

STRAIGHTWAY

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

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The Fundamentalist and His Music—Part Three

*Adapted excerpts from *Confronting Contemporary Christian Music**

Dr. H. T. Spence

Fundamentalism as a movement has commenced a decline away from its legacy by entering the wide river of Neo-Evangelicalism. Considering the increased falling away in recent years, only a mighty revival from God will stop the demise of Fundamentalism. The music now coming from most schools which carry the banner of Fundamentalism verifies what my father announced over twelve years ago: “The battle against CCM has already been lost in Fundamentalism.”

We have witnessed in the past fifty years the *public* death of *true* Christianity in America;

we are now witnessing the *public* dying of *historic* Fundamentalism. The potential public demise of historic Fundamentalism will be the product not only of its pulpits but also of its music, both of which have been crossing over into Neo-Evangelicalism.

The reader must understand that we are living in the end-time apostasy, an apostasy like no other. From its biblical perspective, apostasy is the final resolve of the principle of sin; it is the final outpost of sin; it is the link between the natural world of man and the demonic world of Satan. Apostasy is the permanent

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uniting of these two worlds. Yet, true apostasy must have something from which to fall. Because a falling away is identified more specifically as a *defection* or *turning* from truth, the one necessary ingredient for the final world apostasy is the globalization of Christianity.

Throughout recent decades in American Christianity, there has been a growing trend identified as the *crossover*. Not exclusive to our generation, the subtle tactic of a crossover has appeared at critical seasons throughout history. However, the contemporary crossover has grown into a subtle yet a powerful trend seeking to pull down the public testimony of true Christianity.

The term *crossover* in its simplistic understanding is a bridge. As a prominent term in today's music industry, however, crossover is defined as the act of crossing over to a different style, usually with the intention of broadening one's commercial appeal to a wider

audience. The term also may identify the act of crossing over in doctrinal identification with the intention of broadening one's appeal to a wider religious audience. A crossover is basically a compromising of two distinct points of view, philosophies, or characters.

In recent decades one of the most critical and delicate areas in which a crossover has been more evident is in the context of music. Though the contemporary sound may be traced back much further, during the 1960s and 1970s, many crossovers and changes took place in American Gospel music. Within these more than thirty years since, our country has been bombarded with a new type of Christianity that has been commercially promoted through its *acceptable* music. In this marketable music, worldliness increasingly has become a trait.

The crossover trend is a powerful enticement, especially in our generation. With the pressures coming upon us as Fundamentalists to gain more followers, to build bigger churches, to keep our academic halls filled, and to become more accepted by the lucrative crowd and the media, the temptation will always exist to cross over to the other side in our style of living, our style of worship, and even our style of music. Of course, it would also be very easy simply to follow those who are the trendsetters in Christianity or to seek the aid of those who are in the mainstream of what is in trend, in

STRAIGHTWAY

O. Talmadge Spence, Founder

H. T. Spence, Editor
President

Foundations Bible College

P. O. Box 1166

Dunn, NC 28335-1166

800-849-8761

www.straightwayonline.org

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vogue, and in fashion in the worship and music industry. To do so would truly broaden the appeal to a wider audience. Some might say, “We must change to become more acceptable if we are going to survive in the days ahead.” There are always deceptive reasonings that will quickly come to the heart to entice one to make the crossover.

The temptation of present Fundamentalism is not so much a crossover toward the world or even to Liberalism. Our temptation is an attraction toward or crossing over into Neo-Evangelicalism. After all, the members of this movement were our brothers at one time, though disorderly brothers. We were *one* before the split. Their men have succeeded in building edifices, in accruing money, and in composing acceptable popular music. They are the acknowledged mainstream of evangelical Christianity in America and throughout the world. Their prime spokesmen, such as Billy Graham, are at the top of the list for the most admired individuals in America. Why should we not simply cross over in at least a few things and take advantage of these trendsetters? Will their methods work for us?

Yes, there is the temptation to write the music as they do, to make the preaching more palatable to the carnal man as they do, to “preach Christ” without any stand as they do. Once an individual or a church sets the crossover in motion, the tendency is to take advantage of it again and again. The results

convince us that the end does justify the means. With a little bit of soft syncopation here and some sensual dissonances sprinkled there, one has easily composed the latest hit song. When Neo-Evangelical radio stations begin lauding our accomplishments and, more importantly, buying our music, we have crossed over to a contemporary, Charismatic sound. Inevitably, our young composers begin crying for the musical trendsetters to step forward and train them in this crossover sound. Our infatuation with this crossover sound and success becomes so strong that if we cannot write the music ourselves, we will hire those outside the camp to compose and perform our music. They may be Charismatic or any other brand of the Christian spectrum, but they are (as we will begin to reason) the more talented writers and musicians in the kind of music for which we are now seeking. After all, the success of these Neo-Evangelical and Charismatic composers proves they know what the people want. In the end, we become more accepted in their eyes simply because we have crossed over to their musical style.

Slowly but surely, the crossover tragedy is finally manifested. By trying to become more like them in our worship and music, we lose our identity as God’s chosen in the earth. The distinctives that made us great in our precious Lord are abandoned. Our worship, our music, our dress, our manner of living, as well as our failures and calamities are no longer

different from those whom we secretly had longed to emulate and join. Our musicians now play like them because we trained them so. Our vocalists have the same soft, ethereal sound as they do, because we trained them so. Our composers write with the same surrealistic, modern musical chordality, with wandering, pretty melodies that have no strength and no conviction, because we trained them so. The sad day will finally come when the line of distinction will be erased between the Fundamentalists and the Neo-Evangelicals; the crossover will have succeeded. What we thought was exciting and innovative, a novelty to us as Fundamentalists, will become the razor to cut away our Nazarite vow of heart and life before God. Why? It is because the trendsetters trained us so.

Is the above scenario one of impossibility, possibility, or probability? Will music become Fundamentalism's crossover bridge to Neo-Evangelicalism? We must be on guard for any dangerous trends and trendsetters making their way into the Body of Christ. Some will try to convince the Lord's people not to be concerned or afraid of the changes; they will say it is time for a breath of fresh air and fresh innovations to come to our churches, even if we have to cross over the line which our forefathers drew on the battlefield. We must not give ear to the trendsetters and their lines of reasoning. Our churches do not need champagne music or the eclectic

sounds to "liven up" the services. It is not the synthetic remedy of the Charismatics that we need. Dare we fall on our knees and in desperation of heart cry out to God for an awakening to righteousness and for a revival of communion with God? Such a genuine move of God will pull us back from the border of the world, its sound, and its acceptability. The crossover to Neo-Evangelicalism is not what we need. There is no hope to be found there. The crossing that we need to make is over the Jordan River that leads into the Promised Land of spirituality and holiness of heart (Hebrews 4).

The mutation of CCM is widening with such force and velocity that its aggressive intimidation for acceptance has pressed itself within the sacred precincts of Fundamental churches. It must be understood that CCM is not just "rock" music. Its elastic, existential nature produces a multicolored facet of the contemporary. What we are witnessing today in the Fundamental churches is more of an enticement on the perimeter: the surrealistic, ethereal, easy-listening sound heard in piano or orchestration introductions and the soft, meandering melodies even written for our traditional hymns. For this reason young people are delightfully being drawn to the "youth camp" songs which have this carefully marked identity. It is truly the "sound" of the contemporary; it will be just a matter of time before the rock beat will enter.

But we cannot put all the blame

on the composers, for they are simply writing what they have been taught (or were not taught) in the Bible colleges and Christian universities. There is a glaring deficit of theology and Bible in the music degree curricula of such schools; a "biblical" philosophy is not thought to be a necessary, consistent sentinel in all the classes. The contemporary is flirted with and experimented with by the teachers, stretching more and more the boundaries of acceptability. The result is a proliferation of weak music composers. A simple Bible survey course is basically all that the music students are required to receive. Such graduates have no depth of spiritual study from which to draw; therefore, they can only write from what they know. With such an anemic view of Christian principles, the product gives evidence of a spiritual "dumbing down" of the people. Martin Luther strongly believed that a composer needed to be a theologian in order to write the music of the church. This belief is not held by many today. Eclecticism dominates the theory classes of these institutions. When these graduates take their positions in the churches, preachers are constrained with timidity to say nothing about contemporary changes. Musicians can be intimidating and temperamental, even in response to a pastor's inquiry and concern.

I continue to plead with all Christian composers, teachers, and pastors to return to a biblical philosophy for their music. Do not be pressed

into accepting the contemporary styles of music which are becoming more and more the norm of the "specials" of many church services. It is alarming to hear the recordings released from a large number of our Fundamental colleges; many of the musical selections chosen are of a surrealistic sound. It is a sedative to the soul and a slow but deliberate means for the heart's assimilating of the world and the flesh. Unless the preachers stand up and clean out the contemporary song from both choir and congregation, all will be over for the spiritual soundness of our churches. Once the contemporary taste is in the heart, the return to a more excellent way will never be desired.

It should be obvious to every true Christian that rock music is diametrically opposed to the Christian Faith and is an intelligently designed medium to destroy Christianity. It is of the flesh, and it is contrary to the Spirit. Whatever some say, a Christian cannot listen to that which is anti-God and anti-Christ in substance and think that he knows the true Christ of Scripture as his Saviour. The Church has "stolen" the Devil's music and tried to Christianize it and believe it is all right. It is still true: the music itself is the message. Whether the words are dealing with the occult world or with Christianity, the music itself becomes the key to the underworld of Satan. To take the thesis of Christ and the antithesis of Rock and Roll and put them together

is a synthesis, a dialectic principle that cannot be sanctioned by Scripture. God condemns the dialectic principle of the world (read II Corinthians 6:14-18).

When one carefully studies Protestant hymnody, he will recognize that there were two levels of music springing forth from the eighteenth century: first, from those writers still identified in depth and burning of heart to that previous century, emphasizing a furthering of their walk with God; and second, from those who were drawn more to the burden of evangelism in the latter part of the 1800s. From one historical perspective it could be concluded that they complemented one another, yet from another perspective it is evident that the Gospel hymn which was birthed from the burden of evangelism became the more prominent influence that would lead Christian music into the twentieth century. Though evangelism is certainly part of the Gospel message, there must be the strength of a solid, on-going Christian life to preserve that born again experience. When the emphasis in Christianity shifts to “experience,” “feeling,” and “assurance,” without the greater call to a consecrated life, there will inevitably emerge a shallow, dwarfed concept of what a Christian is. Yes, we thank God for the revivals of the late 1800s and those appearing during the early 1900s, but evangelism will not keep the church when the enemy comes in like a flood. In such a situation,

shallow Christianity will be swept under the tidal wave of doctrinal heresy; the present institutional church is the commentary of this. Getting souls saved is a fine thing, but what is going to feed and preserve those birthed babies? The lack of deeper biblical teaching and preaching concerning the consecrated life is what has produced the falling away of even a number of conservative local churches. Shallow preaching allows for shallow music, and such a duo will help prepare the casket for any church.

Things that may be “all right” sometimes lead to things that turn out to be “all wrong.” It is imperative that we, as the church of the Living Christ, choose between “good” and “best” rather than simply “good” and “evil”; for the best way is the safer way when time makes its mark on the matter.

May God save us from falling into the belief that the grass is greener on the other side of Evangelicalism. We as Fundamentalists have had a noble birth; rather than depart from it, let us pray for revival within it.

Dr. Spence's book

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The Fundamentalist and His Music—Part Four

Adapted excerpts from *Confronting Contemporary Christian Music*

Dr. H. T. Spence

How often in the Christian schools the study of the philosophy of music is conspicuously absent when it comes to the presentation of Christian music. If it is taught, it is usually from the contemporary perspective rather than from a true, biblical perspective. Thus, even the concept of logic becomes questionable by the contemporary mind. The principle task of logic is to investigate the nature of correct thinking and valid reasoning, including the laws of rational thought. Questions related to this study that have often been asked through history include the following: “What are the criteria used to distinguish between truth and error?” “Are there fallacies of reasoning?” “Can truth be attainable?” These questions need to be answered; these principles of thought must be understood before we enter the realm of contemporary music. The sad reality of the present trends in Fundamentalism is that there is a deterioration of secular epistemology and its so-called logic. And finally, we need to see the major influences that lead to the musical concepts of our times.

Criteria for Truth

Man must have a criterion of absolute truth, a standard or rule, by which to judge the accuracy of statements, opinions, and thoughts; there must be a standard of verification. Absolute truth must be nailed down in our hearts and minds. Churches today (and I am amazed at the Fundamental churches that are questioning the standards of the Word of God) battle this question, “Is there a criterion of truth?”

Man has drawn from several sources for his truth. Customs have often been used as a criterion: “when in Rome, do as the Romans do.” Whatever church you are in or people you are around, follow their customs for truth. Dress as others dress; use expressions which are linguistically fashionable; practice the moral principles that are currently in vogue; do whatever is popular. Following customs calls man to the philosophy of being part of the herd. If the music is popular, go with it. Bill Gaither back in the early 1970s, used this concept to prove the acceptance of his song “The King is Coming.” So many people liked it, bought it, enjoyed it, were “inspired” by it that, yes, according to Gaither, it had to be of God.

Others follow the tradition route to prove truth, the notion that if anything lasts for generations, it must be valid. Any practice which has gained the loyalty of succeeding generations must deserve a measure of credibility. However, traditions can also reinforce what is false.

Others have counted the test of time. We have heard this line of reasoning to prove the validity of Christianity: “Christianity must be true, for it has stood the test of time.” Now we certainly believe that Christianity, at least biblical Christianity, is true, but not simply because it has stood the test of time. The assumption that if a belief is really erroneous, the error will sooner or later come to light is not necessarily true. In Acts 5:38-39, Gamaliel believed this assumption:

And now I say unto you, refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God.

Now this sounds good on the surface, and it seems logical especially in the light of the context of the apostles and true Christianity. Is something true simply because of time? How long has the Islamic faith continued and flourished? Even the oldest continuing Christian apostasy, Roman Catholicism, is experiencing a revival of popularity in recent decades. Does the test of endurance mean these are true religions? How often the above passage of Scripture has been used by compromisers who did not want to take their stand against men such as Billy Graham, Kenneth Copeland, T. D. Jakes, Robert Schuller, and others. These men flourish even when their sin and error are exposed. Furthermore, many errors have lasted for a good length of time before being exposed as such, and superstitions have endured through the centuries.

In addition, there are those who depend on feelings or emotions as the test of truth in situations. More and more this particular view is becoming the criterion for truth. Here man lives, boasting in the scientific age, yet deciding truth on the immediate feeling of the moment.

Yet, another group of individuals tends to base truth on a hunch, an impulsive generalization; and still others, on intuition, a judgment without recourse to reasoning from facts.

Some thought must be given to this subject, for the presupposition of a man’s heart will dictate how he views life. It also will dictate what kind of music he will write or listen to.

A New Concept of Viewing Truth

What about the concept of truth in the light of the 21st century? The “new” concept or the “new” consciousness (as the New Age was formerly called) is settling across the civilized world as a London fog. One of the greatest tragedies of our times is that we are being fundamentally affected by these new ways of looking at truth. This must be acknowledged in the proclivities of the conservative, fundamental churches in recent years. It is

already underway in mainstream Christianity. If you had lived in Europe prior to about 1890, or in the United States prior to World War II, the main reasoning and thinking of people would have seemed to be clearer. One basic presupposition was the existence of absolutes in knowledge and in morals. In that time absolutes were the guardian principles of thought concepts. In morality, if one thing was true, then it was clearly understood that its opposite was false. There was no question about adultery or abortion, or fornication, or a preacher living in these evils. Life was easier to live then when everything was clear-cut.

The concept of logic itself is simple: the first concept in classical logic or the study of logic is that “A is not non-A.” If you have “A,” then that “A” is *not* “negative A.” This truth of logic means that absolutes have antitheses, which are definitely not the same. Even non-Christians have thought this basic way for centuries. During the earlier years of the twentieth century, it was still possible to discuss what was right and wrong or what was true and false. A non-Christian child could be told to “be a good girl,” or “be a good boy,” and while he might not follow your advice, at least he would understand what was said and meant. But today, to the modern child this statement would be utter nonsense. Forty years ago one could have said, “This is true” or “this is right,” and people would have understood. Even in spiritual things and evangelistic witnessing, the congregation understood what was being said, though they may not have lived it.

We as Christians were not ready for the changes to come. Before the shift took place and the chasm was fixed as it is today, we should have realized what was happening and preached with a clearer grasp of absolutes. Back in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s my grandfather preached as if what he was saying was true, and he could prove it, for it was absolute. In all the days of my father’s preaching there was a clear-cut line given in the preaching, even to the day he passed away. Nevertheless, a false set of presuppositions has taken over today in modern thought and literally permeated the very fabric of society to the point that nationwide it will be impossible to change. While the true Bible Christian may continue in the old set of presuppositions, the world has left them. If a preacher stood before his audience years ago and stated in his message, “Believe this; it is true,” those who heard would have said, “Well, if that is so, then its opposite is false.” Historical Christianity has always addressed the thesis of truth and its antithesis, error. Without this clarion message, historical Christianity is meaningless. There is *Christ*, and then there is definitely an *Antichrist*.”

The New Way of Thinking

The breakdown of absolutes and principles leads to a new society that is

given to pragmatism, relativism, surrealism, and personalism. New approaches are now invading both our society and the institutional church: new ways to evangelize, new ways to organize churches, new methods, and new music. Innovation is the key. The message of truth is changing both on the streets with the common man and in the services of the churches. The medical world is changing its ethical procedures. Sympathies are being illogically fabricated to succumb to accepting abortion, euthanasia, ecumenicity, and the breakdown of national and ethical distinctions. Music is becoming the pied piper to cause us to march to the destruction of our beloved country and public Christianity.

It is all part of the Cultural Revolution, which must take place before the coming of Antichrist. All absolutes must go; the God of absolutes must go as well. Truth must be rendered inoperative in order for a new set of standards and logic to be set up. The philosophy working through the music is also affecting our conversational language, our clothing, our culture, our education, our government, our view of the world, our jewelry, our entertainment, and the total outworking of life itself. And to what is this leading? It is leading to the ultimate goal of Satan and workers of iniquity to get to the heart of man, to control the mind and soul against the things of God, to question God, and to ultimately deny the need of God.

The very spiritual life of most Bible colleges and Christian universities is being sucked out. It is rare to find a preacher, a church, or a Christian school standing unashamedly for the absolute principles of God's infallible Word. It is a rare jewel to find a music composer who is not being philosophically influenced by the trends and spirit of our times. Fundamentalism is facing the potential danger of losing its anointing from God and His presence, for we are slowly allowing our "locks" of separation to be shaven by the barbers of our generation (as Samson was). And if preachers and musicians give in to this age's mood and spirit of compromise, they will be selling Christ as Judas did nearly two thousand years ago. To exalt Jesus in "praise" is not all that is needed in the music; the Charismatics are "verbally" doing that. But we must take a definite stand *in* the music against the powerful undercurrents, which are pulling our churches out into the immense sea of secular humanity and are eroding godly living.

The need goes back to our thinking. What is the philosophy of the heart? When the strong stand is no longer evident in the life, the thinking has obviously changed. The professing Christian world is beginning to believe that carnality and the world are not as bad as we thought twenty, thirty, or forty years ago. Has the change which has come to our nation's churches been the effect of shallow music and empty preaching? And has this music and preaching become the cover-up for our ugly and undealt-with sins? Is the

mood of “feeling” giving us a false hope? Are we oblivious to the judgment of God that will begin at His house? Have our clothing and our children’s clothing changed in recent years? Are we being influenced by the fads of the time? Are we buying due to psychological manipulation? Are our children pressured by their school peers (even in Christian schools that are fast losing their biblical standards) to dress a certain way, speak a certain way, or act a certain way?

We might be coming to a point in this battle that we say, “I get tired of dealing over and over with these things with my children or in my church.” It may be true, for who wants to fight? But if we ever quit the war, we will lose our souls; we will lose our children, our homes, and our good conservative churches. The power of the age is overwhelming. It is one thing to wear the Christian down in prison through torture, but mental and philosophical pressures are wearing us down. The pressure to relax in morals, standards, and doctrine is found in the business world, corporations, medical staffs, hospitals, schools, government, and even in the churches. “Just relax . . . relax!” We are being lulled to sleep, sedated in mind, not to do our own thinking, but to go along with the mass. And, oh, the irony of it all! They tell us *we* are brainwashed, *we* are narrow-minded, and *we* are following a man. They cannot even conceive that they are the ones who are the puppets, the gullible mental pacifists, who are brainwashed and cloned by the age!

When we become Christians, there is to be a biblical change. The Word of God becomes the power to mold us in lifestyle and thinking. Yes, we even have to relearn how to think, for the age has had a greater holding power over us than what we thought it had. The institutional church has actually lost the biblical concept of what a true Christian is. Have we noticed the pulpits of many churches? The preachers have not been teaching the Bible, but filling their sermons with jokes, at times bordering on the risqué. More and more their sermon content is psychology rather than biblical exhortation. This is part of the root problem evident in the music being written today. As the pulpit, so goes the music. If the pulpit is shallow or becomes weak and anemic in absolutes, it will be a matter of time before the music will reflect philosophically this shallow pulpit. As a result, the music and its composers have more influence on the people than the preachers do.

Music has become the most popular method to change people’s philosophy; the inner circles of compromisers know it. They are going to use it to accommodate and promote their own heart changes. A steady stream of a nebulous diet of music after a while becomes like leaven to the mind and soul. Over a period of time the sedative will begin to work. The philosophy will then be planted, and time will tell the outworking of it in the life. The war

cry will be gone from the soul, and compromise will be inevitable. People will change and not even know they are changing. But the implantation has already taken place. And as the milk, the message will gradually be watered down. Yes, we will be clapping and making a joyful sound, but the heart will be void of the stand and strength of the Word of God to counteract the age. Christ may seem to be exalted in the words and pretty music, but the message chosen will separate Christ from our lives and the real living of life in this dark and evil world. Feelings will dictate actions and words. The flesh and the Spirit will be thrown together as compatible.

The world system knows that a great power is found in the mind of a human being. It sees the capability of the mind to be molded with a mixture of an age and false religious philosophy. While the evil molding is occurring, it can have the sound and name of Jesus; however, it is not the same Christ of the Scriptures.

A Final Warning to Forms of Music

A number of years ago we would not have to have dealt with “forms” of music, for God’s people knew what forms were right and what forms were wrong. But this is not true anymore. Back in the 1960s Mick Jaggard of the Rolling Stones declared that rock ‘n’ roll music was the devil’s music, and the churches were stealing it from the devil. Professing Christians do not see this, but believe that rock music can be sanctified and used for God. We are seeing this in other areas as well today: Christian leaders from Southern Gospel to leaders in the National Association of Evangelicals believe you can be a homosexual and be a Christian, or you can dedicate your tobacco and cigarettes to the Lord or even your wine and whiskey. There is no longer a line of demarcation of what belongs to the Devil and what can be used by God. More and more we are seeing Fundamentalist churches and radio stations giving in to Southern Gospel, a style often preached against years ago.

Developing alongside rock music, Country-Western had its own history. Of course present day CW is neither true “country” nor “western” but has eclectically drawn from the contemporary decades to make its own identity in the modern music world. Its message hits the middle-class worker, the blue-collar man of the town. Its message feeds infidelity, drinking, gambling, vices of pleasure, and yet speaks of lovingly standing by one woman or man. Its slang and twang, its slur and blur of voice, its beer-guzzling promotions, its jeans and cowboy look, all add to another aspect of the ever-growing and mutating slob, loose-living culture. It is clearly evident that the classic, general culture of the past is gone; in fact, it is now hated by society. Music was the medium through which this new philosophy was sown. No matter what part or class of society in which an individual finds himself, there is a form of

music which will sow the philosophical message into him. It is all part of the variety of choices that Satan causes man to think he has; yet, all the choices end in man's death and the demise of any hope.

We are also seeing the inroads of Jazz and Blue Grass music coming into Fundamentalism. What is so appalling is that the Fundamentalist music leaders will not publicly take a stand against these forms of music and thus permit its usage in the churches. It causes grief to the soul to know that such music concerts are being given on Christian campuses without any shame or apology. There are those who have endeavored to "sanctify" Blue Grass music by stating that it is a form of American roots music, with roots in Irish, Scottish and English traditional music. But any simple background study of Blue Grass music would truly reveal that it is an amalgam of country, ragtime, jazz, and blues. Bill Monroe has been referred to as the "founding father" of this form of music, but men like Earl Scruggs, Snuffy Jenkins, Rex Brooks, Smith Hammet, and others made their early influence. Where is the church pulling in rock music? Where is it pulling in Country-Western? Where is it pulling in Blue Grass and Jazz? It is from the contemporary sound of the world. This music ought not to be played in church. It does not promote spirituality; rather it promotes the carnal side of man.

Fundamentalism has truly lost its way in this contemporary maze of modern Christianity. *It is becoming more familiar with this world than it is with God.* We are boldly hearing of a "Neo" Fundamentalism emerging among the ranks of its leaders. May God have mercy on our generation as well as the next generation of those being trained for the ministry both in the pulpit and in music? They will have never known historic Fundamentalism or its God of Scripture. And sadly, there seems to be no desire to return to the God of our forefathers and the life they knew with God.

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Christ's Birth in an Outhouse of a *Kataluma*

Dr. H. T. Spence

Luke 2:7 states, “And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.” Ancient tradition places the birthplace of our Lord in a cave, for caves were used as stables in most countries with rocky terrain. The Greek word for *inn* is *kataluma*, denoting the simplest of inns. It is similar to a Syrian *khan*—a refuge from thieves, a shelter from the heat and dust, a place where a man and his beasts may lodge, where a trader may sell his wares, and a pilgrim may slake his thirst. However, in such inns the visitor had to do everything for himself.

At the time of this momentous event, the census for the taxation, people had filled the little town of Bethlehem occupying even the most inexpensive of inns. Thus a cave, a stables, an outhouse where waste was disposed of became the divinely appointed place for the Christ Child to be born on earth.

The Holy Spirit led the physician Luke to use this word *kataluma*, a lowly place that aptly depicts the humble life and death of Christ. The Gospel is heavily freighted with the truth of this word. Why did God pick a *kataluma*-type birth for His Son? If one reads the Bible with a prayerful heart, he will see that God has been working in the *kataluma* fashion since the foundation of the world.

Kataluma Types in the Old Testament

In Genesis 3:15, God could have immediately destroyed the Devil after the Fall of man. Instead, He chose the plain, ordinary seed of the woman, the weaker of the vessels, to take care of the sin problem as well as the Devil.

God could have supernaturally made a luxurious cruise liner to carry Noah, but He chose for Noah to build the ark with no fancy fringes on it. It certainly was a *kataluma* boat.

God could have created a place of giant redwoods or a place equivalent to Cypress Gardens in Florida in order to call Moses to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt. Instead, God used a *kataluma* calling, a burning bush on the backside of the wilderness.

God could have chosen an animal with a higher intelligence like a monkey to speak to Balaam, the apostate prophet, when he was to curse Israel. Instead, He chose a *kataluma* animal, an ass.

God could have supernaturally made a machine gun ahead in history as David's weapon to kill Goliath. Instead, God provided *kataluma* weapons, a slingshot and a smooth stone, to bring down the giant.

When Elijah announced a severe drought and famine, God could have used a variety of ways to provide for

the prophet food and a hiding place from King Ahab. But God chose a *kataluma*-type stream of water for Elijah as well as unclean grocery boys, ravens, to feed the prophet.

God has used broken pitchers and trumpets to kill an army, and a muddy river to cure a leader from leprosy. Yes, God has used a multitude of things that men would view as nothing, but in His hand and plan they became the ideal means for the moment.

The Coming of Messiah

What about the Messiah? How would he come? Isaiah 53:1 declared, “Who hath believed our report and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground.” It seemed God bypassed the great palaces of the leaders in Rome and the luxurious homes of the rich. He bypassed it all and chose for His precious Son to be born in the stables of a *kataluma*. The Lord chose Mary, a young girl in her mid-teens, to be the mother of Christ rather than one of the more mature, seasoned women such as Elizabeth or Anna the prophetess. “Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women” (Luke 1:28). “For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden” (1:48); “He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree” (1:52).

According to Leviticus 12, the sacrifice of dedication for a child

was to be a lamb; but if the family was too poor, two turtledoves or pigeons were acceptable. Mary and Joseph brought the latter (Luke 2:24), a *kataluma* sacrifice. Over his many years, the priest Simeon must have seen thousands of parents coming in with their babies and accompanied by a sacrificial lamb. But when Simeon saw this child, when he took him up in his arms, he declared, “For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people” (2:30-31). The Holy Spirit revealed to this priest, in spite of their *kataluma* sacrifice, that this child was the Messiah.

When Jesus grew up to manhood He still lived that *kataluma* life. “The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head” (Matthew 8:20).

When the hour came for His sacrificial death He had a *kataluma* death. The Jewish means of execution was stoning; the Roman way was beheading. Yet, Christ was given the barbarous death of crucifixion on a cross. Heaven was shut up to Him because He was made sin for us. Hell was shut up to Him as well as the earth. His friends forsook Him. The *kataluma*-type baby was born to die a *kataluma*-type death.

The Message of the Messiah

In reading the four Gospel writers and even the letters of the Apostles, it is evident that Christ’s message was no different.

In the Book of John, when Christ started out in His ministry, the people were lauding, “My, He has gracious words.” But by John 6, when Christ stated, “I am the Bread of Life; he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst,” the same ones were then murmuring against Him, including many of His followers. “Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, this is an hard saying: who can hear it?” (John 6:60).

Christ did not come preaching the gospel according to Dale Carnegie on “How to win friends and influence people.” But He came preaching repentance, being born again, the call to sin no more!

To the world, Christ is a *kataluma* Saviour and His message is of the same view. He is as the Tabernacle of the Old Testament: from within the Tabernacle one could look up at its covering and see goat’s hair and ram’s skins dyed red; however, from without one only saw lowly badger skins. To the world this is what Christ and His message are. “For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness” (I Cor. 1:18). The prophet Isaiah declared,

He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not (Isaiah 53:2-3).

The contemporary church today is trying to change our Lord, make Him a superstar, a hippy, a revolutionist, or a leader against the establishment. He is viewed as a modern ecumenicist, enjoying the contemporary sounds of rock music integrated with the spiritual vocabulary. He is found in contemporary artwork on shirts, pants, posters, etc. He is drawn into contemporary slogans such as “Me and Jesus have got a good thing going,” “Get high on Jesus,” and “Honk if you know Jesus.” However, His *kataluma* message is “Come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty” (II Corinthians 6:17-18). The contemporary church talks much about love and peace, but the *kataluma* Saviour stated, “Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace on earth: but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man’s foes shall be they of his own household” (Matthew 10:34-36).

The Christ of the modern day church is “one of the boys” and has been set forth to make the world feel at home without any conviction or need of repentance. There is no stigma or persecution identified with the contemporary Christianity of our times. In contrast, the *kataluma* Saviour declares,

The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household (Matthew 10:24-25).

Christ made it clear in John 17:14, “I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.” Our Lord also boldly declared, “And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me” (Matthew 10:38). The Charismatics with their emphasis upon prosperity and divine health have made Christ’s kingdom an earthly kingdom of this world. Christ made it clear even to Pilate that His kingdom was not of this world (John 18:36); He even declared to his disciples in Acts 1:6-8 that He had not come the first time to restore the kingdom to Israel.

The Scriptures make it clear that we must accept the Christ of Scriptures, the despised and rejected One, the One Who will be hated by this world. And if the Church is worldly, then the Church will hate Him too. We are not called upon to change the message of the Bible or the truth of the Saviour presented therein. We must accept Him the way He is presented or reject Him fully. There is no middle ground.

From the *Kataluma* to the *Pandocheion*

For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that though he was rich,

yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich (II Corinthians 8:9).

In Luke 10:30-37 Christ gave the story of a man traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho, who “fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.” This is a type of our own life. This world has tried to destroy us, stripping us of any character, wounding our conscience and our living, and leaving us for dead. It is amazing how the religious movements have tried to help the natural man failures but totally ignored the spiritual needs of the people. Priests and Levites are passing wounded lives each day but are never able to give them what they need.

Jesus Christ is to be viewed as this good Samaritan, the half-breed, one who is hated by the Jews; it is He that came by us one day. Thank God, He came by “where he [the man] was, and when he saw him, he had compassion on him.” Our beloved, despised, rejected Saviour did not only have compassion on him, but He also “went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast.” It is through His great merits at Calvary that He is able to come to us; He is able to bind up all the wounds from our life of sin, pouring in the oil of the Holy Spirit and wine of sanctification to bring about a full restoration of life unto Him. Oh, how the providences of God have

been supporting and transporting us along.

Finally, He took us to the “inn,” a *pandocheion*, a palatial hotel, certainly the opposite of the *kataluma*. Because of His poverty for us, we will be the spiritually rich ones when His redemption is fully wrought in us.

It is our prayer that during this

Christmas season God will richly bless your life and family. Let us ever be conscious of the fact that He was born to die for our sins. He was born in the outhouse stables of a *Kataluma* in order to take us to the palatial *Pandocheion*. It truly must be said, “He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities” (Psalm 103:10).

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