

ANGLICAN 'ESTABLISHMENT' REACTIONS TO 'POP' CHURCH MUSIC IN ENGLAND, 1956–c.1990

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THE use of popular styles of music in the Church has often proved contentious,¹ and perhaps particularly so in the later twentieth century. Anecdotal evidence abounds of the debate provoked in churches by the introduction of new 'happy-clappy' pop-influenced styles, and the supposed wholesale discarding of a glorious heritage of hymnody. In addition, a great deal of literature has appeared elaborating on the inappropriateness of such music. Welcoming a historical study of hymnody in 1996, John Habgood lamented the displacement of traditional hymn singing by 'trivial and repetitive choruses'.² Lionel Dakers, retired Director of the Royal School of Church Music, also saw choruses and worship songs as 'in many instances little more than trite phrases repeated *ad nauseam*, often with accompanying

¹ For other examples from the English context, see Jim Obelkevich, 'Music and Religion in the Nineteenth Century', in Jim Obelkevich, Lyndal Roper and Raphael Samuel, eds, *Disciplines of Faith: Studies in Religion, Politics and Patriarchy* (London, 1987), 550–65.

² Foreword to Bertram L. Barnby, *In Concert Sing – Concerning Hymns and their Usage* (Norwich, 1996), vii.

body movements'.³ This paper investigates the reactions of the musical and ecclesiastical establishments to the use of popular music in public worship in the Church of England from 1956 to c.1990. The period began with a new wave of experimentation epitomized by Geoffrey Beaumont's *Folk Mass* and the controversy surrounding it, and ended in the early 1990s, by which time the pop-influenced worship music of the renewal movement had become firmly established in some sections of the Church, with its own figureheads and momentum.⁴ This paper argues against the assumption, common to many social historians,⁵ that the religious establishment unreservedly hated popular music, or, as some recent general commentaries

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on the Church have assumed, that there was a simple bi-polar division 'for' or 'against' it.⁶ Instead, the history of the debate reveals a wide and

³ Lionel Dakers, 'Church Music in the Twentieth Century - A Rise and Fall?', in P. R. Hale, ed., *IAO [Incorporated Association of Organists] Millennium Book* (2000), 149-64, 153.

⁴ For a brief history, see: Pete Ward, *Growing Up Evangelical: Youth Work and the Making of a Sub-Culture* (London, 1996), 80-140.

⁵ See John Street, 'Shock Waves: the Authoritative Response to Popular Music', in Dominic Strinati and Stephen Wagg, eds, *Come on Down? Popular Media Culture in Post-War Britain* (London and New York, 1992), 302-24; Martin Cloonan, *Banned! Censorship of Popular Music in Britain: 1967-92* (Aldershot, 1996).

⁶ See, for example: Ysenda Maxtone Graham, *The Church Hesitant: a Portrait of the Church of England Today* (London, 1993), 213-39.

complex range of 'establishment' reactions, particularly in the early part of the period.

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The 'establishment' in question may loosely be defined as that nexus of individuals and institutions that in the 1950s were dominant in the music of the Church of England: the Royal School of Church Music; cathedral and other salaried organists; concerned clergy; and the musical critics and academics who treated new church music with the same seriousness as they did concert and chamber works. This 'establishment' is clearly visible in the list of contributors to the journal *English Church Music*, published by the Royal School of Church Music. Between 1955 and 1970 the journal carried articles from clergy such as Joseph Poole, Precentor of Coventry, academic musicologists such as Peter Le Huray and Watkins Shaw, professional musicians such as Christopher Dearnley, organist of St Paul's, and also from those not directly employed by the Church, such as Sir Thomas Armstrong, Principal of the Royal Academy of Music. Indeed, in the first half of the century the conjunction between the 'sacred' and 'secular' musical professions was arguably at its closest for a hundred years, following the involvement of 'professionals' such as Charles Villiers Stanford in a previously marginal

cathedral world.⁷ This establishment is also given coherence by external forces, as the (more or less willing) guardians of tradition in the face of a newly emerging mass culture of popular music, disseminated by easily-available recordings to increasingly affluent listeners.⁸ Of course, throughout history, popular music had often been deployed in the services of the Church, but in the early twentieth century much of it was either heavily refined into a more classical idiom⁹ or confined to the margins, for use in mission services

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or Sunday Schools. By the late 1950s however, the Anglican musical establishment were faced with renewed attempts to write music in a popular style specifically for Sunday worship, striking at the heart of the English hymn and choral tradition.

Defining the 'pop' church music in question here requires similar care, just as musicologists and music historians more generally have struggled to delineate so diverse a phenomenon as 'popular music' in the later twentieth century as a whole. Some have used 'pop music' and

⁷ Erik Routley, *Twentieth-Century Church Music* (London, 1964), 13–19; Horton Davies, *Worship and Theology in England, Book III: The Ecumenical Century, 1900 to the Present* (Cambridge, 1996 edn), 102–7.

⁸ Arthur Marwick, *The Sixties: Cultural Revolution in Britain, France, Italy and the United States, c.1958–c.1974* (Oxford, 1998), 55–80.

⁹ Such as Vaughan-Williams's treatment of folk songs in *The English Hymnal* (1906).

'popular music' interchangeably, whilst others have identified 'pop' as a distinctive sub-category with particular characteristics; for example that it is guitar-driven and reliant on technological advances such as amplification,¹⁰ or that 'pop' is any music which is mass-produced for a mass-market.¹¹ Still others have found the terminology so problematic as to eschew any such neat definition.¹² To this extent, debates about the nature of 'pop' amongst musicologists mirror the problems faced by historians of religion in defining 'popular' belief. In this paper, 'pop' church music is used in a broad sense, encompassing several different strands of popular music written for a church context. In the 1950s and 1960s, this largely meant light music, light swing or folk, as found in Geoffrey Beaumont's *Folk Mass* (in the Anglo-Catholic tradition) and the compositions of the Twentieth Century Church Light Music Group (TCCLMG). At roughly the same time, Anglican evangelicals were experimenting with similar styles, out of which came the collection

¹⁰ See for example Iain Chambers, *Urban Rhythms: Pop Music and Popular Culture* (Basingstoke, 1985), 9-15.

¹¹ Roy Shuker, *Understanding Popular Music* (2nd edn, London, 2001), x. See also Theodor W. Adorno's influential (though contentious) work 'On Popular Music' (first published in 1941), repr. in Simon Frith and Andrew Godwin, eds, *On Record: Rock, Pop and the Written Word* (London and New York, 1990), 301-14.

¹² See for example John Connell and Chris Gibson, *Sound Tracks: Popular Music, Identity and Place* (London, 2003), 4-5.

Youth Praise (1966).¹³ From the late 1960s to the early 1990s, as folk hymns (such as those by Sydney Carter) became more generally accepted, establishment critiques turned towards the more youth-orientated, verse-chorus format guitar song, whose introduction to English church life owed much to the charismatic renewal; first in the folk-pop style of *Sound of Living Waters* (1974) and *Fresh Sounds* (1976), then in the soft rock/rock ballad feel of the *Songs of Fellowship* books, which reflected the additional influence of the Restoration Movement.¹⁴

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Whilst a diversity of musical styles is represented here and the difficulties of precise definition are recognized, this broad definition of 'pop' church music is appropriate, since the Anglican musical 'establishment' under discussion here tended to lump together a range of different styles under the general heading of 'pop'. Moreover, just as 'popular music' had by the 1940s come to denote not just 'the music of the people' but music with specific styles and characteristics,¹⁵ so by the same period the Church of England's musical commentators discussed a

¹³ Nicholas Temperley, *The Music of the English Parish Church*, 2 vols (Cambridge, 1979), 1: 341-2.

¹⁴ The first of several major collections was published as: *Songs of Fellowship Book 1* (1st edn, Eastbourne, 1981). For hymns and songs in the evangelical tradition from *Youth Praise* to *Songs of Fellowship*, see Ward, *Growing Up Evangelical*, 80-140.

¹⁵ Shuker, *Understanding Popular Music*, 5.

variety of different genres under the heading of 'church pop' and assumed some common qualities between them.

The authors recognize that applying notions of 'popular' and in particular 'elite' to this period is problematic. As the paper will argue, there was no uniform view on popular music in church amongst this loosely-defined establishment. Many of the early advocates of 'church pop' were themselves part of it; often clergy (sometimes high-ranking) who justified the new music on the grounds that it was something to which the man in the pew could relate. At the same time many laity as well as clergy opposed the changes. Nor were the attitudes of this loosely-defined 'elite' either wholly accepting or rejecting; anthropologists such as Mary Douglas have alerted us to a much wider range of responses to the 'anomalous', from studied indifference, to outright attempts to repel it, to attempts to incorporate or domesticate it within existing structures.¹⁶ All of these responses are found towards the new music in this period. The paper also identifies key polarities in debates about the nature of church music (many of them scarcely defined or worked out): order versus spontaneity, reverence versus relevance, expertise versus participation, the beautiful versus the vulgar.

¹⁶ Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: an Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London, 1966), 37-40.

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The initial experimentation with 'light music' by Geoffrey Beaumont and the Twentieth Century Church Light Music Group began with the publication of Beaumont's *Folk Mass* in 1956, subsequently televised in 1957. Several collections of hymn tunes in a similar style followed. The *Folk Mass* attracted a range of responses, many of which were hostile

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and gave it no quarter. The response of W. Greenhouse Allt in 1957 is a good example of the tone, blending exalted purpose with withering criticism. The bishop of Leicester, R. R. Williams, had welcomed the piece and called for a reconsideration of music 'until the musical medium is found which is natural to our modern folk', which then might become a weapon to combat the indifference of present-day youth, and 'draw them in thousands into the Church's fold'.¹⁷ In reply, Allt countered that

We should tell the Right Reverend the Bishop that the cultivated mind of a skilled musician understands too well that sensuous appeal, and revolts against the use of such a sensuous appeal to replace Church Music, the finest of which is hallowed by tradition, inspired by spiritual experience and capable of

¹⁷ Quoted in W. Greenhouse Allt, 'The Presidential Address', *Quarterly Record of the Incorporated Association of Organists* 43 (1957), 3-6, 5.

satisfying our deepest spiritual needs when there is an understanding and sympathetic mind ready to receive it.¹⁸

For Allt, this deplorable trend was to be countered in musical education, and it was for the Incorporated Association of Organists 'so to strive and fit yourselves that you may worthily uphold the dignity of your contribution to the worship of Almighty God and keep inviolate the integrity of the Art of Music'.¹⁹ Here we see illustrated several of the key themes: a juxtaposition of the cultivated musical taste of the tradition against the supposedly vulgar and crude sensuality of the popular, and the assertion of the establishment's role as gatekeeper and guardian. However, we also see an important difference of opinion *within* the establishment; between those who saw high standards of music and musicianship as essential to true worship, and those (including high-ranking clergy) whose pastoral sensibilities suggested greater latitude over permissible styles of music, a point explored further below.

Amongst those who saw popular music as simply inadequate for worship, several key strands of criticism recur: firstly, 'pop' could be portrayed as primitive or primal. Allt contrasted music which

¹⁸ Ibid., 3-6, 5.

¹⁹ Ibid.

had 'passed through the discipline of intellectual effort and brought delight to a higher pitch by masterly design' with skiffle, 'a manifestation of the primitive folk-habits of the unskilled-in-music', invoking Carl Jung on

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the ease of re-animating 'archaic patterns of behaviour'.²⁰ Concerns over 'primal' music could sometimes take on racial or national dimensions: church musician and writer Charles Cleall could even quote approvingly from Aldous Huxley that 'Barbarism has entered popular music from two sources: from the music of barbarous people ... and from serious music which has drawn on barbarism for its inspiration'.²¹ Even those who adopted more measured tones could suggest that since jazz-influenced music was non-indigenous to British culture, it was therefore undesirable. For Erik Routley, a Congregationalist minister who was nevertheless widely read and admired by Anglican audiences, 'the cultures from which Western European music and "jazz" spring are profoundly different in all their ways, and there is nothing to be gained by

²⁰ Ibid., 6, 3 and 5.

²¹ Charles Cleall, *Music and Holiness* (London, 1964), 44-5.

minimising or pretending to ignore these differences'.²² To import this music directly into services could only ever be 'a cult of the exotic. It would be tourism saying aren't those Polynesians fascinating?'.²³

A second key theme is that even in the majority of cases where racial or national characteristics were not invoked, some commentators clearly saw popular music as part of a wider cultural crisis. 'How easy it is', argued Cleall,

for an old civilisation like ours to fail to hand on to the next generation the rich and complex culture which is the Englishman's birthright. Such a culture is painfully achieved, over centuries: it is shockingly easily lost, by men who are more concerned to be 'with-it' than to know the Good, the True and the Beautiful.²⁴

Sir Thomas Armstrong saw the 'JAZZ-MASS' as part of a 'rebellion of the inarticulate, uninformed and illiterate - a deliberate deification of bad taste' arising from a despair about modern life. These were dangerous times, he believed, but the situation could be saved by people of talent and good will.²⁵ Such views reflect a much wider sense of anxiety in the late 1950s and early 1960s

²² Erik Routley, *Is Jazz Music Christian?* (London, 1964), 3.

²³ *Ibid.*, 10.

²⁴ Letter of Charles Cleall to *Church News*, January 1963.

²⁵ Thomas Armstrong, 'Presidential Address', *Quarterly Record of the IAO* 44 (1958), 3-5, 4 and 5.

amongst the guardians of 'respectable' values that post-war hopes for a Reithian elevation of national taste were failing.²⁶

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Thirdly, as Armstrong's criticisms imply, it was commonly asserted that church music could never legitimately be of the same everyday kind that advocates of the Beaumont *Mass* had argued for. In 1960, light music hymn-writer Patrick Appleford had argued that, just as common prayer was in the common tongue, so it was natural that 'the musical idiom of what is sung in worship should as far as possible be common to everyone'.²⁷ This would be neither Bach nor the very latest jazz, but 'the kind of music that is the background of all our lives - light music of various kinds'.²⁸ This was in direct response to the suggestion from *Musical Opinion* that

by its very nature this music cannot bring any association of thought and idea other than that with which it is commonly connected, the dance hall, the radio band, the TV show. It can never become 'church music' merely because of an association of time and place.²⁹

The insistence that only the best music was admissible in worship had a long pedigree and pervaded much of the discussion, as

²⁶ Robert Hewison, *In Anger: Culture in the Cold War, 1945-60* (London, 1981), 177-81.

²⁷ Patrick Appleford, 'Music in Worship and Mission Services', *Theology* 63 (1960), 329-33, 330.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Leader 'From Minerva House', *Musical Opinion* 963 (1957), 149-51.

exemplified in the 1951 report of the Archbishops' Commission on *Music in Church*, which asserted simply, as the second of the four key principles, that church music should be 'good, as music'.³⁰ Little consideration was given to the criteria by which goodness was to be defined, and the report reflected the prevailing pre-pop understanding of taste. The report was subsequently and frequently invoked as authoritative; at the 1959 congress of the IAO, a plain assertion of the report's principle was deemed sufficient to close a debate on the worth of Beaumont's *Folk Mass*.³¹

For a minority of commentators, the charge that popular music was simply inadmissible *per se* was overlain with a second accusation: that the works of Beaumont and others were not even good examples of the style in which they were written. Despite Patrick Appleford's insistence that church music should be of the common tongue rather than cutting

³⁰ *Music in Church: a Report of the Committee Appointed in 1948 by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York* (1st edn, London, 1957; revised edn, 1960), 6.

³¹ On the IAO conference at Newcastle, see the *IAO Quarterly Record* 45 (1959), 5.

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edge (to enable more than just devotees of the style to use it),³² the charge of 'bad jazz' became a constant refrain amongst opponents, occasionally lapsing into an audible sneer. 'It is really rather pitiful', said Ivor Keys in 1974, to introduce tunes with

the type of syncopations ... that Bertie Wooster might have danced to.... A staid Stanfordian feels a fool in lending himself to it, and the young find the situation just as embarrassing as if he had turned up in purple trousers.³³

Even amongst commentators better-disposed to popular music in church, a more moderate version of the same argument was found, though here relating more to the commonly-expressed need to offer only the best to God. If, argued Allan Wicks of Canterbury Cathedral, the church was to have pop, then let it be the real thing, and not 'a sort of sentimentalized and watered-down concept of pop. The idea of the Church as something which continually takes the edge off things, spoils the fun of things, makes mediocre, is still very strong'.³⁴ It is here that the common stress on the idea of the

³² Patrick Appleford, 'Music in Worship and Mission Services', *Theology* 63 (1960), 329-33, 330.

³³ Ivor Keys, 'Church Music - Change or Decay', *English Church Music* (1974), 7-10, 8. See also Allt, 'Presidential Address', 6.

³⁴ Allan Wicks, 'Towards the Relevant - in Church Music', *Modern Churchman* 8 (1964-5), 80-3, 83. This paper was part of a conference of the same year on 'Symbols

best of all things being the only suitable offering to God can be seen across the spectrum of opinion, but with the resulting practical implications being contested.

Not all commentators from within the 'establishment' denied positive value, or at least some utility, in this new style. It is among these writers that principles held in common with the more hostile can be observed being shaped and transmuted by other, wider pressures within a volatile church. Some, while still emphasizing the need for musical quality, nevertheless saw some place for the new. Stephen Rhys and King Palmer argued that while the glories of the tradition were something in which to rejoice, church music was not an end in itself, and must stand or fall by the degree to which it enabled Christians to worship. It may well have been the case that those embracing the *Folk Mass* were more influenced by 'the evangelical [*sic*] possibilities than by the fitness and quality of the music'.³⁵ However, before condemning,

for the Sixties', which included papers on church architecture, liturgy and the new Coventry Cathedral.

³⁵ Stephen Rhys and King Palmer, *The ABC of Church Music* (London, 1967), 63. Rhys was a Professor at the Royal Academy and sometime assistant chorusmaster to the Philharmonia Chorus. Palmer was a composer, writer and conductor, who had previously worked with the BBC Light Orchestra.

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'perhaps we should reflect that we, the children of God, are "all sorts and conditions of men"; and that, for all we know, the music which is so easy to despise may sometimes lead a doubting Thomas to the feet of the Master'.³⁶ Lancelot Hankey, head of Clifton College Preparatory School, asked: 'Are we to suppose that full Christian worship is to be limited to those with a taste for classical or traditional music? Music is merely a means to worship ... the acid test of this new approach is whether it is aiding worship'.³⁷ Paul Chappell, chaplain and vicar choral at Hereford Cathedral, condemned the 'musical philistinism' that saw the cathedral choral service as an expensive luxury, but refused to rule out the use of 'pops' in church. Responding to Charles Cleall he wrote:

As our Lord Himself used the common things in life to express divine truth, so the Church of our present age must use the medium of folk-song³⁸ in order to communicate the Gospel message to those in desperate need of God's forgiveness. ... Sacred music requires to be related to modern culture and life, or else it will become as fossilized as the dance music of the 1920s.³⁹

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 29

³⁷ *Church News*, October 1964.

³⁸ Apparently meaning here any music used by 'folk'.

³⁹ Paul Chappell, *Music and Worship in the Anglican Church* (London, 1968), 111, 118-9.

We have thus far identified a number of trajectories of response from among the church music establishment to experimentation with pop, and have argued that the more rigidly bi-polar debate between old and new of the 1990s is unreflective of the early years of the period. Why, then, does the range of responses narrow during the 1970s and 1980s, to the point that the 1991 debate over the inclusion of popular worship songs in George Carey's enthronement service was widely constructed as a two-way fight between 'traditionalists' and the 'happy-clappy'?⁴⁰ Further research remains to be done on charting the adoption of the new music in practice. However, that this narrowing does occur in theory can be seen in the pages of *English Church Music*. For a period from 1957 until the early 1970s the journal teemed with comment on experiments both with pop and with modernist classical music, and on the future of the whole of church music in England. After this point,

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the journal increasingly concerns itself with the traditional and cathedral scenes only, and with the history of that tradition. It is at this point that some thinkers appear to shift from an aggressive posture, seeking to repel the new style, to an attitude of indifference towards it, working

⁴⁰ Robin L. D. Rees, *Weary and Ill-at-Ease: a Survey of Clergy and Organists* (Leominster, 1993), 13.

instead to preserve the old style in the places where it was still employed. This shift was related partly to the general pluralization of worship styles in the Church of England⁴¹ and the comparative ease with which each sub-culture could maintain its own 'niche' style; it was also partly due to the emerging identification at this time between the new music and the evangelical and charismatic parts of the Church, with a corresponding loss of experimental impetus among other groups.⁴²

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That such a change should have taken place at this time arguably corresponds with wider changes of mood in the churches over the post-war period. If the turmoil of the 1960s shook the near-complacency of the church and caused a level of confusion, it also led to a radical questioning of the role of the church and the languages it used. Nothing less than a 'New Reformation' was needed, forging a church which was modern, up-to-date, relevant.⁴³ However, the optimism and openness to experimentation which characterized the later part of the decade had

⁴¹ Geoffrey Cuming, 'Liturgical Change in the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church', in Rupert Davies, ed., *The Testing of the Churches, 1932-1982* (London, 1982), 119-31.

⁴² Peter Webster and Ian Jones, 'New Music and the "Evangelical Style" in the Church of England, c.1958-1991', in Steve Holmes and Mark Smith, eds, *Evangelical Identities* (forthcoming, Carlisle, Paternoster Press).

⁴³ For this, see Adrian Hastings, *A History of English Christianity, 1920-1990* (3rd edn, London, 1991), 580-1; Grace Davie, *Religion in Britain since 1945* (Oxford, 1994), 33.

given way by the early 1970s to exhaustion, and a feeling amongst some that these experiments had not worked.⁴⁴ Those with little time for the new music for its own sake perhaps increasingly felt that the time had come to revert to old patterns, for the good of the church's own, and to reassert the church's distinctiveness in unapologetic fashion. As one contributor to *The Sign* put it in 1971, 'a time of appeasement is over and a time for fighting has come'.⁴⁵

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The career of Lionel Dakers provides an excellent case study in this change of tone. Dakers is perhaps the quintessential example of an establishment figure. After spells on the musical staff of St George's Chapel, Windsor and Ripon and Exeter Cathedrals, he became Director of the RSCM in 1973 and was made CBE in 1983. A prolific writer on church music in both theory and practice, his reactions to pop in the church shift over the years from a balanced caution to a gloomy pessimism and sense of decay. Dakers' 1995 memoir reflects a deep sense of failure on his part to maintain an appropriate balance between

⁴⁴ Adrian Hastings, 'All Change: the Presence of the Past in British Christianity', in Haddon Wilmer, ed., *20/20 Visions: the Futures of Christianity in Britain* (London, 1992), 13–29, 20; Davie, *Religion in Britain*, 36.

⁴⁵ *The Sign*, 'Signet' column, January 1971.

proven tradition and a legitimate use of the contemporary.⁴⁶ Never enthusiastic about pop in church, Dakers was nonetheless able in his earlier writing to reserve judgement to the winnowing effects of time, and also to accept it if it was at least well prepared and performed. In 1970, whilst condemning the “pop” element’, he welcomed the exciting ‘New Look’ of Sydney Carter and Malcolm Williamson, and stressed the need for the church periodically to be jolted from its ‘complacent ecclesiastical museum’.⁴⁷

By his retirement in 1988, however, a clear sense of failure in this had set in. In the theological colleges he had lost his fight to moderate the ‘angry young men’ who were guilty of

playing to the gallery, being gimmicky, drawing in the crowds through *ad hoc* free for all unstructured services, with music at its lowest common denominator of quality and performance.⁴⁸

Worst, this had been done ‘in defiance of the established and proven traditions and values’.⁴⁹ He and they clearly spoke different languages and no meeting of minds had been possible, despite Dakers’s perception of his own openness to debate.⁵⁰ By 1988, a decline in ‘traditional’ music, at least in the parishes, had left him feeling that ideas of accommodation

⁴⁶ Lionel Dakers, *Places where they Sing. Memoirs of a Church Musician* (Norwich, 1995).

⁴⁷ Lionel Dakers, *Church Music at the Crossroads* (London, 1970), 129–33.

⁴⁸ Dakers, *Places where they Sing*, 207.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 206–7.

and synthesis of twenty years previously were misplaced. Dakers's reflections are at least in part conditioned by a broader sense of cultural and religious decay: 'the rejection of awe and reverence, the wholesale matiness, the clatter and chatter of so much contemporary worship' sent him reaching for the warden of Barchester and Jeremy

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Taylor, Bunyan and T. S. Eliot as representative of a simpler, more noble past now seemingly irrevocably lost to a cult of the shoddy and unworthy.⁵¹

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Whilst Dakers's pessimism was emblematic of a common trend amongst members of the Anglican musical 'establishment', his negativity towards popular music in church was not universally shared. A paper concerning the attitudes of the musical 'elite' inevitably neglects the widespread adoption of the new music in practice: one 1991 survey estimated that two of the most popular new songbooks of the 1980s – *Mission Praise* and *Songs of Fellowship* – had sold one and three quarter million copies between them in

⁵¹ Ibid., 224–9.

their first six years, many to Anglicans.⁵² Even within the Anglican musical 'establishment', attitudes towards popular music for church were complex and varied. Whilst this loose nexus of individuals and organizations shared a strong sense of responsibility as guardians of the Anglican musical tradition, opinions differed considerably on how far the new music posed a threat or an opportunity. Whilst the criteria for 'good' church music were all too rarely articulated in depth, this paper has highlighted several important polarities in the discussion: the preservation of 'beauty' and rejection of 'vulgarity'; the merits of 'reserve' as distinct from 'impulsiveness' and 'spontaneity'; a search for the 'indigenous' in preference to the 'foreign'; and a juxtaposition of 'reverence' for tradition and excellence with the need for 'relevance' to society.

This last axis cut particularly deep across the Anglican musical establishment, between those who insisted that true worship demanded above all the highest standards (with only certain types of music making the grade) and those who saw music as ultimately subordinate to the needs of the parishioner, and could

⁵² Tony Collins, 'Blockbuster Tales and Gospel Songs', *Church Times*, 1 March 1991, 8.

pragmatically accommodate the new music if it seemed to touch hearts and attract new folk to worship. In this respect the debates on pop music for church from the 1950s to the 1990s appear as yet another chapter in a much longer history of the struggle for power between religious and musical expert, clergy and organist.⁵³ However, even here the lines of debate did not

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neatly fall between ordained minister and professional musician; this should not surprise us, given the extent to which the religious ferment of the post-war period radically re-shaped the ecclesiastical landscape, confounding the expectations of some historians that the Anglican musical establishment's view of 'pop' in church would be uniformly dismissive.

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⁵³ On this relationship, see Lionel Dakers, *A Handbook of Parish Music* (Oxford, 1982), 46–87.