

MUSIC IN WORSHIP

By Roelf L. Ruffner

“And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering: But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell....And his brother's name was Jubal: he was the father of all such as handle the harp and organ” Gen. 4:3-5, 21).

In the Bible acceptable worship of the Creator has always been distinct from unacceptable worship. Jehovah “had not respect” or was displeased with Cain’s sacrificial offering or worship. Yet He found Abel’s offering acceptable. Years later, after the murder of Abel and the exile of Cain, Moses records the materialistic advancements of Cain’s descendents. They were still in rebellion (polygamy, violence, murder) against God but advancing in the fashioning of mechanical instruments of music. Did they still attempt to offer unacceptable worship to God as Cain had? Did this attempted worship include the use of mechanical instruments of music? The Bible does not say. Yet in the divine record of the worship offered by the righteous under the Patriarchal System (Abel-Seth-Enoch-Noah-Abraham-Isaac-Jacob-Jethro-Job-Cornelius.) there is not ONE mention of the use of mechanical instruments of music in their worship of God.

Today the difference between music in the worship of the body of Christ and that offered by much of the religious world is profound. The New Testament authorized worship of the church of Christ uses the instrument of the human heart or mind aided by the human voice. “Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and **making melody in your heart** to the Lord; Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Eph. 5:19,20 – Emphasis mine - RLR). Much of the religious world uses MIM in its “vain worship” (cf. Mat. 15:9) sometimes accompanied by the human voice: the piano, organ, orchestra, electronic synthesizer, fiddle, guitar, cymbals, singing groups, choirs, hand bells, etc. These spiritual descendents of Cain and Jubal are just offering up exuberant noise to God. Though they claim to be doing this out of love, it is a pseudo-sentimental

affection not based on the authority of the word of God (John 14:15; Col. 3:17) but their whims. “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal” (1 cor. 13:1).

Much of what passes for Christian worship today in most churches is just entertainment. In their pursuit of the new and the novel, churches have turned to titillating the senses of the audience. The other day I happened to turn on the television to a church service in which a choir was performing. In the choir members’ gyrations and vocal gymnastics I saw and heard something akin to a religious circus. The ringmaster was the choir director. The center of that worship was not God or Jesus Christ but the performer(s).

The true worshipper of the Father seeks to worship Him “in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). Their pattern or program for worship is not the newest religious tune or an emotionally induced “high” but the Spirit of God. “For as many as are **led by the Spirit of God**, they are the sons of God” (Rom. 8:14 – emphasis mine RLR). “Led by the Spirit of God” does not mean the uncontrolled emotional spasms people falsely attribute to the Holy Spirit. It is following the dictates of the Holy Spirit – the word of God (2 Pet. 1:20,21). “It is the spirit that quickeneth: the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life” (John 6:63).

Do not be fooled dear reader, if your worship is centered on a mechanical instrument of music or an emotional experience and not on the pattern of the New Testament it is “will worship” and not pleasing to God (Col. 2:23). That pattern specifies unaccompanied, congregational singing as the music (Eph. 5:19). “Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts. Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols” (Amos 5:22, 23).