

“SING UNTO THE LORD A NEW SONG—JUST NOT *THAT* ONE!”

A CASE STUDY OF MUSIC CENSORSHIP IN FREE WILL BAPTIST COLLEGES

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ABSTRACT

Like so many of the world's other religious institutions, the Christian church has a long and well-documented history of using music to enhance and enliven the spiritual experiences of believers. Many of the church's greatest champions throughout history have spoken about the inherent power of music, but as history always seems to demonstrate, along with power comes the need for control. As long as church leaders have used music to attain spiritual progress, they have also censored music that threatens to impede that progress. Even today, many church leaders still rely on music censorship to protect the future and identity of Christianity.

The following case study highlights the underlying reasons for and effectiveness of music censorship among the current generation of believers. Interviews were conducted with nine individuals who were students at a Free Will Baptist college when it closed its doors in 2013. Eight of the nine students relocated to one of two other Free Will Baptist colleges to continue their education. The purpose of this study is to trace the ways that their views on music and spirituality either changed or stayed the same after they left Gateway and also to provide broader observations about what their experiences say about music censorship in the modern Christian church.

As information about the students' experiences with music and spiritual authority is discussed, it becomes apparent that the role of personal experience is just as important as the role of spiritual authority in helping students to forge their own ideas about music and spirituality. It also becomes clear that as the students navigated from one spiritual institution to another, they actually chose to expand their musical preferences far more than they chose to limit them.

The research from this case study ultimately suggests that music censorship is not producing the desired effect among Christian young people. Instead of complying with the music standards of those in places of spiritual authority, students instead propose that church leaders either offer the reasoning behind their standards or stop talking about music altogether.

CHAPTER 1—INTRODUCTION

On November 23, 1644, in the midst of political turmoil and bloody civil war, English author and poet John Milton published a pamphlet attacking the English government's censorship of printed materials. In his pamphlet, which he called *Areopagitica*, Milton passionately proclaimed, "Give me the liberty to know, to utter, and to argue freely according to conscience, above all liberties."¹ Aside from laying the foundation for free speech, Milton's arguments also appealed to popular opinion in a society dominated by religious ideology and political authority. It should come as no surprise that in this sort of society, printed material was not the only thing the government chose to censor. Music was also within the grasp of the censors, perhaps since the very nature of music renders it capable of communicating subversive truth in subtle and often ambiguous ways. As French author Victor Hugo wrote nearly two hundred years after Milton's death, "Music expresses that which cannot be said and on which it is impossible to be silent."²

In many ways, music is similar to faith—they both pervade all of life, they both remind humankind of greater forces at work in the universe, and they both contain the power to influence thought and action. For these reasons and for many more, the Christian church has been utilizing the immensely powerful combination of music and faith for nearly two millennia. But just as music can serve as a vehicle for sacred

¹ John Milton, *Areopagitica, with a Commentary by Sir Richard C. Jebb and with Supplementary Material*, ed. Sir Richard C. Jebb (Cambridge at the University Press: 1918), 57, accessed April 1, 2015, <http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/103>.

² Victor Hugo, *William Shakespeare* (HardPress Publishing, August 2012), quoted in Robert H. Woody, "The Effect of Various Instructional Conditions on Expressive Music Performance," *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 54, no. 1 (Spring 2006): 21, accessed April 1, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.liberty.edu:2048/stable/pdf/3653453.pdf>.

expression, it can also be used to express sentiments that church officials find offensive or even heretical. Just as Milton's contemporaries decided that censorship should be used to curb the spread of political dissent, church authorities long ago determined that if music is to remain a legitimate part of sacred worship and expression, it must be controlled. Even in contemporary societies characterized by democracy and free speech, many church leaders still consider music censorship to be one of their greatest spiritual obligations.

This particular thesis focuses on the ways that music censorship in the Christian church has affected the lives and musical choices of nine students who attended Gateway Christian College in Virginia Beach, Virginia. When the college closed its doors in 2013, eight of the nine students I interviewed chose to relocate to one of two other Free Will Baptist colleges—Southeastern Free Will Baptist College in Wendell, North Carolina, or Welch College in Nashville, Tennessee. In order to understand how music censorship actually affects today's generation of Christian young people, I also researched broader concepts concerning the nature of censorship, the history of music censorship in several different branches of the Christian church, and ways in which the students' views on music and spirituality either changed or stayed the same after they left Gateway.

Statement of the Problem

Censorship alone certainly does not represent any particular problem; in fact, each of us censors in some way, shape, or form each and every day. The problem with music censorship in the church, however, comes into play as research reveals that an unhealthy fascination with or improper ideas about music censorship in the church have been responsible for distracting the church from fulfilling its stated purpose of proclaiming

redemption to a fallen world. In recent years, Christian authors have been producing countless resources devoted to the problem of declining interest in the doctrines and practice of Christianity, especially among young people. One of the authors tackling this issue is Thom Rainer, Dean of the Billy Graham School of Missions, Evangelism, and Church Growth. In his book *Surprising Insights from the Unchurched and Proven Ways to Reach Them*, Rainer says, “Our recent research on the younger generation, the bridgers (born 1977-1994), indicates that only 4 percent of the teenagers understand the gospel and have accepted Christ, even if they attend church. Of the entire bridger generation, less than 30 percent attend church. America is clearly becoming less Christian, less evangelized, and less church.”³ Other works such as David Kinnaman’s *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians Are Leaving the Church...and Rethinking Faith* and George Barna’s *Churchless: Understanding Today’s Unchurched and How to Connect with Them* also highlight the decline of interest in American Christianity. It seems that the church’s love/hate relationship with music could be partly to blame.

Need for the Study

I have no doubt that research into this topic is greatly needed, not only to afford a glimpse into the cause of declining interest in Christianity, but also to discover where the church has made unwise decisions about music censorship in the past, why and how these decisions were made, what these decisions say about the broader church subculture, and how these decisions determine where the church will go from here. Though Christian authors on several different sides of the issue continue to write about their particular

³ Thom S. Rainer, *Surprising Insights from the Unchurched and Proven Ways to Reach Them*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 33-34.

views on music and spirituality, very few (if any) have written about the impact of music censorship on today's generation of Christian young people.

Research Questions

In thinking about the insight needed to speak about these matters with certainty, some basic research questions come to mind. First of all, what are the underlying reasons (both biblical and historical) that the church has used to condone and direct its use of music censorship? With music serving almost as a line of spiritual demarcation for many Christians, the church leaders responsible for enforcing music censorship cannot afford to ignore their responsibility to offer both scriptural and historical proof validating their use of music censorship. Secondly, how has music censorship in the church been enacted and enforced in the past as well as in the present? The importance of this question is related to the impact that church authorities have had on the lives of past and present believers. Now more than ever, Western thinkers (even Christian ones) are less likely to accept direct commands, spiritual though they may be. If imposing music censorship on believers is only enhancing the effects of an evangelical legalism, church leaders may need to rethink their methods.

The third question is this: how is the younger generation of believers reacting to the standards of music censorship being imposed upon them by their spiritual leaders? Perhaps more importantly, how are official or institutional church policies on music censorship actually affecting the music choices of the younger generation of believers? Both of these questions highlight the already-stated fact that music censorship often targets the younger generation. I will discuss this fact further in later chapters as I cite Gateway's policy on music and discuss some of the student's thoughts on one of

Gateway's courses entitled "Biblical Philosophy of Music." The ultimate question, however, is whether this generation of believers truly understands the principles behind why their leaders instruct them not to listen to or perform certain kinds of music, or whether they are merely expressing verbal consent. The answers to these questions ought to reveal whether or not the official or institutional church standards on music are having any real impact on the music choices of the younger generation. If not, the future of music censorship in the church and official music standards will certainly head an entirely different direction than if these standards truly are affecting the lives and choices of younger believers.

Definition of Terms

Before proceeding any further, it would be helpful to offer definitions for several key terms. Perhaps the most important term to define is the term *censorship*. According to C. Benjamin Cox, "to censor is intentionally to prevent someone from viewing and/or hearing meaningful verbal, graphic, dramatic, or sonic material... [This] definition asserts that to be censorial, an act must be intentional... Also, the act must be successful... Finally, it seems clear that the medium must have a message if its restriction is to qualify as censorship."⁴ This definition implies that censorship must not always be negative; as I already mentioned, censorship is actually a necessary part of life. Instead, when I speak of censorship as negative, it is because I am speaking of a selfish or improper use of power that has manifested itself in the practice of censorship. Furthermore, when I speak of music censorship, I am speaking of the suppression of an

⁴ C. Benjamin Cox, "The Varieties of Censorial Experience: Toward a Definition of Censorship," *The High School Journal* 62, no. 8 (May 1979): 312, accessed March 5, 2013, <http://jstor.org/stable/40365120>.

instrumental, vocal, or blended musical work because of its content, context, composer, performer, or any other quality deemed sufficient for its censorship. Censored works may be suppressed from being used in worship, or from being used at all, even for purposes of entertainment.

Two other terms that need to be defined are *Church* and *church*. When I intend to refer to the whole of Christendom both past and present, I do so by using the word *church*. When I instead speak of a Church, I am referring to local institutions and leaders. I realize that in discussing the position of an institution as broad as the Christian church, I would seem to leave myself open to attack from every direction, since the views that I will choose to relate certainly do not reflect the views of every Christian that has ever lived. With that being said, all I can do is relate the typical positions of the Christian traditions that I have studied and experienced for myself. Having grown up in the Free Will Baptist denomination, my own personal background stems from the Protestant and more recent evangelical traditions; however, I will also quote church leaders or members that come from Roman Catholic, Anglican, and Greek Orthodox backgrounds. I will attempt to present each of these views accurately and with respect whenever possible. As a student of both ethnomusicology and theology, my ultimate goal is to understand the true nature of music censorship in the church while also being respectful of the various longstanding Christian traditions.

Limitations of the Study

I realize that it would be foolish to try to list every example of music censorship in an institution that is so segmented and that is over two millennia old. What I will

attempt to do, however, is offer a general picture of music censorship in the church throughout various stages of history, while also digging deep enough to be able to present answers to several pertinent questions. Another limitation of my research will be the difficulty required to transform research from sideline commentary into frontline application, since any application must be made by those encountering music censorship on both sides of the issue.

One final set of limitations concerns the body of students I was able to interview. While evangelical Christianity represents just one faction of modern Christendom, Free Will Baptists represent an even smaller percentage of evangelicals. Having chosen an extremely small group of students to interview, I am unable to offer broader observations about how students from different backgrounds would answer the same questions. Furthermore, since only two of my interviewees were females and the rest males, I am unable to offer much insight into whether or not these issues affect each gender differently. More study would be needed to answer these questions with certainty.

Assumptions

Along with these limitations comes the assumption that an analysis of the history of music censorship in the church can truly serve as an indicator of where the church will go from here, as well as the assumption that the body of students I chose to interview accurately represents the experiences of Christian young people growing up in evangelical communities. A final assumption is that such an analysis actually possesses the potential to make a difference, even if that difference is only to express for myself “that which cannot be said and on which it is impossible to be silent.”⁵

⁵ Hugo, quoted in Woody, 21.

CHAPTER 2—LITERATURE REVIEW

Perhaps since the dawn of music-making itself, human beings have used music as a tool to achieve various purposes, only a few of which include entertainment, personal expression, and worship. As with any other tool, the way music is used often depends on the one who is using it. This important fact means that as wonderful as music is, it can be used to accomplish purposes that run contrary to popular or official opinion. Because of this potentially subversive capability, the wonderful gift of music has often been the object of suppression and censorship. As Jean During writes, “Power has always interested itself in music and its effect on the psyche, its potential to seduce, to communicate and to unify.”⁶ Studies in ethnomusicology have sought to discover why this suppression takes place, who it is that has suppressed music throughout history, and how they have done so. I present the answers to each of these questions below by citing not only reasons for music censorship but also examples of music censorship within both secular society and the church.

Reasons for Music Censorship

Within Secular Society

According to C. Benjamin Cox, whose definition of *censorship* I borrowed in chapter one, censors often act out of a desire to maintain health, safety, and the public welfare. He says, “We censor either out of fear, based on our inability to trust ourselves and others, or out of arrogance, based on the notion that what we believe and value is

⁶ Jean During, “Power, Authority, and Music in the Cultures of Inner Asia,” *Ethnomusicology Forum* 14, no. 2, “Music and Identity in Central Asia” (November 2005): 143, accessed February 19, 2013, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20184516>.

correct not only for ourselves but also for others for whom we have or take responsibility.”⁷ The greatest problem with censorship lies in the subjectivity of deciding what is actually best for the public welfare. Furthermore, the questions that all ethnomusicologists must ask are as follows: Who is authorized to make these decisions? And what happens if they are wrong? Certainly there have been a multitude of instances throughout history in which political and spiritual leaders have abused their power for personal gain. It can only be assumed that at least some of the suppressors and censors of music throughout history have used their political or spiritual power in a similar way.

According to Cox, in order for a medium to be censored, it must have a message that is capable of being restricted.⁸ Few would doubt music’s capability to serve in this type of communicating capacity. Consider, for example, the traditional Chinese belief that music expresses ethical qualities and is capable of inciting concrete behaviors, whether those behaviors be good or bad. Even modern-day Marxists, who believe that music is not a metaphysical experience, view music as suggestive and laden with emotions, and therefore in need of being controlled.⁹ Each of the aforementioned beliefs represents an ideology about music that dates back at least several centuries. Naturally, the result of such beliefs held by those in authority has been the suppression or censorship of the offending musical pieces or genres. During ancient times and the medieval period, offensive music was music with heretical or political themes; much later, during the Victorian era especially, a work’s obscenity came to be determined by

⁷ Cox, “The Varieties of Censorial Experience,” 312.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Arnold Perris, “Music as Propaganda: Art at the Command of Doctrine in the People’s Republic of China,” *Ethnomusicology* 27, no. 1 (January 1983): 13, accessed March 5, 2013, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/850880>.

its tendency to “deprave and corrupt those whose minds are open to such immoral influences and into whose hands [or ears] a publication [or work of music] may fall.”¹⁰ Another important factor involved in censorship in any era has been the influence that a particular song or genre has upon the young people of the nation or institution in question. According to Ronald Cohen, “the search for control of the young has perplexed each generation.” Cohen states that in America, during the Red Scare of the 1950s, “purifying society of corrupting influences became a permissible activity, upheld by the religious, political, economic, legal, and cultural establishment.”¹¹

Whether in the realm of music or in other fields, history has produced numerous opponents of censorship in its various forms. One of these is William Butler Yeats, the Irish author, poet, and playwright; Yeats constantly battled an Irish senate that continued to pass increasingly strict censorship laws. The argument that Yeats faced time and time again was the contemporary idea that all art must be supported by a moral law. Yeats responded by insisting that “the subject of art is not law, which is a kind of death, but the praise of life, and it has no commandments that are not positive.” At the same time, Yeats was intuitive enough to realize that “one man’s vision of the world, one man’s experience. . . can only be popular when men are ready to welcome the visions of others.”¹² Another victim of frequent censorship, composer Giuseppe Verdi, consistently did everything within his power to buck the censorial system. Even though an 1853

¹⁰ Mark Conrad, “Censorship in America,” *Human Rights* 10, no. 1 (Winter 1982): 30, accessed February 19, 2013, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27879235>.

¹¹ Ronald D. Cohen, “The Delinquents: Censorship and Youth Culture in Recent U.S. History,” *History of Education Quarterly* 37, no. 3 (Autumn 1997): 252, 256, accessed February 19, 2013, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/369445>.

¹² Marion Witt, “‘Great Art Beaten Down’: Yeats on Censorship,” *College English* 13, no. 5 (February 1952): 251, accessed March 5, 2013, <http://jstor.org/stable/372079>.

article in a Jesuit publication accused Verdi of narrating “dreams of sickness or the deliriums of a wounded mind,” Verdi continued to compose and to find ways to ensure that his works made it onto the stage.¹³

Within the Church

One of the most historic moments in African Christianity occurred in 1913 when Prophet William Wade Harris of Liberia began an 18 month-long evangelistic tour of nearby Cote d’Ivoire. Harris, who had been raised under the influence of Methodist and Episcopal missions, was no stranger to Western-style gospel hymns. As Prophet Harris began to win converts and establish congregations, new believers started to ask what songs they should sing in worship. Rather than suggest that the new believers learn the Western hymns he had grown to love so much, Prophet Harris responded, “I have never been to heaven, so I cannot tell you what kind of music is sung in God’s royal village. But know this, that God has no personal favorite songs. He hears all that we say in whatever language. It is sufficient for us to offer hymns of praise to Him with our own music and in our own language for Him to understand.” Even though Prophet Harris did later forbid the use of the Dida genre *zlanje* in worship because of the genre’s sexual nature, his teachings on music represented a radical shift in thinking as far as contemporary church leaders were concerned.¹⁴ Even today, not all church leaders share Prophet Harris’ lenient attitude toward various musical genres; in fact, many still choose to censor. Before discussing the various cognitive and philosophical reasons behind this

¹³ Andreas Giger, “Social Control and the Censorship of Giuseppe Verdi’s Operas in Rome (1844-1859,” *Cambridge Opera Journal* 11, no. 3 (November 1999): 233, accessed February 18, 2013, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/823611>.

¹⁴ James Krabill, gen. ed. *Worship and Mission*, ed. Frank Fortunato, Robin P. Harris, and Brian Schrag (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2013), 247-48.

choice, I first describe the reasons that they themselves advocate for music censorship within the church.

One of the most influential leaders in the Free Will Baptist denomination over the last several decades is Dale Burden, a pastor, teacher, and author who served on denominational boards for twenty-six years, wrote Sunday School materials for the denomination for seventeen years, and spent thirty years as pastor of Gateway Free Will Baptist Church, the church that housed Gateway Christian College until its closing. In 2014, “Preacher Burden,” the name used by those who know him best (including his wife), published a book entitled *Holiness Demanded*. In the very first chapter, Preacher Burden says, “Many faithful Christians are in the dark as to what is taking place in churches today. They suspect things are going in the wrong direction, but they do not realize how far it has already gone and how aggressive is the movement that is spearheading it.”¹⁵ According to Burden, the only solution is “a revival that will return us to Biblical truth and scriptural holy living.”¹⁶ Throughout *Holiness Demanded*, Burden addresses issues that he feels indicate the church’s need to return to holy living; these issues include modesty, adultery, the “Lord’s Day,” music, movies, alcohol, and gambling.¹⁷

Taking up thirty-six pages out of a total just over two hundred, Burden’s chapter on music is by far the longest chapter in the entire book. The main focus of the chapter is the denouncement of Contemporary Christian Music, or CCM, which Burden describes

¹⁵ Dale Burden, *Holiness Demanded* (Virginia Beach, VA: Dale Burden, 2014), 19.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid., 5.

as “‘foreign’ to the godly and scripturally informed followers of our Lord.”¹⁸ Burden clearly associates CCM with rock music, which he describes as rebellious, sexual, violent, and addictive like a drug.¹⁹ He also links CCM to homosexuality, ecumenism, and unbiblical doctrine.²⁰ Using militant terms as if to warn his readers of encroaching disaster, Burden also accuses advocates of CCM of “*targeting* the churches that are Bible-based” (emphasis mine) and quotes an author who refers to them as “heretics out to prey on our children and build a one-world church.”²¹

At the root of each of these accusations seems to be the fear that CCM is ultimately responsible for blurring the lines between denominational groups. Burden writes about the influence of not only rock and roll, but also what he calls the “Pentecostal/Charismatic movement.”²² He accuses CCM of “bringing all religions together” and “reversing what was accomplished by the Great Protestant Reformation”; he also reminds his readers that the great hymn writers of the past were Protestant and not Roman Catholic.²³ As if this denominational hegemony were not insulting enough, Burden also goes so far as to associate a particular “demonic” Haitian drum rhythm with the power to send listeners into a trance and commit vile acts such as rape.²⁴

Another modern author who has attempted to prove the morality of music is Kimberly Smith, author of *Music and Morals: Challenging the Myth That Music Is*

¹⁸ Ibid., 141.

¹⁹ Burden, *Holiness Demanded*, 142-46.

²⁰ Ibid., 156-70.

²¹ Ibid., 168, 173.

²² Ibid., 147.

²³ Ibid., 164-65, 173.

²⁴ Ibid., 154-55.

Amoral. In her book, Smith speaks of “the power of suggestive music to convey a particular message, portray an emotion, or communicate a mood.”²⁵ Ultimately, Smith carries her arguments a step further by saying that music also has the capability to influence people to commit immoral actions. Rather than holding individuals solely responsible for those actions, Smith forces the blame onto the music itself. She cites as an example the association of “sultry jazz saxophone or clarinet” music with the “vixen” so characteristic of movies made in the 1940s and 50s. Smith says that the association of the two is created by characteristics found within the music itself.²⁶ She also goes so far as to say that “the morality of almost any music usually manifests itself in the behavior of those listening to it,” a strange conclusion for an evangelical since evangelicals typically tend to shy away from relativism (at least in theory) when dealing with issues of morality.²⁷

Another one of Smith’s arguments for the morality of music involves the use of rhythm, particularly that of backbeat. She warns that drum rhythms especially are quite powerful and can therefore be used for good or evil. She quotes rock musicians who have spoken of the importance of rhythm, and like the author of *Holiness Demanded*, she also makes the ethnocentric accusation that most modern uses of rhythm are sinful because they originated among the demonic cults of the African tribes and subsequent diaspora.

²⁵ Kimberly Smith, *Music and Morals: Dispelling the Myth That Music Is Amoral* (Enumclaw, WA: WinePress Publishing, 2005), 1.

²⁶ Smith, *Music and Morals*, 1-3.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 5.

She mentions that “by using certain drum rhythms, the drummer is very aware that he can purposely cause demonic possession.”²⁸

Unfortunately, Smith’s arguments seem to ignore modern studies within the field of musical anthropology revealing that intersense modalities tend to be culturally-determined and not truly “natural.” According to Alan Merriam, “If the distinction between true and forced synesthesia is acceptable, then we must conclude that examples of the latter are culturally determined and are perhaps more a symbolic than a synesthetic phenomenon *per se*.”²⁹ Merriam also cites evidence suggesting that even though experience has proven music’s capability to produce a direct influence on the individual biological organism, research has also shown that “people of different cultures respond physiologically in different ways to the same music or sound, depending upon its cultural significance.”³⁰

Obviously, not all evangelicals agree with the stance taken by Burden and Smith. Others such as Harold Best, author of *Music through the Eyes of Faith*, take a more moderate stance. Best rejects the notion that there is a very limited kind of music acceptable for worship, and he reminds his readers that believers cannot be overcome morally, spiritually, or behaviorally by anything in creation, including music.³¹ He speaks of music and art as “essentially neutral in their ability to express belief, creed, moral and ethical exactitudes, and even worldview,” and maintains that “artists and their works can

²⁸ Ibid., 55.

²⁹ Alan P. Merriam, *The Anthropology of Music* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 91.

³⁰ Ibid., 111-112.

³¹ Harold Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith* (New York: HarperCollins, 1993), 16.

be separated and their works are to be understood simply as handiwork.”³² Writing about those who insist on using a certain kind of music in worship, Best asks, “If they can’t worship until the right music comes by (and what if it doesn’t?), then they are essentially preferring the gift to the giver, or making God’s presence contingent on the quality or effect of the gift.”³³

Another author who advocates the amorality of music is Donald Walkout, who suggests that modern views about music’s possessing moral implications are essentially neo-Platonic in that they echo Plato’s belief that music stimulates emotions which then stimulate ethical or unethical behavior. Walkout claims that while music certainly does stimulate particular emotions, there is no evidence to suggest that certain emotions or feelings always trigger a certain kind of behavior. In fact, in order to show that certain musical qualities possess political or moral implications, one would have to demonstrate which chords, key signatures, progressions, timbres, pitches, rhythms, melodies, etc. always impart negative moral values. This is certainly a task that no musician or composer would be willing or even able to undertake, since “political and moral properties apply to persons and social arrangements and not to sonic sequences and their secondary qualities.”³⁴ According to Walkout, this is not to say that music is completely devoid of any effect at all, but rather that “the influence of the musical on the moral is a possibility only, not a necessity.”³⁵

³² Ibid., 42.

³³ Ibid., 150.

³⁴ Donald Walkout, “Music and Moral Goodness,” *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 29, no. 1 (Spring 1995): 10-11, accessed May 2, 2013, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3333513>.

³⁵ Ibid., 11-14

When it comes to the philosophical reasons for music censorship within the church, Walhout is correct in highlighting the presence of neo-Platonic thought. A study of church history reveals that the early church fathers were, in fact, greatly influenced by the ideas of secular Greek scholars such as Pythagoras, whose fixation with the relationship between numbers helped to lay the foundation for later studies of tones, proportions, and tunings. Pythagoras helped to popularize an idea later known as “music of the spheres,” which is the belief that all motion, such as the motion of the heavenly bodies, produces constant, inaudible sound that finds its truest correlation in music. According to Pythagorean philosophy, music produces “sympathetic vibrations” within the soul; these vibrations could have either a purifying or a polluting effect. This influence was also discussed by Plato and Aristotle, who censured the use of instruments such as the flute-like *aulos* and the stringed *kithara*. Both philosophers preferred instead the instrument of the human voice; this preference found its correlation in the thinking of church leaders for centuries.³⁶

By the close of the fourth century A.D., the ideas of Pythagoras had been reinterpreted and given a new Christian dimension by none other than Saint Augustine, the author of *De Musica*, which he began at Milan in 387 and finished in North Africa in 389.³⁷ Music had played an important role in Augustine’s conversion, and thus he understood its capability of serving a greater spiritual purpose. In spite of this understanding, Augustine also feared music’s tendency to distract the soul by causing it to focus on the sensual pleasure of the creation rather than on the qualities of the Creator.

³⁶ Margaret J. Kartomi, *On Concepts and Classifications of Musical Instruments* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 108-115.

³⁷ Goulburn W. Crossley, “St. Augustine’s ‘De Musica’: A Recent Synopsis,” *The Musical Times* 92, no. 1297 (March 1951): 127, accessed May 2, 2013, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/933234>.

For Augustine, as for Pythagoras, “good” music was music which displayed an appreciation of numerical proportion in its meter; such music was supposed to display a sense of the divine order and thus to serve as the ultimate pattern for a life of order. Just as Plato had condemned music that did not resemble “the utterances and the accents of a brave man who is engaged in warfare,” Augustine condemned music that he believed was capable of producing a negative ethical state.³⁸

When it came to the actual application of musical principles to worship, Augustine did confess that he had some reservations about either accepting or rejecting the use of music in worship settings. He said in his later work *Confessions*,

Sometimes I seem to give them [melodies] a worthier place than they deserve. Then I feel that our hearts are instigated to a more fervent devotion, if the words are sung, and less moved if the words are spoken only... but still I am often overpowered through the pleasure of the senses. The intellect should not be given over to them as they want to lull its consciousness... The impression through the senses should be admitted on behalf of the intellect only. Thus I often commit a sin without noticing it; it is only later that I become aware of it.³⁹

Ultimately, Augustine defined music as the “art of good motion.” His fears that listeners would be carried away by their feelings were based upon the idea that the internal motions of the soul ought to influence listeners to order music’s motion measure by measure (and thus to line up with the motion created by the music of the spheres). In other words, Augustine expected his followers to employ both feeling and reason when listening to music. The failure to use both qualities was equivalent to committing a sin.⁴⁰

³⁸ Brian Brennan, “Augustine’s *De Musica*,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 42, no. 3 (September 1988): 267-272, accessed May 2, 2013, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1584121>.

³⁹ Kathi Meyer-Baer, “Psychologic and Ontologic Ideas in Augustine’s *de Musica*,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 11, no. 3 (March 1953): 224-225, accessed May 2, 2013, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4267661>.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 225-228.

Before moving on to discuss specific examples of music censorship, I feel it is important to discuss one final area of research which offers insight as to why individuals find certain styles of music so offensive; this area includes research from the developing fields of neuroacoustics and music cognition. According to Daniel Levitin, a pioneer in these fields, when individuals hear music that is meant to accompany a particular scene, such as a scene in a movie, “Music is being used to manipulate our emotions, and we tend to accept, if not outright enjoy, the power of music to make us experience these different feelings.”⁴¹ There can be no doubt that this principle is just as effective in sacred settings and that this characteristic of music must also come with special rules delineating its use in sacred contexts, but how and why does music work this way?

Perhaps the single most important principle of music cognition as it relates to spiritual experience is that “all of us have the innate capacity to learn the linguistic and musical distinctions of whatever culture we are born into, and experience with the music of that culture shapes our neural pathways so that we ultimately internalize a set of rules common to that musical tradition.”⁴² For those living life in a spiritual subculture such as an evangelical Christian denomination, this means that their brains can become biologically trained to think about music and spirituality in a particular way. As believers continue to experience music and store these experiences by means of musical memory, their brains develop schema that contain determinations concerning which parts of their musical schema are flexible and which are not.⁴³ According to Levitin, “As we age, these

⁴¹ Daniel J. Levitin, *This Is Your Brain on Music: The Science of a Human Obsession* (New York: Plume, 2007), 9.

⁴² Levitin, *This Is Your Brain on Music*, 27.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 116.

neural circuits are somewhat less pliable, and so it becomes more difficult to incorporate, at a deep neural level, new musical systems.”⁴⁴ This could explain why many of those who choose to censor music in the church are older believers; they simply cannot develop a neurological understanding or appreciation of the new music being proposed by the younger generation.

Modern experts on memory and cognition have proposed that the brain stores memories according to what they call the “multiple-trace memory model.” In keeping with this model, experts suggest that the brain stores traces of experience along different neural pathways; these traces include both abstract and specific aspects of those experiences, including the emotions felt during the initial experience. As the brain later recalls the experience in question, the memory of that experience travels along the same neural pathways used when the experience first occurred.⁴⁵ This could be the reason that many church leaders who have had negative experiences with certain genres and artists in the past simply cannot imagine how others could experience the same genre or artist without also experiencing those negative emotions. For those who have had these negative experiences with music in the past, it is literally impossible to remember the music without also remembering other negative traces of the initial event. Along these same lines, Levitin states, “Safety plays a role for a lot of us in choosing music. To a certain extent, we surrender to music when we listen to it—we allow ourselves to trust the composers and musicians with a part of our hearts and spirits; we let the music take

⁴⁴ Ibid., 41.

⁴⁵ Levitin, *This Is Your Brain on Music*, 164-65.

us somewhere outside of ourselves.”⁴⁶ For those censoring music in Christian contexts, unacceptable artists or genres take them to a place where they simply do not feel safe; it is no wonder then that they choose to try and block out that sort of music from their congregations.

When it comes to religious songs in particular, Levitin suggests that viewing religion as ritual is key. Naturally, one of the most important parts of preserving continuity within a ritual is the social and continual re-creation of that ritual in the same ways that have proven effective in the past.⁴⁷ Concerning music’s place in ritual, Levitin writes, “Rigidity in the performance of the ritual is enhanced by the music.”⁴⁸ Consider, for example, the beat alone; according to Levitin, “When the beat is predictable, neural circuits in the basal ganglia (the *habit* and *motor ritual* circuits), as well as regions of the cerebellum that connect to the basal ganglia, can become entrained by the music, with neurons firing synchronously with the beat.”⁴⁹ This preference for experiential and neurological rigidity helps to explain why church leaders are often so hesitant to accept musical changes within rituals that have proven spiritually effective in the past—they fear that change will ruin the effectiveness of the ritual.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 242.

⁴⁷ Daniel J. Levitin, *The World in Six Songs: How the Musical Brain Created Human Nature* (New York: Plume, 2009), 195, 205.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 208.

⁴⁹ Levitin, *The World in Six Songs*, 214.

Example of Music Censorship

Within Secular Society

Even though this first set of examples may not seem to have any direct impact on music censorship in the church, the philosophies promoted by secular institutions have, in fact, influenced church policy on many occasions and should therefore be considered. The first example concerns the censorship of jazz music in Nazi Germany before and during World War II. Nazi leaders of the time hated what they deemed “atonality,” which was essentially any musical form using a 12-tone (chromatic) system.⁵⁰ They especially detested jazz because with its emphasis on improvisation, it essentially embraced musical freedom. Furthermore, it was closely associated with blacks, it emphasized individual creativity rather than social or collectivist ideals, and perhaps most importantly, its use of syncopation rendered it unfit for marching and for delivering propaganda messages. Though they tried to eliminate jazz in any of its forms, Nazi officials ultimately succumbed to the realization that if the German people were not allowed to hear jazz on the German radio, they would simply listen to it on foreign stations.⁵¹

Another political regime that has practiced strict censorship of music is the formerly Communist nation of Russia. In the early days of Soviet control, the government declared the music of Russian composer Pyotr Tchaikovsky to be reactionary and alien to the interests of the working class. The main reason for these accusations was

⁵⁰ Erik Levi, “Atonality, 12-Tone Music, and the Third Reich,” *Tempo*, New Series, No. 178 (September 1991): 17, accessed February 19, 2013, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/945001>.

⁵¹ Michael H. Kater, “Forbidden Fruit? Jazz in the Third Reich,” *The American Historical Review* 94, no. 1 (February 1989): 13,16, accessed February 19, 2013, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1862076>.

that Tchaikovsky embraced a lifestyle (homosexuality) that was alien to Soviet ideals. Unable to keep people from listening to Tchaikovsky's music, however, the Soviet government instead decided to celebrate Tchaikovsky as a Soviet hero and to censor any texts written by or about him.⁵² In more recent days, the Soviets sought to censor pop music, declaring "it is harmful to see the occasional emergence on a wave of popularity of musical bands with repertoires of a dubious nature. Their activity is ideologically and aesthetically harmful."⁵³ Perhaps the greatest threat faced by the Soviet government in this regard was the tendency of pop musicians to sing about corrupt morals, ideological compulsion, and intolerance. Of course, the response to such music was the official statement that pop musicians "set a bad example to Soviet youth and contribute to wrong ideas and bad taste."⁵⁴

Other Communist nations such as China and Vietnam have also practiced music censorship. In China, former leader Mao Tse Tung stated that all music must have an official message. He condemned any music promoting private expression, class distinction, immorality, or selfishness.⁵⁵ Mao's goals proved to be threefold: to promote nationalism, to create and present music to the masses of working people, and to support socialism and the "proletariat" dictatorship of the Communist regime.⁵⁶ Further south in Vietnam, the Communist government of the late 1970s focused on purifying the South of

⁵² Alexander Poznansky, "Tchaikovsky: The Man behind the Myth," *The Musical Times* 136, no. 1826 (April 1995): 176, accessed February 19, 2013, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1004168>.

⁵³ Terry Bright, "Soviet Crusade Against Pop," *Popular Music* 5, Continuity and Change (1985): 123, accessed February 19, 2013, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/853286>.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 146-147.

⁵⁵ Perris, "Music As Propaganda," 2-4.

⁵⁶ Perris, "Music As Propaganda," 16.

any vestige of “neocolonial U.S. culture.” The government warned its people that the importation of U.S. culture represented a subtle attempt at military domination. In campaigns designed to “eliminate the cultural vestiges of the former regime,” Vietnamese government officials raided homes and commercial establishments, collecting any offensive tapes, records, and printed musical scores and destroying them as part of the cultural purification campaign.⁵⁷

Aside from promoting government ideals, another huge factor in political censorship has been the promotion of nationalism. (Think of this as similar to the church’s use of music and music censorship to establish and maintain a spiritual subculture.) In Iran, especially, where government officials have yet to establish a position on music that has not been revised and updated multiple times, music has often been used as a tool to promote nationalist ideals. In 1964, Ayatollah Khomeini denounced the influence of foreigners in Iran, stating that “the road to reform in a country goes through its culture, so one has to start out with cultural reform.” Later Khomeini sought to eliminate music altogether, saying that “music is like a drug, whoever acquires the habit can no longer devote himself to important activities... We must eliminate music because it means betraying our country and our youth. We must completely eliminate it.”⁵⁸ Later, Khomeini lifted his ban on music, deciding once again that music was essential to the formation of a new, modern Iranian culture.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Philip Taylor, “Music As ‘Neocolonial Poison’ in Postwar Southern Vietnam,” *Crossroads: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 14, no. 1 (2000): 100, 104, accessed February 18, 2013, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40860754>.

⁵⁸ Amenah Youssefzadeh, “The Situation of Music in Iran Since the Revolution: The Role of Official Organizations,” *British Journal of Ethnomusicology* 9, no. 2 (2000): 37-38, accessed February 18, 2013, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3060645>.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 39.

Further east in Central Asia, nationalism has also been an important deciding factor in which musical styles are accepted or rejected. For many of the Central Asian people, creating a unique cultural identity in the newfound light of freedom from Soviet control has become a national priority. Censorship has naturally played a significant role in this sort of culture formation.⁶⁰ Other newly free nations such as those in Central and Latin America have also experienced similar difficulties. In Panama, for example, the intent to create a unified Hispanic identity has alienated many of the people and musical styles of those who are part of the African diaspora.⁶¹ Similarly, in the early part of the twentieth century, many black Americans in the Appalachian region of the United States expressed disapproval at the deliberately-promoted public ignorance of the influence they had had on mainstream Appalachian music.⁶²

Within the Church

It would probably come as a surprise to many Christians to learn that even though the Bible contains over five hundred references to music, the early Church fathers forbade the use of instruments, harmony, polyphony, and folk melodies, all of which were added to the Church's repertoire centuries later.⁶³ As already mentioned, during the early era of the church's existence, secular Greek philosophy dominated the church's

⁶⁰ During, "Power, Authority, and Music in the Cultures of Inner Asia," 144.

⁶¹ Carla Guerron-Montero, "Can't Beat Me Own Drum in Me Own Native Land: Calypso Music and Tourism in the Panamanian Atlantic Coast," *Anthropological Quarterly* 79, no. 4 (Autumn 2006): 637, accessed February 19, 2013, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4150925>.

⁶² Deborah J. Thompson, "Searching for Silenced Voices in Appalachian Music," *GeoJournal* 65, no. 1/2, Geography and Music (2006): 73, accessed February 19, 2013, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41148023>.

⁶³ C. M. Hann, "Creeds, Cultures, and the 'Witchery of Music,'" *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 9, no. 2 (June 2003): 225-26, accessed February 19, 2013, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3134647>.

thinking on music and was given a “spiritual” dimension in the teachings of Augustine. Nearly a thousand years later, as the Reformers were renewing the discussion of Augustine’s ideas about music and morality, the music of the Mass had already developed from simple plainsong and chant to a repertoire including the use of instruments, polyphony, motets, requiems, and Passion compositions. Along the way, these musical advancements were “always provoking protests from those for whom these innovations offended their perception of the spiritual, because they were opposed to the elaboration of music for its own musical attractiveness.”⁶⁴

Before the introduction of polyphony (until about the ninth century), the clergy had performed the *Proprium*, which were more intricate musical settings for the Mass, and each of which was designated for a specific occasion. The *Ordinarium* had been sung by the congregation. After polyphony was introduced, the congregations grew increasingly uncomfortable with the technicalities of the music being used and began to separate themselves from the performance of the liturgy. It was not until the Reformation that this gap began to be mended.⁶⁵

One of the early Reformers who actually supported the demise of congregational singing was the Dutch humanist Erasmus, who advocated a return to “pure, biblical Christianity.” Erasmus rejected the significance of the many Catholic feast days, discounting even the musical sequences written for such occasions. He believed that plainsong ought to be sung only by those trained for it, and he called congregational singing a “ridiculous confusion of voices.” Erasmus also believed that the only fitting

⁶⁴ Ibid., 232.

⁶⁵ Elwyn A. Wienandt, *Choral Music of the Church* (New York: The Free Press, 1965), 33-35, 67, 103-113.

subject matter for the Mass and the Hours of the Office was Scripture and the writings of “truly proven men.” Even those could be polluted, however, if the playing of an organ or the use of polyphony made their meaning unclear. In short, according to Erasmus, worship music is valuable only for religious use and not for any aesthetic purposes.⁶⁶

Like the ancient Greeks, Erasmus prized the human voice over any other musical instrument. In his opinion, the use of instruments in the church had “brought into sacred edifices a certain elaborate and theatrical music, a confused interplay of diverse sounds, such as I do not believe was ever heard in the Greek or Roman theaters.”⁶⁷ Later, Erasmus compared the use of drums and other instruments in the Church to the sounds of war, noting that the German princes (contemporaries of the music-loving Luther?) were especially fond of this kind of music. On a more positive note, Erasmus, like Plato, certainly did believe in the positive power of music to improve society, but nevertheless, he seemed much more concerned about what he deemed the negative effects of bad music and the light morals of contemporary musicians.⁶⁸

Many of the other Church authorities during the Reformation expressed opinions quite different from those of Erasmus. Ulrich Zwingli, for example, forbade the use of any music in public worship.⁶⁹ John Calvin, who admitted to being influenced by the ideas of Plato and Augustine, believed that music in the church had “to be regulated so

⁶⁶ Clement A. Miller, “Erasmus on Music,” *The Musical Quarterly* 52, no. 3 (July 1966): 332-338, accessed May 2, 2013, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3085961>.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 339.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 345.

⁶⁹ David Crook, “A Sixteenth-Century Catalog of Prohibited Music,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 62, no. 1 (Spring 2009): 4-5, accessed February 18, 2013, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/jams.2009.62.1.1>.

diligently that it would serve only what was virtuous, and to that end, therefore, Calvin concluded that only the psalms should be sung and these only in a sacred style, removed as far as possible from any worldly connotations.”⁷⁰ Another of the Reformers, Martin Luther, was a fierce advocate for the use of music in public worship, writing that, “next to the Word of God, only music deserves being extolled as the mistress and governess of the feelings of the human heart...by which as their masters men and women are ruled and often swept away.”⁷¹ On another occasion, Luther wrote the following:

The riches of music are so excellent and so precious that words fail me whenever I attempt to discuss and describe them... In summa, next to the Word of God, the noble art of music is the greatest treasure in this world. It controls our thoughts, minds, hearts, and spirits...Our dear fathers and prophets did not desire without reason that music be always used in the churches. Hence we have so many songs and psalms.⁷²

Luther believed that aside from serving as a catalyst to praise and worship, music could also serve other worthy purposes such as helping to fight temptation and helping individuals to withstand bad company. Luther also believed that music is capable of quieting and cheering the soul of man, “which is clear evidence that the devil, the originator of depressing worries and troubled thoughts, flees from the voice of music just as he flees from the words of theology.”⁷³ When he wrote this last statement, Luther no doubt had in mind the story of David’s playing the harp for Saul. His statement about music’s spiritual influence thus leads us to wonder whether or not Luther considered

⁷⁰ Charles Garside, Jr., “The Origins of Calvin’s Theology of Music: 1536-1543,” *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 69, no. 4 (1979): 28-29, accessed April 1, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.liberty.edu:2048/stable/pdf/1006143.pdf?acceptTC=true>.

⁷¹ Walter E. Buszin and Martin Luther, “Luther on Music,” *The Musical Quarterly* 32, no. 1 (January 1946): 81, accessed March 18, 2013, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/739566>.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 83.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 84.

music to be free from Satan's corrupting influence. Luther did believe in the capability of music to corrupt, but it seems that he believed this corrupting influence is the work of the flesh rather than that of the devil.

One of Luther's primary concerns in writing and teaching about music was to ensure that the Christian young people of the time received the proper biblical training about music. He wrote, "I desire this [four-part harmony] particularly in the interest of the young people, who should and must receive an education in music as well as in the other arts if we are to wean them away from carnal and lascivious songs and interest them in what is good and wholesome... The welfare of our youth should be our chief concern."⁷⁴ In a letter that Luther wrote to the aldermen and cities of Germany in 1524, he said that rather than forbidding young people to skip about, leap, and search for pleasure, the Church ought to furnish schools that can teach young people the proper methods of expressing those desires.⁷⁵

As Reformers like Luther became more and more influential in sixteenth-century Europe, church authorities concerned with the growing disunity of Christianity began to sense the need for censorship. As early as 1509, leaders such as Johannes Pfefferkorn had issued calls for the destruction of all the Hebrew books in the empire. In 1536, William Tyndale, who had translated the Bible into English, was condemned as a heretic and burned at the stake, along with his literary works. Luther's works were condemned by both the pope and the Holy Roman Emperor, and in Rome, Pope Paul IV ordered the repainting of Michelangelo's *Last Judgment*, since the original painting displayed nude

⁷⁴ Buszin and Luther, "Luther on Music," 88.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 92, 94.

genitalia. Other sixteenth-century objects of censorship included Paolo Veronese's depiction of the Last Supper, Michael Servetus' *Restoration of Christianity*, and the works of Giordano Bruno, who was deemed "erroneous and heretical" and was stripped naked, gagged, and burned at the stake. As each of these cases illustrates, church authorities made the decision somewhere along the line that the right to censor was a manifestation of their God-given responsibility to maintain both doctrinal and moral purity, a responsibility that knew no boundaries and superseded even the authority of secular political leaders.⁷⁶

One early example of the Church's desire to censor the music affecting young people is seen in the story of the Jesuit College of Saint Michael in Munich. The local leaders of the college were greatly affected by the decisions of the Council of Trent, which had convened in 1563. The Council had deliberated about music a great deal and had inspired church leaders such as Monsignor Antonio Seneca to pass specific legislations such as the one related to the music of nuns in the cloister. Seneca declared, "We order that the abuses of dancing, masquerading, and playing vain instruments such as viols and violins shall no longer be tolerated, nor do we approve of novices during the probationary year—a time of mortification—attending to polyphonic songs which relax the spirit and true observance of their vows."⁷⁷ Seneca's reactions to the Council of Trent's deliberation represent the typical action of church leaders at the time—taking the

⁷⁶ Crook, "A Sixteenth-Century Catalog," 1-2.

⁷⁷ Kimberlyn Montford, "Holy Restraint: Religious Reform and Nuns' Music in Early Modern Rome," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 37, no. 4 (Winter 2006): 1011-1012, accessed February 19, 2013, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20478126>.

vague and unspecific decisions of councils and making specific applications within their own localities, such as the Jesuit college in Munich.⁷⁸

Originally, Jesuit leaders viewed music with skepticism, adopting opinions similar to those of Augustine and Erasmus. Eventually, however, the Jesuits decided that music, aside from providing distraction to spiritual pursuits, can also serve as a powerful tool when used “to arouse and move souls.” While the Jesuit leaders still remained wary of using music in their own personal lives, they nevertheless allowed their students to follow very specific musical pursuits. The four approved uses of music in Jesuit colleges included its use in liturgical and paraliturgical services, in plays and other forms of drama, in academic and other public assemblies, and in meetings of the Marian congregations. The Jesuits also recognized the spiritual validity of music “used for the relaxation of the soul,” although that particular terminology only added to the difficulty of deciding which forms of music were appropriate for such use.⁷⁹

The only way that the Jesuits leaders were finally able to exercise control over their students’ use of music was the establishment of strict guidelines delineating what kinds of music were considered acceptable or unacceptable. The basic instructions concerning recreational music were as follows: First of all, students were allowed to sing ecclesiastical music, including motets, masses, hymns, and other *cantiones*, provided that their composers were not heretics and the songs had been produced with the permission of bishops or inquisitors and approved by the college authorities. Secondly, works of music that demonstrated an obscene or vain style or included indecent texts were to be

⁷⁸ Crook, “A Sixteenth-Century Catalog,” 5.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 9-10.

burned. Third, all questionable compositions were to be submitted to the college authorities for approval. Fourth, students were forbidden to buy, read, or keep any books that had not been approved by the college authorities.⁸⁰ Later instructions that were added to these prohibited students from composing music or changing pre-existing compositions without explicit permission, which was only to be granted if such pursuits would not hinder students' "more important" studies.⁸¹

As time progressed, the church continued to censor music that was considered offensive to religious or even political ideals. By the late nineteenth century, during the lifetime of composers such as Giuseppe Verdi, the practice of censorship had developed into a system often requiring the official approval of representatives from both the church and the state. In London, for example, from 1737-1968, performers were prohibited from performing any work on stage that had not been officially approved and licensed. Verdi's works were often the subject of intense debate among the censors, not just in London but in other places as well, since many of his operas included religious, political, and social themes, all of which were typically excluded from approved works (interestingly, the censors did not seem to concern themselves with the music itself). The reasoning behind excluding religious themes especially was the idea that performing religious themes on stage could pervert the sacredness of those themes.⁸² This idea certainly seems a far cry from the philosophy of many of today's church authorities who encourage their congregations to listen to Christian music alone. According to the church's earlier line of

⁸⁰ Ibid., 11-12.

⁸¹ Ibid., 14.

⁸² Roberta Montemorra Marvin, "The Censorship of Verdi's Operas in Victorian London," *Music and Letters* 82, no. 4 (November 2001): 582-584, accessed February 19, 2013, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3526278>.

thinking, such a practice could actually have the potential to pervert and even to profane the true spirit of worship by over-exposure to spiritual themes at times when the mind and heart are not in a position to receive these themes with due reverence.

By the late nineteenth century, the conversation on music and spirituality had shifted back to issues related to music's morality and not merely its appropriateness for public or Christian settings. In 1867, the Anglican Reverend Thomas Helmore submitted a paper to a local ecclesiastic meeting suggesting that church music ought to be, first of all, holy, "as in everything connected with the worship of the Most Holy God," secondly, the best of its kind, and third, devotional rather than sensational.⁸³ Other Anglican clerics of the time attacked Christian songs that employed the 6/8 time signature, suggesting that such music, with "tripping measure, in secular style, with associations of secular and even amorous and questionable words," was absolutely incapable of inspiring devotion in churchgoers. Some even went so far as to say that such music could result in "aught but the disgust and discouragement of all musical churchmen, the misleading of the unlearned, the abasement of sacred song, the falsification of public taste, and...the dishonor of God and His worship."⁸⁴

By the beginning of the twentieth century, the "secularization" of church music was becoming a real concern. Authors such as G. Edward Stubbs began making a distinction between true "church music" and music that was merely used in churches.⁸⁵

Church leaders of the time believed and preached ideas such as those following:

⁸³ W. H. Monk, "The Cultivation of Church Music," *Proceedings of the Musical Association*, 8th Sess. (1881-82): 31-32, accessed May 2, 2013, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/765429>.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 33-34.

⁸⁵ Edward G. Stubbs, "Secularization of Sacred Music," *The Musical Quarterly* 2, no. 4 (October 1916): 616, accessed February 19, 2013, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/737944>.

“Nothing should have place in the temple calculated to disturb or even to diminish the piety and devotion of the faithful... [Church music] must be true art, for otherwise, it will be impossible to exercise on the souls of the listeners that efficacy which the Church desired when giving it a place in her liturgy.”⁸⁶ Both of these ideas, with implications that only “true” church music could be efficacious, bear a remarkable resemblance to the Christianized Pythagorean ideas of church leaders such as Augustine. Such attitudes also describe what David Crook has called an “ideology of difference and exclusion [that lies] at the very heart of post-Reformation Christianity.”⁸⁷

As church leaders became increasingly more exclusive in their acceptance or rejection of certain musical styles used for worship, native Christians in locations outside the sphere of Western musical influence seemed to suffer the most in the wake of official decisions. In Africa, for example, church leaders resisted the idea that native music could be used as a valid expression of Christian ideals. In 1957, addressing the issue of developing music for use in Bantu worship services, the Reverend Brother Basil asked, “Can it be said that a number of noisy instruments will add to the solemnity of the Holy Sacrifice and, day in and day out, to the devotion of the faithful? The supersensitive African does not need that much excitement to pray and serve God ‘in spirit and in truth.’”⁸⁸ Only recently have church leaders expelled this sort of thinking from their mission works and sought to embrace the use of native music in worship.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 617-18.

⁸⁷ Crook, “A Sixteenth-Century Catalog,” 53.

⁸⁸ Dr. the Reverend Basil, S.C., B.A., B.Sc., MUS.D., “The Dilemma of Bantu Church Music,” *African Music* 1, no. 4 (1957): 37, accessed March 12, 2013, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30250200>.

As each of the above examples illustrates, there is a long and well-documented history of music censorship within the Christian church. Even today, authorities such as those who oversee Christian colleges still concern themselves with limiting what kinds of music their students hear and perform. In the next few chapters, I deal exclusively with the experiences of the nine Gateway students I interviewed. As I explain these experiences and offer broader observations about music censorship in general, I will return to themes that I have already mentioned in the literature review; I will also introduce the reasons several of these students have resisted the various forms of music censorship they have encountered in Christian contexts.

CHAPTER 3—METHODOLOGY

After graduating from Gateway Christian College in 2011 with a degree in Bible and missions, I found myself working part time as the choir director and piano player for a small Free Will Baptist church in Harrisonburg, Virginia. During the fall of 2012, shortly after I had started pursuing a degree in ethnomusicology, Gateway's promotional group visited the church to host a service. After the service was over, I started talking with several of the group's members about the perceived link between music and spirituality. I had always been a music lover, but I was just starting to study music in depth for the first time. As I spoke with one of the promotional team members, it became obvious that he and I differed on several major points. While I suggested that the effects of music are too intensely personal to allow room for spiritual mandates, he argued that the church is responsible for setting a standard which all believers ought to follow.

After the promotional group left town the next day, I thought very little of my conversation with Daniel until two years later, when I interviewed him for this case study. At the end of our conversation, Daniel said, "I want to thank you for that conversation we had a couple years ago. It really got me thinking, and it was so nice to find out that I wasn't the only one questioning what we've heard about music our entire lives."⁸⁹ Immediately I was both shocked and grateful that something I had said two years earlier had made a difference in someone else's life. For years I had struggled with reconciling my love of music with the narrow worldview that was being suggested in my church and college. Somehow I knew all along that very few of us were willing to accept what we were being told without taking the chance to think for ourselves and to head out

⁸⁹ Daniel, telephone interview by author, January 7, 2014 .

in entirely new directions in the search for contextualization, identity, and relevance. For me personally, completing this case study has been an important part of finding closure after growing up in a religious subculture that thrives on exclusion and criticism. I can only hope that as I present my research methodology and my subsequent research findings that this study may prove helpful to others as well; if nothing else, I know it has to Daniel.

Research Design

This case study represents a qualitative analysis rather than a quantitative one; as such, it identifies “a population, process, problem, context, or phenomenon whose parameters and outcomes are unclear, unknown, or unexplored,” and “an identified and operationalized community, target population, or other unit of study.”⁹⁰ As already mentioned, the target population is the body of students who were attending Gateway Christian College when it closed its doors in 2013. Even though I identified fourteen students who met this criterion, two were unwilling to participate, and three initially agreed but then stated that they did not have time for the interview. Of the nine who did participate, five have since started attending Welch College in Nashville, Tennessee. Three others attend (or attended briefly) Southeastern Free Will Baptist College in Wendell, North Carolina, and one chose not to attend another college at all.

The outcomes of this case study were previously “unclear, unknown, or unexplored” in that there seems to be very little (if any) research on the impact of music censorship on the current generation of Christian college students. Even though the data I present represents the outcome of only one case study, it is my hope that this research

⁹⁰ Margaret D. LeCompte and Jean J. Schensul, *Designing and Conducting Ethnographic Research: An Introduction* (Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2010), 114.

will serve as a springboard for other researchers and that the data I present will yield “descriptions of relationships and recurring patterns of behavior and belief within institutional structures and larger policy-related and political and economic dynamics” that can be used in other similar case studies.⁹¹

Strategy of Inquiry

Since the individuals making up the target population of this study now live in several different states and even U.S. territory outside the continental U.S., my interaction with the participants was limited to interviews conducted over the phone or via Skype. Before conducting the interviews, I received approval from the Institutional Review Board of Liberty University, and I emailed all participants a recruitment letter explaining my research and a consent form asking for permission to conduct the interview.⁹² During the interviews, I asked participants a series of questions related to their views on music and spirituality, their experience with music censorship in Christian contexts, and their ideas about the role that spiritual authority should play in censoring music.⁹³ I assured each of the participants that I was not looking for “correct” answers, but instead was trying to gauge the effects of music censorship on the Christians of our generation. Since the institutions that I mention are comparatively small and the students I interviewed would not be difficult to identify, I also ensured the students that I would alter any of their names that I use while presenting my research findings.

⁹¹LeCompte and Schensul, *Designing and Conducting Ethnographic Research*, 118.

⁹² For a copy of the recruitment letter, see Appendix A; for a copy of the consent form, see Appendix B.

⁹³ A list of the interview questions template is included in Appendix C.

Role of the Researcher

I have already mentioned that I myself was a student at Gateway Christian College and that I graduated from there in 2011. Some might suggest that this past experience could jeopardize my ability to remain subjective in analyzing the data that I gathered from my interviewees, several of whom were classmates before I graduated. Instead, I suggest that this role actually proved helpful since I was unable to meet every student for the interview in person. Our common background and past experiences together made the interviews that much more effective since I already possessed a basic understanding of the students' environment. With that being said, my own criteria excluded me from the body of participants. The reason is that each student I interviewed was attending Gateway when it closed and was forced either to relocate to another college or to return home without a degree (none of those I interviewed were eligible for graduation when the college closed); I graduated from Gateway two years before it closed. Furthermore, in analyzing the students' responses, my focus remained on how the students' views either changed or stayed the same after they left Gateway; my own experiences became irrelevant when compared with those of my participants, "whose meanings, values, practices, ideas, and cultural ways of knowing ethnographers privilege over those of outsiders, including other researchers," and thus, including myself.⁹⁴

Data Collection Strategies

Even though I relied heavily on written resources for information on music censorship and music cognition in general, my primary strategy for collecting data for

⁹⁴ LeCompte and Schensul, *Designing and Conducting Ethnographic Research*, 145.

this case study was interviewing each participant. During the interviews, most of which were conducted over the phone, I kept a list of the interview questions directly in front of me. As participants answered the questions, I either typed or hand-wrote their responses. Hand-writing responses allowed me to see all of a participants' responses at once and thus to draw parallels between questions with similar answers. Unfortunately, writing down the answers by hand took much longer than typing them. Even though I had recorded the interviews so that I could listen again for anything I had missed, I ultimately decided that typing the participants' responses was much more efficient and just as effective in terms of later analysis.

Data Analysis Procedures

After notating all of my participants' responses, I needed to find a way to code and categorize them in order to analyze what the students had actually said about their experiences with music censorship and how these observations may or may not apply in other contexts. My first step was to summarize what each student had said and to notate key words that he or she had repeated often throughout the interview. My next step was to accumulate all the data into a single document; I did so by typing all of the students' responses to individual questions under each question in my interview questions template and by color-coding the answers by student. Doing so allowed me to analyze the data not only student by student, but also question by question.

After I compiled all the answers together into a single document, I combed through the data question by question in order to discover parallels and differences of opinion from student to student. I grouped similar responses together, counted the total number of responses to each question, and formulated groupings which I placed into

order by total number of responses. I also developed three criteria for coding each student, based upon the following questions: Is the student male or female? After attending Gateway, did the student attend Welch, Southeastern, or neither? If he or she makes such a distinction, does the student describe himself or herself as a musical person or a non-musical person? The answers to these questions provided interesting parallels between the ways that participants answered the interview questions. I cite these correlations as part of my research findings.

Verification

Unlike research that seeks to elucidate the thought structures underlying participant responses and recorded events, this case study highlights links between what various students actually said about their thoughts on music and spirituality. For this reason, verifying my findings meant cross-checking my analysis more than following up to see if what the students said has changed since they said it. I performed this cross-check by summarizing participant responses, by analyzing answers both by student and by question, and by developing the three coding factors listed above. Completing this process allowed me to triangulate the data in several different ways and to compare any resulting conclusions or patterns with the original list of each participant's responses.

Findings

As stated in the introduction, the purpose of this case study is to highlight the ways that the Christian church is still enforcing music censorship and to provide insight into how this censorship is affecting the current generation of believers. In order to accomplish this purpose, I divided the data gathered from participants' responses into

three broad categories—music and personal choice, music and spirituality, and music and spiritual authority. In presenting the data, I also make references to previous research cited in the literature review, and I include several observations about the potential of future case studies or research projects to gather new data that I could not due to the limited scope of this particular project.

CHAPTER 4—RESEARCH FINDINGS

Before I had even conducted my first interview for this case study, I already suspected that music would play a huge part in the lives of the students I was planning to interview; I had personally heard several of them sing, play an instrument, talk about or listen to music. I also suspected that the students did not agree with everything they had been taught about music and spirituality. Little did I realize what these two suppositions would actually reveal about the way these students interact with music and faith in their everyday lives. As I suspected, music *is* important to the students, though not all of them even claim to be “musical.” Music is important, however, in that it serves as a sort of ideological anchor as they navigate complex webs of meaning that surround the notions of identity, culture, modernity, and faith. Each and every student had something valuable to say about these topics, and I can only hope that their various and even conflicting encounters with music will only add to future conversations about music, spirituality, and censorship.

Music and Personal Choice

Even though music censors attempt to guide or even preclude the use of personal choice in music, it is clear that the students I interviewed still retain personal choice when it comes to the styles of music they enjoy. In order to offer a bit of background on the environment in which students exercised this personal choice, I first quote Gateway’s policy on music as found in the 2006-2007 Student Handbook:

It is the desire of Gateway Christian College that all students build an appreciation for the best in music, and especially in Christian music. The standards which are promoted for musical choice at GCC might not be the ultimate standard by which the graduate might judge musical choices;

however, the following standard will serve the institutional directive to caution students in what they will allow for themselves. There are three major concerns involving the evaluation of music:

1. The content (message) of the song.
2. The style of the music.
3. The association of the performer with a questionable style.

Because of these concerns, GCC will guard the choices available for students in Christian training because some level of guidance is needed. Therefore, the following types of music are unacceptable in any form (written or audio) and may not be performed, listened to, or kept by dormitory students: jazz, rock-and-roll, folk-rock, country-western, or contemporary Christian music.

Traditional Christian music (hymns and gospel songs, etc.) and “some” Southern Gospel is permitted. Concerning Southern Gospel, the student needs to use strong caution because many groups performing the four-part harmonies allow their orchestrations to cross the line between what is acceptable for the church and what is recognized as popular with the world. No music, Christian or otherwise, is allowed if its sound and style mirrors the sounds produced from the world. The Deans and the college administration will be the final word on music that might or might not check.

Day students [students who live off campus] are not required to have their personal recordings checked; however, they are under the same music policies and must diligently screen their selections just as carefully at home. They may not listen to the above mentioned styles (paragraph 2 of this section). Any day student who undermines the college’s policy of music with a dormitory student will face strong disciplinary action.

Music that does not check must not be retained in personal possession, in the dorm room, or in one’s vehicle.⁹⁵

Rather than question the participants on these guidelines right from the start, I began by asking each participant, “What do you think are the various purposes of music?” Participants identified eight different purposes and gave thirty-one total responses, which I grouped into the following five categories: 1. Spiritual purposes (for worship—nine total responses), 2. Mental purposes (for entertainment or to block out background noise—nine total responses), 3. Emotional purposes (to soothe, comfort, or affect feelings, mood, and/or emotion—six total responses), 4. Physical purposes (to accompany physical activities like sports or working out, or for medical reasons—three

⁹⁵ “Student Handbook: 2006-2007.” (Virginia Beach, VA: Gateway Christian College, 2006), 23-24.

total responses), and 6. Social purposes (to create bonds or to accompany parties or gatherings—three total responses). All nine students cited worship as a purpose of music, and eight out of the nine mentioned using music for the purpose of entertainment.

These answers make it clear that all of the students believe that music can be used not only in sacred settings, but also to accompany various activities in everyday life. This fact is important since it highlights the very duality of music that leads spiritual authorities to censor in the first place. As the students began to open up about their personal experiences with music, it became clear that some value music much more than others. One student remarked, “I’m not very musical.”⁹⁶ Another stated, “To be honest, I’m not a huge music person.”⁹⁷ All in all, four of the nine students remarked that they do not consider themselves to be musical people. Whereas two of the students did not mention the role of music in their everyday lives, three other students (all of whom were males) did speak about the importance of music. One remarked, “I’m definitely a big music-head.”⁹⁸ Speaking about the memories and emotions that songs can evoke, another student said, “I guess you could say I have a jukebox for a brain and a music box for a heart.”⁹⁹

The students’ self-identification as musical or non-musical became more and more important as I began to analyze the data gathered from their responses. Initially I had suspected that students would answer the questions differently according to their current enrollment at Welch, where students mentioned they have much more musical

⁹⁶ Russell, Skype interview by author. October 2, 2014.

⁹⁷ Teresa, telephone interview by author. October 9, 2014.

⁹⁸ Nick, Skype interview by author. October 4, 2014.

⁹⁹ Thomas, telephone interview by author. November 10, 2014.

freedom, or at Southeastern, where students are encouraged to adopt a “‘conservative’ philosophy of dress, music, and entertainment.”¹⁰⁰ As it turns out, my initial hypothesis was wrong. Though students at Welch or Southeastern did answer several questions in a similar way, musical students gave similar responses to other musical students and vice versa far more often than students who attend the same college. I will highlight these similarities as I present the rest of the data gathered from the interviews.

When I asked the participants which qualities they consider desirable in a piece of music, they listed six different characteristics with a total of eighteen responses. Four of the participants mentioned the quality or artistry of the music, and another four mentioned the lyrics. All four of those who mentioned the lyrics now attend Welch. Six out of the seven male participants mentioned either quality or artistry, though neither one of the female participants nor any of the four students who identified as “non-musical” mentioned these characteristics. Three responses dealt with the emotional impact of a piece, and another three with the overall “sound” of the music. Finally, two of the participants stated that they listen to music that is “happy” or “fun,” and two stated that they listen to Christian music. Both of the participants who seek out happy or fun music identify as non-musical, and both of those who stated that they listen to Christian music attend Southeastern.

A third question dealing with music and personal choice concerns the styles, songs, or artists to which the students actually listen. Answers to this question ranged anywhere from Contemporary Christian Music (CCM) to Celtic Woman to punk rock. Out of fifty-nine total responses, participants mentioned Christian music the most, with a

¹⁰⁰ “Moral and Ethical Values,” *Southeastern Free Will Baptist Bible College 2014-2015 Catalog* 23 (May 2014): 6, accessed February 26, 2015, <http://www.sfwbc.edu/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Catalog-2014-2015.pdf>.

total of thirty responses. Folk, country, or bluegrass came in second, with a total of seventeen responses; easy listening or pop third, with seven responses; rap or rock, fourth, with three total responses; and instrumental or classical music fifth, with two responses. Out of the twenty different Christian styles or artists that participants mentioned, fifteen can be considered CCM, the genre denounced by some of the most conservative evangelicals such as Burden and Smith, whom I quote in the literature review.

It would be difficult to draw many parallels between the students based solely on the factors that affect their personal choices in music. It is significant, however, that nine different students with such similar educational and spiritual backgrounds listen to such a wide variety of music, and that nearly all of the students believe that worship and entertainment can both coexist as valid reasons for listening to or performing music. As I mentioned before, it is also significant to note the ways that students' identification as musical or non-musical impacts their personal choices. In this research category alone, only the musical students said that they consider the quality or artistry of a piece to be important, and only non-musical students mentioned listening to music that is happy or fun. Before discussing how these and other facts relate to the broader discussion of music censorship within the church, I first discuss the participants' views on music and spirituality.

Music and Spirituality

The second question that I asked each of the participants is as follows: "What is the correlation between music and spirituality? How would you say that the two are linked, if at all?" Many of the students expressed difficulty answering this question, and

one student admitted the following: “[Music and spirituality] are definitely linked, but it is a weird interplay...it’s hard to place a tangible stamp on a certain type of music and spirituality...Music flows from *and* comes after spirituality.”¹⁰¹ Another student stated, “God created music, and it is part of who He is. It connects us to Him in a different way. At the same time, different people have different views...It’s personal.”¹⁰² Overall, eight out of the nine participants stated that there is a link between music and spirituality, and one expressed that there *may* be a link. Of the eight who said that music and spirituality are related, four believe that the link is direct, and four stated that the link is indirect. Based upon these responses, it seems clear that while most of the students do believe that music and spirituality are related in some way, the students assign meaning to that link in different ways.

Next I asked the participants to name the biblical principles that guide their personal music choices. Even though the Bible contains over five hundred references to music (more references than it makes to heaven and hell combined), only seven out of the eighteen total responses reference an actual verse or passage from the Bible, and only four of those make any reference to music. Verses or passages that the students mentioned include Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16, in both of which the apostle Paul instructs believers to sing “psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs”; 1 Corinthians 10:31, which commands believers to “do all to the glory of God”; Psalms 100:1 and 98:4, which command believers to “make a joyful noise unto the Lord”; 1 Samuel 16, which contains the story of David’s playing his harp to appease the evil spirit tormenting King Saul;

¹⁰¹ Gavin, telephone interview by author. January 3, 2015.

¹⁰² Brandi, Skype interview by author. October 9, 2014.

Romans 12; Philippians 4:8, and the entire Old Testament book of Psalms.¹⁰³ Other factors which the students said that they consider include the effect of the music on the mindset or emotions, personal upbringing, the artist's lifestyle, the message or doctrine of the song, and musical balance.

Since the students were only able to mention a handful of biblical passages that contain principles governing the use of music, it can be surmised that they have developed their own personal music principles from other sources, including the teaching of spiritual authorities and personal experience. I will discuss these sources further in the next section on music and spiritual authority. Before I move on, however, it is significant to note that when I asked the students if there is a difference between the music they listen to for worship and the music they listen to for entertainment, seven students said that there is a difference, and two students said that there is not. Neither of those who said that there is not a difference identify as musical, but all three of the musical students said that there is a difference. Thus, whereas the non-musical students are more likely to utilize music for spiritual purposes alone, the musical students use music to accompany many more activities than simply spiritual ones. As a result, the non-musical and the musical students interact with spiritual authority and music censorship in different ways, a truth which I highlight in the following section.

Music and Spiritual Authority

The last and most important area of research includes data gathered on the subject of music and spiritual authority; this section includes information about the students' interaction with spiritual authority on the subject of music, their encounters with music

¹⁰³ All quotes are from the ESV, or English Standard Version.

ensorship in spiritual institutions, and their ideas about the role that spiritual authority should play in enacting music censorship. The first question that I asked the participants concerning spiritual authority is whether or not they took the course “Biblical Philosophy of Music” at Gateway. Five of the students had, and they remembered the course’s focus on balance between melody, harmony, and rhythm; they also mentioned the professor’s emphasis on the style of a song as its message, the beat, the way that music influences its listeners, and the self-serving character of particular artists and/or genres.

According to the GCC 2006-2007 college bulletin, TH202: Biblical Philosophy of Music was “designed as a biblical and theological survey of music in the Bible,” along with suggestions “for maintaining and restoring conservative, biblical music that is Christ-honoring, that avoids the extremes in all areas of Christian music, and that also condemns the worldly, secular music of our day.”¹⁰⁴ A class syllabus from spring 2011 reveals that the class was divided into “classroom instruction, DVD presentations, and extensive reading.”¹⁰⁵ Textbooks for the class included *Music Matters: Understanding and Applying the Amazing Power of Godly Music* by Cary Schmidt; *Harmony at Home: Straight Answers to Help You Build Healthy Music Standards* by Tim Fisher; *Oh, Be Careful Little Ears* by Kimberly Smith; *Music and Morals: Dispelling the Myth That Music Is Amoral* by Kimberly Smith; *The Battle for Christian Music* by Tim Fisher; and *Why I Left the Contemporary Christian Music Movement: Confessions of a Former Worship Leader* by Dan Lucarini. The DVD’s that students watched included “Pop Goes

¹⁰⁴ “College Bulletin: 2006-2007.” (Virginia Beach, VA: Gateway Christian College, 2006), 48.

¹⁰⁵ Syllabus, “TH202: Biblical Philosophy of Music.” (Virginia Beach, VA: Gateway Christian College, 2011), 2.

the Music,” “The Language of Music,” and “The Nature of Music,” all by Dr. Frank Garlock.

According to notes a student took during the class in spring 2011, the professor offered seven ways to keep CCM out of the church. They are as follows: 1) Prepare for a battle. This preparation is defensive, offensive, experiential, and spiritual. 2) Begin with the understanding that it will take time. 3) Maintain spiritual standards for music in the church. 4) Train people about spiritual music, and warn them of the dangers of worldly music. 5) Select the music personnel carefully. 6) Maintain the highest standards for workers throughout the church. 7) Lead the youth group spiritually.¹⁰⁶ Specific genres, philosophies, or musical characteristics condemned throughout the class include neo-orthodoxy, Contemporary Christian Music, Christian disco, jazz, New Age music, polyrhythm, rock, strong rhythm, and “sexy” torch singing.¹⁰⁷

Interestingly, none of the three participants who identified as musical took this course at Gateway; one even admitted to “avoiding” the course.¹⁰⁸ Three of those who did not take the course stated that they had learned Gateway’s stance on music by noticing musicians’ modeling of appropriate music during chapels and other church services, by watching a video citing the negative associations of backbeat (one of Garlock’s videos which the TH202 professor played in another class), and by observing a “Christian music only” attitude.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ Dr. Bruce Barnes, “Biblical Philosophy of Music” (class, Gateway Christian College, Virginia Beach, VA, spring 2011).

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Jason, telephone interview by author, January 7, 2014.

¹⁰⁹ Daniel, interview.

Next I asked the participants to describe the changes that took place in their listening habits both when they started attending Gateway and after they left Gateway. Before Gateway, one of the students claimed to listen to “no music at all.”¹¹⁰ The rest claimed to listen to hip hop, conservative Christian music, Southern gospel, country, or the “music of the culture.”¹¹¹ One claimed to listen to “anything really.”¹¹² After the students started attending Gateway, only two demonstrated what I call conservative change. One of these claimed that he stopped listening to hip hop and started listening to more Christian rap.¹¹³ The other said that he started listening to “less dark” music once he started attending Gateway.¹¹⁴ The rest of the students demonstrated what I call neutral or no change, or liberal change. These students claimed that they continued to listen to the same styles of music but also gained an appreciation for other artists or genres, including Celtic music, Michael Buble, classical music, a cappella music, and quartet music. Interestingly, each of the four non-musical participants learned to appreciate new artists or genres after attending Gateway. Two of the three musical participants demonstrated no change whatsoever, and the third demonstrated conservative change as a result of “personal study” that began long before he ever attended Gateway.¹¹⁵

After the students left Gateway, four of them demonstrated liberal change, one demonstrated conservative change, and four demonstrated neutral or no change. The

¹¹⁰ Russell, interview.

¹¹¹ Daniel, interview.

¹¹² Stephen, telephone interview by author, October 20, 2014.

¹¹³ Nick, interview.

¹¹⁴ Gavin, interview.

¹¹⁵ Nick, interview.

student who had listened to Christian rap while at Gateway now claims that he does not listen to rap at all, citing again personal study on the issue.¹¹⁶ Those who made neutral or no change are now listening to more Southern gospel or a cappella music, and those who made liberal change now listen to CCM or more “questionable” non-Christian music.¹¹⁷ Initially I had surmised that students would alter their views on music to reflect the views of the institution they currently attend; I was forced to rethink this hypothesis when I noticed that none of those who transferred to Southeastern after attending Gateway made conservative changes, and that only one of the five who transferred to Welch after attending Gateway made liberal changes. Furthermore, the only student who is now more conservative than he was before attending Gateway currently attends Welch, the college students consider to have the loosest standards on music. My observations also led me to notice that students actually chose to expand their musical preferences far more than they chose to limit them. This seems to be a result of constant interaction with other students and their musical choices in new locations or institutions.

The fact that the students so rarely made changes to their listening habits based upon the views of the college they attend(ed) seems to indicate that they have not been willing to adopt those views blindly or without question. I have also already mentioned that the students I interviewed do not seem to rely too heavily on biblical principles in developing their views on music and spirituality even though the stated objective of TH202 was to offer a theological survey of music in the Bible. If both of these are the case, where and how *did* these students develop their guiding principles? When I asked the students this question, they gave six different answers, with eighteen total responses.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Jason, interview.

Eight of the students said that they have developed principles on music through personal experience. Three mentioned the class at Gateway (one of these because he disagreed with what was being taught), and three others the role of a father, pastor, or youth pastor. Two students mentioned personal thinking that started after taking the class at Gateway, one student mentioned watching the way that others were influenced by music, and one mentioned a video about music and spirituality that he had watched before attending Gateway. Of the eighteen total responses, eleven focused on personal experience or thinking, and seven on spiritual institutions. There can be no doubt that the spiritual institutions must have influenced the students' experiences or thinking along the way, but it is still significant that the students chose to relate the importance of personal thinking or experience over the authority of spiritual institutions. Keeping this in mind, the answers to this question alone seem to indicate that personal experience is just as important, if not more so, than the views of spiritual authorities in helping students to develop their own personal views on music and spirituality.

Even after arriving at this conclusion, I wanted to gather more information on the ways that students do rely upon spiritual authority for information and/or guidance. When I asked the participants about the role that spiritual authority has played in helping them to develop music principles, only six of them were able to give a response. Four mentioned the impact of preaching. Of these four, three reported no lasting impact, and one claimed to take certain parts as helpful while merely "listening to" the rest.¹¹⁸ Two others mentioned once again the class at Gateway. Neither of the female participants mentioned the influence of preaching, and both of those who said that the class at Gateway was helpful were non-musical.

¹¹⁸ Gavin, interview.

I have already mentioned that none of the musical students took the class at Gateway, but it is just as important to note that the only two who continued to mention the lasting impact of the class are non-musical. It seems that the class was so influential for these two students in particular because their lack of interest in music had kept them from ever studying any of the technical aspects of music. As their first experience ever learning about the specific characteristics of music itself, the class continues to remain influential for both students. It is also significant that the other four students who responded to this question mentioned the influence of preaching and not the influence of education received at a Free Will Baptist college. This seems to suggest that the church may be just as influential (if not more so) than Christian colleges in passing on information about music and spirituality.

With this realization in mind, I asked each participant to summarize his or her experience with music at each spiritual institution that has proven significant to his or her personal development. The students mentioned not only Gateway, Southeastern, and Welch, but also the church and the family. The students who mentioned Gateway mentioned taking the class on music, learning to think for themselves, being introduced to new music, learning to analyze music, and encountering negative attitudes about personal music choices. Secondly, the students who mentioned the church mentioned an impact on personal views or approach, a bigoted view of music, and an impact on early thinking. Concerning their experiences at Welch, students mentioned learning to relax their music standards, feeling burned out by trying to encourage peers to raise their music standards, being introduced to new genres, learning to appreciate blended worship, and learning to judge music as good or bad. Those who transferred to Southeastern after

leaving Gateway mentioned talking briefly with staff about music, or simply breaking the rules. Finally, one student described her family as important in the formation of her initial views on music and spirituality.

Out of the eighteen total responses for this category, five of the responses referred to negative experiences, whether in the church or at Gateway, Welch, or Southeastern. (The family was the only institution that students mentioned without citing negative experiences.) The number of negative responses for each institution is as follows: Gateway—two, the church—one, Welch—one, and Southeastern—one. Only three students actually cited negative experiences at any institution, but two of these cited negative experiences at more than one institution. All three of the students who cited these experiences were males, and two of the three consider themselves to be musical. None of the non-musical students cited negative experiences at any spiritual institution. I propose that the reason for this lack of negative experiences is the fact that the non-musical students were not likely to listen to music deemed inappropriate by spiritual authorities and thus did not encounter negative attitudes directed toward their music choices.

After learning how each institution had been influential in the lives of the students, I wanted to discover whether or not they had encountered music censorship somewhere along the way. I knew from the start that using the term *censorship* would seem like a strong approach. As I explained my research to the participants, however, several of them acknowledged that this was exactly the right word to use. Speaking about the course “Biblical Philosophy of Music,” one of the participants stated, “Man, that class

was censorship!”¹¹⁹ This same student expressed the following about his experience at Gateway Church: “Growing up, [it] seemed like a kennel. I don’t hate my upbringing, but it was influenced by people whose mentality was ‘my way or the highway.’ There was pressure for me to seek my own view, but they were constantly presenting theirs. Finally I thought, ‘Surely this isn’t the only way. This is tiring, and I don’t enjoy this. This is not what I want my worship experience to be limited to.’”¹²⁰

Speaking about the role of spiritual authority, another participant stated, “They’re always in the back of your mind.”¹²¹ One even said, “There should almost be a support group for people like us who grew up in that sort of environment... Music has changed my life and been something I run to... I always felt sinful and even questioned my salvation at times because the church didn’t like the music I listened to. They said if I loved the world, I couldn’t love God. If my music was of the world and I loved it, that meant I didn’t love God. I always felt judged.”¹²² This same student went on to explain that music was actually the reason he was expelled from Gateway. According to Jason, he had attended a Christian alternative rock concert during winter break. When he came back to Gateway for the spring semester, he discovered that one of his roommates had been borrowing his laptop in order to view pornography. Concerned about his roommate, Jason took the laptop to the dean of students and the academic dean and told them what had been happening. Jason was called back into the office soon after this meeting. He assumed it was to discuss what had happened with the laptop and his roommate; instead,

¹¹⁹ Daniel, interview.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Brandi, interview.

¹²² Jason, interview.

the deans confronted Jason about his attendance at the concert over the break and expelled him. Jason said, “I saw little to no discipline for my roommate, and I went to a Christian event on New Years’ Eve and got kicked out. Their priorities are so out of whack. It’s super frustrating.”¹²³

In spite of these experiences, not all of the students related similar encounters with censorship. One of them stated, “I always kind of kept my music to myself so I never really had to worry about it.”¹²⁴ Another student admitted, “I didn’t really experience it, but I never wanted to listen to anything that wasn’t allowed. I was never one to push boundaries.”¹²⁵ Initially, five out of the nine students said that they had not experienced or witnessed music censorship firsthand. By the end of the conversation, however, seven out of the nine students were able to give examples of censorship they had encountered in various institutions.

Obviously, not all of the students experienced or witnessed music censorship in the same way. Some of the participants said that their pastors or former youth pastors merely preach about choosing music wisely. One of the students said, “In our youth group, we pretty much couldn’t listen to music at all. Earbuds were of the devil. You’d be better off committing adultery than having earbuds in your ear. They just assumed you were listening to Lil’ John or Lil’ Wayne.”¹²⁶ Another student remembered, “After camp we would come back and have CD burnings, but then later in the year I’d be

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Stephen, interview.

¹²⁵ Gavin, interview.

¹²⁶ Daniel, interview.

downloading the same songs all over again.”¹²⁷ This practice in particular seems reminiscent of other examples of modern music censorship that include Taliban bonfires of music and videocassettes in Afghanistan and the smashing of Dixie Chicks CD’s at a “destruction rally” sponsored by a U.S. radio station in 2003.¹²⁸

Yet another example of music censorship in the church is related to the use of drums in worship services. Six of the nine students I interviewed mentioned the prohibition of drums in many conservative churches. As one of the students remarked, “Over time...people will be much more open to things like having a drum set, whereas now it’s still associated with heavy rock in a lot of places.”¹²⁹ This last example highlights particularly well the fact that spiritual authorities who choose to censor often rely on philosophical and historical tradition more than they do biblical precedent. In the case of censoring drums, there is clearly no biblical basis for the banning of any particular instrument; in fact, the Bible mentions at least six instruments that were used to accompany true worship and religious processions in spite of their use in false worship and at drunken parties.¹³⁰ The banning of drums in modern conservative churches thus seems to rely solely on historical precedent that began as hegemonic discrimination. This reliance upon extra-biblical tradition also seems to account for the fact that even students

¹²⁷ Nick, interview.

¹²⁸ Nigel Williamson, “Banned! Music Censorship Spans Globe, and U.S. Is No Stranger to Trend,” *Billboard*, May 22, 2004, accessed April 1, 2015, https://books.google.com/books?id=HhAEAAAAMBAJ&pg=PA60&lpg=PA60&dq=music+censorship+bonfire+cd%27s&source=bl&ots=ae6aZBjTkl&sig=-xUoDeIs_TBb5dn-QOATKPBDWCY&hl=en&sa=X&ei=laUcVbGjO4KVNu6jg-AH&ved=0CEgQ6AEwBw#v=onepage&q=music%20censorship%20bonfire%20cd's&f=false.

¹²⁹ Daniel, interview.

¹³⁰ Brian Schrag, *Creating Local Arts Together: A Manual to Help Communities Reach Their Kingdom Goals*, ed. James R. Krabill. (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2013), 187.

who have heard sermon after sermon on music and spirituality were unable to list the biblical principles that are supposed to guide their own personal music choices.

Four of the students also mentioned generational gaps as a potential cause for music censorship. One of them stated, “The older people are afraid to change, and they’re afraid that the next generation won’t do things right. But that’s not true!”¹³¹ Another student commented, “There are people opening up to the newer music, and I think it’s happening because culture is changing and older generations are dying out.”¹³²

Comments such as these seem to suggest that the current generation experiencing music censorship places part of the blame on an older generation of spiritual leaders who are unwilling or unable to change. There may be some truth to this sentiment in that the negative experiences of the older generation prevent them from being able to accept styles of music that they associate with sinful lifestyles.¹³³

As further examples of music censorship, students also mentioned the injunction against CCM at Gateway, and the advocating of certain styles of music at the expense of others at Welch. It is not surprising that all of the students who identify as musical confessed that they have witnessed music censorship firsthand. Interestingly, even two of the four who identify as non-musical were also able to give examples of music censorship, whether in their own experience or in the experiences of their friends. As one of them put it, “People get really mad and yell about it when they’re told they have to

¹³¹ Nick, interview.

¹³² Thomas, interview.

¹³³ For more on this topic, see pages 18-21.

stop [listening to certain kinds of music].”¹³⁴ The other expressed that “there were people who got angry, complained, or just didn’t understand.”¹³⁵

These negative responses to music censorship can be partly explained by the cognitive theories of researchers such as Daniel Levitin, whom I mention in the literature review. Levitin’s explanations of the multiple-trace memory model help to explain the frustration and anger felt by students who are told they cannot listen to certain styles of music. In the minds of the students, music represents not only an aural experience, but also the positive memories and associations tied to that initial experience. In other words, for all of us, music is a not just a memory—it is part of who we are. As one of the participants explained, “Before college, I was into the skater culture, including music...My other [music] choices had to do with where I was from. I sort of gave in to Gateway’s mentality, but I wasn’t ashamed of my culture I grew up with either.”¹³⁶ For students such as this one, experiencing the wholesale condemnation of certain styles of music could easily have been perceived as a condemnation of their entire past. When seen in this light, getting angry, yelling, and complaining seem to be no more than a natural response to music censorship.

After discussing specific examples of music censorship in spiritual institutions, it became clear that the students I interviewed have experienced music censorship in Free Will Baptist churches just as often as they have in Free Will Baptist colleges. It is also clear that many of these encounters with censorship have left negative and lasting

¹³⁴ Russell, interview.

¹³⁵ Brandi, interview.

¹³⁶ Daniel, interview.

impressions of the leaders and institutions promoting music censorship. As Daniel said, “I viewed it as advocating personal preference instead of things that are biblical...As far as school, I respect [my professor] to the core, aside from his musical presentation.”¹³⁷

Another student remarked, “Free Will Baptists will continue to be stuck in their ways when it comes to music. A lot of people are being misguided and made to feel guilty about personal preferences.”¹³⁸ A third stated, “Church is too often like high school where you’re just used to knowing the right answers without knowing why.”¹³⁹

Based on these types of responses, my next question focused on the role that students believe spiritual authority *should* play in enacting music censorship. The students gave a total of eight different answers, with nineteen total responses. Six of the students believe that the church should teach principles rather than specifics; six others believe that the church should merely model appropriate music. Two of the students believe that the church should continue to present rules about music to believers. The following responses were mentioned by one student each: They should leave censorship to parents; they should explain the rules they already have; they should develop a canon of acceptable music; they should educate the people more about music theory; they should promote balance.

Out of the nineteen total responses to this question, only four involve the continued use of censorship within the church. Not surprisingly, the only two students who cited the need for “rules” about music are both non-musical. Out of the other

¹³⁷ Daniel, interview.

¹³⁸ Jason, interview.

¹³⁹ Gavin, interview.

seventeen responses, ten involve education in some form. The following quotes from the students highlight these responses: “The church should just teach the principles and the effects of music; it would be hard to enforce rules anyway.”¹⁴⁰ “I wish that I had been taught music growing up—like theory and not just hymns.”¹⁴¹ “They’re not teaching principles—they’re teaching rules.”¹⁴² “You can’t dictate people when it comes to music...The church should focus on corporate worship without focusing on what people do at home.”¹⁴³ “They can preach principles, but it’s wrong and uncalled-for for them to say certain kinds of music are wrong or sinful. You can’t dictate that based off your own personal standards and call it Bible.”¹⁴⁴

Before asking for final recommendations on where the church should go from here, I asked the students to share their thoughts on how the church as a whole has changed its music standards in recent years. Five of the students believe that the church as a whole has gotten more liberal. Three of those five believe that this change has been good. According to one of these, “The church always responds to something different in a bad way. Over time and as we get information, maybe even from what the general population puts out, we become accepting of it, or warm up to it over time.”¹⁴⁵ Of the two other students who believe that the church has gotten more liberal in its music standards, one believes that the change has not been good, and one is undecided. Interestingly, all

¹⁴⁰ Russell, interview.

¹⁴¹ Gavin, interview.

¹⁴² Stephen, interview.

¹⁴³ Thomas, interview.

¹⁴⁴ Jason, interview.

¹⁴⁵ Daniel, interview.

four of the students who believe that the church has gotten more conservative in recent years believe that this has been negative change. To summarize these findings, only one student out of nine believes that the church should return to more conservative music standards. Both this student and the student who is undecided about whether the change has been good or bad identify as non-musical.

The final question I asked the students is as follows: If you could change anything about the church's involvement with believers and music, what would it be? To my surprise, five of the nine students returned to the theme of more or better education. One of these stated, "The biggest thing we need is education. People need to know why things are bad or good."¹⁴⁶ Another said, "I would advocate people presenting information on music but not in the way it's been presented in the past. I would provide resources that are helpful, biblical, and not rigged."¹⁴⁷ Other students also suggested that the church should do a better job of encouraging and utilizing Christian musicians, teach the Bible alone rather than people's opinions, attempt to enliven worship, focus on other more important things, and get involved in the local music culture. The student who advocated a church-wide shift in emphasis stated, "We need to focus more on preaching the gospel and reaching out to the lost and learn to look past those little issues. People are still people, and we need to find out more about them without letting musical preferences get in between us."¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁶ Nick, interview.

¹⁴⁷ Daniel, interview.

¹⁴⁸ Thomas, interview.

Even though five out of the nine students identified the need for more or better education in the church, none of the students who identify as musical suggested that the church should incorporate more education. Instead, they want the church to become more involved in music and less involved in talking about it. One stated, “The church should be utilizing local talent instead of just relying on the whole Christian music industry.”¹⁴⁹ Jason, the student who was expelled from Gateway for attending an alternative Christian rock concert and chose to attend another Free Will Baptist college briefly before leaving the denomination altogether, now works at a local craft brewery (which he has decided not to tell most of his conservative Free Will Baptist family). He now attends the very church that hosted the concert he was expelled for attending. Speaking about his current church, Jason said, “They’re still very conservative, but they do a great job of not calling people out when it comes to music. The college pastor here is very involved in the local music scene; he’s getting involved in the culture. Music is a huge part of the culture.”¹⁵⁰

As these statements illustrate, the differences between the musical and the non-musical students are nowhere more clear than they are in the students’ ideas about the future role of the church in discussing matters of music and spirituality. As I have mentioned several times, the musical students related an entirely different experience of music censorship than did the non-musical students. Once again, this seems to suggest that the teachings of spiritual authorities on music and spirituality differ in their impact on students according to the overall importance of music in the students’ everyday lives. For those who are non-musical, spiritual authority seems to have offered new information about music that students have never encountered before. These students have been

¹⁴⁹ Nick, interview.

¹⁵⁰ Jason, interview.

affected by this information in different ways, yet even they long for more or better education concerning the standards set by those in positions of authority. For those who consider themselves musical, the teachings of spiritual authority have served to distract the church from its main purpose at best, and at worst have frustrated and alienated genuine believers. The very fact that both musical and non-musical students are aspiring to future positions of service in the Free Will Baptist denomination seems to offer hope that future generations of students will be better informed about the issues and freer to make their own decisions.

CHAPTER 5—SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In many ways, there can be no neat or tidy conclusions where music or music censorship are concerned. This is certainly true for the students I interviewed. For these students and for others, living with past experiences of music censorship will always color their perceptions of the link between music and spirituality. Whereas I cannot undo the negative experiences these students shared throughout this case study, in this chapter I offer a summary, conclusions, and recommendations for future researchers who wish to study other aspects of music censorship in the modern Christian church.

Summary

Spiritual and political authorities have always been wary of the influence of music on their followers, not only because music contains the power to express, but also because of what it is capable of expressing. At the very least, this capability presents a challenge to those possessing other forms of power, if for no other reason than that music affords power to those who may otherwise hold none. Music is also capable of influencing cognitive thought and action, as it imprints permanent traces of emotion and experience within the brain itself. For spiritual authorities in particular, who are charged with protecting the minds of the faithful, this power simply cannot exist apart from their direct interference and control.

This control has most often manifested itself in the form of music censorship. Sometime after 1563, Jesuit leaders at St. Michael's College in Munich developed a catalog of acceptable and prohibited music in order to keep their students on the right track; today, more than four hundred years later, authorities in Free Will Baptist colleges

are making just as much effort to ensure that their students are not misguided by the “music of the world.” Students in this environment have reacted differently to the commands of those in spiritual authority. Some simply comply, not wanting to seem rebellious or stir up any trouble. Others rely more heavily on the power of music to evoke past experience and to provide a safe haven from the hardships of modern life; for these students, passive acceptance is not an option.

Each of the students I interviewed for this case study had already heard a great deal about music and spirituality long before he or she ever enrolled in college. Some cited appropriate modeling at home, and others recall hearing sermons by youth pastors and pastors about the dangerous effects of secular music. When the students arrived at Gateway Christian College, they received more training on these issues. Some even took a class entitled “Biblical Philosophy of Music.” At Gateway, students were discouraged from listening to any secular music or even Contemporary Christian Music. When Gateway closed in 2013, most of the students transferred to either Southeastern Free Will Baptist College, whose standards nearly match those of Gateway, or Welch College, which has taken a more liberal stance on music.

Instead of citing the church or any one Free Will Baptist college as responsible for the formation of their personal views on music, most of the students claim that personal experience was actually the most important catalyst for this development of thought. The students still listen to many different genres of music, and in fact, living in several different Christian contexts has actually helped to foster an appreciation for new artists and genres. Unlike I initially suspected, students have hardly changed their listening habits at all when transferring from church to church or from college to college. Most of

them believe that there is some sort of link between music and spirituality, but very few were able to give concrete biblical evidence as to what this link actually entails.

Even the students who claim that spiritual authority has been influential in this area admitted that it was most often experience and not instruction that made the difference. For several students, even negative experiences served to give them a better idea of what they do *not* believe. As students encountered music censorship, whether in the form of instruction, direct commands, or even expulsion, they made subtle decisions about how they would choose to relate to music in the future.

Even though at least one of the former Free Will Baptist college students I interviewed has chosen to leave the denomination, the students who remain involved in Free Will Baptists seem hopeful about making positive change in the years ahead. As Brandi remarked, “We need diversity. There are lots of different worship styles, and that doesn’t mean that people aren’t walking with the Lord.”¹⁵¹ Some of the students want the church to do a better job of educating believers on the principles underlying music and spirituality. Others want the church to do less talking about these issues and simply become more involved in music itself.

It remains to be seen how the rising generation of Free Will Baptist leaders will alter the use of music censorship in their colleges and churches. It could be that someday they will find themselves guilty of censoring the music of the younger generation, just like the leaders they complain about today. It is also possible that they truly will make a difference and learn to help others see past musical preference. For now, it is sufficient that these students have seen the bitter division that this issue has caused and desire to

¹⁵¹ Brandi, interview.

make amends. It is even more valuable that these students have learned firsthand how to embrace the power of both music and faith without compromising identity or integrity.

Conclusions

Though the limited nature of my research precludes any attempt to make overreaching conclusions about music censorship in the church, this case study does reveal several important truths about this topic. First of all, not all spiritual authorities agree on the concepts of music and spirituality or use music censorship in the same way. Secondly, those who choose to censor music in the church clearly rely on philosophical and historical evidence more than evidence that is strictly biblical. Third, cognitive considerations are to blame for many of the differences between students and those in places of spiritual authority. Fourth, students seem to interact with spiritual mandates on music differently based upon the overall importance of music in their everyday lives. Fifth, not all students alter their listening habits to coincide with what they are being told is acceptable. Sixth, students seem to be dissatisfied with their encounters with music and spiritual authority; instead of desiring that the church continue to focus on music censorship, many students would like the church to offer more or better education about music and spirituality. Lastly, some students would like the church to talk less about music and focus more on other issues. I explain and briefly discuss each of these conclusions below.

My first observation is that not all spiritual authorities agree on the concepts of music and spirituality or use music censorship in the same way. Among evangelical Christians, for example, some embrace the use of any style of music in corporate worship whereas others condemn much of today's popular Christian music even for purposes of

private worship or entertainment. This means that whereas music censorship for some involves only secular music, for others it includes even Christian music that is deemed inappropriate. Methods of censorship also differ. Some merely preach about appropriate and inappropriate styles of music, but others go as far as hosting CD burnings and banning the use of earbuds.

Secondly, those who choose to censor music in the church clearly rely on philosophical and historical evidence more than evidence that is strictly biblical. This is evident in the fact that the origins of Christian musical thought lie in the teachings of Pythagoras, Plato, and Aristotle as much they do the teachings of any church father. The use of censorship in the church is reminiscent of the Reformation era, when even musical differences were condemned as heresy due to the church's struggle to preserve proper sectarian boundaries. Later church teachings on rhythm trace their roots to fears of pagan foreigners' ability to conjure up spirits or to drum listeners into a trance. None of these characteristics of church dogma have any scriptural basis, as was further evidenced when the students interviewed for this case study were unable to offer any sound biblical evidence for the nature of their views or the views of their spiritual leaders.

My third observation in this area is that cognitive considerations are to blame for many of the differences between students and those in places of spiritual authority. I have already mentioned that many of the church's older generation are simply unable to accept new styles or genres because of the way the brain stores traces of negative emotions or experiences tied to those styles or genres in the past. I also mentioned in the last chapter that the multiple-trace memory model is actually a double-edged sword. While it prevents older believers from remembering certain styles of music without remembering the

associated negative experiences, it also prevents younger believers from being able to distance themselves from styles or songs they have enjoyed in the past. After students have already stored those songs to memory, to abandon them would mean to abandon all the positive emotions and experiences that the brain stores along with them. Thus, for many students, giving up certain styles of music would literally require them to give up a part of themselves.

This fact coincides with my next observation that students seem to interact with spiritual mandates on music differently based upon the overall importance of music in their everyday lives. When I initially started tracking the students' responses based on gender, college of choice, and musicality, I had no idea that this third category would become so important once I started analyzing the data. I developed the criteria for this determination based on statements made by the students themselves, four of whom said they do not listen to music very often, two of whom made no comment, and three of whom stated the importance of listening to music often. Differences between these groups soon became apparent, as in instances when the non-musical students failed to mention quality or artistry as desirable in music, or when non-musical students were the only ones claiming to appreciate the class at Gateway. These differences became even more apparent when the musical students were the only ones to cite negative experiences involving music in spiritual institutions. Perhaps most significant is the fact that none of the musical students believe that the church should offer more or better education on music and spirituality; instead, they want the church to become more involved in engaging music or encouraging musicians and less involved in talking about music.

My fifth observation is that not all students alter their listening habits to coincide with what they are being told is acceptable. Even though some of the students did make conservative changes in their listening habits either while attending Gateway or after they left, the only student who consistently demonstrated conservative change claims to have done so as the result of personal study on the issues that began before he ever attended college and not due to any institutional policy. The rest of the students actually chose to expand their musical preferences more than they chose to limit them; this appears to have happened as they came in contact with other students who introduced them to new genres or artists. Students who chose to listen to prohibited music usually did so on their own terms or simply accepted the consequences.

This leads me to my sixth observation that students seem to be dissatisfied with their encounters with music and spiritual authority. For several of the students I interviewed, learning about music and spirituality in church quickly turned into a negative experience as they were forced to deal with criticism, judgment, and guilt. Once the students reached college, the negative experiences continued. Several took a class in which they were supposed to learn how to distinguish what “spiritual” music really sounds like. Others were forced to listen to music in private. One was even expelled for attending an alternative Christian rock concert.

Instead of desiring that the church continue to focus on music censorship, many students would like the church to offer more or better education about music and spirituality. This sentiment was especially strong among the students who identify as non-musical. My personal opinion is that it was easier for these students to accept what they were being told about music and spirituality since music had never played a major

role in their personal lives anyway. As these students began to broaden their own musical preferences and witness music censorship among other students, they began to question the things that they had simply accepted before. After developing their own thoughts on the issues and looking back, they now wish that the church had done a better job all along of teaching them basic principles rather than issuing official dogma.

One final observation is that some students would like the church to talk less about music and focus more on other issues. Whereas most of the non-musical students involved in this case study complained about a lack of music education in the church, the musical students I interviewed complained that they have heard enough already. Instead, they suggested that the church should either focus on other things such as prayer or find ways to enliven worship, encourage Christian musicians within their churches, or get involved in the local music scene. It could be that these students are tired of hearing about music from those who know it the least and therefore feel that better involvement would afford spiritual leaders some much-needed perspective. It could also be true, however, that these students have had so many negative experiences with music in the church that they simply desire the freedom to follow their musical and spiritual pursuits without any further involvement from church authorities.

Recommendations

Before I conclude, the nature of my research compels me to offer several recommendations. First of all, it is important to note that this case study merely scratches the surface of all that could and should be said on this topic. Specific examples of music censorship within the church abound, but further research is needed to highlight the methods and effectiveness of music censorship on a broader scale. Other qualitative

studies would add insight into how censorship is being used among other denominations and branches of the church, whereas quantitative studies are needed to illustrate the broader impact of censorship according to gender, age, and even social status within Christian circles.

Concerning gender, only two of the nine participants I was able to interview are females. Neither of them identified as musical, and neither attended Welch after leaving Gateway. Future studies of music censorship in the church could help to determine whether or not each gender experiences music censorship differently and whether or not my designations of “musical” or “non-musical” would still apply if “musical” female students were included in the research. (It could be that these designations would cease to retain any significance whatsoever if applied across a broader target population; I leave that possibility for future researchers to determine.) Next, concerning age, further study is needed to determine whether or not the younger generation always blames the older generation for enacting music censorship, or whether the older generation also experiences censorship in some way. Further research into the experiences of older believers would also add insight into the ways that the church’s stance on music and spirituality has changed over the last several decades.

Other questions which only further research can answer include the following: First of all, how has the church traditionally responded to undercurrents of musical rebellion expressed in songs such as those found in the medieval collection *Carmina Burana*? Secondly, how much does the church’s involvement with music and music censorship rely on cultural collective memory, and how has this reliance altered church leader’s opinions throughout history? Third, how does the biological processing of music

interact with and ultimately affect the realms of the psychological and the spiritual? Fourth, how might researchers interpret church music differently by rejecting the traditional ritual/entertainment dichotomy, and instead perceiving a spectrum with ritual and entertainment existing at opposite ends? Fifth, how do church leaders determine contemporary applications concerning which music is “conservative” and which is not? And finally, how and when do these applications change?

Ultimately, I realize that researchers can only observe and document the processes that are happening around them; it is believers themselves who will determine whether the church’s longstanding tradition of music censorship will continue in its present form. For those who must make these decisions, I offer one final word of advice from Milton’s *Areopagitica*: “The light which we have gained was given us not to be ever staring on, but by it to discover onward things more remote from our knowledge. It is not the unfrocking of a priest, the unmitering of a bishop, and the removing hum from the Presbyterian shoulders that will make us a happy nation; no, if other things as great in the Church...be not looked into and reformed, we have looked so long upon the blaze that Zuinglius and Calvin have beacons up to us that we are stark blind.”¹⁵²

¹⁵² Milton, *Areopagitica*, 49.

APPENDIX A

Recruitment Letter Template

Date: July 30, 2014

Student

Dear Student:

As a graduate student in the music department at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a master's degree in ethnomusicology. The purpose of my research is to develop a history and analysis of music censorship in the church, especially as it relates to the current generation of believers, and I am writing to invite you to participate in my study.

I have chosen you as a potential participant because you transferred colleges recently and therefore represent a member of the current generation of believers who has experienced music censorship firsthand in two separate environments. If you are willing to participate, you will be asked to participate in a recorded interview during which I ask questions about your views and experiences related to music, spirituality, and music censorship. It should take approximately thirty to sixty minutes for you to complete the procedure listed. Your participation will be completely anonymous, and no personal, identifying information will be required.

To participate, please complete and return the consent document, and contact me to schedule an interview. I may be contacted via email at jb4jc06@juno.com or via phone at 540-214-6744.

A consent document will be given to you via email before an interview is scheduled. The consent document contains additional information about my research. Please sign the consent document and return it to me at or before the time of the interview via email.

Sincerely,

Jon Bullock

APPENDIX B

Consent Form

CONSENT FORM
Music Censorship in the Church
Jon Bullock
Liberty University
Department of Music

You are invited to be in a research study of music censorship in the Church, especially as it affects the current generation of believers. You were selected as a possible participant because you transferred to another FWB college when the one you were attending closed its doors. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by Jon Bullock in the Department of Music, Ethnomusicology, at Liberty University.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to trace the effects of music censorship on the current generation of believers. As I mentioned, I chose you as a participant because you relocated to a different Free Will Baptist college when the one you were attending closed its doors. By studying the ways that your views on music and spirituality may or may not have changed since transferring colleges, I hope to discover the ways that music censorship imposed by spiritual authority actually works.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:
Participate in a recorded interview during which I ask you questions about your views on and experiences with music, spirituality, and music censorship. There are no right or wrong answers involved; I am merely attempting to track personal experiences and analyze the subsequent data.

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study:

No study is without risk; however, I believe that the risks involved in this study are no more than you would encounter in everyday life.

The benefits to participation are indirect but still important considering the nature of the research. Music has always been a valuable tool in the hands of believers; by helping me to research the Church's long and complex history of music censorship, you would be helping to produce a valuable work that can help church leaders reevaluate their typical approach to this volatile issue and decide how to approach this process in the future.

Compensation:

You will not receive payment or contribution for your assistance with this research.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only the researcher will have access to the records.

In order to protect confidentiality, I plan to alter any names that will be mentioned in my research. The recorded interviews will be stored in a locked file on a password-protected computer. I am the only one with access to this computer. After I have finished analyzing the data and reporting my findings, the recorded interviews will be stored for three years in accordance with federal regulations.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

How to Withdraw from the Study:

Should you choose to withdraw from this study, you may do so by contacting me directly via email at jb4jc06@juno.com or via phone at (540)214-6744. If you choose to withdraw, no information gathered during your interview will be used in any way.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is Jon Bullock. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at (540)214-6744 or at jb4jc06@juno.com. The research advisor for this project is Dr. Katherine Morehouse, who can be reached at kmorehouse@liberty.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd, Suite 1837, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

I agree to allow any interviews to be video- or audio-recorded for research purposes only.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Investigator: _____ Date: September 10, 2014

IRB Code Numbers: 1931.082714

IRB Expiration Date: August 27, 2015

APPENDIX C

Interview Questions Template

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS- STUDENTS

Music Censorship in the Church

Jon Bullock

Liberty University

Department of Music

1. What do you think are the various purposes of music?
2. What is the correlation between music and spirituality? How would you say that the two are linked, if at all?
3. What factors guide your current choice of music?
4. What biblical principles guide you in making music choices?
5. Is there a difference between the music you listen to for worship and the music that you enjoy for entertainment?
6. What kinds of music do you listen to, and when?
7. Should there be a difference between music used for corporate worship and music used for other purposes, such as personal worship, entertainment, etc.?
8. Did you take a course in music such as “Biblical Philosophy of Music” at either college? If so, what were the basic principles taught in that course?
9. Where and when would you say you gained your current guiding principles concerning music?
10. What kinds of music did you listen to before college? While attending college #1? While attending college #2?
11. What role has spiritual authority played in shaping your views on music and spirituality? Have you always agreed with the choices mandated for you? Did you allow these mandates to influence the music you listen to?
12. To what degree has each institution been influential in shaping your personal views on music?
13. What has been your personal experience with music censorship in spiritual institutions?
14. What role do you think the church should play in enacting music censorship? What should guide the church’s involvement in music censorship?

15. How do you view the church's history of music censorship?
16. What do you think the future involvement of the church in music censorship should look like?
17. How has the church's stance on music evolved over the years, and how should it evolve in the future? What factors affect these changes?
18. If you could change anything about the church's involvement with believers and music, what would it be?

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