

Editorial

The Contemporary Music Scene

Besides the issues of dispensationalism and Bible prophecy, another great mountain of division among Evangelicals is coming upon us, and it has to do with contemporary music. The reason this is a problematic issue is that music touches us all on an emotional sliding scale that has to do with the message, the beat, the tempo, and speaks in one way or another to our very soul. Since music is such an emotional issue, no two Christians agree fully on what is evil or what is alright for congregational consumption. Another problem is that no one has yet defined what contemporary music really is. A new song that has just been written may actually be quite traditional, or it may reflect the new tastes in the most extreme ways. The Church is now divided. People are leaving congregations and are either going *to* churches featuring contemporary music or *away* from them to assemblies that sing more traditional songs and hymns. Some are so discouraged because they no longer hear the Word of God, that they simply stop attending their church altogether.

The Fall of the Bible Church Movement

What is most disturbing is that Bible churches are racing to the new contemporary formats and rapidly moving away from strong biblical exegesis to hot-rock musical formats, shorter "feel-good" messages, and simple devotionals rather than strong, meaty teaching. Added to such anemic fare is the belief that contemporary music is the savior of our churches.

Dan Lucarini has written a most informative little book entitled *Why I Left the Contemporary Christian Music Movement* (Evangelical Press, 2004). It is his personal testimony as to how he moved from a young convert who was into rock music, to a musician who became instrumental in bringing that same music into the Church.

Lucarini writes, "For a time after my conversion, I found it difficult to give up 'my' rock music, which, with its accompanying lifestyle, had for so many years defined my identity and was the source of much of my self-esteem." Rock music had a firm grip on his flesh. He admits that he and others had a deep appetite for rock and roll, and as he says, "To put it bluntly, I was having fun!" That would probably be a similar confession of many modern Christian "contemporaries" who try to push the same kind of music in their churches, and also to the young people in those congregations!

Lucarini lays much of the blame to the influence of Rick Warren's book *The Purpose Driven Church*. In it Warren describes the music most needed to minister to modern "felt needs." He says the Church should

use the style of music the majority of people, in our church listen to on the radio. They like bright, happy, cheerful music with a strong beat. Their ears are accustomed to music with a strong bass line and rhythm. For the first time in history, there exists a universal music style that can be heard in every country of the world. It's called contemporary pop-rock.

Hanging on to Punk Rock Music

Lucarini tells about a new Christian who wrote: "I recently became a Christian but I still like to listen to secular punk music. Do I need to give it up?" A contemporary music artist responded: "God cares more about the heart of worship, not the style of your music. There is a lot of good Christian punk music out there." Lucarini replies,

On the contrary, God does care about the style of music too. Punk music is the ultimate statement of musical rebellion. Changing the words and the artists and calling it Christian will never sanctify it. It has no place in a new Christian's life. ... Any time we misunderstand a biblical principle, we lead others and ourselves into error. In this case, a new Christian was deceived into thinking that he can hold on to some of his old styles.

Lucarini believes his generation was deceived by the argument that all music was amoral and harmless. He adds:

Once we were taken in by that clever, relativistic argument, the floodgates were opened and we could enjoy the music guilt-free. We could use our rock music for the glory of God. I now believe that we have been *completely* deceived by that argument. We cannot separate the style of music from its immoral associations. Rock music inevitably corrupts Christians.

A. W. Tozer some years ago said:

Much of the singing in certain types of meetings has in it more of romance than it has of the Holy Spirit. Both words and music are designed to rouse lust. Christ is courted with a familiarity that reveals a total ignorance of Who He is.

It can be well proven from the New Testament that the main purpose of the gathering of the church is first to hear the exposition of the Word of God. Exegesis is explanation! It is the sharing and teaching of all that the Bible has to say about both time and eternity. Pastor after pastor today is no longer capable of opening the Scriptures for his congregation. But more, his philosophy of ministry has shifted. He is not only unable to teach the Word, he does not feel this is his main task. To replace the Bible, he now uses Hollywood tactics and advertising gimmicks. He is a performer and an entertainer. He believes he must hold an audience by sensory stimulation.

Seminary Holds "Multisensory" Workshop

In a brochure announcing a one day "musical workshop" recently sent from a well-known seminary that used to pride itself on training Bible teachers, it was said that an older generation "removed from our churches and worship the very things that postmodern generations ... desire in a church." The advertised worship was to provide "a road map to help our church reach emerging generations," and provide a "cross-generational bridge between a new breed of young church leaders and [the old guys], those who have been in ministry for some time."

Those coming to this workshop would learn how to create "emerging worship [by] not being afraid to rethink what we do in worship" [as if worship is some hidden secret]. Those attending would learn new "models" for emerging generations. And they would learn how to go about "DESIGNING MULTISENSORY WORSHIP GATHERINGS FOR EMERGING GENERATIONS." Note "multisensory." This means creating worship by working on the senses!

Finally, the brochure noted that we must wake up to the "seeker-sensitive" movement. And, we must understand that "there are rumblings that today's generation has its own spiritual perceptions," and these are the "many spiritual elements that were removed from our churches and worship" that the postmoderns are looking for! Note the dangerous statement that the younger crowd has "*its own spiritual perceptions.*"

The *pit* has been opened! And it is possible that there is no way to turn back the destructive flood. Could it be that this is just one of the first signs that apostasy is now with the church?

With a certain ironic twist, about the same time the *big* seminary held its *multisensory worship* workshop, a little seminary was holding a *Preach the Word Workshop*. Its brochure read somewhat differently. It said:

We invite men who desire to begin new churches to join us in a *bold pioneering effort* in launching a new movement to recapture America for Christ, and *for the founding of churches that will again teach His Word!*