

Renewed love for hymns makes a comeback among youth_20705

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David Crowder

Band (from

University

Baptist Church

in Waco) leads

the crowd in

"Come Thou

Fount of Every

Blessing"

during Passion

'05. The Passion

movement has

focused on

introducing a

new generation

to the theology

found in many

ancient hymns.

(Courtesy

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Renewed love for hymns makes a comeback among youth

By Leann Callaway

Special to the Baptist Standard

Melodies and instrumentation have changed, but the lyrics remain the same, as young worshippers find new meaning in traditional hymns.

Some observers attribute the trend toward renewed interest in hymns to the Passion Conferences movement, established in 1995 by Louie Giglio.

They consider music from Passion Conferences—which incorporates traditional hymns with contemporary songs—the leading edge in worship music and the spark that has kindled a renewal of hymn-singing among teenagers, college students and young adults.

“Somewhere along the way, tradition became a casualty in the explosion of contemporary worship that has swept the church around the globe in recent decades,” Giglio said.

“Yet we would be fools to discard the rich treasures of the church through ages past just because they are old. It says in Ecclesiastes 1:9-10: 'What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun. Is there anything of which one can say, 'Look! This is something new?' It was here already, long ago; it was here before our time.'

“For us, these words cast modern worship in a whole new light and cause us to wonder if the cutting edge of worship might not be deep in the recesses of the past, after all.

“And clearly these words remind us that the God we worship is timeless,

concerning himself less with the age of our songs and more with the condition of our hearts.”

Worship leaders at Passion Conferences, including Chris Tomlin, David Crowder and Charlie Hall, seek to recapture the rich treasure-store of theology in ancient hymns and recast them for a new generation, he noted.

Passion recently released a seventh worship album, *Passion: Ancient and Modern Hymns-Live Songs of our Faith*. This CD, which includes traditional hymns, represents the growing trend toward hymnody.

“Making a CD of traditional hymns has been on our hearts for a long time,” said Tomlin, who grew up in Grand Saline. “With this modern worship movement that's going on, we've noticed that a lot of hymns are being lost or not appreciated.

“It's our desire for people to rediscover these songs. For people who haven't grown up with hymns, we hope they're like: 'Wow, I didn't know these songs were out there. I didn't know it was like this.'”

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The hymns that were chosen on this CD include “O Worship the King,” “Doxology,” “Fairest Lord Jesus,” “How Great Thou Art,” “All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name,” “On Christ, the Solid Rock,” and “Take My Life.”

“Every time I've led worship, I've always used hymns,” Tomlin noted. “They've been a big part of my faith growing up. They're powerful, powerful songs.

“As far back as I can remember, 'All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name' has been a favorite hymn of mine. I love the reverence and grandness that this song evokes in me. It's a song that commands your worship. Every time I sing it, I feel like I'm in the midst of thousands and thousands of people and angels bowing down before God.”

Furthermore, Tomlin emphasized the importance of finding a balance between contemporary songs and traditional hymns in churches today.

“I think hymns are extremely important, because you realize that you're standing in a long line of believers that sang these songs,” Tomlin said. “So that's what we're trying to hold onto with Passion.

“It's sad there's controversy in churches over music. There shouldn't be. These songs are all songs of our faith, and I think to abandon one in choice of the other is a really wrong thing.

“This 'hymn/chorus' battle isn't going on in other countries, especially since they're happy to get together to sing.”

Tomlin added it's important for people to remember some traditional hymns were not widely accepted when they were first introduced.

“In the 1700s and 1800s, some of the hymns were brand new, and people were going, 'What's up with these new songs?’

“In the 1800s, they were like, 'I'm not so sure about this new song,

'Amazing Grace.' They were all new songs at some point, and to say one song is better than the other is wrong," he said.

Likewise, Crowder—who helped establish University Baptist Church, a postmodern congregation in Waco—is bringing students back to an appreciation of hymns.

Crowder said he has fond memories of singing the "Doxology" each Sunday morning as a child. He now regularly sings this hymn and others, in addition to his original material, at events around the country.

"It's one of my first memories of church," Crowder explained. "I have this recollection of singing the 'Doxology.' No music was played. Our voices echoed its lyrics."

"Modern worshippers have tended to discard these ancient confessions of worship because they are old, while traditional worshippers have failed to embrace modern confessions because they feel they are shallow and void," Giglio said.

"We want to create a common ground where worshippers, traditional and modern, can join in worship and realize that worship is not about the music but the state of the heart."

Worship leader Hall can relate to the sentiments of many modern worshippers.

After growing up in a Baptist church and regularly singing hymns, Hall moved away from his traditional roots because he felt it hindered authentic devotion to God.

But Hall recently realized the beauty of hymns and discovered what congregations were missing by not including hymns.

"I grew up singing 'How Great Thou Art' but never fully appreciated it until

recently,” he said.

“This is a beautiful song that describes the greatness of God through his creation, the sacrifice of his son and the return of Christ. This song inspires me on all three accounts.

“Another hymn, 'On Christ, the Solid Rock' has become one of my greatest confessions over the last few years. The song has a mixture of human need and beautiful theology. God has given an oath and a covenant to be a sure thing in a shifting world.”

Today, worship leaders around the country are taking cues from the Passion movement and giving younger generations an appreciation of traditional hymns.

As Todd Agnew leads worship at “The Loop,” a weekly Bible study for college students in Memphis, Tenn., he reflects back on singing hymns while growing up at Plymouth Park Baptist Church in Irving, and he often takes the opportunity to share the meaning behind these songs of our faith.

“We have a powerful heritage in the church,” Agnew explained. “We are tied to generations of worshippers who have honored God with their lives. Hymns are a part of that legacy.”

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