

# In Defense of Contemporary Christian Music!

By Ken Rich

## The Controversy

I recently had a friend (and fellow Christian musician) tell me he will not use drums in his music. His music Ministry was just getting started when he was *hamstrung* by listening to Brian S. Neumann (author of From Rock 'n' Roll to Rock of Ages). As a consequence, he will never reach the people he could have for the Lord.

This is tragic because his lyrics are Biblical and his voice and talents could have given him mass appeal. He is one of the best performers and song writers I have ever heard and could have had a huge influence outside of Christian circles. Perhaps even putting Biblical messages on mainstream charts.

He left the secular music scene some time ago, and quietly wrote enough Christian songs for 5 or 6 albums. I helped him set-up a home studio, and the tracks he was working on impressed me more than I can adequately describe. I believed that he would become one of the most influential artists to hit the Christian music scene in decades.

Now his music will never become popular and few, if any, souls will be won. Thanks to Neumann, Walter Veith and similar influences, he does a watered down version of his former style. It is bereft of passion, with no rhythm section, and a just a few *worthy* instruments.

Instead of reaching out to the masses with a Gospel message riding on the popular folk music he can do so well, he is reduced to *sacred* music. He has eliminated the possibility that the *holier than thou* will be offended by his work, but will anyone but the most conservative Christians listen to it? In effect, he has been limited to *preaching to the choir*, instead of *reaching out to the lost*. I fail to see how that wins souls.

I have met people, read books, and heard presentations, espousing the idea that drums and certain other instruments should not be used in Christian music. Some people feel that a 4/4 time signature is *of the devil*. Can a musical instrument like a drum, or a musical form like a certain rhythm be evil, in and of itself? What if the beat *reputedly* originated in Africa where Voodoo was prevalent?

Some people feel that notes played on a violin are heavenly, but if you play the same notes on an electric guitar they are evil. For some, the guitar is acceptable as long as it's not amplified. By that logic, preachers who amplify their voices must also be evil. In fact, their microphones and PA systems are identical in function to those used by secular rock musicians.

I can understand placing limitations on the use of *extreme* styles on both ends of the spectrum. Hard core, head thrashing, screaming rock styles, are inappropriate for *communal* worship.

By the same token, dull, boring, traditional and classical styles, are abhorred by numerous modern day Church goers. Many people would rather not come to Church if they are forced to suffer through them, especially the younger generation. Despite the protests of the youth, many of the older generation equate somber to reverent, and staunchly defend their traditional hymns.

There are people who believe that any appeal to physical movement, by rhythm, is intrinsically evil

(Gnostic heresy). Those who support dance are quick to point to their numerous proof texts, to refute them. Some see the lack of evidence of instrumental accompaniment in the New Testament as a reason to conclude that only singing should be allowed. All of these groups have proof texts, logical arguments, and historical evidence to back up their claims - so who is right?

I do not claim to have any special knowledge or discernment in these matters – just common sense, a music background, and a God fearing heart. The fallacy of *argumentum ad verecundiam*, whereby an argument uses the statements of a highly respected individual to secure acceptance of a conclusion, is one of the scourges of the information age. Do not believe what I say, simply because I provide quotes from respected sources. To be totally transparent from the outset, allow me to outline my approach.

I will liberally quote from the thoughts of others, *The man who never reads will never be read; he who never quotes will never be quoted. He who will not use the thoughts of other men's brains, proves that he has no brains of his own...* C.H. Spurgeon (Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit, Vol. 9, 1863, sermon #542, p. 668)

To get a clear picture, we must *stand on the shoulders of giants* as Sir Isaac Newton did, but to make sense of that lofty view - we must acknowledge that God hath *chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise* (Cor. I 27, 28). In the temple the learned Pharisees were vexed but not the children. *...And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?* (Matthew 21:16)

Therefore, I will *stand on the shoulders of giants* if it allows me to see further, but I will also take into account the *foolish things* (which often trip giants). I will explore the opinions of *learned men* while not forgetting that *knowledge puffs up* (1 Corinthians 8:1), and intellectualism can become an idol that blinds us to the truth.

## **New Testament Worship**

I think it would be wise, to first establish if the Bible allows for instrumental accompaniment at all, before entering a discussion about which instruments are sanctioned for use.

You may be surprised to learn there are roughly 2 million Christians (by some estimates), mostly from the Restoration Movement (also known historically as the Stone-Campbell Movement) who argue for plain chant alone. Their belief stems from the lack of evidence of musical accompaniment in the New Testament.

As I will show later, plain chant in no way guarantees true worship, as pagans also practice it. Also, music is not the focus of the Bible, so we shouldn't expect it to be mentioned often.

Nevertheless, it is true that early Christians did practice plain chant, and there are only a few references to instruments in the New Testament. However, rather than as a rejection of everything Old Testament as legalism and inferior, as some try to argue (heresy of Marcion – Frend, Rise, 214), there were other reasons for the development of plain chant.

The early Church was persecuted and carrying conspicuous instruments to use in loud meetings was not a wise course of action. There is great evidence that plain chant developed out of plain necessity.

*The early Christians were organized in congregations vulnerable to persecution in a mainly non Christian world. As a result their music was less conspicuous and less for the masses and loud as Greek stadiums music and the Jerusalem Temple music.* Guy Shaked M.A.

*Another possibility is that the early Christians were compelled to meet secretly and could not use instruments in their hushed prayer meetings for fear of being detected by their adversaries. The Philosopher and Music, Julius Portnoy*

*I believe based upon my own examination that it was because the church was under intense persecution from its very beginning. It would be very dangerous to play instruments that would bring attention to the area you worshiped. Singing hymns silently together would be safer and I think that is the way it was done. But instead of it just being the practice because of persecution, some fathers took it upon themselves to make it the practice because of conviction. I believe these early church fathers while sincere, were wrong to draw such conclusions the New Testament never does. The error of the early fathers in this area of music (as well as many other errors) stayed in and continues to stay in many churches to this day. Larry Harriman*

The Jews and Christians had in common the desire to avoid the heathenism of the Greek style of music and outdoor stadium culture. It was similar to the fear of secular music and changing styles that exists today. In reality, this mentality is ancient but where does it come from - Bible principles, or something else?

*Plato distrusted the power of music over human emotions a power which he considered comparable to that of sorcery. The Philosopher and Music, Julius Portnoy;The Humanities Press: NY; 1954, p.19)*

*During the first two centuries of Christianity, the Patristics displayed the same mistrust of musical instruments or musical accompaniments in religious ceremonies as the Rabbis had. Clement of Alexandria (c. 150-220) points out that even “The flute belongs to those superstitious men who run to idolatry. Plato had warned against the orgiastic nature of this instrument (pipes). (Ibid. p.31)*

*(Origen wrote to Gregory Thaumaturgus) I would wish that you would **take from Greek philosophy that which has the capacity, as it were, to become encyclical and propaedeutic studies for Christianity**, and whatever of geometry and astronomy might be useful in the interpretation of the Holy Scriptures, so that just as the children of the philosophers speak of geometry and **music**, grammar, rhetoric, and astronomy as being ancillary to philosophy, we too may say this of philosophy itself in relation to Christianity. Letter to Gregory I; PG XI, 88 Music in Early Christian Literature, James McKinnon, Cambridge University Press, New York, NY*

*Unlike the apostolic fathers who were generally simple, uncultivated men, the Ante-Nicene Fathers from 150-325AD included the first great Christian intellectuals who sought a synthesis between biblical truth and the best of classical wisdom. Employing the rigorous intellectual tools of Greek philosophy in their reflection on the mysteries of the faith... Dr. Marcellino D’Ambrosio*

I would like to point out something that is apparently missed by those who make long lists of all the negative statements by early Church Fathers against instrumental accompaniment, as proof of their position. The early Church Fathers were not infallible apostles, and their writings are not scripture. They were influenced by Greek philosophy, gnosticism, anti-semitism, and the various ideologies of their times. They espoused many heretical views, and often contradicted each other. As Dr. Marcellino D’Ambrosio points out above, they were intellectuals who sought to combine the simple truth of the Gospel, with classical wisdom.

This is why the fear or mistrust of instruments, prevalent in Greek philosophy, entered the Church.

Many errors entered for the same reason. For example: *Origen had a Platonic view of eternal souls achieving perfection while escaping the temporary, imperfect material world. He imagined even demons being reunited with God. His views of a hierarchical structure in the Trinity, the temporality of matter, “the fabulous preexistence of souls,” and “the monstrous restoration which follows from it”*

were declared anathema in the 6<sup>th</sup> century. (Wikipedia) Referenced The Seven Ecumenical Councils by Schaff, Philip (1819-1893).

Dr. Adam Clarke, commenting on Proverbs 8, speaks of the Fathers as follows: - *But of those we may safely state, that there is not a truth in the most orthodox creed, that cannot be proved by their authority, nor a heresy that has disgraced the Romish Church, that may not challenge them as its abettors. In points of doctrine their authority is, with me, nothing.* Adam Clarke's Bible Commentary pp. 58, 59.

Ecclesiastical history confirms what the apostle Paul warned of, *the mystery of iniquity, said Paul, doth already work.* Why consult this period of Church history, and even to later times, to correct our Bibles?

Self-perpetuating traditions can develop very fast, and are vigorously defended once established. It is something that plagued the Jews with their numerous additions to the law, and it was also something that has plagued Christianity, as we well know from the pagan practices brought in by the Roman Church. Once plain chant became the custom during the early Church persecution, the early Church fathers guarded and protected it, as zealously as the Jews protected their numerous additions to the law. When the persecution abated, it was nigh on impossible to change from the accepted practice, resulting in hundreds of years of plain chant culture in Christianity.

Resistance to change in regard to worship music is longstanding. Julius Portney points out that **Greek philosophers** provided many of the intellectual arguments **borrowed by theologians**, who use them to maintain the status quo. He relates that the philosopher has *thwarted the creative musician at every turn by his defense of traditional values and his zealous retention of the status quo. The philosopher has been quick to question musical change and he has taken it upon himself to evaluate new music in light of the old. He has left behind a legacy of intellectual arguments which the theologian and statesmen have used, effectively, to combat new musical ideas which might threaten the stability of the liturgy or the political status quo.*(1954, p.x.)

The protectionism Portney identifies, has long been a problem in societies, and is still in evidence today. Early Christian chant culture was not a phenomenon developed by Biblical command, but a necessity, coupled with a fear of musical influences, which later became a self-perpetuating tradition. Once established, it was defended in the same way all such traditions are, and history is littered with statements which must be seen in that context. Otherwise, they become misleading.

*... early Christianity did not perceive the chant music culture as the highest form of religious music. It probably sought to restore in the end of times (or at least days of redemption when they won't be persecuted) the music as described in the days of David and in the Temple.* Guy Shaked M.A.

Having established the historical context and cultural dynamics effecting the early Church, let's turn to Jack Brooks B.A. M.A. (Pastor) who sums up beautifully and briefly why we should use **both** Testaments as our guide to faith and worship and avoid tradition.

*It's important that we form our religious convictions on the teachings of Scripture only, not tradition. That includes both Testaments, not just the New Testament. It was primarily the Old Testament to which Paul was referring (given his historical context) when he said that all Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for the Christian's teaching, reproof, and training in righteousness (2 Timothy 16-17). For instance, we wouldn't know if Jesus was the Christ, if not for the Old Testament. Old Testament prophecies prove the claims of Jesus Christ regarding Himself.*

*The New Testament repeatedly cites the Old Testament in the areas of Christian faith and practice. For example, the Old Testament is cited as the basis for Paul's New Testament teachings about the Holy Spirit's enlightening ministry today (1 Cor. 2:9-10), the foolishness of man's worldly wisdom, by which*

*no one is saved (3:19-20), the call for the spiritual purity of the local church (5:6-8), the command to do church discipline (5:13), and the basis for paying minister (9:8-10).*

*Old testament language is used to define the Church (1 Peter 2:2-9-10). The New Testament is the filter through which we look back at and better understand the Old Testament – which parts still apply to us, and which parts do not. We have one Bible, not two Bibles.*

*It is clear from the Old Testament literature that God approved of the use of musical instruments, as well as special singing groups (such as the Levitical choirs). Psalm 150 commends horns, strings, woodwinds, percussion, and dance as valid parts of worship. Many of the Psalms were song lyrics written for the choirmasters of the Tabernacle. It was God's will that musical instruments be used. Since God is perfectly holy, it cannot be a sin to use musical instruments.*

*Anyone who dismisses the Old Testament as not applicable to Christian life and faith in this matter, simply as a way of voiding this, is doing something worse than just adopting a wrong view of musical instruments. Such a person has adopted, whether they intended to or not, a heretical view of the Bible from long ago. This is called the heresy of Marcion, a false teacher of ancient times who split the Bible in two and denied the divine authority of the Old Testament.*

*The pro-instrumentalist already has lots of Scriptural evidence that God wanted the use of musical instruments in worship. The burden of proof does not fall on him, but on the antiinstrumentalist to produce proof that this precedent of approving musical instruments was ever changed by God. But no such proof exists. Arguments from silence carry zero weight. Besides, the Bible isn't silent. It already approved musical instruments. That is God's word on the topic. Unless God says He changed His own rule, then we forbidden making any change to the rule. The absence of a passage telling us to use instruments (in the New Testament) does not mean that instruments are forbidden. That is a logic fallacy called the fallacy of the assumed negative. Jack Brooks B.A. M.A. (Pastor)*

I agree with Brook's assessment, and it can be readily understood, for example, that circumcision is an Old Testament practice that no longer applies to us (Galatians 5:1-6), but there is no command to cease from instrumental accompaniment, or to use plain chant alone.

The Old Testament is replete with authoritative statements on this subject (as it is on others) and we ignore the word of God at our peril.

The New Testament writers considered the Old Testament the word of God himself and authoritative. They quote liberally from the Old Testament to justify their New Testament teachings. ... *which was spoken by the Lord through, the prophet...* (Matthew 1:22). *David himself said in the Holy Spirit.* (Mark 12:36; cf. Matthew 22:43). ... *the Holy Spirit spake before by the mouth of David* (Acts 1:16; cf. 4:25). *Well spake the Holy Spirit through Isaiah the prophet...* (Acts 28:25). *He saith also in Hosea...* (Romans 9:25).

*In quoting the Old Testament, the New Testament writers proceed consistently from the presupposition that they have Holy Scripture in hand.... The actual author is God or the Holy Spirit, and both, as also frequently the graphe, are represented as speaking either directly or through the Old Testament writers. (E. Huehn, Die Alttestamentlichen Citate... im Neuen Testament, Tübingen, Mohr, 1900, p. 272)*

On this particular issue, those who oppose instruments exhibit an unconscionable denial of scripture and an irrational dependence on the historical position of the Church Fathers - who were polluted with fears built upon Greek Philosophy, not the Bible. Some of the early reformers, like Calvin (in spite of the advances they made), carried on this tradition of rejecting instrumentation, and exhibited the same unBiblical protectionist attitude as their forefathers.

In spite of claims by the non-instrumental Christians, the New Testament is not entirely silent on the issue. They like to translate the Greek of certain verses to have it command singing, but be silent on playing. However, the Book of Psalms is one of the most quoted books in the New Testament and many of the Psalms quoted were written to be accompanied by instruments. Aside from that evidence, Paul not only instructed the Ephesians to sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, but he added the phrase, *sing and make music* (α[δ]οντες kai ψαλλοντες” (adontes kai psallontes). Dallas Burdette, D.Min.

See Jamieson, Fausset and Brown, Commentary on the Whole Bible (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970), 1295, where they comment on the word psalm and making melody: *psalms – generally accompanied by an instrument. . . . Making melody – Greek, playing and singing with an instrument. In your heart – not merely with the tongue; but the serious feeling of the heart accompanying the singing of the lips* (cf. I Cor. 14:15; Ps. 47:7).

In other words, sing and *play* with *feeling*. From the heart, not by rote like some repetitive prayer or useless custom, that doesn't touch the heart and *move* people.

Most Christians take the Bible as a whole, are not stuck on the plain chant arguments and have no problem with instrumental accompaniment. The controversy centers on which instruments and styles are acceptable to God. Henceforth, this is where I will concentrate my efforts.

If we really believe what the apostle Paul said about scripture (2 Timothy 16-17), the use of rhythm, drums, and even dance, are in no way condemned by the Bible. In fact, we are **instructed** to employ them, and their use is **demonstrated** in many scriptures. Shouldn't we leave our cultural and musical bias behind, and consult the word of God on this issue with an open mind?

## A Key Concept

Before I get into any heavy Bible exegesis, or advanced music theory, I would like to share something simple, yet so very profound and pertinent to this discussion. What follows is a perfect illustration of a concept which must be grasped by the critics of CCM (if they are ever going to overcome their ethnocentric prejudice against popular forms of musical expression).

I am indebted to Rich Deem and his article *Should Christians Worship to Rock Music?* Which highlights the book *Bruchko* by Bruce Olson (and it's lessons), in one section of his article - which I have reproduced below.

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*Some people think that rock music is too weird to give honor to the Lord. However, there is a good story in one of my favorite books, **Bruchko** by **Bruce Olson**, that relates to this question.*

*Bruce Olson spent many years in South America attempting to witness to the Motilone people. He became friends with a boy, Bobby (real name was Bobarishora), who became a young man through the years that Bruce stayed with the people. Bruce eventually learned the language and led Bobby to faith in Jesus Christ (a fascinating story on its own). Bobby was so excited about his faith that he spent an entire night (14 hours) witnessing to his lodge in a way that was uniquely Motilone. Here is Bruce's account of the singing and his reaction to it: Bobby's song was about the way the Motilones had been deceived and had lost God's trail.*

*He told how they had once known God but had been greedy and had followed a false prophet. Then he began to sing about Jesus. As he did so, the other men who were singing stopped. Everyone became*

*quiet in order to listen.” Jesus Christ was incarnated into man,” Bobby sang. “He has walked our trails. He is God, yet we can know Him.” The home was deathly still except for Bobby’s wailing song and Abjibacayra’s repetition. People were straining their ears to hear. Inside me, however, a spiritual battle was raging.*

*I found myself hating the song. It seemed so heathen. The music, chanted in a strange minor key, sounded like witch music. It seemed to degrade the gospel. Yet when I looked at the people around me and up at the chief swinging in his hammock, I could see that they were listening as though their lives depended upon it. It was Bobby giving them spiritual truth through the song...” But, Lord,” I replied, “why am I so repulsed by it?” Then I saw that it was because I was sinful. I could love the Motilone way of life, but when it came to spiritual matters I thought I had the only way. But my way wasn’t necessarily God’s way. God was saying, “I, too, love the Motilone way of life. I made it. And I’m going to tell them about My Son in My way.”*

*Even though Bruce was unaccustomed to the harsh tones of Motilone singing, he realized that the music was honoring to God. The music that was initially repulsive to Bruce led to the salvation of the entire home that Bobby lived in, and eventually to the salvation of virtually the entire village and other Motilone villages.*

*Even if we personally don’t appreciate Christian rock music, but it honors God, we should not judge others for the way in which they worship. We are encouraged to do all things to the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31), and if we do so with a clear conscience, we should not be judged by other Christians.*

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There is an application of the lessons of Bruchko, that applies to this discussion. For example, if you are an old school conservative minded preacher who enjoys traditional hymns, or classical styles, you may actually (stranger things have happened) be fortunate enough to win the soul of some young kid who grew up listening to rap music.

His lingo, his tastes, his style, his mindset, his music, his mannerisms, might be as foreign to you, as if he grew up in a remote jungle somewhere. Once you win his heart for the Lord, he will try to win souls too, like any other disciple of Christ. He may even write songs, perhaps not even intended for formal worship settings, just to communicate his feelings, experiences, or opinions, on the life altering truths of the Bible. However, he will do so in the language and music of **his** culture, not **yours**.

This is the fatal flaw in the thinking of many of the critics. They expect to make *clones of themselves* that communicate in the language and music of **their** culture. That is a highly unreasonable expectation, but they nevertheless demand it, especially in the area of musical tastes.

If you manage to win the soul of some kid who is into heavy metal, or rap, don’t expect him to suddenly develop a taste for your classical or traditional Gospel music, or Near Eastern music from Bible times, which is different yet again.

He will naturally, and quite properly, take the truths of the Bible and communicate them in **his own** musical language. This wins other souls that belong to those associated sub-cultures, and spreads the Gospel. When you try to stop that, you are hindering the cause of Christ, as assuredly as if you tried to prevent Peter from speaking in tongues at Pentecost. These forms of music are like languages you don’t understand, but God can use them, he works in mysterious ways. These people who convert to Christ, till soil that you can’t till, especially not with your traditional music those sub-cultures don’t want to listen to.

*As Chenoweth and Bee say, “When a people develops its own hymns with both vernacular words and music, it is good evidence that Christianity has truly taken root.” (p. 212). Like it or not, a country bumpkin, harmonically impoverished with the sounds of Nashville, will not sing “I love you” to his fiancée in the style of John Dowland’s renaissance Lute songs (a sixteenth century court musician of Queen Elizabeth). Greg Strawbridge Ph.D. Pastor*

From the standpoint of music anthropology (or ethnomusicology), we should expect music to develop within culture and for culture to transform music. One feeds upon the other in a symbiotic relationship that is reciprocating. We should see Christianity influencing culture in a positive way, and we should see the advance of music and languages within cultures, reflected in Christianity. Many of the critics would keep the music of Christianity frozen to the Common Practice Period (1600-1900), of Western art music. This would be imposing an ethnocentric standard which is **far** from the Near Eastern music of the Bible, thus proof of very changes they fight against. It’s like allowing a plant to grow, and then continuously cropping it off at a certain height, while denying that the plant has ever grown at all. Growth occurred, to get us from Near Eastern Hebrew music, to hymns influenced by Western art music, and that growth is not considered evil by the critics. So why is growth beyond that standard considered evil by them?

The Papacy kept the word of God chained to Monasteries in the Dark Ages. Latin became the ethnocentric standard for the language of the Bible (Hebrew, Greek), for well over a millennium, and the vast majority of people were doomed to live out their lives without the guiding light of God’s word. Protestant men of God rose up to translate it into the vernacular (vulgar, common languages), at the risk and very often the cost of their lives.

William Tyndale – *I defy the Pope, and all his laws; and if God spares my life, I will cause the boy that drives the plow in England to know more of the Scriptures than the Pope himself!* (He was burned at the stake for translating the Bible to English in 1536).

People caught with the word of God in their **own** language were tortured and killed. For example, in the case of the English language, we have the records of John Foxe (A.D. 1516 – 1587) THE ACTS AND MONUMENTS, which chronicle the horrible persecution, inhuman torture, and murder, of *Bible believing Christians* by the papal power. Foxe’s *Book of Martyrs* describes person after person, burned at the stake, for simply owning the scriptures in English.

Yet now, things have come full circle. Some who claim the title Protestant, actually try to keep the word of God from being communicated in the vernacular **music** of various cultures.

Western art music has become the ethnocentric standard, for the (Near Eastern) music of the Bible, but God has commanded through his prophets that **all the earth** should sing a new song. This includes cultures with music **other** than Near Eastern (Bible music), or Western art music (ethnocentric standard). *Sing to the Lord a new song, sing His praise from the end of the earth!* (Isaiah 40:10). *Sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth* (Psalm 96:1).

*Scripture itself recognizes change in cultural mediums of communication and allows for cultural differences and changes within time. “And they read from the book, from the law of God, translating to give the sense so that they understood the reading” (Neh 7:8, see also Mat 1:23, Mar 15:34). Greco-Roman language and culture with Judaistic roots rather than the language Abraham, Moses, or David eras – remembering their were vast differences linguistically/culturally between even these patriarchs. When this is coupled with the “sing a new song” prescriptions, linked to ethnic groups (Psa 96:1-2; Isa 42:10-11) and that redemption is intended for “every tribe and language and people and nation, (Rev 5:9-10)” the ethnomusical implications are strong. The cultures of the world will and do in fact use their languages and musical expressions for praise! Gregg Strawbridge Ph.D. Pastor*

God is not static in his dealings with mankind. Christianity should be constantly progressing and remaining relevant, along with the cultures it impacts, while maintaining absolute truth against the moral relativism of the changing times. We can not keep it like a *ship in a bottle*, isolated from its surrounding time and place. We can not crawl into a time machine and go back to ancient Jerusalem to relive *their* culture, or *their* Near Eastern music. We also can not go back in time, to the common practice period of Western art music. We must embrace Christianity *today*, in our *own* cultures and time, with our *own* music, to make it relevant in the here and now.

## **Greek Philosophy, Gnosticism, or the Word of God**

Some wonder where the prejudice against modern forms, especially strongly rhythmic styles, comes from. The Bible not only encourages – it ordains, sanctions, and demonstrates the use of drums and danceable rhythm in the worship of God. So *why* are some theologians teaching against it?

In the words of John Wheeler: *This leads us to the matter of two fundamentally philosophical aspects of music: its melos (or combination of parts into an expressive whole) and its ethos (or “moral force”). Both terms are Greek concepts, but have their counterparts in every ancient culture about which we have exact information.*

He then moves on to apply the anachronistic standards of western art music to the Near Eastern music of the Bible: *...biblical Hebrew melos (even more than ancient Greek melos) would have been a combination of melody, harmony and rhythm with any words used, just as in Western “art music” in general today.* John Wheeler

Then he goes way beyond the realms of reality and calls upon a unBiblical metaphysical relationship between man and music (cf. p. 57 Garlock and Woetzel, 1992). This metaphysic, relates rhythm to the physical part of man, which is considered evil or sinful under Garlock’s Gnostic belief system.

Wheeler states: *In “good” music, then, the melody should predominate, then the harmony, then the rhythm – just as the “spirit” or rational faculty of man should predominate over his desires (the “soul”) and his impulses (the “body”). But if these elements are out of order, or if they are emphasized in an imbalanced way, the melos is imbalanced and will have effects that are ultimately harmful.*

The medium is the message, Marshall McLuhan’s famous thesis, is thus misapplied and twisted by the critics. They conclude that the melos of contemporary music is sick, in the sense that it is not balanced. It is too rhythm dominated they say, which effects its ethos negatively. According to the philosophy of ethos, music has the ability to influence the listener’s emotions, thoughts, moral character and even spiritual state. They maintain that no matter what lyrics you put with contemporary styles, the ethos is harmful, negative (or evil) and the melos is sick and unbalanced. One will be effected adversely at a subconscious level they argue, such that the negative medium becomes the message and what the artist is actually trying to communicate through the medium is lost.

It is understandable the critics feel the way they do, since they are polluted by the hierarchy of western classical music, which was influenced by Greek music and philosophy. Scales were assigned emotions, and their ideas about the moral force of different forms of music were incorporated into Western thought. A hierarchy of instruments developed, with some considered noble, while percussion instruments are seen as inferior and physical. A balance of the elements of music (melody, harmony and rhythm) that is outside the boundaries of Western classical music, which is the **touchstone** used by the critics, appears sick in their eyes. Many theologians have been poisoned by this bias and have formed a vicious circle, whereby a biased exegesis of scripture, in turn, reinforces the precepts of

Greek philosophy and Western art music. This despite the fact that the hierarchy thereby maintained, *is found no where in scripture*.

Underlying the critics contempt for rhythm dominated music, is this unBiblical metaphysic: *Rhythm is that part of music which elicits a physical response. Therefore, most of today's music, secular and sacred, feeds and satisfies the self-seeking, self-centered, and selfworshipping part of man* (cf. p. 67 Garlock and Woetzel 1992)

This is **Gnostic teaching**, expunged from Christianity centuries ago and proven to be false, anti-Biblical rubbish, by some of the greatest minds of Christianity. It was long ago relegated to the dung heap of heresy, and rightly so, since it **contradicts** the word of God. The metaphysical relationship they describe actually makes God a *tempter*, a *liar* and *complicit in sin* for asking us (through the author of Psalms) to use drums and dance to praise him, and for accepting that rhythmic worship in many scriptures.

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*...But, the physical part of man cannot be equated with the sinful nature since, the sinless Son of God was made flesh (1Jo 4:2).*

*Further, the first man and woman were initially sinless, though incarnate. And we shall ever be sinfully incarnate after the Resurrection. Passages which use "flesh" (sarx) to refer to sinfulness (Rom 6-7, Gal 3, etc.) are not referring to merely the physical body, but the inherent sinfulness of fallen human nature which permeates every facet of man, body, soul, spirit, mind, heart, bowels, and spleen.*

*Of the 147 times "flesh" (sarx) is used in the New Testament, only a small minority of passages have the sense of "sinful nature" (NIV). "Flesh" (sarx) is used in a number of ways both positively (Rom 1:3, 2Co 4:11), and negatively (Gal 5:17).*

*Fatal to the argument above, is the clear teaching that the regenerate spirit of man is also sinful. "Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2Co 7:1).*

*Finally, it is simply metaphysically false to imply that evil is to be equated with embodiment, since the devils are not physical but are evil. To connect sinfulness with physicalness is the Gnostic heresy and is a flat contradiction to the redemptive enterprise of the incarnate Jesus. Gregg Strawbridge Ph.D. Pastor*

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According to the criteria the critics use to condemn contemporary styles, they must also condemn the Near Eastern music of the Bible, which is also **very far** from their (balanced western art) touchstone, according to learned experts in this field. Instead, the critics deny the facts, and try to pretend the music of the ancient Semites fits their ethnocentric standard.

I highly recommend that you google for and download the following document in it's entirety. It exposes the fallacies used by various critics and soundly refutes all of them with inescapable logic, solid Biblical exegesis, and an eloquent command of the English language. I have reproduced a section here that highlights the Western classical bias of many of the critics, and the unBiblical Gnostic metaphysic, which permeates and poisons their whole approach to Biblical exegesis related to worship music.

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A Biblical Theology of Music Applied to the Contemporary Music Styles Debate by Gregg Strawbridge Ph.D., Pastor

*The description of good music in Garlock and Woetzel, Cannon and Cannon, and the Gothard ministry generally clearly reads Common Practice Period (1600-1900) Western art music (hereafter, WCPP) back into the Bible. It is, thus, anachronistic ( impossible in the time period it has been placed in). This can be illustrated from the often used threefold division of music (e.g. Garlock and Woetzel, p. 55): “Music is also considered to have three primary parts: melody, harmony, and rhythm.*

*Perhaps a starting place for evaluation is to see whether Biblical-times music could even be identified with the features of WCPP music. Certainly the descriptions of Biblical-times musical style, given by learned experts, cannot be understood as depicting “godly music,” according to the standard of the authors (see the Appendix: Ancient Near Eastern Music).*

*Consider what Vida Chenoweth and Darlene Bee explain (The authors are ethnomusicologists associated with Wycliffe Bible Translators), “Christianity has certainly influenced the course of Western musical development; some of our greatest music has been inspired by a strong Christian faith. Nevertheless, we cannot say that our Western musical tradition is the same as the Christian musical tradition. It is not the musical idiom of the New Testament; the founders of our faith would have been ill-at-ease in it. There was no musical notation at the time of Christ so we will never know what melodies were sung by Jesus and His disciples. What we do know about their musical style is that it was Near Eastern. Our modern hymns are also different from Hebrew and Greek music, even though the gospel reached us through the cultural matrix of these societies. Our Western hymns are a heritage which we rightly cherish, but they belong to our faith through our culture.” (“On Ethnic Music” Vida Chenoweth and Darlene Bee 1968, see pp. 211-212)*

*The music which emerged in the WCPP, though grand and beautiful to us, is anachronistic to Biblical-times music.*

*Garlock and Woetzel, et al (above) go further though. Their aesthetic turns out to be a metaphysic. They describe godly music as a hierarchy of melody, harmony, rhythm with a steady pulse (pp. 64-66). They relate their anachronistic standard, metaphysically, to a trichotomist anthropology (man is body, soul, spirit). “The part of music to which the spirit responds is the melody” (p. 57). “The part of music to which your mind responds is the harmony” (p. 58). “The part of music to which your body responds is the rhythm” (p. 59).*

*The fact that the Bible does not teach this musical metaphysic (exegesis will not yield anything like these claims) in no way impedes the critics from developing an entire musical ethic. What follows from this? No rock, no jazz, no beat, no back beat, and I guess dancing is out too.*

*Even apart from the fact that Biblical-times music does not correspond to their description of Biblical music, there are more difficulties. For example, if it is true that the spirit of man (assuming the trichotomist’s view of man) – responds to the melody, what are we to say for the music of percussion instruments? Is it metaphysically possible to praise Him with timbrels, loud cymbals, and resounding cymbals (Psalm 150) since those percussion instruments make no melody (and God is a spirit)? Percussionists are apparently doomed to the basement of the physical, sub-spiritual? I am only hinting at the ridiculous nature of these criticisms of CM. It has been said, “A little clarity goes a long way.” And a little knowledge of Biblical-times music would prevent an ethnocentric standard from being disguised as a Biblical standard.*

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John Wheeler (aka Johanan Rakkav) the American editor and co-publisher of *Music of the Bible Revealed*, exhibits a textbook example of the mentality and reasoning of the critics. I find it very disheartening, that the excellent work of Suzanne Haïk-Vantoura, the French author and music theoretician, who decoded the cantillation marks of the Hebrew Bible, comes to the English language filtered through his unbiblical musical ethic.

Wheeler's statements, which I quoted at the beginning of this section, impose the anachronistic standards of western art music to the music of the Bible, to the denial of common logic and to the abnegation of the findings of learned experts in this field. Those experts relate that the aesthetic qualities of the Bible's Near Eastern music, **are no where near** the balance of Western Art music.

As we will see, in upcoming sections, the ancient Hebrew music was rhythm dominated according to many sources including (I. Be. Immanuel Benzinger, Ph.D.). It was also lacking in what we would call harmony. *What Western peoples understand by harmony, is still incomprehensible to the Arabs* (Emil G. Hirsch, Wilhelm Nowack). *It (harmony) is considered a wild and unpleasant noise, in which no sensible person can take pleasure.* (Niebuhr "Reisen").

Even Suzanne Haïk-Vantoura, who makes perhaps the strongest case for a rudimentary form of harmony states, when speaking of II Chronicles 5:13,14, *This implies heterophony (a simple one to be sure, given the capabilities and limitations of ancient instruments)*. She also emphatically stated that her musical arrangements (based on the Bible), were merely *evocations*, intended to show that biblical psalmody was not monodic (and that biblical prosody was in principle accompanied).

Even after a lifetime of work in this area, and developing a different (perhaps the authentic) way of decoding the cantillation marks of the Hebrew Bible, Haïk-Vantoura could in no way recreate the melos, ethos, or what we would call the *style* of the musical accompaniment, and denied that she could.

Yet, John Wheeler feels sure the Near Eastern music of the Bible, fits the standards of Western art music, because if it doesn't, it's melos would be sick or unbalanced and it's ethos harmful or evil, by his (cf. Garlock et al) definition.

## **Are Drums or Rhythm Evil?**

Every attempt is made by critics, to downplay the use of rhythm by God's people in the Bible, and make it seem like Contemporary styles are sick, unbalanced, even evil, for employing it. Yet the truth is, the ancient Hebrews used **more** rhythm than modern western music.

*In the Hebrew music of Old Testament times, as indeed in Oriental music to-day, rhythm was of much greater importance, in comparison with the melody, than it is in modern Occidental (Western) music. Accordingly instruments like the drum and tambourine, which serve principally to accentuate the rhythm, played the greatest part.* I. Be. Immanuel Benzinger, Ph.D., (Professor of Old Testament Exegesis, University of Berlin, Germany; Jerusalem, Palestine)

Danceable rhythm and drums are sanctioned by God to praise him in his heavenly sanctuary and the congregation of the saints (Psalm 150, Psalm 149). They were employed during worship in his direct presence before the Holy Ark of the Covenant (2 Samuel 6:5), and drums were also in evidence when his prophets gave prophecy (I Samuel 10:5). They were used for praise and worship in many other Scriptures, by God's people. We will examine some of these verses later.

1 Chr 16:5 *Asaph, the player of the cymbals, is named the **chief** of all the musicians.*

Why are drums and cymbals so *prominent* in the Bible, yet so *despised* by some in the modern Church?

Anathea Portier-Young, Ph.D., quotes Larrick Geary here with the answer. *Larrick notes that by the standards of Western classical music, which continue to govern much of musical appreciation in the West today, the human voice is considered the most intimate of instruments, outstanding for its ability to convey emotion. Those instruments that are best able to imitate the sounds of the human voice, such as the violin, are perceived as aesthetically superior, even sublime. Percussion instruments, on the other hand, are perceived as least consonant with the human voice, and therefore inferior. They are considered "aboriginal," physical, and earthy. Larrick maintains, in my opinion correctly, that such a hierarchy did not exist in the ancient near east and is nowhere present in the Bible.* (Geary, Larrick . 1990. MUSICAL REFERENCES AND SONG TEXTS IN THE BIBLE. STUDIES IN HISTORY AND INTERPRETATION OF MUSIC, vol. 9. Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press)

There we have it, the source of the bias so openly displayed by many of the critics. Not based in the Bible but on cultural preferences **at odds** with the Bible.

What about Ezekiel 28:12? The critics say it makes drums and pipes evil. *While this verse has been used in the past to establish an improper use of music, in reality there is nothing inherent in this verse, about music or musical instruments. The misunderstanding comes from a poor King James (and New King James) translation of this verse. The Jewish Publication Society translates "timbrels and pipes" as "settings and sockets." The Revised Standard Version has "settings and engravings" and the New International Version has "settings and mountings." What is being described here are the sockets and grooves used as **jewelry settings** for the precious stones mentioned **in the context** that were used for the king of Tyre's adornment. The king of Tyre was the personification of Lucifer in this chapter. When properly understood, it is clear that Ezekiel 28:13 gives no support whatsoever to the concept that Lucifer is connected with either the creation or initial production of beautiful music. In fact the opposite is true when it comes to Satan and his influence in this world.* (Music in the Bible Study Paper – UCGIA)

Perhaps you wish to cling to the KJV on this. Even if you do, the verse does not make drums and pipes evil. In fact, it says the devil didn't start out as the devil. He was a covering cherub full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. It doesn't say his pipes and drums were evil, it says their workmanship was **prepared on the day that he was created** and were **therefore perfect** like everything else about him. He remained perfect **until** he chose to be evil, and unrighteous was found in him. The verse says absolutely nothing about drums or pipes being evil and is an example of the biased Biblical exegesis I was speaking of. Read it for yourself.

Ezekiel 28:12 *Son of man, take up a lamentation over the king of Tyre, and tell him, Thus says the Lord Yahweh: You seal up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering, the sardius, the topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the emerald, and gold: the workmanship of your tambourines and of your pipes (settings and sockets) was in you; **in the day that you were created they were prepared.** You were the anointed cherub who covers: and I set you, [so that] you were on the holy mountain of God; you have walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. **You were perfect in your ways from the day that you were created, until unrighteousness was found in you.***

Are drums and pipes sometimes used for evil? Of course, but this makes them no different than harps and lyres, which were used in obscene, licentious, pagan worship rites, and even played by prostitutes according to historians and the Bible.

Isaiah 23: 15-16 *Take an **harp** (not a drum), go about the city, thou **harlot** thou hast been forgotten; make sweet melody, sing many songs, that thou mayest be remembered.*

Hañk-Vantoura states: *we see much more in the literature and surviving music of the ancient Greeks,*

Egyptians, Canaanites, Hurrians, Hittites and various Mesopotamian peoples. Reed pipes, drums, cymbals and other percussion instruments were put readily into the service of such religions; **but so were harps and lyres**, due to their very versatility (and despite their frequent association with the “noble” side of human nature and religious expression).

Any instrument can be used for good or evil. God would not have ordained the use of drums and pipes for his worship in Psalms 149, 150, or accepted worship employing them in (2 Samuel 6:5), if they were evil or unworthy. He would not have let his prophets give prophecy to their beat (I Samuel 10:5), or allowed his people to dance to them, or use them in his worship, as is recorded in many scriptures.

Let’s take a look at one of the statements made by some very vocal critics of drums, and it’s refutation, to see if there is any logical or Biblical basis for it.

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*Garlock and Woetzel (1992) focus on the inherent immoral qualities of rhythm-dominant music (pp. 79-80). The emphasis of most of contemporary sacred and secular music is on the rhythm. Rhythm is that part of music which elicits a physical response. Therefore, most of today’s music, secular and sacred, feeds and satisfies the self-seeking, self-centered, and self-worshiping part of man. (cf. p. 67).*

*Here is another example of demonstrably fallacious reasoning. Either the argument is invalid because of equivocating on terms “physical response” and “self-seeking, self-centered, and self-worshiping part of man” - or, the authors are guilty of serious theological error in equating the physical part of man with the sinful part of man.*

*...Let us suppose that Garlock and Woetzel really mean that rhythm appeals to the “sinful nature” (“flesh”). By this they would avoid a theological error of no small proportion; however, if rhythm appeals to the sinful part of man, it follows necessarily that good music should have no rhythm at all! But of course, this is not possible, since all music involves sound in time.*

**Note well:** *what the Bible almost explicitly teaches about rhythm in music is irreconcilable to the above critics of CM. Scripture does not condemn the appeal to bodily movement and rhythm in music. This is indicated by the correlation of dancing with the use of music and especially percussion instruments such as timbrels and cymbals. Gregg Strawbridge, Ph.D. Lancaster, PA, Pastor*

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I was watching a presentation by Walter Veith one day, and he was attempting to show that drums are evil. He put up a video of people acting demoniacally possessed, with drum beats playing in the background as evidence. Why didn’t he put up I Samuel 10:5, where the Prophets of God gave prophecy to the beat of drums – ***because what the Bible teaches doesn’t suit his bias!*** He showed an ancient culture who used drums in their heathen worship. Why didn’t he show II Samuel 6:5, where drums were used in the the worship of the true God, before the Holy Ark of the Covenant – ***because what the Bible teaches doesn’t suit his bias!*** Why did he not mention that lyres and harps were also used by heathen cultures in false worship – ***because what history teaches us doesn’t support his bias!***

Veith goes on to quote Howard Hanson who says that music can be used for good or evil, and I agree it can, however, Veith inserts his ***bias*** making the music ***he doesn’t like*** evil – ***because the truth about the dual application of contemporary music doesn’t suit his bias!*** He quotes Jimmy Hendrix on the power of music, to try and prove rock music is evil, yet ignores it’s use by Christian artists for good – ***because the evidence of the positive effects of CCM, doesn’t suit his bias!***

Samuele Bacchiocchi does the very same thing in his book ***The Christian and Rock Music!*** In fact, he

even recycles some of the same tired old quotes as Veith, so I will examine them in more detail in a later section.

I cannot emphasize strongly enough, that many of the theologians, musicologists, authors and lecturers who study the Biblical use of music, are cultured connoisseurs of Western art music, and approach the whole subject with a mindset poisoned by that influence. Some are also influenced by the unBiblical rhetoric and propaganda of critics like Garlock and Woetzel, which feeds that bias. These ideas are based on Greek philosophy instead of Biblical principles. Some are Gnostic, yet they are being taught in some of our seminaries and many ministers of the Gospel, simply regurgitate the biased theology they are taught, without questioning it, thinking they are serving God by doing so.

## **Biased Arguments and Twisted Scripture**

Let's examine the evidence and the arguments presented by the theologians opposed to Contemporary Christian music, to see if they hold water.

Revelation 22:18 *If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book.*

Adding something that isn't there, is exactly Samuele Bacchiocchi does in his newsletter with this ill conceived diatribe from THE SABBATH AND WORSHIP MUSIC. He states: *The only instrument used by the heavenly choirs is a harp ensemble (Rev 5:8; 14:2). [Then he Adds] The reason, as Thomas Seel explains, is that 'the distinctive timbre of the harp in worship blends harmoniously with the worshippers' collective voices...' Thomas Allen Seel A Theology of Music for Worship Derived from the Book of Revelation (Metuchen, NJ, 1995), p. 124.*

Really? There is nothing in the verses quoted that even remotely suggests this. It is conjecture added to support a bias. Revelation is a book containing a great deal of symbolic language. The heavenly choirs with harps, light fires in the imaginations of those who prefer that type of music. Visions of sublime vocals combined with melodious harps appeal to them, so they apply their subjective bias and the harps become literal, even though they are embedded in verses that are **clearly** symbolic.

The Bible does not tell us **why** harps are briefly mentioned in these highly symbolic passages. Just because other instruments were not also mentioned, does not mean they are **excluded** from Heaven! I haven't seen either of those men's names mentioned in Revelation, so by their logic, I guess they won't be in heaven either. Neither will a great many things.

Where is the verse that **prohibits** other instruments? Couldn't it just as easily be argued, as other theologians do, that harps were briefly mentioned as a **symbol** denoting instrumental accompaniment?

His argument has no legs and adds something that **does not exist** in the text. It **adds** an **exclusion** of other instruments from Heavenly worship (simply based on the fact that they were not mentioned along with harps in two brief symbolic passages) and then it **adds** a **reason** for this prohibition, based on bias and conjecture, not anything found in Scripture.

Psalm 150:1 *Praise ye the LORD. Praise God in his SANCTUARY: praise him in the firmament of his power.* In verses 3-5, a description of **many** instruments deemed worthy to be used to worship God in his **heavenly sanctuary** are given, including **drums**. In the firmament of his power reveals to most scholars, that the passage refers to the heavenly, not the earthly sanctuary. This contradicts the added in assumptions, and conjecture, of Bacchiocchi and Seel.

When speaking of the earthly Temple instruments, Bacchiocchi also makes this biased statement: *Of*

the four, **only** the last two, the lyre and harps (both string instruments that blended with human voices), were used to accompany the singing. The trumpets were used **only** to give various signals, such as when the congregation was to prostrate or the choir was to sing during the presentation of burnt offerings (2 Chron 29:27-29). The cymbals were used to announce the beginning of a song or of a new stanza.

Notice that he once again infers that the lyre and harp are the **only** instruments **worthy** to be combined with human voice and that the trumpets were **only** used to give signals. The cymbals were (only) used to start songs or stanza's.

Was the scenario he describes always the case, or even the norm? Let's use the following scripture as an example of how a verse can be read differently by people with different biases.

I Chronicles 5:13,14 ...and it was the duty of the trumpeters and singers to make themselves heard in unison in praise and thanksgiving to the LORD, and when the song was raised, with trumpets and cymbals and other musical instruments, in praise to the LORD... the house of the LORD, was filled with a cloud, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled the house of God.

Here we see the trumpeters and singers **in unison**, with the cymbals and other instruments of worship also being **raised together**. It says it was their **duty** to do so and what was God's response? Did he strike them with lightning because this profane noise did not harmoniously blend the singing with harps **alone**? No, his glory so filled the house of God that they found it difficult to Minister.

Perhaps I'm reading the verse wrong. Lets bring in some experts on this subject and see how they view the verse:

## Jewish Encyclopedia

MUSIC AND MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS: By: Emil G. Hirsch Wilhelm Nowack Niebuhr ("Reisen," i. 176) calls attention to the fact that in the Orient it is still the custom for a precentor to sing one strophe, which is repeated three, four, or five tones lower by the other singers. In this connection mention may be made of the alternating song of the seraphim in the Temple, when called upon by Isaiah (comp. Isa. vi.). The measure must have varied according to the character of the song; and it is not improbable that it changed even in the same song. **Without doubt the striking of the cymbals marked the measure.**

What Western peoples understand by **harmony** is still incomprehensible to the Arabs. They consider it "a wild and unpleasant noise, in which no sensible person can take pleasure." Niebuhr refers to the fact that when Arabs play on different instruments and sing at the same time, almost the same melody is heard from all, unless one of them sings or plays as bass one and the same note throughout. It was probably the same with the Israelites in olden times, who attuned the stringed instruments to the voices of the singers either on the same note or in the octave or at some other consonant interval. This explains the remark in II Chron. v. 13 that at the dedication of the Temple **the playing of the instruments, the singing of the Psalms, and the blare of the trumpets sounded as one sound.**

Probably the unison of the singing of Psalms was the accord of two voices an octave apart. This may explain the terms "'al'alamot" and "'al ha-sheminit." On account of the important part which women from the earliest times took in singing, it is comprehensible that the higher pitch was simply called the "maiden's key," and "ha-sheminit" would then be an octave lower.

Note in the commentary above **Without doubt the striking of the cymbals marked the measure, and the playing of the instruments, the singing of the Psalms, and the blare of the trumpets sounded as one sound.**

This is not exactly in line with Bacchiocchi's assertions, so who is right? Let's go to another expert source: Suzanne Hauck-Vantoura – organist, music teacher, composer and music theorist. Her magnum opus was in the field of musicology *The Music of the Bible Revealed*, a massive work covering the entire Hebrew Bible, decoding the cantillation marks (as musical notes which support the syntax and meaning of the words) of its 24 books, to music.

*“It was the **duty of the trumpeters and singers to make themselves heard in unison**”? Why this? It is merely an assumption (based without question on preconceived notions about ancient music) that all the singers and instrumentalists were performing the same note at the same time. The corresponding passage in the KJV (verse 13) says: “It came even to pass, as the trumpeters and singers were as one (Hebrew *ke`ehad*) to make one sound (*qol ehad*)...”*

*The literal word order in Hebrew is, “and it came to be as one to the trumpeters and to the singers to make heard one sound”. Now the word “one” (*ehad*) in Hebrew can and often does denote a unity of parts. The *te`amim* themselves in this passage – *silluq*, *munah* and *telisha gedolah*, which are found on *vayhi ke`ehad*, “and it came to pass as one” -- suggest to the ear that **the trumpets and singers joined together harmonically to form “one sound”**. This implies heterophony (a simple one to be sure, given the capabilities and limitations of ancient instruments).*

Notice in her statement, **the trumpets and singers joined together harmonically to form “one sound”**. So here we see a case, where despite Bacchiocchi's assertions, the singers did not harmoniously blend the singing with the harps **alone**. The trumpets were used for something else, other than to **only** give signals. God's response was to fill the Temple, and he was not displeased because it was their **duty** to do so. Therefore, the verse implies it was not an isolated occurrence, or some kind of mistake, but what was **expected** of them. The temple instruments were used in other ways as well, which we shall see later.

Difficulties arise because not a great deal is known about the specifics of the temple music and those critics of modern styles like Bacchiocchi, feel that today's Church services, should be a reflection of the ancient temple services, when it comes to the use of music. Most Christians would consider that legalistic thinking, since we are not under the Old Covenant. We are not expected to dress like Levites, sacrifice bulls and goats, follow their numerous laws, etc., so why should we be confined to only the instruments assigned to *them*. However, in the interest of complete fairness, I will examine this line of reasoning in a later section. It is basically an appeal to the regulative principle, however, the critics try to do so in a biased and twisted fashion, which belittles the noble principle they call upon.

Music archaeology (or Archaeomusicology), examines past music cultures using the tools of both archaeology and textual analyses. This field of inquiry, is constantly in flux and the evolving evidence causes scholars on both sides of this issue to refine, modify, or recant their assertions. Therefore, it is unwise to speculate too much in this area, to flout pet theories, or build theological arguments based on potentially biased (or flawed) research, as though it were hard fact.

Fortunately, there is a general consensus on many of the texts that we know and love in our Bibles, and there are a number of **verifiable facts**, provided by Archaeomusicology, concerning the use of music in ancient semitic worship. These are more than enough, to refute those who make unprovable, biased assertions, on either side of this thorny issue. These will reveal that Bacchiocchi and other critics claims, concerning what God finds acceptable regarding music and worship, are very far from the truth indeed.

## Music of Babylon

Here is a prime example of an unBiblical, biased argument, used by many against contemporary Christian music. They use the catch phrase **Music of Babylon**, in order to generate an immediate evil connotation, and apply it selectively to any instrument or style of music they dislike.

The styles they dislike, are then said to be a key factor in leading people into the end time false worship of the beast. The styles and instruments they like, are somehow *exempt* from this evil stigma. How convenient!

Are drums or guitars associated with Babylon in Rev. 18:22? No, it is Bacchiocchi's beloved harp which is first in line, trumpets and flutes are also mentioned specifically. These are never attacked by him or the others as the Music of Babylon. The harps and so on are **symbolic of modern popular music** they insist.

Is it logical to insist that the harps are **literal** in the highly symbolic passages of (Rev 5:8; 14:2) but they are to be taken as **symbolic** of popular music here in Rev.18:22? **You can't have it both ways!**

Are not these temple instruments, associated with true worship elsewhere in the Bible? Is there any reason to throw out those verses and assume they are *symbolic* of modern *popular music*, being used in false worship? Could they be symbolic of music in general, not just popular forms the critics don't like?

Let's look at Rev.18:5 and take note of which instruments are mentioned. Also, let's see if the verses they use to make their argument were meant to incriminate music (in any form) at all.

Bacchiocchi's writes: *The final silencing of the musicians of Babylon suggests that their music plays an active role in promoting false worship.*

He seizes on Rev 18:22, uses **only the first part** and **removes the context**.

Are we to assume that *the craftsmen, the mills, the lights, the brides and the bridegrooms* were **all** used to lead people into false worship, and needed to be silenced too? The musicians no longer being heard, just like the craftsmen no longer making crafts, is just a poetic way of describing the completeness of the destruction, not the reason behind it. It is part of a long description of what will cease at that time, but has nothing to do with the **reason** for this drastic judgment.

Rev 18:22 The music of harpists and musicians, pipers and trumpeters, *will never be heard in you again.*  
No worker of any trade *will ever be found in you again.*  
The sound of a millstone *will never be heard in you again.*  
The light of a lamp *will never shine in you again.* The  
voice of bridegroom and bride *will never be heard in you again.*

Rev.18:5 states the reason for the destruction and it has nothing to do with music *...for her sins have reached even unto Heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities.*

Rev. 18:23 also indicates **why** God destroys Babylon and music is again not part of the reason. *...for with your sorcery all the nations were deceived. In her was found the blood of prophets and of saints, and of all who have been slain on the earth.*

Is God upset with the musical style here? If you still think so, go back and read the *whole chapter* for **context**. The mention of music, and the **other things** ceasing, is just a poetic way of describing the completeness of the destruction.

When Moses came down off the mountain, much emphasis is placed on the type of music the Hebrews were playing, as if it was the problem, rather than the fact that they were worshipping a golden calf. Biased theologians insinuate that they were dancing and playing *evil music* and that the popular styles

today are a *modern repeat* of this false worship. Singing and dancing (Ex 32:18,19) were certainly taking place, and it was absolutely *false worship* that was occurring, but singing and dancing also occur in many scriptures in the *genuine worship of the true God*. The issue here is idolatry, not singing and dancing, which can be used for true or false worship.

What does God say he was angry about? Ex 32:8 *They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them. They have made themselves a molten calf, and have worshiped it, and have sacrificed to it, and said, "These are your gods, Israel, which brought you up out of the land of Egypt"*.

Does that sound to you like an indictment of their music? A child could see that the problem here was idolatry. If Moses had come down off the mountain and they were singing and dancing while praising the true God, (as we are instructed to do in Psalm 149 for example), he would have *commended* their actions. Music can be used for good or evil, including music with danceable rhythms as scripture demonstrates in verse after verse. For example when David danced before the LORD and the Holy Ark of the Covenant (2 Samuel 6:5), and the whole house of Israel made merry to the music. The critics don't like to talk about the use of rhythm and dance in *true worship*. Nor do they like to talk about the use of hymns and lyres in *false worship*, because such things **do not fit their bias**.

With Daniel 3:10 they once again focus on the music, instead of idolatry as the problem. *You, O King, have made a decree, that every man that shall hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipe, and all kinds of music, shall fall down and worship the golden image.*

If the King had something else **loud** he could have used, like cannons, would the cannons be evil, or would the bowing to the image be the evil act? Of course it was the worship of the golden image that was the issue here.

Just because the King used the sound of music as the *starting gun* in this race of idolatry, it doesn't necessarily mean that music is evil, or will be used in the end time to lead people into false worship. It was a convenience only, a **loud** signal that everyone could hear, despite the vast area and large group of people involved.

This next verse quoted by Bacchiocchi doesn't even mention music, in any form, yet is used to attack popular styles. How can that be? Actually, it's use is particularly offensive and deceptive.

Bacchiocchi states: *In the plains of Moab, on the borders to the Promised Land, the Israelites were "beguiled with music and dancing"* (Ellen G. White, *The Story of Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, CA, 1958, p. 454) *into a terrible apostasy* (Num 25:1-2). *They were lured through music to participate in heathen worship something which they may have resisted under other circumstances.*

Let's look at what the actual word of God states on this: Numbers 25: 1-2 KJV *And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab. And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods: and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods.*

No mention of music is made, in the passage quoted, the entire chapter, or in the chapters before or after this. God was upset about their whoredom and bowing down to foreign Gods, not their involvement with any type of music. I'm sure that the Moabites had some type of music associated with their culture, but this was not considered *relevant* enough to even be *mentioned* in the Biblical account.

Bacchiocchi is twisting the commentary of Ellen G. White here, just as he twists the Bible elsewhere. It doesn't matter if you believe that the Ellen White is a genuine prophetess or not, or was right in the commentary he quotes here, to disavow his statement. He *perverts* what she says to suit his bias and those who accept her word as truth, should be more upset about this, than those who reject her writings and stick to the **Bible alone** as their rule of faith (Sola Scriptura). (Most Christians see her as a false

prophet and her writings as contrary to Scripture).

He takes her statement out of context, and emphasizes music as the culprit she identifies, while she only mentioned music in passing, as one of many things, which contributed to the apostasy of the Jews.

White relates in the paragraph which precedes the one quoted by Bacchiocchi, how *Midianitish women began to steal into the camp, and It was the object of these women, in their association with the Hebrews, to seduce them into transgression of the law of God.* This is the whoredom talked about in the Bible, and according to White, it began **before** the main fall into idolatry. Sex was therefore the main lure. The Midianitish women seduced them with sex, which was the key to leading the Hebrews into their heathen rituals which involved more sex.

Now for additional context here is the whole paragraph from **Patriarchs and Prophets by E.G. White** (not the Bible), from which Bacchiocchi quotes.

*At Balaam's suggestion, a grand festival in honor of their gods was appointed by the king of Moab, and it was secretly arranged that **Balaam should induce** the Israelites to attend. He was regarded by them as a prophet of God, and hence had little difficulty in accomplishing his purpose. Great numbers of the people joined him in witnessing the festivities. They ventured upon the forbidden ground, and were entangled in the snare of Satan. Beguiled with music and dancing, and **allured by the beauty of heathen vestals, they cast off their fealty to Jehovah. As they united in mirth and feasting, indulgence in wine** beclouded their senses and broke down the barriers of self-control. **Passion had full sway; and having defiled their consciences by lewdness, they were persuaded to bow down to idols. They offered sacrifice upon heathen altars and participated in the most degrading rites.***

She alluded to the seduction of the women, the inducement of Balaam (which was also key), allured by the beauty, the feasting, mirth, and wine beclouded their senses, until passion held full sway, and they committed lewdness and degrading rites. She didn't say that their music was responsible, or even a major factor, or that they might have otherwise resisted without it.

She only mentioned it in passing, as **one** of the **many** contributing factors.

To assert that they were "beguiled with music and dancing" into a terrible apostasy. Lured through music to participate in heathen worship, something which they may have resisted under other circumstances, is espousing something that **does not exist in the word of God**, and is also a misuse and perversion of Ellen White's writings (whether you believe they should be taken seriously anyway – which is a separate issue).

Even in White's account, different music, or no music, would not have caused the Hebrews to perceive Balaam as a false prophet or resist the charms of the Midianitish women, since they had fallen for both **before** the music she mentioned was even involved. At most, it helped set the stage for their final slide into apostasy, just as the feasting and mirth did, more so the wine which would have served to remove their inhibitions (as those familiar with its effects can attest). Principally, their sexual desire was paramount and key to the whole affair in White's account (which reflects what the Bible says).

God often likens idolatry to whoredom, which is brought out quite forcefully in the book of Hosea and in many other scriptures. The heathen rites of surrounding cultures, often included orgies and temple prostitutes, which exerted a strong temptation, or influence on the Hebrews to participate.

So here we see here a Bible verse that **doesn't even mention music** used to condemn **modern popular forms**. From not even mentioned in the Bible, we go to a self proclaimed modern prophet mentioning it in passing, as one of **many** contributing factors, to finally Bacchiocchi's bogus claim - *they were lured through music to participate in heathen worship something which they may have resisted under other circumstances*, as if music was the sole cause of their apostasy, or perhaps Bach playing in the

background, instead of Moabite music, might have saved them from apostasy.

Is this what passes for Biblical exegesis? Here is the Bible verse again, and Bacchiocchi's interpretation of it. What would any ordinary person who didn't check the Bible for themselves, be **deceived** into thinking, if all they went by was Bacchiocchi's statement.

Bible:

Numbers 25: 1-2 KJV *And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab. And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods: and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods.*

Bacchiocchi:

Numbers 25: 1-2 *In the plains of Moab, on the borders to the Promised Land, the Israelites were "beguiled with music and dancing" into a terrible apostasy. They were lured through music to participate in heathen worship - something which they may have resisted under other circumstances.*

If Bacchiocchi and other devotees of this theory, want to insist on making an association between Babylon and false worship involving music, wouldn't they have to condemn (Rev 18:22, Dan. 3:10) harps, lyres, and trumpets which are Temple Instruments, and a variety of orchestra related instruments used in classical music? Notice drums are the **only** instrument *not specifically mentioned* in any of their proof texts, but are *primarily* the instrument they attack. Is it logical, to leave those instruments *specifically mentioned* and their *associated styles* unscathed, while using these verses to attack **only popular styles and music using drums and guitars**? We are told the harps and so on are *symbolic* of modern popular Christian music here (Rev 18:22, Dan. 3:10), but *literal* elsewhere (Rev 5:8; 14:2), because it *suits their bias*. **Sorry, you can't have it both ways, pick one or the other please.**

Personally, I don't see **any** type of music condemned in the Bible verses above, but here is what Bacchiocchi states: *Could it be that a Satanic stroke of genius will write gospel songs that will have the marking of every taste of music: folk music, jazz, rock, disco, countrywestern, rap, calypso, etc.? Could it be that many Christians will come to love this kind of gospel song because it sounds very much like the music of Babylon?*

I didn't see Western art music on his list, yet he says **every** taste of music. Perhaps what he meant to say was, the music **he** finds distasteful, because of **his** cultural bias. At the very least, **his beloved harp** and **classical music** should be maligned, before drums and styles **not even mentioned** by the verses quoted.

He says *popular music* sounds very much like the *Music of Babylon*. If anything, the *Music of Babylon* sounds like harp music and classical styles, judging by the instruments presented in the proof texts. To assert otherwise is adding bias.

This teaching is deceptive, and illustrates flagrant bias, coupled with logical fallacy and poor scholarship. Let's take a look at the Bible and see how many scriptures must be rejected if Bacchiocchi's assertions are correct.

## **Rejected Scriptures**

The scriptures that ordain, sanction, or show the use of a variety of instruments (especially percussion), used in true worship - are thrown out, or down played as much as possible, to suit the bias of those opposed to popular styles. The demonstrably false reasoning, of the appeal to physical movement

generated by rhythm, as being *evil* or *unfit* for worship, biases their whole approach to Biblical exegesis. Therefore, all the verses describing drums and dance used in true worship, must be explained away, which they do by *any and all* means possible.

For clarity, the timbrel and tabret which are unfamiliar words to many, were **percussion** instruments – **drums**. *Tabret Hebrew: a smiting; The root word for tabret is tabor which is a one-sided drum. The root word for timbrel is toph also a small hand drum. There are nine Scriptures concerning the tabret and nine separate Scriptures containing the word timbrel or tambourine instruments (Jeanette Strauss).*

Note: these are just a sample of some of the verses, there are plenty more.

Genesis 31:27 *Wherefore didst thou flee away secretly, and steal away from me; and didst not tell me, that I might have sent thee away with mirth, and with songs, with tabret, and with harp?*

I Samuel 10:5 *...thou shalt meet a company of prophets coming down from the high place with a psaltery, and a tabret, and a pipe, and a harp, before them; and they shall prophesy.*

I Samuel 18:6,7,10 *...to meet King Saul, with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of music.*

II Samuel 6:5 *And David and all the house of Israel played before the Lord on all manner of instruments made of fir wood, even on harps, and on psalteries, and on timbrels, and on cornets, and on cymbals.*

Psalms 68:25 *The singers went before, the players on instruments followed after; among them were the damsels playing with timbrels.*

Psalms 81:2 *Take a psalm, and bring hither the timbrel, the pleasant harp with the psaltery.*

Psalms 149:1,3 *Praise ye the Lord. Sing unto the Lord a new song, and his praise in the congregation of saints. Let them praise his name in the dance: let them sing praises unto him with the timbrel and harp.*

Psalm 150:1 *Praise God in his sanctuary: praise him in the firmament of his power.* This is the opening line which refutes any suggestion that the various instruments listed below in verses 3-5 are unworthy instruments, for secular purposes, for entertainment only, or are the *Music of Babylon*. Nothing could be clearer, yet biased scholars try to make that argument, much to the amusement of unbiased scholars.

Psalm 150:3-5 *Praise him with trumpet sound; praise him with lute and harp! Praise him with tambourine and dance; praise him with strings and pipe! Praise him with clanging cymbals; praise him with loud clashing cymbals.*

Notice that several of the musical instruments in Psalm 150 are **percussion instruments**. This shows that **beat** is acceptable in worship music, **dance** implies **danceable rhythm**. Loud music was also endorsed here, as it is in many other Scriptures.

The harp, lute, lyre, psaltery, and viol are words used in various translations to describe the different stringed instruments employed by the ancient Hebrews. Scholars argue over which particular instrument was referred to in certain verses, but on one thing they all agree. These were stringed instruments, played by plucking or strumming with the fingers or by using a pick. How similar they are to the the much maligned guitar.

The lute (above) was basically a lyre with a neck and very closely resembled a guitar. Both instruments are of one family, the shape or length of the body and neck being the only real difference.

According to Al-Farabi (the noteworthy polymath), the lute or ancient guitar (oud, ud,) was invented by Lamech, the sixth grandson of Adam. If that's true, Noah and God must have carried the *evil*

instrument on the ark for us to use in the modern world.

In any case, stringed instruments are ancient in the extreme (Genesis 4:21), were used in the worship of God (even in the Temple) and were given a ringing endorsement by David. However, that's not good enough for some people. They still insist the guitar is an *evil* instrument, *unfit* for Christian music.

Psalm 81:2 *Start the music, strike the drum, play the melodious harp and lyre.* The word here translated, drum, is the Hebrew word *toph*, or *tof*. Before we examine drums more closely let's review, once again, this statement:

*In the Hebrew music of Old Testament times, as indeed in Oriental music to-day, **rhythm was of much greater importance**, in comparison with the melody, than it is in modern Occidental (Western) music. Accordingly instruments like the drum and tambourine, which serve principally to accentuate the rhythm, **played the greatest part**. The most ancient means of marking rhythm was the clapping of hands, a method which is still employed. Among the instruments of percussion, the timbrel or hand-drum (*tof*) is the oldest and most popular...* I. Be. Immanuel Benzinger, Ph.D., (Professor of Old Testament Exegesis, University of Berlin, Germany; Jerusalem, Palestine)

This is exactly the **opposite** of what the critics of popular forms are trying to argue, especially for temple music which *some* insist had **no** timing. Generally, the critics want to impose a balance on the ancient Near Eastern Hebrew music of the Bible (between the melody, harmony and rhythm), in the proportions of Western art music, but **that is simply not the case**.

Just like the modern forms they criticize, and the music of many ancient and modern cultures, the music of the Bible is **dominated** by rhythm. Also, it was not monadic, but it was certainly lacking in what we call harmony, possessing at the most, a rudimentary heterophony.

The ancient Hebrews, also used various other percussion instruments, there are indications of rattles, shakers, kettle drums, clappers, and sticks or bones played in the manner of the traditional spoons in my part of the world.

For a deeper study on their instruments, there are a number of scholarly articles available for free on the Internet. One of the earlier works by Dr. (later Sir) John Stainer (1840-1901), would be a good place to start, since there are *actual pictures* of the instruments described, and unlike much of the other free public domain information - personal bias is not in evidence.

The Music of the Bible With an account of the Development of Modern Musical Instruments from Ancient Types By John Stainer, (M.A., MUS. Doc.) MAGD, COLL., OXON (1879).

Francis Galpin, edited a revised edition published in 1914 and this was reprinted by the Da Capo Press at New York as late as 1970. While Stainer's music was never popular, his scholarship is **highly regarded** and has stood up to many subsequent challenges, with only the minor corrections one would expect through later findings.

If the ancient Semites had the capability to manufacture modern drums, is there any reason to believe they would have considered them evil? They were already using cymbals and stretched membranes to produce beats. These are the essential elements of modern drums.

David and others Bible characters worshiped and danced to the beat of drums and percussion instruments of **various descriptions** according to the Bible, this is further supported by Archaeomusicology, as applied to their culture.

Bacchiocchi states in his newsletter: *the music in ancient Israel, as Anthony Sendrey ( I believe he meant to say Alfred Sendrey) has shown, lacked a regular beat and a metrical structure.* Alfred Sendrey, Music in Ancient Israel (London, England, 1963), pp.376-377.

Others scholars disagree, and since there are few records to go by it, is hard to define what their music sounded like. Instead of lacking structure, some think it was **more structured**, and while not the regular beat of modern western music that we are accustomed to, it ...*has a more complex pattern of time structuring* (Dr. Richard C. Leonard).

The Jewish historian Josephus, was born in A.D. 37, at Jerusalem, and belonged to a distinguished priestly family - whose paternal ancestors he himself traces back five generations. Here we have a historian who actually heard the second temple music, and had an intimate knowledge of that culture. What did he write?

*And now David being freed from wars and dangers, and enjoying for the future a profound peace, composed songs and hymns to God of several sorts of meter; some of those which he made were trimeters (i.e., 3/4 and 6/8), and some were pentameters (i.e., 5/4). He also made instruments of music, and taught the Levites to sing hymns to God, both on that called the Sabbath day, and on other festivals.” - Antiquities of the Jews 7:305 Flavius Josephus*

The fact that they employed various rhythm instruments, and that David and other Biblical characters danced to it, indicates that the scholars who acknowledge timing in Semitic music are the ones who have it right. Even **their temple music had timing** according to numerous experts in the field, and as we will see, there was even **dancing** in the temple at times, according to Rabbinical records.

As a musician, who has accompanied stringed instruments with a very similar hand drum to the toph, I can tell you it would be very unnatural, in fact difficult, to produce anything but a rhythmic beat that one could easily dance to.

Helter skelter patterns, at odds with the music, or themselves, are almost impossible to achieve since they deny our own natures. Call it evil, or *hypnotic*, as Bacchiocchi maintains, but rhythm or cadence comes naturally to all people, whether they are good or evil, in every culture.

We seem to have come from the Creator's hand programed for it. It doesn't *feel right* when the timing is off in the music we are playing, or listening to.

It's true now and it was true then, regardless if it's ancient Semitic worship music, popular Christian music, or any kind of music you care to discuss. Even classical forms have to have timing. What do you think the conductor is doing with that stick, shooing away flies? Far from being evil, rhythm is a gift from God and was certainly not considered evil in the Bible. Numerous percussion instruments were employed in worship and common, danceable beat, is indicated in many verses. It is quite natural and **Biblical** to **enjoy** the sensation of timing.

Try it yourself with a tambourine, and have your friends play a simple hymn on guitars, or other instruments. Even beginners *instinctively*, and almost instantly, develop a rhythm that fits with the other instruments.

Musicians describe the feeling as **tight**, when everyone syncs up to the same timing. When the timing is off, everyone can feel it, and sensation could be described as **disturbing**, or unpleasant.

It would feel disturbing to true of men of God in the Bible, or even to Bacchiocchi and Neuman. However, they still *mindlessly* argue that beat, especially the common, danceable type, which is found in many scriptures, and comes so naturally to any ordinary person with a tambourine, is somehow objectionable and evil.

## **Temple Instruments**

Much is made (by the critics) of 1 Chron 15:16; 16:5-6, 2 Chron 29:27-29 to show that only four instruments were used in the ancient Temple service. They were trumpets, **cymbals**, lyres, and harps. Here again, outright conjecture and biased unwarranted conclusions are tacked on to these verses.

Look at this statement by Bacchiocchi as an example of how these verses are applied to condemn popular music. *Worship leaders, who are urging the use of an array of drums, bass guitars, and rhythmic guitars to give a rocky beat to their church music, should notice that both in the earthly Jerusalem Temple and in the heavenly sanctuary, no percussion instruments were allowed. The only instrument used by the heavenly choirs is a harp ensemble.*

First of all, that is a **false** statement, cymbals were a temple instrument and are classified as percussion, therefore percussion instruments were allowed. Also, it would be more accurate to say the other instruments were not specifically **assigned** to the Levites (not allowed - infers negative connotations not supported by scripture). Limiting the heavenly choirs to only a harp ensemble is an **unprovable** assertion which **contradicts** the theme of Psalm 150. It rests on interpreting harps as *literal* (and exclusive) in the highly symbolic passages of (Rev 5:8; 14:2), but he also expects us to believe they are symbolic of popular styles in (Rev 18:22, Dan. 3:10).

The argument is also made, that instruments like their primitive drums were **banned** from Temple music, because of their association with dancing women, and common use in folk music, or for entertainment. Bacchiocchi states *...their music consisted mostly of dancing with timbrels – a music that was **unfit** for sacred worship.*

We are not told that dancing, or timbrels, are **unfit** for worship **in the Bible**. The concept of them being unfit, is **supplied** by Bacchiocchi to promote his bias. We are told over and over again in the word of God, **to use them in his worship**.

Furthermore, **chosen** instruments like the lyre (or harp) were **also** used in common folk music, as instruments of entertainment, even played by prostitutes and used in licentious heathen rituals, so his biased argument against drums - *shoots itself in the foot.*

The temple instruments were assigned by David during the movement of the ark to Jerusalem. Let's examine this more closely, and notice something the critics of popular styles always try to *sweep under the carpet.*

As they were moving the Ark, some interesting events took place. 2 Samuel 6:5 *And David and all the house of Israel were making merry before the LORD, with songs and lyres and harps and tambourines and castanets and cymbals...14 And David danced before the LORD with all his might.*

In between verse 5 and verse 14, Uzzah was killed for touching the ark, even though he was simply trying to rescue and steady it, as the oxen stumbled. This is because the Ark was Holy and had to be treated with the utmost reverence, in accordance with the rules specified by God. Aaron, the brother of Moses, had lost two sons in like manner, for a different violation (Lev. 10:1-2). God was there (before the LORD) and no one will dispute that God is Holy, and should be shown the utmost reverence, respect, and worshipful attitude.

Despite the presence of God and the Holiness of the Ark (and the immediate destruction of anyone who profaned it), God was not offended by their **merry making**, with the **tambourines and castanets** accompanying the temple instruments, or by the the scantily clad David **dancing to the beat** of the music.

I have heard the foolish argument that this was because the Ark was outside. Was the fact that God and the Ark were not inside the temple, responsible for making either less Holy? Try telling that to Uzzah! **God and the Ark are what made their temple Holy, not the other way around!**

Say what? I never hear the guardians of orthodoxy bring these facts into their castigation of Christian musicians. The musical technique and worship style portrayed here, sounds much more colorful and lively, than the bland and somber ceremonies inflicted upon the members of some of our Churches.

Is God pleased, when people, our youth in particular, are forced to endure boring, staid, lifeless services, until they no longer wish to attend? Must our worship music avoid popular styles enjoyed by the *common people*? It seems to me, the worship style here was of a nature that the *common people* found very *enjoyable*. In fact, **all** the house of Israel were *making merry* to the music.

God is obviously not angered by joyful, loud, boisterous celebration, dancing, singing, or other instruments (including drums) played together with the temple instruments assigned to the Levites and Priests. Scholars find evidence for the latter in Rabbinical records of the temple as well. The Babylonian Talmud, Arachin, 2:10, 1 Gamra, indicate that on special occasions, other instruments were employed in parts of the Temple services.

David, danced to the beat of drums, endorsed a wide variety of instruments in worship, and took part in this lively and joyous celebration that combined all of these things in front of the Holy Ark of the Covenant, in the presence of God. I did not notice any bolts of lightning striking him or the others down, did you?

Rhythm and dance are a strange concept to many Christians who have been taught to shun them all their lives, but it's quite prominent in the Bible. In Exodus 15:20, Miriam and the other women respond to God's triumph over the Egyptians by joyful dancing accompanied by drums. There were harvest dances in the book of Judges (21:21), as well as dancing by Jephthah's daughter at his return (11:34). 1 Samuel depicts the children of Israel praising David their king, by dancing and singing songs of his exploits (21:11). Jeremiah 31:13 shows us that **God's redemption causes His people to dance** before Him. In verse four of this chapter, **dance is seen as a response to God's love** for His people. We are instructed to use dance and drums in the worship of God in many of the Psalms. Drums and dancing are Biblical forms of worship and praise, as well as expressions of joy.

In spite of all this, the argument is raised that they were *outside of the temple* which is why all of these things were *permitted*, but never inside, lest the temple *become a dance hall* as Bacchiocchi asserts. According to rabbinic literature, there actually was dancing in the temple during the festival of Sukkot (M. Suk. 5:4). We will see that later, but for now, let's simply establish that ***popular styles and rhythms the common people found enjoyable and danceable were permitted outside the temple in the worship of God***, as most of the critics concede. Also note, ***the singing was not harmoniously blended with the harps alone during all this***.

But wait, we haven't discussed Psalm 149 yet, which ***places all this in the congregation of saints***. Now the critics really have a problem. This is generally understood to be the Church in our day, which is the modern equivalent of the gathering of worshipers, or body of believers in their day. The Augsburg Confession states: *Article VIII: What the Church Is. 1] Although the Church properly is the congregation of saints and true believers...*

It is more than fair to assert, as unbiased scholars do, that Psalm 149 can be applied to the modern Church, or to their Temple, since these are the places where the saints congregate (to come together into a group, crowd, or assembly. Merriam-Webster) Psalm 149:1 *Praise ye the Lord. Sing unto the Lord a new song, and his praise in the congregation of saints. Let them praise his name in the dance: let them sing praises unto him with the timbrel (drum) and harp.*

To add insult to injury, the **heavenly sanctuary** is covered by Psalm 150, and essentially all the major instruments they had, are **sanctioned to worship God**, including **drums** combined with **dance**.

Psalm 150:1 *Praise God in his sanctuary: praise him in the firmament of his power. Praise him with*

*trumpet sound; praise him with lute and harp! Praise him with tambourine (drum) and dance; praise him with strings and pipe! Praise him with clanging cymbals; praise him with loud clashing cymbals.*

Psalm 150:1 refers to the worship of God in his heavenly sanctuary according to unbiased scholars and also by a plain reading of the text. Notice this commentary: *The same harmony of comparative thought appears in the two clauses of this verse as in such passages as 1Ki 8:13,49 Isa 62:15. The place of worship where God specially hears prayer and accepts praise, and the firmament where angels fly at his command, and veil their faces in adoration, are each a sanctuary. The sanctuary is manifestly here looked at as the temple of grace, the firmament as the temple of power. So the verse proclaims both grace and glory.*” Martin Geier.

The critics object, on the grounds that God couldn't possibly want rhythm and dance used for worship in the Church, or to worship him in his heavenly sanctuary, because it is *vulgar* and *unfit* for worship.

**Does God consider it unfit or do they?** He ordained those various instruments including drums and dance to be used to worship him in his Sanctuary. I think he gets to decide what is vulgar, and what is Holy, in his own sanctuary, don't you? If he obviously doesn't find drums and rhythms the common people danced to and enjoyed, vulgar or unfit ***in his direct presence*** before the Ark in 2 Samuel 6:5, (as the critics are forced to admit), why do they suddenly become vulgar and unfit in his Church, or his sanctuary, when their use is **sanctioned** in Psalm 149,150.

So in fact, for both the heavenly and earthly sanctuary, this type of worship music is acceptable to God. Moreover, drums and danceable beat is **ordained** by God (through the author of Psalms), and graphically **demonstrated** by Samuel 6:5.

Those who don't see it that way, try to build their case by concentrating on *symbolic* verses in Revelation, denoting heavenly choirs and harps (Rev 5:8; 14:2), where they can apply their bias to the interpretation, and make symbolic passages literal. When it suits their bias, they do the opposite, such as in Rev.18:22, where they insist harps and temple instruments are *symbolic of modern popular music*.

Meanwhile, plain texts describing the *actual use* of music in worship, in *practical situations* such as the congregation of the saints, are ignored. When confronted with the texts, they symbolize them away to mean something other than what they clearly state. Another strategy they employ, is explained in the next sections. They try to use the assignment of the temple instruments to the Levites, as a *prohibition* of drums and rhythm instruments, while simultaneously *allowing* other non-temple instruments, that suit their bias. They take the quite proper, and noble, regulative principle Reformed Protestants have employed for a long time now, and apply it in a biased, twisted fashion.

## **Regulative Principle Gone Awry**

David **assigned** the use of certain instruments to the Levites for reasons we can only speculate about. 2 Chronicles 29:25 shows it was considered the Lord's command through his prophets, but no clue is given as to why. All we know is that wind, stringed and **percussive** categories were represented by the selection, and that other instruments are in **no way maligned** as upsetting to God, or unfit for worship. Most especially not the ones he specifically **ordained** through the author of Psalms.

Is God schizophrenic? Does he change his mind like the shifting sand? The critics would have you believe that he does! The attempt is made to negate all of the good, crystal clear, practical scriptures concerning worship music, (especially those involving dance and drums), by confining the topic solely to ***specific parts*** of the temple ceremonies, and the instruments assigned to the Levites.

It is an attempt to apply the regulative principle with narrow bias and illogic. For those who are

unfamiliar with this subject, I have reproduced below, an excellent statement on the proper use of the regulative principle. In many ways this is the key to this whole discussion and controversy within much of Christianity.

## **The Regulative Principle**

by Dr. Richard L. Pratt, Jr.

*The regulative principle is currently the subject of no small controversy in Reformed Circles.*

*Some Reformed thinkers and churches have appealed to it to bar the use of contemporary praise songs in public worship, some to insist on the use of Psalms only, and some even to eliminate musical instruments. Partially in response to this, others have determined that the regulative principle is unbiblical, and that it should be abandoned altogether.*

*I would like to suggest that all these viewpoints are incorrect. The regulative principle is quite biblical, if it is properly understood and applied. Unfortunately, today it is very often misunderstood and misapplied, such as by those who would use it to prohibit the use of modern praise songs or of instruments.*

*I think it is helpful to conceive of the regulative principle in terms of the following various emphases:*

- 1. Worship was more tightly regulated by Old Testament Law than were many other areas of life. This gives credibility to the belief that we should be more concerned with specific scriptural teachings regarding worship than we should about its statements on other areas of life such as car mechanics, grocery shopping, etc. Thus, the motivation behind the regulative principle is correct.*
- 2. The Westminster Confession of Faith 21.1 provides a very common statement of the regulative principle: "The acceptable way of worshipping the true God is instituted by Himself, and so limited by His own revealed will, that He may not be worshipped according to the imaginations and devices of men, or the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representation, or any other way not prescribed in the Holy Scripture. The word prescribed has frequently led to the types of narrow assertions listed above, i.e., that we ought not to sing songs other than the Psalms or to use musical instruments in worship. A more helpful formulation of the regulative principle is: We must have positive biblical support for all that we do in worship. This formulation keeps us from a Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran, or other model. But it also acknowledges the hermeneutical complexities of deriving directives for worship from the Bible.*
- 3. The regulative principle was developed primarily: a) to exclude Roman Catholic idolatry from worship; and b) to protect the liberty of conscience against the enforcement of Anglican liturgical orders. These two concerns are just as relevant today as they were when the regulative principle was developed, we must continue to reject idolatry and to protect liberty of conscience.*
- 4. To apply the regulative principle appropriately today, we cannot simply repeat the way it was applied in earlier centuries. Rather, we must identify the idols and attacks on liberty of conscience that are present among our churches today. This will differ from church to church and from time to time. One of the principles which the Reformation embraced was *ecclesia semper reformanda est* the church is always reforming. This means that we cannot represent the Reformed tradition without re-presenting it. Simply to repeat it is not to represent it at all.*
- 5. What idols do we have in our churches today? Each church must answer this question with sincere self-evaluation. It is worth noting in this regard that our modern churches frequently employ five popular models which involve much idolatry. Evangelicals tend to reduce the throne room experience of worship to: a) a classroom for learning; b) a family reunion for mutual encouragement; c) a welcome wagon for visitors and seekers; d) a therapist's couch for*

*psychological healing; and/or e) a variety show for entertainment. None of these models is entirely wrong, but when any of these becomes the central model for worship, it also becomes idolatrous. In many Reformed churches today, the idol is intellectualism. We turn worship into a classroom for learning. This emphasis on intellect was appropriate in earlier historical periods, and may become necessary again some day. But just as Hezekiah destroyed Moses's bronze serpent because it became an idol, we must destroy the tendency toward intellectualism that has become an idol in worship for many of us. There are other worship idols as well, and these must become the focus of our attention as we apply the regulative principle today.*

- 6. What are the attacks on liberty of conscience in worship today? It is difficult to identify such attacks today because we have so much freedom to choose between one church or another. Conscience can be followed in the situations in which most of us find ourselves today. Ironically, perhaps the closest thing in Reformed circles to the Anglican book of prayer is the insistence of some on particular practices such as Psalm singing. The biblical support for insisting that Psalms be sung (and sometimes exclusively) in every worship service is weak to say the least. In effect, it reflects the convictions of some being forced on others. This violates the regulative principle, and must be rejected in the spirit of the reformation. It is time for those devoted to continuing the Reformation to revive commitment to the regulative principle. The regulative principle has characterized our tradition for centuries and we must stop yielding exclusive claim to it to those who have idealized its past applications. We should move forward by applying it in new ways so that we may worship God in the Spirit and in truth.*

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To recap and be perfectly clear on this – the critics of modern styles try to apply the regulative principle with bias, and heavily emphasize *certain portions* of the temple services, to support their assertions. Instead of looking at it as an *assignment* of temple instruments, it becomes a *ban* of other instruments, and words like *not allowed* and *prohibited*, creep into their rhetoric.

God ordained instruments such as the drums of Psalms 150 and 149, are made to look *evil* and *unfit*, instead of simply not specifically assigned to the Levites. They never attack the other instruments, translated in different versions as pipes, flutes, horns, organs, etc., their modern day counterparts, or the plethora of instruments invented since then, that fit their Western art music bias. It is always drums, rhythm, and styles they don't like.

Since the critics want to use the regulative principle to restrict modern day Christians in their worship music, by citing Jewish temple music, let's see what actually went on in the temple. I will spend a lot of time on this (although it is a *red herring* to start with) because there are many things the critics conveniently leave out in their interpretation of the evidence. This allows them to draw principles from the Temple period (to apply to our Church age), that suit their bias.

## The Temple Music

Look at this statement by John Stainer, (M.A., MUS. Doc) MAGD, COLL., OXON as an example of what a *learned expert* on the use of Biblical instruments concluded.

*As to the manner in which the Psalms of David were rendered at the time of the first Temple, little can be said with certainty, unless it be that the instruments we have enumerated were used in whole or in portions, and that **dancing of a solemn character** formed an accompaniment to the **rhythm of the***

*music. Of the psalm-singing of the second Temple, clearly-defined traditions are to be found in the Talmud.*

Note that the one thing he says he says he can be certain of, regarding the first temple, is that they used the various instruments he speaks of, and **danced to the rhythm of the music.**

Since there is precious little to go by in terms of the temple services in the Bible, let's do as Stainer suggests and see what evidence exists in the Talmud and Rabbinical sources that relate to our discussion here. After all, if the critics want us to act like the Jews in the temple, why not consult the Jews about their records of ancient temple services. Remember, this is the second temple spoken of and this later evidence can therefore be misleading.

Jewish Liturgical Music from the Bible to Hasidims by Eliyahu Schleifer, in Sacred Sound and Social Change: Liturgical Music in Jewish and Christian Experience Schleifer:

*Rabbinic literature recalls worship at the Second Temple, especially after its reconstruction by King Herod. To the extent that these recollections are valid, we can say... and a rather lengthy description of parts of the temple services is given. The interesting thing is that we see instruments not assigned by David in the Temple, pipes, shofars (horns) and one is essentially a rake used in the manner of a percussion instrument, but the word has been misinterpreted as organ in many ancient and modern books. (Bathja Bayer, Encyclopedia Judaica (Jerusalem, 1971), vol. 12, cols. 1452-53) Schleifer:*

*...two to twelve chains (pipes, perhaps shawms of the aulos type), and one cymbal. The priests blew the shofar and at least two trumpets. They also sounded the magrefah (the rake used for clearing the ashes of the altar) by throwing it forcefully on the ground in order to signal the beginning of the Temple Worship.*

*...The best time to hear the music of the Temple was probably during the celebrations of the water libation at the festival of Sukkot. The festivities took place at night and included **singing and dancing of all assembled** (the only occasion when dancing in the Temple is mentioned in the sources), as well as acrobatic feats performed with torches. The Levites formed a huge choir and orchestra "**with innumerable musical instruments**" that stood on the fifteen steps that led from the men's section to the women's. They sang psalms of praise, perhaps the fifteen Psalms of Ascent, Psalms 121-135 (M. Suk. 5:4).*

Midrash Shir Hashirim Rabbah, ch. 3 indicates **unusual virtuoso techniques** being employed by the levites as well. *It was said of Hugas the Levite that when he sang his virtuoso passages he inserted his thumb into his mouth and placed his index finger under his nose, and that by this means he was able to produce unusual tones that used to astonish the attending priests.* I have heard critics of CCM denounce vocalists for breathy techniques, voice scooping, or sliding from one syllable into the next. I wonder what they would have said about Hugas.

Rev. Daniel L. Wheeler brings to light some interesting facts in his musings on the subject, that I am sure are hotly contested by the critics. He points to a highly respected source - Smith's Bible Dictionary ( Author., Smith, William (1813-1893). Print Basis., 1884) *The drum (toph). Of this there were many varieties, some of them resembling modern drums. The Egyptians had a long drum, of wood or copper, 2 ½ feet long, resembling the tom-tom of India, and beaten by the hand. Another form was shaped like a cask with bulging centre, and was made of copper. It was of the same length as the other, but larger around, and was beaten with sticks. **Another drum was more like our kettledrum; and one of these, the rabbins say, was placed in the temple court to call the priests to prayer, and could be heard from Jerusalem to Jericho.***

He also points to a recent discovery in archaeology several years ago - *archaeologists found a relief from Carchemish in Syria which portrayed worship in the Jewish temple. This basalt relief depicts 4*

*musicans, one blowing a curved horn (shofar), one carrying a large drum, and two people beating the drum with their open hands. The person holding the drum also appears to be wearing a neckstrap to help support the drum. ...Used in the home, on the battlefield, at feasts and celebrations there has been evidence that the priests in the temple took the tambourine at one time for use. Rev. Daniel L.*

Wheeler Dennis F. McCorkle, author of **The Song of the Levite** has an interesting assessment of the cymbals. He talks about a **family** of different cymbal types with melodic pairs assigned to the singers. One of their purposes was to act as a tuning reference for the stings but according to him, they were used in other ways as well. The cymbals also provided the added aspect of praising the “Name of Yah,” not with a crash, but with the tones of his name. Additionally, the melodic cymbals of the Levites may have also been used **throughout their performances** in any place where the tonality was appropriate.

*...We also know from various historical Jewish writings, that by the time of the Second Temple there was only one cymbal that remained and was used by the singers to start the song. - an extremely important point that will be discussed in more detail later. These texts further state that this one cymbal was cracked (Mishna-Arachin II, 5; Mishna Tamid; VII, 3). A further commentary relates that the Temple hired some metal craftsmen from Alexandria in attempt to repair a crack in this single remaining cymbal. However, once the crack was fixed, the tone changed and the sound was no longer pleasant so they removed the patch (Mishna- Arachin 10b) (see also A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica, John Lightfoot (ca. 1602-1675), A Chorographical Century, Chapter 36). ...An interesting parallel to this single, broken cymbal used in the Temple and the texts in Psalm 150:5 may have been the inspiration to a commonly quoted Christian text of Paul in 1 Corinthians 13:1 Dennis F. McCorkle*

If McCorkle is right in his assertions about only one broken cymbal (from one of the melodic pairs) remaining at the time of the second temple, (and he seems to have his ducks in a row regarding references) then **we should not expect to find the proper use of the cymbals demonstrated in the accounts of the second temple.** In fact, those accounts would be misleading. Starting the song would be all they could do with one broken cymbal. The melodic pairs they employed in the past, could have therefore been used in any number of ways that are not recorded in the Rabbinical literature.

Another noteworthy scholar focuses on what would be considered part of a normal daytime service here. We see cymbals used as a sign to start the proceedings but also note that one cymbal accompanied the singing and **other instruments** were played by the younger Levites.

*...according to which, on a sign being given on cymbals (not melodic pairs), twelve Levites, standing upon the broad step of the stairway leading from the place of the congregation' to the outer court of the priests, playing upon nine lyres, two harps, and one cymbal (this would have been McCorkle's last broken melodic pair) began the singing of the Psalm, while the officiating priests poured out the wine offering. Younger Levites played other instruments, but did not sing; while the Levitical boys strengthened the treble part by singing and not playing. The pauses of the Psalm, or its divisions, were indicated by blasts of trumpets by priests at the right and left of the cymbalists. Lange, Commentary, Psalms.*

It might be instructive here to present some commentary on the temple music: John Stainer, (M.A., MUS. Doc) MAGD, COLL., OXON: *It will not be difficult to form an opinion of the general effect of Temple music on solemn occasions if we know the grand musical results of harps, trumpets, cymbals, and other simple instruments, when used in large numbers simultaneously or in alternating masses. It is easy to describe it in an off-hand way as **barbarous**. Barbarous in one sense, no doubt, it was; so, too, was the frequent gash of the uplift sacrificial knife in the throat of helpless victims on reeking altars.*

In contrast, here is a description which is quite contrary to Stainer's assessment.

*The music played in the temple and at religious festivities was **most gay**. As was the case in the inauguration of the walls of Jerusalem (Nehemiah 12:27), in festivities over winning a war (Divrey Hayamim 2, 20:27) or in David's bringing of the arc of the covenant to Jerusalem (Divrei Hayamim 1, 15:16). ...The sound of some of the instruments played was **very loud**. This is evident from the sources in the Talmud which speak of the great sounds in the temple that were heard all the way to Jerico (Babylonian Talmud, Tamid, 3). Although these sources are probably an exaggeration they speak of the general property of the music – loud. Guy Shaked M.A. (Internationally acclaimed author)*

Here is yet another view which eludes to numerous instruments, including drums.

*Part and parcel of the religious ceremonies at the Temple of Jerusalem, rebuilt by the Jews after their return from Babylonian deportation, was a rich offering of sacred music, impressive in its splendor: no less than twenty-four choral groups raising their voices in song, accompanied by musicians on more than a dozen different types of instruments, including a variety of strings, reeds, and **percussion – drums, cymbals and tambourines**. Rabbi Dana Magat Temple Emanu-El.*

An effort is made by Bacchiocchi (in his newsletter) to shore up his arguments against percussion, by removing the use of cymbals for timing in the temple music. In his newsletter he states the cymbals were not used by the precantor to conduct the singing and quotes Anthony Sendrey (he possibly meant Alfred Sendrey) as his proof.

For one thing, if Dennis F. McCorkle is right, then it is extremely doubtful that the surviving records accurately portray the original use of the cymbals. Many scholars disagree with Sendrey on this (and on other issues) and Bacchiocchi fails to point out that not enough evidence exists through the tools of Archaeomusicology, to conclusively prove assertions by anyone about the specifics of how the temple instruments were used, or the Psalms were sung. There are too many unknowns, such as words no scholar can translate, with any certainty. Some may indicate timing, modify the use of a known word, or any number of things which remain unprovable to date.

This is an issue which is far from resolved and many scholars do think the cymbals were used for timing. For example (Emil G. Hirsch, Wilhelm Nowack – Jewish Encyclopedia) state: *Without doubt the striking of the cymbals marked the measure.*

If Bacchiocchi wants to quote Sendrey he should take note of this statement which refers to Sendrey and his book (Alfred Sendrey, Music in Ancient Israel (New York, 1969). It brings out something that applies to anyone who wants to build a case for their assertions, based on the existing evidence.

*The Bible presents **severe problems** for the student of Israel's ancient liturgical music, not the least of which is the fact that we can **only guess** what biblical music sounded like. No precise musical notation indicated melody and rhythm until the thirteenth century. Moreover, music is far from the Bible's center of interest, so descriptions of music are **scanty**; allusions to instruments, **obscure**.*

*To some extent, we interpret scriptural information from traditional interpretations of the text and the reappearance of the Bible's musical terms in later sources. Such later sources, however, are **insufficient** and, at times, **even misleading**. We prefer, therefore, to apply historical and etymological analyses derived from comparisons of ancient translations, such as the Aramaic targum or the Greek Septuagint, or evidence from archeological findings.*

*Alternatively, we consult ancient Christian sources and ethnomusicological studies of the living Semitic cultures of the Middle East, such as that of the Bedouins of the Negev and Sinai deserts. Jewish Liturgical Music from the Bible to Hasidims by Eliyahu Schleifer, in Sacred Sound and Social Change: Liturgical Music in Jewish and Christian Experience*

Does it sound like Sendrey's assertions, or those of anybody in this field, can be taken as hard fact?

The truth about such things may never be known on this side of heaven. It is misleading to ordinary people when you quote someone in this field that happens to support your bias, as if that is all the proof needed to make your case. I have not read Bacchiocchi's book, but I found his newsletter **very misleading** in that sense. His assertion of the voice exclusively combined with harps alone, also does not seem to be supported by the evidence.

It was combined with trumpets at least at times, as we saw in II Chronicles 5:13,14. Since it says it was their duty to do so, it would seem that this was not an isolated event. During the movement of the ark and in Rabbinical literature, especially the records of religious festivals, processions, and inaugurations we can find **singing combined with everything**. The Psalms themselves indicate singing combined with drums, dance, and other instruments such as in Psalm 149.

I believe the critics make a grave error in down playing the importance of the religious festivals and feasts of the Hebrews. They do so because the records of these events supply ample evidence, indicating many instruments, including drums and dance, were employed. Therefore, the critics like to portray these events as secular and somehow less than sacred. Yet these were the religious **high points** of the Jewish system and indeed these events foreshadowed the coming Messiah and Christian Church age.

For instance, their khag shavuot (feast of the harvest) was fulfilled perfectly when Christ rose on the first day (first fruits) and the Spirit was poured out on the Church exactly 50 days later at Pentecost (harvest). There is nothing unholy or irreverent about joyous celebration of God's love and plan of salvation. The critics equate somber to reverence, thus they can't picture these events as anything but irreligious and secular, or somehow less sacred than the times of sacrifice.

Going back to John Stainer, (M.A., MUS. Doc) MAGD, COLL., OXON, there is something of great significance that really shocked me. I have chopped up a longer discourse by him to highlight the three relevant statements alluding to the pentatonic (5 note scale).

*As regards the form of early Hebrew melodies, it is probable that they are reflected in modern Asiatic music, and would, if we could hear them now, strike us as being in a sort of minor mode...*

*Engel has shown his appreciation of this difficulty when discussing the pentatonic scale, to which he justly attributes **great antiquity**. It consists of what we should call the first, second, third, fifth, and sixth degrees of our modern scale...*

*Some interesting remarks on the almost universal use of this pentatonic, or pentaphonic, scale will be found in Gevaert [Histoire et Théorie de la Musique de l'Antiquité; Gand, 1875].*

What I find highly significant, is that this scale is commonly used in modern rock music.

The major pentatonic scale consists of the 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6 of the major scale (This is what Engel refers to as ancient) but we hear it everyday on the radio in popular music.

The minor pentatonic scale consists of the 1, 3, 4, 5 and 7 of the natural minor scale and is even more popular in rock music.

The holy grail if you will, of blues/rock scales is simply 1 b3 4 5 b7 where the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> notes are flattened, which is responsible for the much maligned dissonance employed in modern styles. It's birth is generally attributed to early blues artists like Muddy Waters.

My interest was peaked, so I did some more research and was amazed by what I found. I don't know if scholars overlook this because their classical training *blinds them* to what is obvious to an ordinary guitarist, or if they purposely avoid mentioning it, since most of them exhibit a distinct bias toward

classical music and *cultured* sensibilities.

I went to the site of John Wheeler (Johanan Rakkav) the editor and co-publisher of the (English version) *The Music of the Bible Revealed*. He exhibits obvious bias against modern forms, a Western art music mentality, and expresses his agreement with the gnostic metaphysical assertions, of Dr. Frank Garlock (by his own admission) – which were thoroughly debunked to the point of looking ridiculous, by Gregg Strawbridge Ph.D. Pastor, in an earlier section.

However, despite his bias (and perhaps overlooked by him), some of the evidence he himself presents, greatly strengthens the case of those who like modern forms. Let's see what we can glean from this, without the limitations of cultural bias and classical music tastes impeding us.

If you don't understand music, just bear with me or skip what is between the lines. I will explain the significance at the end of the quotes.

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The late Abraham Idelsohn (in his famous Thesaurus of Oriental Hebrew Melodies, Vol. 1, p. had this to say as well: “Riemann [in *Folkloristische Tonalitätsstudien*, Leipzig, 1916, Chapter 1] has...drawn our attention to the **pentatonic elements** in the music of the ancient races. Aristoxenos (sic) has already called the pentatonics “archaika” (emphasis mine). These tunes without semitones [half-steps], extant in the folk-songs of the Chinese, the Irish, the Scotch, the Scandinavians, and in the Gregorian liturgy, are also to be **found in ancient Hebrew music...**

*One other thing is worth noting in this context. Curt Sachs, Hans Hickmann of the Museum of Cairo, Ha'azk-Vantoura and others all have pointed out that **the tonic (1<sup>st</sup>), 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> degrees of the scale were always considered the foundation of tonality...***

*Ha'azk-Vantoura's reconstructed melodies and their modality imply that David (like the Mesopotamians) would have tuned his kinnor or nevel using a cycle of fourths and fifths. His basic mode would have been the “**mode of E**” rather than the “major mode” or “mode of C” (again, as in Mesopotamia).*

*The strongly “harmonic” character of the Psalms' melodies especially suggests **the frequent use of “root position” chords in a I-IV-V-I sequence**. In effect, the “bass line” of these chords likely tended to descend below and return to (E), while **the melodic line tended to ascend above and return to (E)**. Prosodic melodies, while retaining the same general tendency to rise from and fall to the tonic degree (E), generally had a more complex harmonic structure than did psalmodic melodies.*

A B C D (E) F G A B C D E Nevel

A B C D (E) F G A B C Kinnor

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Notice what these scholars indicate, the chord progression they speak of I-IV-V-I, is the underpinning of 12 bar blues and the foundation of rock music. The pentatonic scale they speak of is likewise the foundational scale of rock. Ha'azk-Vantoura places David's harp in the key of E, also known as the key of rock, and melodic lines in rock often start and finish in E, just as she said David would have played. In fact, modern guitars are tuned to E at the open position on the first and sixth strings and many of the arpeggios and motifs center on E.

Unlike a harp, a guitar can be easily played in many keys, but the key of E and the pentonic scales come easily to the instrument. This is why the early delta blues artists quite naturally and almost instinctively developed the backbone of blues and rock around this inherent touchstone. **As the ancients discovered, the relationships in those progressions and scales work well with the general tonality of the human voice, thus modern musicians are drawn like a magnet to this same foundation. When you think about it, how could it be otherwise? The underlying principles have not changed, nor can they.**

As someone who is somewhat a purist in guitarist terms, rarely straying from the key of E and employing the pentatonic scales almost exclusively, I am delighted to discover what seems to escape the classically trained musicians. According to experts like Hañk-Vantoura, who have made this their life's work – Davids harp was tuned to give similar tonality as a guitar in the (rock) key of E, used the standard (rock) chord progression, and employed the (rock) pentatonic scale. In fact, there would be no possible way to make a harp sound more like a rock instrument if you tried.

## **Conclusions from the Temple Evidence**

If the information above is correct (I am relying on the learned experts in this field), I don't see indications of the melodious harp music accompanying the sublime vocals of Bacchiocchi's imagination. It was certainly not far at all from the tonal quality used in today popular music.

When drums were played along to it with danceable rhythm, as it was in the worship of God in 2 Samuel 6:5 and as we are encouraged to do in Psalm 149, 150 and elsewhere, I suspect it would sound very familiar to the critics of modern styles - but in a way they wouldn't like.

It would have had a Near Eastern style in the manner of playing, heavy on the rhythm as I. Be. Immanuel Benzinger, Ph.D. points out, perhaps with a haunting minor flavor overall as John Stainer concluded, but they could not have escaped hitting the tones and progressions of rock music, if Hañk-Vantoura and others are correct.

Most of the scholars acknowledge timing of some sort. Even John Wheeler, who is critical of modern styles and has a classical bias states, *The rhythm, though not "regular" in the sense that ancient Greek song was or modern song is, is nevertheless "metrical", with occasional "offbeat" accents to underline words where necessary.*

On some occasions, such as the festival of Sukkot dancing occurred in the Temple accompanied by various instruments as evidenced by (M. Suk. 5:4). Dancing of course indicates **danceable rhythms and beat** such as we saw during the movement of the ark in II Samuel 6:5.

We can see from the commentaries above, that different people take different impressions from the evidence. John Stainer gets the impression that the music would have sounded barbarous at times of sacrifice and was confident a somber form of dancing occurred in the first temple period. Schleifer points out joyous dance and other instruments, in the second temple period. Guy Shaked feels that the music was very loud and was most gay. Dennis F. McCorkle sees the cymbals as multi-purpose. Hañk-Vantoura indicates David's harp was strung in the same key, used the same chord progression and employed the same scale as modern rock, at rock's most fundamental, foundational level.

We can conclude then, that what went on in the temple was a pretty mixed bag. Psalms were sung antiphonally, responsorially, as a litany and even with rather **bizarre virtuoso techniques** based on the

Rabbinical records. Therefore, the instrumental accompaniment at those times, we can assume, did not overshadow the vocals. I will accept the critics claims about that, for those specific occasions.

However, Bacchiocchi's contention of **no timing** from the cymbals and the vocals combined **exclusively** with the **harps alone**, is not supported. There is solid evidence that the music was **very loud**, that **dancing took place in the temple** and that the four instruments initially assigned to the levites **were not** the only ones permitted in the Temple.

Also, I cannot emphasize enough, that the evidence that exists is so **scanty** and **obscure** that 10 different people can look at it and form 10 different opinions. Consensus tends to build around certain interpretations on specific issues, but then a new generation of scholars uncover something that overturns the consensus. The wisest people in this field of inquiry follow their assertions with a question mark.

## Lessons from the Temple

If there is a lesson to be taken from the temple music, I think McCorkle sums it up nicely with his opinion that we should move away from, not toward the old practices.

We are told over and over again in scripture to sing a new song, not return to the old songs.

*Sing to Yahveh a new song because He has done marvelous things:...* - Psalm 98:1... [see also Isaiah 42:10; Psalm 33:3, 40:3 (40:4 JPS), 96:1, 98:1, 144:9, 149:1] He points out that **God has spoken** on this subject – *Take away from Me the din of your songs and melody of your harps – I will not listen! But let justice well up as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream.* - Amos 5:23-24

The melos and ethos of their music, which some **desperately** wish to recreate, **as though it had magic mystical powers**, certainly didn't do much to influence the Hebrews of the time of Amos (Amos 5:23-24) to establish justice and righteousness. The Pharisees of Christ's day would have fastidiously attended the Temple services and heard the music, (which some would like to recreate), but it didn't do much to improve their spirituality, as far as we can see.

Jesus had some choice words for them, like *brood of vipers, whitewashed tombs, blind guides*, but these are people who listened to that Jewish temple music perhaps more than anybody, except the Priests and Levites themselves. The high Priest Caliphaz, would have certainly been often exposed to it, but he had no compunctions about having the Son of God crucified.

Perhaps we should sing a new song (as we are instructed to do), that is relevant and has the power to speak to modern people. We must try to **inspire** people in today's world, toward justice and righteousness, since these are the results that God desires.

If we do not have justice and righteousness, God will not accept our worship songs, no matter what style they are in. It won't matter if they are in the style of Near Eastern music, as was practiced in the temple, or Western art music, which many critics would have it to be, or contemporary Christian music, despite it's relevance in today's world.

## How the critics apply their Temple Instrument Argument

The trumpet had been ordained for Priests since the time of Moses in many activities that required a loud sound. The addition of the cymbals, harp and lyre by David was, for whatever reason, deemed sufficient for the use of the Levites, in the performance of their duties. We are not told why! Who knows only God – all anyone can do is speculate! Is there any need to insert bias, throw out dozens of crystal clear scriptures and make God sanctioned instruments (Psalm 149, 150, etc.) appear *evil* and *unfit*, just because they were not specifically assigned to the Levites.

That type of thinking, fits the Greek philosophy behind Western classical music. It turns the assignment into a promotion of (what that ethnocentric mentality considers) *noble* instruments and a demotion of (what that mentality, not the Bible) considers *unfit* instruments. The word of God does not make the distinction they try to impose, and we are told over and over again, to use **all** the instruments (including drums and dance), in the worship of God. The Levitical instruments were **ceremonial** in purpose, instruments of the sacrifice, part of the their rites associated with the slaying of animals.

The critics would also turn the parts of the temple services that suit their bias into *sacred* music, and everything else into secular (in a non-standard definition of secular) music. This is not supported by the Rabbinical records, or the word of God. Some of the places where we see drums and dance used are **high points** in their religious affairs, not low points, or secular irreligious activities. Also, the Psalms themselves **sanction** their use in the congregation of the saints, and for worship of God in his heavenly sanctuary.

Let us suppose for a moment that the assignment of instruments to the Levites, was in fact a *prohibition* against other instruments in the worship of God, and actually does apply to the modern Church. Forget arguments about bulls and goats and ceremonies that no longer exist, since the Lamb has been slain once and for all. Forget about the fact that we are under the New Covenant. Forget about all the verses this would contradict, where drums and other instruments are **sanctioned** and **demonstrated** in the worship of God. Let's follow their logic through to the bitter end, to see where it leads. Let's give them enough rope, and see if they hang themselves.

If those who oppose modern Christian music want to limit themselves to the four instruments selected for the Levites and Priests, I see no problem with that. If they want to play a somber, stilted style, with no timing, and insist everything else is irreverent, that is their prerogative. I don't think many would show up for Church if they played, but I see nothing morally wrong with the idea.

If they would insist that the whole body of Christ be subject to the above limitations, by equating parts of the Temple services (that we have record of and which happen to suit their bias), to our Church services, this would be an extremely narrow use of the regulative principle. It would make God doubly minded for sanctioning other instruments like drums and pipes in Psalms, plus it would ignore the evidence that the Temple music was often extremely loud, included other instruments (not just the four they quote) and even incorporated danceable rhythm on occasion. It would ignore the fact that the evidence we have about temple services is scanty at best and may be misleading (in the sense that perhaps much more went on, than we have record of). It would also be narrow, in the sense that we don't have to keep their traditions or ceremonial laws, dress in robes, perform blood sacrifices on reeking altars, so why be limited to their music.

However, the above is not what they seek to achieve. I never hear the critics suggest limitations that are simply narrow, when they quote the verses describing the four Temple instruments. What they do is something far more insidious.

According to **their own arguments**, other Biblical instruments we translate as pipes, organs, flutes, horns, their modern equivalents, and other modern instruments such as pianos, the dozens of accepted classical instruments, massive pipe organs, etc., were not used in the Temple. So if they wish to pursue their line of reasoning, they must ban them along with the drums and guitars they seek to eliminate.

Instead, they selectively pick and choose which instruments and styles to apply their prohibition to, based on personal preference, musical tastes, or cultural bias, **not on the word of God**. This *stultifies* them in the eyes of every thinking man.

We see an example of this in Bacchiocchi's statement: *Worship leaders, who are urging the use of an array of drums, bass guitars, and rhythmic guitars to give a rocky beat to their church music, should notice that both in the earthly Jerusalem Temple and in the heavenly sanctuary, no percussion instruments were allowed. The only instrument used by the heavenly choirs is a harp ensemble.*

If his assertions are correct, would it not also follow that: *Worship leaders, who are urging the use of an array of organs, pipes, pianos, flutes, classical instruments, etc., to give a western art flavor to their Church music, should notice that both in the earthly Jerusalem Temple and in the heavenly sanctuary, no other instruments were allowed. The only instrument used by the heavenly choirs is a harp ensemble.*

If his reasoning is applied in a fair, unbiased manner, we are left with four instruments we can play in Church, with only harps and lyres combined with the vocals, no timing from the cymbals, and we are further reduced to one instrument when we get to heaven.

Instead, he takes the theological tourniquet he fashions from the temple instruments and the symbolic harps of Revelation, and applies it with bias, to eliminate **only** rhythm instruments and popular styles he doesn't like.

If it's western art music for example, performed on a vast orchestra of various instruments, that is perfectly fine in Church (to his and the other critics thinking), which **exposes their hypocrisy and bias**. In fact, pretty much anything goes with these people as long as it maintains the western art balance of melody, harmony and rhythm and the hierarchy of instruments, which is **their ethnocentric standard**. Confront them with this and they reply that they are simply drawing a Biblical principle from the temple instruments which is that drums and rhythmic instruments were prohibited, but pianos and such were not, since they were not yet invented, as if that solves everything and justifies their reasoning.

Here we see what happens when Biblical exegesis is approached with a false predication.

The musical hierarchy imposed by western classical thought, and the fallacious reasoning of the appeal to physical movement (Gnostic metaphysic) caused by rhythm, equating to evil, creates a bias. This in turn causes an unwarranted attack on drums and rhythm instruments which are clearly **sanctioned** by the Bible (Psalm 150, 149, etc.), as unfit for use in worship. Other instruments are ignored, since they are not despised. References to the work of scholars in Archaeomusicology, modern music, history, science, and other fields, are **hand picked to support the bias** and **opposing evidence is rejected**.

Some ordinary Christians with no training, are completely taken in by the evidence presented, since it comes from highly respected people with letters behind their names. They do not comprehend that these fields of inquiry are not immune to bias, honest mistakes, assumptions, or manipulation and outright deception by misapplying the findings of honest scholars. It is a prime example, of an appeal to the regulative principle - made in a biased, illogical, narrow, deceptive manner.

If the critics want to draw principles from scripture then consider the following: *In particular, Ps. 150 is a grand vision of eschatological worship, where different instruments and all of heaven and earth in all its diversity come together in harmony eternally praising God. What's particularly instructive in the list of instruments in v3-5 is that some instruments were used in temple worship (trumpet, cymbals, the string instruments), while others such as the tambourine and flute, were generally confined to secular uses. **The 150<sup>th</sup> psalm is obliterating all such distinctions**, and is giving us a grand metanarrative of worship where each distinct and diverse instrument plays its part, but in harmony with all the other instruments. It is a great symphony of praise to God, the grand final doxology of the Psalms.*

*Ps. 150 does for worship what Paul does for the church in 1 Cor. 12.* Jason Foster (Mdiv, RTS)

Is it any wonder there is a backlash effect against the critics, with celebration Churches popping up everywhere, and independent Ministries splitting from the main bodies. The staunch traditionalists would rather rip the book of Psalms and other texts from their Bibles, and resort to biased exegesis and fallacious reasoning, to promote their musical preferences.

No matter how many scriptures you show them where drums are used, or sanctioned for use, in true worship, they remain in denial over the simple fact - that rhythm is not evil. They attempt to impose their will on the body of Christ, and when their prohibition is extended outside of formal Church services, it becomes even more offensive and destructive to Christianity.

In terms of theological arguments, the critics of drums and rhythms don't have a leg to stand on, so they also resort to *scare tactics*, based on demonstrably false scientific evidence, and science that is absolutely correct - but misapplied by them. This only adds to their shame, in maligning a God given gift, produced by a God sanctioned instrument. In upcoming sections, I will examine the the earworm effect, memory mnemonics and rhythm, plus syncopated beats in particular the much maligned anapestic beat pattern which has been the subject of bogus assertions.

## **The Earworm, Mind Control and other Fears**

In the overview of his book, *The Christian and Rock Music*, Bacchiocchi makes several statements which are used to paint contemporary Christian music in the worst possible light.

He begins by saying music is non-neutral and that it dictates feelings. I totally agree, that is exactly why musicians attempt to make music that creates a mood conducive to communicating the message of their lyrics. That is why movie sound tracks use scary music to create suspense, or soft romantic music for love scenes. This is done with all forms of music, not just contemporary styles, or popular music. Star Wars for example has exclusively orchestra music in it's sound track. The Imperial March that gives Darth Vader and his legions connotations of evil seething power, is orchestra music. Does that make orchestra music evil? No, just like popular forms, orchestra music and classical instruments can be used for good or evil.

He quotes Howard Hanson, famous composer and former head of the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York: *Music is made up of many ingredients and, according to the proportion of these components, it can be soothing or invigorating, ennobling or vulgarizing, philosophical or orgiastic. It has power for evil as well as good.* Once again we find ourselves in perfect agreement. Instead of reinforcing his argument this is shooting himself in the foot. The shower scene from Psycho, a well know Alfred Hitchcock movie employed a sound like a high pitched, repeatedly screeching violin to amplify the horrific effect of a brutal stabbing. Classical instruments have been used for such things for centuries. Does this make them evil, or can they also be used for good?

There is no question that music (of practically any style) can create powerful connotations, we see this used in advertising, theater, movies, opera, musicals, concerts, etc. No reasonable person would dispute this fact. **Where Bacchiocchi (and other critics) err, is in assigning connotations of good to the music they like (usually western art music or some form with a similar balance) and connotations of evil, to the forms they don't like (Country Western, pop, rock, folk, etc.). The truth is, all of these forms can be used to give connotations of good, evil, love, hate, suspense, romance, etc., or any shade in between.**

It is the job of the artist to use the tools of his chosen genre to set a mood with the music, that matches well with the particular message he is trying to communicate, also taking into consideration the intended audience and setting. The medium is de facto not the message in popular music, because everyone except the critics is able to understand what the artist is trying to communicate (except in extreme cases). By their reasoning, the secular song by The Beatles – *All You Need is Love*, has a strongly danceable rhythm, which makes it's melos sick and unbalanced – such that it's ethos is harmful and it does not communicate the moral message *All You Need is Love* (but harmful, sinful, negativity instead).

Funny, everyone but the critics seems to get the message *All You Need is Love* from the song, in a positive feel good sort of way. The medium is not the message (in their twisted application of it), since common ordinary people can understand the message communicated by the lyrics of the song, and don't get evil, harmful, negative connotations from the music. Play it for a ten year old and ask them what the message is, and how it makes them feel. Apparently, they are lacking in an education in the concepts of Greek philosophy and Gnostic metaphysics, since they inevitable get the message of the lyrics *All You Need is Love* - with no evil connotations.

The critics deceptively say, you can't change the lyrics to a rock song and turn it into a worship song. You can't put Christian lyrics to *The Imperial March* (Star Wars) which gives evil connotations to Darth Vader and make it into a worship song either. Does this mean that you can't craft a worship song using classical instruments, of course not. Likewise, you can craft a Christian song with popular music, as we see with (*Turn, Turn, Turn, - To Everything there is a Season* popularized by the Byrds), which will be examined in an upcoming section.

Some popular melodies have been turned into hymns by such notable men as Martin Luther and Isaac Watts. In fact, one of the Psalm's in your Bible is played to the tune of a Philistine (heathen enemy) song. It's true that this doesn't work for every tune (even in classical music) but it does work out just fine with some modern rock songs. Personally, I do a version of Led Zepplin's *Stairway to Heaven*, with just a few lyrical modifications, and it becomes a song about the abuse of power by the Papacy. I do a version of Pink Floyd's *Mother* that is changed into a Mother's plea to God, to help her in raising her son in a Godly manner. The melos and ethos of that music, quite naturally fits those themes, perhaps even better than the original lyrics. My versions are not worship songs in the strictest sense, but they are ***quite strongly Christian in their character and message.***

Bacchiocchi sites Jimmy Hendrix: *You can hypnotize people with the music and when they get at their weakest point you can preach into their subconscious minds what you want to say.* Once again I find myself in complete agreement. This is nothing new, the Greek concept of Ethos - the ability of music to influence, set mood, hypnotize, control minds, etc., has been understood and exploited for centuries. Moods were even assigned to certain musical scales by the Greeks, and their philosophy permeates the Western classical mentality.

Long before rock and other modern forms were established, or Jimmy Hendrix was born, this was known, discussed, used, and exploited. It is **deceptive** of people like Bacchiocchi and Walter Veith, to use this quote by Jimmy Hendrix to make it appear as though ***modern music***, especially ***forms they personally don't like***, are the **only** forms that have this power, or that they can **only** be used for evil, not good. Hendrix also said - *When the power of love, overcomes the love of power, the world will know peace.*

Classical and orchestra forms, are commonly used for the purpose of manipulating peoples minds and have been for ages. For example the orchestra pit at the theater, doesn't have Jimmy's electric guitar, but it is an essential element in driving home the themes of the play and **planting ideas in peoples minds.**

*...the play's the thing. Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the King. Hamlet*

Historical records show music and theater going back all the way to 1200 BC in ancient Greece, as an essential part of the rites of Dionysus. This included the dithyramb which means choric hymn. The cult's most controversial practice involved uninhibited dancing and emotional displays that created an altered mental state. This altered state was known as 'ecstasy', from which the word ecstasy is derived. Dionysiac, hysteria and 'catharsis' also derive from Greek words for emotional release or purification, associated with the music of their religious rites. Besides hymns, the general consensus is that there was instrumental accompaniment, including, but not limited to, lyres. **Say it's not so – hymns and lyres (small harps) were used in pagan rituals that included mind control, orgies, and bizarre theatrics – I'm afraid so and long before electric guitars and modern drums were invented.** This power resides in many forms of music including classical, even in plain chant, not just styles Bacchiocchi doesn't like and it can be used for good or evil.

Bacchiocchi talks about the Musak Corporation as though it is some *scary new thing* now that science is adding labels and applications to the effects of music.

The Musak Corporation, which distributes music for businesses, advertises its services saying: *The science of stimulus progression employs the inherent power of music in a controlled pattern to achieve predetermined psychological and physiological effects on people. Leading companies and commercial establishments now employ the Musak concept to improve environment, attitudes, and performance.*

Lets take a look at this, it is simply the background music you hear at shopping malls and in elevators. It is soothing music, not Jimmy Hendrix style **hard** rock and often *classical* is employed in this *sinister* brainwashing.

*The Muzak corporation deliberately use established musics – pop, jazz and classical – because they want to produce the impression of familiarity. Familiarity is equated with friendliness and any threat is removed. ...Background art is to be found in the same locations as Muzak and background music, and like the former has a corporate body dedicated to its commission and manufacture. ...How then do background music and background art work together? They conspire to make us feel “at home wherever we are, to win our trust effortlessly.* Musak and Background Art by Mike Est Magazine

*The soothing music you hear as you glide up and down the escalators has a powerful tool you don't consciously hear. The message is there, coherent, repetitive, yet so soft only your subconscious hears it. A message that reaches the subconscious only, telling the workers continuously that they would not steal. They work for a caring company. They are important and their job is important. They would not steal. The department store reports employee stealing was cut 68% during the first six months they used the control tapes. A company manufactures the tapes to order. The ethical questions are many.* (Ethel Gillette, R.N., B.A.)

Not very scary stuff really. They make us *feel at home* with music that is *soothing and familiar* which has the terrible side effect of *curbing stealing*, and perhaps *staying to shop longer*, since you are **comfortable**. However, Muzak is part of Bacchiocchi's attempt to paint **modern forms** as evil, when in fact they use soothing music, including ***soft classical styles that have a melos and ethos fitting the Western Art Balance.***

Let's further examine the science of *mind control* by businesses who employ the use of music such as the use of jingles. Have you ever heard of brand name recognition and *memory mnemonics*. You can base jingles on popular styles, classical music, or some other form, depending on the corporate image you are trying to project.

There is one thing related to this that Bacchiocchi almost seems to grasp, but not quite.

Rhythm has a power over people, that music without a distinctive rhythm, does not possess (cadence added to words has a similar effect). This doesn't make it evil, just useful and more powerful. God is powerful and he is not evil, so why equate the two. Allow me to illustrate with a true story from my own life experience.

I was at a Church camp meeting many years ago in Alberta Canada and had to suffer through what seemed like an endless parade of performers doing dull, boring, hokey, pathetic, traditional hymns and instrumentals. I desperately wanted to leave, but it was raining outside and I had no other place to go. Finally, a girl got up and did some Country Gospel music that was *catchy* and I really enjoyed it. However, there were some dower old conservative minded people in the audience, muttering under their breath and saying disrespectful things. *If it makes you tap your toe, then the music has got to go* was the general sentiment expressed, and she was considered **evil** for performing in that style. Later, I could recall the Biblical messages that accompanied the catchy songs she did, at will, thanks to the rhythm. I couldn't remember anything about the traditional songs, except that they were awful, unpalatable, *suicide songs*.

It is a well known fact, that songs employing *catchy rhythms* have the power to make lyrics *memorable*. An extreme form of this effect has been dubbed Earworm, a loan translation of the German Ohrwurm, a term for a song stuck in one's head. Use of the English translation was popularized by James Kellaris, a professor of marketing at the University of Cincinnati.

The phenomenon has been experienced and understood by common people for ages. Now that someone with a Ph.D. has identified it and added a label, it has suddenly become fodder in the cannon of the critics, who equate it's power to influence with evil, instead of something that can be used for both good or evil. This simple effect is related to memory mnemonics taught in first year Psychology courses. We find it easier to remember things if they are associated with something else, or are stored in a more complex way, etc.

There are five basic forms of memory mnemonics, easily identifiable, that have been taught for years. I could give you a practical example from my electronics courses 25 years ago in the Military. To remember the color codes for resistors, we were taught a simple poem that used the first letter of each word to identify a color. I won't repeat the poem (since it is vulgar) but you get the idea. All these years later, I can *still remember* the color codes. Another example would be trying to remember to pick up a carton of milk for your kids on the way home. If you make the carton of milk 100 feet tall with fireworks shooting out of the top, you will remember it easier than if you imagine it as an ordinary carton of milk. That's why advertisers use *bigger than life* images with *bright colors* and so on. The principle at the most basic level is: the method of storage, effects the ability to retrieve the information. Generally, the more complex (or associated) the method of storage, the easier the retrieval.

Nursery rhymes are memorable because the words have rhyme, cadence and sometimes simple melodies. Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall, who can't remember the rest? Classical music is not immune to ear worms either, as jingle writer Chris Smith notes: *Even the greatest musicians had suffered with earworms. Mozart's children would "infuriate" him by playing melody and scales on the piano below his room – but stopping before completing the tune... He would have to rush down and complete the scale because he couldn't bear to listen to an unresolved scale.* That's all it takes for some people, just stop before the scale is resolved.

Professor Kellaris indicates that his research had shown that although ***rhythm and repetition create highly favorable conditions***, *...there was no standard for creating an earworm – people could react differently to different tunes. ...I compiled a top 10 list of earworms in the US, but the number one item is simply the category 'other' - which means that any tune is prone to become an earworm. ...It's highly idiosyncratic.*

Songwriters *instinctively* try to make the chorus of a song simple, catchy and repeat a number of times during a song, while saving the heavy, wordier messages, for the verses. The catchy chorus is the hook or bait that helps makes a song popular and ensures the delivery of the messages in the verses. If possible, the main message that is trying to be conveyed is summarized by the chorus. This technique is used by songwriters we would consider good or evil, ***it's even in your hymn books***. Songwriters were creating choruses that lend themselves to becoming earworms, long before the term was coined.

*Yes, Jesus Loves Me* (for the Bible tells me so), the popular children's hymn, is one earworm that sticks in my head quite frequently. I end up singing it over and over again in my mind.

Why do critics like Bacchiocchi believe drums and rhythms are evil, when the Bible tells us to use drums and dance in the congregation of the saints and to praise him in his heavenly sanctuary? I don't think we would be instructed by the word of God to use them if they were evil or detrimental. The proof is in the pudding. Contemporary Christian styles employing drums and catchy rhythms are being used for ***good purposes*** everyday and there is great evidence of their spiritual uplifting nature and their ability to communicate Biblical messages to masses of people. This comes with the added benefit that the Biblical messages thus communicated are ***easy to recall***. Thousands upon thousands of committed Christians can testify from personal experience, but the critics don't want to talk about that. They ignore the positive evidence and hand pick negative examples to support their bias. They are quite convincing, until you peel away the facade and realize they are teaching principles based on Greek philosophy, and Gnosticism, that are at odds with the Bible.

Add some rhyme and cadence to a Biblical message and it becomes more memorable. Associate a simple melody to it and it becomes even harder to forget. Put the whole package in a popular music style that common people find ***catchy*** and enjoy listening to, and now you have a powerful way to deliver a good message that sticks in the minds of your audience.

Don't we want people to know the truths taught in their Bibles? Isn't the object of a sermon to plant a Biblical lesson into peoples minds, that will hopefully stick with them? Should we ban sermons because they manipulate peoples minds and plant messages in peoples heads? Isn't that what they are supposed to do? Why attack Contemporary Christian music for doing what sermons do? Why can the critics only see the evil applications of rhythm? Like everything else they list to shoot down the music that doesn't fit the balance of Western art music, it can have positive or negative effects **depending on it's application**. It can be used in good music from God fearing artists, or evil music from the likes of Marilyn Manson (a self proclaimed Satanist and musical performer/pop icon who has publicly stated he would like to destroy Christianity).

The work of Suzanne Haïk-Vantoura, decoding the cantillation marks (as musical notes which support the syntax and meaning of the words) of the 24 books of the Old Testament, show that ***the Hebrew Bible was meant to be read to music with some kind of cadence***. We don't know the style, but it was in principle accompanied, not monadic, and this would have greatly increased it's ability to be communicated and recalled. Do you think God might have known something that scientists are only now discovering?

## **Brainless Brainwave Arguments**

Brian S. Neumann (and others), make an argument based on rhythm changing brainwaves. Has common sense no place in their world? We will have to ban Television Evangelism, since TV and all forms of video (taped sermons, Internet) mess with the brain's alpha waves, according to science.

Better to let the devil control those mediums completely by their perverse logic.

Don't use a cell phone to call an emergency service when you are trying to be a good Samaritan. Scientists say a two minute call will change your brain waves for about two days.

Enough of this foolishness - Neumann fails to point out that music is not the only thing that causes these types of effects. There are a myriad of common ordinary things that effect out brainwaves. It's like a fat man saying I will denounce cookies and never eat them again, while at the same time continuing to eat gallons of ice cream and other goodies.

Some of the researchers quoted by Neumann (and other critics) maintain that modern rock beats zap us of energy, by conflicting with the bodies natural rhythms. Others, using the same tools of science, argue quite the opposite - that it energizes us, especially sexually.

Sorry, but your expert researchers can't have it both ways. Using the infallible and unbiased tools of science, there is strong empirical evidence indicating that Bacchiocchi managed to clone himself, since having it both ways is his forte.

The conclusions of the particular brain wave research these critics refer to, have less validity than my assertion of Bacchiocchi clones conducting it on the spaceship fallacy, from the planet bias.

Listen to what Gregg Strawbridge, Ph.D. Lancaster, PA, Pastor, has to say in his enlightening paper *A Biblical Theology of Music Applied to the Contemporary Music Styles Debate*. The following excerpt (I once again, highly recommend you Google for and download the full version) was given in response to the specific brain wave science under discussion here.

Notice this shining gem of reptilian rhetoric from Bill Gothard which begins the passage.

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**(Bill Gothard)** *...rock music causes a mix-up in the alpha waves between the two hemispheres of the brain, resulting in what some researchers call 'switching.' 'Switching' is a phenomenon which occurs in adult schizophrenics to produce regression to infantile, reptilian locomotion.*

**(Gregg Strawbridge)** *Much of the behavioral research to which the above Gothard-endorsed authors refer is based on the behavioral kinesology of Psychiatrist John Diamond. Diamond says that the anapestic beat ("da da DA") found in some rock music causes muscle weakening, even up to a reduction of two-thirds (Cannon & Cannon; Miller, 1993, p. 12ff). An example of this beat is that fine specimen of popular music, "Southern Nights" by Glenn Campbell. Miller (1993) is right in questioning these conclusions. As for a refutation, suffice it to say that at every Golds Gym, Diamond et al is constantly being refuted. An instant autonomic reduction of strength is de facto not occurring as iron-pumping people are benchpressing to anapestic back beats.*

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Thank you Gregg Strawbridge, now back to my point. Why believe research that *contradicts the word of God*, when it is demonstrably false to begin with? Science is not immune to bias, honest mistakes, assumptions, and a variety of other inherent weaknesses, as we well know from the Evolution vs Creation controversy.

There is plenty of opposing research, showing the positive effects of music, **including music containing beat**. Bogus assertions will probably crop up and be shot down in this field of study, as they are in other fields, until hell freezes over. Personally, I find this endless cycle amusing. Really, you have found the missing link? Show it to us and let's see what it really is!

Today, we can even make music *from* brainwaves, but we are far from being able to understand or even define, all of the complex mysteries associated with the reactions of music and man.

I wouldn't rule out the possibility that science will someday discover some type of beat that affects us adversely. It has been discovered that some patterns of light affect us adversely. A Japanese cartoon animation had to be pulled off the air some time ago, because the flickering light patterns it accidentally created, sent some people into seizures. ***Does that make light evil?***

If a beat pattern is ever discovered that does something similar, ***would that make beat evil?*** I would suggest to you, that in all likelihood, such a beat would never be employed by musicians, secular or religious (even if they were allowed to), because common people would probably not find it's damaging effects enjoyable.

We tend to avoid things that are damaging instinctively. If the stove is too hot, we pull our hand away, if the light is too bright, we put on sunglasses, if the sound is too loud, we cover our ears. I find it highly unlikely that there would not be an instinctive response.

I also don't think our Creator would have somehow overlooked damaging beats in our design, especially since he ordained the use of rhythm and dance to worship him in the congregation of the saints and his heavenly sanctuary (Psalm 149, 150), allowed them when his prophets gave prophecy (I Samuel 10:5) and listened to danceable beats Himself, before the Holy Ark of the Covenant in (II Samuel 6:5) - as the whole house of Israel employed them in his worship.

Moreover, such a discovery would not make any of the other danceable beats evil or detrimental. Beats were danced to and used during worship in the Bible, so they can't **all** be bad, no matter which way you slice it.

However, let's suppose for a moment that the devil was so sly as to deceive people into damaging themselves with a particular beat pattern. Going back to light, we have an example of this. Using vanity as his lure, he causes people to bath themselves with ultra-violet rays in tanning salons, even though there is strong evidence they cause skin cancer. If science ever does find a damaging beat, banning **all** danceable beats from the Church on those grounds, would be analogous to making everyone sit in the dark during services, because one narrow spectrum of light is damaging.

The assertions of Psychiatrist John Diamond are clearly bogus. I have bench pressed to the much maligned anapestic beat myself, with no loss of strength. Necessity calls upon me to be little bit crass here, so please forgive me. Despite the assertions of the other critics, rock beats do not cause sexual arousal. That bias stems from what is commonly ***associated*** with the beat, when it is employed by carnally minded artists.

For example, there are secular musicians combining rock beats with sexual lyrics, half naked women dancing suggestively, etc., (on stage and in their music videos). That sort of stuff is clearly arousing, no one will disagree, but you can not condemn ***the beat*** for that.

There are plenty of God fearing musicians and Christian audiences, participating in rock styles, without having orgies, participating in any type of deviant sexual behavior, or in any way being lead to sexual arousal. They are as morally sound as the people in the Church who enjoy classical styles and ***there is no evidence to the contrary that stands up to scrutiny.***

People find Christian music and videos employing these beats ***inspirational***, not ***sexual***. If statistics, empirical data, and the language of case studies is what you are looking for, consider this: *While not a large case study, since I am not a mainstream artist with a large audience, I have a contemporary Christian music video employing rock beats on the Internet called "The Lord is Come". It has had in excess of 15,000 plays to date, and well over one hundred people, with no prompting, took time out of*

*their busy schedules to comment on the spiritually uplifting, inspirational effect it had upon them. I received zero comments indicating sexual arousal, or loss of strength. Some people even wrote private messages to me, sharing how they wept (in a good way) because they were so moved spiritually, others said they danced for spiritual joy with their children. This hardly seems like evidence that supports the assertions of the critics of rock beats.* (Ken Rich – author of this book)

Sex and rock beats do not go hand in hand unless the lyrics, dress, attitudes and moral convictions of the people involved are carnally inclined. Many people prefer to make love to classical music (or other forms) as their mood music. I see no reason to malign their musical tastes because of it. Not to be obtuse, but personally I find that when Christian lyrics and visuals are attached to any form of music, it automatically negates it's ability to create a mood conducive to romance. Don't we find it hard to think about *Godly things* and *sexual things* at the same time?

I have learned to be a skeptic when it comes to all the foolishness out there, that claims to be legitimate science. Science (so called) can make *monkeys out of men* in more than the evolutionary sense. History is littered with the corpses of failed scientific theories, which enjoyed a life of acceptance for a time, yet died a miserable death under the withering light of scrutiny.

If science is your standard, consider this. There are reams of scientific studies showing that the written word, or the spoken word alone (even without cadence), and the associated ideas, thoughts, and emotions elicited by it, can cause all manner of changes in our brains and bodies, including sexual arousal.

Based on science, scripture, and what our our own senses tell us, there is every reason to believe that a good rousing sermon may not only *alter your brainwaves*, it could make your heart burn within you, make you sick with guilt, move you to tears (tears alone come with numerous brain related reactions), change your pulse, raise your adrenaline level, have other physiological effects, ***or even change the entire course of your life!***

Luke 24:32 *They said one to another, "Wasn't our heart burning within us, while he spoke to us along the way, and while he opened the scriptures to us?"*

If the criteria of brain and body responses is to be used, sermons employing nothing but words cause far more effects than simple rhythms alone (without the lyrics, visual stimulation, and so on, normally associated with it).

The effects of words spoken (or written) in sermons, can also be used for both good and evil, as witnessed by the ones we label deceptive or heretical. So what is more powerful and potentially dangerous, rhythm or words? Which causes more physical and mental responses?

## **A Little Common Sense**

What then, can we reasonably assert, based on the available facts and the Bible. The effect of rhythm on the brain and the body is God given, since we are born with our response to it. It was part of Biblical worship, and therefore acceptable in our modern worship of God. It is enjoyable and inherent to both the Godly and the unGodly, which tends to make songs employing it popular and memorable, whether those songs are good or evil.

Why then argue that only evil songs should employ rhythm, unless you don't want good songs with Biblical messages to become popular and memorable? Are we trying to hide the Word of God from the masses?

Would Reggae or Classical music be more effective in reaching the people in Jamaica for instance? If you limit Christian musicians to forms of music and instruments that few people want to listen to, how is that serving God or evangelizing the masses? Tell me how such a limitation would be beneficial?

It's like saying we should only allow the word of God to be in Latin because it's a noble language. This type of ethnocentric standard has been applied in the past, but thankfully we are now able to communicate the word of God in the vulgar (common – popular) tongues of the people. It also needs to be communicated in the vulgar (common – popular) **music** of the people. *When a people develops its own hymns with both vernacular (common, popular) words and music, it is good evidence that Christianity has truly taken root* (Chenowith and Bee p. 212).

I rejoice when a Christian song becomes popular on mainstream charts. Whenever a secular radio station plays a song that gets people thinking about God, I consider that a victory.

Many popular hymns in our Church Hymnals were set to the tunes of popular beer hall songs. Should we also stop singing those? Were Isaac Watts and others wrong to do this? A Mighty Fortress by Martin Luther takes Psalm 46 and sets it to a lively German beer hall melody. As he said, *...the devil should not have all of the good melodies!*

Dr. James B. Richards (Senior Pastor – Impact Ministries) brings out the following four points:

1. *Religion approaches God in a sorrowful, pious manner as if it was a duty or painful obligation. **True worshipers are people who have fallen in love with God and are not afraid to express it.***
2. *The Psalmist wrote a song, inspired of God and put it to the tune of a popular Philistine song. In the Amplified Bible the introduction to Psalm 84 says, To the Chief Musician, set to a Philistine lute, or a particular Gittite tune, a Psalm of the Sons of Korah. **That means they put their words to the music of a popular song of their time.***
3. *Habakkuk the prophet set his prayer to music. In Habakkuk 3:1 it says, “A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet, set to wild enthusiastic music.” AMP. **God has never been nervous or insulted by loud, wild, enthusiastic music.** We have been led to believe it is wrong to have fun with God. Religion tries to make you afraid of God. Jesus sought to help you fall in love with God.*
4. *In 1690 a teenage boy complains to his father that the church's music is out of date and boring. The father insisted that it was good enough for him and his father it should be good enough for the son. The father challenges his son and says if you think you can do better, then why don't you. The young boy, Isaac Watts, goes into his room and begins a writing career that produces “Behold the Glories of the Lamb,” “We're marching to Zion,” “When I survey the Wondrous Cross,” and “Joy to the World.” In all he wrote 350 contemporary tunes that later generations came to consider classics. **Yet, in their day they were as outrageous as electric guitars and drums.***

I must say I completely agree with Richard's points above. In fact, limiting Christian artists in their choice of instruments and styles has a very negative effect. It cripples us in the race to win hearts and minds.

The spoken word, the written word, TV, Internet, music, and other forms of communication are often used for evil, but that doesn't mean that the medium itself is evil. It is only a tool that can be used for good or evil. The devil is smart enough to take advantage of effective tools, does that mean we should abandon them as unfit for Godly purposes?

## **The Devil's Tools**

It seems silly, but this is one of the main arguments I have heard used against popular Christian music. It's a *tool of the devil* and they point to Death Metal bands, Punk Rock, explicit lyrics, Christian bands that do not act *Christian*, and so on, to illustrate their point.

Isn't it strange, money is a tool that is often used for evil but I never hear those preachers refusing it or banning it from their Churches as a *tool of the devil*. It is one of his greatest, most often used tools.

1TI 6:10 *For the love of MONEY is a root of all kinds of evil...* I could point to corruption, child prostitution, modern slavery, and a plethora of other examples to illustrate my point.

What if everyone followed this *ban the devil's tools* aspect of their perverse teaching, to it's logical conclusion. How soon after the flow of filthy lucre ceased, would they change their tune?

I have never seen any of the critics of the *devils tools* ban money, although it is arguably his favorite tool. Instead they ban popular Christian music as a *tool of the devil*, **while simultaneously getting as much of the devils favorite tool, as they possibly can!** Does anyone see the irony and hypocrisy in this?

Why stop there, why not get rid of **all** the devils tools. Studies show that most people use the Internet for gambling and porn, so let's abandon that, along with TV, which we all know is evil since it is full of vile, objectionable programs. Why finance the Church with filthy lucre, or try to win souls with TV Evangelism, Internet ministries, or contemporary Christian music?

Enough of this foolishness - if we banned all the devils tools we wouldn't have any left to use ourselves **for Godly purposes**. He takes advantage of everything he can, his wolves in sheep's clothing even twist scriptures to deceive people! **Are we to throw out our Bibles too?**

I think that any reasonable person, would concede that modern music, (like any other communication medium, or tool, including money), could be used for good or evil. It is idiotic to suggest that just because the bad guys use something for evil, the good guys should be banned from using it for good. **That just deprives the good guys of a useful tool in the race to win hearts and minds.**

It seems like an easy concept to grasp, but somehow this simple principle escapes certain theologians and preachers, unless of course we use money and not music as our example. It's *funny* how that sharpens their wits!

## **True and False Worship**

I was watching the Discovery channel one evening and they had a documentary about wiccans and other pagans. A group of witches and warlocks formed a circle and began their pagan worship service with what? Drums? Rock music? Fiendish evil instruments banned by the guardians of orthodoxy?

No, it was a plain chant. No instruments at all, except for their voices. What the Church calls A Cappella, which is accepted by even the most conservative and stringent anti-instrumental Christians.

False worship can take place with no instruments at all. One could also sing a devil worship song accompanied by slow melodious harp music. In fact, piano music, organ music, classical music, any kind of music could be used in false worship, not just popular styles.

I agree that the devil uses popular styles more than the others forms of music. Why wouldn't he, they are popular, which makes them a more effective tool.

He's not stupid, just because some of the good guys are using popular styles to win souls for God, he doesn't ban their use as a *tool of God*. A tool is a tool, it can be used by either side. Why throw away the one that's going to reach and influence the most people.

I have seen Walter Veith's presentation, where the head of the system Protestants have taught for centuries as being the anti-Christ, is being worshiped by people from around the world and music of varying descriptions, is part of that. Does this mean that those same styles of music can't be used in true worship? Are Protestants supposed to see this as a reason to ban contemporary styles as Veith suggests? Wouldn't they also need to ban plain chant, classical, traditional, in fact **all** styles of music from their Church's, because their old enemy employs them **all**, not just the ones the critics don't like. They use the Bible too, should we ban those? They use money, should we ban it? They use TV Evangelism should we ban that? They use video presentations like Walter Veith's, should we ban those, including his?

It all goes back to the simple fact that music, whether it be classical, contemporary, or even plain chant, can be used by *either side* in this war. Veith is like a military commander that sees the enemy coming over the hill with rifles and grenades, so he tells all the soldiers on **his** side to drop **their** rifles and grenades. His reason - the other side is using those weapons, so they must be evil.

It becomes a little bit harder to win the war, with that type of mentality in the leadership positions, don't you think? What makes his reasoning really ridiculous, is that he considers other weapons to be **not** evil, even though the same enemy is also using them.

True Biblical worship can take place in the presence of a variety of loudly played instruments, including percussion and combined with dance, as is shown in passage after passage of Scripture. So what is the *Music of Babylon*, aside from a deceptive catch phrase designed to give evil connotations to contemporary Christian music.

Does style matter? You could change the words to *The Old Rugged Cross* and do a devil worship version accompanied by harps with the same melody. On the other hand, Martin Luther made a Christian song, beloved by millions of conservative Christians, out of a beer hall melody.

False worship is false worship, whether music is part of it or not. True worship is true worship, whether music is part of it or not. The style, or choice of instruments is not the determining factor. The intent of the heart, the message carried by the lyrics, and primarily **the acceptance of God**, is what counts.

We have already seen examples of what God accepts, even in his Sanctuary (Psalm 150), in his presence before the Holy Ark (2 Samuel 6:5), when his prophets prophesy (I Samuel 10:5), in the congregation of saints (Psalm 149), and in other supporting texts.

All of the essential elements of popular Christian music are there. Drums with rhythms the **common people** found enjoyable and danceable are represented. Also a wide variety of instruments were used, in fact, an astonishing array - considering their primitive technology limited their ability to invent instruments.

## **Satanic Stroke of Genius**

If there is a *Satanic stroke of genius* regarding music and Babylon, as Bacchiocchi suggests, then it seems to me that he (and like minded people) are the ones promoting it. If the devil were to convince Christians that popular styles, which could carry their message to the masses, were somehow evil and unfit for use, that would give him a huge advantage in the race to win hearts and minds.

If we use harps and classical styles, while the devil's followers use the music of the common people, whose message will be heard? Is God against using the music of the common people? Not in my Bible! Quite the opposite is demonstrated in verse after verse.

Does a Christian song have to be a worship song at all for that matter? Most of the ones I write are not written for formal Church settings and communal worship. They were written for evangelizing the lost on the Internet and were never intended for formal worship in a Church setting. It is the sick that need a doctor! I don't till the soil in Church, since it is *preaching to the choir*.

The best *soul winning* opportunities are on the highways and byways, where you can't reach people with traditional, old time, conservative Gospel music - let alone harp music with no timing. You have to reach them with the styles they like, or your message just won't be communicated to them. If it's not communicated, then how can it influence them? What are they left with to be influenced by - music in that style by a secular artist - who is not trying to lead them to Christ, or teach them a moral lesson.

The songs and videos may not suit the tastes of conservative minded traditional Gospel or Western classical art music fans, but they are still Christian songs, with Biblical themes, and they carry good messages intended to teach, inspire, and evangelize. Their styles vary to set the mood for the message being communicated, not on other considerations, since the Internet is home to every form of music - the good, the bad, and the ugly.

Unlike a communal worship setting, where you must listen to what is provided by the worship leader or else leave, on the Internet there are thousands of choices. People gravitate to the styles they prefer. If you can place a moral lesson into a style they like, you have at least a small chance of influencing them toward good. Try to reach them with a style they don't like and **your message will be silence**.

Should Christian artists be restricted in what styles and instruments they can use in songs regardless of whether they are worship songs, lamentations, evangelizing songs, commentaries, or some other form of inspirational music - not even intended for Church use? Most artists would tell you the same thing, we need creative freedom in order to create, restrictions stifle our creativity and **limit our ability to communicate**. This is true of artists who are trying to do good or evil. **So why restrict the good artists, unless you want the evil ones to triumph and win more souls?**

After listening to the material of Brian S. Neumann and Walter Veith, my friend not only abandoned rhythm in his music, he has also tried to convince people that **the local Christian radio station is doing evil**, by pumping out *The Music of Babylon*. Meanwhile, what they are actually doing, is offering people the option to tune into modern music with good messages and spiritually uplifting themes - rather than letting secular music with worldly, devilish lyrics, be the only choice on the radio dial.

No, popular music cannot be used for good according to the ultra pious guardians of orthodoxy. By default then, they argue it must be used as a tool for **evil alone**. Whose side are they on?

## **An Old Message with a Modern Style**

If a song, employing modern instruments and style, was so catchy, so contagious, so memorable and popular, that it burned a Bible message into the hearts and minds of people everywhere, wouldn't that be a good thing?

Neumann, Bacchiocchi, Veith (and other like minded people), should ask themselves a question. How many millions of people can't quote a lick of scripture except for Ecclesiastes 3:1-8? Those verses are known to millions because of the popular song Turn! Turn! Turn! (To Everything There Is a Season).

It was written and composed by Pete Seeger and covers were done by numerous mainstream groups, most notably The Byrds. It was also prominently featured in the 1994 movie *Forrest Gump* and the TV series *The Wonder Years*. I have heard it played on **secular** radio stations so many times while I was growing up, that I often had those verses from Ecclesiastes stuck in my head (earworm). Secular stations still play it, and another generation is being affected by a Biblical message.

If a popular style of music had not been used, how many people would have been influenced by the beautiful message of those Scriptures - through Seeger's song? I know I would not have been.

Boney M's *Rivers of Babylon*, Sister Janet Mead's *The Lord's Prayer* and U2's *40*, are further examples of large portions of scripture set to popular music.

If this was a regular occurrence, rather than an infrequent, frowned upon event - how much scripture could be placed into the hearts and minds of the people we are trying to lead to Christ?

My friend, who I mentioned already, also had the potential to reach millions. Now his Biblical lyrics will languish in obscurity and have no influence upon the lost. Unless of course, he chooses to return to a popular style, with instruments the common people want to listen to.

Using logical fallacies, bogus scientific assertions, and twisting scripture - to suppress the creative people in the Church, does not honor God, or spread the Gospel.

## **Applying Limitations**

I can identify with the critics of modern forms in one sense. We all see the need to apply limitations on the use of some the *extreme* styles in communal worship settings. Some are not appropriate, even though the book of Psalms sanctions drums and rhythms, while 2 Samuel 6:5, 1 Samuel 10:5 and other scriptures demonstrate their use (also other sources from Rabbinical literature).

What is sanctioned by God, are various instruments (all of the ones they had – thus all that we have) danceable beats and style, that the *common people* found enjoyable, which does not include some of the extreme styles, since they are enjoyed by only a small segment of a mixed congregation. Some forms are not *vocally oriented* enough to reflect the parts of the temple services that the critics point to, which is a valid use of the regulative principle *when applied with fairness and a dash of common sense*.

The message of the lyrics should be *intelligible* and not *drowned out* by the music. This is a principle also laid down by the apostle Paul, when addressing the gift of tongues. While not speaking to the issue of worship music directly, Paul admonishes us to communicate in a way that can be understood, or else it is of no benefit to the congregation.

1CO 14:9 *So also you, unless you uttered by the tongue words easy to understand, how would it be known what is spoken? For you would be speaking into the air.*

However, the regulative principle is a double edge sword, since it can also be applied to limit the use of classical and traditional forms which *common people* don't find enjoyable, inspiring, or uplifting. In fact, many find them unbearably boring, dull, and lifeless. Some of the younger generation *roll their eyes* and suffer through them; *some leave the Church because of the stifling atmosphere*. We've all seen it, so why deny it.

The traditional styles also employ instruments other than the four temple instruments (pianos, organs, violins, etc.), just like Heaven's Metal (and other extreme forms), but they are more vocally oriented and have a melos more to the liking of the classically biased critics. So they fight to keep those styles

and their instruments (thus exposing the hypocrisy of their temple instrument argument). However, those styles are certainly not considered enjoyable, or spiritually uplifting, to the vast majority of the modern congregation of the saints. Therefore the regulative principle can be called upon to limit them on those grounds.

We are encouraged by the Bible to sing a *new song* and outdated forms that only a few people with eclectic tastes enjoy, don't have the power to *inspire* modern Church goers toward *justice and righteousness*. Many leave the Church if they are *forced* to suffer through them, and who can blame them? Their Bibles don't condemn them to somber ceremonies, and the Spirit within them wants to praise God enthusiastically, not in painful obligation to a staid and sorrowful Liturgy.

There are plenty of easy listening styles that average, common people, do like - which work well in communal worship settings. They are not condemned by the Bible in any way. Those in the minority, like the hard core rockers, the classical aficionados, and the staunch traditionalists, could possibly enjoy their music outside of regular services to solve the problem. An after hours concert where attendance is optional, would be more appropriate.

Otherwise, there will always be people who are upset about sitting through a worship service they find too offensively rockish, or too staid, boring, and insufferably dull. There is no way to make everyone happy of course, but at least the majority of people in the congregation would find it acceptable and above all, it would be applying limitations based on the Bible in an unbiased way and applying the regulative principle in a reasonable and fair manner.

## Personal Tastes and Views

Personally, I don't like to listen to some of the extreme forms around today because I find them lacking in the aesthetic sense. However, I do not condemn the artists who use them outside of formal worship settings. On Cd's, or especially the Internet and radio, Christian Rap, Heaven's Metal, Holy Hip-Hop, and other forms, are perfectly acceptable means of communicating with the devotees of those styles. It is a language if you will, as completely foreign to me as Chinese, but an effective communication tool in those particular sub-cultures.

In a large cities, where those musical sub-cultures are substantial, there are Churches that cater almost exclusively to those tastes, and I see nothing wrong with that. However, in a *mixed* congregation, with limited alternatives in the community, styles that are offensive to the *typical* Church goer - should be avoided.

Extreme, or radical styles, can influence thinking positively, as evidenced by those spiritually inspired and converted through those means. The ethos of the music is not evil, and the medium is de facto not the message, since Christian principles are effectively communicated, and the results upon the hearts of the devotees of those styles, is good and beneficial.

Thousands upon thousands can testify to that fact. Like Bobby in the story Bruchko by Bruce Olson, Christian artists are winning souls and spreading the Gospel with songs and music considered weird (or evil), to the Western art music mentality - which stems from Greek Philosophy.

Personally, I don't find classical and traditional styles to be particularly offensive in the aesthetic sense, as I do with some of the extreme modern forms, but I don't find them spiritually uplifting either - despite their devotees claims about their superior melos and ethos. To my tastes, they are lifeless, dull, somber, boring songs - lacking in the ability to communicate effectively to the modern Church goer.

If the medium is the message, then traditional western art forms are **worse than silence** to many of my generation, and I am a middle aged man. The younger generation can't stomach them at all, for the most part. There are some (usually in the older generation) who prefer it, and **they can't be ignored or undervalued**. It is still possible to win souls within that styles sub-culture, and I am glad that there are artists tilling that soil as well. However, classical/traditional fans are a small minority within the general population. They have a larger ratio in the body of Christ (since many have been *brainwashed* that everything else is irreverent), but they are still a minority and have no right to **force** their ethnocentric standard on others.

## **Recommended Reading**

I have not yet read the following book but from the reviews, it appears that I am not the only person who sees a heavy reliance on tradition and a lack of Biblical support among the critics.

John Frame, a seminary professor with a Ph.D in theology from Princeton University, exposes the fallacious reasoning of the critics, in his book ***Contemporary Worship Music: A Biblical Defense*** (P & R Publishing, 1997).

In his review, Bill Newcomer notes that *Frame calls for approaching issues from a basis in Biblical theology. This is to be in contrast with appeals to confessional systematic and historical theology that makes theological tradition equal to Scripture, and refuses to weigh those traditions against the Reformation principle of Sola Scriptura. ...I find that Frame's critics tend to not meet him on the basis of Scripture, but on the basis of historical theology or tradition.*

Dr. Barry Liesch points out the following in his review of Frames work. *[Frame] ...accuses academics of "shoddy argumentation," "carelessness in research," unethical scholarship, "aesthetic snobbery," of "sheer stubbornness," and of being "locked in cement," in their harsh criticisms of worship choruses! He deals squarely with all of the objections leveled at choruses--the subjectivity, narcissism, triviality, emotionality, anti-intellectualism, pragmatism, consumerism, and musical chauvinism commonly associated with choruses..*

## **What are the fruits**

What are the fruits from the deceptive teachings of the critics? What harvest is being reaped from the seeds they plant?

- Needlessly dull, boring, lifeless services that **drive away**, rather than **attract** people to the worship of God.
- Gifted people who are **suppressed** and convinced they should not use their talents to win souls and glorify God.
- Masses of people **inundated** with devilish lyrics by secular musicians, while Christian musicians are **discouraged** from offering Gospel songs with equally popular styles.
- A **loss of confidence** in the doctrines of the Church, since biased and unBiblical teachings on this subject, imply that other teachings are also quite possibly wrong.

- **Bogus assertions**, based on faulty science, or correct science misapplied, used to *scare* Christians about a Biblical, God given gift.
- **Divisions**, usually along generational lines. The older generation insisting that somber services and tradition styles equate to reverence, while the appeal to physical movement associated with rhythm is intrinsically evil. The stifling atmosphere forces a **split** with the younger generation, who opt for celebration Churches. Their worship style is more in keeping with what the Bible actually describes related to worship and music, based on unbiased Biblical exegesis, hermeneutics, and the evidence of Archaeomusicology.
- The overall effect, *hinders* the spreading of the Gospel and the Kingdom of God.

## Lost Souls and Wasted Talents

One of the proponents of these fruitless and barren teachings was once a professional musician. At some point he was influenced by the critics and became one himself. He portrays himself as noble and virtuous, for laying down his drum sticks. Instead, I see him as a man to whom God has given a talent, one he used in his past life when it served his *own* interests and glorified self. Now, as a *enlightened* Christian, he refuses to use this same talent to *win souls* and *glorify God*. So be it, that's his choice to make, but I see nothing noble or virtuous about wasting talents.

Far worse, is that he and others try to convince Christian artists to stop using their gifts to win souls for the Kingdom. My enormously talented friend was one of their casualties, and so were all those he could have reached with his Biblically based lyrics and popular music style.

## Conclusion

After examining the evidence, and hearing all the arguments (I know of and that warrant a response) against popular Christian music, I find them shockingly biased, demonstrably false, downright deceptive, and totally unBiblical.

Therefore, I have decided to continue to worship the true God in his heavenly sanctuary, as he has ordained through the author of Psalms and supporting scriptures.

*Psalm 150: 3-5 Praise him with trumpet sound; praise him with lute and harp! Praise him with tambourine and dance; praise him with strings and pipe! Praise him with clanging cymbals; praise him with loud clashing cymbals.*

I think I've wasted enough time refuting the assertions of the critics of contemporary Christian music. I'm going back to winning souls and feeding kids with Gospel music. In fact, I'm going to stop writing right now, so I can free up my hands to...

*Start the music, strike the drum, play the melodious harp and lyre and ...sing unto the Lord a new song.*  
(Psalm 81:2) (Psalm 98:1).

Ken Rich

Contact Author: [kengrich@yahoo.ca](mailto:kengrich@yahoo.ca)

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