

NEWSBYTES

June 14, 2023

No. 1114

Since 2001

A ministry of Calvary Chapel of Appleton

"Let us be alert to the season in which we are living. It is the season of the Blessed Hope, calling for us to cut our ties with the world and build ourselves on this One who will soon appear. He is our hope—a Blessed Hope enabling us to rise above our times and fix our gaze upon Him." Tozer

And the beat goes on...I trust you all are choosing worship tunes wisely... MD

Nearly all top-25 worship songs are tied to 5 megachurches in the past decade

By [Nicole Alcindor](#) Christian Post

Just about every worship song that hit the top-25 music charts from 2010 to 2020 were co-written or popularized by one of five megachurches, according to a recent study.

Worship Leader Research released a study titled "(Almost) 100% of the Top 25 Worship Songs are associated with just a handful of Megachurches," which analyzed where popular worship songs originated.

WLR research reveals that from 2010-2020, only 38 worship songs appeared on the Christian Copyright Licensing International and PraiseCharts top-25 lists. The CCLI lists, researchers said, are seen as the "Billboard charts of church music," while the PraiseCharts is "where churches might purchase chord charts and arrangements."

Of the 38, 37 were either written or popularized by one of five megachurches: Bethel Church, Hillsong, Elevation Church, Passion Church and North Point Community Church.

Of the 37 top-25 songs tied to megachurches, 13 are associated with Bethel, nine with Passion, nine with Hillsong, five with Elevation and one from North Point.

The lone song not written or popularized by the five megachurches was "Great Things" by Phil Wickham. However, the study noted that "Bethel Music's successful collaborations with Wickham preceded the song's release."

Shannon Baker, a postdoctoral fellow in music and digital humanities with Baylor University who assisted with the study's findings, told The Christian Post that the study sought to answer "who are the main players" in contemporary Christian music.

"And then the other part of our study was how is that landscape and environment being engaged by worship leaders," she said in an interview. "How are they interacting with these big artists and the songs that they're putting out? And then, how our worship leaders are engaging with the contemporary worship music?"

Marc Jolicoeur, the worship and creative arts pastor at Moncton Wesleyan Church in New Brunswick, Canada, and another WLR study author, told CP, "I guess we can say we were surprised at how unsurprising the results were."

"You often go into these kinds of projects with a thesis, a hypothesis that you want to test. And then, the goal is to not just try to reinforce that hypothesis. It's really to genuinely put it through the test to see whether or not the data stacks up to the theory," Jolicoeur said.

"A lot of people have this sense that there's a small number of large players as it were in this arena, in this field. But then to just see it so data-driven and just laid out in Excel spreadsheets, like 'oh, wow, there it is. It's really true.' So, that kind of was surprising for me."

The part that fascinated Baker the most about the results was the influence of a song being released as a single. "The fact that by 2017, every song after that that was in the top-25 on our list were all released as singles," Baker said. "For me, I think it's just really interesting to see the way that the industry mechanics have influenced the way the most used songs find their way into the church."

Baker said there are reasons why the most popular songs heard in worship are written by just a handful of songwriters from a few megachurches, labeling Hillsong, Passion, Bethel and Elevation the "big four." She said megachurches are more established than artists who are not affiliated with them.

"You think about Hillsong and Passion. They've existed a lot longer. But I do think that the prominence of these artists, especially Hillsong and Passion, their longevity is due to the fact that people have grown to like those artists and therefore have developed the trust of the songs that they produce," Baker said.

"I do think that a lot of it is that these big four that we call them have developed this trust with their listener base. So that perpetuates when they release the new album or the new single, people are going to gravitate toward that because they've liked their songs in the past, so they're probably going to like their new songs."

Baker added that while Bethel and Elevation came "a little later onto the scene," they were immediately "able to develop that trust to quickly emerge into the songs that made it onto our list. So, I do think a lot of it is trusted sources."

The idea that artists, such as Chris Tomlin, have a trusted fan base has played a role in the trend, according to Baker, who pointed to Tomlin's ties to Passion during the 2010s.

"Eventually, he does leave. But while he was there, I think his connection added another level of trust to Passion as a whole because he was trusted both as a solo artist and with his work with Passion," she said.

Jolicoeur was concerned with the trend, telling CP that this could be bad news for aspiring Christian musicians and artists, as they might lack equal opportunity in the Christian music industry, calling it "a tough game".

In historic vote, Christian and Missionary Alliance approves 'pastor' titles for women

Ian M. Giatti, Christian Post Reporter



Getty Images

The Christian and Missionary Alliance (CMA), a denomination of over 2,000 churches with a statement of faith that aligns with the majority of Evangelical Christianity, has voted to allow women to serve in pastoral roles.

The historic vote was part of CMA's 2023 General Council in Spokane, Washington, last week.

Over 60% of delegates at the General Council approved updating the CMA Statement of Faith to

reflect that, at the discretion of local church leadership, official workers, whether male or female, may use the title of "pastor" or "reverend" for specific ministry roles.

The change means that females may be ordained for pastoral roles with the exception of senior/lead pastor roles, which require male eldership.

CMA Director for Media Relations Peter Burgo said the main reasons for the statement rewrite were to "refresh the language to make it more readable and relevant to future generations" and "clarify through the updated language that, in this era of ambiguity regarding gender, God created male and female."

Before the vote, only male workers were eligible for ordination while female workers were eligible for consecration, Burgo told The Christian Post.

"Since both processes required the same theological and spiritual qualifications, it was voted by accredited delegates at Alliance General Council 2023 that all workers — male and female — who

meet these stated qualifications for ministry shall be considered 'Ordained and Consecrated,'" he wrote via email.

Burgo acknowledged the "varying views" on the topic of women in spiritual leadership held by U.S. Alliance churches, noting that while some churches have been planted by women in positions of leadership, other churches still hold fast to a "strict complementarian position."

"Rather than dictate how all churches must align on these issues, General Council passed resolutions that give local church elder and governing boards more latitude in determining the best course of action for their congregations and ministries," he added. "We believe that because of this freedom, our movement will remain strong and united for generations to come."

In a video blog last month, U.S. Alliance President John Stumbo said, "I believe we're making [the CMA Statement of Faith] more understandable to this generation and strengthening some weaknesses from the past."

"We're passing on something stronger for our next generation of licensing, ordination, consecration, and membership within The Christian and Missionary Alliance family."

As part of the council's proceedings, Burgo said The Alliance reaffirmed several "long-held, deeply rooted beliefs," including:

- God is the creator of all;
- Jesus was sent by the Father;
- The Holy Spirit is the giver of spiritual gifts;
- The fruit of the Spirit is given to us;
- Justification is through faith;
- Deliverance from the dominion of darkness is ours;
- Transfer to the Kingdom is through God's Son alone; and
- Healing is available for the whole person.

The delegation clarified its position on the premillennial view of the return of Christ "without disqualifying those with varying millennial views from ministry within The Alliance."

About 500,000 people worship in 2,000 CMA churches in the U.S., according to the denomination. The church also has 700 workers doing missionary work in 70 countries.

This year's General Council was the culmination of a "national conversation" launched in 2019 to address several topics, including retaining male leadership, titling, and ordination/consecration.

In a 2021 interview, Stumbo [told](#) CP the undertaking would be deliberate and biblical in its execution while avoiding particular hot-button theological debates.

"We're not moving fast, but I do believe we can move together with our policy manual in hand and our Bible on top of it, so to speak," he said. "We didn't, nor will we, attempt the national exegetical debate on Pauline and other relevant passages. Some have thought that if we just open our Bibles together, we'll all come up with the same conclusion."

"I don't believe that to be accurate, because I've witnessed how deeply some of us have wrestled with the Scriptures, coming to different conclusions and holding those conclusions dearly," Stumbo added.

Debauchery And False Prophecies: Irrefutable Proof that Joseph Smith Was a Fraud, And Mormonism is Not Christian

May 31, 2023



One of the most prolific spiritual signs of the end times that point to the soon return of Jesus Christ involves the increasing appearance of false christs and their cults ([Matthew 24:5,11,24](#)). A cult is a counterfeit religion that practices deception to present a likeness to the original. Adherents claim to be genuine Christians while redefining biblical doctrines involving God, Jesus, and salvation to reduce their chances of detection and increase being accepted as authentic Christianity.

One of the most notorious and successful of these religious counterfeiters was Joseph Smith, Jr. (1805-1844), founder of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (LDS), better known as the Mormons. With nearly eight million followers today, the LDS Church continues to grow at an exponential rate, even some 180 years after Smith's death.

However, the cult of Mormonism stands precariously like a house of cards, easily toppled by two simple and unarguable facts: Smith's immoral character and his many false prophecies. To know what these are is to gain spiritual discernment and so not be duped by a false christ "*masquerading as an angel of light*" who was in truth a "*false apostle and deceitful worker*" ([2 Corinthians 11:3-4,13-14](#)).

Smith's Immoral Character

Many historically documented accounts of Joseph Smith's character demonstrate a lifestyle of immorality and debauchery that lie in stark contrast to the biblical man who lives in holiness and obedience to sound biblical doctrine.

Smith's own testimony reveals him to be a serial liar. He claimed at the tender age of 15 to have been visited by "two glorious personages surrounded with a brilliant light which eclipsed the sun at noonday," whom he identified as "the Father and the Son." God Himself supposedly taught young Smith to despise Christian creeds, consider denominations as abominations, and believe that the Bible had been corrupted and so in need of restoration.

Three years later, Smith next claimed that an angel named Moroni directed him to a hill called Cumorah near the village of Manchester, New York to find hidden golden plates. There he would also find the Jewish high priest's Urim and Thummim stones, and by looking through these stones, he could translate the plates from ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics into English. Coincidentally, Smith just happened to find these artifacts right near his home.

To substantiate his discovery, Smith deviously qualified three witnesses — Oliver Cowdery, Martin Harris, and David Whitmer — as those who could testify to the existence of the plates while Smith kept them out of sight from the world during his time translating. Nobody but these four could have viewed the plates, for Smith revealed that the angel Moroni had conveniently returned and delivered them back up to Heaven before anyone else could have a look. These witnesses' wretched moral character makes their testimonies completely dismissible. Both Whitmer and Cowdery were later charged by their fellow Mormons as thieves and counterfeiters, and Harris eventually admitted that he never had really laid eyes on the plates, but instead gazed upon them through his "eyes of faith."

What Smith claimed to have translated were the written words of a man named Mormon who had been a descendant of a Jewish exilic pilgrim to the New World named Lehi. Once Smith had finished "translating" the golden plates into the *Book of Mormon*, he then revealed that John the Baptist had appeared to him to ordain him into the Aaronic priesthood. Now commissioned, Smith launched his new religion — Mormonism — on April 6, 1830, and quickly began amassing followers from people who had become disenfranchised by traditional Christianity.

When it came to leading his new followers, Smith behaved more like a gang leader than a shepherd of God. Anyone who spoke out against Smith's false teachings was attacked with a vengeance. In one historic account, Smith hired two Mormons to kill a man who had been outspoken against his teachings. In another historic account, Smith claimed he had a vision from God that told him that "the redemption of Zion must come by power," and so amassed an army of 200 Mormons to march on Independence, Missouri, where he was summarily routed. Smith's army, called the Danites, was described as "a band of murderers whose vile misdeeds were later written in blood on the blackest pages of the history of Mormonism."

Because of their treasonous actions, Missouri Governor Lilburn W. Boggs ordered General Clark to treat the Mormons as enemies who "must be exterminated or driven from the state, if necessary, for the public good" for "their outrages are beyond description." Porter Rockwell, chief of the Danites, was described as "a powerful man physically, with a mind of narrow perceptions, intense convictions, and utterly depraved motives," who had been charged with close to one-hundred cold-blooded murders.

Polygamy and pedophilia also demonstrated Smith's contempt for God's moral law, especially [Genesis 2:24](#) which defines marriage as being between one man and one woman for life. Smith claimed divine revelation to justify his acts of polygamy, having amassed a collection of some 33 known wives, some as young as 14 years old. This lurid behavior led the townsfolk of Kirtland, Ohio to tar and feather Joseph Smith and his friend, Sidney Rigdon. Polygamy so defined early Mormonism that Smith's successor, Brigham Young, even went as far as blasphemously claiming Jesus Christ was a polygamist who had been married to Mary and Martha, the sisters of Lazarus, as well as to Mary Magdalene.

Wherever Smith and his followers went they sowed discord and violence, even among themselves, eventually causing the Mormons to be forced out of Ohio, then Missouri, settling in Illinois, before

later finally being pushed west into Utah. While in Illinois, Smith ordered his followers to burn down the *Nauvoo Expositor* newspaper for publishing the horrors of Mormon rule and practice. This act of arson led to Joseph Smith's arrest. An angry mob stormed the jail where he was being held and shot Smith and his brother Hyrum. For supposedly being a divinely appointed prophet of God, Smith died like the criminal he was on June 27, 1844.

For all of his supposedly divine proclamations, Smith proved to be a lying, thieving, violent, sexually immoral miscreant who clearly did not live a life as the Apostle Paul preached, "*worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God*" (Colossians 1:10).

Smith's Many False Prophecies

The LDS Church made the following admission concerning their founder's personal claim of being a divinely appointed prophet of God:

By nearly three million persons in many lands, Joseph Smith is today held in remembrance as a Prophet of God. The virtues and achievements of his followers stand as a monument to his divine calling. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has its foundation in the revelations he received, the sacred truths he taught, and the authority of the priesthood restored through him.

Within this foundational LDS statement lies Mormonism's "Achilles' heel" in that the authority of the Mormon priesthood and the validity of their doctrines rest entirely on Joseph Smith's claim to be an inspired prophet of God. That means that should Smith have ever pronounced any prophecy that turned out to be false, he would end up violating Moses' litmus test of 100% accuracy in determining whether a message had been truly spoken by the Lord or not (Deuteronomy 18:21-22). Mormonism's own *Articles of Faith* admits to as much stating, "If his [Smith's] claims to divine appointment be false, forming as they do the foundation of the Church... the superstructure cannot be stable." *Cold Case Christianity* author J. Warner Wallace proves the superstructure to indeed be very unstable by providing just a few of the many false prophecies made by Joseph Smith which prove that he had indeed failed Moses' test:

1. Joseph Smith made open-dated prophecies, such as when he predicted in 1835 that, "The coming of the Lord, which was nigh — even fifty-six years should wind up the scene" (*History of the Church*, Vol. 2, 182).
2. He made several self-fulfilling prophecies, such as when he claimed the Lord instructed him not to translate any more until he had arrived in Ohio. (*D&C 37:1*).
3. Smith made conditional prophecies, such as when he stated that if the people of Ohio repented they would not be severely judged by the Lord (*D&C 40:16-18*).
4. Smith even went as far as to make close-dated, unconditional prophecies, such as when in 1832 he prophesied that an LDS temple would be built in Independence, Missouri within his generation. Almost 200 years later, no temple has ever been built, especially during Smith's generation, forcing the LDS leadership to admit this prophecy never came true. (*D&C Section 84*).

5. Smith also made several fanciful prophecies, such as when in 1837 he proclaimed that the Lord had told him that the moon was inhabited by men and women who looked like the people of the earth, that they lived up to a thousand years old, stood nearly six feet tall, and dressed uniformly like Quakers (*The Oliver B. Huntington Journal*, 1881).

Conclusion

It takes little effort to prove that Joseph Smith's claim to being a divinely called prophet of God was fraudulent. First, Smith's own ungodly and immoral character would cause even the most ardent hedonist to blush. Second, his failed prophecies fall well short of Moses' test in determining a false prophet.

Many more pieces of evidence could be presented that discredit Mormonism. For example, Smith obviously plagiarized the *Book of Mormon* from other sources such as the Bible as well as a novel written earlier by a minister named Solomon Spaulding. Some 3,000 "revisions" were made to Joseph Smith's writings by the LDS church over the subsequent decades. The many historic and linguistic claims Smith made were in time proven to be utterly fictitious, if not ludicrous. The evidences go on and on. Such plentiful arguments should cause Mormons to express serious doubts as to the legitimacy of their false religion and so stop them from walking blindly down the steps leading away from God.