

Music in Public Worship - *An Introduction*

7th September 2008

Arturo Pérez (Arthur_pink@hotmail.com)

Every Church sings praises to God...

- WHY do we sing in our worship service?
- Just because of tradition...? Or because God's word?
- Is the singing as important as the Preaching of the Word? Or even more important than the Preaching?
- What Purpose we pursue with our songs and hymns?
- Characteristics of those songs to fulfill THAT purpose?
- How can we differentiate between an **appropriate** hymn to worship God and some other **inappropriate**?
- Is there a right musical Style for Corporate worship? What is it?
- Is MUSIC itself a NEUTRAL matter that we should leave to our own taste and preference?
- What about the musical Instruments? How to discriminate? Are they all **appropriate** for worship?

What does the Bible say?

- **It depends on WHO do you ask the question to!**
- Charismatics open up the Psalms and find commands to clap, dance, and shout (Ps.35:27; 47:1; 149:3)
- Presbyterians insist that Scripture should be read only by ordained ministers (Nehemiah 8:2-7).
- Others emphasize cultural relevance promoting contemporary music (1Cor.9:22).
- Some take NT silence on instruments to worship a Capella only.
- Others claim Classical Hymns are the only acceptable music.
- Others claim the Psalms are the only songs acceptable.
- Reformed Baptists hold the "Regulative Principle" to forbid everything that it is not specifically commanded by God.
- Some forbid choirs, special music, instruments, announcements, etc.
- Others think the Bible says nothing!! ("Whatever Principle").
- Can we propose a **Biblical Theology** about Corporate Worship?

Recommended Bibliography

Note: These books are mentioned in the order I happened to review them through the time I studied the subject. I give my personal perception about each one of them, but you may judge yourself after you read them. Also take into consideration that some of them are more inclined to Traditional music and others go the opposite way to be inclined toward Contemporary music. Regardless their preferences over music styles, it is valuable to ponder everyone's arguments and compare them with the Scripture's Principles or factual evidence before you embrace your own opinion on the subject.

•**Pop Goes the Gospel** (John Blanchard). This book is an attempt to take calm, balanced, and biblical look at the whole subject of what has been called 'entertainment evangelism'. John Blanchard focused his subject on the problem of ROCK music and he quotes a lot of non believers who work in the Entertainment Industry of Musical Productions so the readers may understand the INTENTIONAL agenda behind the MUSIC BUSINESS. This book was an EYE OPENER for me and I loved the way John Blanchard brings the EVIDENCE quoting the experts in the industry to explain the EFFECTS that the MUSIC produces on the human being, and HOW the Entertainment INDUSTRY targets the Christian MARKET to make them feel as they would be worshipping by manipulating their feelings with the MUSIC. VERY balanced book for new believers and for young people.

•**Music in the Balance** (Frank Garloc). One of the more enlightened SPEAKERS I heard in that time when I began to study the subject was Frank Garloc (You can find his recordings in the Internet, even translated into Spanish). Mr Garloc is a Fundamentalist Baptist, rather radical in his thought and therefore he promotes TRADITIONAL hymns he doesn't see any value on Contemporary Music because most of contemporary music has a wrong message (Rock, seductive, etc). What I REALLY Liked about Frank Garloc is his THESIS about the LANGUAGE of the MUSIC. So as you will see along these SESSIONS that we if you are able to understand that MUSIC (Not just the lyrics, I am talking about the SOUND of MUSIC), if you understand the MECHANICS of MUSIC, if you understand THE POWER and the INFLUENCE that MUSIC has over our SOULS, then you will be WISE enough to DISCERN what should be sung in the Church of the Lord. We will see about the LANGUAGE of the MUSIC later on.

•**Measuring Music** (John Makujina). He holds the theology behind Garloc's preaching against Rock Music as something wrong to incorporate in the Christian worship.

•**MUSIC and the MIND** (Anthony Storr) is a NON-Christian point of view about MUSIC in GENERAL. Storr was a Psychiatrist. This book shows an EXCELLENT SUMMARY about the theories of MUSIC from Plato, Schopenhauer, Stravinsky, Nietzsche, Bartók, and others philosophers. What I LIKED about this book was the ANALYSIS about RELIGIOUS MUSIC quoting John CALVIN, and Saint AUGUSTIN.

I found VERY interesting Quotes I plan to share with you as well. The author proves with the historical testimony of many famous thinkers including our theologians, the universality and centrality of music and how the music expresses and affects the deepest emotions of the human soul.

• **Worship in the melting pot** (Peter Masters, pastor in the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London). THIS WAS the book I liked the LESS because it LACKS of Arguments to prove his points of view. It seems this was not a book written from the author's pen, but someone else took the sermons of Masters and put this book together. In my opinion, it lacked of good argumentation and it was written to TRY to prove why the Charismatic are wrong in everything. Peter Masters states that Contemporary music is completely wrong, and he tries to demonstrate why you can't lift up your hands, clap, etc. It is really the extreme in traditional worship, but sadly without strong arguments. HOWEVER, it has some interesting analysis in the Book of Psalms regarding the subject of the Psalms that is very valuable and well founded.

- **Worship Matters** (Bob Kaufflin). Kaufflin is a professional musician who composed and arranged music for well known Christian group called GLAD. Kaufflin has been Director of Worship for C.J. Mahaney so he is part of Sovereign Grace ministries, this is, their believes are Reformed Baptist but their external worship is Charismatic. INTERESTING enough, this book was written in very BALANCED way. IF you are a LEADER in the Church, if you are a LEADER at your home, if you Lead the worship here or you lead the praises at your local church, I STRONGLY recommend this book. Kaufflin has a very HUMBLE approach acknowledging the Strength on TRADITIONAL and Contemporary worship. My RESPECT for this book. Very well written, very spiritual, very useful for those who try to lift up the HEARTs of the congregation in PRAISES. EXCELLENT Book.
- **Worship By The Book** (Donald Carson, Mark Ashton, Kent Hughes, Tim Keller). This book is for grownups. If you are SERIOUS about Worship Theology, this is the book you must read. It has 4 chapters: First, Donald Carson writes a **biblical theology of worship** in the opening, which is then followed by three application chapters written by pastors from differing denominational backgrounds who set out to show how they have applied the principles of such a theology of worship in the practices of their local churches. The last chapter is written by Tim Keller, from Presbyterian church in Manhattan, NY. One of the best books I have ever read about the subject.
- **Worship in Spirit and Truth**. I discovered this book because it was quoted several times by Tim Keller in **Worship by the Book**. **John Frame** is a Calvinistic theologian, also a Presbyterian, holding the Confession of Faith of Westminster.

With these books of Contemporary Music and Worship in Spirit and Truth, Frame provoked controversy because of his interpretation of the (regiuleitiv) REGULATIVE principle of worship (which he subscribes to) in a non-conventional manner. Frame regards contemporary worship music, musical instruments and liturgical dance as permissible, which has brought him into conflict with other reformed theologians who regard them as forbidden.

- **Give Praise to God** is a very complete book about the whole concept of Worship. It is a collection of articles written by very well known theologians such as Derek Thomas, Ligon Duncan, Albert Mohler, Mark Dever, and some others. Of course it is a Reformed view of worship, and Derek Thomas writes an article defending the Regulative Principle because of the critics received from John Frame, among others.
- **Marva Dawn** is a LADY who wrote “Reaching Out without Dumbing Down”. She is a Lutheran Theologian DEFENDING the idea that CHRIATIANITY must be transcending our contemporary CULTURE instead of being conformed to it. She says that CONTEMPORARY preaching and worship is an INSULT to people’s intelligence so she insists on the serious EXEGESIS in the Bible instead of “Motivational / Marketing Speeches. She acknowledge that some traditionalists have let the liturgy become an IDOL. She tries to engage Christianity's rich history, but not just follow it blindly. She believes that LITURGY should be taught so we can understand its fullness: confession, thanks, prayer, etc. Memorized forms, like creeds and prayers, are important, she says, because they create a solid believing community, rather than a fragmented loose association. We must say AMEN to that. THE POINT IS THAT WE WANT TO BE BIBLICAL AND TALK WHERE THE BIBLE TALKS, AND REMAIN SILENT WHERE THE BIBLE IS SILENT.

Premises / Presuppositions

- **Audience knows** the definition of **Worship**: “*the work of acknowledging the greatness of our Lord*”.
- **Scripture Alone** (1 Corinthians 4:6)
- “...that you may learn by us not to go beyond what is written...”
- The Bible has **no records**, reference or musical notation on how the ancient psalms or hymns used **to sound**.
- The Bible does **not prescribe a particular style** of music as being solely acceptable to God, nor does it condemn any particular styles.
- The Bible **does contain principles** that we can apply to any situation to please God according to His Character.
- The **words** we use to talk or sing to the Lord must be totally **according** to

what the **Bible** says regarding **His character**.

- It is OK to have **personal preference** and **traditions** for godly reasons (association and appropriateness); BUT, if we elevate personal preference and tradition to the level of God's Word (Mark 7:6-15), we risk to fall in legalism.

Roadmap for next 4 sessions:

- Session #1 – The language of the Music.
- Session #2 – Structure of Music
- Session #3 – Choosing the Music
- Session #4 – Leading Worship

Music in Public Worship - *The Language of the Music*

Proposed THESIS

1. Music is a Language
2. Music is not “neutral”
3. You can discriminate appropriateness

The Language of Music

- Language: “is a human faculty that allows communication through articulated sounds”.
- Music is a Language because it has the elements of a language: the grammar, the syntax, and the meaning.
- The Meaning of music is abstract it is not concrete.
- Anthony Storr: “There are many similarities between music and conventional communication”..
- Like music, we have non verbal communication in our accent, our tone, the volume, the emphasis, and other EMOTIONAL meaning that it is not grammatical or literal, but more musical.
- Example: The phrase “Do you mind?” varies its meaning depending on the tone we choose to say it.
- “It is not only WHAT you say, it is HOW you say it (that's the tone).
- OPERA (musical drama putting music to the words to emphasize the emotional meaning).
- Storr: Indians “Mura” in the Amazonas communicates across the river with a musical language with a 3-holes flute.

The Bible Illustrates Language with Music

- 1 Cor.14:6-9 (ESV)

6 “Now, brothers, if I come to you speaking in tongues, how will I benefit you unless I bring you some revelation or knowledge or prophecy or teaching?

7 If even lifeless instruments, such as the flute or the harp, do not give distinct notes, how will anyone know what is played?

8 And if the bugle gives an indistinct sound, who will get ready for battle?

9 So with yourselves, if with your tongue you utter speech that is not intelligible, how will anyone know what is said?...”

Music for each activity in Life seeks appropriateness

- Funerals have a different music played than birthday party
- The movies play background music (Sound Track) for each scene to help the moment to express the mood.
 - If our hero is “losing” the battle the music is sad or anxious.
 - If our hero is “winning”, the music will be for triumph!!
- How would you feel with a horror music at the waiting room of your dentist?
 - Instead you need a RELAXING music.
 - How do you know the difference???

Music is not "neutral"

- What’s the difference between a “B-Flat” in a Christian song and a “B-Flat” in a Rock song?
- ALPHABET and MUSIC
- Alphabet (A, B, C, D, E, F, G...) is NEUTRAL.
- Sentences you write with the Alphabet are NOT neutral.
- Musical NOTES (Do, Re, Mi or “C”, “D”, “E”...are NEUTRAL)
- Musical Compositions are NOT Neutral.

Quotes from thinkers and experts *Regarding Moral Character of Music*

- 1Sam.16:23 “And whenever the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, David took the lyre and played it with his hand. So Saul was refreshed and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him.”

- PLATO (428 – 348 BC). He said that “proper music is a powerful educational instrument able to transform the personality of those who study it, leading them to reach interior order and harmony.”... “Rhythm, I insist, was given to us for the heavenly source to help us put order and harmony...”
- ARISTOTLE (384 – 322 BC). “Music represents the passions from the soul, and if someone listens to inappropriate music he will become in that kind of inappropriate person.”
- JOHN CALVIN (1509 – 1564). “We know by experience that music has a secret power almost incredible to move the hearts”.
- Dr. MARTYN LLOYD-JONES (1899 – 1981). “Music can produce an emotional state on the mind in which it won’t work properly and won’t discriminate...”

Quotes from pop music composers

Regarding Moral Character of Music

- **Timothy Leary** (“Turn on, tune in, drop out”). “Don’t listen to the words, it’s the MUSIC that has its own MESSAGE... I have been drunk with MUSIC many times... The music is what turns you on”...
- **Graham Nash** “Pop Music is the COMMUNICATION MEDIA to affect people’s way of thinking”.
- **Donovan**. “Rock Music is the music to affect the conscience”.

IF Music communicates... THEN...

You Must discriminate Appropriateness!

MUSIC is a LANGUAGE and it COMMUNICATES a MESSAGE

- Ancient philosophers talked about the power of Music to express the feelings of the human soul.
- Musicians from the Classical era agreed Music was a Universal language to express the passion itself.
- Movies and Theaters industry leverage on Musical compositions to communicate a stronger message beyond the movie characters.

MUSIC is Not Neutral because every COMPOSITION communicates well defined and INTENTIONAL messages.

- Greek Philosophers talked about “MODES” or “musical scales” able to communicate different MOODS (Mental Piece, exaltation, anxiety, sadness, etc.)
- POP and Rock music composers were very intentional in their compositions and they

claimed that the power of the message is not the words, it's the MUSIC!!!

- Christian thinkers (Luther, Calvin, Augustine, etc.) were very conscious of the power of music in the soul of people. (even sacred music!)

DISCRIMINATE the SOUND to be ACCORDING to your INTENTION

- What do you want to express to the WORLD? ANGER? SADNESS? HATE? LOVE? CELEBRATION? HOPE?
- What do you want to express to ALMIGHTY GOD? (Be careful!!!!!!)
- Does your MUSIC accord to the WORDS you are telling our LORD?

5 questions when evaluating music in the Church

From Grace Community Church

- What is the **lyrical** content of the song? Are the **words** true? Are they biblically accurate?
- Does the way in which the **lyrics** are presented cheapen the message?
- Does the **song** make you conscious of the Lord, and draw you to Him, or does it distract from true worship?
- Do the **musical style** and performance promote and facilitate a worshipful atmosphere? Or do they somehow undermine the truth and purity of the lyrical content?
- Is the **life-style** of the **musician** honoring to God?