

Some Thoughts On Music

Sound affects the entire body including every nerve cell. Natural sound or sound from natural instruments *cannot* hurt the ears, yet when mechanical or electronic sound is turned up it can seriously or permanently damage the ears. Music affects children emotionally, intellectually, and in the psychomotor areas. Music can affect babies even *before* birth. When classical music is played in maternity wards it keeps the babies quiet. Yet the same babies will not settle to pop, jazz or rock music. Certain styles of music have also been proven to help children to be 'smarter'.

Music can affect emotions. Music is communication and as Christians the music we have and how we use it is surely our expression of our communication with God. The Bible says to '*take heed what ye hear*', (Mk.4:24) and to '*take heed how ye hear*', (Lk.8:18).

Is music '*amoral*'? The dictionary meaning of the word '*amoral*' is: '*without a sense of moral responsibility*'. It is interesting that this word was only invented *this century*, and especially with the arrival of the term '*contemporary Christian music*'! All the music experts that I know of do not say that music is '*amoral*'. Is music really neutral?...Is speech neutral? In speech we have the alphabet and the individual letters are neutral but combine them into letters and can they not take on a moral quality? Lines and circles are also neutral, but combine them and you have '*art*'! Can we really separate the *medium* from the *message* in music? The fact is that music can range from philosophical to orgiastic! It has power for evil or for good!

How powerful is music and what effect does it have on our Christian walk and the presentation of the Gospel? One professor of social thought in Chicago says, '*TV compared to music plays a comparatively small role in the formation of character and taste...Rock music has one appeal only, a barbaric appeal to sexual desires*'. This statement comes from an *unsaved* man! As with so many false things within the church today, the secular experts have to tell many in the church the truth! Another secular writer says: '*The concept that music affects character was the one great inspiring force behind the lives of the great composers*'. Aristotle said: '*If one listens to the wrong kind of music he will become the wrong kind of person. If he listens to the right kind of music he will tend to become the right kind of person*'. Arguably there is some truth in this statement. Yet, why is it that many of today's Christian musicians and church leaders cannot see nor understand the powerful effect music has on Christians?

Music reflects a philosophy. When songs were being sung about free love and sex, we had free love and sex in society. Today we have songs that encourage suicide and suicide is at an all time high, particularly amongst teenagers. Many suicides have been *directly* linked to the music the victims have listened to. So too New Age music reflects a mindset: it has what some call 'ambient sound': short repeated patterns, a lack of variety and form, little melody and no rules. New Age magazines write: '*for the purposes of occult dominion, minds must be rendered passive*'. Another example is varieties of disco music. This music attracts the homosexual element. Nth Africa had the strongest church in the world in the first three centuries but they turned to heathenism which was reflected in their music with its excessive rhythm and beat. In short, musical styles reflect a school of thought.

In church I am convinced that worldly music breaks down separation between us and the world. Music reflects our view or our philosophy and therefore *reflects our view of God*. Christian rock is Christian lyrics (at best), mixed with *rebellious* music. Rock music is steeped and rooted in rebellion and drugs, sex, and rock-n-roll. I do not have to prove this - the secular artists, the media, and the world admits it! The underlining premise is: you cannot escape the *way* something is said!

An orchestra may have 100 musicians with only 3 or 4 rhythm instruments, (1-2%). However, Christian rock music and much of today's contemporary music is more than 75% rhythm! Contemporary world star, Paul Simon says '*Rock is rhythm*'.

We are *tripartate beings* made up of a spirit (Matt.6:33), soul (mental - mind, will, emotions, 2Cor.10:5), and body (Rom.13:14), as *one being*.

Whatever appeals to the flesh opens the door for *more* flesh. Ephesians 5:18 says we are not to be in the flesh wherein there is excess but that we are to be filled with the spirit. This scripture is showing a definite contrast between the flesh and the spirit. The word '*filled*' denotes a *control of* - that we are to be controlled by the Holy Spirit which is already in us. Interestingly the verses following speak about

music, (*psalms, hymns and spiritual songs*)!

Christian music is often a replica of its worldly counterpart. Several top Christian singers are knowingly or unknowingly copying the world's style in music. Indeed many of these stars are now highly rated in the music charts of the world and being signed by secular record companies.

'*Torch singing*' is another style that is seen in nightclubs. This is the use of voice inflection to transmit provocative thoughts. Many believe the popular Christian singer Amy Grant has increasingly become more worldly in her style of singing, particularly with the way she uses voice inflection. It has been shown that voice inflection can transmit sexy thoughts. A rock magazine stated: '*Some female vocalists invite sexy thoughts because of voice inflection...vulgar lyrics supported by provocative sound results in music pornography*'.*

Most popular secular music today is very much rhythm and has a profound effect on the body. Enthusiasts of contemporary Christian music and Christian Rock sometimes cite the Old Testament scripture where David led the people in a dance. A close examination of the passage should warn any against taking too much out of this scripture. David simply beat time with his feet! This was not a sensual dance! The music of that day was not sensual like much of today's contemporary music! If it were, then David would have defied the boundaries of the lusts of the flesh. The fact is that rhythm affects the body immediately. This is not to say we should have no beat in music for there needs to be *some* pulse or the music is dead. However, such events as Christian rock concerts step way over the boundaries of the use of *some* beat. Preaching the Gospel through this medium is not effective. It has been said that the bait you catch them with is the food you have to continue to feed them with. *Time Magazine* writing of some contemporary Christian music stated: '*New lyrics for the devils music*'... '*the sound of a swarm of angry insects amplified several thousand times*'. Why should it be that the world can see and admit to the dangers of our contemporary music or our 'Christian Rock', yet the church slumbers on with very few voices being raised against such evils? Jesus said: '*The children of this world are in this generation wiser than the children of light*', (Lk.16:8).

In one Christian Rock concert in the USA where the Gospel was preached, follow up at a later date showed not one person to be committed to their original decision for Christ. Similarly, I have personally before written of similar results where the Gospel has been polluted in some way. It very often becomes '*another gospel*' and '*another Jesus*' and many can receive '*another spirit*', (2Cor.11:4; Gal.1:6,8,9). Today, we have youth organisations such as *Youth Alive* (AOG) openly using Christian Rock music and even secular bands as a means to bring the Gospel to youth. The results of this are a huge 'backsliding rate' and 'carnal Christians' of whom many should question if they are Christian at all. Can we 'Christianise' this with (debatable) Christian lyrics?

I am not here advocating 'dead' music or only old hymns sung with little life. If the music is dead, young people will unfortunately add their own 'artificial' life. I have no problems with lively choruses and a variety of musical instruments. Many churches could well learn from some aspects of so called 'Charismatic' worship. However, the beat must be controlled and minimised in comparison to the melody and the harmony. Songs should not be repeated over and over so as to introduce the hypnotic element so prevalent in many churches today. (Rhythm can be a useful tool for hypnotic induction). The lyrics should be Christ centred, doctrinally sound, and meaningful enough to cause people to think about who the Lord is and what He has done for us. The music and the words should glorify the Lord Jesus Christ. In my opinion, these things alone should make Christian music *different* to the world's music. The problem with contemporary and Christian Rock music is that the world has come into the church to take the church into the world - this ought not to be.

Is my music God's music? Does it honour God and his ways, (1Cor.10:31)? Does it help me to think on what is right and true, (Phil.4:8)? Does it reinforce my faith, (Rom.14:22,23)? Does it approve what God condemns, (Pr.19:27)? Do the words displease God, (Eph.4:29)? Can I listen to this song in the name of the lord Jesus, (Col.3:17)?

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Some of the above material was extracted from '*The Language of Music*' by Frank Garlock, *Majesty Music*

* '*The Secret Power of Music*' by David Tame.