2013

Unlocking the Paradox of Christian Metal Music

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UNLOCKING THE PARADOX OF CHRISTIAN METAL MUSIC

DISSERTATION

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the College of Fine Arts at the University of Kentucky

By
Eric Scott Strother
Lexington, Kentucky

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Lexington, Kentucky

2013
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UNLOCKING THE PARADOX OF CHRISTIAN METAL MUSIC

In 1984, Stryper released its first album *The Yellow and Black Attack* and introduced audiences to a different kind of heavy metal. Instead of lyrics about sex, alcohol, and Satan, Stryper sang about Jesus, salvation, and God. While there were a number of fans ready for this change more were not. Members of the Church as well as members of the metal subculture were in agreement that Christianity and heavy metal were incompatible. Despite these objections, however, more bands emerged, and Christian metal became a significant genre within the Christian music industry. These bands presented Christian-oriented lyrics within the full spectrum of metal subgenres.

This dissertation examines the ways in which Christian metal bands create an intersection between Christianity and the heavy metal subculture, infusing Christianity within the textual, visual, and musical structures of heavy metal. The author employs Deena Weinstein’s “metal code” to frame the analysis. The metal code includes the textual elements (band names, album and song titles, and song lyrics); the visual elements (band logos; album covers; and the various elements of the concert experience including the bands’ appearances, the staging, the interactions with the fans, and music videos); and the musical elements (timbre, modality, formal structure, and production of the songs and albums) that set metal apart from other musical genres. The dissertation also examines the concept of bands as “metal missionaries” that immerse themselves within the heavy metal subculture for the purpose of bringing the Christian message of hope and salvation. The author concludes that even though Christian metal bands modify aspects of elements that are otherwise incompatible with their Christian beliefs and message, they still maintain a sense of stylistic integrity that gives them credibility within the heavy metal subculture and allows them to fulfill their mission.
KEYWORDS: Music, heavy metal, Christianity, popular music, contemporary Christian music
UNLOCKING THE PARADOX OF CHRISTIAN METAL MUSIC

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January 16, 2013
To my wife, Tammy, and our precious sons, Jacob and Andrew: I love you more than I could ever imagine is possible. You are my joy.
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S.D.G.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

“Hair is long and the screams are loud and clear/Clothes are tight, earrings dangling from their ears./No matter how we look, we’ll always praise His name/If you believe, you’ve got to do the same.”\(^1\)

From the time Stryper’s *The Yellow and Black Attack* made heavy metal a genre with which the Christian music industry would need to contend, critics decried it as worldly and satanic, claiming there was nothing “Christian” about it. The band’s appearance – bare chests, spandex, and makeup – drew criticism from those who believed the look encouraged a sexualized view of the artists that was intended to arouse the audience physically rather than spiritually. The fact that Stryper, along with many other bands, rarely smiled in promotional photos drew criticism because a smile was perceived as essential evidence of the “joy of the Lord” within a person. The album covers drew criticism because of their violent, chaotic, and sometimes grotesque artwork. Even the largely evangelical content of the lyrics, complete with biblical references, was not enough to win over the critics who focused on the sometimes-violent imagery that was present. Ministers across the United States began speaking out against this supposed attempt by Satan to infiltrate the church and pollute the minds of Christian youth while adding albums by groups such as Stryper and Barren Cross to their bonfires. While much

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of this opposition has faded over the years, there are still pockets of opposition to Christian rock—and especially to heavy metal—in American churches.

One unintended consequence of this strong, vocal opposition was (and remains) that it created an intensely loyal fan base for Christian metal that vigorously defended the music against its adversaries. While the general perception was that heavy metal and Christianity were inherently incompatible, the music’s supporters claimed that heavy metal was a viable tool for reaching “the lost,” recalling the words of Larry Norman from little more than a decade earlier: “Why should the devil have all the good music?”\(^2\)

Supporters defended the bands’ appearances as necessary for ministry, claiming they were following the Apostle Paul’s example by becoming “all things to all [people] so that by all possible means” they might bring people to salvation,\(^3\) and argued that fans of heavy metal are going to be more receptive to the message if it comes from someone with long hair wearing black leather than from someone with short, neatly trimmed hair and a three-piece suit. Fans also defended the imagery by pointing out the amount of violence and graphic depictions found in the Bible, such as Queen Jezebel being thrown from a window and eaten by dogs,\(^4\) the description of Judas Iscariot’s death in Acts,\(^5\) and many of the images from the book of Revelation.

\(^2\) Larry Norman was part of the founding generation of contemporary Christian music. He is generally considered the father of Christian rock. The sentiment of the quote has been attributed to numerous other Christian leaders, including Martin Luther and Charles Wesley, although there is no written record of these men ever saying this. Two documented instances that predate Norman come from the British evangelist Rowland Hill and General William Booth, co-founder of the Salvation Army.

\(^3\) 1 Corinthians 9:22 (NIV).

\(^4\) 2 Kings 9:33-36
At the same time, heavy metal fans outside the church were resistant to the idea of heavy metal music with Christian-oriented lyrics as well. Some heavy metal fans saw Stryper and other Christian metal bands as novelty acts that should not be taken seriously. Other fans viewed these bands with hostility, believing that Christian metal was a watered down, false metal because metal was about evil and rebellion. Still other fans, however, took a neutral position on Christian metal, claiming that as long as it is good quality music there is not a problem with these bands singing about Jesus. They saw little difference between bands that sang about Jesus and bands that sang about Satan or any other philosophical position—as long as the music “rocks,” it did not matter what the lyrics advocate.

Historically, then, Christian metal has found itself uniquely positioned between the Church on one hand and the heavy metal subculture on the other, not exclusive to either, yet desiring to be fully accepted by each. Christian metal bands create an intersection between these two worldviews that appear to be diametrically opposed to each other by infusing Christianity into the musical, visual, and textual structures of heavy metal. This study will demonstrate ways in which they accomplish this. This present work is important because Christian music has become a significant cultural phenomenon since the 1970s, yet it remains understudied. As with the general market,

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5 Acts 1:18
6 “The Church” (capitalized) is used to refer to the body of Christian believers in a general sense. While the Catholic and Orthodox Churches tend to view “the Church” as being exclusive to their particular branch of Christianity, most Protestant churches tend to hold a more inclusive view of “the Church” as anyone who expresses faith in Christ regardless of denomination or sect. This study will use the term in this broader, more inclusive sense.
heavy metal in the Christian market is a marginalized genre so it is even less frequently examined than mainstream Christian music. Thus, the present study will contribute to understanding this body of music within the contexts of both popular music and sacred music.

Methodology of the Study

In order to frame this analysis, the present study will focus on what sociologist Deena Weinstein calls “the metal code.” The metal code does not define rules that govern heavy metal, but instead offers a set of criteria that demarcates heavy metal from other musical genres. Weinstein divides this code into three dimensions. The first dimension consists of the verbal elements, including band names, song and album titles, and song lyrics. The second encompasses the visual elements: band logos, album covers, costuming, staging, performance practice, and music videos. The third and final dimension is comprised of the sonic elements of metal, such as the instrumentation, vocal styles, and volume. By analyzing Christian metal in light of this code, the author will be able to consider issues of stylistic integrity and consistency.

Text content

Stylistic integrity includes the textual components because they are critical to popular music. Because names are important ways bands identify and advertise themselves to potential listeners, it is important that Christian metal band names are

consistent with those of their general market peers. They need to have the same spirit and character as those in the general market. Likewise song and album titles need to be consistent and not be awkwardly conspicuous on the shelves beside general market albums. The largest body of text to consider is the lyrics to the songs themselves. It is expected that vocabularies and themes of Christian metal lyrics and general market metal lyrics will not be identical; however Christian metal artists can use language that is stylistically consistent with the general market as well as with their professed Christian beliefs. The present study will evaluate the textual aspect of Christian music in terms of thematic consistency. Even though the language may be different, Christian metal lyrics still need to fit within standard metal themes to maintain stylistic integrity.

Visual imagery

Popular music relies heavily on image, so stylistic integrity requires that the visual codes be met. Even before the advent of MTV and music videos, visual images were attached to music by way of album cover art and artist logos, a practice that continues today. The concert experience is also a significant visual identifier through the appearance of the stage as an environment in which the performance takes place and the appearance of the musicians as they perform. Since the video revolution in the music industry, the music video has been a primary visual identifier in addition to being a surrogate for the concert experience. This study will consider each of these as a contributor to the overall visual image of Christian metal. As with text, they will be examined within the context of standard metal imagery.
Finally, it is important to examine how the sound of Christian metal recordings compares with that of their general market counterparts. The goal is not to “prove” that Christian metal sounds exactly like general market metal, but rather to demonstrate how Christian metal bands adopt the stylistic musical characteristics established by general market metal. There are three aspects of the sound that will be considered in this study: timbre, modality, and formal structure.

Timbre is the primary element of the music under examination. Each musical genre exhibits sets of characteristic instrumental and vocal sounds and inflections, and these characteristic sounds aid listeners in situating the music within a style or genre. The timbral aspects go beyond the instruments and voices being used to include the styling and coloring of those individual instruments and voices as they combine to produce the whole aural product. Again, the goal is not to argue that Christian metal sounds exactly like general market metal, but instead to demonstrate that uses these sonic elements in ways that are consistent with general market metal.

Modality is another important component of the overall metal sound. This study will treat modality in a general sense of “majorness” or “minorness” rather than looking at particular tonal centers because the researcher is more concerned with the sound modality contributes to the songs rather than any harmonic function it serves. There is a greater tendency for most metal subgenres to use a minor-sounding mode—Dorian,

8 There are very few instances of Christian metal bands being at the vanguard of new metal trends, so it is fair to assume that Christian metal bands are following trends established by general market ones and not the other way around.
Phrygian, Aeolian and Locrian\textsuperscript{9}—than other rock genres, but since some within Christian circles disparage minor modes,\textsuperscript{10} there is a possibility that Christian metal will go against the standard of general market metal.

Formal structure will also be considered in a broad sense, incorporating rhythmic and melodic patterns as formal elements. Most rock songs use some variation on a verse-chorus structure,\textsuperscript{11} so there is little reason to focus on the actual form. The rhythmic and melodic patterns are considered formal because they are markers of style that function structurally within the overall structure. The riff is a prominent example of these patterns that will be a focus of this examination.

\textit{Musician as Missionary}

Another significant point of reference for this study is the role of “missionary” in the Christian church. Many Christian metal bands believe they need to look, act, and

\textsuperscript{9} Robert Walser, \textit{Running with the Devil: Power, Gender, and Madness in Heavy Metal Music}, Music/Culture (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1993). 46. Locrian is often considered the “diminished” mode because the tonic chord is a diminished chord instead of a major or minor one. Power metal is an exception as it often uses the triumphant sound of major modes in connection with its heroic lyric themes.

\textsuperscript{10} Major modes are often viewed as expressing joy while minor ones are viewed as expressing sorrow. Anecdotally, this author attended a church where the song “They’ll Know We Are Christians by our Love” (usually performed in E minor) was essentially blacklisted because a few vocal members of the congregation did not think it sounded “joyful enough.”

\textsuperscript{11} Verse-chorus form consists of two main alternating and contrasting sections of music. The verse repeats with different lyrics throughout the song. The chorus repeats with the same (or very similar) lyrics. More often than not the chorus is the focus of the song: the chorus is often louder and more memorable melodically than the verse and the lyrics of the verse direct the listener to the lyrics of the chorus.
sound like general market metal bands because they see themselves as more than just musicians and entertainers; they see themselves as “missionaries” in a mission field that desperately needs the message they are bringing. The concept of a missionary is a fitting representation because missionaries dedicate their lives to the work they feel called to do, and as a result, they immerse themselves in the culture of the people to whom they are ministering by learning their language and adopting their dress and social customs.

The concept of being “metal missionaries” has existed from the early days of Christian metal. Bloodgood’s 1985 demo was titled Metal Missionaries and Lightforce’s 1988 album Mystical Thieves contained the song “Metal Missionary,” which encouraged people who had been involved in heavy metal before becoming Christians to “Go into all the world / The darkest corners will have heard / That Christ has died to save their soul.” The missionary concept is also expressed by Sacred Warrior in the song “Minister by Night” from its 1990 album Wicked Generation. In this song, the band boldly proclaims it is “taking the Word to places, places where you [the band’s critics] would not go.” The song further defines those places as “the front lines” where the band is “surrounded by the fruits of sin that consume your daughter and son.”

Adopting the identity of “missionary” provides bands with a sense of perspective as to why they are doing what they are doing. Carlos Batista of the band Antidemon

12 A missionary is someone who is sent into an area to perform an evangelistic or humanitarian work, and it is generally considered an immersive calling.
13 Following this album, Lightforce changed its sound and became the first Christian death metal band, Mortification.
16 Ibid.
described his band’s purpose as “missionaries and teachers that show the way to heaven.”17 Identifying as a missionary also helps these bands cope with some of the criticism they face from detractors by connecting them with a group of people whose work is respected by the church, but who also experience some criticism for the way they go about that work. Alan Popoli, vocalist for the hardcore band Debtor, referenced this situation when he said, “Missionaries who adopt cultural forms to embody the gospel are always misunderstood by those outside those cultural forms. It’s inevitable…”18 Caleb Snead from the band Divide the Sea adds, “We have a missionary friend in an undisclosed country that wrote us a long letter comparing her trials to ours and really encouraged us, that what we are doing is just as important as what she is doing.”19 By analyzing the work of Christian metal bands within the framework of missionary work, the author will provide a context to explain the bands’ choices in terms of their Christian profession.20

Terminology

For the purposes of this study, popular music is divided into two markets: general and Christian. The term “general market music” refers to music directed at and marketed

20 It is important to consider that not all Christian bands consider themselves missionaries or “ministry bands.” Some bands simply consider themselves to be metal bands that write songs that are consistent with their Christian faith.
toward the general population. The Christian music market refers to music that is primarily directed at a Christian audience and is marketed through church-related channels. This definition bypasses the debates over legitimacy of musical style and lyric content and moves directly to audience expectations. Consumers assume that any music they see at a Christian retailer (i.e., Family Christian Stores, Lifeway Christian Stores, RadRockers.com) is “Christian music,” and they treat it as such even when they see it at a mainstream retailer, such as Walmart or FYE. Generally speaking, there is an expectation from both the industry and the fans that the lyric content will be consistent with biblical teachings and will be free from profanity and other content deemed “immoral.” This study will use the word “Christian” as an adjective (i.e., Christian rock, Christian band) to refer to objects within the scope of the contemporary Christian market.

The term “secular” is a common term used in discussions of contemporary Christian music. In its purest sense, the term “secular” simply refers to that which is not considered “sacred,” or set apart, usually for the purposes of religion. Unfortunately this term, like “mundane” and Emile Durkheim’s term “profane” (both of which initially held similar meanings to that of “secular”), has been layered with negative associations and politicized to the point that it is no longer useful as an objective category. In the discourse of Evangelical Christianity, “secular” is frequently associated with the evil,

21 This is also how Nielsen SoundScan calculates album sales. If an album is carried in a Christian retailer, the Christian music industry can count sales of that album from any retailer toward their totals. For more information on this see Anthony Klatt, "The Emergence of Contemporary Christian Music as a Force in Popular Culture," in Meeting of the Southwest and Texas Chapters of the Popular Culture Association (Cameron University, Lawton, OK1987).
vulgar things of “the world” which are diametrically opposed to the things of God. From this perspective, secular music is not merely different from sacred music; it is morally deficient and influences those who listen to it to do immoral things. Because of the moral implications, this study will only use “secular” as a term to reflect that particular viewpoint and not as a general descriptor.

The terms “heavy metal” and “hard rock” also figure prominently in this study. Heavy metal is a musical genre that emphasizes loudness, distorted guitars, aggressive vocals, and visceral bass lines that are felt as well as heard. It has become common practice to refer to this music as simply “metal” in more recent years, reserving the label “heavy metal” for classic metal, so this present study will adopt that usage as well. “Hard rock” is a more ambiguous term. For some, hard rock is a genre separate and distinct from metal. While it also features loud volume and electric guitars, hard rock places more emphasis on melody than on the riffs common in heavy metal. Others consider hard rock to be an umbrella term encompassing all rock that emphasizes high volume and distorted guitar sounds, such as metal, arena rock, and psychedelic blues. More recently, the term “hard music” has replaced this general usage of hard rock as an overarching category that includes the various metal, punk, industrial, and hard rock styles. This study will follow more recent conventions by using “hard rock” as a genre label and “hard music” as the umbrella term. In addition to the overall metal genre, this study will examine several subgenres. Appendix A provides an overview of the different subgenres and their key characteristics, influences, and representative bands.

While there are other labels for the musical genre at the center of this project, the author has chosen the term “Christian metal” for its simplicity and relative clarity. Other
commonly used labels include “white metal” and “heavenly metal.” “White metal,” metal with overtly Christian lyrics and imagery, was coined in the late 1980s in opposition to the label “black metal,” which referred to metal with overtly satanic lyrics and imagery. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, however, the two terms ceased to be analogous as black metal became a distinct musical genre while white metal continued to be used to refer to Christian metal in general. “Heavenly metal,” which is used less frequently, is an attempt to make the genre more palatable to the Christian market by “sanctifying” its name.\textsuperscript{22}

Another term in need of clarification is “scene,” which is commonly found in the literature of popular music studies and will be used in this one as well. Scene refers to the space in which a set of interactions takes place. It is a literal, physical space as well as a figurative, communal space. In terms of music it can be defined as “the contexts in which clusters of producers, musicians, and fans collectively share their common musical tastes and collectively distinguish themselves from others.”\textsuperscript{23}

One final term that needs to be clarified is the usage of the word “first,” as in “the first thrash band.” Since it is impossible to know every band in existence, the author is using the distribution of recordings as a means of documenting bands. Thus, the designation of a band as the “first” should be interpreted to mean that band was the first to have released a distributed recording.

\textsuperscript{22} This idea of redeeming objects or activities by changing their names can also be seen in the “harvest parties” and “Watch Nights” churches host near the end of October where children are encouraged to dress in costumes and are given candy. \textsuperscript{23} Andy Bennett and Richard A. Peterson, eds., \textit{Music Scenes: Local, Translocal, and Virtual} (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press., 2004).
Review of the Literature

Contemporary Christian Music

Contemporary Christian music has only recently captured the attention of the academic community. The foundational scholarly writings on contemporary Christian music are William D. Romanowski’s dissertation “Rock ‘n’ Religion: A Socio-cultural Analysis of the Contemporary Christian Music Industry,”24 and Jay Howard and John Streck’s book Apostles of Rock: The Splintered World of Contemporary Christian Music.25 Both address the contemporary Christian music industry from a socio-cultural perspective, but each has a different focus. Romanowski’s work examines the development of the industry and its relationship to the general market music industry,26 and provides information on the state of contemporary Christian music from its origins in the late 1960s through the late 1980s. While he calls his work a “socio-cultural” study, it focuses more on the economics of the industry, particularly marketing and sales, rather than on its social or cultural impact. Romanowski’s coverage of the industry in the late 1970s into the early 1980s chronicles the industry changes that were taking place that made the modern conception of contemporary Christian music possible; the study is particularly significant because these years are seldom documented. The present study

26 Romanowski has since contributed articles to various magazines concerning contemporary Christian music.
uses Romanowski’s work primarily to provide background information on the nature of the industry in that transitional period.

In *Apostles of Rock*, Howard and Streck approach contemporary Christian music from a theoretical framework synthesized from the works of sociologist Howard Becker and theologian H. Richard Niebuhr. From Becker’s work they borrow the concept of an “art world” as a network of artists, producers, audiences, and critics who collaborate to produce art. From Niebuhr they take the theoretical working-out of the Christian dilemma of being “in the world, but not of it.” They view contemporary Christian music as an art world that is splintered along three lines: “separational,” “integrational,” and “transformational.”

The “separational rationale” attempts to establish a strong distinction between Christian and non-Christian culture while also maintaining a commitment to evangelism. This perspective leads to isolation, the authors conclude, and the music becomes more for the enjoyment and edification of Christians than for the evangelism of non-Christians. Artists who fall into this category are most likely to use lyrics with overt Christian references and to speak (or preach) about Jesus between songs. They are also likely to conclude concerts with an “altar call” in which audience members are invited to come down to the front of the stage to meet with someone who will pray with them and lead them in the process of becoming a Christian.

27 In Christian discourse, evangelism refers to the practice of persuading people to convert to Christianity, and discipleship refers to teaching converts the doctrines and practices of the faith.
The “integrational rationale” positions the music and artists as “infiltrators” into non-Christian culture. From this perspective, artists attempt to integrate themselves and their Christian beliefs into the culture as a whole so that their messages will reach those who otherwise would not hear them. These are the artists most likely to be criticized by those who favor the separational rationale for “selling out,” or putting financial gain above ministry. Much of that criticism is born out of the tendency of artists who fall into this category to sing lyrics that address issues of self-esteem, social awareness and responsibility, and other themes that fall into the “Christian worldview” approach. They are also less likely to preach from the stage or to give an altar call at the end of the concert.

The “transformational rationale” draws from each of the other two rationales, but also incorporates the idea that inherently Christian or non-Christian art does not exist because there is no inherent morality in art. Instead, art should be defined in terms of its aesthetic quality and its relation to “truth.” From this perspective, artists seek to create “good” music – music of high aesthetic quality – rather than using music as a tool to promote their beliefs. Instead of presenting truth in catchy phrases or encouraging narratives, artists in this vein attempt to reveal truth through allowing the listeners (and the artists) to discover something new about themselves. Howard and Streck draw the parallel to the parables found in the teachings of Jesus, which required his listeners to look below the surface of the story in order to find the truth contained therein. The separationalists and the integrationalists often criticize this rationale because transformationalists do not claim to have an agenda for their music and often even reject the notion of their music as a ministry.
*Apostles of Rock* provides a system for categorizing contemporary Christian artists according to their views on the role of Christians in popular music and the stated goals of their music. Generally speaking, “separational” artists believe that Christian musicians should work entirely within the Christian market and that those who are involved in the general market (by signing with general market record labels and touring with general market artists) are violating the Apostle Paul’s admonition against being yoked with unbelievers. “Integrational” artists view the general market as a mission field in which they are called to minister, and by working within the general market, they are being obedient to Christ’s call to go into the entire world. “Transformational” artists believe the distinction between the Christian market and the general market is artificial and serves only to exclude listeners and limit audiences. Although they do not deny the possibility that God can work through their music, they reject the idea that music should be used as a tool for evangelism or discipleship. While this present study is not concerned with the formal delineations offered in *Apostles of Rock*, it does recognize that the imagery and language these bands use likely differs depending on the category into which they fall.

Most dissertations and journal articles on the topic examine contemporary Christian music in relation to spiritual issues or marketing, while others consider it within the wider subject of the changing face of hymnody and religious song. A few articles have examined particular songs through semiotics and communication theory, such as

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28 2 Corinthians 6:14. This admonition is often cited to discourage Christians from being involved in social or business relationships with non-Christians.

29 Matthew 28:19
Jon Radwan’s articles “Religious Identity via Pop Music: ‘Shine’”\textsuperscript{30} and “Music and Mediated Religious Identity: ‘Jesus Freak.’”\textsuperscript{31} The first article examines the song “Shine” by the Christian pop-rock band Newsboys by relating its musical and lyric content to the concept of creating religious identity. The lyrics describe a transformation from being an outsider and having others shine their light on you (a metaphor for evangelism) to being an insider and shining your light on others. Musically, the catchy hook-laden chorus serves as the means by which the listener is drawn into the song and then participates in singing along. Radwan concludes that the musical setting of the text is a metaphor for the text itself. As the listener changes from a passive listener to one who sings along, he or she is symbolically representing the transformation described by the lyrics. The second article also examines the relationship between the lyrics and their musical setting as they relate to creating identity. Radwan ties this creation of identity to DC Talk’s transformation from a rap-oriented act to a rock-oriented one. This present work will draw from Radwan’s methodology in its exploration of the texts and the symbolic structures of some metal songs.

Eric Gormly’s “Evangelizing Through Appropriation: Toward a Cultural Theory on the Growth of Contemporary Christian Music” attempts to explain the expansion of the genre as the result of Evangelical culture adopting and adapting elements of


mainstream culture. Gormly argues that Evangelical Christianity has always been eager to adopt technology and the media for the purposes of evangelism and contemporary Christian music is simply a continuation of that trend. He also notes that music is merely one of many products (books, clothing, video games, computer software, etc.) being created and marketed to Christians primarily through Christian booksellers.

The present study uses this article to assist in describing the blending of Christian music with general market music.

Most writing on contemporary Christian music comes from journalists in trade magazines such as Billboard and Rolling Stone and the industry’s own CCM Magazine, Syndicate (originally Harvest Rock Syndicate), HM Magazine, and Heaven’s Metal. The articles in general market publications are usually artist profiles and album reviews. There are also a number of articles that discuss the genre as a whole, such as Billboard’s stories on the rise of indie labels in the Christian music industry, new marketing strategies by Christian record labels, and the rise of “holy hip-hop”. These articles provide information about the artists and their music that would not necessarily be included in an academic study. Many articles in Christian music magazines address problems within the industry from the perspectives of the magazines’ editors and the

artists they cover. More pointed criticism tends to come from *Syndicate* and *HM* rather than *CCM Magazine*, which is considered the “official” magazine of the industry.  

Several books on contemporary Christian music have been written by industry insiders who are attempting either to chronicle the music or to provide commentary on it. One of the earliest is Paul Baker’s *Why Should the Devil Have All the Good Music?* Baker’s work contains many quotes and anecdotes from industry insiders and artists as well as airplay information from the 1970s, which makes this book a significant history of the early years of contemporary Christian music. Baker does not provide any critical analysis of the music or the fledgling industry, preferring instead to document it in a journalistic manner. In doing so, Baker provides some biographical information on the

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34 *CCM Magazine* is directed at the mainstream contemporary Christian music audience and focuses on more mainstream artists, like Amy Grant, Michael W. Smith, the Newsboys, and the new wave of worship leader-artists. Artists working largely outside the mainstream (such as metal and underground hip-hop artists) do appear in *CCM Magazine*, but they are rarely featured. The magazine originally contained sales and airplay charts in addition to articles and reviews. It has operated as a digital-only publication since 2009, and has expanded its coverage to include general market music and films that may be considered “positive” or “family-friendly.” *Syndicate*, now defunct, also included mainstream artists, but traditionally focused on alternative music and Christian artists working in the general market, such as Bruce Cockburn, T-Bone Burnett, and Kings X. *HM Magazine* covers “hard music” (metal, punk, hardcore, goth rock, etc.) with artist interviews, album reviews, and the readers’ favorite “What So-and-So Sez” interview that features interviews with general market musicians focused around different religious and moral issues. Nearly all interviews conclude with direct questions about the artists’ views on Jesus. *Heaven’s Metal* has recently been resurrected as a fanzine to focus on the resurgent 1980s-era Christian heavy metal bands that are currently experiencing a revival and those new bands that play in that style rather than those that play more modern metal styles.

35 Paul Baker, *Why Should the Devil Have All the Good Music?* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1979). Baker was the creator of “A Joyful Noise,” one of the early syndicated Jesus music radio programs, and his book chronicles the development of contemporary Christian music through the 1970s.
artists, chronicles industry “firsts,” and describes how the structures of the industry developed. For the present study, Baker’s book serves primarily as a source of background information on the development of the Christian music industry.

Another of these insider books, John Thompson’s *Raised by Wolves*, focuses on Christian rock artists from the early 1970s to the turn of the twenty-first century. Thompson avoids discussing Christian pop artists (Amy Grant, Michael W. Smith, Rebecca St. James, and comparable artists) and focuses exclusively on rock artists. As a founding member of the alternative Christian band The Wayside, Thompson emphasizes the alternative artists who inspired him, including Daniel Amos, Mark Heard, and the 77s, more than the mainstream Christian rock groups like Petra, Newsboys, and DeGarmo & Key. He also briefly addresses hard rock/metal and rap. As a musician participating in the industry, Thompson does offer a somewhat critical look at the music; however, the emphasis of the work is to chronicle rather than to critique. Thompson’s

37 “Pop” is viewed as a more commercial, softer alternative to rock. Musically, pop tends to emphasize acoustic instruments and keyboard sounds, whereas rock tends to emphasize electric guitars.
38 “Alternative” rock is a genre rooted outside the mainstream in the “underground” and “independent” music scenes. It covers a wide variety of styles in some way connected to punk in style or attitude.
39 Daniel Amos is a band that began playing in the California country-rock style popularized by the Eagles, although it quickly transformed into a new wave act in the 1980s. Mark Heard was a folk-influenced singer songwriter. The 77s was an eclectic rock band rooted in the blues that was popular among a group of devoted fans but virtually unknown in the Christian market as a whole.
40 DeGarmo & Key was a collaboration between keyboardist Eddie DeGarmo and guitarist Dana Key. Their early recordings were influenced by the blues of their native Memphis, Tennessee, while their later recordings moved toward a polished pop rock sound.
criticism is primarily concerned with whether or not artists are trying to create good artistic music or simply to produce something that will sell. As with Baker’s work, Thompson’s book provides background information on some artists for the present study.

Charlie Peacock’s *At the Crossroads: An Insider’s Look at the Past, Present, and Future of Contemporary Christian Music* is a manifesto on the state of contemporary Christian music. Peacock, a long-time recording artist, producer, and label executive, examines the theology and ideologies that have shaped the industry, which he believes have been problematic because they are incomplete in terms of the Christian mission and what he calls a “comprehensive kingdom perspective.” In his words, the lack of a comprehensive kingdom perspective has “fail[ed] to provide the participants of CCM [Contemporary Christian Music] with a sufficient theological or ideological foundation from which to create music, ministry, and industry.” He encourages everyone involved in contemporary Christian music – artists, producers, writers, and fans – to cultivate a comprehensive kingdom perspective and to return to a true Christian mission based on such a worldview. For Peacock, this means that music should be viewed as “art” rather than as a tool and those responsible for creating music should attempt to create good art, not propaganda to further a cause. Peacock is one of the artists Howard and Streck cite as

42 “Comprehensive kingdom perspective” refers to examining the world through the lens of the entirety of Scripture in order to see it the way God does. It is similar to the idea of a “biblical worldview.”
a prime example of their transformational perspective, so this book provides important insight into that viewpoint.

Andrew Beaujon’s *Body Piercing Saved My Life* provides a different view of the Christian music industry. Unlike Baker, Thompson, and Peacock who were looking at contemporary Christian music from within, Beaujon, a contributor to *Spin* magazine, examines the phenomenon from the outside. This vantage point enables him to question the assumptions insiders take for granted (i.e., refraining from using profanity in lyrics and the presumed pro-life, non-smoking, or non-drinking perspectives and lifestyles of performers). Beaujon provides an alternative explanation for the overall lack of success contemporary Christian artists have had in the general market. Rather than relying on the common “insider” explanation – religious or anti-Christian bias – Beaujon posits that many contemporary Christian artists write songs that are irrelevant to non-Christian audiences. Those who have been successful (Amy Grant, Jars of Clay, P.O.D., Switchfoot, et al.) are the ones who have written songs about issues and subjects that are recognized as relevant to most people, such as life, love, and happiness, rather than songs about an abstract relationship with an unseen God or songs that preach to listeners about their sinfulness.

While *Body Piercing* provides a different perspective on contemporary Christian music, the research seems slanted toward the fringes. Beaujon claims to be going “inside” the phenomenon of Christian rock, but focuses more on those who stand out

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45 *Spin* is a major general market music magazine similar to *Rolling Stone.*
from the mainstream of contemporary Christian music, such as David Bazan of the band Pedro the Lion and Sufjan Stevens (Beaujon devotes an entire chapter to each), rather than on those who define the music in the Christian market.\textsuperscript{46} Instead of “getting inside” the industry, Beaujon seems satisfied to concentrate on those within Christian rock with whom he can better relate – those who share his skepticism about the idea of a Christian music industry. He does devote one chapter to praise and worship music, which he considers music for the insiders and even describes his lack of comfort in being an outsider in that setting. For the present research, Beaujon’s book serves to provide a perspective on how some outside the Christian music industry view it.

Falling between the insiders and total outsiders is Mark Joseph. Joseph is a contributor to \textit{Billboard}, Beliefnet,\textsuperscript{47} and CNN and has written two performer-centered books about the Christian music industry. His books, \textit{The Rock and Roll Rebellion} and \textit{Faith, God, and Rock 'n' Roll},\textsuperscript{48} both focus on telling the stories of individual performers. Joseph believes the Christian music industry exists in order to make money from Christian audiences more than to provide a forum for artists with a Christian worldview to create their music. In \textit{Rebellion}, he supports his belief by relating the accounts of artists who came into the Christian music industry during its early days and

\textsuperscript{46} Pedro the Lion is viewed with suspicion by a large segment of the Christian market because many songs include profanity.
\textsuperscript{47} Beliefnet.com is a non-denominational religious website.
arguing that they were pressured to leave or avoid the general market in favor of the Christian one.

Joseph groups artists into categories based on their relationship to the industry. The “Defectors” are those who were working in the general market when they converted to Christianity and subsequently left that market for the Christian one. Joseph believes that while some musicians who are new to Christianity feel the need to make a break from their previous lives, many are pressured by those within the church, and particularly within the Christian music industry, to leave their previous careers behind. A second category is the “Remnant,” those who remained in the general market after their conversion. As a result of that decision, many in this group endure questions about their faith and commitment to Christ. The third group, the “Rebels,” consists of those who began in the Christian industry before making a move to the general market. Rather than proclaiming the virtues of one category above the others and claiming Christians should follow that model, Joseph advocates abolishing the Christian music industry because he believes dividing “Christian” musicians from “non-Christian” ones is useless and is more of a marketing ploy than a market necessity.

Joseph’s other book, *Faith, God, and Rock ‘n’ Roll*, focuses on artists who profess Christian beliefs in some way but choose to work in the general market. He does not attempt to fold these artists into the Christian music industry nor does he label them Christian artists. Instead, he chooses to highlight the Christian backgrounds of people
like Jessica Simpson, Destiny’s Child, Lenny Kravitz, Lauryn Hill, and Carson Daly\footnote{Jessica Simpson began singing in Christian venues before turning to the general market. Destiny’s Child was a trio consisting of Kelly Rowland, Michelle Williams, and Beyoncé Knowles. Lenny Kravitz is a rock artist whose songs contain a mixture of religious imagery with sexual overtones. Lauryn Hill is a singer who started out with The Fugees before embarking on a solo career. Carson Daly rose to fame as the host of the MTV request show \textit{TRL} before leaving to host a late night talk show.} and to describe how that Christian background is evident in their work. This book is a sequel to \textit{The Rock ‘n Roll Rebellion} and is based on his prediction at the end of his first book that someday Christian artists would re-enter the general market, “not as ‘Christian artists’ playing ‘Christian music’ but as Christian men and women deeply committed to their faith, but who avoided those stigmatizing labels, even as they infused their music with their faith.”\footnote{Joseph, \textit{Faith, God, and Rock 'N' Roll}: 8.}

The most comprehensive reference work on contemporary Christian music to date is Mark Allan Powell’s \textit{The Encyclopedia of Contemporary Christian Music}.\footnote{Mark Allan Powell, \textit{Encyclopedia of Contemporary Christian Music} (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2002).} Powell obtained his information from \textit{CCM Magazine}, \textit{HM}, and other publications to create this book. Entries for the artists contain biographical information, discographies, discussions of significant releases, hit lists, and the artists’ web sites.\footnote{The print edition also comes with an electronic version with hyperlinks to the artists’ websites and, in many cases, a site that allowed readers to purchase albums and listen to brief audio clips, but those purchase links are no longer valid.} Though it was outdated well before it was published, it is the first major attempt to catalog the contemporary Christian music industry.
This tome provides an excellent resource for basic background information on virtually every Christian musical artist from the 1960s through the late 1990s and is focused strictly on the musicians and their music. One problem with this work is that Powell freely interjects his opinions on the quality of the music, the theology of the lyrics, and the social outlook of the artists and songs rather than writing from a more objective position, so the articles present a skewed view of the artists.

Eileen Luhr’s article “Metal Missionaries to the Mainstream: Christian Heavy Metal, ‘Family Values,’ and Youth Culture,”53 explores this body of music as an attempt to counter the messages of general market metal. Luhr relies on many of the same elements of the metal code as this present study with the intention of showing how Christian metal promoted messages that were counter to that of general market metal in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The present author’s work differs from Luhr’s in that the present study is more concerned with the similarities in language, sound, and image than with the differences in messages. While Luhr examines Christian metal as a reaction against and as an alternative to general market metal, the present study considers Christian metal as one part of the overall metal genre.

Phillip Bashe’s *Heavy Metal Thunder* is the first publication dedicated to compiling a history and canon of heavy metal. The book is divided into two basic sections: history and biography. The first focuses heavily on influences and styles related to metal from the 1960s and early 1970s, particularly psychedelic blues, with less attention given to the development of the music through the 1970s and early 1980s. This omission is somewhat addressed by the second section, which emphasizes ten significant bands, including Black Sabbath, Iron Maiden, Judas Priest, and the Scorpions. These biographies complete much of the missing history from the first section. Bashe takes a broad view of heavy metal, arguing that the Kinks’ “You Really Got Me” is the first heavy metal song and referring to Grand Funk Railroad as an American heavy metal band. This book is more of a work for fans of the bands contained within rather than a scholarly study, as indicated by the tone and language used. Even so, it did provide some background for the early developments of metal in the present study.

Ian Christe’s *Sound of the Beast: The Complete Headbanging History of Heavy Metal* is a fairly complete history of the metal genre to date. Christe traces metal from its roots in the blues and psychedelic music of the 1960s to Black Sabbath and through its various incarnations and sub-genres over the past four decades. He presents both the basic historical information of bands and recordings (dates, releases, member changes, 

etc.) and the issues related to the development of the genre. For instance, he dedicates an entire chapter to the PMRC-driven Senate hearings\textsuperscript{56} and lawsuits against Ozzy Osbourne and Judas Priest.\textsuperscript{57} He also emphasizes the significance of grassroots fan movements in promoting the music in the days before mainstream media (i.e., radio and MTV) would

\textsuperscript{56} The PMRC (Parents Music Resource Center) was an organization formed in 1985 to address the sex, violence, drug use, and occultism in popular music. It is best remembered for the Senate Commerce committee hearings which led to the “Parental Advisory” stickers that labels voluntarily place on records deemed to contain explicit content, although there were no standardized guidelines for determining what was explicit. Although the hearings concerned popular music in general, most of the focus was on heavy metal.

\textsuperscript{57} In two separate cases, Ozzy Osbourne, former lead singer of Black Sabbath and the leader of his own band, and British heavy metal band Judas Priest were sued by family members of young men who committed suicide allegedly as a result of listening to their music based on the evidence of recordings being in their record and cassette players when the men were found. In both cases the plaintiffs argued that the men were driven to suicide by suggestive lyrics and subliminal messages in the songs (Ozzy Osbourne’s “Suicide Solution” and Judas Priest’s “Better By You, Better Than Me”). Neither suit was successful because there was not sufficient evidence to prove causation and there were other factors that could have led to the suicides. In Osbourne’s case the young man suffered from clinical depression and alcohol abuse and was not actually listening to the song at the time he committed suicide. The judge also ruled that song lyrics were protected under the First Amendment. In the Judas Priest case, the issue was subliminal messages, which a judge ruled were not afforded First Amendment protections because the messages were believed to affect people without their consent. Lead singer Rob Halford stated that encouraging their fans to commit suicide was counterproductive and that if they were going to put subliminal commands in their music it would be to buy more of their records. In this case the two men had been drinking beer and smoking marijuana while listening to the song before attempting suicide (only one was successful, the other died three years later as a result of drug use). This suit was dismissed after the plaintiffs failed to prove that the alleged command “Do it” was directly related to suicide and the surviving “victim” acknowledged that they were aware of that lyric, thereby removing the subliminal element and placing the lyrics under First Amendment protections.
play it. He focuses mainly on the fanzines and tape traders that gave rise to more mainstream publications and independent record labels.\(^{58}\)

There is room for debate regarding the developmental path Christe outlines, particularly that he downplays the contributions of bands like Led Zeppelin, Deep Purple, and Blue Cheer and measures everything since the early 1980s against Metallica. There is also some room for disagreement over where he draws the line between hard rock bands and metal bands. Both of these are issues metal fans take very seriously, and as Christe points out, one of the qualities that makes metal such a dynamic genre is the passion of the fans. While this is also a fan-oriented book, it has a more journalistic tone than Bashe’s book and examines the genre in a more systematic way.

Other books that attempt to provide an overview of metal include Garry Sharpe-Young’s *Metal: The Definitive Guide*, Chris Ingham’s *The Book of Metal: The Most Comprehensive Encyclopedia of Heavy Metal Ever Written*, and Daniel Bukszpan’s *The Encyclopedia of Heavy Metal*.\(^{59}\) These works contain detailed information on a number of bands, but they are remarkable as much for which groups are not included as they are for the coverage of bands contained within them. Most notably, *Metal: The Definitive

\(^{58}\) Tape trading was a practice common to the underground music scene, of which metal was a part in the late 1970s and early 1980s, where people would swap cassette tapes of band demo songs and live concerts through the mail.

Guide omits all mention of glam metal as well as popular nu-metal bands like Korn and Slipknot, and some of the bands listed in the table of contents, such as the Christian death metal/grindcore band Mortification, do not actually appear in the body of the book. Sharpe-Young does provide a great deal of information, including discographies on a large number of bands grouped by subgenre. Some bands receive more space than others, but overall this is due to their long careers and/or their significance to the overall history of the music.

The Book of Metal and The Encyclopedia of Heavy Metal, on the other hand, are criticized by metal fans for being too inclusive. In addition to Black Sabbath, Judas Priest, Iron Maiden, Metallica, and other undeniable metal bands, the authors include Joan Jett and the Blackhearts, Cheap Trick, Kid Rock, Bad Company, and other acts that are not usually considered metal. Additionally, The Book of Metal is rife with factual errors that make it difficult to trust any of its information.

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60 Glam metal, also called pop metal or lite metal, was a genre popular in the late 1980s; it was characterized by an emphasis on artists’ appearance and androgyny. Examples of glam metal bands are Poison and Stryper.
61 Nu-metal is a broad subgenre that refers to bands that combine metal with other influences, most notably rap/hip-hop and world music.
62 Grindcore is a brand of “extreme metal” that is characterized by heavily distorted guitars, extremely fast tempos, “blast beats,” and incomprehensible growling or shrieking vocals. Napalm Death and Carcass are prominent examples.
63 Examples of these errors include referring to Queensryche’s Hear in the Now Frontier as Here in the New Frontier, calling the band Soundgarden “Sound Garden,” and listing Ted Nugent’s Cat Scratch Fever as his second album instead of his third.
Deena Weinstein’s *Heavy Metal: A Cultural Sociology* is the pioneering academic work studying metal as a social force and musical genre. Weinstein examines and explains metal as a “bricolage” of symbols and meanings revolving around the expression of power, youth, and masculinity. She explores the visual images, lyrical themes, and even the media of this genre using content analysis to illustrate how that bricolage functions to create the genre. She also postulates that much of the negative perception of metal is the result of a misunderstanding or sloppy interpretation of the imagery. The music itself is largely ignored in her analysis, though, and her brief discussion of the vocal and instrumental styles focuses more on laying the groundwork for applying social codes than on the musical aspects of the style. However, the work does offer a model for approaching the non-musical aspects of a musical genre. Weinstein’s book serves to provide background and a framework for the present study as described previously.

Robert Walser’s *Running With the Devil: Power, Gender, and Madness in Heavy Metal Music* builds on Weinstein’s work by incorporating discussions of specific songs to provide context and application to her observations. Walser focuses on the themes of gender construction, power, and madness, drawing mainly from the music of Van Halen and Ozzy Osbourne. Throughout the book, he uses transcriptions of guitar solos to compare the virtuosity of the metal guitarist with the virtuosity found in Baroque

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65 Bricolage refers to something that is composed of a variety of diverse resources.
66 Walser, *Running with the Devil: Power, Gender, and Madness in Heavy Metal Music*.
keyboard works and nineteenth-century virtuoso soloists to dispel the image outsiders have of metal musicians using volume to cover up a lack of skill. Walser’s book provides a model for examining metal in a musicological context.

More recent books tend to focus on specific subgenres, particularly extreme metal. Most of these works examine the history and development of their particular subgenre with an emphasis on significant bands. Some of them, such as Keith Kahn-Harris’ *Extreme Metal: Music and Culture on the Edge* and Natalie Purcell’s *Death Metal Music*, are more concerned with socio-cultural issues, both in society at large and within the specific scene, than with the musical aspects of the subgenres.

Many of the journal articles on metal focus on its negative associations, particularly regarding deviance and destructive behavior in adolescents. Typically, the studies attempt to ascertain whether a preference for metal music is related to deviant behavior or mental states (violence, suicidal tendencies, poor academic achievement, lack of cooperation, “looser morals,” etc.). Psychology and behavioral science have produced several studies that analyze data obtained from surveys in connection with pre-existing models or studies. These studies tend to exhibit two primary weaknesses. First, the

authors’ knowledge of the music is often based on secondary sources rather than on personal interaction. For example, Karen R. Scheel and John S. Westefeld’s study “Heavy Metal Music and Adolescent Suicidality: An Empirical Investigation”\(^{68}\) describes metal as “typified by themes of societal and mental chaos . . . and references to homicide, suicide, and satanic practices . . .”\(^{69}\) These statements are taken from studies written by others, not from Scheel and Westefeld’s personal observations. The problem with this approach is that it has the potential to treat the biases and opinions of a third party as authoritative facts. A second weakness is that the tone of many studies implies that the authors were looking for particular results and may not have considered other explanations. Scheel and Westefeld clearly have a negative view of metal that is evidenced by the above quote. To say that metal is “typified by themes of societal and mental chaos”\(^{70}\) is only part of the picture, even as presented in the source the authors are discussing, Deena Weinstein’s *Heavy Metal: A Cultural Sociology*. Weinstein considers not only the chaotic themes mentioned in this study, but also the Dionysian themes that encourage listeners to live life to the fullest. It is uncertain why the authors omitted these themes in their discussion.

Other articles address metal as a cultural phenomenon with community-building elements. One such article, Karen Bettez Halnon’s “Heavy Metal Carnival and Dis-

\(^{70}\) Ibid.
alienation: The Politics of Grotesque Realism,”71 explores the ways the music and spectacle associated with shock metal bands serve as an antidote to the alienation their fans feel from society. 72 She concludes that by disaffecting the mainstream, these bands create a sense of belonging for their fans who often feel estranged from society themselves. This idea of alienation is a recurring theme in many analyses of the metal subculture and will be considered in this present study as well.

Gender and metal is another topic explored in articles. Metal has traditionally been an androcentric genre, and despite the image that the metal subculture is in rebellion against the norms and values of society, traditional gender roles are consistently reinforced. Leigh Krenske and Jim McKay’s article “‘Hard’ and ‘Heavy’: Gender and Power in a Heavy Metal Subculture” draws from social constructionist and feminist theories to analyze role and power structures in metal clubs.73 The authors conclude that interactions, from “pick-ups” to stage diving, as well as the perceptions people have of different types of women associated with the bands (performers, fans, “groupies,” etc.) are governed by males. Many of their conclusions support Walser’s ideas about gender in metal while they also propose some original theories about the construction of

72 Shock metal is a body of music that is characterized by lyrics, costumes, and related imagery that is intended to shock people. It is designed to transgress societal norms by depicting, in word or image, acts which are not considered socially acceptable. Examples of this include Alice Cooper’s on stage “executions,” Marilyn Manson “baptizing” his audience by spitting on them and throwing a feces-covered towel or American flag into the audience, and GWAR’s use of swords to dismember bodies onstage and hoses to spray their audience with simulated blood and semen.
73 Leigh Krenske and Jim McKay, “‘Hard and Heavy’: Gender and Power in a Heavy Metal Subculture,” Gender, Place and Culture 7, no. 3 (2000).
gendered identity. These ideas will be used in the present study in conjunction with information regarding views of gender in Christianity to examine some of the visual imagery and language.

As there are significant segments of the Christian metal scene located in Latin America, Australia, and Scandinavia, nationalistic themes also need to be considered in the present study. “Heavy Metal in Postdictatorial Brazil: Sepultura and the Coding of Nationality in Sound” by Idelber Avelar explores the music of Brazilian thrash/death metal band Sepultura as a microcosm of Brazil’s history and heritage. Avelar draws a connection between the band’s drum sound and the drummer’s technique and the charangas in which he played. He also briefly addresses integration of Amazonian tribal singing and percussion into some of Sepultura’s songs.

In addition to articles and books on the subject, there are also a few video documentaries on metal. One of the earliest is The Decline of Western Civilization Volume 2: The Metal Years by Penelope Spheeris. This documentary focuses on the metal scene that developed around Los Angeles’ Sunset Strip in the mid-1980s, particularly the rise and popularity of glam metal. Spheeris emphasizes the excesses of the genre by showing intoxicated musicians stumbling through their answers,

75 These are percussion ensembles used to lead chanting at Brazilian soccer matches. Polyrhythm is a key feature of these groups.
76 Penelope Spheeris, The Decline of Western Civilization Part II, the Metal Years, (1988).
interviewing KISS lead singer Paul Stanley in bed surrounded by women, and asking
musicians like Steven Tyler of Aerosmith about how much money they spent on drugs.
In the years since its 1988 release, the validity of this documentary has come into
question because of the revelation of staged and faked scenes. Most notable were scenes
depicting Ozzy Osbourne spilling orange juice on a kitchen counter because of the
uncontrollable shakes he suffered as a result of drug and alcohol withdrawal, which
Spheeris later admitted was faked, and a member of the band W.A.S.P. pouring bottles of
vodka over his head and into his mouth that were later revealed to be water.

*Metal: A Headbanger’s Journey* is a more comprehensive documentary by
Canadian anthropologist Sam Dunn. Dunn’s work explores the genre’s origins,
development, fragmentation, and cultural impact. The documentary features interviews
with such noted figures in metal as Ronnie James Dio, Tony Iommi, Alice Cooper, Bruce
Dickinson, Rob Zombie, and Lemmy. 77 It bridges the divide between academic
documentary and entertainment film. Some of the interviews, such as those with the
Norwegian black metal band Mayhem, offer viewers a chance to see and hear directly
from the bands but do not add any substantial information. The Mayhem interview
consists mainly of the drunken band members’ profanity-laden boasts about Mayhem

77 Ronnie James Dio was the founder of the band Elf and sang in Rainbow with Richie
Blackmore of Deep Purple. He later led his own band, Dio, and sang for Black Sabbath
after the departure of Ozzy Osbourne. Tony Iommi was the guitarist and a founding
member of Black Sabbath. Alice Cooper, the stage name of Vincent Furnier, is arguably
the original shock rocker. Bruce Dickinson was the lead singer for British metal band
Iron Maiden for some of its defining releases, including *Number of the Beast* and
*Powerslave*. Rob Zombie was the founder of the band White Zombie. He also records as
a solo artist and more recently turned to producing horror films. Lemmy, the stage name
of Ian Kilmister, is the bassist and vocalist for Motörhead.
being the best band in the world. Even these moments, however, contribute to understanding the role of image in metal. One particularly useful feature of the 2-disc DVD version is the interactive metal “family tree” that provides a visual representation of the relationships among the various subgenres and their influences.

Dunn’s follow-up film, *Global Metal*, examines metal outside the United States and Europe. In particular, Dunn tries to document the globalization of metal, both how metal has influenced culture around the world and how the different cultures have transformed metal. In addition to well-known metal centers like Brazil and Japan, Dunn travels to locales where the metal scene is less obvious: Israel, Indonesia, China, India, and the United Arab Emirates. He does not avoid discussing controversies in his interviews, but his overarching purpose is to demonstrate that metal fans are a global community with commonalities shared across cultures.

Dunn also directed the documentary series *Metal Evolution*, which began airing on the VH-1 Classic television network November 11, 2011. Each episode of the series focuses on a different stage in the development of metal or on a different subgenre. It is largely an expansion of the material presented in *Metal: A Headbanger’s Journey*.

*Heavy: The Story of Metal* is a four-part documentary produced by and aired on the VH-1 network in 2006. The four segments focus on the origins of the genre; the New

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78 November 11, 2011—11/11/11—was celebrated by many metal fans as “National Metal Day.” The significance of this date is a reference to the movie *Spinal Tap*—a mockumentary about the world’s loudest band. There is a scene in the film in which the band’s guitarist, Nigel Tufnel, shows the filmmaker (Rob Reiner) the special amplifiers the band uses that “go to eleven.” He states the reason Spinal Tap is louder than other bands (whose amplifiers have knobs that only go to ten) is because its amplifiers go to eleven, which is “one louder.”
Wave of British Heavy Metal (NWOBHM); glam metal; and thrash and nu-metal. Discussion of death metal, black metal, progressive metal, and power metal is conspicuously absent and may be due to the audience VH-1 tends to attract. Unlike the more comprehensive *Metal Evolution, Heavy* focuses primarily on metal of the 1970s and 80s. In fact, nu-metal is the only post-1990 subgenre to be included, and the artists covered—Slipknot, Korn, Limp Bizkit, and Marilyn Manson—are artists who already enjoyed some measure of mainstream exposure.

All of these works contribute to the overall tone and direction of the present study. The body of literature focusing on the main topic of this study, Christian metal, is noticeably absent from this review because it is a subject that is only beginning to be explored more fully. *Metal Missionaries: The Assimilation of Extreme Christian Metal into the Mainstream Consciousness* is the first book-length publication dedicated to Christian metal. It consists of some background material on the development of Christian metal and twenty-two unedited and unprocessed interviews of extreme metal bands. One of the leading scholars in this field is Marcus Moberg, whose work focuses on Christian metal as a transnational scene, particularly as a scene that has developed

79 The idea that these subgenres were omitted due to audience concerns is reinforced by the fact that VH-1 cut the episode of *Metal Evolution* that was to cover extreme metal when Dunn first pitched the series to the network.
81 The interviews are presented simply as a series of questions and answers. Technically, one of the bands interviewed—Grave Robber—is a horror punk band, not an extreme metal band, but it was included in this work because of its “extreme” costuming and stage show.
around the internet. Other scholars have published a few articles on the subject, but Moberg’s publications constitute the bulk of the existing scholarly literature on Christian metal.82 This present study will add to this growing body of literature.

Outline of the Study

This study will focus on Christian metal from the mid-1980s through the present. While it is a global phenomenon, this study will focus on Christian metal in an American musical and religious context. Chapter two will outline the theoretical framework and methodology of the study and address some of the issues and problems specific to this body of music. Chapter Three will examine the verbal and textual elements of the style, such as the language and themes of the lyrics as well as band names. Chapter Four will focus on the visual elements of the style, including album cover art and photos, costumes and clothing, music videos, and typefaces. Chapter Five will address the musical elements, particularly timbral, modal, and formal characteristics. Chapter Six is a case study that will synthesize and summarize the findings from the previous three chapters through a comparative analysis of two songs, and Chapter Seven will present the conclusions drawn from those findings as well as provide suggestions for further study. The appendices that follow will include a description of the more prominent metal subgenres and a selected discography.

Bands Considered

The artists considered in this study were chosen because of their commercial and/or historical significance. Those with the greatest commercial success are likely to be the artists with whom most listeners are acquainted and therefore best define the character of the music in the minds and ears of the audience. There are other artists who are significant because of their historical location but who may not have had a high level of commercial success. While it is tempting to focus on the artists who may be creating the most innovative or distinctive music, this study focuses largely on those who are working within the established standards because they represent the norm.

In addition to their commercial and/or historic significance, these bands are considered representative of Christian metal because of the frequency with which members of internet Christian metal communities discuss their music and recommend them to newcomers. In order to provide readers with an overview of these bands, the following will summarize some key information about each of the bands under consideration, including the subgenre(s) with which they are most commonly associated and years of activity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Band Name</th>
<th>Associated Subgenre(s)</th>
<th>Active</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Antestor</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>1990-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antidemon</td>
<td>Death, Grindcore</td>
<td>1994-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armageddon</td>
<td>Classic</td>
<td>1985-1991, 2007-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arsenal</td>
<td>Glam</td>
<td>1984-1991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As I Lay Dying</td>
<td>Metalcore</td>
<td>2000-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August Burns Red</td>
<td>Metalcore</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Commercial success is a relative concept. Even in the general market, metal often struggles to be commercially successful; this is magnified within the Christian music industry.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Band</th>
<th>Genre(s)</th>
<th>Years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Barnabas</td>
<td>Hard rock, Classic,</td>
<td>1977-1986</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Progressive</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Becoming the Archetype</td>
<td>Death, Progressive</td>
<td>1999-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Betrayal</td>
<td><strong>Thrash</strong>, Industrial</td>
<td>1988-1994, 1999-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bloodgood</td>
<td>Classic, Glam</td>
<td>1984-1995, 2006-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bride</td>
<td>Classic, Glam</td>
<td>1983-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corpse</td>
<td>Death</td>
<td>1993-1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crimson Covenant</td>
<td>Thrash</td>
<td>1997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crimson Moonlight</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>1997-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crimson Thorn</td>
<td>Death</td>
<td>1991-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniel Band</td>
<td>Hard rock, Classic</td>
<td>1979-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darkwater</td>
<td>Progressive, <strong>Power</strong></td>
<td>2003-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Benson</td>
<td>Classic, <strong>Doom</strong></td>
<td>1993-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deborah</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>2001-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demon Hunter</td>
<td>Metalcore</td>
<td>2000-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonic Dismemberment</td>
<td>Grindcore</td>
<td>2006-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demoniciduth</td>
<td>Trash, Death</td>
<td>1998-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deuteronomium</td>
<td>Death</td>
<td>1993-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disciple</td>
<td><strong>Nu-metal</strong></td>
<td>1992-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drottnar</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>1996-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East West</td>
<td>Nu-metal</td>
<td>1993-2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eternal Decision</td>
<td>Thrash</td>
<td>1996-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eternal Ryte</td>
<td>Glam</td>
<td>1984-1991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frost Like Ashes</td>
<td>Black, Death</td>
<td>2001-2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guardian</td>
<td>Glam</td>
<td>1982-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gwen Stacy</td>
<td>Metalcore</td>
<td>2004-2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haven</td>
<td>Classic, Progressive</td>
<td>1988-1993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holy Soldier</td>
<td>Glam</td>
<td>1985-2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horde</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>1994-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impellitteri</td>
<td>Classic</td>
<td>1987-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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84 Industrial is a subgenre of metal that blends thrash and hardcore punk with electronic music. It contains elements of both metal and electronic dance music. Examples include Ministry, Godflesh, Klank, Mortal, and Circle of Dust.

85 Alternative metal combines metal with alternative rock and grunge. It is characterized by unconventional vocal and instrumental timbres and song structures. Examples include Faith No More and Soundgarden.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Band Name</th>
<th>Genre(s)</th>
<th>Years Active</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Impending Doom</td>
<td>Death</td>
<td>2005-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacob’s Dream</td>
<td>Power</td>
<td>1994-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jerusalem</td>
<td>Classic</td>
<td>1975-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leviticus</td>
<td>Classic, Glam</td>
<td>1981-1990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living Sacrifice</td>
<td>Thrash, Death</td>
<td>1989-2005, 2008-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mortification</td>
<td>Death, Grindcore, Classic</td>
<td>1990-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narnia</td>
<td>Power</td>
<td>1996-2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oh Sleeper</td>
<td>Metalcore</td>
<td>2006-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.O.D.</td>
<td>Nu-metal</td>
<td>1991-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pantokrator</td>
<td>Death</td>
<td>1996-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paramaecium</td>
<td>Doom</td>
<td>1991-2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Precious Death</td>
<td>Thrash</td>
<td>1991-1997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project 86</td>
<td>Nu-metal</td>
<td>1996-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rage of Angels</td>
<td>Classic, Glam</td>
<td>1987-1989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red Sea</td>
<td>Classic</td>
<td>1994-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resurrection Band</td>
<td>Proto-metal(^{86})</td>
<td>1972-2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sacrament</td>
<td>Thrash</td>
<td>1989-1993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sacred Warrior</td>
<td>Classic, Progressive</td>
<td>1986-1994, 2010-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saint</td>
<td>Classic</td>
<td>1984-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saviour Machine</td>
<td>Gothic(^{87}), Progressive</td>
<td>1989-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scarlet Red</td>
<td>Glam</td>
<td>1988-1989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shout</td>
<td>Glam</td>
<td>1987-1990, 1999-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slechtvalk</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>1999-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soldier</td>
<td>Classic, Glam</td>
<td>1985-1989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stryken</td>
<td>Glam</td>
<td>1980-1988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stryper</td>
<td>Glam</td>
<td>1983-1992, 2003-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tempest</td>
<td>Glam</td>
<td>1987-1990, 2011-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Templar</td>
<td>Progressive, Classic</td>
<td>2005-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Crucified</td>
<td>Hardcore(^{88})</td>
<td>1984-1993, 2009-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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\(^{86}\) Proto-metal refers to bands that are not generally considered metal but exhibit many characteristics of the genre. It is usually used to refer to heavy psychedelic blues bands from the late 1960s and early 1970s like Deep Purple, Uriah Heep, Blue Cheer, and Blue Öyster Cult.

\(^{87}\) Gothic metal combines the heavy sound of doom metal with the dark, atmospheric sound of gothic rock. Some gothic metal bands also exhibit influences from death, black, or symphonic metal. Examples include Paradise Lost, My Dying Bride, Type O Negative, and Cradle of Filth.

\(^{88}\) Hardcore is actually an offshoot of punk that features faster tempos and thicker, heavier sounds borrowed from metal. Examples include Black Flag, Suicidal Tendencies, and the Dead Kennedys. It is sometimes considered “crossover thrash”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Band</th>
<th>Genre</th>
<th>Years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Devil Wears Prada</td>
<td>Metalcore</td>
<td>2005-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theocracy</td>
<td>Progressive</td>
<td>2002-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Torn Flesh</td>
<td>Hardcore</td>
<td>1987-1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourniquet</td>
<td>Thrash, Progressive</td>
<td>1989-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ultimatum</td>
<td>Thrash</td>
<td>1992-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Underøath</td>
<td>Deathcore, Metalcore</td>
<td>1997-2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vengeance Rising</td>
<td>Thrash, Death</td>
<td>1988-1993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veni Domine</td>
<td>Progressive</td>
<td>1990-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virgin Black</td>
<td>Gothic, Progressive</td>
<td>1995-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Funeral</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>2010-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Throne</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>2008-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whitecross</td>
<td>Glam</td>
<td>1987-1996, 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xalt</td>
<td>Glam</td>
<td>1987-1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X-Sinner</td>
<td>Classic, Glam</td>
<td>1988-2001, 2005-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zion</td>
<td>Classic</td>
<td>1982-1990</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

because of the incorporation of some of the techniques and aesthetics of thrash into the style by bands like Suicidal Tendencies and Dirty Rotten Imbeciles (DRI). For this reason, it is often considered a metal subgenre as well.
Chapter 2: Background

History of Christian metal

The roots of Christian metal can be traced to the birth of the contemporary Christian music genre in the late 1960s. The “Jesus Movement” played an important role in the development of this genre by offering young people a new perspective on Christianity that focused more on personal experience and relationship rather than ritual and liturgy. For many of the participants – some of whom were former members of other youth subcultures – Jesus was the new drug and the new way of coping with the turbulent times in which they lived. These groups of young people, often called “Jesus people,” or more derogatorily “Jesus freaks,” structured themselves more like communes than formal ecclesiastical organizations and developed a new body of music—Jesus music—in a folk-rock style largely based around the acoustic guitar. The movement’s blending of Christian teachings with popular music was primarily an attempt to reach young people through music they would accept, and it produced the earliest contemporary Christian artists and bands.

Many of these early artists, such as Larry Norman, Honeytree, John Fischer, and Second Chapter of Acts tended to perform in that acoustic, folk-rock style. Others, like Petra and Daniel Amos, played the country rock style popularized in the general market by the Eagles. Before long, however, Christian bands emerged that played the hard, psychedelic blues-rock of groups like Grand Funk Railroad, Cream, and Led Zeppelin.

One of the first of these, Agape, formed in 1968 and released its first album, *Gospel Hard Rock*, in 1971. Historian Paul Baker described Agape’s music as “Jesus rock at its crustiest—music which cut through the defenses of the non-Christian rock fans.”


In 1972, Resurrection Band formed as the primary ministry group of the Chicago-based Jesus People USA, and in 1974, it made two recordings that were given away after concerts. *All Your Life* contained some of the band’s acoustic, folk-styled songs that were targeted at more conservative audiences, like those in churches. The other cassette, *Music to Raise the Dead*, contained a hard-rocking, psychedelic blues that “rips through all namby-pamby perceptions of Christian rock.” The group split vocal duties between the husband and wife team of Glenn and Wendi Kaiser and drew comparisons with both Led Zeppelin and Jefferson Airplane. The band released its first full-length album, *Awaiting Your Reply*, in 1978, and over the next twenty years, Resurrection Band established itself as one of Christian music’s most consistent and socially conscious bands.

91 Jesus People USA (JPUSA) is an intentional community on the north side of Chicago. It is currently affiliated with the Evangelical Covenant Church and is best known for organizing the Cornerstone Festival, a five-day festival which featured music, films, artists, seminars, and workshops. Resurrection Band changed its name to Rez Band in 1984 and then Rez one year later. The band returned to the original name for its last studio album in 1995.
93 Rez’s 1991 album *Civil Rites* closes with a cover of the Jefferson Airplane hit “Somebody to Love.”
Barnabas was another band that figured into the early history of Christian metal. The band was founded in Los Angeles in 1977 as a female-fronted new-wave punk band but gradually transitioned to hard rock and eventually to metal by its fourth and final album, *Little Foxes*, in 1986. In addition to standard rock songs, Barnabas also displayed some elements of progressive rock, particularly the Rush-influenced drum and bass parts and the band’s inclusion of extended pieces, non-traditional rock instruments, and UFO/alien references.

From its earliest days, Christian rock was an international music scene. Daniel Band, from Toronto, is perhaps the most overlooked of these early hard rock bands. It formed in 1979 but did not release its first album, *On Rock*, until 1982. While there was a slight progression of “heaviness” from one album to the next, Daniel Band’s sound was a consistent blend of Tony Rossi’s blues-rock guitar riffs and melodic solos and Dan McCabe’s soaring vocals and driving bass that regularly drew comparisons to fellow Canadian rockers Rush and Triumph. The band released its last album of new music, *Running Out of Time*, in 1987, but has never officially broken up or retired and still performs together on occasion.

*Early Christian metal*

The band that typically gets the title of “first Christian metal band” is Sweden’s Jerusalem. While Jerusalem’s style was not metal in the sense of the classic NWOBHM
bands that were popular contemporaneously, it did bring an infusion of bass-heavy rock featuring Ulf Christiansson’s forceful vocals and guitar. Its earliest albums were recorded in Swedish, and then re-released in the United States (with overdubbed English vocals) in the early 1980s on Pat Boone’s Lion and Lamb label. The band’s 1982 album *Warrior* was its first album originally released in English and is considered the heaviest. Through the 1980s it became more melodic, culminating in 1988’s *Dancing on the Head of the Serpent*, which featured keyboards and brash anthems that approached the sounds of the pop glam metal of the time.

Another Swedish band, Leviticus, actually released the first album by a Christian band that was consistent with the NWOBHM sound, an EP entitled *Stå och titta på* in 1982. Its first full-length album, *Jag Skall Segra*, was released a year later, but neither of these albums really had an impact on the Christian market in the U.S. because they were released and performed in Sweden.

Stryper formed in Los Angeles in the early 1980s as Roxx Regime playing in clubs alongside glam metal heavyweights Mötley Crüe, Poison, and Ratt after signing with the general market label Enigma Records in 1983, the band changed its name to


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94 NWOBHM, New Wave of British Heavy Metal, was a movement in metal of the late 1970s and early 1980s. It was characterized by a de-emphasis on the blues, and the incorporation of the aggressiveness and speed of punk. Prominent NWOBHM bands include Iron Maiden, Saxon, and Judas Priest.

95 There was a fledgling Christian metal scene developing in the United States at this time, including the formation bands that would become Christian metal powerhouses Stryper, Bride, and Saint, but none of these bands appear to have released an album until after these Leviticus albums.
Stryper in reference to a phrase in Isaiah 53:5, “by his stripes, we are healed.”96 The band released its debut EP *The Yellow and Black Attack* in July 1984 and exposed American audiences to the underground Christian metal scene. Enigma Records entered into a distribution agreement with the Christian label Benson Records in order to distribute Stryper’s albums more effectively to both the general and Christian markets.97 The labels’ joint marketing campaign gave the band wide exposure by putting it in the pages of general market magazines such as *Hit Parader* and *Metal Edge* as well as Christian ones like *Contemporary Christian Music* (*CCM*) and *Campus Life*.98 In Stryper’s wake, several more Christian metal bands emerged. Saint and Messiah Prophet, two classic metal bands, also released their debut albums in 1984, and Leviticus made its U.S. debut with an English-language re-recording of *Jag ska segra* that was released under the title *I Shall Conquer*.

**Christian metal support systems**

Many of the early developments in Christian metal paralleled trends in general market metal, including the creation of specialized record labels. In 1986, Pure Metal Records, a division of Refuge Records, began releasing albums that later became classics

96 The name is also an acronym for Salvation Through Redemption Yielding Peace, Encouragement, and Righteousness.

97 Prior attempts by both general market and Christian labels to achieve this widespread distribution failed because neither type of label fully understood the nuances that went along with distribution in the “foreign” market. The Enigma/Benson model was mirrored beginning in 1985 when the Christian label Myrrh Records signed a distribution agreement with the general market label A&M Records. Amy Grant’s 1985 release, *Unguarded*, was the first album released under that agreement.

98 *Campus Life* is a Christian lifestyle magazine targeted at high school-aged teens.
of Christian metal, including Messiah Prophet’s *Master of the Metal*, Leviticus’ *The Strongest Power*, Saint’s *Times End*, and Bride’s *Show No Mercy*. Over the next six years, many of the top glam and classic metal albums in Christian metal were Pure Metal releases. The label also released albums by punk/thrash hybrid bands The Crucified, Torn Flesh, and One Bad Pig as well as the British thrash band Seventh Angel.99

Two more Christian metal-oriented record labels formed in 1987. Intense Records featured a variety of metal styles and subgenres, from the glam/pop metal of Angelica, Recon, and Magdallan to the classic/progressive metal of Sacred Warrior and the more extreme speed, thrash, and death metal of Vengeance Rising, Tourniquet, Deliverance, and Mortification.100 R.E.X. Records offered audiences a broad array of Christian metal bands that stressed artistry and experimentation over commercial appeal. While most of the artists on Pure Metal and Intense were considered “ministry-oriented,”101 R.E.X. artists tended to be more concerned with the artistic value of the music and lyrics than with their ministry value. So while the label featured some ministry-oriented performers, like Trytan, Haven, and Sacrament, it also included bands

99 Pure Metal was purchased by Star Song Communications in 1990, and in 1992, the label was dissolved and the artists who opted to stay were merged into the Star Song roster.

100 Intense was purchased by Frontline Records in 1989. Christian metal’s most refined and musically-intense pop metal band, Shout, was already signed to Frontline and transferred to Intense following this purchase. Intense remained a sublabel of Frontline until financial problems caused Frontline to dissolve in the mid-1990s. In 2010, the Intense name was resurrected for Intense Millennium Records, a partnership of Christian metal distributors Divine Metal Distro and Roxx Productions, for the purpose of remastering and re-releasing the catalog of the Frontline/Intense/Alarma group.

101 “Ministry-oriented” is a term used by Christian music audiences to describe artists that are direct about their faith and usually have a stated evangelistic purpose.
that were less direct about expressing their faith, such as Believer, Circle of Dust, and Paramaecium.

The sampler was another trend Christian metal borrowed from its general market counterpart. Samplers were cassettes containing songs from a variety of unsigned bands, some more well-known than others, and were used to increase exposure of lesser-known bands by packaging them with better-known ones. The earliest of these samplers was Regency Records’ *California Metal* in 1987. Over the next two years the label released a total of five samplers: *California Metal*, *East Coast Metal*, *Underground Metal*, *California Metal II*, and *Underground Metal II*. These albums featured primarily unsigned bands, although there were a few bands that were signed but had not recorded albums. Soon, the labels began to use samplers to promote bands already on their rosters, often by including songs from upcoming releases by established bands along with songs from new bands. Pure Metal released *Heavy Righteous Metal*, *Heavy Righteous Metal Chapter II*, *The Axemen*, *Metal Meltdown*, and *Big Rage Vol. I* between 1988 and 1990.\(^{102}\) Intense created a series of samplers to promote summer releases called *Hot Metal Summer* between 1988 and 1991. These typically included songs and interviews from the bands; the fourth and final installment, *Hot Metal IV*, was a video compilation in 1992. Intense also released *An Intense History of Christian Metal* in 1992 as a retrospective of the recordings released on that label.

\(^{102}\) There were also two compilations by Star Song of largely Pure Metal bands called *Ultimate Metal* and *Ultimate Metal 2* from 1989 and 1990.
In 1985, a student at the University of Texas named Doug Van Pelt printed the first issue of Christian metal’s first dedicated periodical, *Heaven’s Metal*. It began as a fanzine dedicated to covering and promoting the growing Christian metal scene, but became a full magazine within the first year.\(^{103}\) In 1995, Van Pelt changed the name to *HM Magazine* and expanded its coverage to Christian gothic, punk, and alternative music in addition to hard rock and metal. In 2004, Van Pelt revived *Heaven’s Metal* as a separate publication that focused primarily on the revival of “80s metal” and lesser-known bands.

The expansion of Christian metal

With the development of this support structure, the Christian metal world began to expand in the late 1980s. Three of the biggest names in Christian metal—Bloodgood, Barren Cross, and Bride—all released their debut albums in 1986. That was also the year that Stryper’s third album, *To Hell With the Devil*, garnered the attention of both the Christian and general markets. It was the first Christian metal album to be certified Platinum and is the best-selling Christian metal album to date.\(^{104}\) Videos from three of the album’s singles also received heavy rotation on MTV, including two—“Free” and the

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\(^{103}\) A fanzine is a non-professional publication created and produced by fans of a particular cultural activity, such as music or literature. Fanzines are frequently little more than a few photocopied pages and are usually distributed free of charge.

\(^{104}\) Platinum certification is awarded by the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) for albums with sales of more than one million units.
ballad “Honestly”—that spent a number of weeks atop the *Dial MTV* Top 10.\textsuperscript{105} Two years later, Stryper was honored with the first Gospel Music Association Dove Awards for Hard Rock Album and Hard Rock Song of the Year.\textsuperscript{106}

In 1988, the first prominent thrash band emerged within the Christian music industry with the release of Vengeance Rising’s *Human Sacrifice*.\textsuperscript{107} This release was controversial for a number of reasons: the lyrics were sometimes difficult to understand, the album cover showed a close-up of a man’s bloody hand nailed to a piece of wood, and the music sounded more chaotic than anything Christian metal offered to that point. Over the next two years, Deliverance, Believer, and Tourniquet helped establish a strong thrash presence in Christian metal, each with its own unique approach and sound: Deliverance was closer to speed metal than thrash; Believer blended progressive rock tendencies with speed metal/thrash; and Tourniquet was a “technical thrash” band that challenged listeners with intellectually-complex lyrics.\textsuperscript{108}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{105} *Dial MTV* was a precursor to MTV’s popular *Total Request Live* program where viewers could call in and request videos to be played during the program.
  \item \textsuperscript{106} The Hard Rock Album and Song of the Year categories were later changed to Hard Music Album and Song of the Year. Both categories were discontinued in 2003 and incorporated into the rock categories.
  \item \textsuperscript{107} Vengeance Rising was originally named Vengeance, but the band changed its name in 1989 to avoid legal action by another band with that name. The band itself was created as a musical outreach arm of the Hollywood, California, based Sanctuary church (now Sanctuary International). Sanctuary was founded by Pastor Bob Beeman, an ordained Full Gospel minister, as a church where people from rock/metal/punk backgrounds could fit in and be accepted. Vengeance Rising’s lead singer, Roger Martinez, was the pastor of a Sanctuary congregation.
  \item \textsuperscript{108} Technical thrash combines the intricate rhythmic interplay and tight timing normally associated with speed metal into the overall soundscape of thrash.
\end{itemize}
During the 1990s, changes in the overall music industry were reflected in Christian metal as well. The minimalist aesthetic of grunge contrasted with the excesses of metal—particularly glam and classic metal—and provided a new, aggressive outlet seemingly devoid of theatrics and showiness.109 Some bands broke up as their audiences diminished; most adapted by changing their styles to incorporate elements of grunge.

The 1990s brought extreme metal to the Christian market. Mortification, the first known Christian death metal band, released its self-titled debut in 1991 to waves of controversy.110 Its second album, Scrolls of the Megilloth, was musically closer to grindcore than traditional death metal and gave the band greater notoriety within the Christian metal world. Scrolls also received some attention from the general market underground metal scene where it is still considered a classic. Paramaecium released the first Christian doom metal album, Exhumed of the Earth, in 1993.111 The album was based on the life of Christ and included flute, violin, cello, and soprano vocals within the doom metal texture. In 1994, Paramaecium drummer Jayson Sherlock recorded and

109 Grunge was a subgenre of alternative rock that developed in the late 1980s around the Seattle, Washington, area. It featured heavily distorted guitars, moderate-to-slow tempos, and lyrics that focused on themes of alienation and disenchantment. Several grunge bands, including Nirvana and Soundgarden, frequently satirized glam metal and pointed to that subgenre as an example of what was “wrong” with popular music.

110 The album cover was considered too gruesome by some retailers, prompting the label to re-release the album with a different cover with the band’s logo on a black background. In addition, some within the Christian community did not think “death metal” was appropriate for Christians, prompting some fans to begin referring to music in this style by Christian bands as “life metal.”

111 Doom metal pioneers Trouble included Christian themes and Biblical references as early as 1984, but the band attributed that to the religious upbringing of some of the members and rejected the notion that they were a Christian band.
released the first Christian black metal album, *Hellig Usvart*, under the name Horde.\(^{112}\) The album was styled after Norwegian black metal, including Sherlock’s use of the pseudonym “Anonymous,” and was intended to be a one-time studio project. The act of presenting Christianity within the framework of black metal was so detestable to hardcore black metal fans that some began sending death threats to the executives at Horde’s label, Nuclear Blast, to compel them to release Anonymous’ real name.\(^{113}\) Because black metal has a strong anti-Christianity philosophical bent, many fans believed “Christian black metal” was contradictory and began using the English translation of the album title “holy unblack” metal as the label for this subgenre.\(^{114}\)

In the early- and mid-1990s, several general market recording conglomerates purchased the major Christian labels, which brought a new influx of resources into the Christian music industry. While this was a positive development for the more profitable artists and those with the widest mainstream appeal, many metal bands found themselves without labels, which led to the rise of independent record labels like Solid State Records, Retroactive Records, and Bombworks Records in the Christian market.

Christian metal again pushed into the mainstream in the late 1990s and 2000s. Nu-metal acts P.O.D. and Project 86 signed with Atlantic Records and have received considerable exposure on radio and MTV, while metalcore bands As I Lay Dying and The Devil Wears Prada have toured regularly with general market bands and earned a

\(^{112}\) Sherlock was the drummer for Mortification from 1990 to 1993 when he left to join Paramaecium.  
\(^{113}\) Horde made an appearance at the Norwegian metal festival Nordic Fest in 2006 and was again the target of death threats by overzealous fans.  
\(^{114}\) Most commonly the genre is simply called unblack metal.
great deal of respect from those bands and their fans. Haste the Day, Underøath, and August Burns Red have appeared on the Warped Tour and other prominent metal tours. Norma Jean, Demon Hunter, The Devil Wears Prada, Project 86, and Underøath have had songs appear on general market compilations and film soundtracks. Several of these bands have been affiliated with Solid State Records, which as of 2010 was the leading Christian-oriented metal label. The label’s owner, Brandon Ebel, made a concerted effort to avoid the stigma that often follows the label “Christian music” through promotion and distribution deals with general market retailers like iTunes and Best Buy.

In the late 2000s several bands from the 1980s, including Stryper, Bloodgood, Whitecross, and Guardian, reunited and began working on new material while others, like Bride and Deliverance, announced their retirements. Two of these bands, Stryper and Bloodgood, also received some measure of acknowledgment from the Christian music industry. In 2008, Stryper became the first metal band inducted into the Christian Music Industry Hall of Fame.

115 The lead singers of As I Lay Dying and the Christian metalcore band Destroy the Runner also record as the novelty metal band Austrian Death Machine, which combines metalcore and death metal with lines from Arnold Schwarzenegger movies.
116 The Warped Tour is a nationwide tour that presents a day-long music and extreme sports festival sponsored by BMX/skateboard footwear company Vans. It features multiple stages with several of the nearly 100 bands on the tour performing simultaneously. Although it initially focused on hardcore punk and ska—music that was popular among skateboarders in the mid-1990s—it now presents a wide variety of musical acts including dance-pop, hip-hop, metal, and punk.
117 The members of Vengeance Rising, minus lead singer Roger Martinez, reunited briefly as Once Dead with vocalist Scott Waters of Ultimatum. After announcing that 2011’s Tsar Bomba was Bride’s last album, lead singer and spokesman Dale Thompson later announced that the band was working on writing songs for another album. In 2012, Jimmy Brown of Deliverance announced that the band (which had been dissolved by Brown in 2011) had reformed and was working on a new album.
Hall of Fame. Bloodgood followed in 2010, but as of 2012, no metal bands have been inducted into the Gospel Music Association Hall of Fame.

**What Makes Music “Christian”**

One of the main questions that arises when one considers Christian music is what makes music “Christian.” This study considers “Christian music” to be music that is primarily directed at a Christian audience and is marketed through church-related channels. These Christian, or church-related, retailers exert a great deal of influence on the Christian market, serving as sorts of “gatekeepers.” According to a survey administered by The Jim Seybert Company, most Christian retailers believe they have a responsibility to provide a “safe” environment regarding content for their customers and to stock products that will not tempt customers away from their faith. Nearly half believe there should be industry-wide minimum standards for content sold by Christian retailers. Approximately 40% believe they have a responsibility to “guard against content that could cause customers to question their beliefs.”

Interestingly, about the same percentage believe they should carry products that present “responsible content outside mainstream thought.”

These numbers indicate that many Christian retailers believe that they are responsible for some level of gatekeeping within the Christian community, and by doing


119 Ibid.
this they are reinforcing and even creating the standards by which content is deemed “Christian.” For example, approximately 80% of retailers will not carry nonfiction books that include “Eastern” or “New Age” thought without offering criticism, that advocate for “universal salvation,” or express tolerance for or acceptance of an active homosexual lifestyle. Other subjects or positions that lead retailers not to carry a book include questioning significant Christian beliefs, such as Biblical inerrancy (67%) and the “Virgin birth” (60%), allowing for the probability or possibility of evolution (56%), the use of “non-canonical” writings without censure, and providing scientific/non-supernatural explanations for miracles recounted in the Bible (35%).

When it comes to fiction, the use of “hard profanity” will result in a ban from 80% of retailers. Other content likely to receive a ban includes graphic violence, the implication of sex outside of marriage, “mild cursing,” and illegal drug use. Interestingly, only around 25% of retailers refuse to carry fiction books containing alcohol and tobacco use, and 13% will not carry novels that imply sex within marriage. More than half of the retailers claimed to have pulled a product within the previous year for one of these reasons or because of some issue with a particular author or artist. Fifty-five percent of retailers in the survey use some sort of system to denote materials

120 “Eastern” thought most often refers to different forms of Buddhism and Taoism, although it also incorporates practices such as meditation and yoga. Universal salvation is the belief that all people will receive salvation regardless of their belief system or lifestyle.
121 Ibid.
122 Both Amy Grant and Sandi Patti had albums pulled from Christian retailers when they divorced, and Michael English’s albums were pulled when it was revealed he had an extramarital affair with Marabeth Jordan of the group First Call.
that might be deemed offensive by some customers. The most common approach is to use content warning stickers, but many stores also create special sections for their more controversial content. While the stated purpose for these gatekeeping measures may be to provide an environment in which people can shop for products that are not going to conflict with their Christian beliefs, it actually ends up defining “acceptable” Christian content for many customers: if something is purchased from Family Christian Stores or Lifeway, customers can feel confident that the content will be “Christian” without really having to think about what “Christian” means in that context.

With the growing presence of Internet retailers that provide a wide range of products to a diverse market, these gatekeepers are losing influence. Without the retailer actively defining what constitutes Christian music, its consumers are finding their own ways of defining it. One typical approach is to define Christian music as that which is created or performed by people who profess the Christian faith. Through use of these broad parameters, the label has been applied to all of the work of bands such as Kansas and more recently Creed and Evanescence,123 largely because of the professed faith of some members and the interpretation of some lyrics based on that profession. This definition, however, raises a number of questions. For instance, using these parameters, one could argue that songs like “Why’d You Come in Here Lookin’ Like That,” which was a hit by country singer Dolly Parton in 1989, could be considered Christian because

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123 Evanescence began in the Christian music industry, but since the departure of co-founder Ben Moody after the release of its first major release, Fallen, the band’s leader Amy Lee has made it clear that they are no longer a Christian band.
the songwriters, Bob Carlisle and Randy Thomas, are professing Christians. Further, a number of performers have made statements that at least alluded to some sort of Christian faith, including several country musicians; rapper M.C. Hammer; Bono and The Edge from the band U2; and members of general market metal bands Twisted Sister, Slayer, Poison, Megadeth, and Alice Cooper; yet it would be difficult to consider songs like “Pumps and a Bump” or “Hell Awaits” “Christian” songs.

Another approach defines Christian music by its lyrical content. The main issue with this is that there is a discrepancy concerning what constitutes “Christian lyrics.” For some, in order for a song to be a “Christian” song, it must address Christian beliefs overtly and refer to God (and more specifically Jesus) by name. The question underpinning this view is if a song does not talk about Jesus and does not address the tenets of the Christian faith, what makes it different from a “secular” song?

One criticism of this view is that it is narrow-minded and dogmatic. Saying that only songs that blatantly address Christian ideas or use the name Jesus can be called Christian songs ignores the fact that over half of the Bible (specifically the thirty-nine

124 Carlisle and Thomas were also members of the Christian rock band Allies at the time.
125 “Pumps and a Bump” is a song by M.C. Hammer detailing his attraction to women with “a big butt.” “Hell Awaits” is a song by Slayer that describes God as being defeated by Satan, making all souls damned to hell for eternity.
126 This perspective spawned the somewhat tongue-in-cheek “Jesus counts” system that evaluates songs and artists based on the number of times the name Jesus or another overt Christian reference appears in the lyrics. Bob Halligan, Jr., a songwriter and leader of the Christian Celtic band Ceili Rain jokingly made reference to this idea when describing the band’s songs in a 2001 Billboard interview. “The songs are written from a Christian perspective, but they’re not, as we say, 15 JPM—Jesuses per minute.” Jim Bessman. “Bridging Christian Music, Heavy Metal.” Billboard 113, no. 10 (2001): 51.
books of the Old Testament) does not mention the name Jesus. Further, many biblical passages have nothing to do with Christian principles and are simply descriptions, genealogies, and commentaries on the state of the world. Based on this reasoning, only certain parts of the Bible—or even the New Testament—are “Christian.”

A second criticism is that this approach promotes a “bumper sticker theology,” in which the “mysteries of God” can be summed up in a catchy slogan or a three-and-a-half minute song. One band routinely criticized for this bumper sticker approach is DeGarmo and Key. Their song “God Good, Devil Bad” from their 1993 release Heat It Up addresses the blurred lines between God and Satan in popular culture (rappers who wear crosses while performing profanity-laden, misogynistic songs, artists who thank God when accepting awards for vulgar songs and albums, etc.). The pre-chorus and chorus of the song says “There’s four simple words/You better learn/God good, Devil bad/It’s an elementary truth, this law of the land,” as if this is the only thing one needs to know in order to live an upright, moral, Christian life. “Boycott Hell,” from DeGarmo and Key’s 1989 album The Pledge summarizes the Christian mission as “Don’t let a neighbor

127 While Christians give preference to the New Testament, the Old Testament is still considered divinely inspired Scripture.
128 The Swirling Eddies, a Christian band known for lampooning the Christian establishment, recorded a cover of “God Good, Devil Bad” for their tribute album Sacred Cows. The Eddies’ version includes lines like “Knife sharp, spoon dull” and “Sun hot, snow cold.” DeGarmo and Key keyboardist and co-founder Eddie DeGarmo later said he believed “God Good, Devil Bad” was overly simplistic and should not have been recorded.
go, form a holy picket line/Hey don’t you think it’s time to boycott Hell.”  Songs by other artists which fit this description include Mylon LeFevre’s “Love God, Hate Sin” (Love God, hate sin/refuse to lose, live to win), Stryper’s “To Hell With the Devil” (We’d like to let him know/Where he can go/To Hell with the Devil), and Jerusalem’s “Plunder Hell and Populate Heaven” (Come on, let’s plunder Hell and populate Heaven).

A third criticism of this perspective is that proclaiming music to be glorifying to God based solely on its text excuses inferior musical quality. The notion that it is only “the message that matters” does not encourage artists to strive for artistic excellence in their musicianship or in the poetic qualities of the lyrics. Rather than producing “art,” this approach to lyric writing produces propaganda. A common theme in Harold Best’s *Music Through the Eyes of Faith* and Charlie Peacock’s *At the Crossroads* is that merely applying the label “Christian” to a song or saying it was “given by God” will not compensate for poor craft: if something is presented as God’s handiwork, then it should be of a quality worthy of that label.

We must always remember that the very subversion of quality communicates something about the kind of gospel we are trying to propagate. If we faithfully followed God’s example, there would no longer be the crassness or cynicism or the throwaway of the false pomp and pretense of art for the ages. Nor would the Holy Spirit be continually pestered to turn poor work into blessed work. The Christian musician has

129 Veteran Christian artist, satirist, and producer Steve Taylor rapped in The Newsboys’ cover of the song, “I agree we gotta boycott hell/But we gotta boycott dumb lyrics as well.”


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no right whatsoever to assume that anything other than the mind of Christ and the Creatorhood [sic] of God should guide every note composed, arranged, played, and sung.¹³¹

Much of the criticism of this perspective comes from people who hold the more inclusive “Christian worldview” perspective on Christian lyrics. This approach incorporates songs that address everyday issues and ideas in the context of Christian theology without necessarily stating it as such. Artist and producer T-Bone Burnett illustrates this perspective by saying, “If Jesus is the Light of the world, there are two kinds of songs you can write. You can write songs about the light, or you can write songs about what you can see from the light.”¹³² In other words, Burnett believes Christians can write songs that directly speak of Christ, or they can write songs about how they view the world as the result of their Christian worldview. Metalcore band Demon Hunter’s song “Carry Me Down” is an example of the latter approach. The song is written to the friends of the singer to provide comfort regarding his death. He speaks of reconciliation (For every word we never spoke/We have a tear to cry/For every silence like a wall between a better you and I) and asks that his funeral be a source of comfort for them (Will you carry me down the aisle that final day/With your tears and cold hands shaking from the weight/When you lower me down beneath the sky of gray/Let the rain fall down and wash away your pain), but the reason they should take comfort is only alluded to in the line “Save sorrow for the souls in doubt.” This reflects the Christian worldview that if one is a Christian, death is not a sorrowful occasion because it is merely the transition

¹³¹ Best, Music through the Eyes of Faith: 30.
from life in this world to life in the presence of God in Heaven. Thus, only those whose salvation is in doubt need to be mourned.\textsuperscript{133}

This approach is also criticized for “watering down” the sacred content, but rather than over-simplifying the content in order to fit it into a simple song, artists who write lyrics of this sort are accused of diluting the spiritual content altogether to make the music more appealing to non-Christian audiences. Many critics are particularly troubled by the fact that the name “Jesus” may never appear in these songs. For instance, Terry Watkins of Dial-the-Truth Ministries says of the band P.O.D., “Their album Satellite contains 15 songs, over 3000 words. But among those 3000 words—Jesus is nowhere to be found….I hear people talk about P.O.D. (and CCM) reaching the lost for Jesus Christ but how can you reach someone with the Lord Jesus Christ – when you will not even mention His name?”\textsuperscript{134} A common charge against these artists is that they are “selling out” or “going secular,” which indicates the belief that the artist is less interested in the Christian mission than in the financial benefits of selling albums.

One heavily cited (and criticized) group of songs related to this perspective is the so-called “Jesus-as-my-girlfriend/boyfriend” songs that express feelings of love and devotion to an unidentified “you.” The ambiguity of the language makes it possible for listeners to interpret the lyrics as expressing these feelings either to another person or to God. This is not unique to modern-day practice, however; the Song of Songs in the Old Testament...

Testament provides a biblical precedent for the romance metaphor. For example, the second chapter begins with the Beloved describing herself as a “rose of Sharon” and a “lily of the valley,” both of which are descriptions later used for Jesus.

A second criticism is that without clear reference to God or Christian teachings, there is little to distinguish these songs from their non-Christian counterparts. While some bands, like Demon Hunter, add explanations of their lyrics that make clear their Christian meanings in the liner notes of albums, critics argue that the casual listener is not going to take the time to read those explanations, so the Christian message is likely to be lost.

A third criticism of this “Christian worldview” approach opens the door for supporters to consider any songs that can be interpreted as containing “Christian” themes or conveying a “Christian worldview” to be a Christian song. This broad application has allowed contributors to *The Top 100 Greatest Albums in Christian Music* to include in their lists John Coltrane’s *A Love Supreme*, Bob Dylan’s *Slow Train Comin’,* and U2's

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135 Song of Songs is also referred to as Song of Solomon.
136 The “Jesus as my boyfriend” criticism has also been directed toward the praise and worship genre. For example, “Love Song (Faithful)” by Hillsong, an Australian praise and worship giant, contains the lines “Closer than my thoughts/closer than a kiss/how could it be/more intimate than this?” The song “You Are the One I Love” by Vineyard, an American charismatic church, includes the verse “You are my joy/You are the light in my eyes/and You cause my heart to sing/You’re the One I love.” In this example, the words You and One are capitalized to indicate they are being sung of Jesus, but when heard there is obviously no distinction.
138 John Coltrane was raised in the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, but by the time he recorded *A Love Supreme* he had been exposed to Islam and become interested in a variety of religious and philosophical beliefs. While there are multiple references to
The Joshua Tree because of religious themes which are at least congruent with Christianity, and has led other individuals to include the Beatles’ “Let It Be,” Norman Greenbaum’s “Spirit in the Sky,” The Byrds/Doobie Brothers’ “Jesus Is Just Alright,” Black Sabbath’s “After Forever,” Kanye West’s “Jesus Walks,” and White Lion’s “When the Children Cry” in lists of their favorite Christian songs because of the songs’ allusions to Christian themes, even if the sentiments these artists express in these particular songs are not consistent with other statements they make in their other songs.139 A particularly convincing example of this is the way Christian audiences initially rushed to bring hip-hop/reggae artist and Hassidic Jew Matisyahu into the fold of Christian music because of the strong Bible-based content of his lyrics.

Another perspective that merits discussion is the viewpoint that rock music cannot be considered “Christian” at all. This view is manifested in two distinctly different ways. One is articulated by those whom Howard and Streck consider “transformational” artists: music is a combination of sounds and the attempt to attach any sort of moral identity to it is pointless. This approach can be problematic because it considers music in terms of the

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God in the liner notes to A Love Supreme, it seems to be a generic or universalist deity rather than a specifically Christian one. This is reinforced by Coltrane’s statement in the liner notes of his Meditations album a year later: “I believe in all religions.”

139 The subgenre of Christian country was removed from the Gospel Music Association’s listing of gospel music genres, indicating the GMA no longer saw a need to distinguish between Christian and general market country because of the new wave of “God and country” themes in country music as a whole. It is not uncommon to find recordings by country stars like Alan Jackson and Carrie Underwood in Christian retailers.
overall musical project and ignores specific lyric content, and clearly that content can advocate for a particular moral position.¹⁴⁰

The other manifestation, held by some fundamentalist Christians, is that rock music is inherently evil and, by default, incompatible with Christian teachings. In its student handbook, Bob Jones University states that “we want to walk on a path that is safe from the potential influence of the world, recognizing our sinful tendencies to love the world. Therefore, students may not listen to religious music that borrows from the styles mentioned above: rock, rap, jazz and country,”¹⁴¹ (emphasis added). The clear implication with this statement is that even the most God-honoring lyrics cannot redeem rock or other forms of popular music. Numerous other organizations have published tracts, pamphlets, books, and webpages dedicated to pointing out the evils of Christian rock. Most of the anti-Christian rock rhetoric in these publications is a repackaging of more general anti-rock views. To provide rational support for their views, anti-rock crusaders frequently cite studies that claim to illustrate the harmful physical effects of listening to rock music compared to classical music.¹⁴² Most often there is some reference to studies involving the effects of exposure to rock music on plants, an exposure that allegedly caused the plants to initially begin to turn away from the speakers and eventually die. The plants exposed to classical music, however, supposedly grew

¹⁴⁰ According to Howard and Streck, the transformational perspective views music with lyrics that are intended to promote a particular view or action as being propaganda rather than art.
¹⁴² Although the findings are referenced, there is almost never an actual citation provided where the reader can verify that the findings are being reported accurately or that the study in fact exists.
significantly more than the control plants. Other references include those involving mice exposed to rock music before being placed in a maze. There are typically two variants on these results. In one account, the mice became extremely confused and were unable to complete the maze. In the other, the mice became enraged and attacked and killed each other. Radio host, minister, and former rock musician Bob Larson also relates stories of fans bringing eggs to concerts and placing them in front of the speakers. By the end of the concert, those eggs are hard-boiled, leading Larson to ask if the music can alter the proteins in eggs, what can it do to our bodies?

Another common approach for discrediting Christian rock is the use of selective “proofertexting” from song lyrics, artist interviews, and visual media. For example, Dial-

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143 Most commonly these refer to studies conducted by Dorothy Retallack in the early 1970s. A summary of her results can be found at http://m-edition.com/archives/19 (Accessed December 30, 2012). Attempts to reproduce these results in studies have repeatedly failed. One interesting attempt, though perhaps not fully scientific, came from the television program Mythbusters (Ep. 23, originally aired November 16, 2004.). In this experiment, different plants were placed in identically controlled environments with an automated watering and feeding mechanism to eliminate human bias. The different plants were repeatedly exposed to different stimuli, including encouraging speech, abusive speech, classical music, jazz, country music, and death metal. During the course of the experiment the feeding and watering mechanism stopped working, so all of the plants began to wilt and die. However, the plants exposed to death metal seemed to have grown more and remained vital longer than any of the other plants.


146 Larson also cites a 1936 study that found that pure egg whites could be made to solidify after being exposed to a frequency of 1200 Hz at 175 watts for a period of time. Attempts to replicate the results using amplified music have been unsuccessful.
the-Truth Ministries has a tract titled “Christian Rock: Blessing or Blasphemy,”147 in which the author selects several Christian artists (from Sandi Patti to Mortification), extracts the information that fits his hypotheses, and builds what he considers an airtight case for the satanic influence in Christian rock. For instance, he takes the lyrics from Mortification’s song “Necromanicide” that say “I am no relation of yours, but one spawned from the depths of Hades whose task is to deceive you,” as a statement of purpose for the band. However, reading all the lyrics to the song reveals that the subject of the song is spiritualism and communicating with the spirits of the dead, in which context the excerpted lyric is a clear reference to the belief by some Christian groups that these spirits are really demons and not the spirits of dead relatives.

The case against Christian rock is further “strengthened” by a web of association that connects Christian rock artists to “satanic” influences. For instance, the Dial-the-Truth site indicts Deliverance for recording a cover “by satanist rockers — Black Sabbath — ‘After Forever!’ [sic] Black Sabbath has given altar calls to Lucifer during their concerts! Their song N.I.B. is a love song from Lucifer in which they invite the listener to take Lucifer's hand.”148 While the interpretation offered for N.I.B. is certainly

147 Dial-the-Truth Ministries is only one of many fundamentalist Christian ministries with strong anti-rock and anti-Christian-rock messages. Many of these sites use similar examples, and even similar wording, so it is likely they are reproducing material from a common source.

reasonable, that is not the song Deliverance recorded. “After Forever” contains lyrics that are entirely compatible with Christianity.149

Have you ever thought about your soul - can it be saved
Or perhaps you think that when you're dead
You just stay in your grave
Is God just a thought within your head
Or is he a part of you
Is Christ just a name that you read in a book
When you were at school?
When you think about death do you lose your breath
Or do you keep your cool?
Would you like to see the Pope, on the end of a rope
Do you think he's a fool?
Well I have seen the truth. Yes I have seen the light
And I've changed my ways
And I'll be prepared when you're lonely
And scared at the end of our days

Could it be you're afraid of what you friends might say
If they knew you believe in God above
They should realize before they criticize
That God is the only way to love

Is your mind so small that you have to fall
In with the pack wherever they run
Will you still sneer when death is near
And say they may as well worship the sun

I think it was true it was people like you
That crucified Christ
I think it sad the opinion you had was the only one voiced
Will you be so sure when your day is near
Say you don't believe?
You had the chance but you turned it down
Now you can't retrieve.

149 The author makes a similar connection between Amy Grant and the New Age movement by way of her cover of Joni Mitchell’s “Big Yellow Taxi.” The article refers to Mitchell as a “new age priestess.”
Perhaps you'll think before you say
That God is dead and gone
Open your eyes, just realize that he is the One
The only One Who can save you now from all this sin & hate
Or will you still jeer at all you hear?
Yes! - I think it's too late.\(^\text{150}\)

Another strategy these anti-rock groups use to connect Christian rock to the pagan
and satanic influences perceived in mainstream rock is to assume that symbolism has
exactly one correct interpretation. Stryper is demonized for its use of the number 777,
triangles, and its yellow and black color scheme. The author cites examples of the
significance of the number “7” in the writings of noted British occultist Aleister Crowley,
including a book called *Liber 777*, the importance of triangles in witchcraft and occult
practices, the significance of threefold repetition in magic rituals, and a medieval legend
that proclaims that the devil’s clothing is black and yellow. The author shows similar
usage of the symbols by “satanic” musicians. Similarly, P.O.D.’s use of the triquetra
(Figure 2.1) is attacked for its association with the New Age movement, the television
show *Charmed*, Aleister Crowley, and the New King James Bible.\(^\text{151}\)

\(^\text{151}\) The cover of the groundbreaking book *The Aquarian Conspiracy* uses a symbol that is
similar to the triquetra. *Charmed* was a show about three sisters who were witches that
battled evil. It was the symbol of the “Power of Three” that gave the sisters their ability
to overcome the strongest demons and warlocks. The symbol appears in the writings of
Aleister Crowley and the author of this tract says most people believe the symbol
originated with him as a representation of three interlocking sixes (666, the mark of the
Beast from the book of Revelation). The New King James Version (a 1982 translation
that attempted to update the language and syntax of the 1611 King James Version) is
viewed as a satanic perversion of the true Bible (the 1611 King James Version) by Dial-
the-Truth Ministries, so the inclusion of what is perceived as an occult symbol on this
While these associations do exist, symbolism rarely has a single meaning. The number seven is considered the number of perfection, so in most Christian use, 777 represents the Trinity, as do the three points of a triangle. Even when other meanings are acknowledged in the tract, such as the ones the musicians claim for their usage, those alternatives are quickly dismissed in favor of the one that supports the author’s claim. Similarly, the author uses quotes from mainstream rock stars that describe their music as inherently evil, like David Bowie’s “Rock and roll has always been the devil’s music,” as authoritative statements of truth rather than personal opinions.

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Bible is interpreted as a reinforcement of both the occult nature of the symbol and this Bible translation.

152 According to an interview included on an early cassette single, Stryper’s yellow and black color scheme is derived from caution signs that tell drivers to slow down or be careful because there is something dangerous ahead. Stryper “Interview,” Reach Out/Together as One single. Enigma Records. 1985.

The Audience for Christian Metal

Christian metal fans are as diverse as fans of general market metal. Membership on the Internet discussion forums The Christian Metal Realm (CMR), Firestream, Christian Hard Music, and Heart of Metal include males and females ranging from their mid-teens to their mid-fifties from a variety of geographic locations including the United States, Australia, South Korea, Finland, the Netherlands, Canada, Thailand, and the British Isles. As with the overall trend in metal, female fans are overwhelmingly outnumbered by male fans. Of the 572 members of the CMR, approximately 11 are female.

Despite stereotypes to the contrary, many Christian metal fans listen to other styles of music as well, particularly hard rock and classic rock, but some are also fans of classical music, blues, jazz, and rap. In keeping with metal trends, many voice distaste over most pop music, particularly the music of teen pop star Justin Bieber. Bluegrass is appreciated by some for the virtuosic musicianship, but little country music besides that by Johnny Cash is viewed favorably.

One somewhat divisive issue among Christian metal fans is the question of whether or not one does (or should) listen exclusively to Christian music. Fans on CMR

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154 The statements regarding the characteristics of Christian metal fans are based primarily on the author’s interactions with and observations of fans in various Internet discussion forums as well as in concert settings and personal conversations.

155 During the course of his research, the present author attended a popular general market metal festival where he saw a jar on the counter of one of the vendor booths with a sign attached that read, “Tips welcome! For every dollar I get, Justin Bieber will get a herpes outbreak.” One fan was overheard saying, “If I thought that would happen, I would put everything I have in that jar.”
tend to have strong opinions on this matter. The “Christian only” camp largely believes that Christians should fill their minds with only those things that glorify God and should avoid things that are in direct conflict with Christian values. More-inclusive fans tend to argue that they are spiritually strong enough to filter out the negative lyrics and enjoy the music. Some even claim to find Christian spiritual messages in lyrics that were never intended to convey them. Somewhat surprisingly, neither side seems interested in converting the other to its perspective, and both sides tend to encourage forum participants who are unsure about their own views to trust the leading of God to help them decide what is right for them,\textsuperscript{156} acknowledging that there might not be a single answer that applies to everyone.

In terms of appearances, many Christian metal fans are indistinguishable from their general market peers. Most metal fans have a favorite subgenre within the overall metal scene and they tend to style themselves (hair, facial hair, clothing, piercings, tattoos, etc.) to match the styles associated with that subgenre.\textsuperscript{157} Christian metal fans generally have no ethical or moral issues with tattoos or body piercings, although many of the older fans (and some of the younger ones) express that they have no desire to have either themselves.

\textsuperscript{156} This is usually measured in terms of the level of comfort one feels listening to particular bands or songs.
\textsuperscript{157} Older fans’ appearances may be tempered by professional obligations as well as having “outgrown” the style choices of their youth. One regular poster on the CMR in his early 40s alluded to this in a comment about his “midlife crisis.” The poster said that for various reasons some of the more traditional midlife crisis choices were not an option for him, so he was simply going to grow his hair out like he did in college.
The perception of these Christian metal fans by churches varies greatly. Many of the CMR participants have expressed at some point that they have faced some degree of resistance from other Christians because of their music preferences. This resistance has ranged from disapproving looks to outright hostility and being asked not to return to church youth group activities. Several members, however, report that they are currently in a church situation where there is some degree of tolerance and acceptance of them and their music, and a few even participate in leading worship in their churches by playing in the worship band or doing readings and prayers. Overall, then, it appears to these fans that in some ways, Christian metal is not viewed as the threat it was in the mid-1980s.

The expectations Christian metal fans have for the performers also varies greatly. There seems to be a general expectation for musicians who consider themselves to be Christians and promote themselves as such to behave in ways that are consistent with Biblical standards and “a life of integrity.”158 As one fan put it, Christian musicians should “be firm and devoted Christian[s] who regularly pray, and [do] not drink to inebriation, smoke, take drugs, swear or participate in sexual immorality.”159 Regarding profanity, many fans express the opinion that it does not belong in Christian music. “I...

159 http://thecmr.forumotion.com/t1977-expectations-for-christian-metal-performers#47178. Accessed November 28, 2012. While there is some debate as to what exactly constitutes “Biblical standards” for morality and behavior, the author is choosing to allow the quotes to stand as the interpretations of the respondents rather than sort out the issues with the various behaviors mentioned.
don't like the cussing either but … it happens. I just don't want it in my music.” While
there are some behavioral standards to which fans hold these musicians, a band’s
theological positions are more significant to most fans than whether or not band members
drink alcohol, use profanity, or smoke. One fan summed up the feelings of many others
by saying, “What I cannot tolerate is when a Christian musician embraces a view that is
against what the Bible says. For example, universalism. If they are going to be singing
songs about erroneous doctrine, they can keep their music.” Another fan provided this
reasoning for these different standards: “With theology, we can clearly draw our lines in
the sand. With behavior, we all know the types of sin that we've all been guilty of. And
hence, we know we are not "holier" than our brothers and sisters.” Another fan
provided insight into expectations for a different kind of integrity: “I expect them not to
produce mediocre drivel under the guise that "it's all about the ministry!" This echoes the
sentiments of Charlie Peacock and Harold Best stated earlier that Christian musicians
should make music worthy of name of Christ.

The Nature of Rock Recordings

Theodore Gracyk, a philosophy professor at Minnesota State University at
Moorhead, considers recordings to be the “primary texts” of popular music discourse

because they are the principal means by which audiences interact with this body of
music. 163 Recordings relate to several elements within the system of transmission for
popular music. 164 As commodities, they are part of the economic structures of the
popular music industry. As artifacts, they are a means of preservation whereby past
musical activity is maintained and protected for the entertainment and education of future
generations. As the primary means by which audiences experience popular music, they
are mediators between the producers of the music and its consumers. With these
different roles in mind, it is important to consider the nature of recordings as they relate
to rock music.

From the early incorporation of instruments like electric guitars to the embracing
of new recording technologies, the history of rock music is intertwined with
 technological advancement. In its early days, sound recording was used to document a
unique aural event that could not be reconstructed or recreated exactly. Thus, musical
recordings from the first half of the twentieth century represented a raw, unaltered live
performance.

Due to the versatility of magnetic tape (and now digital technology), recordings
from the late 1950s on have not been limited to documenting performances, but are

164 A system of transmission is “all the ways that a particular musical content or
repertoire is passed on from an individual to other individuals and from one generation to
another.” (Gregory D. Booth and Terry Lee Kuhn, “Economic and Transmission Factors
as Essential Elements in the Definition of Folk, Art, and Pop Music,” *The Musical
Quarterly* 74, no. 3 (1990). It is a system that maintains the framework for the creation
of new music, provides a way to disseminate the music to its audience, and facilitates the
incidental and intentional teaching and learning of the music.
capable of being constructed compositions that also serve as performances themselves. Artists are no longer limited to what is “humanly possible” and can create the ideal versions of their works.

Albin Zak cites the Les Paul/Mary Ford recording of “How High the Moon” (1951) as a seminal moment in the development of rock recording. Paul used the process of overdubbing to create a recording much more complex than one would expect from two performers. This recording had significant implications for those that followed; most notably, perhaps, was what Zak refers to as the “oral/literate fusion in the field of conventional music making.” In other words, even though Paul was working with sound rather than with notation, the final product was more like an arrangement than a performance, and the processes he employed and issues he considered were those of a composer (or more precisely, an arranger) rather than of a performer, thus fusing the performance-based approach of the oral tradition with the composition-based approach of the “literate” tradition.

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165 Even many recordings released and marketed as “live” recordings have had some studio editing including rerecording some instrument or vocal parts in studio and substituting them for the live version.
167 Overdubbing is the process of layering sound by recording over previous recordings. The process is common in multi-track recording where individual layers are recorded to separate tracks. “How High the Moon” was recorded using a single-track recorder, so each successive dub degraded the quality of the previous layers. To compensate for this degradation, Paul and Ford recorded the least important layers first, saving the lead parts for the end. It is also important to note that “How High the Moon” is not the first recording to use overdubbing, but Zak considers it the most significant moment because of the way Paul approached the process.
168 Zak, The Poetics of Rock: Cutting Tracks, Making Records: 11.
Soon recording engineers and producers became as critical to the creation of popular music as songwriters and performers. Whereas recordings once involved a single live performance of the song by the artists in the studio; now they are most often an amalgamation of sound fragments recorded at different times and even in different locations. As such, Zak believes “rock and roll records do not simply capture and make portable an image of a performance, but are meant to be distinctive worlds of musical sound with the power to make their way into the consciousness of a mass audience.”

Recording and compositional layering

Zak considers recordings to be the combination of three distinct compositional layers: the song, the arrangement, and the track. The song is the raw material—lyrics, melody, chord progression, and formal design; it is everything that can be expressed on a lead sheet. The arrangement is a particular musical setting of that song and includes the instrumentation, rhythmic character or groove, and other elements that make a unique version of the song; it is what is expressed in the musical score or sheet music. The track is the final musical work that encapsulates the other two layers and is what the listener identifies as “the song.” It is more than merely the documentation of an arrangement; it also includes the specific timbres used by the performers and the studio effects (echo, reverb, ambience, etc.) that constitute the sound of the track, as well as the “mix,” or the way these diverse elements interact. This layering is useful in discussing different elements of a recording or different recordings of the same song. It is also worth noting

that each layer can be the creation of a different person or set of people. The songwriter may or may not be the same person who crafts the arrangement or who is ultimately responsible for the track as it appears on the recording.

**Authenticity and rock recording**

Conceding the artifice of rock recordings, Zak analyzes their authenticity by applying Walter Benjamin’s film theories. Zak believes these are applicable to recorded music because of the similarities between film and recordings, particularly in terms of their reliance on technology and their reproducibility. Benjamin defines authenticity as “the essence of all that is transmissible from its beginning, ranging from its substantive duration to its testimony to the history which it has experienced.”\(^{170}\) This authenticity relies on the artwork’s “presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be,” which he refers to as its “aura.”\(^{171}\) The actors perform for the camera—a “mechanical contrivance”—and the audience’s interaction is actually with the camera, not with the actors. From Benjamin’s perspective, the aura of a film is diminished because the filming process and equipment stands between the performer and the audience; there is no unmediated interaction between the actors and the audience. Zak takes exception to this assertion as it relates to his work and proposes that the product in rock is not the song or the performance, but the recording. Therefore aura and authenticity need to be transferred from the performer and a particular performance to the


\(^{171}\) Ibid.
recording. In other words, the recording should be viewed as “the work” rather than as an intervening medium, thus transferring aura and authenticity from the performer and the particular performance in a unique moment to a “unique arrangement of elements”\(^{172}\) that constitute the recording, including the contributions of everyone who is involved in the process of making the recording. Thus, “the work’s aura lies not in a unique physical existence but in the space it makes for itself in the collective consciousness of cultural discourse.”\(^{173}\)

**Autographic vs. Allographic**

Theodore Gracyk discusses this idea of authenticity by borrowing the terms “autographic” and “allographic” from Nelson Goodman’s *Languages of Art*. An autographic work is one that bears the marks of the artist. In autographic arts, such as painting, there is only one authentic version of a work and even the most exact duplication is still inauthentic.\(^{174}\) Goodman says the history of production is a key factor in determining the authenticity of autographic works; a work of art can only be considered autographic if that work is the direct product of the artist and bears the marks of the artist’s direct creation.\(^ {175}\) The version of *Mona Lisa* on display in the Louvre is an autograph while the version one can purchase in the gift shop is not.

\(^{172}\) Ibid.
\(^{173}\) Ibid.
\(^{174}\) Under this system, a remixed or remastered version of a recording becomes a separate work, not a version of the original, so issues of authenticity are not at issue.
\(^{175}\) This closely parallels Benjamin’s idea that the aura of a film is diminished, or to use his word, “shrivels,” because the camera mediates between the actors and the audience.
By contrast, an allographic work is represented by a set of relationships that can be preserved in some way to enable the recovery of the authentic work. Therefore all correct renderings of the work (meaning those that are faithful to the means of production) are equally authentic. Goodman acknowledges there are some elements at work in allographic arts that cannot be accurately and fully represented in the means of preservation, such as timbre in music, so those elements are considered “non-essentials.”\textsuperscript{176} Reproductions may deviate from the spirit or intention of the work in these non-essential ways and still be considered authentic. Thus piano renderings of Bach’s keyboard music are still considered authentic as long as the printed score still guides the rhythms and pitches.

Like Zak, Gracyk proposes an alternate reading of the terminology by shifting the focus away from individual performances and songs to recordings. He believes that rock recordings are autographic based on the end-product by comparing recordings to printmaking, where all prints made from an original plate created by the artist are considered authentic. In like manner, recordings are derived from a “master” and all copies made from that master are considered equally authentic.

\textsuperscript{176} This is not to say these are unimportant to the music, just that they cannot be accurately preserved in written form. Sound recordings, however, are a different matter in that they are capable of preserving information like timbre; therefore this study will treat timbre as an essential.
Metal Issues

All musical genres have their own set of extramusical issues that should be addressed at the outset of academic discourse. For metal, the three most significant ones are gender, race, and power.177

Gender

From its inception, metal has been a predominantly “masculine” art form. Until the emergence of symphonic metal in the late 1990s, female metal performers were rare. Girlschool, an all-female band from Britain, emerged in 1978 and received a great deal of support and publicity from Motörhead. In 1983, Lita Ford, the former lead guitarist for the all-female hard rock/punk band The Runaways,178 began her solo career as a hard rock/glam metal artist. Vixen, another all-female band, formed in 1980 but did not release an album until 1988.179 Aside from these acts, women were not a significant part of metal’s artist pool. In 1997, the female-fronted symphonic metal bands Nightwish and Within Temptation released their first albums, opening the doors for women to become prominent members of the metal community.

The “boy’s club” mentality of metal has colored much of the way metal bands treat gender. For many classic, thrash, power, and extreme metal bands, the “feminine”

177 It is important to note at this point that Christian metal diverges from general market even more in terms of gender and race. Those differences will be addressed later in Chapter Three.
178 The Runaways also launched the career of Joan Jett. Reports indicate disagreements between Jett and Ford over the band’s musical direction led to the demise of the band in 1979.
179 Vixen appeared in the 1985 movie Hardbodies as the band Diaper Rash.
simply does not exist or is not addressed. Stereotypically masculine characteristics and pursuits are given preference over stereotypically feminine ones. Lust is more common than love; self is promoted over “other;” strength is favored over vulnerability and openness; conquest and domination is more prized than collaboration and symbiosis.

One area where femininity did make inroads into metal was glam and pop metal. Many of these bands—Poison, Bon Jovi, and Winger, for example—achieved commercial success largely on the strength of their power ballads, which combine the sonic energy of the metal instrumentation with lyrics that have a broader “pop” appeal. Many of these were love songs, like Poison’s “Every Rose Has Its Thorn,” Def Leppard’s “Love Bites,” Whitesnake’s “Is This Love?,” Bon Jovi’s “Never Say Goodbye,” and Winger’s “Heaven.” Others, like White Lion’s “When the Children Cry” exhibit compassion or a focus on other people rather than on oneself.

While the androgynous appearances of many glam metal bands might also indicate a feminizing of metal, it is more likely another way for metal bands to transgress societal norms. In most cases, the “feminine” elements of the band’s appearance—the teased and styled hair, the makeup, the lacy and “frilly” clothing—accompany more masculine elements. For example, many pictures of Poison vocalist Bret Michaels show him clearly wearing eye liner and other makeup while also wearing sleeveless shirts or no shirt at all to show off his muscular physique. The same is true for Stryper drummer Robert Sweet, who in the band’s glam days typically performed in some sort of vest, revealing his bare chest. The very nature of the spandex pants common in glam metal serves to emphasize the physique of those who wear them.
The gendered nature of metal is also reflected in the treatment of women by the bands, both in person and in song. For many of these bands, their lives imitated their art, and songs about sexual exploits, such as Great White’s “Once Bitten, Twice Shy” and Def Leppard’s “Pour Some Sugar on Me” were matched by the stories of parades of groupies backstage at concerts. There are even undocumented reports of sex parties taking place under the stage during Def Leppard’s *Hysteria* tour in the late 1980s. This reflects a view that women are primarily objects who exist for the pleasure of male band members. Thus the primary role of women in metal seems to be to serve as objects for men’s pleasure and sexual gratification.

Given the masculine orientation of metal, it is not surprising that the audience is predominantly male. This situation of male musicians performing primarily for male audiences creates a sort of locker room mentality within metal where these ideas of masculinity are reinforced and perpetuated. Female fans must often adopt more masculine characteristics, such as being brash and bragging of their own sexual conquests, to gain acceptance and avoid being “targeted” as an outsider by male fans.

**Race**

In addition to metal being a predominantly masculine music, it is also overwhelmingly “White” music. Throughout the genre’s history, Blacks have been vastly underrepresented in metal. In the late 1970s, a band called Black Death became recognized as the first all-African American metal band, and in the 1980s, Living Colour became the first high profile Black metal band with its hit “Cult of Personality.” While there are few all-Black metal bands, there are a number of bands that have had Black
members, including Kings X, Killswitch Engage, Sepultura, Sevendust, Blasphemy, Suffocation, and Hirax. Metal audiences also tend to be overwhelmingly White.

One consequence of this is the union of white supremacist/Aryan ideologies with metal. Metal has attempted to make connections with the Germanic lands, and Scandinavia since the 1970s, it could be argued that there has always been a current of Aryanism in metal since its earliest days. There have been a number of bands that have used their music to promote White supremacist ideologies. Some have obvious names like Ethnic Cleansing, Angry Aryans, and Final Solution, while others, like Skrewdriver, Vaginal Jesus, and Centurion, seem to just follow the metal aesthetic without giving away any underlying ideology. Nowhere, however, did this philosophy take root deeper than in black metal and the branch known as National Socialist black metal (NSBM). NSBM “is aurally hateful music that diminishes the listener and saturates them with isolationist and ancient mystical beliefs, separating the tribes so we may have our peoples remain unique and unmarketable.”180 Its ideology is based in the writings of Adolf Hitler and Friedrich Nietzsche; it advocates a separation of all ethnic groups by whatever means necessary. NSBM bands include Burzum, Infernum, and Thor’s Hammer.

*Power*

Ultimately, metal is music about power—obtaining it and exerting it over the situations in one’s life. All aspects of metal are designed with this goal in mind. As will be discussed later, many metal lyrics promote feelings of independence and liberation

from society’s rules and expectations. The images on many album covers give the sense that the listeners are engaged in a battle against the elements of society that cause discord and chaos. The posturing and gesturing of the bands on stage give them an air of authority, and by imitating those motions, the feelings of authority are transferred to the fans. Most obviously, power in metal is expressed through the music itself. Metal is essentially loud. It is not intended to be music that sneaks up on a listener or ask for permission to be listened to; rather, it confronts the listener and imposes itself on not only the listener, but all within earshot. Metal music is difficult to ignore.

In metal, the power passes from the bands to the listeners as if carried on the sound waves themselves. Many studies on the psychological effects of heavy metal on listeners often report higher rates of depression, anomie, and suicide among metal fans than fans of other music genres, and they interpret the direction of causality to be the music as the cause of the emotional and psychological state. But from the perspective of metal fans, there is a greater likelihood that people who feel depressed and isolated from society are drawn to metal because it gives them a sense of power. In fact, some studies offer evidence that supports this hypothesis that rather than causing depression in the metal fan, listening to the music actually elevates their mood. Participation with

\[^{181}\text{Scheel and Westefeld, “Heavy Metal Music and Adolescent Suicidality: An Empirical Investigation.”}\]
the music through listening empowers these fans to face the negative situations in their lives and gives them hope and encouragement to overcome.

The analysis of Christian metal and its relationship to the metal and Christian subcultures in the next three chapters will necessarily address the issues outlined above. Christian metal has a long history modeled after its general market counterpart. The audience for the music shares much in common with the general metal audience in terms of why they listen to metal and what they expect from the musicians. The nature of the relationship between artist and audience as an indirect one mediated by a recording has implications for the ways the music is created by the artists and received by the audience. Finally, despite the “Christian” orientation of the music, Christian metal is still “metal” and must negotiate the issues underlying the genre overall.

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Chapter 3: The Verbal Dimension

Band names, album titles, song titles, and song lyrics are all elements considered part of the verbal dimension of the metal code. On the surface, it appears that this would be the easiest dimension to interpret because words and language rely on commonly agreed-upon meanings in order to be useful. However, that does not mean those meanings are fixed and constant; meanings are mediated by a number of contextual factors, such as the surrounding words and inflections. The author will negotiate and explain these mediating factors in this chapter in order to present what he believes best expresses the artists’ true intents.

Band Names

Naming conventions for metal bands tend to vary according to the subgenre to which the band belongs, but there are some overarching characteristics. For instance, unlike pop-rock or country bands that frequently use the band leader’s name in the band’s name, as in “Huey Lewis and the News” or “The Charlie Daniels Band,” metal bands tend to avoid the use of members’ names in the name of the band. Metal bands typically view themselves as a single unit made up of different but equal parts. The use of an individual’s name implies that a particular member is the leader of the group, which affects the sense of equality among the members. In cases where a member’s name is used, it is almost always used as a collective noun, not as representing the individual. For example, Dio and Van Halen both take their names from founding members, Ronnie James Dio and Alex and Eddie Van Halen, respectively, but the bands are viewed as a
single unit, not as a leader and his/their backup band. This is evidenced in part by these namesake members referring to Dio or Van Halen as something external to themselves. Ronnie James Dio regularly spoke of his involvement with Dio in the same way he spoke about his work with Rainbow and Black Sabbath. The name Alice Cooper is usually used to identify an individual, Vincent Furnier, but it is actually the name of the band for which Furnier sang in the early 1970s.183

In Christian metal the most prominent bands to use an individual’s name are Joshua and Bloodgood. Both of these bands were named for founding members, guitarist Joshua Perahia and bassist Michael Bloodgood, respectively, but within the context of Christian metal the names also hold sacred significance. In the Old Testament, Joshua was the successor to Moses who led the Israelites into “the Promised Land” at the end of the forty-year period following their escape from Egypt. Additionally, the Hebrew word “Yeshua,” typically translated in the Old Testament as “Joshua,” is translated as “Iesous” in the Septuagint, 184 which is the name given for Jesus in the New Testament. Bloodgood fans have applied a symbolic meaning to that name as well: “the Blood,” meaning the blood of Christ, is good for the salvation of humanity.

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183 Furnier reportedly still pays the members of that band for the rights to use the name in his solo act.
184 The Septuagint is the Greek translation of the Old Testament that was in common use during the early days of the Christian church.
Most bands, however, choose names that are not connected to members’ names but instead draw from one or more sources of evocative imagery. Some choose names for their ability to bring to mind disturbing, ominous, and destructive images that Weinstein classifies as “chaotic.” She defines chaos as the “absence or destruction of relationships, which can run from confusion, through various forms of anomaly, conflict, and violence, to death.” The degree of chaos represented in the name is related to the subgenre to which the band belongs. From the beginning, Black Sabbath embraced a name that was disconcerting to the general public. The notion of a “black Sabbath” was associated with the Black Mass of Satanism and led to accusations that the band members were devil worshippers. Classic metal bands like Iron Maiden, Venom, Grim Reaper, and Raven in the late 1970s continued with images that have negative and discomforting associations, a trend that carried over in glam metal bands such as Ratt, Motley Crüe, Poison, and Skid Row. Thrash band names tend to be more chaotic, reflecting the style of their music. Bands like Megadeth, Overkill, Annihilator, Slayer, Anthrax, and Nuclear Assault embrace the imagery of mass destruction common to thrash. Death metal bands predictably tend to choose names that call to mind images of death, such as Death, Autopsy, Grave, Cemetery, Embalmer, Mortem, and Six Feet Under. Some death metal bands, as well as many grindcore bands, take this death imagery to more extreme

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186 Black Sabbath attributes the origin of its name to the 1963 horror film *Black Sabbath* featuring Boris Karloff.
187 The term “megadeath” is used by the military to describe a war in which one million people are killed.
levels, such as Cannibal Corpse, Carcass, Slaughter, Impaled, Defleshed, Disgorge, Dismember, Ribspreader, Napalm Death, Dahmer,\textsuperscript{188} Pig Destroyer, Cattle Decapitation, Dying Fetus, Prostitute Disfigurement, and Rotting Corpse. At the same time, death metal bands like War, Possessed, Terrorizer, Misanthrope, Dies Irae, and Anathema choose to focus on other images of chaos. Many black metal bands follow the same conventions as the other extreme metal bands, with names like Lord Kaos, Mayhem, Morbid, Mütilation, Dissection, and Magnum Carnage. While metalcore is better known for its abstract and literary names, some bands adopt names that emphasize chaos and destruction, including Avenged Sevenfold, All Guns Blazing, The Tempest, Day of Vengeance, Darkest Hour, and Muerte.

These naming trends carry over into Christian metal, although primarily in the extreme styles. From thrash bands like Vengeance Rising, Ultimatum, and Torn Flesh to death metal bands like Corpse, Mortification, Crimson Thorn, and Impending Doom and black metal bands like Crimson Moonlight, Slechtvalk, and Horde, Christian metal draws on images of death, chaos, and doom to promote itself as well.\textsuperscript{189} These bands, and many of their fans, do not see a contradiction between these chaotic images and their Christian

\textsuperscript{188} Dahmer is named for the serial killer Jeffrey Dahmer.

\textsuperscript{189} Crimson Moonlight references the belief that red moons are bad omens, perhaps deriving from the prophecy of Joel quoted in Acts 2: “The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord,” (Acts 2:20 [NIV], which quotes Joel 2:31). Slechtvalk is the Dutch name for the peregrine falcon, a bird of prey.
messages. As one fan notes, “Let’s face it, there are a lot of dark elements in the Bible, and in the world.”

At the same time, however, some Christian bands, like Deliverance, Jerusalem, Zion, and Haven choose names that represent peace, protection, and security—the antithesis of the chaos promoted by general market metal.

**Militant Power**

Power is another common theme in metal band names. Sometimes that power is associated with military might, as with Jag Panzer, Armored Saint, and Megadeth. Christian metal bands draw strongly from military imagery because of the concept of “spiritual warfare” that many bands reference in their lyrics. Spiritual warfare is the belief that humanity is involved in a supernatural war between God and Satan in which Christians are called to actively fight. Arsenal, Soldier, Guardian, Holy Soldier, and Recon are some of the more prominent bands to adopt military-inspired names.

**Religious Power**

Bands also adopt names that allude to religion. Many choose images common to Christianity because it is a cultural marker for most of the United States and Western Europe, so the imagery is familiar even to the non-Christian population. Some bands, like Mass, Cathedral, Candlemass, Saint Vitus, Baptism, and Eucharist, allow the imagery to stand on its own without any attempt to mediate the meaning of the name with

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additional modifiers. Some, however, use religious images in ways that fuse their sacred “energy” with concepts that seem at odds with that sacred nature, transforming the religious image from something familiar that provides hope, comfort, and strength into something that is somehow unfamiliar and discomforting. For example, Judas Priest takes the image of the priest, who is traditionally viewed as a trustworthy person to whom one can turn in times of need and despair, and weds it to the image of Judas Iscariot, the betrayer of Christ. Other examples include Morbid Angel, Armored Saint, and Metal Church. Extreme metal bands frequently use Christian imagery in ways that are considered blasphemous by Christians, whether it is by expressing anti-God sentiments (Eyehategod, Deicide, God Dethroned, Atheist), celebrating the fallen state of humanity (Heathen, Sodom, Lover of Sin), or mocking Christ (Impaled Nazarene, Rotting Christ).

There are also bands whose names are related to non-Christian or even anti-Christian religions. Satan, demons, and hell are all prominent themes that can be traced back to classic metal bands Demon, Hell, Hell’s Belles, Cloven Hoof, and Satan. The practice continues in thrash bands Destroyer 666 and Infernal Majesty; death metal bands Demonoid, Diablo, Devildriver, and Helltrain; black metal bands Asmodeus, Goatlord, Gehenna, Azazel, Chthonic, Gospel of the Horns, and Satanic Warmaster. Likewise, witchcraft, magic, and the occult are prominent themes, as seen in the classic metal bands

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191 According to founding vocalist Al Atkins, when Judas Priest formed they were looking for a name in the same spirit as Black Sabbath. Bassist Bruno Stapenhill suggested the name Judas Priest from the song “The Ballad of Frankie Lee and Judas Priest” from Bob Dylan’s John Wesley Harding album.

192 Chthonic is a term that refers to the gods and spirits of the Underworld in Greek mythology.
Angel Witch, Witchfinder General, Witchfynde; thrash band Witchery; death metal bands Alchemist, Hecate Enthroned,\textsuperscript{193} and Incantation; black metal bands Hecate, Bewitched, Ceremonial Casting, Wykked Wytch, and Witchmaster; and doom metal bands Cult of Luna and Pentagram. Other bands are inspired by Norse, Celtic, and Middle Eastern mythologies, such as Odin, Thor’s Hammer, Stonehenge, and Tiamat.

The use of religious imagery in names is a convention Christian metal bands have little difficulty adopting. Saint, Barren Cross, Whitecross, Theocracy, Veni Domine, Disciple, Leviticus, Xalt, Deuteronomium and X-Sinner are examples. There are also bands that use references to the demonic in their names, such as Demon Hunter, Antidemon, Demoniciduth, and Demonic Dismemberment.\textsuperscript{194} These names, however, reference feelings of antagonism, hatred, and violence toward the demonic rather than embracing and celebrating it.

*Historical and Literary References*

Some bands choose names associated with historical events or people, including Lizzy Borden, Saxon, Pretty Boy Floyd, Vlad Tepes, Bathory, and Holocaust.\textsuperscript{195} Again, these names show a tendency toward images of violence. The historical references

\textsuperscript{193} Hecate is a Greek goddess considered the goddess of witchcraft.
\textsuperscript{194} The Devil Wears Prada is a literary reference and therefore does not really fit into this category.
\textsuperscript{195} Lizzy Borden took its name from the historical figure Lizzie Borden, who was accused of violently murdering her parents with a hatchet. Pretty Boy Floyd was a bank robber who was also a suspect in a gun battle with police that killed four officers. Vlad Tepes is the Romanian name of Vlad the Impaler. Bathory refers to Countess Elizabeth Báthory, also known as the “Blood Countess” for the rumors that she killed young girls and bathed in their blood to maintain her youth.
Christian metal bands use tend to be less closely tied to violence, such as King James, Templar, and Barnabas.\textsuperscript{196}

There are also several metal bands that take names from literary sources. One popular source is J.R.R. Tolkien’s \textit{The Lord of the Rings}, which has spawned bands named Isengard, Gorgoroth, Burzum, Amon Amarth, Cirith Ungol, Ephel Duath, and Gandalf. Other literature-inspired names include Paradise Lost, Nevermore, Cthulhu Rise, and Dante’s Inferno.\textsuperscript{197} Christian metal bands drawing on literary sources for names include As I Lay Dying, The Devil Wears Prada, Gwen Stacy, and Narnia.\textsuperscript{198} Of course the Bible also provides names for several bands, including Leviticus, Deuteronomium, and Megilloth.\textsuperscript{199}

\textsuperscript{196} King James is a reference to the King James VI and I who is historically remembered largely for sponsoring the production of the King James Version of the Bible. Templar is a reference to the Knights Templar, a monastic order of knights from the 12\textsuperscript{th} to 14\textsuperscript{th} centuries. Barnabas was an apostle and travelled with Paul throughout Asia Minor. While there is a history of violence associated with King James, who was involved in the torture of a number of accused witches in the 1590s, and the Knights Templar, some of whom were among the most skilled warriors of the Crusades, they are most strongly remembered for other reasons: King James for the Bible translation, the Knights Templar for their mythical involvement in protecting the Holy Grail and for creating a sort of banking system during the Crusades.

\textsuperscript{197} Paradise Lost is an obvious reference to the John Milton epic of the same name. Nevermore is a reference to Edgar Allan Poe’s poem “The Raven,” with the title character’s ominous repetition of the word “nevermore.” Cthulhu Rise refers to the creature Cthulhu created by H.P. Lovecraft. Dante’s Inferno is the opening book of \textit{The Divine Comedy} by Dante Alighieri.

\textsuperscript{198} \textit{As I Lay Dying} is also a novel by William Faulkner. \textit{The Devil Wears Prada} is best known as a film, but the film is based on a novel by Lauren Weisberger. Gwen Stacy was the name of Peter Parker’s first love interest in the Spider Man comic books. Narnia is the alternate world in C.S. Lewis’ \textit{The Chronicles of Narnia} series.

\textsuperscript{199} Megilloth is Hebrew for “scroll,” and is often used to refer to the five books of Ecclesiastes, Esther, Lamentations, and Ruth.
Use of color

Bands often use colors in their names as well. Black (which symbolizes night, power, fear, mystery, darkness, death, and evil) is perhaps the most common, with bands such as Black Sabbath, Black Funeral, and Black Murder. “Dark” is related to the color black, and is represented in metal band names by Dark Funeral, Dark Domination, Darkthrone, and Dark Angel. Perhaps its association with evil has resulted in few Christian metal bands with the color black in their names, Virgin Black being one of the few, but “dark” does appear in bands such as Darkwater, Dark Endless, Dark Lay Still, Dark Procession, Dark Valentine, and Dark Woods.\(^{200}\) It is significant that with the exception of Darkwater, all of these bands are black metal, which has an atmosphere of mystery around it that is emphasized by the “dark” reference.

White is another color commonly found in band names, including White Lion, Whitesnake, White Tiger, White Spirit, White Wizzard [sic], White Zombie, and Whitechapel. White commonly symbolizes purity, innocence, and good so these names stand in contrast to the darker, more sinister names. Christian metal surprisingly has very few bands with the color white in their names—Whitecross, White Throne, and White Funeral are the only three listed in the Firestream Music Vault, the most comprehensive database of Christian rock and metal.\(^{201}\) It is difficult to speculate why that is the case with any certainty, but it is possible that the Christian doctrine of the sinfulness of humanity makes bands reluctant to identify themselves with purity. It is also possible

\(^{200}\) Darkwater is progressive metal. Virgin Black is a symphonic/gothic metal band.  
\(^{201}\) http://www.firestreamvault.com
that bands do not wish to be perceived as weak or “lite” because of their association with Christianity. In the words of one fan, “I'm suspicious that ‘Christian’ metal bands, who are seeking to gain a hearing with ‘secular’ metalheads, might eschew names that could sound too soft.”

A third common color is red, which typically symbolizes intensity, passion, excitement, and strength. The association with violence and blood is also obvious within the context of metal. Bands like The Red Chord, The Red Death, and Crimson Death carry that connotation of blood. Within Christian symbolism, the color red takes on religious significance and represents the blood of Christ. Scarlet Red, Crimson Moonlight, Red Sea, Crimson Covenant, and Crimson Thorn all evoke such an image.

If bands are reluctant to identify with white for the reason speculated above regarding purity, the same doctrinal reasoning could lead to them to focusing on red as a symbol of purity instead. Doctrinally speaking, Christians believe their purity is a result of the blood of Christ shed through the Crucifixion rather than through any inherent purity of individuals.

203 The Red Death is also a reference to the Edgar Allan Poe story “The Masque of the Red Death.”
204 Red Sea is also associated with the story of the Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt described in the Old Testament, but the title of the band’s debut album was Blood, which lends credibility to this interpretation as well.
Masculinity and femininity

One other characteristic of band names is the strong masculine character they have. As metal is a genre that stresses power, strength, and “toughness,” it is expected that there are more masculine-sounding names than feminine-sounding ones. Glam metal is one exception, with bands like Britny [sic] Fox, Cinderella, Twisted Sister, Femme Fatale, Stage Dolls, Lillian Axe, Vixen, Black Veil Brides, and Lord Tracy as examples of names that carry feminine images along with the NWOBHM band Girlschool. The masculine dominance is carried over into Christian metal as well. The all-female black band Deborah, classic/glam bands Bride and Rosanna’s Raiders, and metalcore bands Mychildren Mybride, Gwen Stacy, and Norma Jean are notable exceptions.

Album titles

The second element of the verbal dimension is album and song titles. As a whole, album and song titles follow the same themes as band names, which is to be expected considering the significance of power and chaos as an overarching theme in metal. Album titles are one area where metal follows other rock and pop conventions by providing a context in which the songs are heard. This contextualization takes place in a variety of ways.

Eponymous Albums

Many bands choose to name albums after themselves, particularly their debut albums. A band’s debut album is its formal introduction to its potential audience, and self-titled debuts are announcing that the music contained on that album is representative
of the band. Bands that have chosen to represent themselves in this way include Black Sabbath, Iron Maiden, Deicide, Slipknot, Korn, System of a Down, W.A.S.P., Iced Earth, and Metal Church. Christian bands that have followed this trend include Bloodgood, Whitecross, Mortification, Impellitteri, Holy Soldier, Deliverance, The Crucified, and Demon Hunter.²⁰⁵

Related to eponymous albums are albums that have a title that somehow relates to the band’s name or image, such as Living Colour’s *Vivid*, Armored Saint’s *March of the Saint*, Tesla’s *Mechanical Resonance*, and Manowar’s *Battle Hymns*. Examples in the Christian market include Tourniquet’s *Stop the Bleeding*, Guardian’s *First Watch*, Zion’s *Thunder from the Mountain*, Recon’s *Behind Enemy Lines*, and Stryper’s *The Yellow and Black Attack*. Each of these album titles serves as an illumination on the band’s name by making reference to some aspect of the name’s meaning. For instance, “vivid” refers to a very strong color, the military connotation of marching connects with the military image denoted by “Armored,” mechanical resonance is one of the many subjects of experiments by physicist Nikola Tesla, tourniquets are used to restrict blood flow, and Mount Zion is figuratively the mountain of God.²⁰⁶

²⁰⁵ Mortification and The Crucified actually released demo tapes called *Break the Curse* and *Take Up Your Cross*, respectively, prior to their actual label debuts.

²⁰⁶ *The Yellow and Black Attack* is less about the band’s name and more about its appearance. Stage sets featured the two colors prominently, and the yellow and black striped costumes the band wore earned them the nickname “God’s bumblebees.”
Album Titles Derived from Song Titles

The most common sources for album titles are song titles which then become the keystones for the albums. Debut albums that are not named for the band are typically named for a song that serves as a statement of purpose, such as Slayer’s *Show No Mercy*, Venom’s *Black Metal*, and Death’s *Scream Bloody Gore*. Likewise, in the Christian market this is evident in Barren Cross’ *Rock for the King* and Saint’s *Warriors of the Son*. The use of song titles for later albums is the most common source for album titles, and as mentioned above, those songs serve as the focal point for the album and may be interpreted as encapsulating the central theme of the album.

Thematic Albums

Sometimes bands choose a thematic title for the album rather than a song. Examples include Celtic Frost’s *To Mega Therion* and Venom’s *Welcome to Hell*. These titles do not relate specifically to the band’s name or to any particular song on the album, but do supply a context by providing an overarching idea to link the songs together. Christian metal albums that follow this convention include Demon Hunter’s *The World is a Thorn* and Horde’s *Hellig Usvart*.207

Lyrics

The third and most extensive element of the verbal dimension is song lyrics. Metal lyrics, like any song lyrics, are intended to be heard rather than read, so failure to

207 Hellig Usvart is Norwegian for “holy unblack.”
recognize this often leads to an interpretation of meaning that is vastly different from the one intended by the writer. By examining the lyrics within the context of performance, the listener is able to take into account the emotion the singer brings to the lyric and the meanings implicit from it (sarcasm, anger, etc.). One way meaning can be derived from the performance is through the vocal articulation of phrases. In some songs important words or phrases are emphasized, often by having the whole band sing them instead of just the lead singer. This emphasis cannot be determined in any context other than performance. For example, the chorus lyrics of Bride’s song “Hell No” are written as “We won’t go to Hell no, we won’t go,” but in performance, the full band only sings “Hell no we won’t go.” This reference to a common protest chant emphasizes the defiance of the lyric.

Another important consideration is that these lyrics are part of the context of a particular subculture, or two subcultures in the case of Christian metal. Meanings attributed to words or symbols within one subculture may differ from the meanings attributed to the same words or symbols in other subcultures or in the culture overall. These lyric considerations will guide the analysis that follows.

**Lyric Themes**

Deena Weinstein divides lyric themes into two large categories: Dionysian and Chaotic.

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Dionysian

Dionysian themes are most closely connected to classic and glam metal and involve overcoming the cares of everyday life and losing oneself in pleasure. This is usually accomplished by summoning the power of the “unholy trinity” of sex, drugs, and rock and roll. In metal, love in its romantic and altruistic forms is largely absent except in power ballads. In the place of love is carnal lust, as highlighted in W.A.S.P.’s infamous “Animal (F**k Like a Beast)”. Sex in metal is not viewed as lovemaking between two committed individuals, but rather as a symbol of youthful male power and often male dominance over women. The women are usually nameless groupies or prostitutes who are a means for the release of that power. Often metal bands deflect the perception of any kind of romantic feelings, or even physical attraction, by portraying the women as traditionally unattractive or even repulsive, as in AC/DC’s “Whole Lotta Rosie” and Krokus’ “Smelly Nelly.” These views of love and sex are connected to the masculine nature of metal and rooted so deeply that even female performers like Vixen and Lita Ford express them as well. For example Lita Ford’s “Big Gun” uses double entendre when it says “I hear you carry a big gun,” as reinforced by the spoken section near the end:

"Hey man, I gotta tell ya, I really like those boots you're wearing. What size are they?"

"Well, you know..."

209 Power ballads are most closely associated with glam metal, but they are present in classic and power metal as well.
"They look awfully large."\textsuperscript{210}

Vixen uses “rock” as a euphemism for sex in its song “I Want You to Rock Me.”

In the second chorus the female protagonist says

\begin{verbatim}
I want you to rock me, roll me,
Learn to control me
Rock me, roll me,
You really oughta get to know me
Come on rock me, roll me,
I'm feeling kinda lonely
I want you to rock me, roll me,
Quit talking and show me\textsuperscript{211}
\end{verbatim}

After a guitar solo, she continues

\begin{verbatim}
Now it's your turn
I'm gonna rock you, roll you,
Do all the things I told you
I'm gonna rock you, roll you,
Sit down and I'll show you\textsuperscript{212}
\end{verbatim}

The topic of drugs seems less important to Weinstein. She speculates that drugs lack the power associations of sex, as drugs tend to control rather than to be controlled. This is illustrated by Metallica’s “Master of Puppets.”

\begin{verbatim}
Needlework the way, never you betray
\end{verbatim}

\textsuperscript{212} Ibid.
Life of death becoming clearer
Pain monopoly, ritual misery
Chop your breakfast on a mirror

Taste me you will see
More is all you need
Dedicated to
How I'm killing you

Come crawling faster
Obey your Master
Your life burns faster
Obey your Master
Master

Master of Puppets I'm pulling your strings
Twisting your mind and smashing your dreams
Blinded by me, you can't see a thing
Just call my name, 'cause I'll hear you scream
Master

In metal lyrics alcohol appears to be the drug of choice in the hedonistic lifestyle advocated in many songs. Marijuana, the second most prominent drug mentioned, is valued as a way to achieve greater self-awareness (as in Black Sabbath’s “Sweet Leaf”) as well as a way to let go of inhibitions and have a good time.

The third element of Dionysian lyrics according to Weinstein, is rock and roll. She believes that songs that extol the ecstasy of the music are virtually a requirement for the genre. Songs that make references to “rock,” “rocking,” or “rock and roll,” as in KISS’s “I Wanna Rock and Roll All Night,” Vixen’s “I Want You to Rock Me,” and

AC/DC’s “For Those About to Rock (We Salute You),” serve as double entendres. While they are clear references to the music and the lifestyle associated with it, they also reference the usage in blues and early rock and roll in which the terms are synonyms for sex.

Christianity, however, does not endorse or promote such a hedonistic lifestyle, so this creates a problem for Christian metal. There are two ways Christian bands approach Dionysian themes. One way Christian metal treats them is to transform them into something that promotes Christian values. For example, bands turn sexual themes around to promote sex within marriage and emphasize the value of relationships instead of one-night stands. Stryper’s “Not That Kind of Guy” is an example of this. The singer tells of a woman who wants to go home with him “and have a real good time.” His response is to tell her “I don’t give my love away for free.” And then “I would love to take your hand, but baby, I don’t need no one night stand.” Barren Cross’ “Love at Full Volume” is a metal love song vocalist Mike Lee wrote for his wife.

The second way Christian metal approaches these Dionysian themes is to de-glamorize the sex, drugs, and rock and roll lifestyle. Thrash band Vengeance Rising does this in their song “Mulligan Stew” by describing drugs and alcohol as a dead end. The song is directed at the listener, indicated by the use of “you” in the lyrics rather than some unnamed “he,” and tells the story of a man who is sitting alone on Friday night because he spent all his money on marijuana and beer. After “you smoke until you choke and

214 As stated above, power ballads already deal with the issue of love, so they will not be covered in this discussion.
drink your beer alone,” the man is hungry, “so you woof a bunch of munchies cause there’s nothing to do, but when you find they don’t mix, you’re chuckin’ mulligan stew.”216 The rest of the song describes the man as moving on to cocaine use and the mounting debt from his addiction before closing with a word of hope: “Jesus hasn’t come to call the righteous but the sinners, for all have fallen short of the glory of God.”217 The same sentiment is expressed in Barren Cross’ “Deadlock,” which describes drug and alcohol addiction as something that seems harmless at the beginning but then becomes a deathtrap.

Hot steel, the pipe's never cold anymore
The more you feel, the more you can't let go
Bang goes your body now, cocaine
Harmless though it seems, it starts just like a dream
But it ends, ends, ends.218

“Rocking” remains a theme within Christian metal, although a sexual interpretation is less likely than in general market metal. In Barren Cross’ “Rock for the King,” rocking is a response of joy at the return of Christ: “Oh the joy will rise when we see the rider of the white horse. We will rock—for the King.”219 Many of Stryper’s songs about “rocking” view it as part of an evangelistic strategy. “Rockin’ the World” proclaims “We just want to spread the news in a different way. Rock the world but rock

217 Ibid.
it with the truth,"\textsuperscript{220} and the evangelistic interpretation of “Rock the Hell Out of You” is clear. Other songs treat rocking simply as making music, as in Stryper’s “Co’mon [sic] Rock” and “Rock the People.”

We're here to rock for you and rock is what we'll do
Until your body feels the sound.
So don't be afraid to shout cause that's what it's all about.
We've got to spread it all around.
Co'mon rock, rock, rock.
Co'mon never stop.\textsuperscript{221}

From the time I was a boy
I knew what I was born to do
Instead of playing with my toys
I'd play my songs, that's all I knew
With a guitar in my hands everyday
My heart and soul would always say

Rock the people
Rock the people
Now I've been around the world
I can't believe what I have seen
I've rocked with every guy and girl
Sometimes I think it's all a dream\textsuperscript{222}

Some songs within that vein, like Stryper’s “The Rock that Makes Us Roll,”
Tempest’s “Rockin’ for the Light,” and Rage of Angels’ “Rock for the Rock,” point to Christ as the motivation for their music-making.

\textsuperscript{222} Stryper “Rock the People,” \textit{Against the Law}. Enigma Records, 1990.
They say that rock and roll is strong,
But God's the rock that makes us roll.
Don't need no drugs to help us push on
We've got his power in our souls.²²³

Are you lost and lonely, do you search for perfect love?
Well you won't find it here on earth, so set your sights above.
‘Cause sex and drugs and rock ‘n roll can never set you free.
Jesus said “I am the Way, come on and follow me.”

So listen to what we’re saying and think about it well
Look the Enemy in the eye and send him back to Hell
We put our trust in God, and through Him we will win
With each and every note we play, we’ll rock you without sin
Rockin’ for the Light²²⁴

The way has not been easy,
Many walls we had to face.
But still we keep on striving,
Towards the one that grants us grace.
If only you would just believe,
And realize he died for you.
He'd come inside your heart today,
And show you love you never knew.
Let's rock for the rock,
The one that gives us life.²²⁵

Guardian’s “Rock in Victory” goes a step further by saying their music is “His [Christ’s] rock and roll so full of life.”²²⁶

Christian metal’s treatment of rocking themes is part of the strategy of presenting alternatives to the Dionysian themes of general market metal. The primary alternative to seeking pleasure above all else is presented as service to and worship of God.

Whitecross’ “Dancin’ in Heaven” presents the idea of dancing and enjoying oneself, but in the context of praising God.

Dancin' in Heaven
The angels and the sons of men
Will party in God's presence then
Dancin' in Heaven
Like David did in days of old
Upon the rock it does not roll\textsuperscript{227}

Stryper’s “Makes Me Wanna Sing” names Jesus as their source of joy, and their music is an outflow of that joy.

We're gonna rock and have a good time
Tonight's the night, the night we move
Together we will stand to rock the land
We're gonna rock for something new
We're gonna rock for something true
Tonight's the night so let's lift up our hands
Jesus, King, King of Kings
Jesus, makes me wanna sing\textsuperscript{228}

Thus, the Dionysian quest of pleasure for pleasure’s sake is exchanged for taking pleasure in the things of God.

Chaotic themes

Weinstein’s second category of lyric themes, chaotic, is viewed as a distinctive characteristic of metal. Chaos in relation to metal usually revolves around the absence or destruction of relationships. Metal can easily be interpreted as having a “glass-half-empty” view of life. It tends to focus on disorder, conflict, and contradiction, often evoking images of monsters, the grotesque, mayhem, and disaster. Songs typically encourage resistance and rebellion against a moral order that is rife with injustice. There are also numerous references to mental illness and other forms of internal chaos. While chaotic themes can be found in all subgenres, they tend to be more prevalent in classic, thrash, and extreme metal because these subgenres stand against the pleasing illusions of normalcy propagated by other forms of popular music.

While metal is often believed to praise the forces of chaos and disorder, these songs are just as likely merely to be descriptive of the chaos, painting a picture of a world in disorder, or to draw attention to chaos for the purpose of making others aware of it. Other songs call for the listener to resist the chaos and work to restore order. Still others view the current system as beyond repair and call for continued rebellion which leads to greater chaos. All of these treatments of chaotic themes tend to emphasize the power of disorder because the chaos is still present at the end of the song and no tangible way out is presented.

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229 In this regard, metal reveals its 1960s roots and exhibits elements of the protest song, as can be seen by comparing the subject matter of Black Sabbath’s “War Pigs” and Bob Dylan’s “Masters of War.”
230 The Dionysian themes can be viewed as an extension of the chaotic themes in that they represent escaping the chaos by focusing on pleasure and self-indulgence.
Religious imagery

A major source for metal’s chaotic imagery and language is religion, particularly the Judeo-Christian tradition. The book of Revelation from the Bible provides a particularly rich source of ideas and images. Many bands have adopted the apocalyptic imagery for album art and songs, the best known being Iron Maiden’s “Number of the Beast.”

Pre-Christian religions of northern Europe, particularly Celtic and Norse mythologies, also figure into metal imagery. In fact Norse mythology and Viking imagery figure into metal from its earliest years in Led Zeppelin’s “Immigrant’s Song.”

We come from the land of the ice and snow,
From the midnight sun where the hot springs flow.
The hammer of the gods will drive our ships to new lands,
To fight the horde, singing and crying: Valhalla, I am coming!
On we sweep with threshing oar,
Our only goal will be the western shore.

In more recent years, this mythology plays a major role in the subgenre known as Viking metal, where this use of “pagan” imagery is presented by bands like Burzum, Månesgarm, Amon Amarth, and Bathory as an act of rebellion against the perceived Christian-influenced mainstream society by representing an alternative source of divine power. Direct anti-Christian references are rare but do exist (particularly in songs by Burzum), as most Viking metal bands prefer to celebrate Odin and Thor rather than

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231 The spoken introduction paraphrases Revelation 12:12 and 13:18: “Woe to you, Oh Earth and Sea, for the Devil sends the beast with wrath, because he knows the time is short... Let him who hath understanding reckon the number of the beast for it is a human number, its number is six hundred and sixty six.”

denigrate Jehovah and Jesus. National Socialist black metal bands extend this national pride into the realm of racial purity and white supremacy by combining black metal’s
general hostility toward Christianity and affinity toward Satanism and paganism with
Nazism.\textsuperscript{233} There are also a number of metal bands, like Alestorm, Primordial, and
Eluveitie, that draw from Celtic mythology. These bands tend to be less militant and
anti-Christian than their Viking metal peers, but the emphasis on Celtic deities and
mythology does place them in this category of “pagan metal.”

**Good vs. Evil**
The battle between good and evil is another common theme in many metal songs,
although it often reflects an inverted morality in which evil is favored over good. This
inversion is often a matter of terminology rather than morals. When that which is
considered “good,” such as the government, the church, and “proper” society, condones
and participates in acts that are unjust or criminal (persecution, discrimination, abuse,
etc.), one way to stand apart from that is to adopt the opposite characteristics—in this case
that which is considered “evil.” So, for example, the anti-religion sentiments exhibited in
Motörhead’s “Brave New World” and “Orgasmatron” are more accurately interpreted in
the context of the abuses they reference in these lyrics rather than as a general call to
atheism.

\begin{verbatim}
And religion, like the monster that it is
Keeps telling you to turn the other cheek
God is on your side, but I don't think that you're on his,
\end{verbatim}

\textsuperscript{233} NSBM bands typically consider Christianity to be the product of a Jewish conspiracy
to destroy the Aryan race by eliminating its indigenous culture.
If Jesus showed up now he'd be in jail by next week.\textsuperscript{234}

\begin{verbatim}
I am the one, Orgasmatron, the outstretched grasping hand
My image is of agony, my servants rape the land
Obsequious and arrogant, clandestine and vain
Two thousand years of misery, of torture in my name
Hypocrisy made paramount, paranoia the law
My name is called religion, sadistic, sacred whore.\textsuperscript{235}
\end{verbatim}

In fact, the line “If Jesus showed up now he’d be in jail by next week,” seems to indicate a belief that modern Christianity is far removed from the historical person and teachings of Jesus, and “Orgasmatron” indicates that hypocrisy—not living by the principles one proclaims—is the issue with religion and not the principles themselves. So by rejecting “religion” in these songs, Motörhead is actually rejecting the corrupted version of Christianity and not “true” Christian principles. The same idea holds true with Body Count’s controversial song “Cop Killer,” which was written and performed from the perspective of someone who was frustrated over rampant brutality and abuse of power by law enforcement against African Americans.

\textbf{Literature and Popular Culture}

Another important source of chaotic imagery and language is classic literature.

The gothic horror stories of Edgar Allan Poe provide an excellent source of disturbing images and stories for songs like Iron Maiden’s “Murders in the Rue Morgue” and Nightwish’s “The Poet and the Pendulum.” Other writers who have inspired metal artists include H.P. Lovecraft (Metallica’s “The Call of Ktulu” and Black Sabbath’s “Behind the


Wall of Sleep”) and J.R.R. Tolkien (Led Zeppelin’s “Ramble On” and “Battle of Evermore” and Nachtreich’s “Barad Dur”).

Popular culture has also contributed its own inspiration to metal. Power metal frequently employs the imagery of “sword-and-sorcery” movies like Conan the Barbarian, including swords, armor, dragons, and magic. Horror movies provide material for metal lyrics, particularly death and black metal with their propensity toward the grotesque and evil. These sources provide inspiration for one particular chaotic theme – the monster.

The Monster
The monster in metal is much like the monster in horror movies: it is an outsider that does not fit into the existing social order. According to Weinstein, the monster is in a state of chaos because it has no relationship with others in society. Conflict arises with the monster for two main reasons: the monster attempts to change society or society perceives the monster as a threat because it does not fit in. Well-known metal monsters include Black Sabbath’s “Iron Man”, Metallica’s “The Thing that Should Not Be,” and Judas Priest’s “The Green Manalishi.”

Religion also gives metal its main monster figure in the devil. Weinstein claims that references to the devil and Hell in metal are usually symbolic rather than literal. Satan represents the forces of disorder that seek to maintain the chaos. Thus, when Ozzy

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236 “The Green Manalishi” was actually written by Peter Green of Fleetwood Mac and first recorded by that group, but Judas Priest’s version is prominent enough in metal that it can be considered a metal monster.
Osbourne sings “Satan laughing spreads his wings” in Black Sabbath’s “War Pigs.” Weinstein believes he is not singing of a literal Satan, but symbolically about the forces that are driving the chaos. Hell is a representation of that chaos rather than being a place of eternal torment and suffering. She also believes songs about “partying in Hell” with the devil, like AC/DC’s “Highway to Hell,” should be interpreted as reveling in the midst of the chaos of the world.

Christian metal presents chaos in many of the same ways general market metal does. A dominant worldview expressed by Christian metal bands is that the world’s systems are inherently corrupt and self-serving because “the world” is under the power of Satan, and the disorder and conflict of the world are the direct results of that. In fact Christian doctrine teaches that the world is in open rebellion against God who wishes to reconcile the world to himself. Bloodgood’s “Battle of the Flesh” addresses this conflict: “Pleasures of the flesh seem sweet/Worldly thoughts rush in/We fight and fight for mind control/Our weakness turns to sin.” The song goes on to describe how “evil forces of this world” influence our words, thoughts, and actions, and they can only be overcome through the power of Christ. Deliverance’s “This Present Darkness” continues this theme by arguing that the reason the chaos of the world system continues despite all the efforts by political leaders to stop it is that those leaders are also part of the system. The only

solution is to pray because “mighty are the weapons of God/to combat this present
darkness.”  

Revelation remains a prime source for chaos in Christian metal, but the images
are not presented as destruction and chaos that are out of control; they are part of God’s
plan that must take place before the final (and inevitable) victory over evil. Saint is a
band that has developed a reputation for being particularly apocalyptic. Songs like “Plan
II,” “Legions of the Dead,” “Time’s End,” “The Path,” and “Through the Sky” all use
apocalyptic imagery to point to the need for salvation from the coming wrath. “Time’s
End” paints a particularly chaotic picture for those who refuse to take “the mark of the
beast.”

He wakes in darkness
The stench of burnt flesh fills the air
His chewed up body
The rats are crawling everywhere
He looks around him to his horror
Dead bodies rotting all around
There is no memory in his mind
There is no answer to be found

The sound of metal clanging makes him hide
He sees the mutant people walk in stride
Hot crimson lasers glaring from their gaze
Dark shadow killers walk out from the haze

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239 Deliverance “This Present Darkness.” _Weapons of Our Warfare_, Intense Records,
1990.
240 Revelation 13:15-18 says that the mark of the beast will be required of everyone at
that time and that people will not be permitted to buy or sell anything without that mark.
It also says that anyone who refuses to worship an image of the beast will be put to death.
Saint’s account takes some license with the story and should not be taken as a literal
reading of the text.
Sonar detectors working underground
These wicked men of metal know no bounds
He climbs the ladder up into his fright
Leaving the sewer city late at night
Roaming the streets he hears the people cry
There are the beastly banners flying high
Mass execution stage—a bloody feast
Won't take the mark or bow down to the beast.\textsuperscript{241}

Sometimes these images are used as warning signs, as in Saint’s “Primed and Ready,”
which views the signs of the apocalypse as a warning to be

Primed and ready
The end of time is near.
“Someone’s shouting”
He’s coming back for those who care.\textsuperscript{242}

It is a sentiment also shared by Whitecross’ “Signs of the End,” which encourages
listeners to watch for the signs of the end as a warning of what will come after.

These are signs of the end,
Get this through your head.
Live for signs of the end of the age.
These are signs of the end
And soon will all come true.
Watch for signs of the end,
This warning is for you.\textsuperscript{243}

\textsuperscript{241} Saint “Times End,” \textit{Times End}. Pure Metal Records, 1986
Christian metal retains some of the literary and popular culture references of general market metal as well. The progressive metal band Called to Arms released a concept album entitled *Peril and the Patient* that is based on the C.S. Lewis classic book *The Screwtape Letters*. In addition to having a Lewis-inspired name, the band Narnia’s albums include songs like “Return of Aslan,” “Gates of Cair Paravail,” and “The Witch and the Lion.” C.S. Lewis is not the only literary figure whose work appears in Christian metal, however. Tourniquet’s “Vanishing Lessons” includes a quote from Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Masque of the Red Death.”

Sword-and-sorcery images are also present in Christian metal, although there are decidedly fewer references to wizards and sorcerers. As with general market metal, there are certain genres in which these images are more prominent, namely classic, power, and black and folk metal. Examples of this imagery in Christian metal can be found in the Bride song “Heroes” (“I’m standing on the sword of the Dragon”), Leviticus’ “The Winner” (“I’m gonna walk up the mountain/and take the sword in my hand”), and

244 *The Screwtape Letters* is a fictional collection of correspondences between a senior demon named Screwtape and his nephew and pupil Wormwood regarding the younger’s assignment to keep a British man known only as “The Patient” from attaining salvation.

245 Aslan is the lion who rules over Narnia as a sort of Christ figure in *The Chronicles of Narnia*. Cair Paravail, or Paravel, is the name of the castle from which the human rulers of Narnia rule. “The Witch and the Lion” is a reference to the characters from the book *The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe*.

246 Folk metal is an umbrella term for metal that displays many characteristics common to regional folk music, including folk instruments and the mining of folklore for song material. The most prominent examples of folk metal include the aforementioned Viking and Celtic metal, which often includes harps, Uilleann pipes, tin whistles, flutes, fiddles, and even bagpipes.

247 Bride “Heroes.” *Show No Mercy*, Pure Metal Records, 1986

most of the work by Slechtvalk.249 Swords are commonly used in Christian metal to represent the Bible, drawing on imagery from Ephesians 6 and Hebrews 4 where swords symbolize the “Word of God.”250

Monsters are also a part of Christian metal, with the most prominent one being Satan. Contrary to Weinstein’s view on the devil in general market metal, Christian metal treats Satan as a real being, the Great Deceiver and archenemy of God and Christians. Satan is depicted as everything from the sly liar to the vicious killer, a creature of whom Christians should be aware but not fear. Bloodgood’s “Killing the Beast” conveys both images in the lines

Stinging poison he spits on the hopeless ones in chains
The blood of all the dead is on his hands
Yes I remember clearly when he had me in his grip
The promises that blossomed into lies.251

Most songs that speak of Satan remind Christians that God is more powerful and that his fate has been sealed at the final judgment. Mortification’s “Satan’s Doom” says his “head will be crushed and vile gore spurt,”252 and Elgibbor’s song “Satan’s Doom” quotes Revelation 20:7-10, which describes the ultimate fate of Satan and his followers:

When the thousand years are over,

249 Slechtvalk’s second and third albums, The War That Plagues the Lands and At the Dawn of War are Viking metal concept albums.
250 Ephesians 6:17, Hebrews 4:12
252 Mortification “Satan’s Doom.” Mortification, Intense Records, 1991. This is a reference to Genesis 3:15.
Satan will be released from his prison
And will go out to deceive the nations
In the four corners of the earth--Gog
And Magog—to gather them for battle.
In number they are like the sand on the seashore.
They marched across the breadth of the earth
And surrounded the camp of God's people,
The city he loves.
But fire came down from heaven and devoured them.
And the devil, who deceived them,
Was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur,
Where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown.
They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever. 253

The Christian’s response to the devil, according to Christian metal, is active resistance.
Whitecross says “As for Satan, resist him/and he will flee from you.”254  This resistance
is related to the concept of “spiritual warfare” and the warfare imagery discussed
previously. Songs like Stryper’s “Soldiers Under Command,” Theocracy’s “Laying the
Demon to Rest,” Deliverance’s “Weapons of Our Warfare,” Vengeance Rising’s
“Warfare,” and Mortification’s “Brutal Warfare” convey the belief that Christians (and,
in fact, all humanity) are in a constant state of war on three fronts: with Satan and his
demons, the world system, and their own human nature.

We are the soldiers under God's command
We hold His two-edged sword within our hands
We're not ashamed to stand up for what's right
We win without sin, it's not by our might
And we're fighting all the sin

references James 4:7.
And the good book—it says we'll win!  

They're on my back  
I run, but I can feel their talons  
digging in my flesh  
Blood trickles down upon the earth  
And I grow weaker with each breath  
Each time I shake one off  
another wraps its teeth around my neck  
And every time, the one, the thorn is there  
To tear me down again  
The angels counterstrike  
Their flaming swords slice through  
the fallen ones  
The demons reunite, attack again  
The cycle has begun  
Caught in the middle of this present darkness  
with nowhere to run  
We're in a holy war  
As it is written, so shall it be done

The battle; it starts in your mind—a lesson to be learned  
Provoking thoughts only cause the sin  
That provoking thoughts have earned  
Cast down imaginations of every high thing  
That dare exalts itself against the knowledge of God  
The weapons of our warfare  
Powerful they are  
No nuclear warfare attacks can bring these strongholds down  
To take dominion over Satan's own ground  
Rise up with the sword of God and put your armor on

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We wrestle not against flesh and blood
Take the sword and prayer, understand the cause
The brothers in Adam, you're to call
Into the priesthood, warning all
Fight as a Lion
What are we in: Warfare
Onslaught against hell-bent deception
Through apologetics, confrontation
We're calling you, who will come
Show your fist, that you are one of us
Reconciliation

Demon Forces
They must bow
Saints of God arise
And kill deprivation
Evil bondage
Will not claim the church of Christ
Brutal warfare

This active resistance appears to be the only acceptable avenue for violence in Christian metal. Songs like Stryken’s “Crush the Head of Satan,” Vomitorial Corpulence’s “Hammering Satan’s Head,” and Jerusalem’s “Dancing on the Head of the Serpent” tell listeners it is acceptable to direct anger and violence toward Satan and those who are seen as his direct agents (such as “the Antichrist”), but violence against other people is not advocated in any way.

260 The Antichrist is the person who, according to some Christian theological perspectives, will appear in the “last days” and establish himself as a false messiah. Because the theology of the Antichrist is formed from interpretations of multiple Biblical
Crush the head of Satan! Under your feet.
Crush the head of Satan! Lord God of Peace
Crush the head of Satan! Don’t let him breathe
Crush him, crush him.

…
Crush, crush, crush! Give him no power!
Crush, crush, crush! Every minute, every hour!
Crush, crush, crush! ‘Cuz you know he’s just a coward!
Crush, crush, crush! Just kick him in the face! 262

Satan you are a loser, the victory has been won,
Christ is going to crush your head and grind you to a pulp,
Hammering Satan’s head,
Hammering Satan’s head,
Hammering Satan’s head,
Crush his skull! 263

He sits on a throne with an arrogant smile
thinking he's gonna stay there forever
But the King of the Saints is mounting His steps
there is a judgment to settle
And in a short moment his face turns surprised
before he is thrown to the ground
That's alright, that's alright.

texts, there is much room for speculation as to the true nature and identity of this person. Many believe he is a political figure who promises to bring about world peace, while others believe he is a spiritual leader uniting the world under a single creed. Some believe he is fully human and becomes indwelt by Satan at the time he emerges as the Antichrist, while others believe he is somehow the offspring of Satan as Christ is the offspring of God.

261 There are those, however, who do not believe this type of violence is appropriate based on Jude verses 8-9: “In the very same way, these dreamers pollute their own bodies, reject authority and slander celestial beings. But even the archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not dare to bring a slanderous accusation against him, but said, ‘The Lord rebuke you!’” (NIV)


We’re dancing on the head of the serpent.\textsuperscript{264}

There are also numerous examples of Christian metal songs that consider particular social issues—specific points of chaos—from a Christian worldview. One issue Christian metal addresses frequently is abortion. The Crucified’s “Silent Scream” presents a stark but graphic perspective on abortion (“From mother’s womb/to garbage can/the little babies die.”) and asks the question “does only God/and my heart/hear the babies’ silent scream.”\textsuperscript{265} Frost Like Ashes’ “Born to Pieces” also uses graphic details in describing abortion:

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Acid fills the darkness
Of the stretched out womb
Burning her flesh
To the bone
Enter the scalpel
The first cut is made
Separate her body
Severed limb from limb

To the house of the Butcher
Into the eyes of the Slayer
Before the altar of the massacre
Lay her. Flay her!\textsuperscript{266}
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“Born to Pieces” also delves into the more-complex issue of “self-defense by proxy” in a set of verses describing the murder of the doctor.\textsuperscript{267} This second set of verses is written

\textsuperscript{265} The Crucified “Silent Scream.” \textit{Take Up Your Cross}, 1986.
\textsuperscript{266} Frost Like Ashes “Born to Pieces,” \textit{Born to Pieces}. Sullen Records, 2008.
using parallel language and structure to the verses used to describe the abortion to make the point that it is a logical fallacy to oppose abortion using the “sanctity of human life” argument, yet then advocate killing another group of people.

Acid fills his mouth
Silent screams cannot be heard
The machete draws first blood
In this irony absurd
The blade thirsts for more
Limbs are hacked and hewn
I sicken at such gore
But then I am not like you

The slaughter of the Butcher
Deliverance of ten thousand
An end of the massacre
Preyed him. Slayed him!268

Barren Cross’ “Killers of the Unborn” presents abortion from the perspective of a fetus describing what is happening during the abortion process, but rather than just being a typical “abortion-is-murder” lyric, this song turns its attention to the mother and redemption at the end of the song.

The shame and tears she bears
The scar of guilt she is going to wear
But he can forgive her
If she gives her life to the Savior.269

267 Self-defense by proxy is used by some in the extreme end of the pro-life movement to justify bombing clinics that perform abortions and even killing doctors and other personnel who work in these clinics. The rationale is that every destroyed clinic and/or dead practitioner equates to saved lives.
268 Frost Like Ashes “Born to Pieces”
While abortion is by far the most common social issue addressed, others are present as well. Tourniquet’s “Ark of Suffering” addresses animal rights issues like abuse and animal testing.\textsuperscript{270} Its songs “Dysfunctional Domicile,” “Broken Chromosomes,” and “Bearing Gruesome Cargo” deal with the issues of domestic violence and child abuse as does “The Skeezix Dilemma.” “The Skeezix Dilemma” refers to the children’s board game \textit{Uncle Wiggly} and parallels a child’s apprehension about landing on Space 109, the space marking the lair of the Skeezix, to his apprehension about seeing his father. The follow-up to this song, “The Skeezix Dilemma Part II” is a three-part story that ends with the child being set free from the Skeezix (the abuse) by calling on God.

Torn Flesh’s song “World Pollution” talks about the general state of the world as being at least as bad is it was before the Great Flood.\textsuperscript{271} In one verse the song alludes to several general market metal bands as contributing to the problems:

\begin{quote}
The \textit{Poison} in the music is a raucous \textit{Mötley Crüe}.
The \textit{Venom} of the \textit{Whitesnake} will \textit{Sla(y)} yer heart in two.\textit{Grim Reaper’s} slipping in like a \textit{W.A.S.P.} up from below.\textit{Running like a Ratt}, a \textit{Wasted Life} on \textit{Skid Row}.\textsuperscript{272}
\end{quote}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{270} Tourniquet leader and drummer Ted Kirkpatrick is an avid animal rights advocate and in 2010 released a solo album titled \textit{Ode to a Roadkill} which is a nine-song, 45 minute doom/stoner metal album that uses animal sounds as the “vocals.”
\textsuperscript{271} The Great Flood refers to the flood recorded in Genesis 6 where God flooded the earth because of the wickedness of humanity.
\end{flushleft}
Torn Flesh also addresses the role of popular culture (“Hollywood Heaven”) and homosexuality (“Gay Rights?”) in the demoralizing of society.\textsuperscript{273}

Can my heart just filter out
When my God's name is used in vain
For an actor I admire
To coin another phrase

Sin is there on the screen
And in my heart Lord I confess
As I question my own witness
While staring at a breast
Hollywood heaven is a man-made hell.\textsuperscript{274}

The world is full of men lusting men
Gay is not happy when it is a sin
Free sex has got its price to pay
God still loves you but in a different way

If you want gay rights, you got em!
You have the right to repent
You have the right to stand before God and be judged
You have the right to heed Romans 1:26-30
If you want gay rights, you got 'em!\textsuperscript{275}

Night

One theme that seems to bridge the Dionysian and Chaotic dichotomy is that of the night. Night is a symbol with rich and varied meanings and is often employed to indicate danger and the height of chaos as well as a time for love and full Dionysian

\textsuperscript{273} The band received a great deal of negative attention from the LGBT community over its strong homosexuality-is-sin stance. Ironically, former lead singer Greg Hudson has since founded Woobie Bear Music, a record label and management company promoting LGBT artists.


revelry. Weinstein says that both of these ideas about the night can be summarized in the concept that at night, “everything that is repressed by the respectable world can come forth.”

Christian metal tends to look at night only in the chaotic sense, equating night with darkness, both physical and spiritual. Gothic metal band Saviour Machine’s “The Night” describes the way the earth will be plunged into a spiritual night, a time of despair and death as the events foretold in Revelation begin to unfold, and Saint’s “Endless Night” describes the fulfillment of end times prophecies when “we watch the endless night/slowly turn to glory.” Slechtvalk’s “A Cry in the Night” refers to calling out to God in the middle of troubled times. Paramaecium’s “Night Fears Morning” describes the way despair and doubt reign in the night, but that they fear being exposed to the light of morning. Sacred Warrior’s “Minister by Night” describes the band’s mission to go into the dark places where its critics would “only pass in daylight” and be “surrounded by fruits of sin that consume your daughter and son.”

As described here, Christian metal is verbally consistent with general market metal. Band names and album titles tend to follow the same patterns found in general market metal. While double entendre and profanity are absent from Christian metal band names, there are some images that are commonly perceived as “negative,” such as images of violence and destruction, along with a vast array of “neutral” images. Lyric themes in

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276 Weinstein, Heavy Metal: The Music and Its Culture: 43.
Christian metal can also be organized into the same categories of Dionysian and Chaotic that are found in general market metal. One significant difference is that Christian metal warns listeners about the dangers of the hedonistic lifestyle endorsed and encouraged by many in general market metal. Christian metal also offers alternative sources of pleasure that are not self-indulgent but rather are focused on God and other people. Even though chaotic themes are also present—and at times may sound as dark and hopeless as general market metal—they nearly always function as a warning or are balanced with a message of hope.

This consistency is important if these bands are going to be able to integrate into the metal subculture as a mission field. Missionaries use the language of those to whom they are ministering because it removes an obstacle to their work. If an American missionary went into a remote village in Africa and insisted on interacting with the people only in English, that missionary would not only be ineffective, but might also hinder the efforts of other missionaries in that village. In the same way, a Christian metal band that went into a club or other venue to perform and insisted on using “church language” to interact with the audience would likely alienate that audience as well as create or reinforce negative perceptions of Christianity. Even though they may receive some criticism from within the Christian community, many of these Christian metal bands believe they are simply doing what they need to do in order to speak the language of those to whom they are ministering.

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Chapter 4: The Visual Dimension

The visual dimension of the metal code is the set of visual identifiers bands use to distinguish themselves and their music from other bands. There are three distinct elements to this dimension: the logo, the album cover, and the concert experience, which includes music videos.278

Band Logos

The band logo serves to identify the band both visually and verbally on album covers, t-shirts, concert posters, advertisements, websites, music download sites, and any other printed or web medium associated with the band. The logo typically includes the band’s name in a stylized typeface, often with additional ornamentation and embellishments. Logos are not always permanent; in fact it has become common for bands to alter their logos to reflect a different or more contemporary image, sometimes related to a change in musical style. Judas Priest, for example, has had at least seven different logos since its 1974 debut Rocka Rolla.279 Other bands, like Iron Maiden and Metallica, consistently use the same logo, making it akin to a trademark for the band. While there are no specific rules for these logos, they do tend to follow certain patterns regarding typefaces and embellishments.

278 Because of potential issues with copyright and permissions, visual examples will be provided by way of hyperlinks to external sources rather than in-text illustrations.
279 For more on the changes in the Judas Priest logo, see http://kkdowning.net/SpecialReports/logohistory.html (Accessed December 10, 2012)
Typefaces

Some bands, particularly classic, power, and thrash/speed metal bands, show a preference for thick, angular typefaces. (Figure 4.1) The font used by Iron Maiden for its logo has become synonymous with metal and can be found in advertising for those who sell metal merchandise.280 Anthrax’s clean logo with its precise lines and angles might seem at odds with its brand of thrash rooted in the New York punk scene, but like Iron Maiden’s, Anthrax’s typeface has also transcended the band itself. Even though these typefaces are used for purposes other than promoting the bands, it is their association with the bands that have made them popular. Other bands favoring angular typefaces include Iced Earth and Sodom. Many Christian metal bands also follow this

280 While synonymous with Iron Maiden, the typeface known as “Metal Lord” received its first wide-scale exposure on promotional posters for the 1976 David Bowie film The Man Who Fell to Earth.
practice, including Armageddon, Zion, Eternal Ryte, and Stryper. The font used by Stryper, including the coloration, has become as iconic within Christian metal as the Iron Maiden font has in the general market.

Diana Weinstein says that bands tend to avoid rounded typefaces because they communicate an image of softness and femininity. Since the mid-1980s, however, a number of bands have used those typefaces, particularly in glam metal. (Figure 4.2) The logos for Cinderella and Mötley Crüe do convey a sort of femininity; however as glam is known for an emphasis on androgyny, the transgression of the masculine norms of metal seems appropriate. Other uses of rounded typefaces convey different ideas as well. Poison’s rounded font is serpentine in character, connecting the band’s name with the image of a snake. This particular Whitesnake logo follows the same principle, with the addition of the snake head. In the Christian market, Sacred Warrior and Joshua are among the very few bands that adopt the rounded fonts.

Figure 4.2—Rounded typefaces
Plain block lettering is also rare, according to Weinstein, because it is often associated with neutrality and order. For some bands, that is not a deterrent. (Figure 4.3)

Figure 4.3—Block lettering

Queensrÿche’s logo for its *Operation Mindcrime* album is fitting as a symbol of order and stability outside the psychological drama of the concept album’s songs. Industrial metal bands, like Nine Inch Nails, use this typeface to represent the sterility and impersonal nature of the industrial machine. While Weinstein provides a negative interpretation of these typefaces, an alternative interpretation of block lettering is that it represents strength, which fits perfectly within the metal ethos. The logos of power and thrash metal bands Pantera and Hammerfall seem to convey that image.

Extreme metal bands often use ominous and irregular fonts for their logos. (Figure 4.4) Sometimes the logos are designed to resemble tree branches, bat wings, or even blood. Like the music these bands play, the logos often seem designed to create

281 The story of *Operation Mindcrime* involves a mixture of drug addiction, mind control, secret societies, amnesia, and insanity.
distance between those inside the extreme metal scene and those outside by making it
difficult for those not already familiar with the bands to identify them through their logos.  For example, the logos of Enslaved, Leviathan, and Xasthur are written in such elaborate
type that even knowing the name does not guarantee one sees it in the logo.  Extreme
Christian metal has a tendency to follow this trend as well.  Bands like Old Man Frost, Crimson Moonlight, Pantokrator, Living Sacrifice, Detritus, Frost Like Ashes, Crimson Thorn created logos that follow the trend established for extreme metal.  These Christian bands, however, receive a great
deal of criticism from the Christian market for evoking images that appear in some way
evil and demonic.  For example, the Frost Like Ashes logo has been interpreted as being

Figure 4.4—Extreme metal logos. (Top Left to Bottom Right: Dark Throne, Mayhem, Cannibal Corpse, Enslaved, Leviathan, Xasthur, Old Man Frost, Crimson Moonlight, Pantokrator, Living Sacrifice, Detritus, Frost Like Ashes, Crimson Thorn)
shaped like a devil’s head and the Crimson Thorn logo has been viewed as a demonic skull.

The most common typeface choice seems to be some sort of runic, gothic, or Old English lettering (Figure 4.5). These typefaces allude to the Middle Ages—a time that is generally considered dark, mysterious, violent, and chaotic. Kamelot’s logo uses a typeface that is reminiscent of Celtic lettering styles, connecting it to medieval England and the King Arthur legends. Dio and Dark Funeral use a florid Old English typeface that gives their logos a Gothic image. Logos for Mercyful Fate, Mötorhead, and Possessed all resemble calligraphic writing, which is again associated with medieval times.

In the context of Christianity, medieval references also connect historically with the establishment of Christianity as a significant influence on the world. The same typefaces common to general market band logos can also be found in Christian metal. Narnia and Leviticus are examples of bands using the Celtic lettering; Crimson

![Image showing various band logos with different typefaces](image.jpg)

Figure 4.5—Old-style typefaces
Moonlight and Jacob’s Dream employ the Old English font; Veni Domine and Paramaecium use calligraphy-styled letters. Virgin Black alludes to the style found in many medieval books where the initial letters of the first word on a page or in a section would be written in a larger, more elaborate manner than the rest of the text.

Another fairly common font style in metal logos is one that mimics some sort of rough handwritten characters that appear to be hastily rather than carefully written. (Figure 4.6) Some, like Korn’s, create feelings of discomfort through mixed cases and backwards letters. Others, like Skid Row’s, is crafted to simulate spray-painted graffiti, giving them a street-tough image. Likewise, some of the Christian bands that use this style seem to be conveying the same impressions of discomfort and toughness. The way the word “precious” is scrawled over the more formal, block-lettered “death” creates a stylistic disconnect in Precious Death’s logo. The Torn Flesh logo also appears to be cut or torn out of the background. X-Sinner adopts the spray-painted graffiti look.

**Figure 4.6—Handwriting typeface**

In addition to the different typefaces, logos often incorporate embellishments that extend the imagery of the typeface or band’s name. One of the classic metal
embellishments is the lightning bolt, which symbolizes power and the release of energy. (Figure 4.7) This can be seen in the logos of AC/DC and KISS. This particular embellishment can be problematic for Christian metal bands because of the association of the lightning bolt with Satan.\(^{282}\) Perhaps that is why so few Christian metal bands use the image of a lightning bolt; in fact, Stryken appears to be the only somewhat-prominent Christian metal band to have incorporated this into its logo.

Bones, especially skulls, are also widely used and are frequently connected to images of death and destruction. (Figure 4.8) These are often found in extreme metal

\(^{282}\) In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus says, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.” (10:18 NIV)
logos, such as Death, although there are examples from other subgenres as well.

Metalcore band Avenged Sevenfold augments its logo with a winged skull. Mötley Crüe’s logo uses the skull and crossbones motif, which is a common symbol for danger.

Skull imagery is not as common in Christian metal, appearing almost exclusively in extreme metal and metalcore. For example, Corpse and Mortification are death metal bands that include skulls in their logos. Groove metal band Die Happy uses a variant on the skull and crossbones that replaces the skull with the iconic “smiley face” to make a visual representation of the band’s name. 283 This is perhaps due to the perception some Christians have that the use of such imagery is glorifying death and evil, as expressed in this comment from a Christian metal forum poster regarding the album cover for Antestor’s The Return of the Black Death: “I personally don’t have peace about it though. I see it as people taking pleasure in scenes depicting evil and death.”

Religious symbols, particularly pentagrams and crosses, are often used because they represent a particular sort of power that transcends all other power. 285 (Figure 4.9)

283 Groove metal is essentially a slower version of thrash with more syncopation to compensate for the rhythmic energy lost by decreasing the tempo. Examples include Pantera and Lamb of God.


285 Pentagrams, five-pointed stars with five lines connecting the points of the stars, have a long history of symbolism dating back to 3000 BC. In the Middle Ages they were used as Christian symbols representing the wounds of Christ (pierced side, both hands, both feet) and also as a ward against witches and demons. Some pagan groups and Wiccans have also used the image to symbolize the elements (earth, air, water, fire) and the spirit. The inverted form, single point down, is most commonly associated with Satanism. It often is drawn with a goat head inscribed within and is known as the Sigil of Baphomet (the pagan deity, represented as having the head of a goat, that Templar Knights were alleged to have worshiped). The pentagram was later revived by nineteenth-century
Pentagrams have been common in metal as one of the symbols most closely associated

with the occult. Bands such as Arch Enemy, Slayer, and Temple of Baphomet include
this symbol image in their logos. Black metal bands, like Impaled Nazarene, Marduk,
and Corporal Mortification, make frequent use of the inverted cross because of its
blasphemous and anti-Christian associations. As one might expect, Christian metal

occultists as a symbol of Satan. The Church of Satan, which views Satan as a symbol for
human nature rather than as a literal being, uses the inverted pentagram to represent
rebellion against Christian doctrine with the three downward points representing a
rejection of the Trinity and the two upward “horns” representing defiance.

Although the inverted cross is typically viewed as a blasphemous or Satanic symbol,
there is a long tradition of its use within Christianity as the Petrine Cross, or Cross of St.
Peter. According to tradition dating back to the third century, Peter was crucified upside-
down in Rome under Nero because he considered himself unworthy to die in the same
way Jesus did. Since then, the inverted cross has been used in the Christian Church as a
symbol for Peter, appearing on the steeples of numerous Catholic and Protestant churches
throughout Europe. Many fundamentalist, anti-Catholic Protestant groups reject this use
of the inverted cross as a Christian symbol, claiming it is predominantly recognized as a
features crosses prominently, most commonly by extending the letter “t” somewhere in the band’s name, as with Stryper. Mortification uses the three t’s to create a three-cross motif in its logo.287

Bands use other symbols as well; the most common is the hexagram because of its association with Judaism as the “Star of David.”288 In the Hortor logo, the symbol of the cross is shown emerging from the hexagram, representing Christianity’s Jewish roots. The thrash band Possession even uses the inverted cross (as the Petrine cross) in its logo.289

Embellishments that make reference to weaponry are also common within metal music. (Figure 4.10) Swords, scythes, daggers, spikes, and axes are often used to convey a sense of danger, violence, and aggression. Saxon uses medieval battle axes to create the “S” in its logo, while Slayer uses interlocking swords to create four lines of the pentagram in its logo. Guns n’ Roses uses two revolvers joined by intertwining roses as part of its logo. Christian metal follows this trend as well. The spikes on the Bloodgood pagan emblem and attempts by the Catholic church to use it are further evidence of Catholicism’s association with paganism and Satanism.

287 Christian symbolism often uses a three-cross motif to symbolize the crucifixion of Jesus based on Biblical references to Jesus being crucified between two other men. As with the Mortification logo, the middle cross—the cross of Christ—is made to stand out in some way.

288 The hexagram’s usage remains somewhat controversial within the Christian market because this symbol is also used prominently in occultism and witchcraft.

289 In this instance the inverted cross is best interpreted as a Christian symbol based on its use on the cover of the band’s Scourge and Fire EP as part of an overall theme of martyrdom, featuring a lion, chains, flames, and the inverted cross which have all been methods of martyring Christians.
logo give the impression of danger and aggression and connect with the leather and spike

**Figure 4.10—Weaponry embellishment**

tradition in classic metal. The sword in Saint’s logo is obvious, but the motif is carried throughout the logo with the points at the base of each letter. This particular incarnation of Mortification’s logo meshes swords with the three-cross motif. Demon Hunter’s logo uses what appears to be crosshairs in the “o.”

**Other elements**

Besides typefaces and embellishments, a common stylistic feature of the logo is the symmetrical arrangement of the letters. (Figure 4.11) Bands like Metallica and

**Figure 4.11—Symmetrical arrangements**

Pantera create a sense of symmetry by extending the first and last letters below the rest of the text. Manowar and Mayhem create a central point around which the rest of the logo
is symmetrical. As the examples show, this is common among general market and Christian bands. It is difficult to say whether there is an intentional symbolism in this design or whether it is simply intended to convey the idea of symmetry.

The use of diacritical marks is another way band names intersect with the visual dimension of the code. Bands like Mötley Crüe and Motörhead include umlauts, or “röck dots,” to create the impression of strength and power that is stereotypical of the German language and to “conjure up a more generic gothic horror.”290 These are considered decorative as they do not change the pronunciation and are usually added for their visual effect.291 The use of diacriticals is less common in Christian metal; the metalcore band Underøath is the most prominent exception.292

**Album Covers**

The album cover is a prominent way bands represent themselves in the marketplace. Album covers not only identify the band, but communicate a particular image, attitude, and emotion to potential buyers. Album covers are important to Christian metal bands because that may be the first exposure people have to these bands. Since mainstream consumers are less likely to reach into the Christian or “religious” section in retail stores, Christian metal album covers need to blend in with similarly-

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290 Reebee Garofalo, *Rockin' Out : Popular Music in the USA* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1997). 292. It appears that Blue Öyster Cult was the first band to do this in 1972. 291 Mötley Crüe lead singer Vince Neil gives credit for the idea of adding umlauts to a bottle of Löwenbräu beer. Motörhead uses them because Lemmy thought they looked “mean”. Progressive metal band Queensrÿche chose this spelling of their name out of concern that “reich” would be associated with neo-Nazism. 292 The “ø” is a Danish and Norwegian character that has roughly the same sound as “ö.”
styled general market albums in order to attract the attention of the non-Christian consumers they are trying to reach. When bands release images of the cover prior to the release of an album, it generates a great deal of discussion and even fiery debate among fans. The album cover is the primary visual association fans have for the music, and many times the quality of the cover will affect the enthusiasm fans have for the album and their decision to purchase it. Even in recent years as physical media like CDs are yielding to virtual media like digital audio files, album covers remain an important visual identifier for metal bands as fans are able to load album art into most portable and computer-based music players. As with the logos, there are no rules governing album covers but there are some general conventions regarding the color, layout, and images used.

*Color and layout*

The colors used in metal album covers are chosen for their emotional effect and their ability to convey the image the band wants to promote with its music—often intensity, excitement, foreboding, fear, or anger. The dominant color for metal album covers traditionally has been black. Other colors like white, red, and yellow also appear, typically for text and as accent colors. More recently white has become popular as a way of creating an open or neutral space.
The text on the album cover generally consists of the band logo, the album title, and a song listing. The distinctive look of the logo makes it possible for fans to find albums by their favorite bands at a glance. The other text is generally in a typeface consistent with the theme of the album art. Weinstein notes that the album title and song listings may use a typeface that is different from the band’s name to set the work apart from its creators.

The overall layout of the album cover is fluid, based around the graphic. There does not seem to be a standard rule or practice in terms of the placement of the logo and album title, but there does seem to be a preference for placing the band logo on top. Another common configuration is to place the logo and the album title in the same vertical plane, in which case the logo appears on the left so that it is the first thing the viewer’s eye would naturally read. Both of these configurations reinforce the primacy of the band over the work. Some bands opt for textless covers that allow the image to stand on its own. Demon Hunter’s albums, with the exception of The Triptych, opt for this approach.

293 Production and copyright information also appear on the album, but those are not considered part of the album cover design.
294 The most notable exception to this practice is Black Sabbath’s Sabbath Bloody Sabbath, which places the album title at the top of the cover in a large font and the band name in small type at the bottom.
Graphics and images

There are essentially two approaches bands use regarding images on album covers: conceptual images and band photographs. Conceptual images represent the album title. Glam metal cover images tend to be the most sexually suggestive, relating to the hedonistic lifestyle associated with the subgenre. (Figure 4.12) The cover for

![Warrant's Cherry Pie album](image)

**Figure 4.12—Glam album covers**

Whitesnake’s suggestively-titled *Slide It In* album shows a snake slithering down a woman’s top with its head positioned between her breasts. Warrant’s *Cherry Pie* has a wedge of cherry pie positioned over the genital area of a roller skating waitress.

Power and classic metal cover art tends to rely heavily on medieval and fantasy images like dragons, sea serpents, knights, castles, and barbarians. (Figure 4.13) Yngwie J. Malmsteen’s *Trilogy* album depicts Malmsteen fighting a three-headed dragon with

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295 It is worth noting that sometimes bands opt to use no image at all, relying solely on the band logo. Fans generally interpret this in the same way as a self-titled album: as a representation of the musical identity of the band.
only his guitar. The warrior theme is common for Manowar. Most of its studio albums feature a muscular warrior that debuted on the cover of *Kings of Metal*, and *Into Glory Ride* and *Anthology* show the band in barbarian garb brandishing swords.²⁹⁷ HammerFall’s album covers show a preference for an armored warrior, like the one on *Renegade*. Cirith Ungol also features sword-bearing warriors on its album covers, like *Frost and Fire* which also includes a dragon.

Thrash album art often uses apocalyptic or post-apocalyptic imagery. (Figure 4.14) Kreator’s *Phantom Antichrist* album art shows what is presumably the titular character atop a four-headed skeletal beast with corpses hanging from his arms against a red and orange background that gives the impression there is a large fire burning. Emaciated figures reach up toward him and are holding onto the corpses. Many Megadeth albums feature this kind of imagery, in part due to the presence of the character “Vic Rattlehead.” Vic Rattlehead is the band’s mascot and is usually depicted as a

²⁹⁶ “Cherry pie” is slang for a virgin’s vagina. “Cherry” is slang for the hymen, a membrane that may (or may not) remain intact until virginity is lost.
²⁹⁷ These two album images are photographs; the image on *Fighting the World* is an artist’s rendering of the band.
somewhat skeletal figure with a metal visor riveted over his eyes, metal caps over his ears, and clamps on his mouth. The cover of Peace Sells...But Who’s Buying?, Megadeth’s second album, shows Vic leaning on a “For Sale” sign on barren ground in front of a bombed-out United Nations building while three fighter jets approach from the top right corner.

Other forms of chaos are also reflected in thrash album graphics. Metallica’s Ride the Lightning shows lightning flashing around an electric chair, a symbol not only of crime and punishment but also of controversy. Anhilliator’s Alice in Hell shows a young woman holding a Raggedy Ann doll standing at the bottom of a staircase strewn with the dolls. The dark figure in the lighted doorway casting an ominous shadow is presumably another Raggedy Ann. The whole image is somewhat reminiscent of a nightmare in

298 Band leader and vocalist Dave Mustaine created Vic Rattlehead as the embodiment of the phrase “See no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil.”
which the object that was once a source of comfort has been transformed into an instrument of torment. Another type of chaos is demonstrated by Anthrax’s *State of Euphoria* cover. The red spiral and the faces bring to mind a sense of internal chaos or insanity. The band’s *Among the Living* cover makes reference to the concept of the monster in the figure who stands out from the homogenous crowd—Randall Flagg from the Stephen King novel *The Stand*.\(^{299}\) The cover of Slayer’s *World Painted Blood* is red with a rough drawing of the Western Hemisphere. On closer examination it becomes clear that the land masses are comprised of skulls and bones, so the entirety of the cover depicts worldwide death.

Death metal and grindcore albums typically have the most extreme cover images, often featuring gruesome scenes of death and torture. (Figure 4.15) Cannibal Corpse’s *Eaten Back to Life* features a zombie-like figure eating its own entrails, and *Torture* shows a skull-faced torturer with autopsy scars holding a knife and standing beneath several suspended figures in various stages of dismemberment, disembowelment, and

\(^{299}\) Randall Flagg is a mysterious, demonic character that appears in at least nine stories by King. In his debut in *The Stand*, Flagg appears in the wake of a plague that has devastated the population and tries to rebuild a society in which he rules with an iron fist.
flaying. Likewise, Cattle Decapitation’s *Humanure* displays a cow that has recently defecated human body parts, while the more tame cover of *The Harvest Floor* shows a crowd of people being herded like cattle toward a slaughterhouse by men in riot gear carrying shock sticks.

Black metal album art tends to be minimalistic with a preference for solitary figures, winter scenes, monsters, gothic art, monochromatic color schemes, and anti-Christian references. (Figure 4.16) Galdr’s self-titled album art is simply a dark-cloaked figure walking through what appears to be a snowy landscape. Nortt’s *Ligfærd* also uses the solitary figure motif, but this figure is more like an apparition in a graveyard. Blodsrit’s *Helveteshymner* cover is a basic black-and-white church in winter with a blood-red path leading from the front. Emperor’s *In the Nightside Eclipse* and Dark

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300 The same image also appears on Karg’s *Von den Winden der Sehnsucht* album cover.
Funeral’s *The Secrets of the Black Arts* are examples of the monochromatic style. While black and white or grayscale seems to be the overwhelming color choice, these “cool color” covers are also quite common. Some black metal bands show a preference for low-quality, black-and-white artwork, like Dark Throne’s *Transylvanian Hunger* and Burzum’s *Hvis lyset tar oss*, that looks like it was reproduced on a photocopier to maintain an “underground” image.

Religious symbols, particularly crosses and pentagrams, are used frequently in cover art for the same reasons they are used in logos. (Figure 4.17) While many of the crosses are inverted, as on Venom’s *At War With Satan*, Slayer’s *South of Heaven*, and Svierg’s *Demo MMIX*, there are also examples of conventional crosses as well. Black Sabbath’s *Headless Cross* displays a large Celtic cross on its cover, and Celtic Frost’s *To Mega Therion* uses several small crosses in the background as well as suggesting a crucifix with the image of Jesus. Slayer’s *Diabolus in Musica* shows a cross on the man’s robe and the slip cover insert for *God Hates Us All* shows a cross made out of four smaller crosses. Venom’s *Welcome to Hell*, Mötley Crüe’s *Shout at the Devil*, Anthrax’s *Worship Music*, Pentagram’s *Relentless*, and Slayer’s *Divine Intervention* all feature pentagrams prominently.

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301 Cool colors are shades of blue, green, and purple. They tend to be used to represent things that are cool in temperature as well as peaceful, calm scenes.

302 “Underground” refers to the notion that a band is not part of the mainstream music scene or even consciousness. Underground bands are viewed by their fans as being more authentic and pure because they are not trying to achieve widespread notoriety or success.

303 This album cover is actually Swiss surrealist H.R. Giger’s *Satan I*.

304 This insert was used for retailers reluctant to display the actual cover art, which shows a Bible with blood on it, nails driven into it, and the band’s name burned into the cover.
While the use of the cross is common among Christian metal bands as well, some have also found ways to address the other symbols that are generally considered occult or anti-Christian in nature. (Figure 4.18) As discussed above, the “Star of David” is found on a number of Christian metal covers, including Tempest, and Mortification. The band Oh Sleeper used a “broken pentagram” for the cover of its 2009 album *Son of the Morning*. This symbol is the inverted pentagram (single point down) with the two upper
points missing to represent the final lyric of the album, which is God telling Satan “I’ll 

cut off your horns.” All-female death metal band Deborah used a heptagram—a seven-pointed star—on its *Soteria* album cover. Bands do encounter problems from using these alternate star shapes, including the fact that hexagrams and heptagrams also have pagan and occultic meanings as well. They are also open to misinterpretation from casual observers who simply look at the image, see a star, and assume it is a pentagram.

As with general market metal, most conceptual covers in Christian metal represent the meaning behind the album’s title. (Figure 4.19) The missiles on Stryper’s

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306 The seven-pointed star has a long history in Christian symbolism representing the seven days of creation and representing God, as seven is considered to be the number of perfection.
307 Deathcore band Impending Doom created its own symbol that it calls the “repentagram” that is used on some merchandise and stage banners. The band does not claim any particular meaning for the symbol, although the name is taken from combining the word “repent” with “pentagram,” leading some fans to surmise it is a call to those who have been involved in “satanic” metal to repent. Other fans have envisioned a cross superimposed over a pentagram, which they interpret to mean the victory of Christ over Satan.
The Yellow and Black Attack, each bearing the initials of one of the band’s members, being directed toward earth by the hand of God. Their original art for To Hell With the Devil depicts each band member as an angel dragging a chain-bound half-human/half-devil into a fiery pit. The angels are also ripping a guitar out of his hand, symbolizing the reclaiming of metal for God. The album title also includes a devil-tail design pointing to the Bible reference Revelation 20:10. The cover for Leviticus’ I Shall Conquer shows a barbarian-type warrior slaying a serpent, presumably representing Satan. Thrash band Betrayal chose nineteenth-century French engraver Gustav Doré’s “The Vision of the Valley of the Dry Bones” for cover of its Renaissance by Death album. Deliverance’s Weapons of our Warfare features an angel fighting a demon in the

Figure 4.19—Conceptual art on Christian metal album covers

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308 Albums and cassettes with this cover were limited. Allegedly there was some controversy over the appearance of the pentagram that is being ripped from the devil figure, so the band changed it. More recently unconfirmed reports have emerged that point to this original cover as a limited edition cover.

309 “And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.” (NIV)

310 The image depicts the prophet Ezekiel’s vision of watching a valley of old bones regenerate into living beings (Ezekiel 37:1-14). The gothic tone of Doré’s illustrations has made them popular among metal bands; his work has either been used on the covers or has inspired original cover art for several metal bands including Iced Earth, Emperor, Dimmu Borgir, Anaal Nathrakh, and Christian metal band Bride.
background while the Apostle Paul writes his second letter to the Church at Corinth in the foreground.311

Conceptual art has created problems for some bands in the Christian market. For instance, many Christian retailers refused to stock Mortification’s self-titled debut album because the art was too “gory,” so the band changed the cover for Christian distributors.312  (Figure 4.20) Vengeance Rising’s third album, *Destruction Comes*,

![Mortification album covers](image)

**Figure 4.20—Mortification Mortification album covers**

caused enough controversy with retailers that the band and its label, Intense Records, decided to create an altered version. (Figure 4.21) This version was a compromise that would not be offensive to retailers and would still allow fans to see the original art. An

311 The text on the parchment says, “For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds…” (2 Corinthians 10:4, KJV). This text is also recited over the musical introduction to the album.

312 The original art was used by the band’s general market distributor Nuclear Blast.
“intact” version of the man was printed on a sticker that was affixed to the outside of the CD and cassette covers over the man in the album art. The original artwork for Stryper’s *To Hell With the Devil* also drew criticism from many conservative Christians for its use of a pentagram and its depiction of the band members as angels. (Figure 4.22) The second pressing of the album included a sticker on the case with the band’s

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313 When Intense Millennium reissued the album in 2011, they used the original cover art and included a new version of the sticker inside.
intentions for the cover art; subsequent U.S. pressings were released with only the band’s logo and album title on a black background.\footnote{314}

Some bands also include a picture of the band somewhere on the cover, often on the back or in place of the conceptual image. Unlike pop album covers, pictures on metal album covers are usually not close-ups, which invite a level of intimacy and ascribe a measure of “safeness” to the subject by depicting them as approachable. Instead, metal band pictures most often show the band at a distance in intimidating or disengaged poses, such as, Manowar’s Into Glory Ride and Mötley Crüe’s Girls, Girls, Girls. (Figure 4.23)

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.8\textwidth]{manowar_motley_cru.png}
\caption{“Intimidating” band picture covers}
\end{figure}

One exception to this is glam metal, which borrows some of its image from pop. Poison’s Look What the Cat Dragged In, Europe’s Out of this World, and Britny Fox’s self-titled album covers all consist of close-up pictures of the bands. (Figure 4.24)

\footnote{314 The sticker also described the original art as “limited edition,” but it is unclear whether this was the original intent or if the decision to change the artwork was a response to the criticism.}
Christian metal most often follows that convention as well. Covers for Saint’s *Warriors of the Son*, Guardian’s *First Watch*, and X-Sinner’s *Get It* all show the band at a “safe” distance looking detached or intimidating, in the case of Saint. (Figure 4.25)

Shout’s *It Won’t Be Long*, Xalt’s *History*, and Bloodgood’s *Rock in a Hard Place* are all examples of more melodic, pop-oriented glam albums with more inviting pictures of the bands on the covers. (Figure 4.26)
Stryper’s *Soldiers Under Command* and Vengeance Rising’s *Once Dead* are examples of conceptual covers that incorporate photos of the band. (Figure 4.27) The Stryper album shows the band holding machine guns with rockets and mortar shells in the background, giving them the appearance of being soldiers. The Vengeance Rising cover features two images of the band. On the top is the band as they normally appear, while the bottom of the cover depicts the band members emerging out of graves like zombies, representing the album’s title.
The Concert Experience

The concert experience blends the visual elements with the music itself and creates an immersive environment for listening. The visual elements associated with the concert include the band’s costuming, the staging and lighting, and the interactions between the band members and the audience.

Costuming

A band’s appearance is an important marker of authenticity for fans. Everything about its appearance—its clothing, hair style, use (or non-use) of makeup, and body piercing and tattoos—conveys a sense of how a band connects with the metal subculture. Metal’s earliest bands favored the “everyman” look as Black Sabbath, Deep Purple, Led Zeppelin, and Iron Maiden performed often in denim and t-shirts. (Figure 4.28) This

Figure 4.28—“Everyman” metal attire (Black Sabbath, Deep Purple, Led Zeppelin, Iron Maiden, Resurrection Band, Daniel Band)

was both an extension of the hippie subculture from which many of these musicians came and a way for the bands to identify with their fans. These musicians also tended to wear
their hair in a natural way, and since many of these musicians were coming from the psychedelic and hippie subcultures, their hair was generally long. As the genre became established and codified, long hair became the standard. This trend was also established in Christian metal by bands like Resurrection Band and Daniel Band. This look has been the dominant fashion throughout metal’s history.

In the late 1970s, bands like Judas Priest popularized the “biker” style for metal bands. (Figure 4.29) This costume consisted mainly of black leather jackets with silver studs and spikes and motorcycle boots. Sometimes black leather pants were also worn along with fingerless leather gloves and silver chains. This costume also provided an air of toughness and rebellion that was enhanced by the steel studs and chains. Whereas the street clothes costume was meant to create a bond between the bands and their audience, the biker style was meant to create distance. As fans began to emulate the look themselves, the bond between band and audience was re-forged. As a variation on the biker look, some bands also incorporated elements of clothing and accessories associated with sadomasochism, adding another layer of rebellion against the mainstream values of

Figure 4.29—“Biker” metal attire (Judas Priest, Saint)
In the 1980s, some metal bands adopted the glam style to metal, which was a stark contrast with these other styles. In contrast to the “everyman” and biker appearances most prevalent in other subgenres, the flamboyant, often brightly-colored glam costumes, teased hair, and feminine make-up conveyed a different image for the bands that wore them. (Figure 4.30) The glam image has been one that simultaneously

Figure 4.30—Glam metal attire (Poison, Britny Fox, Stryper, Scarlet Red)

Halford revealed he is a homosexual in 1998, prompting speculation that there is a connection between his wearing leather and the leather subculture of the gay community, particularly because of the contemporaneous biker character created by Glenn Hughes of the disco group Village People.
promoted androgyny and masculine sexuality. One characteristic of glam costumes is the use of spandex. Spandex, also known as lycra, is a strong, highly elastic fabric that allows a greater range of motion for the performers, making possible some of the more athletic stage movements that became common during the 1980s. Spandex garments are form-fitting, so these costumes are also a way to display the bodies of the performers, reinforcing the ideas of male virility prevalent in metal and the sexual overtones of glam metal in particular. Some glam performers, like Poison and Britny Fox, emphasize the androgynous aspect by including feathered boas, lace, and other more “feminine” items of clothing. Christian metal bands like Stryper and Scarlet Red,316 faced both criticism over their “effeminate” appearance and also charges of homosexuality. David J. Stewart of Jesus-is-Savior.com writes of Stryper, “STRYPER is a bunch of Satanic cross-dressing God-haters... and I'm fully convinced, homosexuals as well.”317 Similarly, Terry Watkins of Dial-the-Truth Ministries says,

> With long womanish hair, earrings, mascara, lip-gloss, eye shadow and effeminate clothes, Stryper demolished any convictions left in Christian music! How Christians tolerate such ungodly behavior is frightening! And despite the Bible's clear warnings! 1 Corinthians 6:9 says ‘... Be not deceived: neither fornicators, ... NOR EFFEMINATE, (emphasis original)... shall inherit the kingdom of God.’318

The emergence of grunge and the backlash against glam in the late 1980s led metal bands to again favor the street clothes look. This style has been the characteristic

316 One member of Scarlet Red, top right, is female.
style for thrash, death metal, nu-metal, and metalcore. (Figure 4.31) In the early 1990s, many metal musicians cut their long hair as a way to separate themselves from the stigma that was attached to metal in the late 1980s. In more recent years, however, hair styles have become more varied. Many musicians have returned to long, natural hair, while others, like former Judas Priest singer Rob Halford and Demon Hunter vocalist Ryan Clark, have chosen to shave their heads. (Figure 4.32) Beards and other facial hair have also become popular among metal performers, with long beards and goatees preferred.

Figure 4.31—Thrash, death metal, nu-metal, and metalcore attire (Metallica, Death, POD, Avenged Sevenfold)

Figure 4.32—Shaven heads (Rob Halford, Ryan Clark)
One of the most distinct metal costumes is that of black metal. Many bands, particularly those with linked with folk metal, connect their appearances to the leather tradition of metal as well as with the Viking warriors. (Figure 4.33) Bands like

![Figure 4.33—Black metal attire (Ensiferum, Immortal, Mayhem)](image)

Ensiferum and Immortal wear leather garments and studded or spiked gauntlets and carry swords, axes, morningstars, and other weapons. Others reflect a more mystical side of medieval history. Attila, the vocalist for Mayhem, frequently performs in a hooded cloak, similar to images of ones wizards and sorcerers are depicted as wearing. Another distinct element of black metal bands is the use of “corpsepaint” makeup.

Corpsepaint\(^{319}\)—makeup applied to resemble the appearance of a corpse—is the most distinctive metal makeup style. Typically it involves using white on the face and black to create hollowing of the eyes, lines around the mouth, and other shadowing. Sometimes black is also used to “inscribe” mystical symbols, and some performers add theatrical blood or small amounts of red makeup. It is uncertain where this practice began,

\(^{319}\) Sometimes the term is written as “corpse paint.”
although King Diamond of the black metal band Mercyful Fate was wearing corpse paint as early as 1978 and Brazilian band Sarcófago used it on their 1987 album *I.N.R.I.* Corpsepaint was standard for Norwegian black metal in the early years, but the practice has begun to wane in recent years. Some death metal bands also wear corpsepaint, although the practice is not as common among these bands. Many Christian black metal bands follow these styles as well. Slechtvalk, Frost Like Ashes, Antestor, and Crimson Moonlight frequently appear in the leather armor and often in corpsepaint. (Figure 4.34)

![Christian black metal attire (Slechtvalk, Frost Like Ashes, Antestor, Crimson Moonlight)](image)

Figure 4.34—Christian black metal attire (Slechtvalk, Frost Like Ashes, Antestor, Crimson Moonlight)

There have also been a few bands and performers that have adopted their own unique and distinct fashion choices. (Figure 4.35) AC/DC guitarist Angus Young’s signature style is to wear a schoolboy’s uniform. Nu-metal band Slipknot wears matching black and red uniforms and latex masks. Gwar and Lordi go a step further by performing in full-body latex monster costumes. Few Christian metal bands have developed their own costume style. Some members of the band Stryken did wear BMX

320 This practice seems to be completely separate from the use of black and white makeup by KISS.
pads that they referred to as “the armor of God.” Members of Grave Robber also wear latex masks similar to those worn by Slipknot. The death/black/doom metal band Drottnar has been performing in Soviet-style military dress uniforms since the mid-2000s. While these costumes are not part of the standard metal practice, they serve similar purposes. Young’s schoolboy uniform creates a dissonance between innocence and decadence. The “monster” look creates sensations of fear and discomfort and also connects with the monster theme in song lyrics referencing being outside the social order. Drottnar’s military uniforms create associations with totalitarianism and the feelings associated with that.

Figure 4.35—Individualized attire (Angus Young of AC/DC, Slipknot, Gwar, Lordi, Stryken, Grave Robber, Drottnar)

321 Drottnar began its career as a Viking metal band.
Tattoos and piercings

One area of controversy for Christian metal is related to choices of tattoos and piercings. Objections to these are often rooted in Mosaic Law’s prohibition against tattoos (Leviticus 19:28), the Apostle Paul’s teaching that our bodies are God’s temple (1 Corinthians 6:19), and biblical descriptions of pagan practices that included marking and disfiguring their bodies. Some people simply raise cultural objections that tattoos and piercings have traditionally been associated with “less-desirable” elements of society. Those who are more accepting make a variety of arguments, ranging from the New Testament proclamation that Christians are no longer bound by the (Mosaic) Law to the Apostle Paul’s example of being “all things to all people.” Supporters propose that tattoos are like other media, such as oil paintings or sculptures, and it is their content that should be deemed acceptable or unacceptable, not the practice. A few supporters also view ear piercing as a symbolic action based on the practice described in Exodus 21 whereby a person was marked as a voluntary lifetime servant by having his or her ear pierced. Those people who use this example often claim their piercings symbolize their commitment to being a lifetime servant of Christ.

Staging and lighting

Stage shows vary greatly across metal, from a sparse set design that features the band and perhaps a large band logo to elaborate theatrical designs with hydraulic lifts, smoke machines, and pyrotechnics. The majority of bands tend toward sparse set design

322 1 Corinthians 9:22.
as metal has traditionally treated elaborate theatrics as excesses to be avoided, but even among simpler staging, smoke machines and pyrotechnics are fairly common. Most Christian metal bands use simpler staging, likely in part because most Christian bands do not have the financial backing that many general market bands have, and they also tend to play in smaller venues that would not allow for large, elaborate staging.

One key element of the staging is the light show, a choreographed display of colored lights and lasers drawn from the psychedelic bands of the 1960s. The light show provides a visual stimulus for the attendees and is programmed to sync with specific musical cues to give them added impact. Generally speaking, the more elaborate the stage design, the more elaborate the light show is as well. Christian metal bands often incorporate the symbol of the cross into their light shows, but other than that, they tend to use lighting in the same ways as their general market counterparts.

Another important consideration in stage shows is the actions of the performers on stage and their interactions with the audience. Visually, a lot of the interaction is through gestures, which in metal usually include raised fists, pointing, and various obscene gestures. One particularly idiomatic gesture is the one known as the “metal salute,” or “devil’s horns,” (Figure 4.36) which is made by extending the index and little fingers while holding the middle and ring fingers down with the thumb. The gesture had some casual association with rock music since at least 1967, but became ubiquitous in metal around 1979 when singer Ronnie James Dio started using it after replacing Ozzy
Osbourne in Black Sabbath. Dio claimed to have learned the symbol from his Italian grandmother who used it as a ward against the “evil eye.” Christian metal bands regularly used raised fists from the beginning, but they were slow to adopt the metal salute. Anti-rock crusaders were quick to connect this gesture to the picture on the back

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Osbourne was known to make the “peace sign” in concerts and Dio said he wanted to do something similar to connect with the fans while not copying him exactly. Dio believed the mysticism associated with the gesture made it a perfect fit for Black Sabbath.
of *The Satanic Bible*, which shows Anton LaVey, founder of the Church of Satan and the

![Anton LaVey](image)

**Figure 4.37—Anton LaVey, back cover photo *The Satanic Bible***

book’s author, making the gesture. For example, the tract “Inside Rock Music” from Mission Evangelism, Inc. contains the passage

Ronnie James Dio, formerly with the group, Black Sabbath, is known for using the patented satanic salute (extending the index finger and smallest finger, so they look like horns). This is supposed to ward off evil spirits and spells—but, of course, it only places the one doing it more in the

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324 http://www.jesus-is-savior.com/False%20Religions/Wicca%20&%20Witchcraft/amysalu2.jpg . Accessed November 29, 2012. The gesture is often referred to as the “Satanic salute” by many of these evangelists. It is also frequently confused with the sign for “I love you” in American Sign Language, which extends the thumb in addition to the index and little fingers.
power of the devil. Prior to his horrible death in the 1990s, Anton LaVey also used that sign on the back of his Satanic Bible.\textsuperscript{325}

Many Christian bands pointed upward, symbolically giving glory to God, as a substitute for the metal salute. By the late 1990s, however, the gesture had become separated from these occult meanings and was viewed simply as a generic symbol of rock. Christian metal bands now use it as prolifically as general market ones do, although they still face some criticism from anti-rock critics who continue to associate the gesture with the occult. These bands and their fans defend their use of the gesture by claiming that like all symbols, the hand gesture has the meaning one brings to it, and even though it has been linked to the occult, the dominant meaning presently is as a part of the rock subculture.\textsuperscript{326}

\textit{Music videos}

The music video is closely related to the concert experience in that it is also a merger of visual stimuli with the music. Further, concert footage (or a facsimile of it) is an integral element of metal videos. Sometimes metal videos are simply performance footage, but most often other content is interspersed with the performance footage. Christian metal again follows the conventions of general market metal in every way except for content. Since video content typically corresponds with the song lyrics,

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{326} The metal salute has crossed out of rock into the pop music scene as well. Pop stars Nichole Scherzinger of the Pussycat Dolls, Britney Spears, Justin Bieber, and Willow Smith have all been photographed making the gesture.
\end{flushright}
general market metal videos often contain scantily-clad women, sexual innuendo and allusions, and obscenities, all of which are absent from Christian metal videos. Christian metal videos tend to be more performance-related than conceptual, although the setting for the performance may be in a location that relates to the subject matter of the song. For instance, the video for Whitecross’ song “No Second Chances,” which is about the belief that there is no second chance to turn to Christ after a person dies, is set in a cemetery. Some Christian metal videos have even been the subject of censorship because of their content. The most notable of these is “Ark of Suffering” by Tourniquet, which is a song about animal abuse and what the band believes to be the inhumane practice of animal testing. The video was banned by MTV because it includes disturbing footage of animals in testing labs suffering from the effects of the chemicals to which they are exposed.

As with the verbal dimension, Christian metal is comparable to general market metal in terms of its use of visual elements. Band logos follow the same conventions and are in many ways indistinguishable from their general market counterparts. Christian metal album covers also look consistent with general market ones, often using the same imagery to convey Christian messages. The bands themselves have typically been indistinct from their general market counterparts, which has sometimes caused problems for Christian bands with more conservative Christian groups, but as with other missionaries, Christian metal bands tend to adopt the dress of those to whom they are ministering because it allows them to more fully integrate into the culture. Many Christian metal videos were and are in the regular rotation on music video programs like
MTV’s Headbanger’s Ball and Cool TV’s Big Heavy Rock Hour, achieving their mission of infiltrating the general market with the Christian message of hope and salvation.
Chapter 5: Aural Dimension

The aural dimension of the metal code is perhaps the most important of the three. A band might use all of the right words and phrases and might “look metal” but if its music fails to meet expectations for “metal,” the band fails in the minds of the audience. Likewise, if audiences like the music they hear from a band, they are often willing to overlook perceived transgressions in the other areas. Perhaps more than the other dimensions, then, Christian metal needs to measure up sonically with general market metal because the bottom line for most metal fans is that they are looking for music that “rocks” and they typically do not discriminate based on what the bands’ lyrics do or do not promote.

The sonic dimension of metal is characterized by power, usually expressed through volume. The volume of metal is meant to overwhelm and force the listener to confront the music. The energy generated by the volume also represents vitality and youthfulness. More so than perhaps any other musical genre, metal seems to dictate that it must be played at high volumes. As one fan put it, “Metal must be played LOUD! [emphasis original] You can listen to jazz, soul and even some rock with a low volume but metal you just can’t”327 From the beginning, metal bands strove to establish a reputation for loudness. In 1975, the Guinness Book of World Records declared Deep Purple to be the “Loudest Pop Group” after verifying the accounts of three members of the audience at a 1972 concert in London’s Rainbow Theatre allegedly being rendered

unconscious after being exposed to 117 dB. In 1984, however, the title of loudest band passed to Manowar, who reached 129.5 dB in a concert. The band also reportedly reached 139 dB at a concert in 2008, but these last two were never “official” as Guinness discontinued the category to avoid causing hearing damage as more bands attempted to set the record. The primacy of volume is also demonstrated in songs like Motörhead’s “Everything Louder than Everything Else,” band names like Loudness, and the previously-referenced scene from the heavy metal mockumentary This is Spinal Tap.

In considering how Christian metal fits with this aspect of the metal code, this study focuses on three main areas: timbre, modality, and formal structure. As previously stated the goal is not to “prove” that Christian metal sounds identical to general market metal, but rather to determine if Christian metal fits the aural markers for the genre.

**Timbre**

In this context, timbre refers to the characteristic vocal and instrumental sounds and inflections that serve to delineate musical style and genre. There is such great diversity among metal bands and subgenres that there are broad parameters for these timbral characteristics.

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328 Decibels are logarithmic units used to measure the intensity of sound. Prolonged exposure to decibel levels above 85dB has been demonstrated to cause hearing loss and 130 dB is considered the point where sound exposure can cause physical pain.
Vocal

Vocal styles and timbres are one of the distinguishing traits of many subgenres. Classic metal vocalists like Ozzy Osbourne (Black Sabbath, Ozzy), Ian Gillian (Deep Purple), and Robert Plant (Led Zeppelin) established the metal vocal sound as a continuation of the blues vocal style common in rock originating in the 1960s, with Plant incorporating extended high-pitched wails. The next generation of vocalists, like Rob Halford (Judas Priest), Ronnie James Dio (Elf, Rainbow, Dio, Black Sabbath), and Bruce Dickinson (Iron Maiden), followed the example of Plant by singing in a high register for extended periods of time. Many of these vocalists brought the element of power and drama to their performances through the smooth but forceful use of their voices and the practice of punctuating important formal divisions with high-pitched screams. Other vocalists, like Lemmy (Motörhead) and Chronos (Venom), used a lower-pitched, raspier voice that corresponded with their bands’ styles that were more raw and punk-influenced than some of the other NWOBHM bands.329

As metal began to fragment in the 1980s, vocal styles became markers of the different subgenres. Power, glam, and progressive metal continued along the path of Halford, Dio, and Dickinson with dramatic, high-pitched vocals. Thrash bands tended to follow the other path with its emphasis on a raspier, less-polished vocal style. Within that raspier approach there was a lot of variety as well. For instance, James Hetfield (Metallica) sings primarily in mid- to lower-registers like a forceful grunt or shout,

329 NWOBHM, the New Wave of British Heavy Metal, refers to the group of bands that emerged in the 1970s and early 1980s that were influenced by Black Sabbath.
whereas Dave Mustaine (Megadeth) tends to sing with a higher, pinched voice that has a mocking or sarcastic character.330

Extreme metal vocal styles incorporate more non-human sounds. The characteristic death metal vocal style uses a low, guttural growl colloquially known as “Cookie Monster vocals” because of the similarity to the voice of the Sesame Street character. Grindcore intensifies the growls of death metal into even lower and deeper growls that make the lyrics indiscernible and “pig squeals”—screaming that resembles the sound of squealing pigs.331 Black metal vocals, on the other hand, tend toward raspy high-pitched shrieks and screams that have been described as being the voice of demons or the sound people make with their dying breath.

Genres such as nu-metal and metalcore are hybrids that blend metal with other musical styles as diverse as hip-hop, hardcore punk, and reggae, and as such, their vocal styles are quite diverse. Many nu-metal vocalists use an intense, hardcore rap style with rapid spoken delivery that sometimes yields to singing in the choruses. Metalcore vocalists often adopt the growling style of death metal or the screaming of hardcore punk, although they often alternate between growling and “clean” vocals, a term fans use to describe conventional, melodic singing.

Christian metal vocalists follow these conventions as well. One issue they sometimes face is the perception that they are trying to imitate general market vocalists

330 Some thrash vocalists sing in the more polished, dramatic style, but most of those bands are more likely to be considered power metal than thrash.
331 Pig squeal vocals are considered more “brutal” by fans. Brutality is a measure of the heaviness and intensity of the music, and the less human the vocals seem, the more brutal fans consider the music.
too closely. Bride’s 1992 album *Snakes in the Playground* attracted a great deal of general market attention, but with that attention came the criticism that vocalist Dale Thompson was trying to sound like Axl Rose, the vocalist for Guns N’ Roses, a general market band that had become very popular in the late 1980s. Longtime Bride fans knew Thompson’s vocal style changed very little for this album, but those who did not know the band’s previous work heard the high-pitched, raspy voice which can sound similar to Rose’s and assumed Thompson was attempting to imitate the better-known singer. Likewise, Saint’s Josh Kramer has received both praise and criticism for his vocal similarity to Judas Priest’s Rob Halford, and David Benson has been heavily criticized for promoting himself as the “Christian” Ozzy Osbourne based on their similar vocal delivery.

Christian extreme metal bands must contend with the perception of the characteristic vocal style held by many within the Christian community. For example, in a critique of death metal/grindcore band Mortification, Terry Watkins of Dial-the-Truth Ministries commented “It’s [sic] deep growling sounds come straight from hell!”332 His is not a lone voice; there are many who share this view, even among those who do not agree with his sentiments on Christian rock in general. One self-proclaimed evangelist commented on the Christian Metal Realm website that vocal sounds he heard in death metal were the kinds of voices he heard when he confronted demons during exorcisms, and that the sounds he heard in black metal were the voices he heard when they were

resisting and eventually were exorcised.\textsuperscript{333} Clearly the point of both of these anecdotes is that these vocal styles are often considered unsuitable for “Christian music.”

\textit{Instrumental}

Vocal timbres are only one part of metal’s aural character; instrumental timbres are also important. The standard instrumentation for metal bands is based in the blues and psychedelic rock of the 1960s and consists of electric guitar, electric bass, and drum kit. Early on, bands like Judas Priest and Iron Maiden added a second guitarist to their lineups, with one playing the more virtuosic lead parts and the other playing rhythmic accompaniments. By the late 1970s, however, many of these bands were employing a double-lead approach, where the two guitarists played unison or harmonized lead melodies instead of the lead-and-accompaniment style. Six-string guitars generally have been the instrument of choice for metal guitarists, although twelve-string instruments are sometimes used for a different sound. In the 1980s it was fairly common to see guitarists playing double-necked guitars to facilitate an easy change between six-strings and twelve-strings. While multi-necked guitars have existed since before the advent of rock, it was Led Zeppelin guitarist Jimmy Page who brought them to the attention of rock and metal guitarists.\textsuperscript{334} In more recent years some guitarists have started using seven- and

\begin{footnotes}
\item[333] The Christian Metal Realm was the victim of a hacker in January 2012. It has re-formed at another location, but the previous site and its information, including the thread referenced here, are no longer accessible.
\item[334] Page used one live to facilitate the change between a twelve-string to a six-string in “Stairway to Heaven,” The identification of Christian musicians with Page is wrought with conflicts for some Christians. Page was known for his interest in the occult,
\end{footnotes}
eight-string guitars to provide an extended range, most often into the lower register. Acoustic guitars are rare in metal outside of ballads, although they are used sometimes to create softer song introductions that build in volume and intensity before yielding to electric guitars for the body of the song, as in Megadeth’s “The Hardest Part of Letting Go…Sealed With a Kiss,” or for contrasting sections within the body of the song like Metallica’s “Phantom Lord.”

One of metal’s characteristic sounds is the use of “power chords.” Power chords are somewhat of a misnomer because power chords are simply open fifths that sound like chords because of the harmonics generated when played through amplification. These are related to another characteristic metal guitar sound element: distortion. Nearly all forms of rock use some degree of distortion to give the guitar a fuller and richer sound. Metal distortion is most often overdriven, meaning it is derived from overpowering the tubes or transistors in the amplifier, which flattens the peaks of the sound waves and produces frequencies not present in the original sound. The resulting sound is thicker and more complex than it would be in its natural state. Different distortion sounds are largely based on the gear the guitarist is using (i.e., amplifiers, pre-amplifiers, and effects pedals), although the individual performers can customize the settings to create their own

particularly astrology and alchemy. In addition, Page held great admiration for noted occultist Aleister Crowley and purchased Crowley’s Boleskin House, which the occultist purchased for the purpose of performing a particular ritual. The thought of a Christian wanting to be associated with someone who holds these beliefs is unthinkable for some Christians, but it really underscores the reality that most serious musicians are drawn to exceptional performers and are able to separate the skill and technique from any ideological differences that may exist.

Because chords are defined as three or more pitches sounded together, power chords are not actual chords.

335 Because chords are defined as three or more pitches sounded together, power chords are not actual chords.
unique sounds. Some manufacturers actually design gear that is pre-set to emulate the distinctive timbre of prominent metal guitarists. For instance, MXR’s DD11 “Dime Distortion” pedal is preconfigured to emulate the sound of the late Pantera guitarist “Dimebag” Darrell Abbott and its EVH117 flanger has a switch that automatically emulates the sound of Van Halen guitarist Eddie Van Halen. The company also makes pedals based around the sound of Slash (Guns ‘n Roses, Velvet Revolver, Slash’s Snakepit), Kerry King (Slayer), and Zakk Wylde (Ozzy Osbourne, Black Label Society). Aspiring metal guitarists also study magazine articles, photographs, videos, websites, and album liner notes in an attempt to discover how to recreate the timbres of their favorite guitarists.

Metal guitarists also developed what became known as “shredding,” a rapid, virtuosic style that produces a flurry of notes. Shredding is an amalgamation of other techniques, such as sweep picking, in which the fret hand moves in the same sweeping manner as the picking hand to produce a rapid arpeggiation of notes, and tremolo picking, in which a single note is played repeatedly in rapid succession. Some metal guitarists also employ palm muting techniques to create a “chugging” sound by using the side of the picking hand to dampen the strings while playing. Tapping is another popular technique associated with metal guitarists. Tapping involves initiating the vibration of the strings by pressing the string against the fretboard rather than plucking them. It is related to hammer-ons and pull-offs; the difference is that tapping is performed with both
hands whereas the other techniques are performed with only the fretting hand.\textsuperscript{336} These guitar techniques together create the overall metal guitar sound that can be found in both general market and Christian metal.

Related to guitar technique is bass technique. The bass guitar is a foundational instrument in the metal sound, and while the traditional four-string bass has been the most common instrument used in metal, so-called “extended range” basses with as many as six or seven strings are becoming increasingly popular.\textsuperscript{337} The additional strings extend the range of the bass lower, complimenting the overall lower pitching in many forms of modern metal. Most metal bassists use a finger-picked approach, although in subgenres like thrash, death metal, and black metal where fast tempos are common, some bassists find it easier to use a pick. Most metal bassists also use fretted basses because they are easier to play in tune and have a cleaner sound. There are some who use a fretless bass for a different sonic effect in certain songs. Bands that have used fretless basses include Death, Iced Earth, Necrophagist, and Opeth.

Even though one of the seminal bands in the history of metal, Deep Purple, relied heavily on Jon Lord’s organ for its signature sound and depth of texture, keyboard instruments were initially held in low regard by many metal bands. Glam bands in the 1980s reintroduced them, particularly in ballads, although a synthesizer is used

\textsuperscript{336} Hammer-on involves bringing the fretting finger onto the string sharply to create a sounding note. A pull-off uses a fretting finger to pluck the string on the fretboard. It is the same technique as a “left-handed pizzicato” on a violin.

\textsuperscript{337} Basses with as many as twelve strings are known to exist, but basses with more than eight strings are extremely rare and have usually been custom made.
prominently in the Swedish band Europe’s anthemic “The Final Countdown” and Bon Jovi’s “Livin’ on a Prayer.” Progressive metal bands also adopted keyboards for their ability to thicken textures and provide a new timbre to the band’s overall sound. Thrash bands tend to avoid keyboards, although some bands use them for special purposes like introductions or sound effects but usually not as a regular instrument in songs. In the 1990s, doom and black metal bands began to incorporate keyboard instruments for their ability to set a mood and create an atmosphere in which the rest of their music unfolded. Examples include “For Those Who Sleep Eternally” by Imperium Dekadenz, “Leblos” by Idisenfluch, “The Forest” by Mirkwood, and “Under the Blade of the Dead” by Aeternus.

Drums serve as the rhythmic backbone of the band. Metal drum kits range from a standard setup of bass, snare, tom toms, crash, and ride cymbals to more elaborate sets that incorporate a variety of different-sized cymbals, gongs, exotic percussion instruments, and timpani. One fairly standard modification is the use of two bass drums or a double-bass pedal. Even though the double bass sound can be traced to jazz drummer Louie Bellson in 1946, it became synonymous with metal drumming. The use of two bass drums enabled thrash, death metal, black metal, and metalcore drummers to provide a constant barrage of bass drum beats at rapid tempos. One characteristic drum sound that developed out of death metal and grindcore is “blast beat,” which involves simultaneous strikes on the bass drum, snare drum, and cymbals, usually in an eighth- or sixteenth-note pattern at a tempo of between 180 and 280 beats per minute.

338 It is important to note that the distinctive sound of the introduction to “Livin’ on a Prayer” is produced by a guitar “talk box” and not a synthesizer. The keyboard appears in a similar role as a rhythm guitar throughout the song.
Related to instrument timbre is the use of downtuning or drop tuning. Downtuning means that all the strings on the instrument are tuned down by the same interval, producing an overall lower and “heavier” sound. Most metal bands downtune as much as a step-and-a-half (from E to C#), but death and doom metal bands commonly go as low as four whole steps (E to G#). Drop tuning is similar to downtuning except the lowest string is tuned a step lower than it would be in a downtuned scenario.\footnote{Double-drop tuning also occurs, although it is much less common and involves lowering both the lowest and the highest strings by one step relative to the rest.}

Christian metal bands have adopted all of these conventions, which again leads to the criticism that they are simply imitating specific general market bands. One response to those criticisms is often that the imitation is not limited to Christian metal bands and that most general market bands also adopt the innovations of others rather than being innovators themselves. A thrash band is likely to sound similar to Metallica in some way simply because of the significance of Metallica in the development of the genre.

Production

A commonly overlooked characteristic of metal’s sound is the production. Many early metal recordings suffered from poor production quality for a number of reasons; perhaps most significantly there was little major label support for these bands. Fans heard new metal bands through demo and bootleg tapes that were often recorded using low-quality equipment and without the expertise of professional engineers and
even after bands were signed, many labels were reluctant to invest resources toward the production of metal albums because executives knew the metal albums would not sell as well as more mainstream rock and pop albums. Thus, poor, murky production became a trademark of the metal sound, so while it initially occurred by chance, it became a desired aesthetic in metal. Low production standards actually helped Christian metal, as Christian metal bands were even less likely than general market metal bands to receive label resources for recording. Even when the support was there, the relative amount of resources available to them was significantly less than that offered by general market labels.341

Production quality began to increase in the late 1980s, as the popularity of glam metal changed the way record labels viewed metal bands. Albums by bands like Van Halen, Bon Jovi, Guns N’ Roses, Poison, and Mötley Crüe were certified Gold, Platinum, and multi-Platinum, so labels began to perceive them as more commercially viable and put more resources into the production of metal albums. By this time, both the Christian music industry overall and the market for Christian metal specifically were better established, and several of the Christian “major” labels felt confident enough to spin off specialty labels or acquire independent labels that focused on metal and other “fringe” genres and to provide them with the resources needed to create high-quality

340 Bootlegs are recordings that were not officially released by the artists and are generally traded among fans rather than being sold. The proliferation of cassette tapes in the 1970s and 1980s facilitated this practice, and each successive copy caused a slight degradation of the sound quality.
341 This is one of the reasons Stryper’s signing with a general market label is often credited for their success.
recordings. To defray production costs, some of these bands used studios owned by the labels and production teams on staff. For instance, nearly every album released on Pakaderm [sic] Records was produced by the label’s co-owner Dino Elefante.\textsuperscript{342} Ironically, Christian metal bands like Shout were criticized for being too well-produced and polished and lacking the raw metal edge.

Some subgenres, particularly thrash and black metal, continued to embrace lower-quality production as part of their aesthetic. The musicians and fans considered unrefined production to be a sign of authenticity that distinguished metal from mainstream rock: it was music made by the musicians, not the engineers. It also connected with their maverick image of being unconcerned with the opinions of others. In more recent years, symphonic black metal has embraced higher quality production because it allows the nuances of the music to be heard in the recording.

Another factor that has helped Christian metal’s production quality remain on par with that of general market metal is the fact that many Christian bands record in the same studios and use the same producers as general metal bands. It is common to see press releases for upcoming Christian metal albums that list well-known general market producers among the album’s credits. For instance, Tourniquet’s 2012 release \textit{Antiseptic Bloodbath} is produced by Neil Kernon, who also produced albums for general market bands Cannibal Corpse, Deicide, Judas Priest, and Queensrÿche. Producers tend to have

\textsuperscript{342} Pakaderm was founded and operated by Dino and his brother John, who replaced Steve Walsh as lead singer for the general market band Kansas and has been an active recording artist in the Christian market as a soloist and lead singer for the band Mastodon.
their own signature sound that they bring to a recording, so bands that use the same producer are going to have some similar-sounding elements in their recordings.

**Modality**

Modality is another important component of the overall metal sound. To at least some degree, all metal employs minor modes. Phrygian and Aeolian are the most common minor modes used in metal, with Phrygian preferred by many thrash and death metal bands because of the added darkness the lowered second scale degree gives the music. Dorian is common in glam metal, which is generally not as dark and gloomy as other subgenres. Locrian mode is rarely used as the basis of a song because of the diminished tonic chord, but guitarists do frequently use it in solos over minor chord progressions to create a more dissonant sound.

While minor modes are favored by most metal bands, power metal tends to use major modes more frequently, particularly Ionian and Lydian. The bright sound of major modes complements the heroic themes of conquest and triumph found in power metal.

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343 The minor modes are characterized by a lowered third scale degree, or one that is one and a half steps away from the tonic pitch. Dorian mode uses only the lowered third (with a natural sixth) and is considered the brightest of the minor modes. Aeolian mode includes a lowered sixth scale degree and is the modal name for the natural minor scale. Phrygian adds a lowered second to the Aeolian mode, making it the darkest of the minor modes. Locrian mode is considered a minor mode as well because of the lowered third, but the fact that the fifth scale degree is also lowered leads theorists to refer to it as a diminished mode. It also uses a lowered second and seventh scale degree.

344 Major modes are considered the naturally-occurring modes and are characterized by a third scale degree that is two steps away from the tonic pitch. Ionian is the modal name of the standard major scale. Lydian adds a raised fourth scale degree, and Mixolydian uses a lowered seventh scale degree.
metal lyrics. Mixolydian is used less frequently overall because of the problems the lowered seventh scale degree causes for chord progressions, most notably the lack of a dominant chord.345

Christian metal’s adherence to the modal expectations of listeners further supports the notion that these bands wish to be taken seriously within the metal community despite receiving criticism from those in the Christian community who do not think the dark sound that results from the use of minor modes is compatible with Christianity’s messages of hope and joy.

**Formal structure**

Overall, metal’s formal structure is similar to most other forms of popular music: verse-bridge-chorus. The verses are usually the least memorable part of the song. Verses tend to use more complex rhythms and harmonies than the chorus, and the lyrics are usually sung by the lead singer alone. The chorus is the focal point of the song lyrically and musically. It tends to be more hook-laden with a more memorable melody than the rest of the song. Lyric-wise, the chorus contains the main thrust of the song and often incorporates singing or shouting from the whole band. The instrumentation and rhythmic character most often change to reinforce the vocal line rather than compete with it. The bridge sections are transitional and signal to the listeners that the chorus is coming. Some black, power, progressive, and symphonic metal bands, however, use a more through-
composed approach to songwriting that presents their lyrics as a narrative or a string of thoughts and ideas rather than using a traditional song structure.

**Breakdowns**

Another formal feature of some metal songs is the breakdown. Breakdowns are typically sections marked by a slightly slower tempo, a steady beat from drums that usually emphasizes the double bass and cymbals, and slow, low-pitched guitar riffs. The vocalist often repeats one line throughout the section. In concerts, the breakdowns are the sections of the songs during which moshing is encouraged. Those who do not wish to mosh are encouraged to sing along with the vocalist. They are most common in metalcore but can also be found in other subgenres as well. Breakdowns can occur at any point in the song but often appear later in the song in place of guitar solos.

Christian metalcore and death metal bands usually include breakdowns as well. In fact, bands like The Devil Wears Prada and August Burns Red are often included in

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346 Moshing is the style of dancing most commonly associated with metal, particularly thrash, death metal, grindcore, and metalcore. It involves a group of moshers moving around an area known as a “pit” and colliding with one another. Sometimes the concert venue will have an area designated as the mosh pit but more often than not, mosh pits form spontaneously in the crowd when moshers begin colliding with each other; the members of the audience who do not wish to be part of the actual moshing form a ring around the moshers. Despite the violent nature of moshing, there is some degree of etiquette that is expected of participants. For instance, if a mosher falls to the ground, the other participants stop and help that person up. Throwing punches or deliberately attempting to harm another mosher is frowned upon in metal pits and will often result in the person being forced from the pit. Metal moshers make a distinction between what they do and the “hardcore dancing” that is associated with hardcore punk, ridiculing them for fighting “invisible ninjas” because of the wild, martial-arts style kicking and flailing of the arms that is common in that style of moshing.
fan discussions of bands with the best breakdowns. This is another area where Christian metal bands are criticized within the Christian market because of the association between breakdowns and moshing. The argument is that Christians should not be encouraging violence against other people and moshing is viewed by outsiders as simply an excuse for violence.

Riffs

Metal is largely constructed of riffs, which are repeated melodic patterns typically played by the guitars. The term riff has essentially the same meaning as the term ostinato, but in a practical sense, riffs tend to be more melodically significant than ostinatos, that are typically accompanimental. For instance, the primary riff of Black Sabbath’s “Iron Man” also serves as the melody line for the verses of the song (Figure 5.1). Each subgenre has its own characteristic riff styles around which songs are built. In many ways, riffs serve as the foundation of metal songs with different sections marked off by the use of different riffs.

![Figure 5.1—Main riff for Black Sabbath’s “Iron Man”](image)

Christian metal bands tend to draw from the same riff collections as general market metal bands, which further embeds their music within the overall sound of the metal genre. Critics charge that this is another example of Christian metal imitating
general market bands, but again the imitation is not limited to Christian metal bands and is instead a characteristic of the metal genre overall.

Christian metal’s sonic character is closely tied to that of its general market counterpart. Comments on general market metal message boards and YouTube about popular Christian metal bands like Demon Hunter, As I Lay Dying, and The Devil Wears Prada reveal that general market audiences are open and receptive to the music of these bands even if they do not agree with the lyrical themes. For example, this comment appears on the video for Demon Hunter’s “Not Ready to Die” video on YouTube: “Even though I'm an atheist, this band kicks f____ing a____! I don't give a s____ who groups them with any religion. Good music is good music.” Even older, more lyrically blatant bands like Stryper, Bride, Mortification, and Guardian receive a great deal of praise for their musicianship. Overall, then, it seems that Christian metal bands are able to attract a following from general market audiences, and having that audience is crucial to fulfilling their mission of promote its Christian message outside the Christian market.

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Chapter 6: Case Study

The three previous chapters have demonstrated specific ways in which Christian metal relates to the metal code. In concluding this study, the author believes it is valuable to present a comparison between specific examples of general market and Christian metal as a summary. For this purpose, the author will examine Iron Maiden’s “The Number of the Beast,” the title track from its 1982 release, and Bride’s “Hell No” from its 1988 album Live to Die. The comparison is meant to provide a practical illustration of the stylistic consistency of Christian metal with general market metal rather than to equate the two tracks and bands.

Verbal

Iron Maiden takes its name from the legendary torture device. Iron maidens were large sarcophagus-like boxes with spikes lining the inside. Anyone placed inside the box would suffer the agony of having various body parts pierced as the doors were closed on them. It is a symbol of cruelty and terror. This not only draws on metal’s connection to chaotic and violent imagery, but also to the historical imagery of medieval torture. Bride, on the other hand, draws more from religious themes than chaotic ones. In Christian symbolism, “bride” is typically used to refer to Christians in general as several

348 While the iron maiden is commonly associated with the Middle Ages, there is no verifiable record of one existing before the 1790s. Even though the dating is erroneous, the iron maiden is linked to medieval times by way of cultural memory.
Biblical allusions to Christ being a bridegroom has led people to refer to the Church as “the bride of Christ”.\textsuperscript{349}

The album titles are both taken from songs on the album, and both also serve to promote unsettling feelings in those who read them. \textit{The Number of the Beast} was released in the wake of a series of Evangelical films depicting the end times and amidst a growing number of reports and claims of satanic cult activity and satanic ritual abuse (SRA),\textsuperscript{350} so the title would have been topical. \textit{Live to Die} plays on humanity’s discomfort with its inevitable mortality. The idea of living to die implies that the point of our existence is to die. Within the context of Christianity, however, it can be interpreted as a reference to Romans 8:13: “For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.”\textsuperscript{351} (NIV)

The lyrics for “The Number of the Beast” were inspired by a nightmare that the song’s writer, Steve Harris, had after watching the movie \textit{Damien: Omen II} with some allusion to the Robert Burns poem “Tam o’Shanter.”\textsuperscript{352} The song begins with a spoken introduction that closes with a direct quotation from Revelation 13:18:

\textsuperscript{349} Matthew 9:15, Mark 2:19, and Luke 5:34 are just some of the examples of Jesus being referred to in this manner.

\textsuperscript{350} The films were \textit{Thief in the Night} (1973), \textit{A Distant Thunder} (1978), and \textit{Image of the Beast} (1980). A fourth film, \textit{The Prodigal Planet} was released in 1983. Most of the reports of ritual abuse were discredited as false memories.

\textsuperscript{351} One of Christianity’s key paradoxes is the idea that people must figuratively die to self and to sinful nature in order to gain eternal life. This verse is just one that illustrates this belief.

"Woe to you, Oh Earth and Sea, for the Devil sends the Beast with wrath, because he knows the time is short...Let him who hath understanding reckon the number of the Beast for it is a human number, its number is Six hundred and sixty six."

The rest of the lyrics chronicle an event from the perspective of someone who witnessed something so surreal he is not completely certain he actually believes his experience.

I left alone, my mind was blank
I needed time to think to get the memories from my mind
What did I see? Can I believe that what I saw
That night was real and not just fantasy?

Just what I saw in my old dreams were they
Reflections of my warped mind staring back at me?
'Cos in my dreams it's always there the evil face that twists my mind
And brings me to despair.\(^{353}\)

These verses paint a picture of confusion, doubt, fear, and perhaps feelings of insanity.

The protagonist speaks vaguely at first before revealing the reason for these emotions—a haunting image of a face so evil it affects his ability to think clearly and rationally, leading him to despair.

He then proceeds to tell the story of the events that have brought him to this point.

The night was black was no use holding back
'Cos I just had to see was someone watching me
In the mist dark figures move and twist
Was all this for real or some kind of hell?

666 the number of the beast

Hell and fire were spawned to be released
Torches blazed and sacred chants were phrased
As they start to cry hands held to the sky
In the night the fires burning bright
The ritual has begun Satan's work is done

666 the number of the beast
Sacrifice is going on tonight

This can't go on I must inform the law
Can this still be real or just some crazy dream
But I feel drawn towards the chanting hordes
Seem to mesmerize … can't avoid their eyes

666 the number of the beast
666 the one for you and me

It appears that he inadvertently witnessed some sort of satanic ritual. His reaction is initially one of fear and he expresses a need to stop those involved (“This can’t go on, I must inform the law.”), but he soon finds himself somehow drawn into the ritual (“But I feel drawn toward the chanting hordes / Seem to mesmerize … can’t avoid their eyes.”). The line “666 the one for you and me” seems to indicate that he is no longer an outside observer of the ritual and has now joined it. If one interprets these lyrics according to Deena Weinstein’s metaphoric approach, then the ritual could represent a clandestine meeting of those working to further societal chaos.

The final verse seems to be sung by Satan, who promises

I'm coming back I will return
And I'll possess your body and I'll make you burn
I have the fire I have the force

354 Ibid.
I have the power to make my evil take its course.\textsuperscript{355}

It is likely that Satan is the “evil face that twists my mind and leads me to despair” from the second verse. This seemingly triumphant statement by Satan is just one of lyrics that led people to brand Iron Maiden as “satanic.” Again, a Weinstein-based analysis might interpret these words to be a personification of chaos itself.

The lyrics for “The Number of the Beast” draw from the chaotic themes, particularly the symbol of the monster, by referencing Satan and feelings of confusion, mind control, and despair. The events of the story also take place under the covering of night, which as stated previously, is another common metal theme.

The lyrics for “Hell No” also draw on chaotic themes and use the metaphor of a ship in a storm at sea to represent life in the chaotic world.

Close the hatches and lower the sails
The wind is whipping great balls of hail
Tempest is raging pulling us down
Time to learn to swim or time to drown.

We won't go to Hell, no we won't go [2x]

Oars have broken your time to kneel
The storm is screaming with vengeance to kill
Faith has plunged into the sea beneath
Waves beat the ship with iron fist to sink

We won't go to Hell, no we won't go [2x] \textsuperscript{356}

\textsuperscript{355} Ibid.
The first two verses set the scene of an increasingly violent storm that threatens to destroy the ship and drown the crew. The lyrics paint the picture of a hopeless situation with lines like “Time to learn to swim or time to drown” and “Faith has plunged into the sea beneath,” and the importance of prayer (“Oars have broken, your time to kneel.”). The chorus stands out as defiant resolve in the face of mortal peril and proclaims “We won’t go to Hell, no we won’t go.”

The final verse presents a sort of moral for the tale:

Fear is the driver we fight for our lives
We're not afraid of death but we don't want to die
Prayed out loud and clung to the deck
No glory for sailors when they've been shipwrecked

We won't go to Hell, no we won't go [6x]  

It says throughout life people wrestle with fear, particularly the fear of death, but it is important to resist that fear and live a resolute life grounded in prayer and by doing so, people are able to weather the storms of life. The final line of the verse reminds the listener that there is no glory in merely letting the forces of chaos take control of one’s life.

The storm, references to Hell, and the threat of death are all part of the chaotic themes of metal, and the call to transcend and resist the chaos are also typical of metal lyrics. What is atypical is the allusion to the need for an external power or force to enable the listener to resist. Metal is typically about self-reliance and personal empowerment, and calls for prayer seem to indicate a belief that personal determination or willpower is not enough.
The bands’ names and album titles are different, but they still connect with the verbal elements of the metal code. Both sets of lyrics are narrative in character, which is typical of classic metal lyrics in general, and both draw from chaotic imagery to paint a picture of forces in this world that are outside of the protagonist’s control. One significant difference is reaction to the chaos in each song. In “Number of the Beast,” the protagonist is eventually drawn in by the beguiling influence of “the evil chanting hordes” and becomes a part of the chaos himself. Bride’s protagonists, however, do not yield to the chaos, but instead rely on prayer and defiant resistance to achieve victory over the chaos.

**Visual**

As previously stated, the Iron Maiden logo is an iconic metal image, and the typeface, Metal Lord, is synonymous with the genre. The band has used the same logo since its debut album in 1980. The album cover for *The Number of the Beast* features a graphic depiction of Eddie, the band’s mascot, controlling Satan like a puppet. (Figure 6.1) Closer examination also reveals that Satan is controlling a small puppet version of Eddie. The purpose of this image is to raise the question of who is really in

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357 Eddie is the zombie-like mascot for the band. Some version of Eddie appears on nearly all of the band’s album covers and often on its stage décor.
control. The dominant color of the cover is black, which is the color of the sky and much

![Iron Maiden: The Number of the Beast album cover](image)

Figure 6.1—The Number of the Beast album cover

ground. \footnote{There was a printing error on the original album cover, so the sky in the background was printed blue instead of black. The artist’s original intent was restored on the remastered CD version from 1998.} Red is used for the text and for Satan; all of this contrasts with the black background. The band’s logo is prominently displayed at the top of the cover, with the album title to Eddie’s right in a thin, handwritten font.

The art for Live to Die is Gustav Doré’s 1865 engraving Death on a Pale Horse surrounded by a background reminiscent of parchment with the band’s logo across the top. \footnote{Bride used Doré’s The Destruction of Leviathan for the cover of its debut Show No Mercy. His engravings are popular among metal bands for album covers because of their gothic atmosphere. Norwegian black metal band Emperor used Death on a Pale Horse for its debut EP in 1991, and several bands have used The Vision of the Valley of Dry Bones.}

(Figure 6.2) Bride has not been nearly as consistent about its logo as Iron Maiden

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358 There was a printing error on the original album cover, so the sky in the background was printed blue instead of black. The artist’s original intent was restored on the remastered CD version from 1998.
359 Bride used Doré’s The Destruction of Leviathan for the cover of its debut Show No Mercy. His engravings are popular among metal bands for album covers because of their gothic atmosphere. Norwegian black metal band Emperor used Death on a Pale Horse for its debut EP in 1991, and several bands have used The Vision of the Valley of Dry Bones.
has. In fact, each album features a different version. This desire to make the logo
consistent with the overall album art is not without precedent in metal. As mentioned
previously, Judas Priest has used seven different logo designs since 1974 and Mötley
Crüe, like Bride, has used a different logo for each of its albums. This particular variant
of Bride’s logo uses a heavily-embellished Gothic style typeface with each letter isolated
into its own box. The coloring is red and black, a standard metal color combination. The
image, inspired by Revelation 6:8,\textsuperscript{360} is obviously apocalyptic.

\textbf{Figure 6.2—}\textit{Live to Die} album cover

The bands’ appearances are standard for metal bands. Both bands tend toward the
“street clothes” costuming, although there is some hybridization occurring as well. By
the early 1980s, spandex pants were replacing denim as standard metal attire, so \textit{Iron}

\textsuperscript{360} “I looked, and there before me was a pale horse! Its rider was named Death, and
Hades was following close behind him. They were given power over a fourth of the earth
to kill by sword, famine and plague, and by the wild beasts of the earth.” (NIV)
Maiden commonly wore spandex in addition to denim and leather.  (Figure 6.3) In the video for “The Number of the Beast” vocalist Bruce Dickinson wore a leather vest and studded gauntlets borrowed from the biker costume.  Bride, on the other hand, adopted some elements of glam in its costume.  (Figure 6.4)
The video for “The Number of the Beast” consists mainly of performance footage of the band interspersed with scenes from various cult monster movies, including *Godzilla, Crimson Ghost, The Devil Rides Out,* and *Nosferatu.* This juxtaposition of the “real” performance of the band with the “fantasy” contributes to the sense of disbelief expressed in the lyric “Can I believe that what I saw/ That night was real and not just fantasy.” The lines between reality and fantasy are blurred further during the last two minutes of the song, as a couple wearing the number six on their backs appears on stage doing a type of ballroom dance. At one point, the female partner spins around three times, after which her hands and face become hairy like a werewolf and the couple dances off stage. They are later joined on stage by an almost comical devil figure and a giant “Eddie.” The addition of these stylistically incongruent elements suggests that the viewers might be witnessing a dream, which would be a reasonable interpretation considering the song’s original inspiration was a dream.

There was no official video for “Hell No,” as music videos were not common in Christian metal in the early years. This is primarily the result of most early Christian metal being released on small labels that did not have the resources to dedicate to producing videos. Videos were also not a high priority because video programs in the Christian market were unlikely to show metal videos, and there was the perception that general market video programming, like MTV, would not show them.361

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361 MTV’s alleged refusal to air Christian rock band DeGarmo & Key’s video for “666” created the perception of anti-Christian bias on the part of the network. The video was aired briefly before being pulled from the rotation as part of a purge in the wake of the PMRC Senate committee hearings. The network decided to stop airing the video because
**Aural**

The timbral elements of both songs are quite similar. Both Dickinson and Bride vocalist Dale Thompson are strong vocalists who strategically employ falsetto screams. Dickinson is responsible for all of the vocals in “The Number of the Beast,” but Bride uses gang vocals in the chorus of “Hell No” to emphasize the sense of defiance in the lyrics. Thompson begins singing “We won’t go to” and the rest of the band joins in to sing “Hell, no we won’t go.” Not only does the addition of more voices lend strength and power to the chorus, but the deliberate use of the gang vocals for a well-known protest chant.362

Instrumentally, both bands use two guitars, bass, and drum kit. Iron Maiden’s guitarists, Dave Murray and Adrian Smith, tend to use the double-lead approach rather than the lead and rhythm approach of Bride’s guitarists, Steve Osbourne and Troy Thompson. The bass functions primarily as a bass line or pedal part in both songs, although there are instances of melodic playing by the bass in both songs. The drumming is standard metal drumming.

Modally, the two songs diverge. The general absence of triadic harmonies in “The Number of the Beast” makes it difficult to make definitive statements about the song’s modality, but the opening section implies Mixolydian mode, a major mode, with the presence of F# in the riff and the harmonic motion from D down to C. While major

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it was concerned the content of the song might be interpreted as anti-Christian (it seems MTV executives were initially unaware that the band was a Christian band), and the video contained a scene in which the Antichrist figure is set on fire. The band was permitted to resubmit an edited version of the video that was reinserted into the rotation. 362 “Hell no, we won’t go,” was a common anti-draft chant during the Vietnam War.
mode is common in power metal, the use of Mixolydian is unusual, although the absence of definitive harmonies makes it unclear whether that is the overarching modality or whether it is merely a whole tone shift in the harmonic progression. The only deviation from the song’s emphasis on D is the second guitar solo, which is in F. “Hell No,” on the other hand, seems to focus around A in a minor mode, as indicated by the minor third in the opening riff and the chorus melody.

Structurally, both songs essentially follow the standard verse-chorus structure and both position a contrasting section featuring a guitar solo between the second and third pairing. “The Number of the Beast” begins with an unaccompanied spoken introduction before the opening riff appears in both of the guitars and the bass (Figure 6.5).

![Figure 6.5—Main riff for Iron Maiden’s “The Number of the Beast”](image)

riff serves as the melody for Dickinson’s vocals for the opening section. The unison performance of the melody in the first verse is intensified by the addition of the cymbal to the mix, playing the rhythm of the riff in the second verse. This exposition climaxes with a primal scream from the vocalist over a series of ringing power chords. The following verses are accompanied by a variation on the opening riff, which serves as the vocal melody here as well, and the choruses are accompanied by those same transitional power chords.

There is a strong melodic relationship between this riff and the beginning of the hymn “When the Saints Go Marching In,” although there is no known indication from the band that this is intentional.
chords. Each section flows seamlessly into the next through two verse-chorus pairings before Dickinson drops out for a brief interlude that features some transitional riff sequencing and two guitar solos (one by each guitarist). Following the third verse-chorus pairing, the song repeats the riff and power chords from the exposition to accompany the final verse, creating a ternary macroform.

“Hell No” is less complex than “The Number of the Beast.” It begins with an introductory section that presents four iterations of the main riff in the bass and guitar (Figure 6.6). The first two verses are accompanied by sustained power chords in the guitars and a bass pedal under the first two lines of text before being joined by a more active drum part for the rest of the verse. The accompaniment for the chorus is a variation on the opening riff with a double-bass drum part. The brief interlude that follows the second verse-chorus pairing begins with a vamp over which Thompson emphasizes divine intervention through prayer and faith with the seemingly-improvised couplet “Man overboard / Looks like he’s walking on the water!”364 This leads into Steve Osbourne’s guitar solo. Drum cues lead into the third and final verse, which is like

![Figure 6.6—Main riff, Bride’s “Hell No”](image)

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364 This is a clear reference to Biblical stories of Jesus and Peter walking on bodies of water. Most likely it is a more direct allusion to Peter, who was able to walk on the water because of his faith.
the first two except the guitars are absent from the accompaniment for the first two lines; they rejoin the accompaniment for the final two lines and the chorus. The song then moves into a coda-type section that features several repetitions of the chorus accompanied by the same riff found earlier in the choruses. This section is set apart from the previous one by removing the bass from the texture and creating a half-time feel in the drums with flams on the backbeats for the first two iterations of the chorus. The song closes with a return to the opening riff and a fermata with a guitar flourish.

Another key difference between the songs is tempo. “The Number of the Beast” is approximately 200 beats per minute, while “Hell No” is around 120 beats per minute. In addition, Iron Maiden’s accompaniment is driven by eighth notes in the bass, making the song sound twice as fast as it actually is.

As should be evident, these two songs are not completely equivalent, nor are they all-encompassing examples of their respective bodies of music; nonetheless, this analysis serves to demonstrate the stylistic congruence between general market and Christian metal. If someone were to listen to these two songs in sequence, there is nothing that should indicate that the two songs were mismatched.

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Chapter 7: Conclusions

One of the premises of this study was that Christian metal bands consider themselves to be missionaries to the general market metal scene—a mission field that is otherwise being reached in an ineffective way, if not simply ignored. The effectiveness of Christian metal’s missionary status is directly dependent on its ability to integrate into its mission field. To do that, Christian metal has needed to find ways to credibly adopt the language, symbols, sounds, and practices of the general market metal culture. The central issue guiding this study is how do Christian metal bands do this within the context of their Christian mission and message?

One important factor is that they tend to select names that share similar characteristics with those of the “native” bands in the general market. While grindcore bands like Vomitorial Corpulence and Demonic Dismemberment face criticism from some Christians for their decision, it is difficult to argue that these names are not going to provide the bands with greater opportunities to integrate into a subgenre where names like Defecation, Dying Fetus, Cattle Decapitation, Pig Destroyer, and Prostitute Disfigurement are the norm.

Likewise, lyric content needs to present Christian principles and messages in ways that are both familiar and accessible to the audience. On this point there seems to be some disagreement among the bands as to how to accomplish this. Bands like Theocracy, Saint, and Mortification adopt metal’s “in your face” attitude and boldly speak of Jesus, salvation, and sin while other bands, like As I Lay Dying, Demon Hunter, and The Devil Wears Prada, present their message in more oblique ways. It is
noteworthy that these last three bands, along with August Burns Red and Underøath, have the greatest presence in the general market, and while Stryper was lyrically bold overall, its biggest hits were lyrically vague. While critics accuse these bands of diluting their message in order to gain popularity and financial reward, the bands respond that writing songs to which the audience can relate instead of songs that overtly preach actually gives them more opportunities to share their Christian perspectives. This reinforces Anthony Beaujon’s point from Chapter One that the Christian artists who have best been able to integrate into the general market are those that approach their songwriting from a relational perspective rather than an authoritative one. They write songs that connect with listeners as equals in their struggles and fears, and not as people who have all the answers.

As important as the verbal characteristics are the visual ones. Metal is definitely an image-conscious genre, and a failure to “look the part” stifles any opportunity Christian bands might have to reach their mission field. While it is certainly a fair argument that Christian metal bands should be “light in the darkness” of the metal scene, T Bone Burnett’s view addressed in Chapter Two about writing songs regarding what he can see from the light can certainly apply to visual imagery as well. Christian metal bands show images of death, destruction, and the demonic, and they do so in part because that is what is expected of metal bands in certain subgenres. It is fallacious, however, to assume they arrive at these images because they are fascinated with evil and chaos. Instead, they hold a perspective that those images reflect the state of “the world” without the light of Christ in it. As one member of the Christian thrash band Temple of Blood
stated, “[M]etal is about dark topics. Christian metal tends to focus on dark Biblical topics.”

More important than either the verbal or visual elements, however, are the aural elements. The attitude of most metal fans is, to quote Vengeance Rising vocalist Roger Martinez, “If it jams, it jams!” Metal fans are generally willing to overlook transgressions of the verbal or visual parts of the metal code as long as the actual music is of high-enough quality. Much of the criticism of the quality of Christian metal in the mid-1980s was not without reason. A desire by Christian labels to sign bands to meet the increasing demand for metal led to a number of albums being released by bands whose talent was not on par with the general market bands to which they were being compared. The music of Torn Flesh and Stryken, for example, is the object of derision from a number of Christian metal fans as well as general market metal fans for the poor musicianship and production quality. Additionally, many of the albums by more-talented bands suffered from poor production, which led to substandard sound quality on those recordings. As a result, there was sufficient reason for the general market metal audience to denounce Christian metal as an inferior product. That is no longer the case; the average Christian metal album can compete sonically with its general market counterpart. If comments on sites like YouTube can be used as a gauge of public opinion, contemporary bands like Demon Hunter and As I Lay Dying as well as classic bands like

Bride and Barren Cross continue to gain respect because of the quality of their work from people who are not “Christian metal fans.”

Thus, Christian metal bands are able to function as missionaries and bring their Christian message to a general market audience without compromising that message or alienating the audience because they translate that message into the language and images that are accessible to that audience and present it in a musical context that attracts listeners rather than alienating them. Most bands realize that there are people for whom Christianity has such a negative association that they will never accept a Christian metal band or its message, but there are a number of general market metal fans who are willing to embrace a band that plays quality music with quality lyrics regardless of the worldview those lyrics express. Stephanie Green of the blog Steffinmetal perhaps summarizes it best:

Much of metal – and I’m talking extreme metal here – is about raw emotions, the dangerous ones lurking beneath the surface. Christians feel pain and hatred and anger and fear too. I bet lots of our favorite metal songs are actually written by people who consider themselves Christians (but don’t wish this to be overt), as well as many other religions. Once you get past all the silliness, emotions are universal. Saying to someone “Don’t write metal songs because you’re a Christian, and you don’t belong” is about as un-metal as you can get. Anyone belongs in metal, that’s the point.367

Areas for further study

Although the present study offers new insights into the genre of Christian metal as it compares to general market metal, there remains a dearth of research on the subject of

Christian metal in general. One significant area that needs further study is the history of Christian metal. It is possible to recreate a rough history of the genre through fan-based websites like “Metal for Jesus,” “No Life ‘Til Metal,” and “Firestream Music Vault” and through fan discussion forums like “Christian Metal Realm,” “Heart of Metal,” and “BlabberBoard,” but those are often grounded in the experience of individuals and are not attempts to document the entirety of the genre. The lack of a complete researched and documented history is one of the more pressing issues that needs addressed in the continued study of the genre.

Similarly, there is a need to chronicle the work and achievements of the pioneering bands. While most of the band members are young enough that the urgency of mortality is not a significant issue, the further-removed chronologically they are from those seminal years, the more researchers risk distorting and mediating the memories and accounts those musicians can contribute. These oral histories will work in conjunction with the chronologies from the web sites listed above to produce a more rich history of the genre in addition to providing a framework within which to interpret that history.

At least as significant as creating an historical record, however, is the need to integrate Christian metal bands into general studies and histories of metal music. By excluding Christian bands, authors of such histories are providing an incomplete and skewed picture. As mentioned in the literature review in Chapter One, none of the significant histories of metal contain more than a passing reference to Christian metal in the 1980s. Christian metal bands can be considered within their subgenres simply as
bands with a particular lyric focus and lifestyle choice, much like “straight edge” bands,\textsuperscript{368} and not as a distinct subgenre.

Another set of questions that warrant exploration revolves around the audience for this music. The audience for Christian metal is a diverse and complex group that makes it an interesting study population. There are also a number of possible avenues for studies beyond a simple demographic overview, such as the intergenerational nature of the fan base and the issues and implications that holds for the sustainability of the music. An examination of groups of people that are underrepresented in the Christian metal fan base, such as females and non-Whites, might also be illuminating. As stated previously, metal has from its inception been a male-dominated genre in terms of both fans and performers, so studies that focus on female fans would provide a different perspective on the genre and its underlying assumptions.

There are a number of possible studies that could explore the characteristics of the musicians themselves. For example, it would be informative to further examine the concept of the Christian metal musician as a missionary, and in particular the idea of the immersive calling and how that both is constructed through and serves to construct the non-professional, “off-stage” lives of the band members. How do they live out that

\textsuperscript{368} Straight edge is subculture that entered metal by way of hardcore punk. Straight edge adherants abstain from using tobacco, alcohol, and recreational drugs, with some following more strict practices of abstaining from caffeine, prescription drugs, and promiscuous sex. Some also eat strictly vegetarian or vegan diets. Straight edge bands tend to promote the lifestyle in their song lyrics. Despite the similarities between the lifestyle choices of straight edge bands and Christian bands, straight edge adherants tend to have negative views of Christian bands, claiming religion is as much of an impediment to sober-mindedness as alcohol or drug use.
calling, in practical terms, in their everyday lives? Additionally, many Christian metal musicians are bi-vocational,\textsuperscript{369} which has definite implications for the creation and promotion of the music.

It is also important to integrate Christian metal into the area of sacred music studies. Most forms of sacred music developed in the twentieth century were influenced by or developed out of a secular popular music genre, so the study of Christian metal would complement studies of Black gospel and Southern gospel, for example. Christian metal lyrics also bring a new set of imagery to the body of images used in sacred song throughout the centuries to express the tenets of the faith, and those new images should be examined and critiqued within the larger historical context of sacred imagery.

There are several research questions that are related to the changes in marketing strategies and dissemination of popular music since the 1980s as well. For instance, what role has Internet streaming services like Pandora, YouTube, Spotify, and Internet radio played in the spread of Christian metal? How has social media not only contributed to the spread of Christian metal, but also altered the relationships between bands and their fans? Since most mainstream Christian retailers stock a limited selection of Christian metal albums at best, how has the online retail market changed the ability of fans to obtain access to the music?

\textsuperscript{369} “Bi-vocational” is a term used in the life of the church to describe ministers who serve in a part-time or even volunteer capacity while relying on another job for financial support.
Final Thoughts

The present research was never intended to “prove” the legitimacy of Christian metal as a musical genre; it was simply an effort to demonstrate how these musicians who play metal music and proclaim adherence to the Christian faith often attempt to situate themselves simultaneously in both worlds. However, the fact that there is a question of legitimacy for many people means that the issue merits a brief discussion.

Many of the ideas on both sides of the Christian metal debate are based in the view that some forms of art are inextricably associated with a particular moral position. It is a perspective that dates at least to the writings of Plato and Aristotle, who both believed particular musical modes were inherently connected to particular states of mind. In the modern era, this view creates a peculiar irony surrounding the Christian metal scene: despite the contempt many within the Christian Church and general market metal scene feel toward each other, many share the same opinion that Christianity and metal music are not compatible because metal is inherently “evil.” What both sides often do not accept is the view that music, as a system for organizing sound, has no absolute morality. Leonard Cohen’s “secret chord” that is pleasing to God is a myth in the same way as Satan’s preference for the tritone is.\(^{370}\) Music has the capacity for inspiring an emotional response from the listener, but the nature of that response is far from universal, it is culturally-based and is within the control of the listener. Harold Best and David Huttar make this statement about the issue:

\(^{370}\) Leonard Cohen’s song “Hallelujah” begins with the line “They say there was a secret chord / That David played, and it pleased the Lord.” The interval of the tritone has historically been referred to as *diabolous in musica* (the devil in music)
[T]he fact that music, among other created and cultural things, is purported by primitives and sophisticates alike to have power is more a matter of the dislocation of priorities than anything else. Ultimately the Judeo-Christian perspective maintains that human beings are interiorly wrong and that until they are right they will place the blame for their condition outside themselves. Hence, they will assume that created things or activities, as is often the case with music, have power over them and their activities.

In other words, assigning a moral character to a body of music is a way to absolve humans from any responsibility for individual thoughts and actions as well as to ignore the bigger issues surrounding the nature of humanity.

While it is the present author’s contention that music is morally neutral by nature, morality can be imposed on a body of music through extra-musical aspects such as lyrics, album art, and stage props. It is the content of these dimensions that gives music its moral character, not the sound of the music itself, and as demonstrated throughout this dissertation, it is the content of these extra-musical elements that delineates Christian metal from general market metal. The content that is frequently deemed evil or immoral in metal is largely absent from Christian metal; therefore listeners can make a distinction between the music and the message.

When one looks at the metal subculture, its breadth is undeniable. It is a cross-section of the larger society, spanning the six inhabited continents and including people

371 “Judeo-Christian” typically refers to values held in common between Judaism in Christianity; however, the belief “that human beings are interiorly wrong” is one of those shared values is a distinctly Christian belief and not one shared by Judaism.
of all races, ethnicities, ages, genders, sexual identities, levels of education, and countless religious and philosophical backgrounds. With all of this diversity, there is little reason to consider any viewpoint as falling outside the purview of metal.
Appendix A: Metal Subgenres

Metal is rooted in the heavy/psychedelic blues rock that became popular in England during the mid- to late-1960s. Each of the three bands generally regarded as foundational to the genre (sometimes called “proto-metal”) built on that blues foundation. Black Sabbath added a darkness to the sound through the use of unusual guitar chording and down-tuning. Deep Purple added a classical influence and the sound of Jon Lord’s Hammond organ to their blues rock base, giving it a fuller texture and a more symphonic sound. Led Zeppelin mixed Celtic folk influences with heavy blues, which introduced modal and non-traditional scales into the music. The bands that followed tended to eschew the blatant blues base and had a more homogenous approach for the music known as classic metal.

Classic metal

Classic metal, sometimes called “traditional metal,” generally refers to metal of the 1970s and early 1980s as epitomized by bands like Judas Priest, Iron Maiden, Manowar, and Scorpions. Classic metal bands moved away from the blues influence

373 Black Sabbath’s guitarist and principal writer Tommy Iommi lost the tips of his middle and ring fingers on his right hand (his fretting hand) in an industrial accident. In order to continue playing, Iommi made his own prosthetic fingertips out of plastic and used lighter and more flexible banjo strings instead of guitar strings. The downtuning was reportedly less about the sonic effect and more about releasing tension in the strings in order to make them easier to bend with the artificial fingertips.

374 Classic metal overlaps with the movement known as the New Wave of British Heavy Metal (NWOBHM), represented by bands like Iron Maiden, Saxon, (early) Venom, (early) Def Leppard, Môtorhead, and Witchfinder General. In fact, the influence of these
of hard rock and early metal by incorporating punk’s faster tempos and more raw production along with fast, virtuosic guitar solos, soaring vocals, and anthemic choruses. Many bands also adopted double lead guitar instrumentation instead of the standard lead and rhythm guitar approach of most rock bands with two guitarists. Lyric themes were quite diverse, even within the same band, including themes of sex, hedonism, war and violence, Satan and the occult, mysticism, fantasy, horror, and metal itself. Bands like Iron Maiden even mixed Biblical imagery into their lyrics, as in “Number of the Beast,” which draws from the book of Revelation. The black leather and studs “uniform” for metal bands also developed during this time. Classic metal thrived into the 1980s, when it began to decline, largely due to the diversification that began to occur.

Glam metal

Glam metal, sometimes referred to as hair metal or pop metal, was one of the subgenres that developed in the early 1980s around Los Angeles’ Sunset Strip. Glam metal’s defining feature is the change in image of the bands. Bands replaced or supplemented the overly masculine, studded leather look of heavy metal with a more

NWOBHM bands, particularly Iron Maiden, was so significant that the NWOBHM is almost synonymous with classic metal. It is, however, only a subset of classic metal, which encompasses bands from across Europe and the United States. Many of these bands credited Black Sabbath—which was overall less blues-oriented than either Deep Purple or Led Zeppelin—as the originator of heavy metal. In this instrumentation, the guitarists tend to play a harmonized version of the guitar melody and alternate solos in a “dueling guitars” manner.
androgynous look featuring makeup, teased hair, and tight-fitting denim and spandex.\textsuperscript{377}

In the late 1980s, glam metal heavyweights Mötley Crüe, Poison, and Stryper received heavy airplay on MTV. Musically, glam metal began to adopt conventions of more commercial rock and pop music, most notably the power ballad.\textsuperscript{378} Lyrics of glam metal songs tended toward themes of “sex, drugs, and rock ‘n roll.” In fact, the hedonistic lifestyle that came to be associated with many of these bands is one of the factors credited for the subgenre’s collapse in the early 1990s.

\textit{Thrash}

The other main subgenre that developed in the 1980s was speed metal, usually called thrash.\textsuperscript{379} Thrash continues the fusion of heavy metal and hardcore punk by featuring extremely fast tempos and aggressive playing. Some bands continue the dueling guitars of the NWOBHM with intricate interplay between the instruments and changing tempos, while others focus on low-register riffs, fast, chromatic single-guitar

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{377} In an ironic twist, the all-female band Vixen was urged by their management to exaggerate their make up because they did not look feminine enough when compared with their male contemporaries.

\textsuperscript{378} Power ballads are slower-tempo songs, in the vein of a pop ballad, that build to a louder, emotive chorus. Many power ballads are love songs, such as Whitesnake’s “Is This Love?” Foreigner’s “I Want to Know What Love Is,” and Stryper’s “Honestly,” but other themes are common as well.

\textsuperscript{379} There are groups of fans who insist there is a difference between speed metal and thrash, saying that speed metal is more technical and rhythmically intricate. However, there does not seem to be a clear-cut differentiation between the two, and the same bands are used to illustrate both, so the position of this author is that at one time there may have been a distinction, the two subgenres quickly merged into one, so speed metal and thrash are now two terms for the same subgenre. Also, fans speak of “thrash,” not “thrash metal”.
\end{flushleft}
solos, and straight-ahead aggression based around the use of two bass drums or a double bass drum pedal. Guitarists also use tremolo picking, downpicking, and palm mutes to create the thrash sound. Thrash was the “true metal fan’s” alternative to the glitz and “pop-ness” of glam metal. Everything about thrash seemed designed to reject everything that was glam metal. Bands left behind their spandex, teased hair, and make up, opting instead for a denim-and-leather look similar to early classic metal. Thrash lyrics tend toward social commentary, addressing issues of isolation, alienation, and injustice while tackling issues like war, abortion, religion, and murder. Sometimes these themes are addressed with a sense of irony or sarcasm, but that is far from the norm. NWOBHM band Mötorhead is generally considered the first thrash band, but in terms of popularity, they are eclipsed by the American bands Anthrax, Slayer, Megadeth, and Metallica.

**Power metal**

Power metal lies in the gap between classic metal and thrash. Musically, power metal features rapid guitar and bass playing over a relatively slow harmonic rhythm, usually changing chords no more than once per measure. It is also one of the few metal subgenres that makes frequent use of major keys and progressions. Power metal

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380 Tremolo picking refers to the rapid rearticulation of a single pitch to avoid the decay of a sustained note. It is the same technique found in bluegrass mandolin playing. Downpicking means playing the strings with only downward strokes. It gives the guitar a weightier, more aggressive sound than an alternate picking style. Palm muting involves using the side or heel of the picking hand to dampen the strings near the bridge to alter the sound. In thrash, it is often used by rhythm guitarists to create the characteristic chugging sound.

381 Collectively these American bands are known as “the Big Four.”
drummers typically play a steady sixteenth-note pattern on a double bass drum (or double pedal) while playing snare accents on the beats.\textsuperscript{382} Power metal vocalists tend to sing in a dramatic, high-pitched, “clean” style reminiscent of classic metal vocalists like Rob Halford (Judas Priest) and Ronnie James Dio (Rainbow, Dio, Black Sabbath). Some do employ the growls and screams of extreme metal, but that is not the standard. Lyric themes tend toward fantasy and mythology as well as what some consider “warrior concerns” – camaraderie, war, and death. Anti-religious and political themes are extremely rare in power metal. Prominent power metal bands include Manowar, Savatage, Iced Earth, Helloween, Jag Panzer, Stratovarius, and DragonForce.\textsuperscript{383}

\textit{Extreme metal}

Thrash is also the gateway into the world of “extreme” metal. Extreme metal is an umbrella term that does not define a single genre or subgenre, but covers a variety of styles that lie outside mainstream commercial aesthetics. Sociologist Keith Kahn-Harris describes extreme metal as being tied to the concept of social transgression.\textsuperscript{384} All aspects of extreme metal, according to Kahn-Harris, are “excessive, testing and breaking boundaries, invoking the joys and terrors of formless oblivion within the collective, while

\textsuperscript{382} Some power metal drummers also play in a thrash style.  
\textsuperscript{383} Savatage went on hiatus in 2002 so the band could focus on their more commercially successful side project, the Trans-Siberian Orchestra. Manowar infamously appears on most of its album covers carrying weapons and wearing barbarian attire, such as leather or fur loincloths and helmets.  
\textsuperscript{384} Kahn-Harris, \textit{Extreme Metal: Music and Culture on the Edge}: 29.
simultaneously bolstering feelings of individual control and potency.”

The music pushes the extremes of tempo, averaging between 150 and 250 beats per minute (bpm) with grindcore and black metal approaching 300 bpm, while doom and stoner metal are often around 70 or 80 bpm. Extreme metal also tends to deviate from standard verse-chorus form. Vocals are often harsh and abrasive, sometimes taking on an inhuman sound. Lyrics are darker and speak more graphically about more sensational topics. Much of the visual imagery of extreme metal is also designed to offend the sensibilities of the mainstream. Much of the staging and costuming is derived from horror and “slasher” films, prominently featuring Satanic, occultic, and pagan imagery. Kahn-Harris also points out that Nazism, as “the pre-eminent transgressive symbol of the modern world,” is another common source of imagery. The most common subgenres found under the extreme metal label include death metal, grindcore, black metal, doom metal, and stoner metal.

Death metal

Death metal developed in the mid- to late-1980s by elevating the extremity of thrash bands like Venom and Slayer to another level. The use of chromatic chord progressions; complex guitar and drum work; and abrupt changes of meter, key, and tempo creates a more chaotic musical structure. The guitar sound is characteristically

385 Kahn-Harris, Extreme Metal: Music and Culture on the Edge: 30.
386 Kahn-Harris, Extreme Metal: Music and Culture on the Edge: 41.
387 Perhaps more than other metal subgenres, extreme metal bands can be difficult to categorize because of the amount of similarity between these styles and the amount of cross-influence that exists.
dark and distorted, in part because it is downtuned as much as a fifth.\textsuperscript{388} The vocals are guttural and growled more than they are sung, often making them incomprehensible to unconditioned listeners.\textsuperscript{389} The characteristic drum style of death metal is a technique known as “blast beats.” Blast beats involve a synchronized pattern for bass drum, snare drum, and cymbal (either ride or high-hat) played at a rapid tempo. The result is more a sonic representation of violence than rhythmic support.

This violence is mirrored in the standard death metal lyric themes. Death metal often celebrates extreme acts of violence, much in the way “slasher” films do, by presenting these acts—mutilation, rape, torture, murder, necrophilia, abortion—in graphic terms. The graphic treatment of these topics in the lyrics is also reflected on the album cover art, which often features grotesque and gory images designed to shock. Possessed and the appropriately-named Death are usually cited as the first death metal bands. Other bands include Morbid Angel, Atheist, Obituary, and Cannibal Corpse.

In the 1990s, the death metal subgenre splintered as well. Melodic death metal, or “melodeath” is a classic/death metal hybrid that combines the melody-oriented guitar playing of classic metal with the growled vocals and blast beats of death metal, as found in the work of In Flames, Dark Tranquility, and At the Gates.\textsuperscript{390} Technical or progressive

\textsuperscript{388} Standard guitar tuning (from the low to high string) is EADGBE. Downtuning means tuning the strings lower, usually defined by the pitch to which the lowest string is tuned. So the common metal practice of downtuning to D makes the open strings DGCFAD. Death metal guitarists frequently downtune to B or even A.

\textsuperscript{389} The vocal style is often called “Cookie Monster” vocals because of their resemblance to the voice of the \textit{Sesame Street} character.

\textsuperscript{390} Melodic death metal is also called Gothenburg metal because these pioneering bands originated in Gothenburg, Sweden.
death metal fuses elements of art music and jazz with death metal aesthetics. Examples include Opeth, Sadist, and Death’s later recordings. Symphonic death metal bands, such as Nightfall and Eternal Tears of Sorrow, incorporate keyboards to thicken the texture of the music and impart a more symphonic character.

**Black metal**

Black metal finds its roots in thrash bands Venom, Slayer, Bathory, and Celtic Frost. While there are many similarities between black metal and death metal – both use extremely fast tempos, tremolo picking, blast beats, and inhuman-sounding vocals – there are also clear distinctions between the two subgenres. The most significant difference is that black metal preferences higher pitches and tunings, whereas death metal emphasizes lower ones. The vocal style tends toward high-pitched shrieks and screams over the low growls of death metal. Lyrics address many of the same themes as death metal, but the primary themes from the earliest black metal feature an opposition to organized religion, particularly Christianity. To that end, many lyrics promote paganism, atheism, and Satanism.\(^{391}\) Another characteristic of many black metal bands is the adoption of pseudonyms by the musicians. This often corresponds to the wearing of theatrical makeup known as “corpse paint.”\(^{392}\)

\(^{391}\) Satanism in black metal can be an expression, authentic or not, of true Satan worship, but more recently has taken the form expressed in the Church of Satan, where Satan is not worshiped as a supernatural being, but rather is used as a representation of nine basic principles that exalt the individual above all else.

\(^{392}\) Corpse paint (sometimes corpse paint) is makeup applied to resemble the appearance of a corpse. Typically it involves using white on the face (and sometimes all exposed

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Black metal is typically considered a two-wave movement. The first wave started in the early 1980s and consisted mainly of thrash and classic metal bands that adopted anti-Christian or satanic themes in their lyrics, such as Venom, Slayer, Bathory, Celtic Frost, and Mercyful Fate. In fact the subgenre’s name is attributed to Venom’s second album, *Black Metal*, because it was the first album to focus on anti-Christian and satanic imagery. Although early black metal was more of an ideological genre than a musical one, some common musical characteristics began to emerge. *Black Metal* set the sonic standard for the subgenre through its low-quality production. Bathory’s lead singer, Quorthon (Thomas Forsberg) provided the characteristic shrieking vocal sound.

The second wave started in Norway in the early 1990s with bands such as Mayhem, Burzum, Immortal, and Emperor. This new movement, known as Norwegian black metal, established itself as a musical genre as well as an ideological one. It broadened the lyric themes of earlier black metal to include nature (particularly associated with winter), philosophy, folklore, and fantasy. Bands that continue the anti-Christian themes of earlier black metal tend to add a more aggressive, almost militant edge. This anti-Christian sentiment culminated in a series of arson attacks against skin) and black to create hollowing of the eyes, lines around the mouth, and other shadowing. Sometimes black is also used to “inscribe” mystical symbols, and some performers add theatrical blood or small amounts of red makeup. It is uncertain where this practice began, although King Diamond of the black metal band Mercyful Fate was wearing corpse paint as early as 1978 and Brazilian band Sarcófago was using it on their 1987 album *I.N.R.I.* While not as common, some death metal bands also wear corpse paint.

The added extremity of Norwegian black metal extended to interactions between the musicians themselves. In 1993, Varg Vikernes, founder of the one-man project Burzum and then bassist for the band Mayhem (performing as “Count Grishnackh”) fatally
Christian churches between 1992 and 1996 and is in part attributed to a sense of nationalism that blames the introduction of Christianity for forcing traditional Norse religion aside and making Norwegian culture less distinct. Musically, Norwegian black metal is quite similar to first-wave black metal, although the quality of the production is often higher for Norwegian black metal. There are also some Norwegian black metal bands that use keyboards to give the music more ambience and a thicker texture. While the style itself is called “Norwegian,” it has spread through Scandinavia (Marduk, Dark Funeral, Impaled Nazarene), into the rest of Europe (Behemoth, Vlad Tepes), and to the United States (Black Funeral, Judas Iscariot).

Like death metal, black metal has fragmented into its own set of subgenres. Symphonic black metal incorporates orchestral instruments; “clean,” sometimes operatic vocals; and choirs. Many Norwegian black metalists cite German composer Richard Wagner as an influence, and that is reflected in symphonic black metal. Another outgrowth of the Norwegian movement is Viking metal. Viking metal relies heavily on Norse folk music and mythology. Performers often dress as Viking warriors and carry swords and battle axes on stage and in promotional photos. Bathory is credited with developing this particular variety. A black metal/death metal hybrid known as blackened death metal also exists, blending the Satanic and occultic imagery of black metal with the musical sound of death metal.

stabbed the band’s guitarist (Euronymous). He served sixteen years in prison for the murder as well as four counts of arson for burning historic churches (including the one that appears on the cover of Burzum’s 1992 EP *Aske*).
Grindcore

Grindcore developed out of a fusion of death metal, industrial music, and hardcore punk in the work of British band Napalm Death. Like death metal, grindcore uses downtuned guitars and blast beats, but the frenetic playing of hardcore punk and the “wall of sound” approach of industrial music take precedent over the tremolo picked riffs. A distinctive feature of grindcore is the brevity of the songs, particularly the “microsong,” a song lasting only a few seconds. Even longer grindcore songs are often less than two minutes. Grindcore lyrics tend to address social and political issues using the provocative language of death metal. Prominent grindcore bands include Napalm Death, Carcass, Pig Destroyer, and Terrorizer.

Grindcore’s subdivisions are based mainly on lyric themes, although others are musically-based. For instance, goregrind lyrics are graphically violent and gory, like a “slasher” movie or a coroner’s report, and pornogrind lyrics deal with sex and fetishism. More music-based subdivisions include deathgrind, which combines the technical elements of death metal with the overall intensity of grindcore; noisegrind, which merges grindcore with the more dissonant, chaotic sound of noisecore; and electrogrind, which incorporates elements of electronica.

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394 Sonically, microsongs are more like emotional outbursts than musical expressions. Napalm Death’s “You Suffer” holds the Guinness World Record for shortest song ever recorded at one second.
Doom

Doom metal draws its inspiration from early Black Sabbath and seeks to create a feeling of dread and despair through its slow, plodding tempos, heavily distorted and downtuned guitar riffs, and pessimistic lyrics. Doom metal’s overall sound is thicker and heavier than most other forms of metal, due in part to the bass doubling the guitar riffs. The vocal style is quite diverse, ranging from Ozzy Osbourne-esque wailing to death metal growls and black metal screams. Lyrics focus on fear, depression, suffering, grief, and other negative emotions. Some incorporate religious imagery, though usually symbolically rather than making a faith statement. Prominent doom metal bands include Saint Vitus, Candlemass, Cathedral, and Trouble.

Doom metal has numerous subgenres that offer variations on the doom theme. Epic doom, exemplified by Candlemass, Solitude Aeternus, and Doomsword, incorporates the dramatic singing style and fantasy imagery from classic and power metal into doom’s soundscape. Stoner doom, sometimes called stoner metal, slows down even more and incorporates elements of psychedelic music, like fuzz, phase, and flange guitar effects and lyrics that often describe the experience of drug use. Kyuss, Sleep, and Acid King are examples of stoner metal. Funeral doom, pioneered by the Norwegian band Funeral, blends elements of dark ambient music with doom metal by using heavily distorted guitars along with synthesizers to create a dark, despairing atmosphere. Vocals are secondary and are typically chants or growls. Drone doom features long songs based around sustained chords played with heavy reverb, as found in the music of Earth and Sunn O. Vocals, if any, are typically growls or screams. Death doom blends the
atmosphere of doom metal with the aggressiveness of death metal, as in the music of Goatlord and Autopsy.

**Metalcore**

There has been some level of crossover between metal and hardcore punk since the 1980s when punk bands like Black Flag, Bad Brains, and The Misfits began attracting metal fans to their concerts and thrash bands like Slayer, Anthrax, and Metallica began drawing punk fans to theirs. Those punk bands, along with The Cro-Mags and Agnostic Front, began incorporating elements of metal, like guitar solos and a greater emphasis on riffs, into their music to create “crossover thrash”. This evolved into metalcore in the early 1990s.

Metalcore blends the intensity of hardcore/post-hardcore punk and death metal with a greater sensitivity to melody. It maintains many of the musical characteristics of melodic death metal but is open to a wider range of lyric themes. Metalcore bands tend to favor screamed or growled vocals with “clean” vocals during the bridge or

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395 Mötorhead is always mentioned as one of the seminal NWOBHM bands, although they considered themselves as a punk band.
396 Metalcore is at the front of the movement known as the New Wave of American Heavy Metal (NWOAHM), an obvious reference to the NWOBHM. The NWOAHM is credited with bringing metal back from the extremes and toward the mainstream. Nu metal is another prominent subgenre that falls under this label.
397 Post-hardcore goes beyond the hardcore punk aesthetic of louder and faster by introducing rhythmic precision and complexity along with a greater range of vocal styles from screams to melodic crooning.
398 One related movement that developed out of the hardcore scene is “straight edge,” which advocates abstinence from drugs, alcohol, tobacco and promiscuous sex. Some more extreme adherents are vegetarians (or vegans) and abstain from caffeine and prescription drug use as well.
chorus. Prominent metalcore bands include Killswitch Engage, All That Remains, Trivium, As I Lay Dying, and The Devil Wears Prada. 399

Progressive metal

Progressive metal is the metal wing of progressive rock, featuring complex formal structures, irregular time signatures, and intricate instrumental interplay. Many of these bands also show an affinity for jazz and classical. Noteworthy progressive metal bands include Queensrÿche, Fates Warning, Dream Theater, Pain of Salvation, and Symphony X.

Symphonic metal

Symphonic metal draws greatly from power metal and classical music, particularly nineteenth-century opera, to create a dramatic metal sound. 400 It tends to incorporate keyboards and acoustic guitars to a greater degree than other metal subgenres, and most often feature a female lead (or co-lead) vocalist. Many bands record with an orchestra, and some even tour with one. Lyric themes cover a wide range of subjects, but most are most often rooted in fantasy and mythology—common themes in

399 As I Lay Dying and The Devil Wears Prada are Christian bands that are highly respected by general market metalcore bands and fans. 400 The symphonic metal label is not used consistently, and although it is usually applied to bands that use this approach for their musical output overall, the label is also used to describe songs by bands in other subgenres that follow this symphonic model. One of the earliest uses of “symphonic metal” was to describe the song “Dies Irae” from Christian thrash band Believer’s Sanity Obscure in 1990, which begins with almost three minutes of synthesizer, string orchestra, and a soprano vocalist. The remainder of the song integrates the metal instrumentation with the orchestra.
both power metal and opera. Extended-length songs and concept albums are also common among symphonic metal bands. Prominent symphonic metal bands include Nightwish, After Forever, Within Temptation, Therion, and Epica.

*Nu metal*

Nu metal is an umbrella term that represents the fusion of metal with a wide variety of other styles, most notably funk, grunge, industrial, and hip-hop. With all of those influences, it is difficult to specify exactly what its defining characteristics are, but there are some elements that seem more prominent than others, such as a stronger reliance on riffs and ostinato and an emphasis on the “groove” above virtuosity. Many hip-hop influenced nu metal bands incorporate a DJ and turntables into their sonic texture. Prominent nu metal bands include Korn, Slipknot, and Godsmack.
Appendix B: Selected Discography

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401 Antestor’s *The Defeat of Satan* is a compilation of the band’s first two demos recorded in 1991 and 1993.
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Welterwerk  2006  Endtime Productions
Stratum  2012  Endtime Productions
East West
East West  1998  Backbone Records
The Light in Guinevere’s Garden  2001  Floodgate Records
Hope in Anguish
Eternal Decision
Eternal Decision  1996  Godfather
Ghost in the Machine  1999  Godfather
E.D. III  2002  Godfather
Eternal Ryte
World Requiem  1990  Pure Metal Records
Frost Like Ashes
Pure as the Blood Covered  2003  Sounds of the Dead
Snow  2005  Psycho Acoustix
Tophet  2008  Sullen Records
Born to Pieces
Guardian
First Watch  1989  Enigma Records
Fire and Love  1990  Pakaderm
Miracle Mile  1993  Pakaderm
Buzz  1995  Myrrh
Bottle Rocket  1997  Myrrh
The Yellow and Black Attack is Back  1998  G-Man
Almost Home  2013  independent
Haven
Your Dying Day  1990  R.E.X. Music
Age of Darkness  1991  R.E.X. Music
Haven  1995  Independent
Holy Soldier
Holy Soldier  1990  Myrrh
Last Train  1992  Myrrh
Promise Man  1995  Forefront
Horde
Hellig Usvart  1994  Nuclear Blast
Impending Doom
The Sin and Doom of Godless Men  2005  Independent
Nailed. Dead. Risen  2007  Facedown Records
The Serpent Servant  2009  Facedown Records
There Will Be Violence  2010  Facedown Records
Baptized in Filth  2012  E1 Entertainment
Jerusalem
Jerusalem  1980  Lion & Lamb
Volume 2  1981  Lion & Lamb

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402 *The Yellow and Black Attack is Back* is a re-recording of Stryper’s debut album by Guardian.
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Picket Fence Cartel 2009  Tooth and Nail Records
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Music to Raise the Dead 1974  Independent
Awaiting Your Reply 1978  Star Song
Rainbow’s End 1979  Star Song
Colours 1980  Light Records
Mommy Don’t Love Daddy Anymore 1981  Light Records
D.M.Z. 1982  Light Records
Live Bootleg 1984  Sparrow Records
Hostage 1984  Sparrow Records
Between Heaven ’n Hell 1985  Sparrow Records
Silence Screams 1988  Grrr Records
Innocent Blood 1989  Grrr Records
Civil Rites 1991  Grrr Records
Reach of Love 1993  Grrr Records
Lament 1995  Grrr Records

Resurrection Band
(Rez, Rez Band)

Saint

Warriors of the Son 1984403  Morada Records
Time’s End 1986  Pure Metal Records
Too Late for Living 1988  Pure Metal Records
The Perfect Life 1999  Armor
In the Battle 2004  Armor
The Mark 2006  Armor
Crime Scene Earth 2008  Armor
Hell Blade 2009  Retroactive Records
Desperate Night 2012  Armor

Saviour Machine

Saviour Machine I 1993  Intense Records
Saviour Machine II 1994  Intense Records
Legend I 1997  Massacre Records
Legend II 1998  Massacre Records
Legend III:I 2001  Massacre Records

Scarlet Red

Don’t Dance With Danger 1989  Pure Metal Records
Shout
It Won’t Be Long 1988  Frontline
In Your Face 1989  Frontline
Shout Back 1999  Z Records

Slechtvalk

Falconry 2000  Fear Dark Records
The War that Plagues the Lands 2002  Fear Dark Records
At the Dawn of War 2010  Whirlwind Records

403 Saint re-recorded this album and released it in 2004 as Warriors of the Son 2004.
Likewise, a new recording of Crime Scene Earth was released in 2010 as Crime Scene Earth 2.0, and The Mark was remastered and released in 2012 as The Revelation.
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<sup>404</sup> *Whitecross* was re-recorded and released as *1987* in 2004.

<sup>405</sup> *Peace Treaty* was re-recorded and released as *Fire It Up* in 2006 on Retroactive Records.
References


Spheeris, Penelope. *The Decline of Western Civilization Part II, the Metal Years.* 1988.
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