

# STRAIGHTWAY

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"And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him" [Mark 1:18].

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## CHRISTIAN PURITIES FELLOWSHIP

The Witness Outreach

Foundations Bible College

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### **“ROCK AND ROLL MUSIC & THE CONTEMPORARY GOSPEL SONG”**

by **Dr. O. Talmadge Spence, Founder & President**  
**Foundations Bible College**

(PART ONE)

The naming of Rock and Roll music came about in the 1950s and now for over forty years has been acclaimed not only by the slob culture of the Rock and Rollers themselves, a number of gurus of India, but also by the Charismatics as “Holy Ghost” Music. This latter reference was made official by the Charismatic movement in The New Orleans Charismatic Conference in 1987 but had been referred to as such as early as 1980. When I first heard this in Richmond, Indiana, in 1985, because of the “Gospel Song,” it was also called “Christian Rock.” Of course, the Gospel Song has taken on the Rock rhythm or the contemporary style. When I heard it as an observer to The New Orleans Conference it was in an evening service while the preliminaries were proceeding that one of the charismatic “prophets” interrupted the service. He went to the microphone and was believed to be

receiving a direct message from God as follows: “Speak much in tongues because it is the only language on earth that the Devil cannot understand. Also, sing much the Gospel Song with its Rock rhythm because the Holy Spirit has reserved this form of music for the Christians as a special blessing late in history, to give us greater freedom in the Holy Spirit.”

#### **The Contemporary Sound**

We must remember that the contemporary anything and everything has always been tainted by the current philosophy of a generation. Generations have not enjoyed revivals all the way through history. In fact, a true, spiritual revival is quite rare when we consider the many driftings and catastrophies which are the two main extremes in history. Man has often went for centuries drifting deeper into error such as earlier Hinduism and later Roman Catholicism. Then a

catastrophe or a reformation suddenly comes into play and rearranges the driftings. We believe all of these are because of the singular straight line of God's sovereignty as men did do their own will contrary to the left or the right of that straight line.

In view of the fact that history is replete with the advancement of disobedience to God and being open to the powers of the Devil, then the contemporary is usually drenched with wrong.

We are encouraged when we read of the Flood and Noah and his Ark, as well as of the intercessions of Abraham in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. We live once again "in the days of Noah" and therefore our generation and contemporary exists in a time of the apostasy and extreme wickedness. The contemporary times of history since the fall of man have always been under the curse and evil, but there are contemporary times which are more wicked.

Rock and Roll music is the indicator of wicked days in spite of the monies amassed from it or the claim of it being a secular sex force or a "Holy Ghost" music.

There is not only the individual compositions of Rock and Roll, but the composers, performers, instrumentalists, lyrics, and advertisements, all speak of depravity in an extreme immoral context. Even the famous guitar has become a phallic symbol of the male reproductive organ as it is hanging lower and lower from the upper part of the body towards that male organ.

There is a "sound" going on in the world that is demonic; it is Rock and Roll. It has grown past the slow, sweet, to acid and hard Rock, and none of it has proved to be a blessing to the spiritual part of man. There is not only the individual Rock songs, but there is the sound of Rock which is always dominated by Rock rhythm.

### **The Origin of the Rock and Roll Sound**

The origin of Rock and Roll, as it finally came into existence, was an intentional invention which appeared, unnamed in the fall of 1954 when a movie called "Blackboard Jungle" featured a song by Bill Haley and the Comets called "Rock Around the Clock." Later on Elvis Presley became something of an oddity. He came from a pentecostal home and church and was reputed as identifying his physical gyrations by the influence of the emotionalism he had seen among pentecostal people.

However, Alan Freed is credited in bringing the entire new sound together and giving it a permanent name. He was a Cleveland, Ohio, disc jockey, and in other metropolitan cities, and was the first of the white announcers to play these "race" records, and much of the popular success of the new sound is owed to him. He was

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the man who coined the term “rock and roll” and it came from his inquiries with his radio audiences seeking out a name for this music from the very sound of it. From these responses to his seeking a name, he identified it with what the audience responded to him as a “Saturday night sex experience in the back seat of an automobile.” Thus, the term “rock and roll” was born from the sex expression of sexual physical motion he borrowed from the Negro community.

At that time, many thought it would be only a fad and fade away from its popularity. However, it has remained and continues beyond some twenty-five years. The presupposition of a “sex experience” has been sustained through the very **double entendre** (pronounced: “dubla-tan-dre) method and **subliminal** method in the use of certain words in the lyrics of the songs. In the former, the sex implications are noted in the meaning, “a word or expression capable of two interpretations one of which often has a risqué (or sexual) connotation.” In the latter, the sex experience is carried with words or word “existing or functioning outside the area of conscious awareness.” This method is inculcated in the Rock and Roll tapes and/or CDs apart from the usual lyrics of the “rock music” itself. Sometimes this has been noted by playing the record backwards. Grandmother may not be educated to hear it or reverse it, but the young people, good and bad, know both methods well.

Thus, Rock and Roll has been an infection all over the world for twenty-five years and continues in the lives of many who are addicted and diseased by it.

## **The Pre-natal Period of Rock and Roll Music**

The question could be rightfully asked: “Where did Rock and Roll music come from or what relationship does it have with other song forms of contemporary music?”

This question is very vital to the separatist, fundamentalist so desperately needed in our modern, contemporary world in being able to identify the line of spiritual separation needed. In any compromise or apostasy in history there were many quarter and half-way houses of thought and action which brought a certain thing to become heresy and error.

During the days of Alan Freed in the 1950s, he openly acknowledged how earlier musical forms paved the way by being mixed in a certain combination that resulted in the various forms of Rock and Roll. This “pre-natal period” is remembered by a mixture of the “gospel song,” country, western, rhythm and blues. More remote back in time was Jazz and negro music which preceded the Rock and Roll period and the remote time includes the Stamps-Baxter “gospel song” era. Pentecostalism has had an especially weak gospel song throughout its history, and not being willing to repent or change the charismatics of our own time believe they must preserve the “rock and roll” concept in their present gospel songs as a “spiritual” indicator to them. The pentecostalist has never realized, from their beginning, that their music suffered from inferiority; they thought it spiritual, and of “the Holy Ghost.” Contemporary Christian Music (CCM) forwards the entire aggregation of these past influences and

endeavors to bring the survival of the “rock rhythm” sound in an ongoing force that fills in all margins and boundaries between the claims of a distinction. “The Gospel Song,” therefore, becomes the greater threat to bring together all of these parts into a consortium of the same “rock” contemporary song form. The ingredients which fostered the birth of Rock and Roll music continues to extend itself into a mutation of a completely grown modern breakage of law, order, design, purpose, and beauty. Although it has its own identity, is different, yet it sustains the very same sensuality, emotionality, and fleshly sexuality of the seed of its pre-natal conception. Then there are those who are endeavoring to keep a relationship with contemporary gospel music, “The Gospel Song,” by claiming to be separated and fundamental, yet yields simply another quarter-house into the contemporary block in the music of the time. They speak of it as an “alternative” to Rock and Roll. We are living in a time when it is rare to find a complete separation from the modern, contemporary sound, entirely, in any church or Christian movement.

### **The Separatist Fundamental Position**

Along with the apostasy against the Word of God in our time, the institutional church is highly marked with the apostasy in worship against God. We believe it is fitting for us, at this point, to enter into a direct confrontation with the apostasy of music which has taken place in so very many of the churches; churches which have become religious entertainment centers for contemporary neo-christianity.

It commenced in our own beloved country, the United States of America. There is evidence of a great lack of unanimity among even to the Christian Fundamentalists concerning this subject of music in the home and the church. And yet, it is a subject that is causing a great division among the church people of the world. Dr. Billy Graham has brought “rock gospel music,” and the “gospel song,” and contemporary music to his own crusade platforms. The Rambo and Gaither families have humanized, emotionalized, and sensualized the hearts of the neo-pentecostals and the Charismatics; the Ecumenical Movement has endeavored to inculcate all the music of church history and the contemporary into one amalgamation of religiosity from John Wesley to Harry Emerson Fosdick; the Romanist has let the Latin go from their liturgy in many places and have also brought in the contemporary sound, too, because of the “People’s Theology” against the pope’s more moderate views. At the other end of these pieces in the spectrum, Dr. Frank Garlock and his son-in-law, Ron Hamilton, have brought contemporary gospel, contemporary rhythm, and contemporary sound close to the music of CCM into the Fundamentalist churches both in America and overseas. “Patch the Pirate” continues its influence, yea has only recently arrived on some shores, and the Garlock-Hamilton ministry is reported to have actually used the assistance of the “Nashville” musical resources in a number of their recordings. Other younger musicians, identified with fundamentalism, are endeavoring to secure a place nearer the separatist position but are not able

to give a clear definition of where that separatist position really is. We are holding our breath (prayers) for them to come to a whole-hearted separatist position, but it has not come to this date. There yet remains a genuine biblical conclusion to be brought to the forefront of all Bible-believing churches, where both pastor and minister of music have truly worked a solution to the contemporary gospel song and the music of the worship services. We are in for devastating times in all of our churches if we continue floundering without a true definition, biblically and spiritually, of a classical and traditional church music. Evidently, God has permitted, in the twentieth century, all the mutated forms of Rock Music and Contemporary Christian Music to test the local, separatist, fundamental church, as they persist that there is a music close enough to the world but not of the world. Dr. Garlock, in his early seminars, years ago, gave a classic concept: as the world moves deeper into bad music, the carnal church will follow it, one notch nearer each time. And again, each time the world moves further away, the Church will move one more notch closer to the world.

Music is an art form; it must be measured from the top of nobility, not from the bottom of the gutter, and as close to the world as if to think a Christian could possibly give an alternative at such a low level. Music must never be anything but a noble art form. Otherwise, music is neither music nor an art form at all. Even in a fallen world where sinners can only be saved by grace, God ordained kings among people. We are a royal priesthood, too. Therefore our music

should bespeak of a royal quality for His Majesty. This test started in the Churches in the 1970s and has been increasing in overcoming the Biblical pulpit. The choir has become the vestibule of the church where sinners and saints come for worship. The instrumentalists, the performers, the accompanists, and the songs have become the basis of what must be called "religious entertainment." It is even difficult, any more, to find a minister of music among the fundamentalists who is genuinely a biblical separatist. The choir's repertoire is so close to the border of "Contemporary Christian Music" that there is no difference between CCM and the alternatives being selected. The only difference is it does not use the acronym "CCM." It is obvious to some that the only thing that will save the testimony of the Church is a separation from all songs composed and/or arranged by those who fellowship with any form of Neo-Christianity serving the apostasy, just as we have formerly thought about preachers in our pulpits. The following is offered at this point only as a premise for thought in a direction not heretofore commenced, with the prayerful hope we shall, although late, yet do something about this problem which supports the apostasy.

### **A Needed Presupposition**

There are two problems which face the Christian at this time in the matter of Christian Music. First, there is the problem of music itself in that it must be taught and studied from the noble side of art by a dedicated commitment to God's endowment and gift of law, order, design, purpose, and beauty. Second, there is the problem of

biblical doctrine itself in the mind and heart of the teacher and the student of music away from a sanctified work of grace in a dedicated commitment to God's endowment and gift of the biblical principles of holiness, conscience, and truth.

There is an affinity between both of these realities, because contemporary gospel and Christian music is suffering from both an ignoble art form and an unsanctified, modern lifestyle. The former marks the breakage of law in the music itself; the latter marks a breakage of God's Word in the musician himself.

Music is not amoral, as the musician is not amoral. This indicates that the current trends and indulgences of Contemporary Christian Music suffer from both erroneous music and erroneous musicians. Both are false; neither are amoral.

The singular principle which attacks both the illegal music and the unsanctified musician concerns scriptural separation. For the clarity of our testimony and the exaltation of the Lord Jesus, Christians must pursue the orthopraxy of their orthodoxy in their own musical testimony. We must refrain from the use of every composer, every arrangement, every performer, every environment, every instrument-style, every philosophy, and every publicity that identifies with the current movements of the apostasy: Romanism, ecumenism, neo-evangelicalism, charismatic, neo-pentecostalism, or other, if it fellowships the apostasy of the time. In our own Foundations Ministries of church, schools, and radio station we are constantly monitoring the music we use whether they be our own compositions, musicians, or tapes and

CDs from other sources.

This is not to be construed that we are isolationists, but from the congregation of God's people to the individual of the musical presentation of our testimony, by the grace of God, we are "isolates" (or separatists) from modern society and entertaining performances which are so rampant in many of the churches in America. And this American slob-culture, as presented through contemporary gospel music, is washing ashore in many of the countries of the world through the charismatic chatters and clowns of the time to people in those foreign countries we were missionaries to years ago and took our stand against their own similar rhythms of song which were not as bad as ours are today. There are some fundamentalists in these groups, too.

### **Church History Past**

There have been times in church history past when the Holy Spirit, revival, and the prophet barred music and its instrumentation entirely from the sacred precincts of the church. John Calvin was such a man. We are fastly approaching such a critical hour, ourselves, as we have seen our young people damaged and some ruined by the throw-backs and throw-offs of rock music in a gospel form. This kind of boundary standard simply leads them on to other "rock." Gospel lyrics do not sanctify the immoral musical forms of our day. Rock Music is like sodomy: it must be totally rejected in all of its stages and forms.

Congregational singing, under biblical direction, remains the best avenue of returning, preserving, and teaching the legacy of the great hymns

of the church as well as the people who sing these songs unto the Lord in reverential worship, what we sing is what we teach.

In similar consistency, we must choose all aspects of music, as outlined above, as we would select a pastor or visiting minister to preach in our pulpits. The separation is the very same.

### **Form and Freedom in Worship**

These two words of form and freedom should be understood in almost everything in life; in every area of life; and, in the whole of life. This particular principle, should be greatly emphasized in the architecture and the liturgy involving worship in the church. It is because of the urgency of our time that we must persist in the call to worship to all Christians rather than for sinners in our art forms. The peoples of God must not forsake the assembly of themselves together for worship. Literally thousands and millions of people are presently identified with astounding buildings built for the church, and yet both the architecture and the liturgy have deteriorated into something of an electronic stage where slob culture is richly clad in the structure of a building dedicated to entertainment and it has communication rather than worship. We will not labor this; we shall just acknowledge it. The appearance of the building and the slob culture of the music all consort to a new (neo) dimension of staggering proportion that simply portrays a different "Jesus" than the true church has preserved Him to be before in their history. The Charismatic clown has come to town, and he went straight to church, or what is called

church.

The main dichotomy that must be respected and demonstrated throughout Christian church appearances, sincerely rendered before the Lord, concerns form and freedom. Whether in the architecture or the liturgy, there must be maintained a balance of form and freedom. If too much form is followed, unscriptural and unspiritual proportions will result. Dead orthodoxy and religious legalism will come. If too much freedom is followed, then heresy and libertinism will come. In all things of worth, nobility, and honor to Christ, there must be the triumph of the balance of form and freedom.

### **The Present Emphasis Upon Spirit**

There is something about the present false teachings on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit which has come to be the most artistic counterfeit that we have seen, heretofore, among protestants. Even the neo-evangelicals are endorsing Romanism and have entered into fellowship with the Charismatic movements.

### **The Prophecy of Things**

Along with these observations, we must once again reflect upon what the Bible has prophesied concerning the empires and forces of Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Graeco-Macedonia, and Rome in the light of an approaching global government and a world religion. The larger scope of such a possible world would be led by the Antichrist and the False Prophet. Many believe them to be standing now in the wings of the stage of world drama. More and more there is an emphasis upon

an ecumenical music and an ecumenical religion, and all else to join a world-people. It is both plausible and credible to believe that the outcome of immediate prophecies are to come to pass in a near future resolve. We are near the coming of the Lord Jesus

Christ. There is a biblical “shout” to come from the Lord Jesus; there is to be the “voice” of the archangel; and there is to be heard “the trump of God” sounded. This trilogy of sounds will mark the overture of the music of heaven for the saints forever.

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## **EVANGELISM MUST COME FROM REVIVAL**

We who are identified with a Fundamentalism must now see where we stand amid the spiritual failures and successes of the past. Our enemy is both old and new. He is old, in that modern Secular Humanism was birthed in America by an old enemy who attacked the very foundations and fundamentals of early American Christianity. He is new, in that a new variety of blendings and amalgams have been made in our own time through not only the failure of the Public School system, but also the apostasy of Protestantism and denominationalism. In the old enemy we see an apostasy away from the Pilgrim-Puritan ethic; in the new enemy we see an apostasy away from the Protestant-denominational ethic.

We must pause at this point and identify the public death of several ethics which were native to the United States of America from our early days. These ethics consisted of at least six upon which America was founded: (1) the Judeo-Christian ethic, (2) the Protestant-Reformation ethic, (3) the Puritan-Pilgrim ethic, (4) the Biblical-Commonwealth ethic, (5) the Geographical Bible-Belt ethic,

(6) the Historic-Denominational ethic.

A careful study of each of these will reveal that there are at least seven definite ingredients which influenced the birth of our country and the writing of our sacred documents which we have departed from in the present twentieth century actions of our political structures and religious institutions.

We could spend much time in the rightful condemnation of all of the political departures from these founding ethics, and in the end it would be profitable to a better understanding of what is wrong with the present American system. However, as biblical believers in the Lord Jesus Christ and in the inerrant, infallible authority of His Word, we must seek to find the other inroads among us, ourselves, that are doing the greater damage. While it is true that Secular Humanism has invaded the Media, the Federal Government, the Public-School System and related bureaucracies, and that they can be rightfully placed back to the Harvard Liberal Elite, yet there is the greater spiritual responsibility among those who are



identified with the Protestant and Fundamental movements of the world.

A number of questions rightly arise from my own heart as **I stand personally responsible to God as a believer in the literal fundamentals of the Bible.** You, as an individual, must ask the very same questions, too.

First, will the failure of full obedience to the Word of God among all of us bring about a collapse of Fundamentalism as it did to the Puritan-Pilgrim movement of long ago?

Second, is there growing somewhere among those who call themselves Fundamentalists a new humanism, or possibly a reputed Christian humanism, that is more deceptive than Secular Humanism?

Third, are the side effects of the Neo-Evangelicals, the Charismatics, and the Pseudo-Fundamentalists influencing us to depart from a true scriptural separation?

Fourth are we inconsistent in our claim to the matter of separation by being militant against some obvious errors while fellowshipping with others who are actually living on the border-line?

Fifth, are there personal sins in our lives that hinder us from a greater spiritual understanding and discernment of what and who the enemies are within our own churches and schools—and that will ultimately defeat our concerted victory against new foes not yet identified on the horizon?

Sixth, are we teaching sterile, static and stale information to our dear families of parents and children because we are powerless in prayer and faith for our times?

Seventh, are we as magnificent in our daily life with the Lord Jesus as we are militant in certain areas of our lives against the apostasy? Which simply means, Do we have an incomplete definition of scriptural separation.

These seven questions do not at all represent even an introduction to what seems to be my need before God Almighty in these horrific days of the twentieth-century apostasy. Could it be that we have truly identified all the enemies before us in the twentieth century and have not yet fully identified our darling enemy—our darling self—before Almighty God? Is it evangelism that we need the most? Or is it personal revival?

**O. Talmadge Spence**

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