YOU'RE NOT SINGING ANY MORE....

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Category: Observations

I grew up attending a smallish Church where music was provided by a somewhat out of tune piano - but boy could we sing. There was something really inspiring about being in a group of thirty or forty people all singing loud enough to raise the roof. These days, I travel from church to church and though worship and music is much more professional these days than it was in my youth, I rarely encounter a Church where the congregation sing with gusto like we used to.

I sometimes wonder whether I'm imagining things. Is this just a case of me getting older and jaundiced? A recent blog post from the US seems to confirm that I'm not on my own.

> *To be sure, there are many churches that have congregations singing with enthusiasm, but generally speaking, our people do not sing like their parents and grandparents did. And even worse, the leaders of those churches donâ€™t seem to know it.*

The post which is written by a musician goes on to give some thoughtful reasons why people no longer seem to sing the way they did in an earlier generation. One of these is the rhythm of the music:

> *Often newer songs have rhythms that donâ€™t lend themselves to congregational singing and rather than struggle, the worshipper will just quit. They may love the song â€“ they just canâ€™t sing it â€“ especially if they barely know it. As they become more and more familiar with a song, they can handle harder rhythms. But we often donâ€™t give them a chance before moving on to a new song.*

The rest of the post is helpful and well worth a read. However there is one issue that the piece doesn't bring up and that is the lyrics to much contemporary worship music. It's not just the 'Jesus is my Girlfriend' type lyrics that I've moaned about in previous posts. A lot of contemporary worship music has lyrics that are banal, incomprehensible or theologically dubious. It's hard to really get into singing a song when you haven't a clue what it is supposed to mean.

Luther and Wesley believed that people learned theology from the songs they sung in Church. Which is one reason that they wrote such profound and Bible-soaked songs. Given the content of much current worship music, perhaps it is just as well that people aren't singing very much any more!

Disclaimer: I know that there are some churches which really sing well and I know that there are some excellent modern worship songs and songwriters. However, I don't believe that these specific examples change the general point of this post.