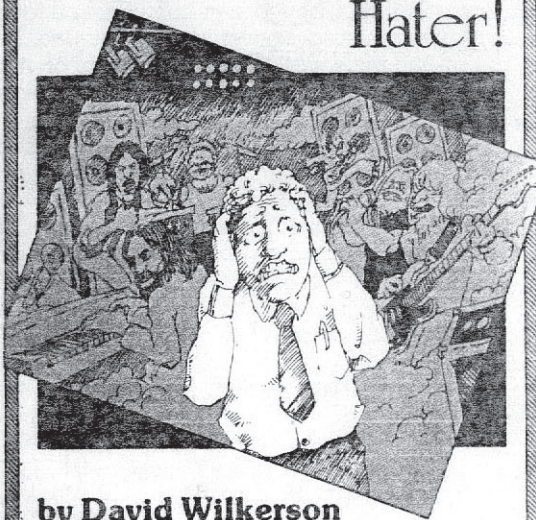


Confessions of a *Rock n Roll* Hater!



by David Wilkerson

I have always hated rock and roll music. My first book was entitled, *Rock and Roll—The Devil's Heartbeat*. In it, I listed what I believed were 16 sins caused by rock music. Looking back now, I don't remember what they were.

My hatred for rock was cultural, having grown up with Elvis Presley, Chuck Berry and Chubby Checker, and hearing them and their music condemned from pulpits everywhere. Even the secular world was shocked by the "sensual" appearance of Elvis Presley on the Ed Sullivan Show. One TV personality who was deeply offended by Elvis' hip swinging and "wild" music, said, "Elvis is a rotten tomato that needs to be squeezed!" Some parents thought Elvis was Satan incarnate, a demonic Pied Piper come to charm their kids to hell.

Recently, I heard an early Elvis recording, and it was amusing. It sounded harmless and rather innocent—and it makes me wonder what all the controversy was about.

Then Came Woodstock

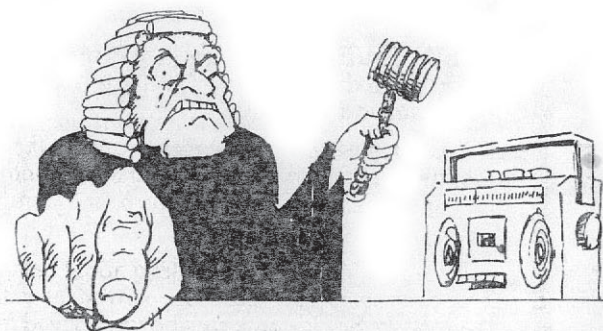
Woodstock intensified my hatred for rock and roll. In the following year, dozens of rock and roll open-air concerts sprang up—mini-Woodstocks. I wanted to understand the significance of what was happening to the youth of our nation, so I put on a leather jacket, bought a motorcycle, and took off to observe the rock concert scene, firsthand. It nearly crushed me. I wept openly at the sight of multiplied thousands of teenagers turning off the world and turning on to drugs. It was a tragic world of acid, speed, alcohol, pills, pot, and flaunted sexuality. The rock performers were treated like gods, and the more brazen and godless they were, the more they were admired. The music was their "sacrifice to idols." I helped put teenage girls who overdosed on acid and speed into ambulances. Some of them died. Their friends were too stoned to care. Meanwhile, Elvis was now being called "The King."

The Jesus Movement

The Jesus Movement was born from the agony of the Sixties, as rock stars began to fall. Janis Joplin, Jimi Hendrix and others, died of overdoses and suicide. By a sovereign act of God, the rock and roll crowd was mercifully wooed by the Holy Spirit. Rock idols began turning to Christ. Large numbers of rock band-members soon followed. Some famous, some notorious, and some not-so-famous—they began singing their rock music in churches and "religious" concerts. Thus, so-called "Christian rock" was born.

I accused converted rock and rollers of living a double-standard. As I saw it, they should have forsaken everything from their past—rock music included. But I could not deny that most of them were sincere, deeply in love with Jesus, and God was blessing their efforts. I was nearly mad at God, thinking to myself, "Lord, here I am holding up Your holy standard, trying to straighten them out, and You are sneaking in blessings to them."

In all sincerity, I preached against what I thought was compromise. I condemned a music-style that was born in rebellion and idolatry. Looking back, I wonder how many innocent young converts I hurt—those who were giving to Christ the only talent they had. They knew nothing else, and to them rock was no longer an offering to Satan. Their idols had been crucified.



"It is unscriptural to criticize another's taste in music!"

Facing Reality

In the past few years, my battle with rock and roll came to a head. It began when one of my music associates started singing what I thought was rock in my crusades. Flushed with what I believed was righteous indignation, I blurted out to him, "What's happened to you? **You** of all people, turning to worldly music!" I equated it with backsliding. A grieved young man had to part company with me, deeply hurt that I thought he had forsaken "the old paths."

All the while I was hurting over my own double-standards. I really did not know what rock music was. Some of the music I enjoyed was "soft rock" (so I was later told). The very thing I condemned, I was sponsoring . . . and in my own meetings.

I have never been smug or "holier-than-thou" about it. My desire to please the Lord with righteous music was, and still is, very sincere. But God had to give me peace and take away my bondage and confusion. I decided to stay on my knees for as many nights and days as it took to hear from God with a biblical answer to all my questions about music—**especially rock and roll**. God most graciously heard my cry, and gave me the following word.

Seven Steps Toward Balance In Music

STEP ONE—The music offered to God must be solemn.

"Sing praises unto His name . . . with a solemn sound"
(Psalm 92:1-3).

Solemn does not mean sad, slow or "high church." It means serious, sober, deeply earnest, arousing feelings of awe and devotion.

Actually, it is **the musician** who must be solemn. Not long-faced, but serious, sober, and deeply in earnest about arousing the audience's feelings of holy awe and reverence for the Lord. Usually, after a "fun time" at meetings, musicians feel it necessary to sober up a crowd with worship music, to prepare them to hear the Word. But the entire evening should be a solemn occasion, with no desire whatsoever to entertain or provide "fun." Enjoyment, godly enjoyment, is a natural by-product of solemn offerings of praise unto the Lord.

Solemn music is joyful, Christ-exalting, and touches the heart of man the most powerfully.

STEP TWO—All music must be sung as if in the direct presence of the Lord.

"Unto Thee will I sing . . . O Thou Holy One of Israel . . . my lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing unto Thee . . ."
(Psalm 71:22,23).

An awesome scene was flashed before my mind. I saw a host of singers and musicians standing before the Judgment Seat of Christ. The martyred saints of all ages were there. Multitudes who came out of great tribulation were standing about. Tier upon tier of mass choirs of angels and other heavenly beings stood by in silence. Michael, the Archangel, and the four and twenty elders sat around the throne. One by one each musician, each group, was made to replay every song they had ever sung—before all these witnesses. Some sang with such an anointing that soon one angel-choir after another joined in. Martyred saints stood before the throne with upraised hands, joining in the glorious anthems. Wave upon wave of glory flooded over the scene.

Others stood with heads down, in deep shame. They could not look Him in the face, but they were made to proceed. The sounds were pathetic, growing more ominous with every beat. Angels wept. None in such a state of shame could finish their song, but fell before His throne, weeping and crying out—"Holy, Holy, Holy, —Lord, **You** are holy."

But in all the proceedings the Master seemed not to be listening to the music—His eyes pierced the heart. He was wanting an aroma, not a sound. A sweet-smelling aroma of godly motives, clean hands, and a pure heart. He was judging only the purity of the spring from which came all words and music.

Just as I must give an account for all my preaching, so must musicians give an account for all their singing. Every one of us should judge ourselves rightly now, so that whether we preach or sing, we do it all **only unto Him!**

STEP THREE—Loud music is encouraged by the Lord!

*"Sing unto the Lord a new song . . . play skillfully **with a loud noise** . . ." (Psalm 33:3).*

If God does not prefer loud music, at least we know He is not offended by it! At the dedication of Solomon's temple, the music was so loud it was heard all over the city. A great 14-day celebration was climaxed with an unusual musical convocation. The priests marched solemnly out of the Holy of Holies, the signal for the music to begin. A mass choir, accompanied by 120 trumpeters, was joined with an orchestra of harps, cymbals, and lyres:

*"The band and chorus united as one to praise and thank the Lord; their selections were interspersed with trumpet obbligatos, the clashing of cymbals, **and the loud playing of other musical instruments**—all praising and thanking the Lord. Their theme was, 'He is so good! His lovingkindness lasts forever . . .'" (II Chronicles 5:11-14 LB).*

The loud playing of instruments does not offend God. The instruments of Bible days were invented by Jubal, a true man of God. Loud or soft—He seeks most of all, the yielding of the talents to Himself.

STEP FOUR—It is unscriptural to criticize another's taste in music!

"You have no right to criticize your brother or look down on him. Remember, each of us will stand personally before the Judgment Seat of Christ . . . so don't criticize anymore . . ." (Romans 14:10,13).

The apostle Paul adds, *"Aim for harmony . . . stir up goodness, peace and joy . . . try to build each other up . . ." (Romans 14:17,19 LB).*

God helping me, I will never again criticize the musical taste or style of any of my Christian brothers or sisters. If anyone is living by a double-standard, that is God's business, not mine. Here is how strongly the Word puts it:

"They are God's servants, not yours. They are responsible to Him, not to you. Let Him tell them whether they are right or wrong . . . God is able to make them do as they should . . ." (Romans 14:4).

I confess that I have been guilty of judging others by my own standards. God reproved me with these words, *"Don't criticize your brother for having dif-*

ferent ideas from yours about what is right and wrong . . ." (Romans 14:1 LB).

STEP FIVE—There is nothing wrong with rightfully using that which has been served to idols!

"As for myself, I am perfectly sure on the authority of the Lord Jesus that there is nothing wrong with eating meat that has been offered to idols . . ." (Romans 14:14 LB).

Here is where we begin talking about balance. The controversy of Paul's day was meat, rather than music. Some converts who were saved from idol worship, could not in good conscience eat meat blessed by ungodly idol-priests. To them, it was contaminated meat. But to others, idols meant nothing—it was just another cut of meat. It was nearly impossible to buy meat except in the markets that sold that which was "blessed" by idolatrous priests.

Paul proposes a balanced view, saying, "He that eats meat offered to idols, he is thankful to the Lord, not the idols—and he is doing right . . . and he that won't touch it . . . he, too, is anxious to please the Lord . . . either way, we are all His" (Romans 14:6,8 LB).

Perhaps the most shocking of all Paul's statements is this: **"On questions of this kind—everyone must decide for himself . . ."** (Romans 14:5 LB).

In other words, "Don't let anyone think he or she is more holy, or more on God's side, in this matter. Don't allow one to put down the other—but in love, respect each other's views." Let us not think that we are divided on two different sides, because after all, we are all on **His** side. Not meat, nor music, should ever divide God's people!

STEP SIX—There is a risk in offending others by our music!

"Try to live in such a way that you will never make your brother stumble by letting him see you doing something he thinks is wrong . . . you are not acting in love if you go ahead and do it . . . don't let your eating (singing) ruin someone for whom Christ died . . ." (Romans 14:13,15 LB).

Paul warns against flaunting a particular music style simply to prove personal freedom—without taking into consideration the conscience of

others. He warns, "Better to quit doing anything that offends . . ." and furthermore, "It is wrong when it makes others to stumble . . ." (Rom. 14:20,21 LB).

In other words, use discretion. Consider your audience and whom you are ministering to. A street crowd? A college crowd? A church group? God, by His Spirit, can lead you into the kind of music to play and sing—when and where you should. Study the audience, be flexible, follow the flow of the Spirit. If you sense that people are being offended—change your tune!

Don't apologize or get under bondage. If your music is truly of God—He will let you know when your music should change gears, from up-tempo and hand clapping, to praise, to worship. Mostly, God wants you to be free to enjoy what you do, and cause God's people to enjoy it as well.

STEP SEVEN—There is a better way—above all controversy!

" . . . I will show you still a more excellent way." (I Cor. 12:31 R.S.V.).

What has ever become of originality? If God is anything, He is **original**. Putting aside the question of whether or not borrowing certain musical-styles from the world is right or wrong—**why borrow at all?**

This brings me to the prophetic part of this message. I believe we are on the brink of a revival of holiness. John the Baptist pictured Christ coming with an axe in one hand and a fan in the other. The axe will cut off the roots of the evil in God's House, and with the fan of the Holy Spirit, the chaff will be blown away. I hear the sound again of a mighty rushing wind. I see Christ preparing a people without spot or wrinkle.

In this revival of righteousness—the first thing to be purged will be the music in the House of God. Granted, rock and roll and other kinds of music may be used as a tool of evangelism by some—and I do not condemn them anymore, for they are servants of the Lord. But what I see coming in the future is a new-**Holy Ghost**-wave music. It will focus on worship. It will ring with the anointed originality of songs written through tears—on the knees. Christ is going to purge the performers and blow all the junk right out of His holy temple. All that will remain of value will be that which truly glorifies His holiness. The closer to Christ we move, the more sanctified our music will become. Worldly-minded

Christians have developed a taste for worldly music. But that is now changing. Holy Spirit wind is blowing out the old to prepare for the new.

Look not for a new **style** of music, but rather look for a **new anointing**—that will produce a glorified sound. Be ready to receive the Spirit's move toward deeper, holier, more worshipful music.

Conclusion

Music will play an ever-increasing role in moving people closer to God in future days. We need to free ourselves from all labels and clichés, and turn to the Lord in repentance. We need a renewed commitment, a new cleansing. We need to examine carefully all our values and permit the Holy Spirit to shake out of us all pride, self, and ambition. May there be nothing left in us but an empty vessel, humbled, broken, and ready to minister only for Him!

No, I am not backslidden. I am not compromising. I am growing up in the Lord. Some will think I have become too soft in my middle age—but we so desperately need to love one another and quit judging. I probably will never like "Christian" rock and roll—but now it is not an issue with me. And I can truly say that I love all who differ with me.

David Wilkerson is a noted evangelist, speaker, and author of over 25 books—he is most well-known for his classic *"The Cross and the Switchblade,"* and for founding the international drug-rehabilitation ministry Teen Challenge. He is both our friend and neighbor here in Lindale, Texas. If you have not yet read his article, "Do You Feel Like Giving Up?" you can order LD#9.

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