

GUIDING YOUNG CHRISTIANS IN THEIR CHOICE OF SECULAR MUSIC

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## **Abstract**

Music is a part of everyday life. It can also be very influential, especially in the lives of young people. This wouldn't be a problem at all if all music were harmless. Unfortunately, that's not the case. Even the most popular music can contain explicit language, sexual references, or references to drug use. The purpose of this paper is to suggest ways to guide young Christians in their choice of secular music. A brief history of the music, focusing on hard rock, will be given. Then the focus shifts to the history between the church and rock music. During the 1980s many religious publishers released books about the dangers of rock music. Since then, however, the church has been largely silent. This paper will examine the dangers that are present today. With the dangers of current rock music in mind, seven suggestions will be given that will help young people be better equipped to make God-pleasing decisions concerning music. A discerning Christian will compare what the music says with what God says.

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## Introduction

Whether a person is a die-hard music fan, listening to music all day long, or a casual music listener who barely takes notice makes little difference. Music is a part of everyday life. It is something that people come into contact with every day, whether the contact is intentional or accidental. Anything that is this prevalent in our lives merits a close, detailed look. Anything that changes as much as the musical landscape does merits a continued look year after year.

“Music is *pervasive* in our culture. Even if we never go near a concert hall, or switch on a radio or TV, or go to films, music will seek us out in airports and train stations, in doctors’ clinics and dentists’ chairs, at the hairdresser’s, and in shopping malls, pubs, and clubs. We do not have to find it; it finds us...It would be odd if Christians were never to think in depth about something so omnipresent.”<sup>1</sup>

It would be hard to argue that music doesn’t have the power to be very influential in a person’s life. The fact that music can be very influential is especially true with young people. During the teenage years, music is often more important to a person than it will be later in life. At the same time, the teenage years are the time when a young person is more exactly forming his or her personality, personal tastes, personal views, etc.

This wouldn’t be an issue at all if all the music in the world had a positive influence on the listener. It wouldn’t be a problem if all music were uplifting, educational, and morally sound. As it is, however, some music is found to be severely lacking in these qualities. This leads to questions like, “Can young people correctly discern which music they should or shouldn’t be listening to?” And if they are able to properly discern, what can be done to help guide them in making those decisions?

Many people noted the dangers of secular music as its popularity grew to unparalleled heights in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. Christians took note perhaps more than anyone else. During the 1970s and 1980s Christian publishing companies put out books, pamphlets, and articles outlining the dangers of music. For the most part, the genre of music being written about was rock music. Rock was the most popular music of the day, as well as the most controversial.

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<sup>1</sup> Jeremy S. Begbie, *Resounding Truth: Christian Wisdom in the World of Music*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 15.

Since the 1980s, Christians have been much more silent on the topic. Perhaps it would be of some value to revisit the topic. A lot has happened in the last thirty years.

The books about rock music that were written by Christian authors did a good job of showing the dangers of rock music. It is possible, however, that they could have made themselves much more valuable by taking it to the next level. Dangers exist in music. Now what? This paper will try to offer some helpful suggestions in this area. One could simply tell a young person not to listen to secular music at all. However, there must be a better way out there. This paper will do its best to provide suggestions of ways to direct young Christians in their choice of secular music.

It is this author's hope that the information and suggestions contained in this paper could be applied to any and every genre of music. Pop and country rule the charts. Rap and pop may have more dangers present than most rock. There isn't one genre that is inherently more or less able to be dangerous than the next. Given the length of this paper, however, looking into every genre of music would be nearly impossible. Due to this fact, the paper will be focusing on hard rock music (a more extreme subgenre of rock music encompassing many more subgenres like metal and punk). The reason this style of music has been chosen is the fact that more has been written on this style in the past. In addition, rock music has never been far from its traditional controversial status in American culture.

Before suggestions are given on guiding young people in their choice of music, some foundational information must be addressed. To better understand rock, this paper will, rather briefly, look at its history and influence from the 1950s up to today. It will also look at how the church has responded to rock music over those decades. The author will also make note of some of the dangers present in some of hard rock's recent releases. Finally, suggestions will be offered on guiding young Christians in their choice of secular music.

One way to guide young people in their choice of secular music is to equip them to be discerning Christians. When it comes to a young Christian and the music he or she listens to, a wise decision should always be the aim. To make a wise decision, young people should be

aware themselves of the dangers that are present. Those dangers can be compared with what they know from the Bible. In the back of their mind, whenever decisions are made, a young Christian should keep in mind what the Bible teaches about topics like music, temptation, sanctification, and adiaphora. The best way to guide young Christians in their choice of secular music is to equip them so that they can more easily make God-pleasing choices.

## **Literature Review**

There was a large amount of reading done for this paper from many different sources. Not all of them will be commented on here, but there are a few that deserve special recognition. They served as the most important sources in the research. The rest were largely supplemental, rather than foundational, in usage.

As I was gathering sources for this paper, I had a specific plan that I wanted to follow. For the first portion of the paper, where the history of rock music would be summarized, I wanted purely secular sources. I knew that I would be using the Christian sources for the second portion of the paper, where I would be summarizing the history of the church and rock. Almost all of the Christian sources included a chapter or two on rock history, but I felt that I could gain a wider viewpoint by utilizing both secular and Christian sources. It also served to differentiate the two portions in my mind. In the end, I sometimes broke my own rule when a quote from a Christian source was pertinent to the secular history. However, the large majority came from a lengthy reading of secular sources.

There was a major benefit in using a lot of the secular sources for the section on the history of rock. Unlike the Christian sources, many of which were written in the 1980s, it was extremely easy to find a large number of worthwhile secular sources that had been written in the past decade. Three books in particular served as the foundation for the summary of the history of rock. Griel Marcus, an editor for *Rolling Stone* and renowned music historian, provided a widespread look from the 1950s up until 2014, titled *The History of Rock 'n' Roll in Ten Songs*.

Since I wanted special emphasis on harder, heavier subgenres of rock, I used a specific history of metal (Wiederhorn and Turman's *Louder than Hell*) and a specific history of punk

(Heylin's *Babylon's Burning*). All three sources were extremely interesting and each book was written in a unique style. For example, *Louder than Hell* was written as an oral history, featuring quotations from the metal musicians themselves. Equally interesting was that the musicians themselves frequently brought up the things that brought controversy to rock throughout the years like the occult imagery used and the sex, drugs, and rock 'n roll lifestyles of the musicians.

I wasn't sure how easy it would be to find sources about rock music written from the Christian viewpoint. I was only familiar with Krug's *Rock—The Beat Goes On*, the only source I could find specifically addressing my topic that was put out through the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod's Northwestern Publishing House. From the rest of Christendom, however, there were a large number of sources. Like *Rock—The Beat Goes On*, almost all of these sources were written during the early 1980s.

Many of the books performed the same task, pointing out the dangers of rock music. A good example of that would be books put out by brothers Dan and Steve Peters, *Why Knock Rock?* and *What the Devil's Wrong with Rock Music?* While the Peters brothers were on the forefront of speaking out against rock music, there were others who were vehemently sticking up for it. Both Key's *Don't Stop the Music* and Lawhead's *Rock Reconsidered* did all they could to defend the fact that rock music was used mainly for good purpose. In general, I found that most of the sources leaned too far either "anti-rock" or "pro-rock." Gary Krug did the best job of giving a proper attitude and level presentation, always making sure to ground all of his opinions in Scripture.

My final section of suggestions on guiding young people in their choice of music drew from a large number of sources. The sources ranged from professional articles to a Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary professor's paper to *One & A Half Hearts*, a confessional style explanation of a Christian metal band, The Devil Wears Prada, and their lyrics. Many of my suggestions later on in the paper are to teach what the Bible teaches on certain topics. All Biblical quotations were taken from the *New International Version 2011*, unless the Bible verse was quoted inside of a quotation from a different source. Guidance for those sections of the paper came largely from the *Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Dogmatics Notes* and *The People's Bible Teachings* series

from Northwestern Publishing House, namely Lange's *Sanctification—Alive in Christ*, Luchterhand's *Man—From Glory to Ashes and Back*, and Fischer's *Christian Freedom—Christ Sets Us Free*.

## **I: The History of Rock—Backdrop to the Issue**

### **Beginnings (1940s-1950s)**

It is extremely hard to pinpoint the exact date of the birth of rock music. For one thing, it was much more difficult in the 1940s and 1950s to know what was going on around the country. With no Internet and a scarcity of televisions in the home it was rare to know what was going on in popular culture outside of what was going on in a person's home region. People were only aware of the most famous and popular musicians of the day. For another thing, rock itself is a genre that has been defined and refined over the years. Tweaks were made to preexisting genres over time until the style itself was something uniquely different from the genres of its origin. When rock music was finally defined, it was differentiated more by the content than the style of music itself. "Most experts believe that rock has its deepest roots in country-western, jazz, and rhythm-and-blues. In the late 'forties and early 'fifties these styles began to merge to form a hybrid with a heavier beat, a catchy melody, and a bent toward indecent and rebellious lyrics. Indeed, the term 'rock and roll' itself was originally a ghetto term referring to premarital sex."<sup>2</sup>

The term "rock 'n roll" appeared in a song before it was a recognized genre of music. When the singer said that he wanted "to rock," he wasn't referring to playing a style of music at all. "In 1947, the same year the term 'teenager' was coined, a rhythm-and-blues singer named 'Wild Bill' Moore wrote and sang a rinky-tink tune that went, 'We're gonna rock, We're gonna roll.' While that bawdy line of lyric, actually sexual metaphor, was set to a catchy melody, there was nothing particularly memorable about it."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Gary L. Krug, *Rock—The Beat Goes On: A Christian Perspective on Trends in Music*, (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1987), 7.

<sup>3</sup> Dan Peters and Steve Peters, *Why Knock Rock?*, (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1984), 13.



The term “rock ‘n roll” did not take off with Wild Bill Moore’s song. The style of music, however, did not die. A new generation of wild, energetic young rockers was gaining large amounts of popularity, especially with the youth of America. Among them were familiar names like Elvis Presley, Buddy Holly, and Chuck Berry. These men were not only famous for their songs. There was more attention put on their youthful swagger and abnormally energetic stage antics. An influential DJ from Cleveland took note of the new sound and put a name to it, taken from the aforementioned Wild Bill Moore song.

“Several years later, however, a Cleveland deejay named Alan Freed made those words unforgettable. Freed borrowed that short bit of lyric to describe a ‘new sound’ of music he had been playing on his late afternoon Cleveland radio program. The music, a combination of boogie-woogie and jazz, hillbilly and blues, has emerged from dark city streets and bleak, back-country roads.”<sup>4</sup>

Rock music was identified by its primary instruments, the guitar, bass, and drum kit. The instruments played along to a beat that many weren’t used to. The lyrics were usually about love, like pop songs. Eventually, however, rock would begin to feature other themes like rebellion or politics. At the time, most people figured that this new sound with the strong beat was no more than a fad and it would pass. They couldn’t have been more wrong. Rock music was striking a chord with young people across America. 70 years later, rock music is still around. Not only has it continued, but it has also thrived. It remains one of the biggest branches of popular music. Rock itself has been divided into countless subgenres and variations. Rock remains, despite going through radical changes with every passing year and with each new generation of young people. Gary Krug, in 1987, was already describing the resiliency of rock as a unique phenomenon in music:

“Rock music as we know it today is the development of a phenomenon. No one could have imagined back in the early 1950s how prevalent rock would become. The music has virtually become *the* sound for young people for more than thirty years. During that time the banner has passed from one individual to another, from one group to another. Yet the sound of each era became the word of that generation. In terms of rock, each ‘generation’ lasts but a few years, no more than a few as fast as the audience changes. Each successive generation wants their own music, something distinctly theirs. Popular music experiences a rapid evolution, but the ‘beat goes on.’”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Dan Peters and Steve Peters, 13.

<sup>5</sup> Krug, 7.

## **The Rock Explosion (1960s-1980s)**

As stated earlier, many people thought that rock 'n roll was dying out. That all changed in the early 1960s. America was suddenly overcome with new bands from England who wrote their own music. This period of music is most commonly referred to as the "British Invasion." It brought America the pop-rock of The Beatles and the blues-influenced harder rock of The Rolling Stones and The Yardbirds. Many artists started to receive international acclaim. One of the most famous moments was when The Beatles played on *The Ed Sullivan Show* with millions of Americans watching.

Another genre that was gaining momentum during the 1960s was folk music. Folk had most of its success on the coast in California. It traded in the electric guitar for an acoustic one, focusing on the songwriter, rather than the performer. The lyrical themes were often identified as political. The most famous folk musician of the time was Bob Dylan. Eventually folk began to blend with rock music, combining the heavier beat of rock with the meaningful lyrics of folk. The 1960s are often looked back on as a period of musical revolution, a smaller part of a cultural revolution going on in America. Many different causes have been offered as catalysts for this revolution, including "the Second World War, an efficient mass media, easy money, and time to burn."<sup>6</sup>

By the end of the 1960s, rock had become diversified enough that it included many different subgenres of music like psychedelic rock, country rock, southern rock, and blues-rock. For the most part, however, rock musicians fell into one of two camps, soft rock or hard rock. Soft rock more often had its roots in folk music, stressing acoustic guitars and melodies. Hard rock more often had its roots in blues music. The star of hard rock was the electric guitar, usually played with heavy distortion through the amplifier. Some examples of early hard rock bands were the British Invasion band, The Who, and the psychedelic guitar master, Jimi Hendrix.

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<sup>6</sup> James P. Tiefel, *Christian Contemporary Music: Its Role in the Lives of Young Christians And Its Use in the Ministry of Their Church*. (Presented on February 9, 1987, available from <http://www.wlssays.net/files/TiefelContemporary.pdf>; Internet), 5.

In the early 1970s, two new terms were being used to describe more extreme versions of hard rock. The rock music was being played louder and faster than ever before. The first type of extreme rock was called “punk rock” and was made famous by bands like The Ramones, The Sex Pistols, and The Clash. The music was extremely fast and extremely simple. Punk bands were sometimes anti-everything, but they were almost always anti-authority. Followers of the music were often called “punks” and didn’t listen to anything else. They followed the mindsets promoted in the music, wore the clothes that their favorite bands did, and tried to do everything their own way.

“Punk rock began on the page not in the clubs, only picking up its Fender and going in search of those elusive three chords afterwards. Those who defined it initially—i.e. between 1970 and 1975—did so with a pen, not a guitar...Punk-rock—in the period before it was defined by the Ramones, the Sex Pistols, The Clash, and/or anyone directly inspired by one or more of them—was an attitude of mind, not tied to a specific sound (or tempo).”<sup>7</sup>

The second type of extreme rock was referred to as “heavy metal” and was pioneered by groups like Led Zeppelin and Deep Purple. Unlike punk, heavy metal often featured intricate musicianship and the ever-popular guitar solo. “Heavy metal was never officially ‘born.’ It came together in bits and pieces between the mid-sixties and early seventies, and stemmed from a desire to rebel, shock, and create a level of intensity that did then not exist in pop music.”<sup>8</sup> While Led Zeppelin and the other early heavy metal bands helped pave the way, it is possible that no band has been more influential on the development of heavy metal than Black Sabbath. Black Sabbath made their music with a “dark” sound and they had a “dark” image. Many other bands would follow their lead over the next decades.

“As heavy as bands like Led Zeppelin, the Stooges, and Blue Cheer were, they lacked the power and sonic impenetrability of the metal bands that followed their lead. More significantly, they could be rugged or mysterious, but they were rarely both, and they were hardly ever frightening. Black Sabbath changed all that...not long after Sabbath introduced the core ingredients of metal to the masses, other aggressive bands, including Deep Purple, Judas Priest, AC/DC, and KISS, conceived their own formulas for metal domination.”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Clinton Heylin, *Babylon’s Burning: From Punk to Grunge*, (London: Penguin, 2007), 4.

<sup>8</sup> Jon Wiederhorn and Katherine Turman, *Louder than Hell: The Definitive Oral History of Metal*, (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2013), 7.

<sup>9</sup> Wiederhorn and Turman, 29.

During the 1980s, the extreme became the norm. Heavy metal was no longer a niche style of rock. Instead, it was at the forefront of rock. Metal music split into three main branches throughout the decade: British metal, glam metal, and thrash metal. The subgenre of metal that a band belonged to was largely dependent on where the band was from. England once again proved to be very influential in American musical culture. “Inspired by Judas Priest and Black Sabbath, Iron Maiden, Saxon, Def Leppard, and a batch of other UK groups spawned the awkwardly titled but hugely influential New Wave of British Heavy Metal (NWOBHM) movement.”<sup>10</sup>

Inspired by the mainstream success won by the British bands, a heavy metal scene bloomed on the Sunset Strip in Los Angeles. They blended heavy metal music with the sensibility of pop and became famous for their “party animal” attitudes and lyrics. The L.A. metal bands would become known as “glam metal” or “hair metal” (in reference to the band’s large hairdos).

“With flashy, androgynous images and brash, solo-saturated songs, the ‘hair metal’ bands were visually compelling and musically engaging. In the beginning, groups like Motley Crue and Ratt were almost as heavy as Judas Priest and Dio, the band Ronnie James Dio formed after leaving Black Sabbath. But as the scene gained popularity and a major label feeding frenzy began, many musicians tailored their songs for mainstream radio, retaining some of their heaviness but drawing more emphasis to melody and heart-on-sleeve sensitivity—and sexuality.”<sup>11</sup>

The flamboyant appearances of the glam metal bands didn’t sit well with everyone. Rock was once again pushed further towards a more extreme sound. Combining all the most aggressive attitudes and sounds from punk and classic heavy metal, thrash metal was born.

“At the same time as the hair metal scene developed, a handful of young, defiant bands were creating a new, more aggressive counterculture that would quickly go mainstream...By combining the speed and ruggedness of Motorhead, the attitude of the Sex Pistols, and the precision and complexity of Judas Priest and Iron Maiden, groups like Metallica, Slayer, Exodus, and Anthrax birthed a scene diametrically opposed to

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<sup>10</sup> Wiederhorn and Turman, 73.

<sup>11</sup> Wiederhorn and Turman, 121.

everything that made commercial metal popular...For almost a decade, these bands composed the fastest, heaviest music on many of the nation's major labels, at the time a significant accomplishment. Along with the speed, groove, and aggression came plenty of stage diving<sup>12</sup>—and a new audience activity borrowed from hardcore known as moshing<sup>13</sup> „<sup>14</sup>.

It didn't take long for the content of heavy metal music to start creating a stir among parents in America. In 1985, a committee was formed called the "Parents Music Resource Center," more commonly referred to as the "PMRC." The PMRC largely consisted of women and most prominently featured Tipper Gore, wife of future Vice President Al Gore. The main goal of the PMRC was to have the Recording Industry Association of America make a rating system for albums, similar to the one used with movies. They were concerned with the violence, drug use, and sex portrayed in the music that their children were listening to. The group was influential enough that there was a Senate hearing on the matter and 19 record companies agreed to start using a parental warning sticker on their albums containing questionable content.<sup>15</sup>

### **Variety and Accessibility (1990s -2010s)**

The 1990s are seen as a major turning point in the history of hard rock music. Leading the way was a subgenre starting in Seattle, called "grunge." Grunge musicians hated how commercialized rock had become. Bands like Nirvana fused punk with heavy metal, while at the same time standing for the opposite of everything metal and punk had become. They didn't care what they looked like. Their music was filled with angst instead of partying and sadness instead of good times. Somewhat ironically, grunge became what it hated, with bands generating major playtime on radio stations and videos on the television. The style of grunge evolved while the new century approached, as more and more subgenres became the new popular form of hard rock. "Alternative" bands like the Foo Fighters made a more radio-friendly version of grunge

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<sup>12</sup> Stage diving is the act of jumping off of the stage and into the crowd.

<sup>13</sup> Moshing is the activity of slamming against others, usually at a concert.

<sup>14</sup> Wiederhorn and Turman, 192.

<sup>15</sup> A transcript of the Senate hearing can be found at <http://www.joesapt.net/superlink/shrg99-529/index.html>

music. “Nu metal” bands like Korn and Limp Bizkit added elements of rap into their music. “Pop-punk” bands like Green Day and Blink 182 used the same catchy melodies employed by pop musicians coupled with an aggressive sound. It seemed like the variety was endless.

Variety in hard rock was about to skyrocket to new heights in the 2000s, not only in the amount of styles, but also in the amount of bands. By the mid-2000s, almost every household had access to the Internet. A person no longer was exposed to only a handful of bands that were played on the radio and the television. Websites like myspace.com and purevolume.com put thousands of bands at the fingertips of the Internet user. It wasn't even necessary for a band to be signed to a record label before developing a following of fans. Anyone with midlevel computer knowledge could record a song and put it on the Internet.

It also became much easier for the listener to acquire large amounts of music from a number of different bands. People could share files of songs over the Internet for free. If someone wanted to buy music, they could use juggernaut services like iTunes. The latest trend in music listening is using streaming services like Pandora or Spotify. With it being so easy for listeners to find new bands, many new subgenres of hard rock flourished, even without significant radio play or video rotation on television. Classic hard rock subgenres, like punk and heavy metal, could be found as influences throughout the onslaught of new bands. Punk could be seen in “post-hardcore” and “emo” bands like Senses Fail and Silverstein. Heavy metal could be seen in “new wave of American heavy metal” bands like Lamb of God and Killswitch Engage and in “metalcore” bands like Bring Me The Horizon and The Devil Wears Prada. With programs like iTunes and Spotify on almost every teenager's computer, phone, and iPod, it doesn't seem like the amount and variety of hard rock will slow anytime soon.

### **The Message of Rock**

Admittedly, the message of rock is different from musician to musician. Some musicians will attest to the fact that they have some sort of agenda. Other rock is made purely for entertainment's sake. Songs have been written about love, sex, God, Satan, war, witchcraft, dancing, driving cars, family, and just about anything else one could imagine. Throughout the history of rock, however, there are a number of themes and messages that keep appearing.

They both come down to the old adage that “rock is rebellion.” Sometimes the rebellion has a more “noble” spin: challenging societal norms to better society. Rock has called for action against the usual conventions. They didn’t want to take anything in life without questioning it. “[Rock] has provided an outlet for frustrations, a medium for voicing new and difficult ideas about society and the self. One of its primal functions has always been to provide a channel for expression outside the standardized and inhibited mores of the established society.”<sup>16</sup>

At other times, “rebellion” in rock is shown in a more base form, rebelling for the love of being reckless. An interview with musician Neil Young shows this side of rock:

“ ‘The only thing that rock & roll did *not* get from country and blues was a sense of consequences,’ the writer Bill Flanagan said to Neil Young in 1986. ‘In country and blues, if you raised hell on Saturday night, you were gonna feel real bad on Sunday morning when you dragged yourself to church. Or when you didn’t drag yourself to church.’ ‘That’s right,’ Young said. ‘Rock & roll is reckless abandon. Rock & roll is the *cause* of country and blues. Country and blues came first, but somehow rock & roll’s place in the course of events is dispersed.’ ”<sup>17</sup>

No matter what message of rock rebellion people subscribed to, one thing was for sure. People were affected by the message. They didn’t want to become the middle-class drones that they viewed their parents to be. Rebellion sells.

“The message of rock was hardly a secret; it was a rejection of middle-class America. Rock offered an escape route, an underground railroad through the middle of Middle America, from the death-dealing conventions of a muddled and increasingly bankrupt society. The high school rebellion of rock went to college. The rock pioneers proposed an alternative to the life-in-death of unchecked materialism. But the music was strong, the rhetoric hypnotic in its force, and thus it frightened many who heard the words but did not feel the life in the music which conveyed them. The young heard the clarion message of rock, however, and they understood intuitively the kind of rebellion—of youth against age, of life against entropy—that it signaled.”<sup>18</sup>

## **The Cultural Impact of Rock**

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<sup>16</sup> William J. Schafer, *Rock Music: Where it’s Been, What it Means, Where it’s Going*, (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1971), 52.

<sup>17</sup> Greil Marcus, *The History of Rock ‘n’ Roll in Ten Songs*, (London: Yale University Press, 2014), 23.

<sup>18</sup> Schafer, 57.

There is no question that music can affect people. “The last point I wish to make here is that music is very much related to the politics and social life of the culture. Music can affect people as profoundly as politics if not more so. Anyone who marched into battle amid martial music can tell you that, as can sweet-hearts whose romance was accompanied by their favorite song.”<sup>19</sup> The exact cultural impact made by rock music, however, is hard to define. It stood for many different things to many different people. To some, it was freedom and it was expression. It symbolized society moving in the right direction. Fans believed that bands were actually trying to better the world. They were idealistic rather than materialistic. To others, it symbolized everything that was wrong with American culture. Cultural historian Herbert London offers the idea that rock was, more often than not, a ruse to make people excited about their music. “The distinguishing mark of this revolution is that it was made by average people whose lyrics raised expectations of high standards and a ‘new level of consciousness,’ but whose personal behavior was by and large strikingly mundane and distinctly self-indulgent.”<sup>20</sup>

In the early years of rock music, many musicians spoke of some sort of cultural revolution that they stood for or promoted. What that revolution is, however, is largely unclear. It was clear rock musicians wanted to rebel; it just wasn’t always clear what they were rebelling against in society. “Many thought that rock music could be a tool for a real revolution in America. Jim Morrison said: ‘Erotic politicians, that’s what we are. We’re interested in anything about revolt, disorder, chaos and activity that appears to have no meaning.’”<sup>21</sup> Rock and cultural historians have tried to define what the revolution was exactly, but to mixed results. This is due in part to the fact that some bands did want to change things, while others had no agenda other than rebellion for the sake of rebellion.

“This cultural revolution is deliberately obscure. But at a minimum it includes unrepressed sensuality, a contempt for ordinary categories of rational thought and speech, rejection of organized work, support for the avant-garde in art, a search for personal fulfillment divorced from conventions, and a fascination with areas of thought stigmatized by prevailing social sentiments—e.g., pornography, drugs. In its most

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<sup>19</sup> Herbert I. London, *Closing the Circle: A Cultural History of the Rock Revolution*, (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1984), vii.

<sup>20</sup> London, 56.

<sup>21</sup> John Orman, *The Politics of Rock Music*, (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1984), 158.



debased forms, it is represented by those who oppose any discipline and who regard it as a badge of revolutionary commitment to flaunt their hedonism, their lack of loyalty to any institution, and their intellectual ignorance.”<sup>22</sup>

Whether or not rock music accomplished any sort of cultural revolution can be debated. One thing that is true, however, is that rock reflects the culture from which it comes. In the same way that a song can bring a memory to mind, certain styles of music can bring a former era to mind. Hearing the music can bring to mind things that the song is not actually dealing with at all.

“Rock music has reflected what was going on in society. Thus during times of political unrest, some rock music reflected that political unrest, but rock basically acts as a regime-maintaining institution in that it keeps people from serious political thought. If fans really thought about the political problems of the world—starvation, nuclear holocaust, inadequate government leaders, unemployment, or economic ills—then the political arena would be a very different place. Rock music is a very entertaining opiate.”<sup>23</sup>

## **II: The Church and Rock**

It was noted earlier how parents in America were worried about the music that their children were listening to each day. This wasn't something that took place completely outside of Christianity. Often, it was Christians who were the most vocal in voicing criticisms of rock music. With the explosion of rock music, Christians preached about rock music in church. They published a large number of books, pamphlets, and tracts. Videos were produced that warned listeners of the dangers. There were a number of things that Christians took issue with, including the explicit promotion of sex, references to drug use, symbols and lyrics about Satan or occultism, and the music itself. This is not to say that all songs were offensive or dangerous, but the fact is that a large number of them did promote content that was questionable at best and

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<sup>22</sup> London, 10.

<sup>23</sup> Orman, 175.

downright blasphemous at worst. Each danger will be addressed briefly in the following section.<sup>24</sup>

### **The Dangers of Rock Music Then**

The sexual lyrics being sung on the radio and on MTV in the 1970s and 1980s rightfully shocked Christians. No longer did musicians use subtle innuendoes. They made the lyrics of the 1950s look completely innocent. Instead, some hard rock musicians sang lyrics graphically describing sexual acts. Nothing was off limits. Popular songs sang about taboo topics like homosexuality, masturbation, and oral sex. When a band had a controversial song, it helped to increase their popularity. In rock, just as in most mediums in the world, sex sells.

Images used by bands featured sex as well. Videos would feature the so-called “video vixens,” scantily clad women who were the featured characters in music videos, regardless of whether or not the song was sexual in nature. Album covers and concert posters were enough to make people blush. What’s more is that rock stars practiced what they preached. Bands were notoriously promiscuous and proud of it. They bragged about the insanity of their sexual escapades on the road. For an example, read the following comment from Motley Crue member Nikki Sixx:

“People think we’re wild and crazy all the time. Well, they’re right. Motley Crue only knows one way of doing things, and that’s the sleaziest way possible. We never get tired. When we finish a show we pile as many girls as we can into our bus and then take off for the next town. After we finish partying with them, we pack them off on a plane home and pick up a new batch of female companions. We go through women like most people go through socks.”<sup>25</sup>

Drug use was prevalent in much the same way as sex in rock music. Although drugs and alcohol were commonly referred to in the lyrics, that was the least of it. Some rock taught the idea that drugs would bring your mind to a higher consciousness. Other rock taught that they would simply increase the level of fun. Rock concerts were often opportunities for people to get together and “party.” Bands made headlines by being arrested for possession of drugs.

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<sup>24</sup> For specific examples of the dangers present with each band read Krug’s *Rock—The Beat Goes On* or anything written by Dan and Steve Peters

<sup>25</sup> Krug, 54.

Musicians would get so high or drunk that they could barely perform on stage. It all added to the mystique of the rock star.

Many times the outcome of drug use was much more serious than a fine or a hangover. It is amazing to look at the amount of rock stars who have died prematurely due to alcohol or drugs. Even the most famous musicians, like Elvis Presley, fell prey to prolonged drug use. The young ages of rock stars when they died led to phenomena like the “27 club.” Members of this club all died at the same age, 27. More often than not, the deaths were due to alcohol or drug use. Members of the club include The Rolling Stone’s Brian Jones, Jimi Hendrix, Janis Joplin, The Door’s Jim Morrison, and Kurt Cobain.

Perhaps most offensive to Christians were the images and lyrics involving Satan or occultism. Satan and the occult were most often employed by heavy metal bands. It is not like these themes were only found in the underground. Just listen to major hits like AC/DC’s “Highway to Hell” or The Eagles’ “Hotel California.” People tend to be fascinated by things like occultism, Satanism, and witchcraft. Metal fed that interest. Many bands like Alice Cooper, Led Zeppelin, and Black Sabbath studied occultism and added its themes and practices into their lyrics. Later on, many of these musicians claimed that they never really believed in witchcraft or that they would never be involved with Satan or the occult. They just thought it was fascinating and cool. Whether or not the musicians themselves bought into the things they sang about makes little difference in the amount of danger for the listener, however.

More often than in the lyrics, Satanism and the occult were found on album covers. Metal bands have long used symbols like the inverted pentagram<sup>26</sup>. Sometimes the head of a goat<sup>27</sup> was included in the pentagram. Another popular trend was including the number “666” from Revelation in album artwork. The most appalling imagery was the mockery of symbols with religious connotations. The most common would be the image of the cross, flipped upside

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<sup>26</sup> The inverted pentagram appears on literature for various Satanic organizations, as well as occult literature.

<sup>27</sup> The head of a goat is often used as a symbol for Satan. It is a mockery of Jesus, the Lamb. It is also a reference to the separation of the sheep from the goats in the Bible.

down. Other symbols included the “lightning bolt” shaped “s,” which symbolized Satan falling from heaven like lightning. This “s” is thought to be present in the logos of bands like AC/DC and Kiss. Former Black Sabbath front man, Ozzy Osbourne, has gone as far as including dead doves and pictures of himself being crucified in his album artwork.

The sex, drugs, and occult themes present in heavy metal were a real problem. Christians were right to be concerned about those types of things showing up in mainstream music. Some Christians, however, became a bit more extreme. A large number of people held to the belief that rock music was in and of itself evil, regardless of content. “In the early 60’s, many well-meaning Christians, spearheaded by several pastors, began to popularize the teaching that certain rock and roll beats were demonic ‘jungle beats,’ which could in and of themselves summon demon spirits. The movement grew quickly and was eventually joined by a controversial modern-day prophet to America, David Wilkerson.”<sup>28</sup>

The theory that there was something evil about rock’s beat has been almost entirely discredited. In the 1980s, even the most anti-rock people agreed that the idea was foolish. Some people were afraid that the beat had its roots in pagan rituals. Others were worried that the beat would be sexually arousing for teenagers. Professor James Tiefel of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary agreed that the idea didn’t hold any weight:

“This essayist does not accept the theory that the beat of rock is a Satan-influenced inheritance of African tribal rites or that the infamous ‘backbeat’ of rock (the beat falling on the off-beats of the rhythm, e.g., syncopation) has inherent corrupting powers. Without offering much justification, I will say simply that I found no evidence that convinced me the theory was true; I found some evidence that black music picked up its beat after slavery arrived on our shores. If it is the backbeat which sinks teenagers into a moral morass, why don’t today’s teenagers react to the Rolling Stones in the same way they react to Motley Crue? Both groups employ the same backbeat and yet teenagers do little more than listen politely to such antiquated groups as the Stones.”<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Dan Peters and Steve Peters, *What the Devil’s Wrong with Rock Music?—Documentation 1*, (North St. Paul: Truth About Rock, 1985), 2.

<sup>29</sup> Tiefel, 4.

Another Christian author argued that the reason people were preaching against the beat of rock music was due to a completely different issue: racism. Parts of white America were made uncomfortable from all of the connections of rock music to traditionally “black” music like jazz and blues. When they heard about the theory that the beat of rock had connections to Africa, they jumped on the bandwagon.

“Much that has actually been written against rock music is actually disguised racial hatred: racism. The words used to describe it display this fact—‘jungle music,’ ‘black boogie,’ ‘demon beat’ and so on. There was a time when Whites discouraged rock ‘n roll shows for the simple fact that they drew both Black and White audiences. Concerned parents did not want their children mixing with other children of another race who were the same age... That rock and its ‘evil beat’ originated with the slaves of Africa is a racist notion which will not stand up. About all that can be said is this: the music which for many years has been associated with Blacks in America emerged out of the general soup of America’s mixing cultures where individual influences are infinite. Jazz, like rhythm and blues, ragtime and the rest which are so often the property of Blacks, were formed in the give-and-take of many cultural backgrounds (German, Czech, French, Irish, English and others) over so many years. Even the music of Africa did not originate spontaneously on its own. It was shaped by its contact with Europe, Asia and the Middle East.”<sup>30</sup>

Despite almost universal agreement that it is foolish to think a style of music can be evil in and of itself, the idea still exists. Holding to the theory is never done by people that have looked into the issue, but is rather from people who heard this idea when they were younger and bought into it. Christian rocker Dana Key offers a good reminder and sound argument, saying, “I believe that music (particularly instrumental music) is absolutely void of moral qualities for either good or evil. This is not to say that there is not good instrumental or bad instrumental music. Instrumental music can be good or bad, but that isn’t a theological issue—it’s an artistic one.”<sup>31</sup>

While Key makes a good point regarding the inherent qualities of music, it should be noted that people might still have questions regarding the music. This is due to the power of

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<sup>30</sup> Steve Lawhead, *Rock Reconsidered: A Christian Looks at Contemporary Music*, (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1981), 59.

<sup>31</sup> Dana Key and Steve Rabey, *Don’t Stop the Music*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1989), 69.

association. The style of music may bring sinful things to mind, even though there is nothing sinful about the music itself. The apostle Paul offers sound advice to stay away from things that might lead one to sin and to cling to things that are clearly God pleasing<sup>32</sup>. At the very least, one should be aware of the power of association and how it affects him or her individually.

### **The Radical Movement Against Rock Music**

The Christian pushback against rock music in the 1970s and 1980s was justified. Most people were going about it in a good way as well. The majority of the pushback against rock came in the form of books and articles written on the subject. Their purpose was to warn young Christians and their parents about the dangers of rock music that were discussed in the previous section of this paper. Sadly, however, these men weren't the ones receiving the attention. Instead there were a handful of men whose methods were more radical. Many of these men had fantastic stories of God speaking to them, sending them on a holy war against rock music. It would be hard to believe that the radical antics and wild stories of these men didn't drive some young people away from church.

One of the better-known men with a radical anti-rock stance was David Wilkerson. Wilkerson was a Christian evangelist who was known for his wild religious rants, many of which centered on rock music. "Wilkerson had heard rock music condemned from the pulpit, and he eventually grew to hate the style of music (his book, *Rock & Roll—the Devil's Heartbeat* was a product of his prejudice, listing 16 sins 'caused by rock music')."<sup>33</sup> He ended up writing entire books about how God hated rock music.

His preaching against rock wasn't what made Wilkerson most well-known, however. Wilkerson wrote books and preached about the visions he received from God. Since the 1970s, he has been predicting God's punishment of the world. His visions included worldwide calamities, economic depressions, and even a new drug that would make people go "sex crazy." His prophecies of destruction continued until 2011, when he died in a car crash. Wilkerson also

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<sup>32</sup> Romans 12:2, 9

<sup>33</sup> Peters and Peters, *What the Devil's Wrong with Rock Music?—Documentation 1*, 3.

claims that he received a vision from God concerning rock music. He wanted God to give him Biblical answers to his questions about rock music and dropped to his knees in prayer. Below is the response Wilkerson claims he received from God.

“Seven Steps Towards Balance in Music

1. The music offered to God must be solemn. (Psalm 92:1-8)
2. All music must be sung as if in the direct presence of the Lord. (Psalm 71:22, 23)
3. Loud music is encouraged by the Lord. (Psalm 33:3)
4. It is unscriptural to criticize another’s taste in music. (Romans 14:10-13)
5. There is nothing wrong with rightfully using that which has been served to idols. (Romans 14:14)
6. There is a risk in offending others by our music. (Romans 14:13, 15)
7. There is a better way—above all controversy. (1 Cor. 13:31)”<sup>34</sup>

Although they discredited Wilkerson’s authenticity in their books, brothers Dan, Jim, and Steve Peters followed Wilkerson as the next crusaders against rock music. The Peters brothers, by their own admission, grew up in a very strict household. While they were teenagers, they all fell in love with rock music. Because their household was so strict, however, they were forced to hide their albums under their beds and in their dresser drawers. These brothers, like Wilkerson, believed they were chosen by God to deal with rock music. Two of the brothers, Dan and Jim, went through traumatic near-death experiences that pushed them to devote their lives to the service of God. The Peters brothers wrote about their callings in one of their books.

“For Dan, a turnabout came during his freshman year at North Central Bible College. Although at a Bible College, Dan was seeking little involvement with ‘the Lord’s work.’ Then he took a step that quite literally caused him to fall into God’s plan for his life. Near midnight, the day before New Year’s Eve, 1969, he took an accidental step straight down an old elevator shaft. As he waited alone in dark, semi-consciousness for help to arrive, a scripture came back to him: ‘And we know that all things work together for the good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose’ (Rom. 8:28). *How can any good possibly come from this?* Dan wondered at the time. As it turned out, he had many long recovery hours to listen for an answer, and it wasn’t an easy one to accept. ‘Look what it took to get you to listen,’ Dan heard the Lord say. ‘I’m not interested in changing your situation. I want to change you through this situation.’ God made it clear to Dan (not vocally but in his heart) that he had a plan for Dan’s life—a life of leadership and ministry. Finally, Dan was rescued by friends and rushed to the nearest hospital where the doctors diagnosed a shattered heel bone, a broken wrist, and two hairline fractures of the vertebrae. Flat on his back, waiting to hear from the doctors whether he would fully recover, Dan knew there could be no more running away. He committed his whole life to God. Although Dan was not instantly healed, he knew he

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<sup>34</sup> Peters and Peters, *What the Devil’s Wrong with Rock Music?—Documentation 1*, 4.

had been visited by God. Within a month was he back to normal, at least physically. Spiritually, however, he would never be the same.”<sup>35</sup>

Jim Peters went through a similar experience. Jim came down with a bad staph infection and was bed-ridden for weeks. The doctors could find no way to cure him and couldn’t explain his symptoms. His skin became rock hard, and he had lost vision in both of his eyes. Here is their account of what happened next:

“Physically unable to read or write, Jim finally had the time and the desire to hear what God had to say. God spoke to him about life goals—something he hadn’t ever bothered to consider before. It was a step in the right direction, but God had a longer walk in mind. Jim’s fever continued to climb. Finally, Jim released his will to God’s design. With determination, he gave his life to God for whatever goal He had in mind. And God accepted. The fever broke and, day by day, Jim’s healing progressed. The sores dried, the scabs fell away. Although the doctors’ prognosis had been possible blindness and permanent scarring, Jim’s eyes returned to normal and his skin grew back in baby-like softness.”<sup>36</sup>

The Peters brothers knew that they were going to devote their lives to God, but they didn’t know how they were going to do it. Eventually, they were led to run the local youth group at the church. Everything took off when their pastor requested that they teach a lesson on rock music during one of their youth nights. The interest shown by the youth group turned one lesson into a series of lessons. One night while studying, they drew inspiration from Acts 19, where new Christians, who had practiced sorcery, burned their scrolls. The Peters brothers told their youth group members to invite their friends and they would all burn their rock albums together. The “burnings” turned out to be a bigger deal than the Peters brothers ever thought. They described one of their early burnings and the reaction it drew:

“With cheers, the young people began to heap their once-prized rock albums onto the fire, nearly choking it with sheer weight—about \$15,000 worth of music, up in smoke. Television cameramen combed the camp, reporters cornered the kids...Consistently the teens responded with maturity and certainty, not empty emotionalism; they were aligning their lifestyles with their Christian commitments, cleaning out their lives. Radical? Yes, it was radical—but wasn’t Jesus radical too? It was an issue they were to face over and over as news of the rock seminar dispersed.”<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Peters and Peters, *Why Knock Rock?*, 45.

<sup>36</sup> Peters and Peters, *Why Knock Rock?*, 46-47.

<sup>37</sup> Peters and Peters, *Why Knock Rock?*, 50.



The media attention created by the “burnings” brought a lot of opportunity to the Peters brothers. They were eventually able to have an entire ministry centered on teaching people about rock music. They started holding rock seminars across the country to large groups. They interviewed famous musicians like Kiss’s Gene Simmons on television. Dan and Steve Peters even published their own books based on the things they taught at their seminars. In all their rock seminars and books Dan and Steve judged music according to four criteria: “1) The lyrics...2) The lifestyles of the musicians...3) Intentions of the musicians...4) Album covers.”<sup>38</sup>

### **The Dangers of Rock Music Now?**

What are the dangers of rock music today? What should Christians be aware of in the 2010s? Has anything changed? Are there new dangers today that didn’t used to exist? Although not present on a lot of albums, all of the dangers of rock music still exist today. In fact, due to the ease of creating music in the digital age, bands can exist in underground scenes and still thrive. Some of these bands take sexual, satanic, and violent themes to heights (or depths) where bands in the 1970s and 1980s would not have dared to go. Even in mainstream hard rock however, there is one area that seems to get worse every year: cursing and profanity. Even the most offensive albums of the past had only a handful of profanities being used. Some single songs today, however, use the “f-word” more than 100 times. Perhaps the best way to answer the questions about the dangers of hard rock music today is to look at the content of some of today’s bands. This paper will give a brief examination and evaluation of three of the biggest hard rock releases of 2014: Linkin Park, Slipknot, and Foo Fighters.<sup>39</sup>

#### *The Hunting Party* by Linkin Park<sup>40</sup>

Linkin Park is a nu metal band from California.<sup>41</sup> Since the late 1990s the band has sold over 60,000,000 albums. In 2014, the music magazine *Kerrang* named Linkin Park the biggest

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<sup>38</sup> Peters and Peters, *What the Devil’s Wrong with Rock Music?—Documentation 1*, 68-69.

<sup>39</sup> Full lyrics to the three albums can be found in Appendices 1-3

<sup>40</sup> Linkin Park, *The Hunting Party*, Warner Bros. Records Inc., 2014.

<sup>41</sup> Wierderhorn and Turman, 446.

rock band in the world. *The Hunting Party* was released June 13, 2014 and landed at #3 on the Billboard 200 best-selling albums chart. The goal of the album was to bring heavy music back to the forefront of mainstream rock music. Multiple rock magazines have named *The Hunting Party* one of the best albums of 2014.

Perhaps the most objectionable content on the album comes in the form of profanity. Although the amount of profanities is much less than some hard rock albums (not even enough to earn it a parental advisory sticker), there are still a handful of “f-words” present. The mood of the album focuses on two themes: anger and hopelessness. Sometimes the band is angry about things that they should be angry about, like injustice and the casualties of war. Other times the anger seems violent and vengeful in nature, as seen in the song “A Line in the Sand” (“Another day, your truth will come. You’re gonna pay for what you’ve done. You’ll get what’s yours and face your fraud.”). Also present on the album is the familiar call for rebellion in rock music. The album would not be fitting for a young child. Overall, however, the dangers of listening to *The Hunting Party* are minimal.

#### .5: *The Gray Chapter* by Slipknot<sup>42</sup>

Slipknot is a metal band from Iowa.<sup>43</sup> They are widely regarded as one of the most innovative and critically acclaimed bands in metal today. They are also extremely popular. Their fans are known to be obsessive and are referred to by the band and themselves as “maggots.” Their newest album is called .5: *The Gray Chapter*. The album name is a reference to their former bass player, Paul Gray, who died in 2010. Dealing with the death of the band member is one of the biggest themes on the album. The album was released on October 17, 2014 to widespread critical acclaim and debuted at #1 on the Billboard 200 chart. Slipknot is best known for their shocking lyrics, littered with dozens of profanities, and even more famously for their shocking appearance. The band features nine members who dress up in horror style masks and jumpsuits in videos, interviews, and in concert.

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<sup>42</sup> Slipknot, .5: *The Gray Chapter*, Roadrunner Records, 2014.

<sup>43</sup> Wiederhorn and Turman, 447.

.5: *The Gray Chapter* is not a departure from the shocking nature of the band. Most people, Christian or otherwise, would find the content of the album highly offensive. The album is more or less 14 tracks of fury and graphic violence littered with a large number of profanities. The band talks about killing, drug use, and sexual violence. In addition, the album features a number of lyrics that are either Satanic or anti-Christian in nature. Lead singer Corey Taylor shows exactly where he plans to end up in songs like “Be Prepared for Hell” and claims that the devil is inside him on songs like “The Devil in I.” He also takes jabs at Christians with lyrics like “Can you stand on your faith with your feet on the Bible?” and “Perish the sacrament; swallow, but nothing’s forgiven.” It would be very difficult, if not impossible, to say that listening to Slipknot wouldn’t be dangerous. To list all the questionable parts of the album would be the same as printing the entirety of the lyrics. With relentless lyrics containing profanity, sexual content, murder, suicide, and Satan, this album should not be recommended to anyone.

#### *Sonic Highways* by Foo Fighters<sup>44</sup>

Foo Fighters are a hard rock band from Seattle that was formed by Dave Grohl, former drummer of the band Nirvana.<sup>45</sup> Grohl started the band after the suicide of Nirvana guitarist and singer, Kurt Cobain. Foo Fighters released their latest album, *Sonic Highways*, on November 10, 2014. The album was commercially successful, debuting at #2 on the Billboard 200 chart. *Sonic Highways* is a concept album built around an interesting idea. One of the goals of the album was to show the rock music heritage of different cities in America. Each of the eight songs on the album was recorded in, and inspired by, a musically influential city (New York City, Los Angeles, Washington D.C., Seattle, Austin, Chicago, Nashville, and New Orleans).

As far as lyrical content goes, there isn’t much questionable material to be found. There are no explicit references to sex or drug use. It is more of a straightforward hard rock album, sometimes somber and sometimes hopeful. There are a couple a lyrics in the album that might be questionable, but Grohl never makes it clear exactly what he is talking about. In one song,

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<sup>44</sup> Foo Fighters, *Sonic Highways*, RCA Records, 2014.

<sup>45</sup> Wiederhorn and Turman, 693.

Grohl sings, “I’m lost, deliver me. I crossed the river finally. God as my witness, yeah, it’s gonna heal my soul tonight,” but it is hard to tell what “it” is or what he is being healed from. On “The River,” Grohl sings, “I found the water, the devil’s water, and walked along its shore.”, but again it is unknown what he is referring to. Like Linkin Park’s album, *Sonic Highways* does contain a couple profanities. The recommendation for this album would be similar to Linkin Park’s: not for small children, but the overall dangers of the music are minimal.

### **III: Guiding Young People in Their Choice of Music**

The dangers of music can be dangerous for listeners of all ages, but it is probable that the influence of music can pose the biggest threat during the teenage years. It is during this age that young people begin to form their own identities. They are starting to spend more and more time away from their parents. Their biggest influence comes not from the home, but from their peers. The influence of peers on a young person should not be underestimated. In addition, teens are traditionally more rebellious than preteens or young people in their twenties. The combination of wanting to blaze one’s own trail with the constant quest for the acceptance of one’s peers leads to an interesting paradox. Young people often want to be different, as long as “different” is the same as their friends.

“You’ll notice the sources of a teenager’s rebellion as you observe the intellectual and volitional characteristics. Teenagers are bound and determined to do things themselves, to be different from their parents and other adults. This, I believe, is an essential art of the process that leads from childhood to adulthood. Teenagers perceive they are different if they are just the same as other teenagers, the same in dress, in language, in activity and in music. The more he is the same as his peers, the more he is different from adults. Sadly, the more he is different, the more upset his parents become!”<sup>46</sup>

Hard rock music (or music in general) plays a large role in the identity shaping of many young people. Often, parents “just don’t understand” the music that the younger generation is listening to. The same thing happened with their parents. The fact that parents aren’t into a particular style of music is alone enough to make the music more appealing to young people.

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<sup>46</sup> Tiefel, 6.

Tension between the musical tastes of the parent and the child is something that a young person craves. Sometimes it is hard rock music that can feed that craving. Gary Krug describes this function of music as a cycle that works to keep rock music something that is desired by young people.

“Follow the logic of what happens. 1) Children, especially teens, feel a need to rebel against their parents. 2) Most adults believe that drugs, free sex, the occult and Satan worship are wrong. 3) These opposing viewpoints require a means, a vehicle, to carry on the dispute. 4) Rock music provides just such a vehicle (as I have heard many an adult and rock musician say, ‘Rock is rebellion’). 5) Therefore, rock sells to teenagers who use it to rebel against their parents.”<sup>47</sup>

So how can someone guide a young Christian in their choice of secular music without it feeding the rebellion that they are craving? If a parent tells the child he can’t listen to the music, the child will probably want to listen to the music even more. If a parent takes the child’s music away from him, it will no doubt cause strife between the child and the parent. Taking an aggressive, offensive position in the issue will only cause more problems. Instead, guiding young people in their choice of music should be all about equipping them to be more discerning as young Christians. The conflict shouldn’t be between the child and the parent, but rather the child should be prepared to make decisions in the light of God’s will. Professor Tiefel offers the following reminder: “The task of the Christian adult is to allow the teenagers in their charge a wholesome degree of latitude without approving or allowing the breaking of God’s will and the subsequent damaging of his faith. Put in other terms: we may allow rebellion against us as long as it is not rebellion against God.”<sup>48</sup> Martin Luther dealt with a similar desire to guide youth when it came to music. Dan and Steve Peters talk about it in one of their books:

“Let’s look to the past and apply some of the principles viewed then as solutions to the music issue. In his preface to the *Wittenberg Gesangbuch* of 1524, Martin Luther voiced some thoughts that are applicable to our situation today: ‘I wish that young men might have something to rid them of their love ditties and wanton songs and might instead of these learn wholesome things and thus yield willingly to the good; also, because I am not of the opinion that all the arts shall be crushed to earth and perish through the Gospel, as some bigoted persons pretend, but would willingly see them all, and especially music, servants of Him who gave and created them.’ Five areas of action are suggested by Luther in this statement—actions which parents can readily use today to help free their

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<sup>47</sup> Krug, 14-15.

<sup>48</sup> Tiefel, 7.

young charges from the harmful effects of rock music. They are: (1) decide, (2) defer, (3) discern, (4) discard, and (5) displace.<sup>49</sup>

In this paper, seven suggestions are offered to help someone guide young Christians in their choice of secular music. These suggestions should help the young person be better equipped to discern how (or if) the music being listened to fits in with what God wants.

1. *Teach them what the Bible says about music.*
2. *Teach them about adiaphora.*
3. *Teach them about temptation.*
4. *Teach them about sanctification.*
5. *Don't be afraid to address the dangers of music.*
6. *Consider the Christian alternatives.*
7. *Encourage the involvement of parents.*

### **1. Teach them what the Bible says about music.**

In dealing with any issue, the Bible is a good place to start. Perhaps before getting the issues surrounding current music, one should teach young people what the Bible itself says about music. Music shows up in many places throughout the Bible and it doesn't take long before it is mentioned. Already in the early chapters of Genesis, music is mentioned. In documenting the descendants of Cain, Moses writes, "His brother's name was Jubal; he was the father of all who play stringed instruments and pipes" (Genesis 4:21). It is interesting to note that in all the laws of the Pentateuch, there is not much said about music. Extremely detailed descriptions are given for different aspects of the worship life of Israel: functions of priests, feasts and celebrations, and sacrifices. Music remains largely absent.

Music was used in many different situations in the Bible. The use of music in the Old Testament was different than it is today. Today there is a greater emphasis on entertainment value. Jeremy Begbie writes, "In any case, the idea of listening to music purely for its own sake—primarily for aesthetic interest or as some kind of object of contemplation would be unknown in this culture... Making music was much more about receiving and developing an inherited tradition of shared material than an individual putting his or her unique, creative stamp

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<sup>49</sup> Peters and Peters, *Why Knock Rock?*, 232.

on the world.”<sup>50</sup> Begbie’s quote is a little strong. There are a couple of places in the Bible where the music could be seen as secular. For example, Lamech bragged to his wives,

“Adah and Zillah, listen to me;  
wives of Lamech, hear my words.  
I have killed a man for wounding me,  
a young man for injuring me.  
If Cain is avenged seven times,  
then Lamech seventy-seven times” (Genesis 4:23-24).

Another example could be the chorus of the people of Israel, “Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands” (1 Samuel 18:7). It was used in the royal court, at coronation ceremonies, at war, and even to soothe King Saul. More often than not, however, music was used in service to and in celebration of God. The greatest use of music is to praise God. For example, take note of the scene at the arrival of the ark, where music is used to celebrate the joyous occasion.

“David again brought together all the able young men of Israel—thirty thousand. He and all his men went to Baalah in Judah to bring up from there the ark of God, which is called by the Name, the name of the LORD Almighty, who is enthroned between the cherubim on the ark. They set the ark of God on a new cart and brought it from the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill. Uzzah and Ahio, sons of Abinadab, were guiding the new cart with the ark of God on it, and Ahio was walking in front of it. David and all Israel were celebrating with all their might before the LORD, with castanets, harps, lyres, timbrels, sistrums and cymbals” (2 Samuel 6:1-5).

The greatest example of music in the Bible is the book of Psalms. The book of Psalms was like an Old Testament hymnal. It contained songs that praised God, confessed sins, and taught the people of Israel. “The Psalms provide a means by which believers can express their heartfelt feelings toward God. Psalm 150, the last and one of the most beautiful psalms, puts into proper perspective the purpose of this special book.”<sup>51</sup>

Music was used in the New Testament to praise God as well. Like the Old Testament, it doesn’t take long before music makes an appearance. As one reads the Christmas story in the first two chapters of Luke, four famous songs are sung to praise God. Upon learning she will

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<sup>50</sup> Begbie, 60.

<sup>51</sup> Krug, 2-3.

bear a child, Mary sings a song of praise and gratefulness (Luke 1:46-55). When the father of John the Baptist regains the ability to speak, he prophesies by song (Luke 1:68-79). A host of angels sang praise to God when they announced the birth of the Savior (Luke 2:14). Finally, upon seeing the Savior with his own eyes, Simeon sings a song of thankfulness (Luke 2:29-32).

While music was used for many good purposes in the Bible, it should be noted that music was also being misused. Music is a gift from God, but it can be easily abused and used for man's purposes contrary to God's will. The familiar story tells of King Nebuchadnezzar building an idol of God. While people worshiped this false god, music was played on instruments—many of the same instruments that were used to honor God in the story quoted earlier with the ark of God.

“Then the herald loudly proclaimed, ‘Nations and peoples of every language, this is what you are commanded to do: As soon as you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipe and all kinds of music, you must fall down and worship the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. Whoever does not fall down and worship will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace.’ Therefore, as soon as they heard the sounds of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp and all kinds of music, all the nations and peoples of every language fell down and worshiped the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up” (Daniel 3:4-7).

The biggest takeaway from what the Bible says concerning music is that it can be used rightly or incorrectly. When used rightly, it can glorify God. When used incorrectly, it can be used to glorify sinful situations. Gary Krug offers the following summary to music in the Bible: “Colossians 3:16 offers a fitting conclusion to this brief look at Scriptural music. ‘Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.’ Music teaches. Music admonishes. Music expresses gratitude to God. Music was made to praise the Lord.”<sup>52</sup>

## **2. Teach them about adiaphora.**

The better someone knows the Bible, the more familiar he will be with God's will. The Bible, however, is silent on a number of subjects. Sometimes the Bible doesn't directly say what people should do or what we shouldn't do. For example, the Bible doesn't say, “Thou shall not listen to hard rock music” or “This is the music that is permissible to listen to.” These

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<sup>52</sup> Krug, 6.



unmentioned items are called “adiaphora.” The apostle Paul reminds us of the need to correctly deal with adiaphora, saying, “ ‘I have the right to do anything,’ you say—but not everything is beneficial. ‘I have the right to do anything’—but not everything is constructive. No one should seek their own good, but the good of others” (1 Corinthians 10:23). Choice in music would fall in the category of adiaphora, and more specifically, moral adiaphora. This is not to say that it is open season on anything not mentioned in the Bible. That would be far from the truth. Instead, one needs to follow principles set forth in scripture. William Fischer gives this summary on dealing with matters of adiaphora:

“To summarize, the following scriptural principles in matters of adiaphora should be kept in mind: 1. We should forego our Christian liberty when it may offend the weak Christian, a person who has a doubting or erring conscience. 2. We should not exercise our Christian liberty when it threatens to enslave us. 3. We should exercise our Christian freedom when someone insists something is a sin when it is not. 4. Christian love is the guiding principle in our relationships with others. Keeping these blessed truths in mind, we will be exercising our Christian freedom the way God intended it to be used.”<sup>53</sup>

There are situations where adiaphora become sin. Adiaphora become sin when they cause a person to sin against his own conscience. In one’s own conscience he must be absolutely free. The apostle Paul teaches a valuable lesson concerning this aspect of adiaphora as well. He says that if something seems sinful in your mind, then it is, in fact, sinful. If someone feels guilty about listening to a certain type of music, it is possible that they are actually sinning against their conscience.

“One person considers one day more sacred than another; another considers every day alike. Each of them should be fully convinced in their own mind. Whoever regards one day as special does so to the Lord. Whoever eats meat does so to the Lord, for they give thanks to God; and whoever abstains does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God...I am convinced, being fully persuaded in the Lord Jesus, that nothing is unclean in itself. But if anyone regards something as unclean, then for that person it is unclean...So whatever you believe about these things keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the one who does not condemn himself by what he approves. But whoever has doubts is condemned if they eat, because their eating is not from faith; and everything that does not come from faith is sin” (Romans 14:5,6,14,22,23).

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<sup>53</sup> William E. Fischer, *Christian Freedom—Christ Sets Us Free*, (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1996), 123.

Adiaphora can also become sinful when it causes others to sin. “Be careful, however, that the exercise of your rights does not become a stumbling block to the weak” (1 Corinthians 8:9). The Bible uses terms like “stumble” or “stumbling block” when talking about things that can cause others to have their faith weakened, or even worse, to fall from faith. How sad it would be if a young person’s choice in music were weakening the faith of one of his friends! Jesus talks about how seriously he condemns people who are creating stumbling blocks for the people around them. Jesus says, “If anyone causes one of these little ones—those who believe in me—to stumble, it would be better for them to have a large millstone hung around their neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea. Woe to the world because of the things that cause people to stumble! Such things must come, but woe to the person through whom they come.” (Matthew 18:6,7)

Paul dealt with an issue in the Corinthian church where people’s actions were causing other people to sin. The issue centered on eating meat that had been used in sacrifices to local idols. Paul makes it clear that eating this meat was not in and of itself sinful. However, for the recent Corinthian converts, the association between the meat and the idols was too much for their consciences. Paul warned the other Christians that if their actions were causing offense, they should just refrain from the action altogether. Paul writes, “If an unbeliever invites you to a meal and you want to go, eat whatever is put before you without raising questions of conscience. But if someone says to you, ‘This has been offered in sacrifice,’ then do not eat it, both for the sake of the one who told you and for the sake of conscience...Do not cause anyone to stumble” (1 Corinthians 10:27, 28, 32).

Paul also dealt with a similar issue in a similar fashion in the Roman church. It seems there were two major groups in the Roman church, Jews and Gentiles. Although the laws had been abolished by Christ, it was hard for some of the Jews to give up their former ways. Paul again suggests that, if an action is distressing another person or causing them to stumble, it would be best to avoid the activity. That is the loving thing to do.

“If your brother or sister is distressed because of what you eat, you are no longer acting in love. Do not by your eating or drinking destroy someone for whom Christ died...Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification. Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All food is clean, but it is wrong for a

person to eat anything that causes someone else to stumble. It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother or sister to fall” (Romans 14:15,19,20,21).

One more thing to keep in mind is that one must show respect for other Christians who are exercising their freedom. Paul writes, “Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in the way of a brother or sister” (Romans 14:13). In matters of adiaphora, it can be very difficult to resist judging another person. This is true for people on both sides of the situation. One may look down on another for not doing something, while the other looks down on the first for doing something. Instead, everyone should be treated with and evaluated with love. Again, Paul applies this principle to his situation.

“The ones who eats everything must not treat with contempt the one who does not, and the one who does not eat everything must not judge the one who does, for God has accepted them. Who are you to judge someone else’s servant? To their own master, servants stand or fall. And they will stand, for the Lord is able to make them stand...You, then, why do you judge your brother or sister? Or why do you treat them with contempt? For we will all stand before God’s judgment seat” (Romans 14: 3,4,10).

### **3. Teach them about temptation.**

A potential danger of music is that it can easily be used to tempt people. “Temptation is when the devil, the world, or the sinful nature try to lure us into sin.”<sup>54</sup> The content of the music that someone listens to can be the source of temptation. The devil can work through any number of things to tempt, and music is certainly not exempt from that list. Remember: “Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings” (1 Peter 5:8-9).

The devil is the master of temptation. While a person may think they know the ways they are most easily tempted, the devil knows better. He knows a person’s weaknesses better than they do, and he likes to afflict us during optimum times of weakness. His purpose is simple: to lead people away from God and his grace. Often he will employ the things of this world to

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<sup>54</sup> Lyle L. Luchterhand, *Man—From Glory to Ashes and Back*, (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1998), 103

accomplish his purpose. The apostle John warns people concerning the temptations of the world, “Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever” (1 John 2:15-17).

The devil has another powerful enemy on his side. It makes all of his work much easier. All people, including Christians, have a sinful nature. This sinful nature does its best to drag people into sin. James warns of the dangerous evil desires in people, “No one should say, ‘God is tempting me.’ For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death” (James 1:13-15).

On their own, people can do nothing to fight against the ways the devil tempts them. A person, on his own, can’t resist the temptations of the world or his sinful nature either. But Jesus broke the power of the devil. The devil is subservient to him. When a person has God on his side, he has everything that he needs to be capable of fleeing temptation brought on by the devil. “Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up” (James 4:7). Christians have the ability to join God’s side and resist temptation because Jesus was able to resist temptation. In his greatest act, Jesus offered himself as a sacrifice to break people free from the bonds of sin, death, and the devil.

“Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by the fear of death. For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham’s descendants. For this reason he had to be made like them, fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted” (Hebrews 2:14-18).

If young people are being tempted by music, remind them of all the ways God gives them help to resist the temptation. If someone is being tempted, they can always go to God in prayer. “ ‘Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak’ (Matthew 26:41). God is faithful and answers the prayers of believers. God makes promises for those who stand firm under temptation and trials. James writes, “Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him” (James 1:12). The help offered from God doesn’t end with prayer and promises, however. Paul says that believer can and should put on the full armor of God to resist the devil’s schemes.

“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Ephesians 6:10-17).

#### **4. Teach them about sanctification.**

Making God-pleasing choices regarding music is also a part of a young person’s life of sanctification. In the narrower sense, sanctification denotes a believer’s new life, both of the heart and of the conduct, that was begun in regeneration.<sup>55</sup> In the narrow sense, sanctification could also be simplified to mean “Christian living.” Living a life of sanctification means purifying oneself from those things that threaten to contaminate. “Therefore, since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God” (2 Corinthians 7:1).

Sanctification is not produced by the power of the Christian himself. God is the one who gives the competence to live a life of sanctification. “Such confidence we have through Christ before God. Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our

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<sup>55</sup> Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Dogmatics Notes, 389.

competence comes from God” (2 Corinthians 3:4-5). However, a Christian may and must cooperate in his own sanctification. “Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose” (Philippians 2:12-13). Sanctification is necessary because making decisions according to God’s will is what Christians were created to do. Paul writes, “For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do” (Ephesians 2:10).

The process of sanctification will not be easy for any Christian. Rather, it will be a constant struggle. Every Christian has in himself a dual nature. Part of that dual nature is the new self. The new self strives to act according to God’s will and to live a God-pleasing life. From the time of baptism, the new self is striving for righteousness. Paul says of the function of the new self, “You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness” (Ephesians 4:24). Although Christians have this new self, the old self, the other nature of a Christian, remains. No matter how much a Christian strives to do what is right, the old self will want to do what is wrong. The Bible describes the conflict, “As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing” (Romans 7:17-19).

The new self and the old self are in constant war and battle within Christians. The Christian has two goals in this war. One goal is to put the sinful flesh to death. “Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry” (Colossians 3:5). For some young people, putting the old self to death might involve refraining from certain music. At the same time, the other goal is to exercise the new self. “Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness” (Romans 6:13). If a young

person is struggling to put sin aside, remind him that Christ has given us the upper hand in this battle of the dual nature. The Christian's old self was crucified with Jesus and Christians are made slaves to righteousness, instead of slaves to sin.

“What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?...For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin...In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus...For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace...You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness...But now you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life” (Romans 6:1,2,6,11,14,18,22).

### **5. Don't be afraid to address the dangers of music.**

The dangers that are present in music are some of the most uncomfortable topics to address with one's children or with the young people with which one is talking. For example, not many people look forward to having the “sex talk” with their children. The easiest way to go about the situation would be to say that all hard rock, or all secular music, is wrong. It is highly doubtful that a statement like that would achieve the desired result. “If an unaware pastor, teacher or parents takes the fire-and-brimstone, all-rock-is-wrong approach, very likely the teen will tune him out. He may feel that no one really cares.”<sup>56</sup> In addition, a statement like that is actually false and could lead to the young person holding a different dangerous belief that everything is wrong, when in actuality, it isn't.

“In the same way, hysterical, uninformed claims about rock music will cause valid criticism to be disregarded. Don't say, ‘All rock music is evil,’ when it would be closer to the truth to say, ‘Some rock music is evil.’ Don't say, ‘Rock music causes suicide,’ when you should say, ‘Rock music may have been an influence in some suicides.’ By going overboard with your criticisms, you may cause the good things you're saying to be ignored.”<sup>57</sup>

Instead, use music as an opportunity to teach young people. Make them aware of the dangers in the music to which they are listening. “The evil attitudes which Jesus lists in Mark 7 (sexual immorality, greed, lewdness, arrogance, and so on) reads like an advertisement for most

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<sup>56</sup> Krug, 101.

<sup>57</sup> Key and Rabey, 45.

secular rock groups! So we have to discriminate, discern, communicate, and beware.”<sup>58</sup> If the music they are listening to is sexually explicit, take the opportunity to teach them about God-pleasing sex. If the band promotes violence and hatred in its lyrics, teach young people what God says about love. If the songs contain depictions of witchcraft or occultism, show young people the places in the Bible where God warns us against such things. Instead of running from the music, use it as a tool to compare the views of the world with what the Bible says.

Directly addressing the dangers of music could be the theme for an upcoming series during youth group. Teach young people in a loving manner and show them the care and love behind the concerns and actions. Allow the youth group members to bring up dangers they know of in music and let them think of comparisons between what is taught in the music and what they know from the Bible. Edward McNulty wrote a book on dealing with controversial topics with youth groups. The topics in the book were phrased as questions. One of the topics in the book was “Can a Christian listen to rock music?” Below is an approach he suggests for handling this topic.

“As time permits, listen to songs brought by group members. Let the person who brought each song introduce it by name and artist and tell why it’s a favorite. Remind the group again that no one will put down the choice of another. After each song ask: ‘What is the song about? Is this a song that just celebrates the goodness of being alive or does it have another message? Does it reflect anything objectionable from our earlier discussions?’ ...By approaching rock music objectively and showing that you can learn from your young people, they may open up in revealing ways. When teenagers find they can trust you to listen to them, they will begin to listen in return. You can help your young people apply the insights of their faith to a pastime that fills many hours of their weekly schedule.”<sup>59</sup>

## **6. Consider the Christian alternatives.**

Another helpful suggestion is to be aware of the Christian alternatives that are available. Christian metal, in particular, has a lot of popular options. Christian metal existed in the 1980s with bands like Stryper and Petra. Since the beginning of the 2000s, Christian metal has seen a large resurgence. Christian metal is very different from Christian Contemporary music.

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<sup>58</sup> Krug, 100.

<sup>59</sup> Edward N. McNulty, *Controversial Topics for Youth Groups* (Loveland: Group Books, 1988), 346.



Christian Contemporary, for the most part, exists in its own world. Their music is sold in Christian bookstores and played on their own radio stations. Christian metal bands, on the other hand, exist in the world of secular music. They tour with the secular bands of the metal scene. Their CDs are available at Best Buy. They have achieved critical and popular acclaim from the music industry and their metal peers. In 2006, metal and hard rock magazine *Revolver* named Christian metal the “phenomenon of the year.” The cover featured the singers from the Christian metal groups Underoath, As I Lay Dying, Norma Jean, and Demon Hunter. The four bands were dubbed “The Holy Alliance” (no doubt a reference to the commonly referred to “Unholy Alliance” of Metallica, Slayer, Megadeth, and Anthrax).

Christian metal has the ability to reach people through a medium that they already may enjoy in a secular context. The music does not need to be viewed as “worldly,” just because of the style of music it is. It should be noted, however, that these bands do not have the same type of lyrics as praise bands. They don’t aim to write songs that will make them a Christian band. Instead, they aim to be a metal band that happens to be made up of Christians. The Christian themes come out because that’s who they are.

“Christian musicians began arguing for better cooperation with the mainstream music industry and secular music as a whole. These integrational bands, while not explicitly evangelical rhetorically or behaviorally, give listeners all the sound and style of today’s most popular rock and roll but offer symbols, lyrics, and lifestyles that remain consistent with Christian values: a more positive, wholesome alternative to much of today’s secular music. Such cross-over artists typically see themselves as entertainers who happen to be coming from a Christian perspective.”<sup>60</sup>

One of the biggest bands in Christian metal today is The Devil Wears Prada. A large majority of the band’s lyrics have to do with materialism or idolatry. Although they do have some lyrics that directly mention Jesus or God, the majority are simply statements of the band’s beliefs on certain topics. Lyricist Mike Hranica wrote a memoir detailing the meaning behind the band’s lyrics on their album *Dead Throne*.

“So many battles with idolatry are based on our want for security and comfort. The things we want in our lives, the things that we often allow to take precedent over more important matters, are very much fueled by our human need for security and comfort.

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<sup>60</sup> Brian Schill, "The impossibility of negation: a theoretical defense of "cross-over" Christian rock", *Journal Of Religion And Popular Culture* 16, (June 1, 2007).

We want answers and we want certainties to console us into being safe and content. The reiterated idea through *Dead Throne* is that there is only one certainty and that there is only one thing we should idolize. Everything else will pass. Relationships will pass, money will pass, jobs will pass, et cetera.”<sup>61</sup>

There has been some pushback to Christians joining the secular hard rock scene. Some feel that it is against rock’s very nature to be tied to a religion. For the most part, however, these bands have been largely accepted, invited to play on national hard rock tours like Warped Tour and Ozzfest. In a strange turn, some actually viewed the religious views of the band as something cool and countercultural. In an article about Christian punk bands, Ibrahim Abraham writes,

“Punk is abidingly anti-religious as parts of its tradition of radical cultural opposition to mainstream society. In questioning whether religious punk continues punk’s critical edge, part of the problem is in defining precisely what mainstream society is. Secular punks would see religion, especially Christianity, as an integral part of it. However, if the subcultural norm is to be anti-religious, then is it not thoroughly punk to reject that norm? Bredan Ebel, owner of Tooth & Nail Records argues that ‘punk rock is...a platform for artists with an against the grain sentiment...If Christianity isn’t against-the-grain in a music business entirely steeped in ideals contrary to Christianity, I don’t know what is.’”<sup>62</sup>

## **7. Encourage the involvement of parents.**

The final suggestion offered in this paper is to encourage the involvement of parents. Parents should be aware of the music that their children like. They should know if there are dangers present in the music. Even rock musicians recognize the fact that parents should be involved with their children’s music. During the PMRC hearing in front of Congress in 1985, Twisted Sister vocalist Dee Snider famously said, “As a parent myself and as a rock fan, I know that when I see an album with a severed goat’s head in the middle of a pentagram between a woman’s legs, that is not the kind of album I want my son to be listening to.”<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Hranica, 28.

<sup>62</sup> Ibrahim Abraham, "Punk pulpit: religion, punk rock, and counter (sub)cultures", *Council Of Societies For The Study Of Religion Bulletin* 37, no. 1 (February 1, 2008), 5.

<sup>63</sup> Key and Rabey, 45.

A parent might be worried that they are “too out of touch” with today’s music to know whether it is dangerous or not. One of the easiest ways to identify a CD is by the Parental Advisory sticker. This was the sticker that was recommended by the Recording Industry Association of America. The sticker, which is more often actually printed on the CD artwork, alerts the buyer of potentially inappropriate content. The contents evaluated are the lyrics concerning violence, sex, drugs, or profanity. However, there are many drawbacks to judging young people’s music by the Parental Advisory sticker. For one thing, it is only a *recommendation* that the CD be marked. Some record labels choose to forego the warning and put out their music without it. Secondly, the warning is not always consistent. Some CDs contain only one profanity and are labeled, while others contain a large amount of objectionable material and slip through without a warning label. This is comparable to the inconsistencies of the movie rating system. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, the warning label often doesn’t exist because most people no longer buy hard copies of music. The majority of music today is downloaded, streamed, or purchased through services like iTunes.

Fortunately, the Internet has put everything at the fingertips of parents. One can find the lyrics to virtually every song in existence by searching “[the song title] lyrics” on Google. The most popular lyrics websites are [azlyrics.com](http://azlyrics.com) and [metrolyrics.com](http://metrolyrics.com). These sites will have the lyrics to almost all notable bands. If the band is more underground or virtually unknown, their lyrics can often be found on specialized sites like [darklyrics.com](http://darklyrics.com) (metal lyrics) or [plyrics.com](http://plyrics.com) (punk lyrics). There are also a number of websites that offer parental reviews of albums or songs so that a parent doesn’t have to trudge through pages of lyrics. One of the best is [pluggedin.com](http://pluggedin.com), a website run by Focus On The Family. They will offer background information on the group, good content found in the lyrics, and inappropriate content found in the lyrics. The drawback to sites like these is that only a handful of albums are posted.

It is important for parents to realize that as their children enter adolescence they will begin to assert their independence. It is a necessary and natural step in the process of a child turning into an adult. Instead of worrying, a parent should seize the opportunity to dialogue with their children regarding the important issues in their lives. The situation does not need to be a conflict of wills between the parent and the child. By starting early in the life of a child, a parent

can lay a foundation that will remain with the child. Give the child the opportunity to make his own choices, all of which can be pleasing to the parent. The idea is that eventually the child will be able to make his own decisions without your direct guidance. The teenage years are a wonderful opportunity for a parent to guide the child's transition into adulthood.

## **Conclusion**

It is the hope of this author that this paper might be beneficial in some way to somebody. This paper has offered a number of suggestions to guide young Christians in their choice of secular music. By looking at the history of rock music, one can see the dangers found in music in the past. One can also learn from how the church has dealt with music in the past. The dangers of secular music still exist and in some cases may be even worse than they were 30 years ago. Young people are especially susceptible to the dangers in the music. It has been shown that the best way to guide young people is to equip them to look at their musical choices through the lens of God's Word. Knowing what God says about music, temptation, and sanctification will give young people the chance to compare what the songs say to what God says.

The work done in this paper could very easily be expanded. There are surely other ways to guide young Christians when it comes to music. For example, someone could offer suggestions of ways to encourage and channel a young Christian's love for music through different channels. However, only a few suggestions have been mentioned here. Also, due to the limits of this paper, other genres were completely overlooked. Many other types of rock, as well as rap, pop, or country could be analyzed.

It would also be interesting to see if somebody would be able to put together a youth group series on secular music. A small suggestion was given in this paper, but it could be fleshed out in a number of different ways.

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## APPENDIX 1

### Lyrics to *The Hunting Party* by Linkin Park

#### Keys To The Kingdom

No control! No surprise!  
Tossed the keys to the kingdom down that hole in my eye  
I'm my own casualty! I f--- up everything I see, fighting in futility!

It's our Final War  
Tell me what's worth fighting for  
When we know there's nothing more  
Take the hand or fist  
Just to sell ourselves for this  
The path we least resist

Uh, I give you what you came for  
This is not the same though  
Got a different method  
But I still can bring the pain so  
Not all give the same flow  
I got daddy's saying low  
I ain't shock and get you  
Never really in my range, though  
Somehow they ain't grow  
Half fried bango  
All primetime  
Imma let the bass bang low  
All you f----- lames go  
Aiming at my name though  
Careful what you shoot because you might hit what you aim for

#### All For Nothing

So whatcha waiting for?  
Anticipating more  
Why you debate what it can take to instigate a war?  
Yeah I've been hating on the time I wasn't hated for  
There's nothing they can f----- say they didn't say before  
But you could never see it, your battle's not mine  
Wanna skate and play it safe but this is take a shot time  
You're waiting for a purpose, I already got mine  
While you tell me step to it like 1, 2, 3, 4!

And if I do what you demand.  
You say  
You'll let me understand.  
You say  
You're gonna hold me to your word  
And if I sell myself away.  
You say  
Ill have no debt to pay.  
You say  
I'm gonna get what I deserve



Woah

Your word  
Obeyed  
My debt  
Repaid  
Our trust  
Betrayed  
All for nothing  
All for nothing

Came back, there's no other way to say it  
So let me break this f----- down for ya  
I really don't know ya  
You're talk, but let me show you where to put your paranoia  
You're joking I don't have a half a sucker bone to throw yah  
I'm disgusted wonder what's gonna make you tuck your tail below ya  
And no I'm not your soldier, I'm not taking any orders  
I'm a five star general infantry controller, need a lesson, let me show you.  
Have you checking your composure while I make you step to it like 1, 2, 3, 4!

### **Guilty All The Same**

Tell us all again  
What you think we should be  
What the answers are  
What it is we can't see  
Tell us all again  
How to do what you say  
How to fall in line  
How there's no other way  
But oh, we all know

You're guilty all the same  
Too sick to be ashamed  
You want to point your finger  
But there's no one else to blame

You're guilty all the same

Show us all again  
That our hands are unclean  
That we're unprepared  
That you have what we need  
Show us all again  
'Cause we cannot be saved  
'Cause the end is near  
Now there's no other way  
And oh, you will know

Yeah, you already know what it is  
Can y'all explain what kind of land is this when a man has plans of being rich  
But the bosses plans is wealthy?  
Dirty money scheme, a clean split is nonsense  
It's insane

Even corporate hands is filthy  
They talk team and take the paper route  
All they think about is bank accounts, assets and realty  
At anybody's expense,  
No shame with a clear conscience  
No regrets and guilt free,  
They claim that ain't the way that they built me  
The smoke screen before the flame  
Knowing as soon as the dough or the deal peak  
They say it's time for things to change  
Re-arrange like good product re-built cheap  
Anything if it's more to gain  
Drained, manipulated like artists, it's real deep  
Until no more remains, but I'm still me  
Like authentic hip-hop and rock,  
'Til pop and radio and record companies killed me  
Try to force me to stray and obey  
And got the gall to say how real can real be  
You feel me, we'll see that green could be to blame  
Or greedy for the fame,  
TV or a name  
The media, the game,  
To me you're all the same  
You're guilty

## **War**

One, two, one, two, thank you!

There's no peace  
Only war  
Victory decides who's wrong or right  
It will not cease  
Only grow  
You better be prepared to fight!

And it will not apologize  
For laying down your life

War

There's no pain  
It will spare  
Fear has become your only right  
And once you're lost  
In your despair  
Forever black, eternal night

And it will not apologize  
For laying down your life

War  
Destroy you  
War  
Destroy you

It needs no side to justify  
Laying down your life

War  
Destroyer

War

### **Wastelands**

This is war with no weapons,  
Marching with no stepping,  
Murder with no killing,  
Illing every direction.  
First, no sequel,  
do the math, No equal  
John with no Yoko  
More power, less people  
And no I'm not afraid of that  
Print in your paperback  
Every rap is made in fact  
To act as a delayed attack  
Every phrase a razor blade  
That's saved until they play it back  
To slay and leave 'em laying on the pavement  
Bang  
Fade to black

In the wastelands of today,  
When there's nothing left to lose,  
And and there's nothing more to take,  
But you force yourself to choose,  
In the wastelands of today,  
When tomorrow disappears  
When the future slips away,  
And your hope turns into fear,  
In the wastelands of today

Roll credits, to get it,  
The show's done,  
They're talking for just talking,  
But meaning they got none,  
None of 'em come proper,  
They talk like a shotgun,  
But how many got bred with integrity,  
Not one  
So no, I'm not afraid to see these suckers hold a blade to me,  
Ain't a way to shake the ground I built before you came to be,  
Take it how you take it, I'm the opposite of vacancy,  
And this is not negotiation, y'all can hate and  
And wait and see...

### **Until It's Gone**

A fire needs a space to burn  
A breath to build a glow  
I've heard it said a thousand times  
But now I know

That you don't know what you've got  
Oh you don't know what you've got  
No you don't know what you've got  
Until it's gone  
Until it's gone  
Until it's gone

I thought I kept you safe and sound  
I thought I made you strong  
But something made me realize  
That I was wrong

'Cause finding what you got sometimes  
Means finding it alone  
And I can finally see your light  
When I let go

'Cause you don't know what you've got  
Oh you don't know what you've got  
No you don't know what you've got  
It's your battle to be fought  
No you don't know what you've got  
'Til it's gone  
'Til it's gone  
'Til it's gone

## **Rebellion**

I've seen the blood  
I've seen the broken  
The lost and the sights unseen  
I want a flood  
I want an ocean  
To wash my confusion clean

I can't resolve this empty story  
I can't repair the damage done

We are the fortunate ones  
Who've never faced oppression's gun  
We are the fortunate ones  
Imitations of rebellion

We act it out  
We wear the colors  
Confined by the things we own  
We're not without  
We're like each other  
Pretending we're here alone

And far away, they burn their buildings  
Right in the face of the damage done

Rebellion, rebellion  
We lost before the start  
Rebellion, rebellion  
One by one we fall apart

### **Mark The Graves**

There's a fragile game we play  
With the ghosts of yesterday  
If we can't let go, we'll never say goodbye

No trace of what remains  
No stones to mark the graves  
Only memories we thought we could deny

There was so much more to lose  
Than the pain I put you through  
In my carelessness I left you in the dark

And the blood may wash away  
But the scars will never fade  
At least I know somehow I made a mark

In the dark  
In the light  
Nothing left  
Nothing right

### **Final Masquerade**

Tearing me apart with words you wouldn't say,  
And suddenly tomorrow's a moment washed away.  
'Cause I don't have a reason, and you don't have the time,  
But we both keep on waiting for something we won't find.

The light on the horizon was brighter yesterday,  
With shadows floating over, the scars begin to fade.  
We said it was forever but then it slipped away,  
Standing at the end of the final masquerade.

The final masquerade!

All I ever wanted, the secrets that you keep,  
All you've ever wanted, the truth I couldn't speak.  
'Cause I can't see forgiveness, and you can't see the crime,  
And we both keep on waiting for what we left behind.

### **A Line In The Sand**

Today, we stood on the wall,  
We laughed at the sun, we laughed at the guns,  
We laughed at it all  
And when they, they told us to go,  
We paid them no mind, like every other time,  
But little did we know...

Today, I look for a sign,  
With flames in my hands,  
A line in the sand,  
Between yours and mine,  
And it came, like fire from below,  
Your greed led the call,  
My flag had to fall,  
But little did you know

Another day, your truth will come,  
You're gonna pay for what you,  
Pay for what you've done,  
You'll get what's yours,  
And face your fraud,  
You're gonna give me back what's mine  
Give me back what's mine!

I ain't never been a coward,  
I ain't never seen blood,  
You had sold me an ocean,  
And I was lost in the flood,  
We were counting on a leader,  
We were driven by need,  
Couldn't take temptation,  
And we were blinded by greed,  
You were steady as a sniper,  
We were waiting on a wire,  
So we never saw it coming,  
When you ran from the fire,  
You can try intimidation,  
Or you can try to ignore,  
But when the time comes calling,  
Yeah! You are gonna get yours!

And so today, your truth has come,  
You're gonna pay for what you,  
Pay for what you've done,  
You'll get what's yours,  
You're out of time,  
And you will give me back what's mine  
Give me, give me back what's mine!

Give me, give me back what's mine!  
What's mine, give me, give me back what's mine!  
What's mine!  
What's mine!  
Give me back what's mine!

## APPENDIX 2

### Lyrics to .5 *The Gray Chapter* by Slipknot

#### XIX

(This song is not for the living  
This song is for the dead)

With my face against the floor  
I can't see who knocked me out of the way  
I don't want to get back up  
But I have to, so it might as well be today

Nothing appeals to me,  
No one feels like me  
I'm too busy being calm to disappear

I'm no shape to be alone  
Contrary to the s--- that you might hear

So walk with me  
Walk with me  
Don't let this symbolism kill your heart

Walk with me  
Walk with me  
Just like we should've done right from the start

Walk with me  
Walk with me  
Don't let this f----- world tear you apart

#### Sarcastrophe

Wallow in the winter of it.  
Discover what you truly covet.  
Underneath and far above it  
You slither in all kinds of s---

How could you forget about it?  
Did you think you could minimize?  
This is the age of consent  
You'll get a day in the sun before I kill your f----- lights

Burn up in your atmosphere  
Burn up in your utmost fear

Desecrate your temples  
Only Hell and Hate remain  
Don't look for crows to scatter  
Prepare for Judgment Day

WE. ARE. KILL. GODS!

The Kings are falling down  
Can I find a way to get there?  
Bury your head in the ground  
Will you falsify for your fair share?  
When it's done, it's done – Plus negative one  
It's everybody's guess but the apathy won  
Will you come testify in the court of myopic opinion?  
Or will you settle for oblivion?  
WE. ARE. KILL. GODS!  
WE – We make this world worth saving.  
ARE – Are you prepared to believe?  
KILL – Kill everything that kills you.  
GODS – Live long and die for me.

Rape crutch and sick in the middle of an evidence bag that'll never obey  
All these years spent hiding all the bodies  
I can never be sure but I remember....the.....graves!

LIVE LONG AND DIE FOR ME  
LIVE LONG AND DIE FOR ME...

## **AOV**

Black. Dirty teeth. In the crease.  
Was the proof too good to be believed?  
It's the c---. With the tongue.  
Who belongs on broken knees.  
So far, it occurs to me that everybody in the world is afraid of me  
Just one more sin and down we go. But the news is out, and I think I'm going to  
Kill myself. F--- myself. Or tell myself. About the only thing that matters now.

We bury what we fear the most  
Approaching original violence  
Is the silence where you hide it?  
'Cause I don't recognize you anymore.  
To each his own  
Life can do with one less watered-down excuse  
If this is over, you can tell me it's no use.  
USE – JUST TELL ME IT'S OVER

Today, we will deceive our better selves  
Into assimilating pain from something else  
Put on your face and show why  
Behind the scenes we had to simply comply  
Now, the community doesn't feel any better than it used to be  
I want to be a judge in a criminal case – you covered up, did you cultivate?  
Be yourself. Not yourself. Know yourself. 'Cause no one seems to know you now.

We carry what we can't control  
Approaching original violence  
In the silence, there's a nihilist  
Who doesn't care, and never did.  
To each his own  
Life can do with one less watered-down excuse  
There comes a time when we can't take the same abuse



If this is over, you can tell me it's no use  
USE

Drug out, p----- on, everything's the same  
B---- and moan, it doesn't matter, nothing's going to change  
I don't want to watch another brother f----- die - so discarded, fallen by the side  
Don't tell me it's the only way – just another reason why you never take the bait  
The trials, the scheming, the burden of the beast  
Both your faces turn your back on everything you fought to save a dream  
Now that it's over... when this is over...

We are the angels' fear to tread  
Approaching original violence  
We're the silence. We'll deny it. We can't continue on like this.  
To each his own  
Life can do with one less watered-down excuse  
There comes a time when we can't take the same abuse.  
My God, it would've taken just one word to stay from you.  
Now that this is over, you can tell me it's no use...  
Now that this is over, you can tell me it's no use...  
USE – JUST TELL ME IT'S OVER  
It doesn't matter what you say. It doesn't matter what you do.  
We can't continue on like this.

### **The Devil In I**

Undo these chains, my friend. I'll show you the rage I've hidden.  
Perish the Sacrament. Swallow, but nothing's forgiven.  
You and I can't decide which of us was taken for granted.  
Make amends... some of us are destined to be outlived.

Step inside/ See The Devil In I  
Too many times, we've let it come to this  
Step inside/ See The Devil In I  
You'll realize I'm not your Devil anymore

Under the words of men, something is tempting the father.  
Where is your will, my friend? Insatiates never even bother.  
You and I, wrong or right, traded a lie for the leverage.  
In between the lens in light, you're not what you seem.

Your Station- Is Abandoned- Fool You 'cause I know what you've done  
Sensation- Deprivation- You should've burned when you turned on everyone

So Step inside/ See The Devil In I  
Too many times, we've let it come to this  
Step inside/ See The Devil In I  
Oh, when all that's left does not make sense  
Step inside/ See The Devil In I  
I know you'll find your answers in the end  
Step inside/ See The Devil In I  
You'll realize I'm not your Devil... anymore

### **Killpop**

She's sticking needles in her skin  
I turn with an ugly grin  
Her canvas doesn't leave a lot, to fantasy  
But her piece of mind can't stay inside the lines  
It's so confusing, the methods that she's using  
She knows she shouldn't leave a mark that I can see  
Will she ever find one million of kind?  
It's cold and lonely, but that's because she told me  
Lost inside her dirty world, no one hurts this pretty girl but her

Oh, she's beautiful  
A little better than a man deserves  
Oh, I'm not insane  
Please tell me she won't change...

MAYBE I SHOULD LET HER GO...BUT ONLY WHEN SHE LOVES ME  
HOW CAN I JUST LET HER GO? NOT UNTIL SHE LOVES ME

She's drowning in herself again. My God, what a lovely sin...  
I guess there's nothing left to do, but have my way  
She can feel it's right so she doesn't close her eyes  
She smiles and answers – it doesn't seem to matter.  
Lost inside my dirty head, something tells me I'm the one who's kept.

Oh, so volatile  
A little better than a man defiled.  
Oh, I need the pain  
Please tell me she won't change...

We were meant to be together. Now die and f----- love me.  
We were meant to hurt each other. Now die and f----- love me.  
Die and f----- love me...  
Die and f----- love me...  
Die and f----- love me...

### **Skeptic**

Only when the fates – Commiserate - Do we get a little taste as unique  
The Libertine – Know what I mean? Hiroshima on a Sunday  
You had a gift – You were a gift – But there's always a g----- catch  
Blessing and a curse – You made it work – The Universe seems so much smaller  
(Legend) B----- (Best Friend) Why? Why do the limits have to realign?  
(Hero) Martyr (Mystery) God – He was the best of us

The world will never see another crazy m----- like you  
The world will never know another man as amazing as you

Never be the same – I want the blame – To be assigned to the guiltiest one  
It can't be done – Because the son – Was the victim they arrested  
I'm so f----- p----- – At all of this – You got to know that you are sorely missed  
Miracles are real. They help you heal. They make you feel like things will get better.  
(Father) Brother (Scapegoat) Why? Why did we only get this time?  
(Fighter) Icon (Skeptic) God – Stop taking the best of us

I won't let you disappear. I will keep your soul alive if I can't have you here.  
History may have its share of lunatics and stars...  
The world will never see another crazy m----- like you  
The world will never know another man as amazing as you

#### SKEPTIC

Where am I supposed to begin? I'm killing for the karma again  
Feed the meter in the machine – Believing it's the way to be seen  
GONE – Are we alone? GONE – Are we alone?  
GONE – Are we alone? GONE – We're not alone

I can't let you disappear. I will keep your soul alive if I can't have you here.  
We were meant to be Kings.  
Rule the masses, run the risks, and keep our systems clean

#### Lech

I know why Judas wept, m-----!

The fires burn on the summit, shining a light on the ones I've killed  
Survivor's guilt, undetermined – I could murder the world in all the blood I've spilled

Banishment – Sequestered and conquered  
To hell with your intelligence – just figure out your common sense

No one is bulletproof

I'll eat the skins of my brothers – the alabaster bones will make a perfect wall  
Can I fill in the cracks of these feelings?  
With every terrible piece or maybe nothing at all?

Selfishness – Take credit for everything  
What more could you ask for?  
And does it matter anymore?

No one is bulletproof

Can you feel the cold? Fortune never favors the old  
Tired of defending myself – Go complain to somebody else....somebody else

The monsters in your madness are the voices in your head  
They're scratching at your windows as you hide beneath the bed  
You live like f----- heathens so you'll die like pagan gods  
In between the poisons and the pure  
Contagions and the cure  
NINE – FOR – SURE

I got a bone that's dead inside of me  
It's a rotting sick that I don't need  
Feel free to vent your denigration  
I can't believe I'm saying this  
I'll live with my regrets. I'll die by my decisions.  
I'm not your f----- superstar - Keep it close – you're going way too far

NO ONE IS BULLETPROOF!

### **Goodbye**

Come on over...come unglued...  
It's not easy to see all of you  
Help yourselves. Help is on the way  
Well there's nothing to lose so now I have something to say  
Maybe we can all recognize a moment of silence  
Maybe we can all finally agree on the same point of view  
A long time ago we believed...and we were united  
So the last thing on Earth I am ready to do is say...  
Goodbye

A long time ago we discovered that nothing could stop us  
This hasn't torn us apart so nothing ever will  
How can we know where we are if the sun is behind us?  
But this moment will show us the rest of our lives  
No one is going to save us this time  
No one can know what we're feeling...  
So don't even try

### **Nomadic**

Let's skip all the histrionics – Not again, not another excuse  
The epidemic is codependent – Biting off more than your mouth can chew  
Don't forget to convalesce your secrets – I don't want to be a man today  
For all you know, I'm the silver in the bullet  
I am the trigger that will make you all obey  
I'm going to make you cry tonight – I'm going to make you hate me

Inside all my flaws again (I can't let go)  
In spite of you, I'm lost again (I still don't know)  
Disguises show me – What am I if I am only?  
The status-quo is not a punishment...but now it feels like home

Your association finds you guilty – Starting with end of the day  
Black and white is such a fascist feeling – Right or wrong and nothing to say  
The last good bipeds cleaning up the fingerprints – unappreciated medical fiends  
Confiscate another classic inbred – F--- it all – Light the acetylene  
No other choice, I can't explain – Life keeps taking things away

The future's here, I'm past my prime  
When the evidence came, I committed the crime  
Can you stand on your faith with your feet on the bible?  
Who could ask for a better disciple?  
What's the point? I'm not sure I can  
I'll never dig another grave, I'm afraid of what I'll find  
If it hurts, then you're too old. I'll take your s--- and give you f----- gold  
I'm going to make you cry tonight – I need you to hate me

### **The One That Kills The Least**

I don't seem to care today. I mirror what I love with what I hate.  
Empty ways can cloud your eyes. I only know because I tried.  
So come with me... come with me...  
Let's meet our contestants! There's no better time to play the game!  
I don't want to give it away! Underneath the citadels  
Buried deep with your guilt and regrets  
Leading in the dark, everything is wonderful  
I don't care – I don't want to forget  
Why is it a crime? It's none of your business  
I prefer to be in hell by myself  
Turn the other cheek and tell it to somebody who  
Refuses to forgive, when nothing was taken

No one else survives – I've seen you live, now watch me die  
But we don't see the writing on the wall  
And as I close my eyes – Alone in here, I realize  
The one that kills the least still kills us all

Hidden in the rubble, everybody's got a story to tell  
What do I need? Eliminate the possible  
All that's left is a man in a cell  
Maybe I'm wrong, maybe a decision is  
The better way to go, the better way to be  
I've got my demons – Go get your own  
Save another number – Don't forget to hate me

## **Custer**

### **RISE**

Half alive and stark-raving free and maligned for  
Encroaching on the purpose of this commercial-free interruption...  
Due to the prolific nature of this statement, listener aggression is advised.

It's strange; whenever I see a gun, I think about just how petty you are  
And it blows my f----- mind – It blows my f----- mind  
These days, I never seem to get enough.  
I'm tired of this – I want to go home  
Don't waste my f----- time – Don't waste my f----- time  
Because anything exceptional gets crushed by common people  
With jealousy and ignorance and all their common evils  
This planet isn't special – collections made of clay  
I'm waiting for the punishment I know is on my way

Cut – Cut – Cut me up and F--- – F--- – F--- me up  
CUT – CUT – CUT ME UP AND F--- – F--- – F--- ME UP!  
Irreverence is my disease – It's second hand but you know me  
The son of a b---- is on his knees  
The last man standing gets no pity!

Somewhere on a toilet wall, I read the words  
'You FORM A LINE to FORMALIZE the FORMER LIES'  
And I finally saw the truth  
Something so profound and it was sitting there, surrounded by  
The garbage and the stains – another victim of the refuse  
Now I've been saying this for years but you don't comprehend it

I fight hell and I fight fear because I understand it  
Androgyny and insults – You try so hard to be difficult  
You want to win the war? Know what you're fighting for!

With angel eyes and demon seeds – You're missing what you really need  
When all is said and done, you see  
The last man standing gets no pity!

### **Be Prepared For Hell**

I can't get out or I'll die  
Just let me be  
I'll never be never

Be prepared for Hell  
And I say oh well  
Just tell me when I can  
Open my eyes  
And realize  
I've died

Be prepared for Hell

### **The Negative One**

Fire and Caffeine- a lot of Nicotine- I'm going to burn so I better tell you everything  
The Competition- The Superstition- Never mind 'cause you're never going to give in  
It's a Crisis, just how you like it- the same drama in a different disguise  
I'm bound to walk with a target on my back- At least I'm ready for another attack  
The Lord Of Lies/The Morning Star/You Had To Be Set Free  
Opposing Sides/Your Choices Are/The Negative One and Me

Svengali- why are we the enemies? I never follow and I never make apologies  
Your dementias are gonna getcha- because your walls can't support each other  
Settle for the Cynical- you're so political  
You're getting ready 'cause the first move is critical  
Reciprocity- somebody's listening- what did we learn from our time in captivity?  
The Lord Of Lies/The Morning Star/You Had To Be Set Free  
Opposing Sides/Your Choices Are/The Negative One and Me  
The Negative One and me  
I Hope You Live/To See The Day/When Your World Goes Up In Flames  
And As You Die/You See My Face/You're The Only One To Blame

The Prescient/The Nascent/The Quotient (THEY ALL WILL FALL)  
The Cystic/Symbolic/Condition (SYSTEMIC)  
Egregious/Replete With/These Lesions (CONTAMINATE)  
Succumb To/The Selfish/Creation (YOUR FAILURE)

No Accountability- Divisibility- I point a finger but it's always looking back at me  
The Centipede's pulling on the mechanism- Unearthing scars of the cataclysm  
When the Innocent- Begin to circumvent- The color fades but the picture is vibrant  
What do you believe? Does it matter now? Turn away- The killer is disavowed

## **If Rain Is What You Want**

It's been years since anyone could be a friend  
It's the fear the kills the feeling in the end  
Can we face it? Can we shape it? Can we really die?  
If rain is what you want...all you have to do is close your eyes  
Just close your eyes...

I am watching resurrection start to crawl  
Is there any chance in hell? Any chance at all?  
Do we need it? Do we see it? Is it really there?  
If rain is what you want...then take your seats, enjoy the fall  
Enjoy the fall...

The only thing deeper than my last breath  
The only thing darker than my last death  
IS THE PANIC – THE STATIC – I'VE COME BACK FROM THE DEAD  
BUT MY CITIES....WILL NEVER SLEEP AGAIN

In these diamonds, we're left with colored glass  
As pressure take its toll, we learn to last  
But you can't break my heart  
As long as I can be myself, I'll never fall apart  
And you can't take me in  
If I'm not broken, break me down  
So I will never feel alone again

### APPENDIX 3

#### Lyrics to *Sonic Highways* by Foo Fighters

##### "Something From Nothing"

Give me the flammable life  
I'm cold as a match  
Ready to strike  
So here I go...

Here lies a city on fire  
Singing along  
The arsonist choir  
Now here I go...

It started with a spark  
And burned into the dark  
Now here I go...

There is a river I found  
Into the wild  
Under the ground  
So here I go...

A button on a string  
And I heard everything  
Now here I go...

Oh sweet ignition be my fuse  
You have no choice you have to choose  
Bid farewell to yesterday  
Say goodbye I'm on my way

But in the end we all  
Come from what's come before  
So here I go...

I threw it all away because  
I had to be what never was  
Been so hungry I could lie  
You took my word I took your wine  
And held you in my bloody hands  
These rattled bones and rubber bands  
Washed them in the muddy water  
Looking for a dime and found a quarter  
But you can't make me change my name  
You'll never make me change my name  
Pay no mind now ain't that something  
F--- it all! I came from nothing

I'm something  
From nothing  
You are my fuse  
I'm something  
From nothing



You are my fuse  
It goes...

All Rise!

### **The Feast And The Famine**

That night they were burning for truth  
Down on the corner of 14th and U  
They took your soul and they took you for fools  
Took all the windows from prisons and schools  
Now what's a poor man left to do?

One heart now broken in two  
You start untying the hands of the youth  
New kids hear the sound of the drumming  
Mother Nature your Summer is coming  
Yesterday and today  
Revolution on its way

Amen  
It was The Feast and the Famine

Crossroads with nothing to lose  
Out of the basement and in to the news  
Come change, now shit getting heavy  
Salvation at the ready  
You look when I walked by  
Still screaming 'til I die  
You can't find peace if you can't find a home  
You can't survive as an island alone  
Black heart with a gaping wound  
Put back together by a troubled groove  
Check yourself  
Wreck your brains  
Where is that P.M.A.?

Hey, where is the monument?  
To the dreams we forget?  
We need a monument  
And change will come  
Yeah change will come  
Is there anybody there? (Anybody there?)  
Anybody there? (Anybody there?)  
There?

### **Congregation**

Well, I met the seventh son  
He came for everyone  
The day he heard the lighting in the field  
I heard him clear his throat  
A fork within the road  
That night the Tallahatchie took the wheel

I've been throwing knives  
To see just where they land  
Now my world is in your hands

Send in the congregation  
Open your eyes, step in the light  
A jukebox generation  
Just as you were

The voice upon the stage  
Is the heart inside a cage  
And they're singing like a bluebird in the round  
There's mystery in this wood  
And ghosts within these roots  
That are tangled deep beneath this southern ground

I've been going through life  
Making foolish plans  
Now my world is in your hands

And you need blind faith  
No false hope  
No false hope  
Do you have blind faith?  
No false hope  
No false hope  
Where is your blind faith?  
No false hope  
No false hope  
Open your eyes, open your eyes  
Step into the light  
Open your eyes, step into the light  
The sound becomes

Congregation  
A congregation  
A congregation, yeah  
And they're singing like a bluebird in the round

### **What Did I Do? / God As My Witness**

There you go again,  
putting words into my mouth.  
This one's for you to know,  
and for me to find out.

All that trouble, and you on about.  
How you gonna know, til you hear it out loud.  
Stop, ask myself what did I do?  
what did I do to deserve you?  
Come on, tell me now what did I do?  
what did I do to deserve you?

I heard every word comin' from the 13th floor.

Your song came along,  
and I heard the voices telling me to save yourself,  
I'll behave yourself.

I stop, ask myself what did I do?  
what can I do to preserve you?  
Come on, tell me now, what can I do?  
What can I do to conserve you?

Your name, year of fame,  
I could see the writing on the wall.  
Come on, flip a coin, bet it's going to tell you  
to save yourself, I'll behave yourself.

Your man, channelin', knowin' by the x on his hand  
You raise, runaways singin' at the gate,  
to save yourself, I'll behave yourself.

So here I go again,  
putting words into your mouth.  
This one's for me to know,  
and for you to find out.

All that trouble and I'm on about,  
how you gonna know, til you hear it out loud.  
All of your heroes, where are they now?

I'm lost, deliver me,  
I crossed the river finally.  
God as my witness,  
yeah it's gonna heal my soul tonight.

## **Outside**

There you are dancing at your altar  
Beautiful earthling, dressed in kashmir  
All of your sound echoes in the canyons  
Down below they're dreaming  
Hear the sirens screaming  
Another time, another world  
Girls were boys and boys were girls  
Find the glitter in the litter  
Like a haunt, it's got to move  
Everybody needs some room  
There's something out there

There's a long straight road, out of the cold  
And we can leave it all behind  
I wanna get outside, baby, let's get outside  
I wanna get outside, outside, of me

Oh, I found the space between the spaces  
Standing in the nothing, and time will cling to  
And as the wind will beat you down  
And the wind the only sound

There's something out there

### **In The Clear**

There are days I might not make it  
There are days I might start breakin'  
But when the rains starts coming down as heavy as the air  
You can find me dancing with the spirits  
It's in the square  
God d--- I swear

There are times I feel like givin' in  
There are times I begin to begin again  
Look outside the world keeps spinning like a paddle-wheel  
Rolling for the broken-hearted waiting on the heal

You know I'm not in the clear  
You are not in the clear  
Don't you go count me out now, dear  
You know I'm not in the clear

There are places I don't remember  
There are faces I don't remember  
How could I forget you painted stars into the sky?  
Coming like a rebirth marching in a second line

And if I should drown  
May this be the sound  
To wash me out!

### **Subterranean**

Nothing left within, I've been mined  
Hell and back again, subterranean  
I've been digging in down inside  
I will start again, subterranean

But the truth is so unkind  
What do you know, how low the sky  
Yet the truth is so unkind  
What do you know, how low the sky

You might think you know me  
I know d--- well you don't  
Oh no, oh no, you don't

Buried my heart, cannot go this alone  
And I might think you love me  
But I know d--- well you don't  
Oh no, you don't

Bring all your lies leave them deep in the dirt  
Oh no, you don't  
Pull down my eyes

Lay me deep in the earth

### **I Am A River**

There is a secret  
I found a secret  
Behind a Soho door

There is a reason  
I found a reason  
Beneath the subway floor

I found the water  
The devils water  
and walked along its shore

Is that what you want?

The channel's changing  
The heart is racing  
from voices on a wire

The soul is yearning  
the cold is burning  
the ember starts a fire

Can we recover  
love for each other,  
the measure of your life

Is that what you want?  
Is that what you really want?

A river  
A river  
a river running under ground

!!.. !!..  
I am a river

Is that what you want?  
Is that what you really want?