

Get in the Groove

Back in the 1970s a popular Bible teacher stood in front of a crowd of thousands at the Omni arena in Atlanta and told us that percussion instruments are sinful and that demons might be attracted to a worship service if drums are used. This respected minister also taught—with a straight face, believe it or not—that God endorses only a “traditional” rhythm style that follows the first and third beat. Music that uses an offbeat 2-and-4 rhythm, he said, has an evil origin.

Say what?

This guy was trying to imply, without saying it, that the lily-white music played at your grandmother’s church is acceptable to God while the foot-stomping style of singing heard at the local black Pentecostal church is sensual and unclean (because people might dare to dance or play drums and bass guitars—gasp!).

I guess he imagined that when the resurrected saints gather before heaven’s throne, everyone will put on robes and sing a dirge-like version of “Nearer My God to Thee” accom

panied by harps and a piano.

Think again! This guy is going to be disappointed when he gets to heaven and finds someone like anointed gospel singer Fred Hammond (see page 50) leading worship with a dozen Hammond-B3 organs and a procession of hip-hop dancers.

Where did we get the idea that the music we offer God has to be slow or somber? That’s not in the Bible! In fact, 2 Chronicles 30:21 says Israel praised God with “loud

instruments” (NKJV) during their celebrations. Psalm 150 says we are to praise Him with every kind of instrument, including “loud cymbals” (v. 5). It also says dancing (v. 4) should be part of our worship. Ever tried dancing without drums to provide the beat?

I wish Christians would quit being such religious prudes when it comes to musical styles. Missionaries who went to Hawaii 200 years ago told their converts that they had to burn their native musical instruments in order to please God. Today we tell radically saved teen-agers that they can’t use rock or metal or rap music to share Jesus with their friends. Why do we make such a big deal about nonissues?

The Bible says people from “every tribe and tongue and people and nation” will worship Jesus at the end of the age (Rev. 5:9). I think that means that the richness of our cultural diversity will be on display when we gather at the throne. Every musical style and every instrument ever created will be used to praise Him.

Jesus loves all music—even the funkier—when it’s used to glorify Him. We’ll hear Celtic ballads, rap songs, Native American flutes, African drums, Scottish bagpipes, gospel choirs, Latin salsa and blaring electric guitars at this heavenly concert. And yes, your grandmother’s easy-listening hymns will be performed there, too, accompanied by a full orchestra.

Has your view of worship been tainted by religious attitudes or

cultural prejudice? Do you have a hard time imagining Jesus enjoying a Christian rock concert or grooving to the sound of

Christian R&B pumped out of a boom box?

I believe He's dancing with the angels because the devil has been defeated. Instead of criticizing this party, let's join in.