by Louis and Mary Charlotte Ball, 41–52. Jefferson City: TN: Center for Church Music and Carson-Newman College, 1997.

This paper was first presented at the McElrath Lectures at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1995. Best later gave this lecture at Carson-Newman University in 1997. Here, Best articulates his understanding of worship as a continuous action—a process of which all people are involved at all times. Ultimately, he argues that we are created worshipping, but because of the fall, we must actively direct our worship to God. So, he asks, “When is worship *Christian* worship?” His answer is rooted in Romans 12 claiming that worship is an all-of-life action, and that music and the arts are offerings of worship—acts of worship—rather than tools or aids to it. Ultimately, he argues that when music and the arts (or anything for that matter) are used in an attempt to invite the presence of God, they become idols. He rightly claims that the presence of God is not connected to music or the arts in any way.

Best, Harold M., and David K. Huttar. “The Philosophy of Music in the New Testament.” In *The Complete Library of Christian Worship*, vol. 1, *The Biblical Foundations of Christian Worship*, edited by Robert E. Webber, 233. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993.

Best and Huttar argue in favor Luther’s normative principle noting that unless something is explicitly prohibited in Scripture, it is permissible in worship. They situate Paul against the prominent Greek philosophy of musical ethos which claimed an intrinsic power within music. Resisting this position, Paul encouraged “extensive use of music in worship” in the New Testament. Additionally, they suggest that the Judeo-Christian worldview avoids placing moral responsibility in creation or the arts, but rather places it “squarely within the human heart.” The music that may have been rejected by the church in the New Testament was not because of an inherent causal power, but rather, strong associations “in the minds of some that were brought from pre-Christian experiences.”

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ABSTRACT

THE INFLUENCE OF HAROLD BEST'S *MUSIC THROUGH THE EYES OF FAITH* AND *UNCEASING WORSHIP* ON SELECT WORSHIP AUTHORS AND EDUCATORS

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This dissertation examines the impact of Harold Best's *Music through the Eyes of Faith* (1993) and *Unceasing Worship: Biblical Perspectives on Worship and the Arts* (2003) on seven representative worship authors and educators. Through interviews and close examination of their writings, lectures, and philosophies, the impact of Best's primary arguments is traced. His main positions are (1) that human creativity is rooted in the doctrines of common grace and the creation of humankind in the *imago Dei*, (2) that worship (which is either biblical or idolatrous) is an inherent activity of all humans, and (3) that music is amoral, a premise upon which he builds his advocacy of musical pluralism in worship and in the Christian life.

Following the introduction to the research problem in chapter 1, chapter 2 presents an overview of the leading philosophies of music from both secular and Christian thinkers between 1940 and c. 1990 as a backdrop against which to view Best's own philosophy of music, worship, and the arts. A survey of the evangelical worship landscape is offered in chapter 3, highlighting major changes in worship philosophy and praxis in the 1940s on through the 1990s. Chapter 4 contains a professional biography of Best, noting specific experiences that influenced the development and articulation of his thought, with reference to Nyack College, Wheaton College, the National Association of Schools of Music, colleagues, and his work as a composer.

An exposition and critique of Best's books is offered in chapter 5. Through interviews and close examination of their writings, chapter 6 traces the impact of Best's books on seven representative worship authors and educators: Bob Kauflin, Barry Liesch, David Music, Michael Card, Mike Cosper, D. Clark Measels, and Joseph Crider. Chapter 7 concludes the dissertation summarizing the main areas of Best's impact.

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EDUCATION

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MM, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, 2010

PUBLICATIONS

Orientalism and the Continuation of the English Oratorio: Representation in William Walton's Belshazzar's Feast. Saarbrücken, Germany: Lambert Academic Publishing, 2011.

ACADEMIC EMPLOYMENT

Assistant Professor, Walters State Community College, Morristown, Tennessee, 2016–

Adjunct Professor, Carson-Newman University, Jefferson City, Tennessee, 2013–

Adjunct Instructor, Walters State Community College, Morristown, Tennessee, 2010–2016