

A BIBLICAL PHILOSOPHY OF MUSIC

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OUTLINE

- I. Focus - Theo-centric
 - A. Defined
 - B. Theo-centric in Character
 - C. Theo-centric in Actuality
- II. Source
 - A. Biblical
 - 1. Doctrine
 - 2. Psalms
 - B. Spiritual
 - 1. Spiritual Fruit
 - 2. Practice because of position
 - C. Not of the World
 - 1. 1 John 2:15-17
 - 2. 2 Corinthians 6:14-18
 - 3. James 4:4
- III. Style
 - A. New Song for New Creature
 - B. No Stumbling block

The Bible is the sole authority for faith and practice in the life of a Christian, and as such must be the authority governing the music that Christians use in their homes and churches. A Biblical philosophy of music then must conform to what the Bible teaches about the **Focus, Source, and Style** of music.

Concerning its focus, music must be Theo-centric. This is clearly the pattern of the Word of God. From the “In the beginning God. . .,” of Genesis 1:1 to the “Even so come. . .,” of Revelation 20:20, the Bible has God as its focus. Theo-centric music brings honor and glory to God. This does not mean that all music must mention God’s name, or focus worship to him lyrically to be Theo-centric; but it does require that music reveal the Lord at a minimum, *in character*.

This conformation to God’s character is exemplified by the Book of Esther. Esther is a divinely inspired portion of scripture which does not mention God. It does however reveal God’s character and nature and dealings with men. It is this principle that allows for God’s approval of the great Classical works, and modern patriotic or social/pedagogic music. (Social/pedagogic music refers here to songs such as “Happy Birthday,” “The Alphabet Song,” and similar cultural songs and nursery rhymes.) These kinds of music, although not deemed “sacred,” do conform to the Bible in the areas of source and style and therefore are able to bring glory to God.

A pattern for Theo-centric music *in actuality* is evident in how the nation of Israel used music throughout the Old Testament. The following outline reveals this use:

I. The Worship of God

A. Levitical

1. Temple - 1 Chronicles 6:31-32; 2 Chronicles 7:6; 1 Chronicles. 15:16
2. Feast days - 2 Chronicles 30:21
3. Offerings - 2 Chronicles 23:18; 29:27-28

B. Personal

1. Spiritual comfort - 1 Samuel 16:16
2. Entreat God’s Help - Psalm 83
3. Praise - Psalm 28:7

C. Public

1. Coronation - king - 2 Chronicles 23:13
2. Celebration - victory - 1 Samuel 18:6
3. Dedication - walls - Nehemiah 12:27

II. The Witness of God

A. Expression of God's Character

1. Loving kindness and faithfulness - Psalm 92:1-3
2. Greatness and power - Psalm 66
3. Refuge and strength - Psalm 46:1

B. Education of God's People

1. Rehearse history - Psalm 18:1
2. Remembrance - Psalm 77:6
3. Future
 - a) Prophecy - 1 Chronicles 25:1-6
 - b) New Song - Psalm 33:3; 40:3; Isaiah 42:10; Revelation 14:3¹

The above pattern shows conformity to the Bible and the *character* of God and also maintains God himself as the *actual* central point of the music. Theo-centric music *in actuality* is also covered by the statement of Ephesians 5:19-20: "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

The word "psalms" refers to the music of the Book of Psalms; that which would be played and sung on a stringed instrument. "Hymns" refers to the emphasis of a song on praise and thanksgiving. Augustine defines a hymn as follows:

Do you know what a hymn is? It is singing to the praise of God. If you praise God and do not sing, you utter no hymn. If you sing and praise not God, you utter no hymn. If you praise anything which does not pertain to the praise of God, though in singing you praise, you utter no hymn.²

The words "spiritual songs" have the meaning of songs characterized by the Spirit of God rather than the musician's old nature.

Biblical music must not only have a right focus, it must have a right source. There are three primary areas to consider regarding the source of music. Is the source Biblical? Is it Spiritual? Is it Worldly? If the source is ungodly, the music is ungodly, and ungodly music cannot be Biblical music. It is in the area of source that compromises are potentially made in regard to "taped music" used in many churches. It could even be that the musicians on these "canned" recordings are heathen studio musicians who have no desire to please

¹ Shawn Trueman, "The Role of Music in the Nation of Israel," A Project for Ambassador Baptist College, 1999.

² Augustine, quoted in The Battle for Christian Music, p. 147.

God, yet they are incorporated into worship services regularly.

A source can be Biblical in that it may cover specific doctrinal issues of the Bible or quote specific passages. This recitation of God's Word honors and glorifies Him. The great old hymns manifest this truth wonderfully as they teach the person and doctrine of God. Bible lyrics alone won't make the source Biblical. Many heathens, and even the Devil himself have misused the Word of God in music, especially in this era of Contemporary Christian Music (CCM.)

There is room for [John Michael] Talbot's apostate [Catholic] theology in the doctrinally confused world of Contemporary Christian Music. The Devil is using the ecumenical thrust of CCM to break down the walls between truth and error toward the completion of the one-world apostate "church."³

Much could be said about the issue of CCM, its sources and styles. Some of the CCM issues will be discussed briefly later, but it is much too broad a topic to be dealt with extensively in this context. Mr. Lynch and Mr. Fisher cover CCM well and provide excellent bibliographic information.

The issue of a Spiritual source for Biblical music is presented by Ephesians 5:18.

18 And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;
(Ephesians 5:18, KJV).

The context following this command reveals that a result of the control of the Spirit of God in a person's life is Biblical music.

19 Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;
20 Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;
(Ephesians 5:19-20, KJV).

The control of the Spirit is essential in the life of the person who is to be the source of Biblical music. It is precisely this control that separates un-Biblical music with good lyrics from Biblical music having the same lyrics. The basic outline of the book of Ephesians shows the Christian's position (Chs. 1-3,) then his practice (Chs. 4-6.) This would imply that only a regenerated person can be controlled by the Spirit and therefore produce

³ David W. Cloud, "Contemporary Christian Music and Rome." O Timothy Vol. 16, Is. 1, 1999: 3

Biblical music.

Not only is the source of Biblical music to be the Word of God and the Spirit of God, but it is *not* to be “of this world.” The world system which has an agenda to appeal to our flesh, eyes, and pride, has music designed to do just that. The music of the world, cannot be the music of God.

15 Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

(1 John 2:15-16, KJV).

This music is coming into the Body of Christ via television, radio, movies, and CCM. When the Church makes the world’s music a source for her music, she violates principles of separation clearly stated in the Word.

14 Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?

15 And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?

16 And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

(2 Corinthians 6:14-16, KJV).

By utilizing the world’s music, the Church has forced the power and presence of God to depart. The use of unconverted musicians and worldly methods of promotion has turned what had the potential to honor God into something which the Lord despises.

4 Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.

(James 4:4, KJV).

Music from worldly, unspiritual, un-Biblical sources is clearly un-Biblical, carnal music.

The final area in examining Biblical music and certainly the most controversial in the Church today is the area of musical style. Ken Lynch gives this list of characteristics of good [classical, for example] music.

1. Volume Changes
2. Tempo Changes
3. Rhythmic Changes
4. Clear Melody
5. Changing Harmonies
6. Modulation (Key Changes)
7. Variety of Development

8. Organization
9. Emphasis on the Development of Melody
10. Rhythm Emphasis on the Down Beat
11. Variations in Intensity⁴

When combined, these characteristics form a style of music that is not of the world's system and that conforms to principles of scripture found in Ephesians, Colossians, and 1 Corinthians.

Biblical music should reflect a "new song" for a "new creature."

17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

(2 Corinthians 5:17, KJV).

3 And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth.

(Revelation 14:3, KJV).

The music of God's people should be totally different from the music they had before conversion. It should not be similar to the Rock and Roll or the Country Western of the lost man. It should not be like the Rap or Jazz of the Child of the Devil. It must be the Spiritual music of Ephesians and Colossians done decently and in order. When God's people listen to music which is styled after the world's music they are no longer avoiding all appearance of evil and are becoming stumbling blocks to both the unconverted and the newly saved.

13 Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way.

(Romans 14:13, KJV).

Biblical music must be Theo-centric, Bible based, Holy Spirit controlled, and distinct from the sources and styles of the unconverted world. It must not be qualified by the question, "Do I like it?," but by the question, "Is it right?"

⁴ Ken Lynch, "Gospel Music: Blessing or Blight?" 1990. tape 1.

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