

A BIBLICAL APPROACH TO WORSHIP MUSIC - Part 1

*O sing unto the LORD a new song: sing unto the LORD, all the earth...
O worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness: fear before him, all the earth. Psa 96:1, 9*

Beauty is an attribute of God (Ezekiel 16:14; Ps 96:9). God expounded His attribute of beauty in the creation of the cosmos (Psa 19:1-3). In God's creation nothing was autonomous; not even the smallest bacteria. There was no secular-sacred dichotomy. God created angels and man with aesthetic senses to enjoy His beauty and to reproduce it in the arts and in music.

Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy? Job 38:4, 7

I. MUSIC AND WORSHIP

God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. Joh 4:24

A. Man is a Temple, uniquely created to worship God. (Gen 2:17; I Thes 5:23)

It is through *the human spirit* that man is enabled to worship God (Jn 4:24). At the Fall the spirit of man lost its destined place of rule and man became soul dominant (I Cor 2:14.) The unregenerate man and the carnal Christian attempt to worship God at the soul level (Jn 4:21, Jude 1:19; Col 2:23; Eph 3:14-19). In the new birth I received a new human spirit (Jn 3:6; Eze 36:26). My renewed spirit became the most holy place into which the Holy Spirit took up His residence. True worship is not worked up in the soul, with its mind, will and emotions, but flows from the Spirit (Jn 7:38; Eph 5:18, 19)

B. The First mention of Worship (Gen 22:5)

The first time the word *worship* occurs, we find Abraham offering up his beloved son on the altar. While there was no mention of music at this first *worship service*, there may well have been tears. Before we approach the subject of *Worship Music*, it would be good if we got on our knees before God and answer these heart questions:

Have I surrendered the dearest thing in my life to God? (Gen 22:5)

Have I surrendered my music to God? (Rom 12:1, 2)

Am I grieving the Holy Spirit with my media and my music? (Phil 4:8)

Am I worshipping God in my spirit, or am I trying to worship God in my soul? (Phil 3:3)

Do I know anything about the filling of the Holy Spirit? (Eph 5:18,19)

As a Christian, am I *carnal* or *spiritual*? (I Cor 3:1; Rom 7:14)

Am I in the right spiritual condition for the Father to seek worship from me? (Jn 4:23)

C. We are commanded to worship God in song. (Ps 96:1-3; Eph 5:18,19; Col 3:16)

Melody is that entity in music that is most akin to the renewed human spirit. Melody is an acceptable vehicle for spiritual worship (Eph 5:18,19).

II. THE MUSICAL TRINITY

God created music as a trinity of melody, harmony and rhythm, to reflect His own Triune Nature.¹ Like the Godhead, each member of the musical trinity is indwelt by the other two. No member can exist apart from the other two. No member is autonomous, or works independent of the other two. Although each member is co-equal, yet there is a line of authority within the members. Harmony does not draw attention to itself, but glorifies the melody. Rhythm does not dominate or act independently of melody² and harmony but lends its support to both.

A. Melody has inherent harmony dwelling within itself – *horizontal harmony*

C + F + A = F major Chord (This is Harmony in Melody)

The Lord is my Shep - herd I'll walk with Him al -
 way He leads be - side still wa - ters I'll walk with Him Al -
 way. Al - way al - way I'll walk with Him al -
 way. Al - way al - way I'll walk with Him al -
 way.

B. Melody has inherent rhythm dwelling within itself.

In a succession of long and short notes, the longer notes tend to sound stronger. Similarly, in any two successive notes, the higher will tend to sound stronger. Rests can sometimes act like negative accents.

Example of note length - longer is stronger

short-long short-long short-long

I serve a ris - en Sav - iour, He's in the world to -
day;

Example of Pitch – higher is stronger

Combo Duration Pitch Combo Duration Pitch

Re-deemed, how I love to pro-claim it! Re-deemed by

C. Harmony is inherently melodic – counterpoint³

Al- way, al- way I'll walk with Him al-
way. The Lord is my Shep- herd I'll walk with Him al-
way. He leads be- side still wat- ers I'll walk with Him al-
way.

D. Rhythm is produced by the combined dynamics of melody and harmony.⁴

“Every change in pitch or of harmony brings with it, broadly speaking a rhythmic accent.”⁵

III. THE MEASURE OF GOOD MUSIC

And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; (Eph 5: 18, 19)

A. God has put melody in the heart of all men. (...making melody in your heart... Eph 5:19b)

1. Little children all over the world reveal the same harmonic sense.

“Studies of the spontaneous chant of very young children.. show a preponderance of simple musical intervals, particularly 3rd, also octaves, perfect 5th and 4ths...

“Given the task of choosing, out of four given alternatives, a suitable end-note to an eight-bar phrase, the majority of seven year-old children will choose a note of harmonic stability. Particularly, if indicated, the tonic... This applies equally to children with and without musical instruction.”⁶

Little children do not naturally sing in the 22 micro-tones of Hindu music.

2. Melody is therefore a universal language.

"There are countless pentatonic melodies found geographically from China to Appalachia and historically from Gregorian chant to Debussy...

... in the absence of Western tonal harmony, quartal melodic patterning ... has spawned the bulk of melodic activity from the dawn of history and the four corners of the earth.”⁷

“ ... **musicality is the implicit grasp of the grammar of one musical language..**”⁸

B. The Bible is not silent about music (Eph 5:18,19)

God has placed melody *in the heart* of all men, so that the redeemed of every nation may praise Him with one voice (Rev 5:9). Melody is the test of all good music. In a simple melody reside the laws that govern harmony and rhythm. From this simple universal absolute we can build a Biblical philosophy of worship music that will glorify God.

C. The Essential Nature of Evil

For thou hast said in thine heart, ... I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. Isa 14:13b .. ye shall be as gods. (Gen 3:5)

From the twin fall of Lucifer and Adam, we discern that **the essential nature of evil is autonomy**. The Fall changed everything. Man’s body began to age as each successive generation of cells became more and more autonomous. The aesthetic sense in man, with its image-making faculty, was corrupted (Gen 6:5; Rom 1:21; Ez 8:8-12). The art of Gentile nations became more and more degraded as they went down the Romans one progression (Rom 1:21-25; Num 33:52).

D. Autonomy in music tends to chaos

There are intrinsic laws in the trinity of music. The laws of melody, like many fields of science, have been discovered and codified. When these laws are obeyed, music is made. When these laws are broken, music is marred. The rise and decline of serious art music illustrates this. Richard Wagner promoted the idea of “Aesthetic Autonomy”. He wanted “infinite melody” and “floating tonality.”⁹ Claude Debussy wanted music that was “untrammelled by rules.”¹⁰ The result was the haunting a-tonality of Stravinsky and Webern, and the chaotic “noise music” of John Cage. Cage literally mutilated a beautiful grand piano and used his chance music to draw people to Buddhism. The results of autonomous freedom are not neutral, but are powerful motivators to adopt the same world view that spawned them. Listen to the results of Aesthetic autonomy!

Audio Visual: Samples of serious art music from Bach to Cage.

E. The Problem of Rock Music

All the genres of Rock music have this one thing in common. Rock artificially stresses weak beats in the metrical framework of the music. Melody is the clock that syncs the time of even the simplest song. Melody tells us where the beats occur and where to start counting. The problem of Rock is not syncopation per se, but syncopation that threatens the whole melodic time frame. Syncopation is not wrong when it rises naturally out of and supports the melody of a song.¹¹ **The rhythm of rock does not arise naturally from the melody, nor is it subject to the controls of melody. It is forced onto the music from without and actually fights the natural melodic rhythm. Rock is therefore autonomous by nature.** Therefore it is not surprising that Rock, from its earliest beginnings in black African cultures, has been associated with the most blatant kind of autonomy, lawlessness and immorality.¹²

1. Commonly used rhythms:

Back Beat: Probably the most common Rock Rhythm.

4/4 Time | da - DA - da - DA | da - DA - da - DA |

Break Beat: Similar to the above, yet usually faster in tempo

4/4 Time | one - AND - two - AND - three - AND - four - AND |

Stopped Anapaestic Beat: Probably the most impacting on the human body

4/4 Time | da - da - DA - (stop) | da - da - DA - (stop) |

Other Synthetic beats: Any weak beat can become the target of an artificial stress.

2. Analysis of Hymn *In The Sweet Bye and Bye*

Melody tells us where the strong beats occur, what the metre and where the bar lines.

Audio: Unknown Group *In the Sweet Bye and Bye*

In the Chorus, find the rock beat marked (>) on the normally weak notes.

3. Questions about this song (Please circle)

Circle the beats that *the melody* determines are strong? | 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 |

What is the main way that *the melody* achieves strong beats? **a.** Duration or **b.** Pitch.

Circle the beats that have been artificially stressed? | 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 |

Which beats are autonomous and do not obey the melody? _____

The rock rhythm is autonomous and does not obey melody law. This explains why Rock music from its very beginnings in black African culture has been so destructive. Do you believe that Rock rhythms can be used in our Gospel music to worship God in the spirit?

END NOTES

¹ The Trinitarian nature of the universe reflects God's eternal power and Godhood (Rom 1:20). For further study consult Henry Morris Many Infallible Proofs (San Diego: CLP Publishers, 1980) p. 108ff

² Melody is not just the top line in the hymn book, but the whole melodic tapestry of a piece of music.

³ Counterpoint is the weaving together of tunes. When two or more tunes are woven together they not only have their own horizontal harmony, but they form vertical harmony with each other.

⁴ "Basically, music that is primarily melodic is more complicated in rhythm than harmonically based music; if, on the other hand, the rhythmic forces are dominant, both melodic and harmonic elements are subdued." The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians (London: The Macmillan Press, 1988) Vol XV p. 810

⁵ The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians (London: The Macmillan Press, 1988) Vol XV, p. 810

⁶ Ibid Vol XV. p. 410

⁷ Ibid Vol XII. p. 118-126

⁸ Ibid Vol XV. p. 410

⁹ Ibid Vol XII. p. 117-123

¹⁰ Ibid Vol V. p. 307-310

¹¹ John Makujina. Measuring the Music (Willow Creek PA: Old Paths Publications 2002) p.135, 149

John Makujina quotes from Kimberly and Lee Smith's book, *Oh, Be Careful Little Ears*. They say: 'The problem with rock is not syncopation per se, but a syncopated beat in dominance to the harmony and melody, which it usually overwhelms.'

"Kimberly and Lee Smith whose treatment of syncopation is one of the most nuanced and balanced of any CCM opponent, add that syncopation is misused (i.e. becomes unnatural) when it conflicts with the melody rather than complementing it. *Oh, Be Careful Little Ears*. p. 44-45, 66

¹² Ibid

"... Sociologists trace most forms of social dance in the United States during this century to the African-American community, which over time blended Anglo-Saxon motions with those from their native cultures. According to Hanna, 'Afro-Americans meshed the African style of loose, flexible torso, extending and flexing knees with an easy breathing quality, shuffling steps, and pelvic swings and thrusts. The erotic nature of these symbols, especially the pelvic thrust, is well documented in the fertility dances of African tribal cultures like the Ubakala of Nigeria: ..."

A BIBLICAL APPROACH TO WORSHIP MUSIC - Part 2

APOSTASY AND WORSHIP MUSIC

(Ex 32:1-28)

In 1975 my wife, Melanie, and I graduated from BBC Springfield Missouri, when the school was running a record enrolment of 3000 students. There was high optimism in those days as graduates went to the four corners of the globe as missionaries and pastors, to fulfil the great commission. We had the privilege of sitting under the teaching and influence of great men like Dr G. Beauchamp Vick. Dr Vick was both our College president and the Pastor of the great Detroit Baptist Temple with its 6000 in Sunday morning attendance and its great missionary program. While in College, we attended the High Street Baptist Church. Under the pastorates of Dr Bill Dowell and Dr. David Cavin this church had maintained a Sunday morning attendance of between 2000 and 3000. Chapel services at the college attracted BBF founders, like Dr John Rawlings, as speakers. Graduates of the school, who had gone before us were an inspiration. Men like Dr Greg Dixon, of the Indianapolis Baptist Temple and Dr Jerry Falwell of the Thomas Road Baptist Church were our heroes. In association with Sword of the Lord conferences, we heard men like Dr Jack Hyles, of First Baptist Church, Hammond Indiana, and Dr Lee Roberson of the great Highland Park Baptist Church and heartland of BIMBI. In more than 35 years of ministry we have not been back to the States, and did not keep up with the changes in the church scene. When I recently began to prepare these lessons, I was shocked at what I saw. What happened to Independent Baptist Churches like Thomas Road Baptist Church, Temple Baptist Detroit and Highland Park Baptist Church? The music tells some of the story.

Audio Visual: Thomas Road Baptist Church Music that was typical of early, middle and recent years.

Background: Lessons from the Golden Calf

Israel had been about three months in the Wilderness when they came to Mount Sinai. After the Red Sea Crossing three million people raised their voices in praise and worship to God for their deliverance. They had a high and holy view of God as they sang:

I will sing unto the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.” (Ex 15:1b)

Miriam led the women’s response in song and dance.

And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand: and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances. And Miriam answered them, Sing ye to the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea. (Ex 15:20, 21)

The whole celebration must have pleased the Lord, for in Revelation 15:3 we read,

And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb.

A few weeks later they came to Mount Sinai where they heard God speak the Ten Commandments. Forty days later, with the glory of God still radiant over the Mount, Israel fell into one of the worst states of apostasy in her entire history. Since this apostasy was celebrated with worship music, it is pertinent to our study. Please note the following:

I. THE CARNAL STATE OF THE PEOPLE

Hebrews 3 and 4 gives Scriptural warrant to see Israel's journey from Egypt to Canaan as a type of the Christian pilgrimage. Egypt is a type of the world. The Wilderness experience is a type of the carnal, babe in Christ. Canaan is the land of fruit and fight, which must be entered by faith. Sinai brings out the worst in a carnal Christian. Paul went through a similar experience. He confessed:

Rom 7:14 For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin.

Rom 7:8 but sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. (lusting)

Under Sinai, the carnal nature of these pilgrims was getting hot. It exploded on Aaron.

Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. (Ex 32:1b)

The carnal state of our churches today makes them very susceptible to CCM.

II. A LOW VIEW OF GOD

When the Israelites saw the golden calf they said:

These be thy gods (Elohim) O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation, and said, to morrow is a feast to the LORD. (Jehovah) (Ex 32:4,5)

A. The Israelites did not set out to abandon the one true God—They kept their creed.

B. They built a god after their own imagination - A. W. Tozer writes;

The essence of idolatry is the entertainment of thoughts about God that are unworthy of Him. It begins in the mind and may be present where no overt act of worship has taken place... Wrong ideas about God are not only the fountain from which the polluted waters of idolatry flow; they are themselves idolatrous. "Perverted notions about God soon rot the religion in which they appear.... So necessary to the Church is a lofty concept of God that when that concept in any measure declines, the Church with her worship and her moral standards declines along with it."¹³

C. They moulded a god after the prevailing spirit of their age.

Ex 32:4 And he ... fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf

Jamieson, Faucet and Brown state: "This idol seems to have been the god Apis, the chief deity of the Egyptians."

D. The modern praise and worship movement is alarmingly similar.

One morning while in BBC, I woke to my radio alarm. It was tuned to the college radio station. A soloist was singing to the hard sound of the electric guitar, "*I want to play lead guitar behind Jesus.*" With a few bars of music, this artist had painted a mental picture of my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, as a rock and roll celebrity. This is idolatry! John Makujina agrees. He states:

"... to much of the unbelieving world, Christ is advanced as a heavenly celebrity in search of earthly groupies – represented in their world by his apostles of entertainment, who in no-uncertain-terms are celebrities themselves."¹⁴

III. AN UNHOLY INTIMACY

When the people mustered at the foot of Sinai, God cordoned off his people with this warning: *whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death: (Ex 19: 12)*

A. The golden calf was an image of God with which they could be familiar.

B. The apostles affirm the high and holy nature of God

Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen. (I Ti 6:16)

Only in our Lord Jesus Christ can we approach the thrice Holy God. Even here, there is a need for soberness. The apostle John saw the Lord Jesus Christ in his glory and said:

Re 1:17 And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last:

C. The CCM worship movement is marked by unholy intimacy. A. W. Tozer saw it.

"Much of the singing in certain types of meetings has in it more of romance than it has of the Holy Ghost. Both words and music are designed to rouse the libidinous [lewd; full of lust]. Christ is courted with a familiarity that reveals a total ignorance of Who He is. It is not the reverent intimacy of the adoring saint but the impudent familiarity of the carnal lover."¹⁵

This pseudo-intimacy is heightened in CCM by the close proximity of the microphone to the lips. The amplification of the breathing gives the sensation of someone who is invading your personal space. In some cases the microphone seems to become a fetish of romantic intimacy.

Video Clip: Sunday Morning service at Northridge Church – formerly Temple Baptist, Detroit Michigan

IV. PERVERTED AESTHETICS.

Ex 32:17 And when Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said unto Moses, There is a noise of war in the camp.

18 And he said, It is not the voice of them that shout for mastery, neither is it the voice of them that cry for being overcome: but the noise of them that sing do I hear.

19 And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing: and Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands ...

The Aesthetic sense in man, with its image-making faculty was corrupted by the Fall. Gen 6:5, Rom 1:21. The Grace of God can sanctify and in some measure restore the aesthetic sense. Ex 28:2, Ps 90:17, Isa 61:3. The golden Calf incident demonstrated perverted aesthetics. Before Moses and Joshua could see their contemporary praise and worship service, they detected something wrong with the music. When they came to the brow of the mount, what they saw matched what they heard.

And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing: and Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount. Ex 32:19

When the modern praise and worship movement claims that music is neutral, they actually begin to pervert the Biblical doctrine of The Fall to accommodate this dogma. One of their proponents, Brad Davis states:

God created Jewish temple music, just as he did Gregorian chants, Genevan tunes, oratorios, string quartets, opera, jazz, swing, be-hop, Motown, rock, pop, funk, rap and who knows what's to come. He didn't create any music to be inherently bad music; and contrary to popular belief, no music is the Devil's music.¹⁶

This writer actually charges God with creating this whole polluted confusion. By this logic, almighty God could be charged with creating pornography!

V. MORAL SHAME

Ex 32:25 And when Moses saw that the people were naked; (for Aaron had made them naked unto their shame among their enemies:)

Idolatry always leads towards moral impurity and perversity. (Rom 1:23-24) The CCM movement is not renowned for its modesty. The history of the movement is littered with the moral casualties of celebrities like Amy Grant, the queen of CCM.¹⁷ Virtually everybody agrees that music exercises a profound affect on people's morals and character; everybody, that is, except the Christians. How can we expect the aphrodisiac music from heathen Africa, to lift the

morals of our people. It is so hard today for our young Christian people to live in this polluted world. They are saturated in dirty rock n' roll all week and they certainly do not need more of it Sunday morning at church! Moses' rebuke of Aaron could well be directed to some of the spiritual leaders in our movement:

Ex 32:21 And Moses said unto Aaron, What did this people unto thee, that thou hast brought so great a sin upon them?

CONCLUSION

What a change had taken place in God's people! Their high view of God changed. Their music changed, their dancing changed, their dress code changed and their morals changed. CCM always comes packaged with other compromises. The sad case of Thomas Road Baptist Church involved a whole raft of compromises; Dress Code, Bible versions, gender distinction, Baptist name removed from Liberty University, Ecclesiastical associations with Neo-evangelicals like Billy Graham, with Catholics and Charismatics, with CCM celebrities like Michael W. Smith and home-grown groups like DCTalk. Where did it all start? In the late 1970's and early 80's some of our preachers started to herald warnings about Jerry Falwell's music. Other preachers said, "Let's not divide over minor matters like music preference." Which group of preachers was right? We close this session with these sobering words from Dr Frank Garlock. In 2001, he stated,

"If a church starts using CCM it will eventually lose all other standards."¹⁸

END NOTES

¹³ A. W. Tozer, The Knowledge of the Holy (Kent: OM Publishing, 1990) pp 13-15

¹⁴ John Makujina, Measuring the Music (Willow Creek, PA: Old Paths Publications, 2002) p. 269

¹⁵ Dan Lucarini, Why I left the Contemporary Christian Music Movement (Auburn, MA: Evangelical Press 2002) p. 73

¹⁶ Ibid

¹⁷ David Cloud, Sound Christian Music Vs Contemporary Christian Music DVD

¹⁸ David Cloud, Contemporary Music Brings Great Changes To Churches, www.wayoflife.org viewed 31/8/2011