

### Copyright Proposal

As it stands, every Christian who hasn't written a song might agree with every song suggestion I have made in principle and practice. I'd be amazed if they did! In life, perceptions vary, and there is latitude in theology. My best hope is that some will agree with some things, enough to stir things up to the good of all. Me in my small corner, they in theirs. There would still remain the fear of copyright law, and therefore self-censorship. Individuals might sing their own words, even in church, rather than affirm, and internally lodge, what they disagree with—that's my way of coping. However, singing from differing hymn sheets isn't ideal, but what is? Changing the hymn sheet? But that's not so easy in the system we have, which even has feedback checks built in to ensure conformity. Which is fine if songs are perfect, but what if they're not?

Some Christians deny copyright. Do they deny their own pay-packets? A professional writer of Christian songs might have their pay-packet limited to the songs they sell, which can include CDs and royalties. Honest workers deserve their pay (Lk.10:7). Christians should not be pirates, ripping off revenues to the worthy. The claim that the songs are all from God, therefore public domain, is a disingenuous guise for theft. OK, God makes it grow, but humans provide the labour (1 Cor.3:8). I affirm copyright & royalties. I disaffirm the idea that we must endure what is on the plate, rather than talking with the chefs. Here is my proposal for good change.

Firstly, that we reject the silly notion that every writer writes as a scribe of God, what some call mechanical inspiration. Songs are not Scripture, no matter how in the spirit the writer was. Second, that every song be placed on a global database, which along with administration will be paid for from royalties and be given sole right to authorise the use of its material. Third, that everyone may log suggestions to the database, which each author (or named person) must consider, and everyone may read: obvious anti-Christian comments may be deleted—there are nasties about. Each suggestion must be either from the new default song, be allowed to be used by all as a variant, or totally rejected from corporate use. Variants would be clearly available to the public. A substantive reason must be given for all total rejection.

That as a dynamic process, each songwriter posts their song, duly registered for copyright and public use, onto a global site. It would have green traffic light status. At that stage their songs may be used "as is". Remuneration could be made annually through the global administration site, or a Regional sector, divided pro-rata according to licensee feedback of songs the licensees have used annually. User accountability is fine. However, writer accountability also requires some commitment. Global policy which all registrees buy into, should require variations suggested by users, to be lodged on a Variations page, along with reasons for variations. Songwriters would be obliged to examine the suggestions, and reject them (red light), permit them (amber light), or adopt them (green light), giving their reasoning for their decision. Variations would have a tentative status permitting the user full use, and not affecting royalties. Variations should be instantly passed to the songwriter, who would have say, a 6 month span in which to declare their feelings. If none is given, variation would automatically become permitted by default, allowing global licensee option to use the variation. Songwriters could authorise a person or persons to step in should illness or death disable them from responding directly. Permission should be granted when they improve, or at least do not substantially spoil, the authorial aim of the lyricist, who as a responsible worker should be obliged to publically explain any reason to withhold permission. Variations could have a like/dislike option for licensees to vote, and their suggestees should be able to make a limited response within 6 months to any reasons given for dismissal. After one year, a dismissed suggestion would not be reconsidered throughout copyright. To adopt a suggestion would be to then make that suggestion part of the default lyrics of the song. The sanity of the songwriters could be publically assessed by how they respond to suggestions. The suggestees should have no stake in the copyright, so will have helped on a not-for-profit basis. They could be acknowledged within the global site and even gain credibility points. The system as stands is a mess loaded against the church, and too close to Pilate's *ὁ γεγραφα γεγραφα*/*ho gegrapha gegrapha* for my comfort. The church deserves a better deal.