

American Council of Christian Churches
77th Annual convention, October 23-25, 2018
Bible Presbyterian Church of Collingswood, NJ
Resolution on Hillsong Church

Numbers 25 records the terrible consequences God's people faced when they joined themselves with the Moabite and Midianite women in the vile pagan worship of Baal-peor. God destroyed 24,000 Israelites for this violation of the covenant of Sinai, and His judgment would have continued unabated had not Phineas stayed His hand. The Apostle Paul, writing to the Corinthian Church centuries later, may well have had Numbers 25 in mind when he warned Christians: "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." Trying to mix the pagan with the holy in worship is an unequal yoke and therefore, forbidden. Many who would shudder at the thought of a Baal-peor moment seem to have a blind spot when it comes to offering worldly, fleshly music to a holy God. Hillsong Church is just such an organization.

Hillsong originated in 1983 as the Hills Christian Life Center in Sydney New South Wales, Australia, founded by husband and wife co-pastors, Brian and Bobbie Houston. Their small assembly of 45 people increased exponentially over the next 35 years into an international denomination of 140,000 attendees and a large viewership of their Hillsong Channel.

Hillsong's global popularity is driven in large part by their pop-style music, which is produced by three of their music teams: Hillsong Worship, Hillsong United, and Hillsong Young & Free. These groups have received numerous awards for their successful songs. In 2016 Hillsong Young & Free was nominated for a Grammy Award for Best Contemporary Christian Music Album. That same year Hillsong United was named Top Christian Artist at Billboard Music Awards. In January of this year, Hillsong Worship received a Grammy Award for Best Contemporary Christian Song/Performance for its hit song, "What a Beautiful Name."

In a December 2017 article entitled "Hillsong Unites Believers and Those Old Agnostics John, Paul, George and Ringo," *The New York Times* reported on Hillsong NYC's successful Christmas service. The author of the article noted that "more than a thousand worshipers attended a Pentecostal singalong whose set list included Beatles hits like 'Can't Buy Me Love' and 'Here Comes the Sun.'" The newspaper reporter explained what the leaders of Hillsong seemed to have forgotten: "The Beatles did not have a great relationship with Jesus Christ. In 1964, the band's publicist told the *Saturday Evening Post* that the boys were 'completely anti-Christ.'"¹

The true Church, past and present, has wrestled to balance the right use of music in its worship. In the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, John Calvin documents this struggle. He offers a timeless truth: "Songs composed merely to tickle and delight the ear are unbecoming the majesty of the Church and cannot but be most displeasing to God."²

The rise of Hillsong music illustrates that much of today's evangelical church has chosen to "tickle and delight the ear," provoking God's displeasure. Their syncretization of the world's music with "Christian" themes yields a diluted gospel message, exposes the abandonment of biblical separation, grieves the Holy Spirit, and embraces the enemy of Christ in an unequal yoke.

Therefore, the American Council of Christian Churches at its 77th annual convention, October 23-25, 2018, at the Bible Presbyterian Church of Collingswood, NJ, resolves to guard our worship by resisting the pressure to yoke ourselves with worldly music that appeals to the flesh and grieves our holy God. We will heed the Apostle Paul's admonition of Colossians 3:16: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." And we will allow no concord between Christ and Belial as we seek to perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord (2 Cor. 6:15, 7:1).



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¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/20/style/hillsong-christmas-beatles.html>;
accessed 10/16/2018.

² *Institutes*. Book III Chapter XX Sect.31, 32.