

**Book Review: Why I Left the Contemporary Christian Music Movement: Confessions of a Former Worship Leader, by Dan Lucarini, (Evangelical Press, Darlington, 2002)  
Paperback, 141 pages. \$14.99/£7.95**

Although several critiques of “contemporary worship” have been written in recent years (e.g. John Blanchard’s “Pop goes the Gospel”), what makes this book unique is that it is written from the perspective of someone who was “on the inside”. This alone will give Lucarini a hearing that he may not otherwise have received for a book whose title will be somewhat provocative for many Christians.

As the title suggests, Lucarini’s book is mostly biographical in nature and “is not meant to be an exhaustive theological discussion of music in the Bible and the church” (p.16). Unfortunately, a cappella psalmody is ruled out as an “extreme” by John Blanchard in his foreword (p.11); the entire book is thus predicated on the assumption that *some* form of musical accompaniment is mandated for God’s worship in the New Testament.

A more sincere and gracious style you will not find in a book on such an emotive topic; although firm and unflinching in his convictions, Lucarini is balanced in his critique of opponents. Among the many CCM arguments addressed are: “Isn’t music amoral? Can’t we use CCM for evangelistic purposes? What about Luther’s beer hall tunes? Isn’t CCM easier to sing?”

In responding to these issues, the author points out the harmful influences of movements such as Promise Keepers, Rick Warren’s “Purpose Driven Church” and several misleading evangelical clichés such as “come as you are”, “the heart of worship”, and “God accepts you unconditionally”. The tale of split congregations, sexual immorality and bewildered believers that CCM has left behind it makes for sobering reading.

Many readers, however, will find some of Lucarini’s reasoning unconvincing. Not all will agree with his contention that certain forms of music (notably those with a beat) are intrinsically immoral. At times it is unclear whether he is saying CCM is guilty *intrinsically* or *by association* with the MTV world. And because Lucarini lacks the concept of an objective Biblical regulative principle of worship, his arguments are often extremely subjective, e.g. depending largely on the “weaker brother” argument from 1 Cor.8:9,12 and 10:23 as to how *we determine* what worship is acceptable. This is especially clear in his final chapters, which deal with how churches ought to worship today.

It is especially enlightening to read this book from a Reformed Presbyterian perspective; ironically enough, one is left feeling relieved for the solidity of the Reformed position on a cappella psalmody. That said, it would be wrong to simply brush the CCM issue aside as “not our problem”. Lucarini’s book stands as a challenge to RP’s to show fellow-believers a “better way” and as a warning to those considering entering the “broad gate” of CCM.

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