

Module 16 Contemporary Hymnody 6/2014

About this module

This module traces the development of what we call worship songs or choruses. Today, the choice of songs is enormous and they are available to download from the internet as mp3 files, sheet music or files ready to project. It was not always that easy to access such material and Joe King maps the route from the earliest experiments to what has become a major slice of the worldwide music industry.

Post war period

In the 1950s, evangelicals in Britain began to focus their activities on communicating the gospel to young people. Through ministry in universities and public schools, new patterns of activity evolved. A “culture” of religious practice and sensibility evolved. By the 1960s evangelical involvement in youth ministry had spread from the universities and public schools to parishes, youth fellowships and youth clubs all around the country.

The emphasis upon young people within evangelicalism was fundamental to its rise in the post war period. As the culture of young people began to change, so the style, and eventually the nature of evangelical religion itself would have to change. The chief agent in this evolution was to be the spiritual song.

Even earlier

The singing of hymns has been a characteristic of evangelical religion. Starting with [Golden Bells or Hymns for Children](#) which was published by CSSM in 1890 and then with the CSSM Chorus book (CSSM eventually became Scripture Union), which was published in 1921, a tradition of Christian songs for children became common place. The chorus from this point on became a recognised aspect of evangelical work amongst young people and children, not only in the United Kingdom but also around the world.



The CSSM Chorus book was important because it encouraged the development of a distinctive style of worship for children. As work among young people and children grew in the 1950s and on into the 1960s, the limitations of the CSSM choruses became evident. It was soon clear that there was a need for a youth-related songbook for use in the many youth fellowships attached to churches. During this period, a new generation of evangelical Anglican clergy were starting their ministries in churches around the country. Through the Pathfinders and the Church Youth Fellowships Association, these young clergy were to look for innovative ways to involve young people in the life of the church and in evangelical Christianity. A number of these young clergy started to compose songs and choruses for use in youth groups and began producing home produced song books. [Michael Baughen](#), curate at Hyson Green entitled his song book Zing Sing and over the following few years, produced five Zing Sing books. [Youth Praise 1](#) was born out of this lively grass-roots concern for outreach amongst young people.

Youth Praise

[Youth Praise](#) was published in 1966 by Falcon Books for CPAS. Containing 150 hymns, songs, choruses and spirituals the songbook was edited by Michael Baughen. Michael brought together a committee of people responsible for compiling the material - Michael Botting, Kenneth Habershon, John Perry, Gavin Reid, Tom Walker, David Watson, John Stott and Timothy Dudley Smith. The songs were seen as an aid to the Bible teaching used in the Churches Youth fellowship Association and Crusaders.

Youth Praise reflected the way that evangelical youth work was characterised by the steady adoption of this 1960s youth culture. The Christian youth work scene had started to spawn its own version of “beat music”. From the beat group scene an organisation emerged which was to play a key role within the development of religious culture, MGO (Musical Gospel Outreach).

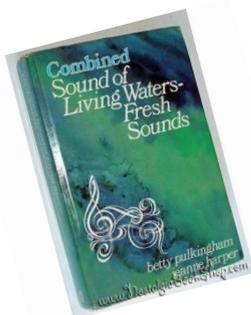
MGO grew out of a conference held for gospel beat groups on 5 December 1964 in Ealing. There was a need for a central organisation to speed up links between groups and to provide the necessary practical help required. MGO produced a magazine called Buzz in the hope that information could be spread amongst the gospel beat scene.

Coffee bars

The gospel beat scene in the early 1960s was generated by the proliferation of coffee bar outreach by churches and Christian groups around the country. [Coffee bars](#), unlike pubs, were accessible to teenagers. Many of these projects were given names like “Top Gear”, “Mad Pad”, “Studio Y”. Buzz was to prove to be a powerful advocate of the use of contemporary youth culture in evangelism.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s the Jesus Movement began to impact the lives of thousands of young people as it swept through North America. A new kind of Christianity began to emerge. Popular music was the most distinctive consumer product offered by the new movement. The Jesus Movement adopted and advocated a charismatic spirituality and an emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit. Charismatic renewal began to spread around the world.

The Charismatic movement



The growing appeal of the charismatic movement witnessed through events such as Come Together and If my People, allowed for a broadening of the market in worship music. Charismatic worship was able to develop a style which also appealed to a wide variety of ages. Leading the way in these developments was a new song collection called [Sound of Living Waters](#) published in 1974. The collection of songs was edited by Betty Pulkingham and Jeanne Harper.

Betty was married to Graham Pulkingham, an Episcopalian priest notable for his pioneering of renewal at the Church of the Redeemer in Houston, USA. Jeanne

Harper was married to Michael Harper, the leader of the UK based renewal organisation The Fountain Trust. This collection of songs (later followed by Fresh Sounds) provided music which was more suitable for congregational singing. Less “pop” culture and more “folk” culture.



1970's

MGO entered the 1970s speculating that their grass roots activities, mainly associated with coffee-bar evangelism, was about to come to an end. At this time MGO were going through a period of unprecedented growth – from two main directions, first a culture of large events and tours and secondly, through a significant investment in worship music.



The first of these was MGO acting in partnership with British Youth for Christ and the creation of a new Christian festival, [Spring Harvest](#) began. At the same time, MGO and publishing company Kingsway published the hugely successful worship song collection [Songs of Fellowship](#) – drawn mainly from the house churches, this music was to be adopted much more widely through the enormous sale of songbooks. It was this style that [Graham Kendrick](#) was to take onto the streets in a worldwide popular movement of praise marching.

The first edition of Songs of Fellowship Book 1 was published in 1979 with just 53 songs. In 1983, Songs of Fellowship Book 2 was published – overall sales for that year reached 90,000. In addition to these direct sales, the material was also being used at Christian events. In 1985 Songs of Fellowship Book 3 was published and in 1987 a collection of hymns was also published under the title Hymns of Fellowship. In 1987 all four volumes were brought together as Songs and Hymns of Fellowship. By 1991 this combined edition had sold over one million copies worldwide.

Alongside the success of Songs of Fellowship, [Kingsway](#) began to develop a number of other branded lines of worship material - Scripture in Song, Graham Kendrick's Make Way, Songs of the Vineyard Volume 1 (following John Wimber's visit to this country in 1987).

The main competitor to Songs of Fellowship was the [Mission Praise](#) series. The first book was published in 1984 as a songbook linked to the visit of Billy Graham for Mission England. The aim of the book was to produce a collection of songs that reflected the breadth of evangelical worship, including some standard hymns.

In 1972, the average contemporary Christian album would sell around 2,500. In the 1980s, album sales were still roughly the same. This meant that contemporary Christian music could not be supported through the usual sources of record sales and touring. In the 1980s Spring Harvest were able to increase their impact through the sale of worship books and recordings. Between 1984 and 1989 Word Records sold 100,000 units linked to Spring Harvest. In addition to these sales, the Spring Harvest 1989 Celebration Album sold 20,000 copies. These kinds of sales made the activities of Christian music companies just about viable. What they did not do was to support the worship leaders themselves.

Graham Kendrick is one of the few exceptions to this. As a gospel artist, Kendrick made a fairly modest and perhaps precarious living. He was essentially a missionary being supported by the charitable funding of British Youth For Christ. When he began to focus upon worship, this situation changed and he was able to support not only himself, but also his whole organisation, Make Way on the basis of record sales and income from publishing. For the majority of worship artists, a wide range of diverse activities were required if they were to be able to earn a realistic living – chief among them was a salaries post, working with local congregations.

As well as being based in churches, worship leaders were also employed full time by evangelists, preachers and Christian organisations. In the 1980s Andrew Maries was one of the first of these new breed of worship leader to be employed by an Anglican Church. He was supported in this ministry by David Watson's church, [St Michael le Belfry](#) in York.

1990s

In the 1990s, when he was still a teenager, [Matt Redman](#) was employed as worship leader by St Andrew's, Chorley Wood where David Pytches was the vicar. From there he was able to develop his ministry by working with Mike Pilavachi of Soul Survivor (a young people's event held yearly and now a church with various church plants around the Watford area).

The Survivor Songbook is part of a series of songbooks published in relation to the [Soul Survivor Festival](#). The songbooks focus almost exclusively on songs written by the artists appearing at the festivals. That means that, unlike Youth Praise or Songs of Fellowship, they do not collect material from a wide range of sources. The first collection of songs linked to the festival was published in 1996 – The way of the Cross. The songbook marks a significant departure in format in that it does not print musical notation. Instead, the music is supplied on a CD rom that comes with the book.. The songs appear simply as lyrics with guitar chords. The songwriters who have contributed to these books are Matt Redman, Tim Hughes, Paul Oakley.

As worship leaders started being employed in churches across the country they began to be linked with particular preachers, Dave Fellingham and Terry Virgo, Noel Richards and Gerald Coates. These relationships were significant because they provided a way for new songs and styles of worship to become known more widely.

The introduction of the overhead projector (OHP), in churches gave more freedom for the musicians – as they were able to use a variety of music books, and also to the congregation who no longer needed to hold a hymn book.

At the same time as people were marching and proclaiming, a more personal style of worship was to start to gain strength. This was linked to [John Wimber](#). Through Wimber's ministry a new emphasis on worship was to become common in many churches and it was characterised by a further shift in the way that God was encountered in worship. Wimber focused on the way that praise and worship grew towards intimate moments in the presence of God.

It has been suggested that through the 1960s to today, worship songs have been popular because they are in touch with the culture and ethos of the day. To worship God is to "give God his worth" says Andrew Maries. Graham Kendrick sees worship

as involving a commitment to living sacrifice; this is a whole body reality. [Mike Pilavachi](#) speaks of worship as “our highest priority”.

Festivals and Conferences are held across the country and across all the churches. Conferences such as New Wine and Spring Harvest Conference are ecumenical and there are influences from churches in other countries, eg. [Hillsong in Sydney Australia](#).

Further work

New collections of songs are evolving, with new composers and events, such as [Worship Central](#) (organised by Holy Trinity Brompton). Can you explore what the contemporary scene is and write about how the use of the worship song is developing. You could also include how much of this material is in use at your church, who plays it, sings it and how you go about finding it?

As usual, share your findings with others on the bulletin board and give others the chance to use good material you have found.

Music resources

[Iona](#) – Come all you people (John L Bell)

[Songs and Hymns of Fellowship](#)

[Survivor Songbooks](#)

[The Source](#), Books 1 and 2, Kids Source, Christmas Source, Easter Source

[Hillsong Songbooks](#)

[Great Big God](#) series (Vineyard – songs for children)

[The Jubilate Group](#) source of contemporary hymnody.

Further Reading

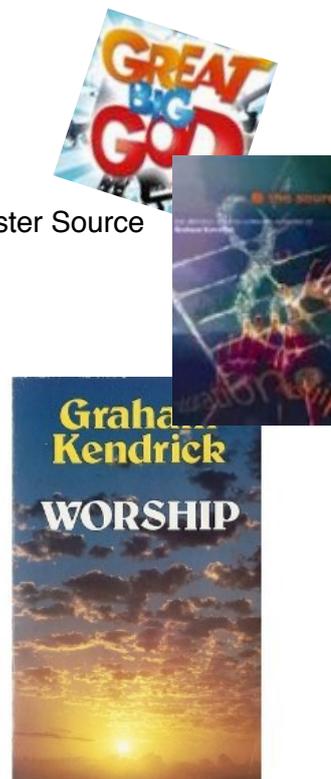
[Evangelicalism in Modern Britain](#), - David Bebbington

[Growing up Evangelical](#), - Pete Ward

[One Heart, One Voice](#), - Andrew Maries

[Worship](#), - Graham Kendrick

[For the Audience of One](#), - Pilavachi and Borlase



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Revised Robert Fielding
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