



IBFNA

February 2024

Volume 32, Number 3

THE REVIEW

“Unity—But at What Cost?”

By Pastor Mark Strangman, Moderator IBFNA

Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment (1 Cor. 1:10).

I hope that you are successfully making your plans to attend the 2024 IBFNA Conference. The theme of the conference is “The Just Shall Live by Faith,” and the location is Vernon Forest Baptist Church in Winston Salem, NC. Brother Jim Brown and the brothers and sisters of the church are planning a wonderful time with us, which is scheduled for June 18-20, 2024. Our main speaker will be Brother George Matzko from Matzko Science Ambassadors. Brother Matzko will be giving three messages based on Heb. 11:3 concerning faith and the creation-account, while the other speakers will be delivering messages from the rest of the chapter.

I am eagerly looking forward to the great preaching and fellowship for which the IBFNA conferences have always been known. It is such a blessing to gather with brothers and sisters of like precious faith and be fed by the Word of God. We echo the Scriptures spoken through David when he declared, “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!” (Ps. 133:1).

Recently, I have had the privilege to preach expositional messages through the book of First Corinthians. It is such a powerful message, with the unity of the local church being the primary emphasis in the first four chapters. The church in Corinth was full of schisms in the body, and Paul uses this foundation to teach them many practical points about their function and ministry. With a cursory reading of chapter 1, it would seem like the only basis of their unity is the preaching of the gospel. Truly, this is a major point of agreement, which will unite a group of believers into an *ekklesia*, a called-out assembly of followers of Christ. But is this the only basis of unity that God would require of us?

The first section of the book answers this question in its introduction, which includes Paul's commendation and encouragement to the church. He would spend the next six chapters rebuking them for their lack of unity and the schisms that plagued the church, but before the rebuke he makes a very important foundational point, one that climaxes in 13:9-12. There Paul declares, “For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought



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as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known."

The interpretation of this passage is the key to understanding Paul's emphasis on unity for the church. In this passage he uses the word *teleios*, which is a neuter noun meaning *complete*. Many commentators will suggest that this is referring to the appearing of Christ as He returns for us. However, nowhere does Scripture refer to Christ in the neuter. This is not Christ's appearing, but Christ's completing. It is the completion of the Word of God, the Living Word guaranteeing the written Word, which will be the final authority of God to man. This is why Paul places this in the context of the sign gifts. Because the completed Word is now given, the signs are no longer needed to authenticate God's servant.

What does this have to do with unity in chapter 1? In that chapter Paul declares that the preaching of the cross of Christ itself causes division. He teaches that gospel preaching exposes the world's wisdom as foolishness, contrasted to the (apparent) foolishness of God (in the world's eyes), which is in fact true wisdom. Jesus said in Luke 12:51, "Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division." The preaching of the cross will truly divide us from the world.

But what is it that guarantees unity within the church as it stands apart from the world? The answer is found in the end of Paul's encouraging introduction: "So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Cor. 1:7-9).

In verse 7 Paul shares that the church at Corinth was greatly blessed with every gift of the Lord. From the context of chapters 12-14, we see that this included the specific gifts which have come to be referred to as the "spiritual gifts." This would include the sign gifts Paul explicitly teaches will cease when the New Testament is completed.

(I personally believe that to be consistent in this teaching, one must conclude in favor of the cessation of all gifts, however that is not the intention of this article, and I do not wish to cause distraction).

He goes on to say that they are waiting for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. After a quick reading, one might conclude that this is the same point he makes in verse 8 when he speaks of Christ's confirming them blameless at the end in the day of the Lord. I would suggest that the word translated in the KJV as *coming* in fact means something else. It is the Greek word *apokalupsis*, which means *disclosure*. Though it can be translated as *appearing*, it may be better understood as *enlightening*, *manifesting*, or *revealing*. I do not believe that Paul is simply being redundant concerning Jesus' return. He is in fact establishing the foundation for their blameless position at the Lord's final appearance and for the key to their unity before the Lord. He goes on to say in verse 10 that they must be "perfectly joined together in the same mind and judgment."

One of the foundational understandings of Biblical Fundamentalism is the statement "Doctrine Divides." Others criticize us for this tenet. We are told that we must put aside doctrinal differences and strive for unity through compromise of biblical truths. While there may be some points of biblical interpretation that we can agree to disagree on (like whether Christ was crucified on Wednesday, Thursday, or Friday, or whether all gifts have ceased or just the ones specifically mentioned in 1 Corinthians 13), there are those doctrinal foundations (the fundamentals of the faith) by which we must be united.

This is a great responsibility which is entrusted to those whom Christ has called to lead the church, the pastor/teachers. These are the gifts of Christ to the church. Paul wrote concerning this responsibility in Eph. 4:11-16, "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ: That we hence-

forth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."

Winds of false doctrine have wreaked havoc upon the church of Jesus Christ since its inception. What Paul reminds us of is the necessity to come to doctrinal purity and thereby to be unified on the Word of God. The price of unity is the abandonment of our own worldly desires through a unified dependence on God's Word. By emphasizing sound doctrinal teaching and preaching, we can ensure that our local churches are not "tossed about" but soundly serving the Lord, being

"perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."

This is the same mind which he commanded the Philippian church to have – the mind of Christ. There the emphasis is on Christ's humility and His offering of Himself. This is the attitude that will guarantee the local church will be unified. Doctrine will always divide us from the world and from erring brethren. We must be sure that it is our soundness of doctrine that separates us and never our own wrongful attitudes and desires.

This is the mind of Christ, something that only comes to pass in the church through the ministry of the Holy Spirit with the Word of God ruling in our minds and hearts, allowing us to have the same mind and judgment the Lord has. By His ministry through the Word, we will become more and more like our beloved Savior. We will avoid schism, and we will dwell together in unity.

May God richly bless the IBFNA.

Is Music Amoral? - Part Three

Brother Kurt Woetzel

Editor's note: Brother Kurt Woetzel serves the Lord as a member of Village Chapel Baptist Church in Weare, NH. Brother Woetzel co-authored Music in the Balance with Frank Garlock (Majesty Music, 1992). This article is the third part of a multi-part series. See the August Review for Part One and November for Part Two. The article has been somewhat condensed from its original form.

The Music Within You, written by two certified music therapists and music educators, Shelley Katsh and Carol Merle-Fishman, write, "Music is not just a special part of life; it represents life itself. From it we receive inspiration, excitement, and emotional enrichment. With it we create, communicate, and express who we are" (208).

A timely, appropriate, and searching question to ask is, "Who are we?" We are the people who claim the Truth. Is this not the cry from our pulpits? Is this not the earnest personal testimony to friends, relatives, neighbors, and co-workers? If

then, we express with our music who we are, the music in our homes, cars, and places of worship becomes an integral Truth statement. Such a statement, the music therapists declare, is often "non-verbal" (206). Indeed, much of music, including music in our worship services, is instrumental. And not everyone in every service can be familiar with the lyrics of every instrumental prelude, offertory, or special. Thus, the style of the sound, the mood which the music summons, its creation and presentation, the sensibility surrounding the presentation, and the pictures which it paints in the minds of listeners, all contribute to an unmistakable value statement. Music clearly expresses who we are--yet often without words.

The world has a precise perspective of music's influence on the individual and society. Dr. Peter Wicke is the Director of the Center of Popular Music Research at Humboldt University in Berlin, Germany. He has been active for many years as an author and music critic. In *Rockin' the Boat: Mass*

Music and Mass Movements, he writes, "Music is a medium which is able to convey meaning and values which--even (or, perhaps, particularly) if hidden within the indecipherable world of sound--can shape patterns of behavior imperceptibly over time until they become visible background of real political activity" (81).

A Brief History of the Question

Music-is-neutral thinking evolved in Christian circles in the late 1960's and in the early 1970's. It was during this same period that Western culture experienced a traumatic and turbulent upheaval. Judeo-Christian values and mores were ridiculed, attacked, and promptly discarded. The revolution in music played no small role in that process. From evangelicals came the clamor for the church to relate to contemporary culture. Music, a marvelous expression of faith for the believer and often a propellant of cultural change, was chosen as the vehicle for the church to connect to a society experiencing tumultuous change.

In 1969, Don Wyrzten, a young, gifted, influential musician and familiar name in Christian music circles, wrote in his Master of Theology Thesis at Dallas Theological Seminary, "Every generation of Christians is responsible to impart the Christian message to the cultural setting in which it finds itself." He continued by claiming that "Christianity will not get a hearing in the contemporary culture until Christians become unshackled from their cultural apathy and begin to enter the arena where the debates of our time are taking place" ("An Introduction to a Christian View of the Arts," 61-62).

The debate, which continues to this day, encompassed an entirely new approach to sacred music. The pop sound, which had been considered inappropriate for church music, began to gain respectability. Since that time, the new religious music (today known as Contemporary Christian Music--CCM), virtually indistinguishable from the music of the world in its sound, sensibility, and antics, has been welcomed into an increasing number of churches. Today, it is prominent on the platform, firmly planted in the pew, and even more securely anchored in the private listening habits of the average believer.

How did CCM get invited, and who did the inviting? What conditions hastened a monumental change in practice, in philosophy, and in the purpose of sacred music? How did that which was art-oriented, contemplative, uplifting, wholesome, and orderly get replaced with the pop sound from the lounge, dance floor, honky tonk, and other places where the world congregates to feed the flesh? Why should the believer have concern about the new association? Julian Johnson has the answer: "Because in art, and music most of all, what is said is inseparable from how it is said" (*Who Needs Classical Music?*, 104).

It all ensued with a change in purpose. Purpose dictates practice. "We must relate to our culture" was the cry. When the goal, motivation, and mission for sacred music changed from exalting the Lord and encouraging the saints to identifying with a culture and reaching the lost, the music had to change. If Christian music was to become a major tool to reach the world for Christ, then it was imperative that such music communicate to the world with a sound and a style with which the world can easily identify. Therefore, not only was a refurbishing of the music in the church required, but more importantly, the character, guidelines, and philosophy which governed and reflected that music needed a remake.

April of 1971 proved to be a pivotal turning point. "After weeks of coast-to-coast surveying and numerous personal interviews by *Eternity's* staff," executive editor William J. Petersen wrote an article with the momentous title, "O, What a Fantastic New Day for Christian Music." In the magazine's own words--this article "brings everything into focus." Indeed, it did.

What was the tone and how did the attitudes change in the "new-day" Christian community? First, the new culture-directed focus for sacred music was to become external and horizontal rather than remain internal and vertical. The Scriptural model for sacred music is quite clear. Eph. 5:19 directs, "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." The sister passage, Col. 3:16, reminds us that we are to be "teaching one another in psalms and

hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." Heb. 2:12 echoes these two passages: "I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee."

The believer's music is to be an in-house, vertical activity. Speaking to yourselves, teaching one another, and declaring the Lord's name in the midst of the church do not even hint at evangelism. Sacred music is for the saints and unto the Lord. Over and over the admonition of music references in God's Word includes the same sentiment, "unto Him," "unto the Lord," "unto the Most High," "unto Thee," "unto Thy Name." When a society abandons its mores, restraints, and conscience, as ours did in the 1960's, it is not the duty of the church, nor is it appropriate for individual believers, to cast off the Scriptural model of music to follow a decadent-bent community for the opportunity "to get a hearing in the contemporary culture."

Secondly, the "new day" would bring an entirely new view of music. That powerful and emotionally packed medium of communication, which had been considered to have great moral influence and impact, was to be reclassified as "amoral." A single sentence from an influential magazine accomplished this. Peterson's article in *Eternity* magazine included a landmark statement that would provide fresh impetus and new justification for the church to embrace any kind of music in order to reach the lost. This new perspective of music would significantly alter the sounds of worship, and more importantly, provide a vehicle for reaching out to a contemporary culture through music-centered evangelism. The article quoted a well-known musician of the day who commented, "Soul winning is the only aim. The music is--well, it's enjoyable sure, but our real aim is soul-winning." Then Mr. Petersen detonated the explosion which unleashed a pop-music avalanche upon the church, "we have to remember that, strictly speaking, music is amoral."

Most of Christianity is now buried under the avalanche. A host of Christian music leaders have written numerous articles parroting the new thinking. Several books echoing, restating, redefining,

and attempting to justify the music-is-amoral ideology have gained a measure of notoriety and acceptance in the Christian community, all in an effort to keep the debris firmly in place and make digging out difficult, if not virtually impossible.

Thankfully, the Lord has allowed some pastors, music directors, educators, and church leaders to observe from a distance and avoid being engulfed by the movement. Not only have they avoided the rubble, but several serious efforts have been made to counter the music-is-amoral posture with Scriptural principle as well as documented and credible evidence from qualified secular sources.

Music is Moral, Not Amoral

Music is a time art. God created time. Music is a tone art. God created sound. String physics, a naturally occurring phenomenon that results in the overtone series and consequently forms the foundation of harmony and music theory, was not created by man but merely discovered by him. God, the Creator, is the author of sound, and He ordained how sound would behave. God formed and endued man with the unique ability, in all of creation, to fuse and fashion time and tone into organized, mood-producing, thought-provoking, and life-impacting sound. We call it music. "And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good" (Gen. 1:31). Moral goodness permeates all that God has created.

Those who propose that music is neutral will argue that since God created music, all music is acceptable to use in worshiping God. But this argument fails. The Lord created the ingredients. He privileged man to shape beauty by combining the elements to mirror His character. And in doing so He gave man the pleasure, obligation, and enduring joy, as with other facets of His creation, to employ those elements in bringing glory to the Creator (Col. 1:16, 17; Rev. 4:11; Heb. 13:15; Is. 43:7).

I recognize that it is relatively easy for believers to dismiss the historian's critique, the sociologist's comments, the music critic's judgments, the educator's opinions, the composer's evaluation, the performer's sense, the choral conductor's insight, the magazine reporter's observations, and anyone else who does not overtly espouse biblical

values. Let us remember, though, that in these circles, and particularly in this discipline, there is a level of expertise, awareness, academic stature, and professional accomplishment which are seldom matched in Christian circles. Furthermore, when folks without the witness of the Holy Spirit in their lives forcefully and passionately condemn that which they consider damaging to the arts in particular and to society in general, we as believers would do well to heed their words. It should make Christians sit up and take serious notice when the world categorizes something as having immoral influence and the Christian community responds by saying, "We don't think so. Matter of fact, we think it's fine." What an awkward and atypical position.

Isaiah 5:20 warns, "Woe unto them that call evil good and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!" When did allegiance to good shift? Who would have imagined Christians to defend evil? Don't we usually find ourselves galvanized in opposition to the world in this kind of discussion? The evidence for the music-is-moral side is overwhelming. Who is being the "salt and the light" here? In Luke 16:8, the Lord alluded to instances in which the world would have better judgment than the believer, "the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light." The area of music is now a classic example.

Throughout this discussion I have sought to meld biblical principles with secular findings in an effort to develop an effective, convincing argument. A wealth of additional supportive information is available and could have been included. However, as in other disciplines of study, the evidence of the world is not necessarily revelatory but simply reinforces, clarifies, embellishes, and perhaps contemporizes what the Bible already declares directly or in principle.

In 1 Chronicles 25:1-3, we find a particularly intriguing report. In verse 1 we read, "of the sons of Asaph, and of Heman, and of Jeduthun, who should prophesy with harps, with psalteries, and with cymbals." In verse 3 the same thought is repeated, "under the hands of their father Jeduthun,

who prophesied with a harp, to give thanks and to praise the Lord." The words *prophesy* and *prophesied* indicate that communication took place. At the very least, we can conclude from this passage that the sound, that is to say the instrumental music, functioned with or contributed to the character of the prophesying. The instrumental music became part of the message. Interestingly, the preposition *with* is prominently included each time an instrument is mentioned. It indicates that prophesying took place *together with* or *accompanied by* the sound from an instrument.

Could it be that this account allows us to share a moment with some of the temple musicians who had a part in the dedication of Solomon's temple (2 Chron. 5:11-14)? It is a scene where the reader is witness to a wonderful, powerful, and unparalleled vocal and instrumental duet, with over 4,000 instruments and 200,000 voices. This monumental group of musicians worked diligently to offer music to the Lord, which resulted in His pleasure and ultimately caused the God of the universe to show His presence in the form of a cloud. And please notice that at this momentous occasion the "priest could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud: for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of God." In this instance the prophesying was done, in noteworthy part, with instruments—with sound—with music. Could this kind of prophesying be considered amoral or morally neutral? Not very well.

Finally, for the Christian to espouse the music-is-neutral position is not only to dismiss the enormous amount of data from secular experts, but more importantly, also to ignore the teaching of the Word of God. Music has a powerful influence in individual lives, families, and churches. My prayer, aim, and purpose for this discussion is that the music in the life of the reader would cause him to experience the reality of yet another passage which suggests that the sound of instruments has moral influence. Consider the words in 2 Kings 3:15: "But bring me now a minstrel. And it came to pass, when the minstrel played, that the hand of the Lord came upon him."

2024 IBFNA Family Conference



Conference Theme: “The Just Shall Live by Faith”

Date: June 18-20, 2024

Host: Vernon Forest Baptist Church, Winston Salem, NC

Join us for an exposition of Hebrews 11 led by Dr. George Matzko and others.

Les Dillon Home with the Lord

We are saddened, yet rejoicing, in the homegoing of our friend and fellow servant, Leslie (Les) Dillon. Les was a man of unwavering faith and boundless kindness, attributes that shone brightly throughout his life. A proud veteran of the U. S. Navy, he served his country with honor and dignity before heeding a higher call to serve the Lord as a minister of the gospel of Christ. He pastored several churches over the years, serving with his faithful wife, Audrey, by his side (often playing trumpet duets together). They grew a large circle of loving family, friends, and co-workers throughout the DelMarVa and New England regions.

After retiring from the pastorate, Les continued to serve the Lord as a missionary to the men and women of our armed forces under Armed Forces Baptist Missions. He was the driving force for the

establishment of the Christian Servicemen’s Center serving Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst in New Jersey. The Lord has greatly used this ministry through the many faithful volunteers serving at this center.

Les and Audrey loved attending the IBFNA conferences and presenting the work of Armed Forces Baptist Missions. Les also enjoyed playing his trumpet along with other musicians at the conferences. They were members of the Fellowship for several years and attended our conferences until travel became too difficult for them. His was a life lived in service—to his country, to his family, and above all, to his Savior. He has now joined his beloved wife, Audrey, to spend eternity with their loving Heavenly Father.

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