

# Worldview and Music in God-Centered Worship: Reclaiming the Keystone of Christian Culture

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The Enlightenment of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was the turning point in the shaping of the modern era. Francis Schaeffer, in *Escape from Reason*<sup>2</sup>, wrote about how Enlightenment philosophy brought with it a break in the unity or coherence of truth in the Western mind, forever changing our worldview. Nancy Pearcey, in *Saving Leonardo: A Call to Resist the Secular Assault on Mind, Morals, and Meaning*<sup>3</sup> built upon Schaeffer's work, further demonstrating how this worldview shift was exhibited in the arts. What these works reveal is the crumbling of the Christian worldview as the foundation of Western society and culture.

The Enlightenment was birthed by a turn from the historical partnerships between philosophy and theology to a strict reliance upon science and reason in the pursuit of truth.<sup>4</sup> The effect was nothing short of a revolution in the way modern man understands reality. As a result, the biblical relationship between the earthly and spiritual things, between the temporal and eternal was forever severed. Core to this new perspective was a change in the Western conception of God. As R.C. Sproul wrote in *The Holiness of God*, the Deists of the eighteenth century embraced God's transcendence, his majesty, but denied His immanence, his nearness.<sup>5</sup> Although Deism had merely a brief following, its impact would be forever felt in the West as the impact of scientific rationalism developed. Today, only knowledge ascertained by science and reason may be held as objective truth—while knowledge ascertained through faith, the supernatural, and the arts is held as merely subjective.<sup>6</sup> This situation represents a cataclysmic breakdown in the unity of truth revealed by God through the Creation and the Scriptures.

To Christians in the twenty-first century, the effects of this spiraling breakdown are visible everywhere. Christians are called to be in the world but not of it. We are called to be God's truth bearers in every arena. As classical Christian education emphasizes, worldview is not transmitted by mere brute facts. Rather, the arts are primary means through which beliefs and values are transferred from one generation to the next. It is for this reason that the arts, particularly the music that we use in our services of worship, must be carefully evaluated for that which communicates a unity of truth. The thesis of this paper is that the Church should embrace the historic Christian worldview as the keystone of Christian culture, as *only this worldview* gives us

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<sup>2</sup> Francis A. Schaeffer, *Escape from Reason: A Penetrating Analysis of Trends in Modern Thought* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1968).

<sup>3</sup> Nancy Pearcey, *Saving Leonardo: A Call to Resist the Secular Assault on Mind, Morals, and Meaning* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2010).

<sup>4</sup> W. Andrew Hofferger, *Revolutions in Worldview: Understanding the Flow of Western Thought* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2007).

<sup>5</sup> R. C. Sproul, *Battle for Our Minds: Age of Reason/Enlightenment*, Ligonier Ministries, 1994, compact disc. See also R.C. Sproul, *Study Guide, Battle for Our Minds: Worlds in Collision* (Park Lake Mary, FL: Ligonier Ministries, 2010).

<sup>6</sup> Pearcey, *Saving Leonardo*, 26.

the understanding of reality that we need to employ Christian wisdom in the arts, and thus form disciples that know and live Christian truth. Therefore, in this paper I will: 1.) describe in detail how the unity of truth was broken in the West and the resulting affect upon the arts; 2.) explain how the historic Christian worldview is the keystone in the formation of Christian artistic culture—culture with the potential to realize the Christian worldview on multiple levels; 3.) describe artistic standards revealed by Scripture and Creation; 4.) describe what we can learn from music composed before the Enlightenment worldview shift; and 5.) draw conclusions and applications for the twenty-first-century church.

### **Enlightenment Worldview and Secular Culture**

Until well into the eighteenth century the Church was one of the foremost influential patrons of the arts in Western society. In this role, the church displayed respect not only for both the book of God's Word, but also the book of God's works—the wondrous created order which displayed the glory of God. This is because, before the Enlightenment, Creation was seen to be permeated with the power and presence of God.<sup>7</sup> Rightly so, because the apostle Paul in Acts 17:27-8 states, “for he is actually not far from each one of us, for in Him we live and move and have our being.”<sup>8</sup> Then in Colossians 1, Paul teaches that all things were created by Christ and for Christ—and “in him all things hold together.”<sup>9</sup> Verses such as these relate to two aspects of God's being: 1.) His transcendence—that God is vastly superior to and distinct from his Creation; and 2.) His immanence—God's nearness.<sup>10</sup> The Scriptures present the understanding that though God dwells in the heavenly realm his majestic presence is all around us and empowering us to exist at every moment.

Today, however, modern man views things very differently due to the shifts in worldview which occurred during the eighteenth-century Age of Reason, also known as the Enlightenment. The most popular religion of the day was Deism, which held that God created the world, endowing it with natural laws, and then separated himself from it, allowing the world and the universe to run on its own laws. This belief initiated a massive shift in worldview. Once God was seen as separated from his Creation—not only superior to, and distinct from, Creation (as Scripture reveals), but separated from it—the concept of miracles was considered to be impossible. If natural law ruled the universe, then God did not. It was such reliance upon reason and science alone in the pursuit of truth that produced in the mind of modern man, an unbiblical chasm between nature (Creation) and supernatural (God and other beings of the spiritual realm).<sup>11</sup> The reality is, as A.W. Tozer writes, that what man perceives as natural laws are really phenomena that God is empowering and enabling to happen in a repeated pattern.<sup>12</sup> It is this view of nature that simultaneously upholds the biblical understanding of God's infinite majesty and his sovereign and intimate involvement with his Creation. Hence only this perspective can uphold the biblical understanding of God's transcendence and immanence.

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<sup>7</sup> A.W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1961), 66.

<sup>8</sup> Lane T. Dennis and Wayne Grudem, eds. *ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 2112.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 2294.

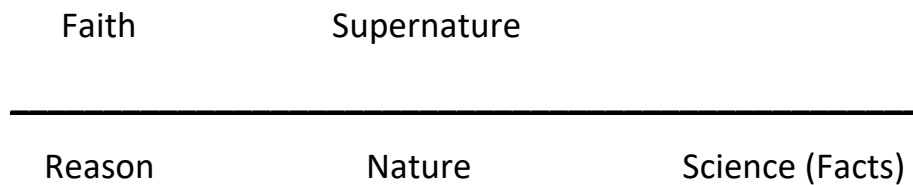
<sup>10</sup> R.C. Sproul, *Battle for Our Minds: Classical/Biblical Worldview*, Ligonier Ministries, 1994, compact disc.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*, 66.

The separation of supernatural from nature led to another separation in man’s thinking: a separation between faith and reason.<sup>13</sup> The understanding that God set in place natural laws—fixed *laws*, rather than continually enabled and empowered phenomena—led man to believe that reason and logic are all we need to to find success in life, including peace with God and our fellow man. During the Enlightenment, man’s understanding of his world, and perceived control of it, grew by discovering the laws of physics and formulating the laws of economics. Deists depended upon the natural laws of morality sown into their God-given conscience to attain virtue. Increasingly prevalent in Western society was the notion that God may be important for eternal matters, but His sovereign activity among his Creation was no longer a factor for everyday living.<sup>14</sup> Further, the philosophy of scientific naturalism or scientism which drives the modern secular worldview, holds that matter is all there is. Therefore, the modern assumption is that the use of reason employed through scientific method and the use of our five senses are the only means we have of knowing that anything is real. In other words, it is only these things that may lead us to knowledge of *objective truth*—that is, truth that exists regardless of opinion—that which relates only to facts. Conversely, matters of faith and the supernatural, which of course includes revealed truth, concern merely the realm of *subjective values*—which are strictly a matter of opinion and personal preference.<sup>15</sup> Of course, Darwin’s theory of evolution in the nineteenth century supported this type of thinking. If God did not create the world as Scripture claims, then faith in God and the supernatural can at best be seen as a matter of subjective preference, hence for many today, God does not exist.

Figure 1. Reality as represented by the Secular worldview.



As can be seen in the illustration above, there is a two-tiered worldview in the mind of modern man. This leads us to the completion of our third division in these sets of concepts. As Charles Colson and Nancy Pearcey write in *How Now Shall We Live?*, “The assumption took hold that anything science cannot detect and

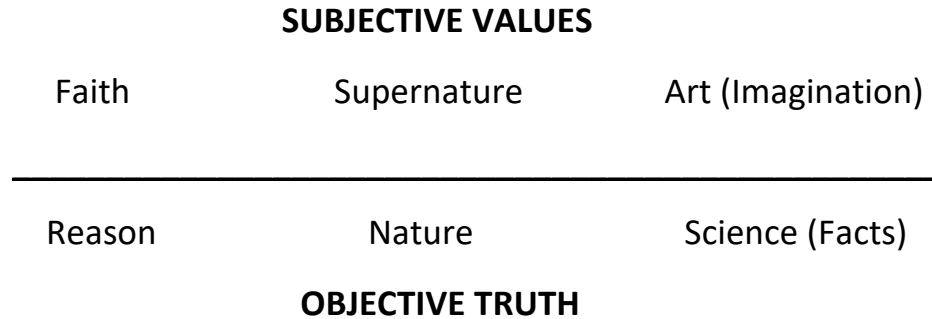
<sup>13</sup> Schaeffer, *Escape from Reason*, 40-59. Schaeffer develops the the upper and lower stories of the two-story worldview by stages. Each stage represents progressive development in the use of autonomous reason in the pursuit of a unified worldview. His first stage involves a separation of Grace (upper story) from Nature (lower story) by Aquinas, although Schaeffer admits, “Aquinas’s view of nature and grace did not involve a complete discontinuity between the two, for he did have a concept of unity between them.” The second stage is separation of Freedom (upper story) from Nature (lower story) accomplished during the Enlightenment by Kant and Rousseau. Now both stories are autonomous, human freedom in the upper story and materialistic determinism in the lower story—a logical impossibility. Next, the loss of “hope for a unified field of knowledge begins with Hegel. Finally, the third stage, the separation of Faith (upper story) from Rationality (lower story) is initiated with Kirkagaard. See also footnote 14 below regarding Pearcey, *Saving Leonardo*, 24.

<sup>14</sup> Paul G. Hiebert, “The Flaw of the Excluded Middle,” *Missiology: An International Review* 10 (January 1982): 43.

<sup>15</sup> Pearcey, *Saving Leonardo*, 24. As Pearcey writes, “Traditionally, truth had been conceived as a comprehensive whole, encompassing both the natural order and the moral order.” She explains that questions of God and religion were also part of the concept of a unified worldview that once existed. But the empiricists, especially David Hume, ended the conception of the unity of truth for the Western mind. As concepts of morality and religion were not things that could be verified through the senses, these things were discredited as having anything to do with objective knowledge.

measure must not be real, leading to an assault not only on religion but also on the realm of the imagination and intuition expressed in the arts.”<sup>16</sup>

Figure 2. Reality as represented by the Secular worldview.<sup>17</sup>



This attack upon the arts grew from a disdain for mythological creatures such as dragons and unicorns appearing in literature and painting. Along with poetic literary devices, such as hyperbole, used to increase the communicative power of the written word, these creatures were seen as fraudulent, a “falsification of reality.” Increasingly, the arts were viewed as dealing with merely the realm of the subjective. Colson’s and Percy’s presentation of this history reveals how these shifts in worldview changed the course of the arts: “As artists were no longer respected for truths that their art could represent, they wondered what their purpose really was. Consequently, many artists decided that they should just “concede the physical world to science,” and create an entirely new world for art—a world separate and autonomous from the world God created:”<sup>18</sup>

In defending their work, artists began to overcompensate by claiming that art is actually superior to science. They contended that it is the imagination, not scientific reason, that is the most godlike. And they insisted that art finds its highest form not in representing reality but in creating something completely new and imaginary. In every poem, every painting, the artist was conceived as the creator of a new universe, a microcosm in which his or her decisions were absolute. The artist’s creativity, says literary scholar M.H. Abrahams, was modeled on the “absolute fiat of Jehovah in the book of Genesis.”<sup>19</sup>

By the time of Beethoven, the same autonomy was taking place in music. So as the chart in Figure 2 is now complete, we see that modern man through the secular or scientific worldview sees things in this dichotomy: 1.) Only our use of reason and logic, our five senses, and study of science can lead us to objective truth; 2.) All matters regarding faith, the supernatural, and the arts are cast into the realm of subjective values. This concept of the two-tiered modern worldview initiated during the Enlightenment was first conceived by writers

<sup>16</sup> Charles Colson and Nancy Percy, *How Now Shall We Live?* (Carol Stream: Tyndale, 1999), 445-46.

<sup>17</sup> This figure is adapted from the work of Schaeffer (*Escape from Reason*), Percy (*Saving Leonardo*), and R.C. Sproul (*Battle for Our Minds*).

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

such as Francis Schaeffer and has been substantially developed in the more recent works of Nancy Pearcey<sup>20</sup> including her aforementioned book with Charles Colson.

The reality revealed through the Scriptures and Creation, however, is altogether different in that each of the things of the upper and lower tiers relate to, and have the capacity to deal in, and communicate, objective truth. Furthermore, the upper level is related to the lower level as seen in the biblical relationships between each of these pairs of concepts. According to the historic Christian worldview: 1.) faith and reason support one another; 2.) supernatural coexists with nature as God dwells with and near his Creation empowering it to bring him glory; and 3.) art is united with science when science is understood as a study of God's orderly designs in his magnificent Creation.

### **The Historic Christian Worldview as the Keystone of Christian Culture**

Although I have already discussed many of the basic ramifications of worldview in this article, I have yet to define worldview. Andrew Hofferger's definition pertains well to our study:

One's worldview, or world-and-life view, consists of one's most basic beliefs and framework of understanding. Basic beliefs can be expressed by several terms—ideas, assumptions, convictions, presumptions, and premises. Directly or indirectly, basic beliefs influence every dimension of human life: they guide thought, stimulate imagination, influence intuition, direct moral choices, and determine the value and priority given to each of these faculties. Collectively, basic beliefs function as the grid or matrix by which we comprehend reality and attempt to live consistently within that framework.<sup>21</sup>

Hofferger further states, "Worldview issues and influences pervade every area of human existence, from individual reflection to all forms of social and cultural activity. . . ."<sup>22</sup>

The historic Christian worldview is the keystone in the formation of Christian culture. "A keystone is the wedge-shaped piece at the crown of an arch that locks the other pieces in place."<sup>23</sup> As the keystone of Christian culture then, it is the Christian worldview that locks together truths and realities that would otherwise be separated by the secular or scientific worldview. This means that the Christian worldview holds together the truth presented to us via God's two forms of revelation—Scripture and Creation. Scripture (or special revelation) is our highest and final authority in all matters of Christian doctrine and practice and informs our understanding of the Creation. The doctrine of Creation is so important that without it not only would Christianity fall, but the rest of the Christian worldview. Creation (or general revelation) proclaims God's nature and character. This is made clear in Romans 1 and Psalm 19. From Romans 1:19-20 we learn: "For what can be known about God is plain . . . , because God has shown it . . . . For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world,

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<sup>20</sup> Pearcey, *Saving Leonardo*, 24-29. Dr. Pearcey refers to the two-tiered worldview as "the fact-value split." Whereas only things that can be proven as objective truth, or facts, via the use of reason, empiricism (use of the senses) and science are included on the lower level. Everything else is dismissed into the upper level of subjective values. This upper level includes all matters of theology, morality, and aesthetics.

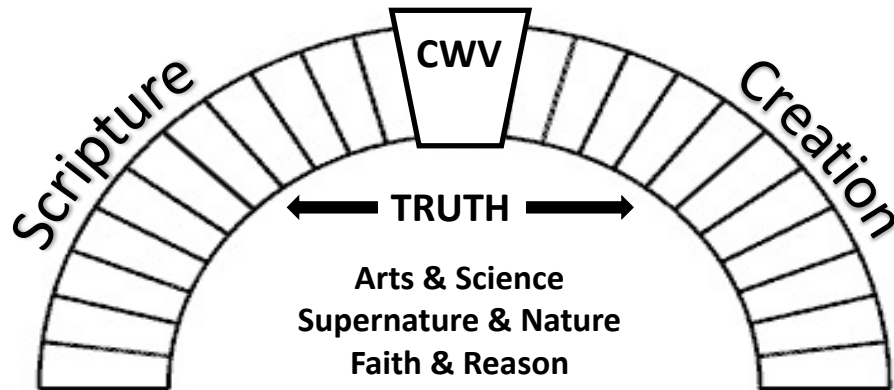
<sup>21</sup> Hofferger, *Revolutions in Worldview*, XI.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, X.

<sup>23</sup> *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 10<sup>th</sup> ed., s.v. "keystone."

in the things that have been made . . . .” In Psalm 19: 1-4 David states, “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard. Their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.” So, the Christian worldview as a joining of the revelation of truth via Scripture and Creation is illustrated in the arch in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3. Reality according to the Christian worldview.



While there is certainly overlap in the things we learn, there are some things revealed only in Scripture and some things only through the Creation. Hence the Christian worldview holds together realities such as those presented in these three pairs of concepts: Faith and Reason, Supernature and Nature, and Art and Science. In other words it presents us with the God-given relationships between these things. Christian culture is then birthed from a working out of our God-given purpose of glorifying God (1 Corinthians 10:31) and set of values implicit in the comprehension of these realities. Put another way, the Christian worldview enables us to see reality as God has revealed it to us. Notice, it is this perspective that gives not only a larger framework for objective reality, but also the biblical and only consistent framework for reality, where truth is not limited to what science reveals, but is understood by the fullness of what God has revealed via general and special revelation. It is this framework then that enables us to employ Christian wisdom in the creation of Christian artistic culture. Only artistic culture created through the lens of the Christian worldview recognizes God as the ultimate reality and capitalizes on every opportunity to fully glorify him. This is culture created as a result of recognizing and honoring the relationship between God and the Creation.<sup>24</sup>

If, on the other hand, we operate from the secular worldview in regard to the arts, which so much of the Church does today, we are operating from an inaccurate view of reality. This in turn will lead us to wrong assumptions, which then affects our sense of *values*—including our purpose and standards for the arts. Hence the modern assumption that beauty and meaning in the arts only pertain to subjective human creativity. However, when we start with the right assumptions of reality provided by the Christian worldview, this shapes our purpose and standards for Christian artistic formation—especially arts used in the practice of Christian worship. To clarify and develop this understanding, the Christian worldview replaces our culture’s subjective

<sup>24</sup> R.C. Sproul, *Study Guide, Battle for Our Minds: Worlds in Collision* (Park Lake Mary, FL: Ligonier Ministries, 2010), 3-9.

values for the arts with an objective, biblical purpose—the glorification of God. In other words, it replaces secular, man-centered purposes for art with a God-centered purpose. In 1 Corinthians 10:31 we are charged to do everything we do “for the glory of God.” Certainly, then, this includes artistic creation. Second, according to this God-given purpose, the Christian worldview then gives us appropriate standards for artistic creativity. So, where can we learn such standards, and what are they? First and foremost, we learn these from both Creation and Scripture. However, we don’t have to do all the thinking on this ourselves. We can learn from theologians, and composers that thought, wrote, and composed with both forms of revelation in mind—before the sweeping changes in worldview and culture brought on by the Enlightenment. Third, we can learn from Christian thinkers and musicians today who clearly express their values and standards for the arts in light of the historic Christian worldview.

### **Standards Revealed in Creation and Scripture**

As Colson and Pearcey write, art finds its very justification in the doctrine of the Creation. It was the orderly mathematical understanding of music, the understanding that mathematical harmony and proportion are built into the cosmos that was adopted into the classical-Christian or biblical worldview that gave art its ability to communicate objectively. This was the aim or purpose for art that was implicit before the two-tiered secular worldview was put into place. In other words, up into the eighteenth century, the classical understanding of the purpose for art predominated—that art should teach us “something significant about reality.”<sup>25</sup> Surely as the most fundamental or ultimate reality is the existence and nature of God, it would seem that Christian art especially in corporate worship would proclaim this reality via its aesthetics. Of course, this purpose is simply a reflection of God’s purpose for His own artistry in the Creation, as Creation shows forth God’s transcendent glory—or according to Romans 1, “his eternal power and divine attributes.” Hence, we learn from Scripture and Creation that humans can communicate the objective and transcendent truth, goodness, and beauty of God via their artwork. God makes it clear to us in the designs, building, and furnishings of the tabernacle and temple that He appreciates this type of art. He loves excellence in the arts that proclaims His glory.<sup>26</sup>

As we seek God’s standards for the arts, including music, we must discover the ways that Creation communicates the truth, goodness, and beauty of God. Doing this is often a matter of respecting the unity of these things as expressed in God’s orderly designs.<sup>27</sup> Such unities are manifest in Creation in many ways, and therefore are available for us to employ in the arts. For example, trained singers understand that there are certain ways we can handle the management of the breath, the creation of vowel sounds, and resonance of the voice to create beautiful sounds.<sup>28</sup> Hence, the components of good vocal technique work together in remarkable ways—so that not only beauty, but increased ease and efficiency, range, and power—all result from the synergistic relationships between them. Barbara Doscher, who taught at the University of Colorado,

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<sup>25</sup> Colson and Pearcey, *How Now Shall We Live?*, 441.

<sup>26</sup> Philip Graham Ryken, *Art for God’s Sake: A Call to Recover the Arts* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2006), 37-45. In the chapter entitled, “The Good, the True, and the Beautiful,” Ryken discusses God’s standards for the arts.

<sup>27</sup> R.C. Sproul, *The Holiness of God*, 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary ed. (Sanford, FL: Ligonier Ministries, 2010), 238-39. Sproul writes of the “three-legged stool” of truth, goodness, and beauty. He elaborates, “In biblical categories, there is a triad of virtues, all of which point beyond themselves to the holiness of God. This triad is composed of the *good*, the *true*, and the *beautiful*.”

<sup>28</sup> Ryken, *Art for God’s Sake*, 38-9. Ryken cites various examples regarding the ways that God’s standards for the arts related to goodness truth and beauty, are revealed to us through Creation.

wrote an excellent manual of vocal pedagogy, entitled *The Functional Unity of the Singing Voice*,<sup>29</sup> that explains and illustrates the phenomenal synergies involved in good singing. Working within the laws of acoustics and physics, instrumentalists experience similar unities and synergies in their playing. Such order bears witness to the truth, goodness, and beauty of God's brilliant designs for music—designs which show forth the glory of their Creator.

To illustrate how this phenomenon is not merely musical, artists portraying realistic three-dimensional images on a two-dimensional canvas employ certain techniques or rules to allow them to consistently portray reality. The results are images that reflect the Creation with remarkable accuracy. Such realistic portrayals of life afford the artist tools of communicating truth, goodness, and beauty to profound levels. What I am not saying here is that all oil painting must portray three-dimensional images. This assumption would miss the point. Rather, what I am saying is that if artists fail to work within the boundaries of good technique their work will miss the mark of portraying life and reality in profoundly meaningful ways. It is through paying attention to God's created order that the revelation of such standards is understood.

Such aspects of the created order may serve for us as artistic standards because, as Philip Ryken writes, "these standards are not relative; they are absolute. A Christian view of art stands in opposition to the postmodern assumption that there are no absolutes."<sup>30</sup> It is precisely the transcendent truth, goodness, and beauty of God that Creation and Scripture work together to proclaim. Hence, it is these realities that Christians should champion in their artworks, especially in corporate worship.<sup>31</sup> Writing at the dawn of the 1960's, American theologian A.W. Tozer wrote of his concern for the low view of God that, in his estimation, had become commonplace in the Church. Tozer was concerned for a loss of the sense of the majesty of God in both public worship and private devotion. He writes, "With our loss of the sense of majesty has come the further loss of religious awe and consciousness of the divine Presence. We have lost our spirit of worship and ability to withdraw inwardly to meet God in adoring silence."<sup>32</sup> The last several decades of worship in the evangelical church have reminded us that God desires, and we need, heart-felt singing. However, the emotions encouraged by our worship music should be the result of an objective contemplation of the holy and wondrous God of Creation and Scripture—the triune God of transcendent majesty and glory.<sup>33</sup> Indeed, *this* is the God we can know and who calls us to Himself.

In seeking to realize God's artistic priorities or standards for us, it is important for us to understand that only God creates *ex nihilo* or "out of nothing." Only He can speak things into existence. As humans we use the materials of the physical world that God has given us. Therefore, as Christians made in God's image, in our

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<sup>29</sup> Barbara M. Doscher. *The Functional Unity of the Singing Voice*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., (Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, 1994).

<sup>30</sup> Ryken, *Art for God's Sake*, 37.

<sup>31</sup> Kevin T. Bauder et al., *A Conservative Christian Declaration* (Religious Affections Ministries, 2014), 26-8. In article 8 the authors present a compelling discussion of transcendent truth, goodness, and beauty; and the book relates the important role of these things in knowing and loving God in worship.

<sup>32</sup> A.W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*, vii.

<sup>33</sup> Bauder et al, *A Conservative Christian Declaration*, 30-33. Article 4 covers the subject of *ordinate*, or rightly-ordered affection.



own artistic endeavors we should strive to be a reflection of God's wisdom and excellence that is made evident the artistry of Creation.<sup>34</sup>

### **Standards Learned from Pre-Enlightenment Philosophers, Theologians, and Composers**

Up through the middle of the 1700s, composers of sacred music understood their work to be a combination of art and science, capitalizing heavily upon the relationship between these two disciplines to facilitate music's power to communicate truth on multiple levels. Not only the text but the sound of the music itself was created to awaken the listener to the God of Scripture. Musical harmony was an earthly representation of the harmonious motion of the cosmos that "declare[s] the glory of God" (Psalm 19). Musical expressions served as a commentary upon the text, reinforcing both thought and emotion. The importance of music in the heart and mind of the magisterial Protestant reformer Martin Luther was such that he considered it the handmaiden of theology. Our consideration of the symbiotic possibility in music today seems trivial in comparison. Hence, there is much we can learn from those who have gone before us concerning the capability of music to render a unified expression of the truth of Creation and Scripture. The philosophers, theologians, and musicians who lived before the sweeping worldview and cultural changes brought about by the Enlightenment can still instruct us today.

**Celestial and Earthly Harmony.** During the fourth and fifth centuries, one of the most influential of all Church fathers, Saint Augustine, believed that study of the number and ratio in musical intervals was a way of gaining knowledge of God.<sup>35</sup> However, it was the philosopher, Boethius (480-525), one of the very best minds of the Roman empire in his day, who had the most impact upon medieval worldview and culture. Boethius believed that the cosmos was tied together by a mathematical harmony running through all things, and expressed in three ways: 1.) the mathematical order of the universe, as represented by the motion of heavenly bodies; 2.) the orderliness of the human body and soul; and 3.) the orderliness of sounding music—instrumental and vocal. All three expressions of harmony were ramifications of the same mathematical ratios at play in everything. Hence, the correspondence between sounding musical harmony and the harmony of the human soul was the reason for music's power or influence over human emotion. As noted author Jeremy Begbie writes, "Boethius believed that because of its embeddedness in divinely grounded cosmic order, heard music could have a profound effect on the harmony of our lives, for good and ill."<sup>36</sup>

**Marriage of Text and Music.** Plato, Augustine, Luther, and Calvin were each cautious regarding the power of music, and therefore insisted that music follow the text—in other words that there be a good marriage, or correlation, between the character, ethos, or emotion of a tune and the text sung with it.<sup>37</sup> To illustrate, we will first consider an example at odds with this principle, and then one that favors it. The song, "Rockabye Baby" has been likely been used by millions of people to sing their children to sleep at night. But

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<sup>34</sup> Colson and Pearcey, *How Now Shall We Live?*, 449.

<sup>35</sup> Jeremy S. Begbie, *Resounding Truth: Christian Wisdom in the World of Music* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 84-5.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 87-8.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 79-86, 98-107.

have you ever considered how the message of this text could have this effect? The words are about a baby in its cradle nestled in a high tree branch that is blown about by the wind to the point that it comes crashing down. Is there anything calming about this? Of course not; it is the music, which in this case runs contrary to the raw content of the text in the emotion it evokes, that gives the song its lullaby status. In our experience, the calming combination of metrical and melodic elements overpowers the frightening images of the text, so that it is rendered docile. A similar text and music mismatch is heard in the nursery rhyme, “Ring around the Rosie.”

In contrast, the stately and masculine tune, EIN’ FESTE BURG, commonly paired with Martin Luther’s hymn, “A Mighty Fortress is Our God,” powerfully reinforces the character and emotion of the text.<sup>38</sup> This later version of the tune contrasts Luther’s original and more playful version from 1529, written before composers began placing meter and bar lines in musical scores. Although the original version had more interesting rhythms, it is the metrical version with more regular rhythm that has endured. Also notable is that J.S. Bach included the later version in his Cantata BWV 80 in the chorale setting of movement 8.<sup>39</sup> Various elements of the text and tune work together to create this strong marriage of text and music. The accent of the poetic feet of the text is iambic, e.g., “A mighty fortress is our God” follows the pattern: weak, strong, weak, strong (repeat). As Scott Aniol notes, this type of poetic pattern produces the stately feeling that most hymns of strong theological content utilize.<sup>40</sup> The poetic stress is *reinforced* by the majestic emotion or *affect* of the tune—a result of the combination of 4/4 meter (here beginning on count four) and the contour of the melody.<sup>41</sup> Of course, tempo and general level of musicianship makes a difference in realizing this correlation. Trained musicians intuitively understand that if the hymn is sung too fast or too slow, or with inadequate accentuation of the right syllables, or with poor volume, the correlation between text and music will not be strong. Another example of an excellent marriage of text and music is heard in the combination of the tune, ST. DENIO, commonly sung with the hymn, “Immortal Invisible, God Only Wise.”

**Luther: Musical Rhetoric and Sermons in Sound.** Luther’s God-centered, Christian worldview is what inspired the development of Christian music to the highest degree. While Luther supported choral music, he was insistent that the entire congregation sing in order to both make them an active part of worship and to reinforce the teaching of biblical principles through memorable text and music. Combining the Word of God with music, Luther stood upon music’s mathematical relationship to the human soul in proliferating music that could both tame and cultivate emotions. He stated:

[Music] is a mistress and governess of those human emotions—to pass over the animals—which as masters govern men or more often overwhelm them. No greater commendation than this can

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<sup>38</sup> Harry Eskew and Hugh T. McElrath, *Sing with Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Hymnology* (Nashville: Church Street Press, 1995), 47. The authors discuss here the importance of matching tune and text, noting, “Hymn tunes themselves cannot communicate nonmusical ideas, but they can express general moods, such as majesty, joy, solemnity, reflection, or meditation, and march-like enthusiasm.”

<sup>39</sup> Chris Fenner, “Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott,” *Hymnology Archive*; accessed May 27, 2021; available from <https://www.hymnologyarchive.com/ein-feste-burg>; Internet.

<sup>40</sup> Scott Aniol, *Worship in Song: A Biblical Approach to Music and Worship* (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 2009), 82-85. Aniol discusses the importance of poetic form and its impact upon how the text is received. He provides examples of anapestic and iambic meter and contrasts their innate character, the first expressing lightness and frivolity, while the second, seriousness.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 87-96. Aniol discusses intrinsic musical meaning.

be found—at least not by us. For whether you wish to comfort the sad, to terrify the happy, to encourage the despairing, to humble the proud, to calm the passionate, or to appease those full of hate—and who could number all these masters of the human heart, namely, the emotions, inclinations, and affections that impel men to evil or good?—what more effective means could you find?<sup>42</sup>

Likewise, it was music's orderly correspondence or resonance with the human soul that afforded composers the means to build a rich system of musical rhetoric beginning in the Renaissance and developing through the Baroque. Hence the music inspired by Luther served to richly communicate Christian truth through music. James Gaines gives an account of Luther's influence:

Luther's mandate for music to deliver "sermons in sound" had several important results over time. It gave new life to an ancient connection between musical composition and classical rhetoric, which after all shared music's new purpose of moving an audience in a particular direction. It reinforced the Baroque composer's notion of himself as an artisan: not an artist "expressing" a personal idea or feeling—a conception the Baroque composer would have found entirely strange—but as a professional with an assigned task and learnable, teachable methods of doing it. Combined with the Baroque infatuation with encoded allegory, this concept of music as an oratorical craft inspired a vast compositional vocabulary of passages, rhythms, key changes, and other devices that could telegraph in music the meaning of a text, the language of what came to be known as "musical-rhetorical" figures."<sup>43</sup>

In worship music the employment of such musical practices preached the meaning of the text to listeners in a manner that helped them receive its full impact. Central to such Baroque musical practice was the Doctrine of Affections, which held that the message of the text should be set and bolstered by an appropriate affect or emotion in the music.<sup>44</sup> Such marriage of text and music would encourage wholehearted devotional worship.

Once Enlightenment philosophy was espoused by Western society and the rising middle class, there began a great shift in the direction of music. By the latter half of the eighteenth century, the man-centered worldview that was shaping European culture changed the values that shaped musical style. Music was valued less for how it related to the cosmos, could preach a text, or shape godly emotions, and more for how it could excite emotions or entertain and draw attention to the genius of the composer. We can trace this shift all the way back to the Comic Opera of the eighteenth century right up to our present-day popular music.

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<sup>42</sup> Walter Blankenburg, "Überlieferung und Textgeschichte von Martin Luthers 'Encomion musices,'" 90-94, cited and translated in Robin Leaver, *Luther's Liturgical Music* (Cambridge: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2007), 313-319. This quotation is from a famous poem of Luther's in praise of music. See also Aniol, *Worship in Song*, pgs. 51-54. Aniol discusses at length Johnathan Edwards' differentiation between the affections and the passions and how these were understood before the Enlightenment.

<sup>43</sup> James R. Gaines, *Evening in the Palace of Reason: Bach Meets Frederick the Great in the Age of Enlightenment* (New York: Fourth Estate, 2005), 81.

<sup>44</sup> Craig Wright and Bryan Simms, *Music in Western Civilization* (Belmont, CA: Thomson Schirmer, 2006), 236. Regarding Baroque practice, Wright and Simms write, "The Doctrine of Affections held that different musical moods could and should be used to influence the emotions, or affections, of the listeners. A musical setting should reinforce the intended 'affection' of the text. As early as 1602 the composer Giulio Caccini, in his *Le nuove musiche* (*The New Music*) referred to 'moving the affections of the soul.' Later music theorists would advocate a unity of affections, holding that each piece of music should project only a single affection, be it anger, hate, sorrow, joy, or love . . ."

Of course, when we consider the worldview that has been at play since the Enlightenment this should not be much of a surprise. The two-tiered worldview brings with it a strong sense of autonomy regarding things of the upper tier.<sup>45</sup> When faith, the supernatural, or the arts are regarded as concerning merely the subjective, this severely limits the expectations for these things to impart any real-world, objective meaning. Things of the upper level then become a servant of individually felt needs rather than a servant of the Creator. Hence music in the worship of God is deemed neutral territory for accommodating personal preferences, and the importance of beauty and meaning are relativized.

On the other hand, when we understand that each of the things of the upper tier are closely related to elements of the lower tier, it profoundly increases our understanding of the value of each of these things, connecting the seen with the unseen, the earthly with the heavenly, and the temporal with the eternal. This realization should compel us, as it compelled Christians for centuries, to capitalize on the relationship between art and science in our musical creations with the aim of bringing great honor and glory to God. Likewise, it should compel us to combine Scriptural texts with richly complementary music, so that we may grow a harvest of Christians who deeply and unselfishly engage with God.

### **Conclusion: Applications for the Twenty-First Century Church**

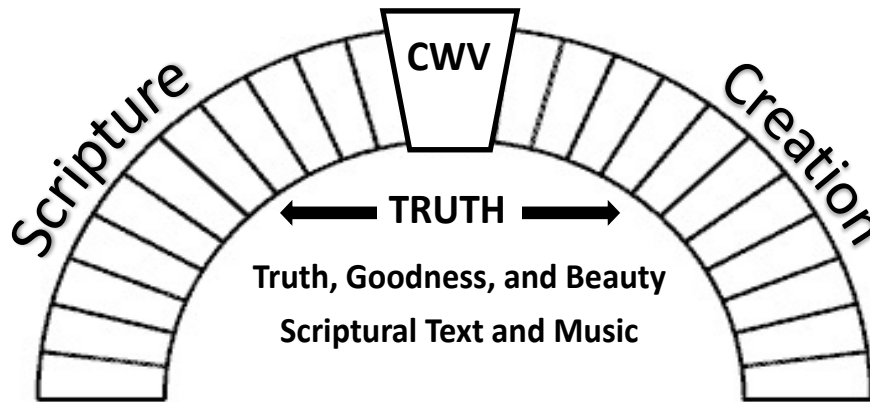
As the twenty-first-century church attempts to swim against the tide of secular culture, it seems we need to be awakened to how vastly different the kingdom of God is to the kingdom of this world. The downward spiraling culture that surrounds us is not spiritually neutral—to the contrary, it is an outflow of the two-tiered secular worldview that is so prevalent. Only by a strong proliferation of the gospel and the Christian worldview can we save not only America but Western Civilization. As it is only the Church that can proclaim these realities, it is the Church that must first understand them and claim them for herself. This means that our services of worship—as the central meeting place of the people of God—must not only proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ but represent and encourage Christian transformation on multiple levels. This is no less than Christian discipleship. Such worship should therefore embody a working out of values implicit in the historic Christian worldview, including the creation and employment of biblically commanded artforms. This clearly pertains to music but may be applied to architecture as well.

The Christian worldview is the keystone of Christian culture. Only an unadulterated historic Christian worldview gives us an understanding of reality necessary to employ Christian wisdom in the arts. In this paper I have touched upon two profound unities upheld by the Christian worldview: 1.) the unity of truth revealed to us by God through Creation and Scripture; and 2.) the unity of truth, goodness, and beauty. As a result of these unities revealed by God, the unity, or *marriage*, of text and music in worship music was held important for centuries by theologians and composers alike. Music was seen as a vehicle for aesthetically and emotionally reinforcing the text, with the goal of moving congregants' hearts toward God.

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<sup>45</sup> Schaeffer, *Escape from Reason*, 75-88. In chapter 5, Schaeffer discusses, "Art as the Upper Story Leap."

Fig. 4. Reality according to the Christian worldview with musical applications:



In architecture a keystone is the wedge-shaped piece of masonry at the apex of an arch. It is the piece that locks all other pieces together and gives it weight-bearing capacity.<sup>46</sup> In associating this important architectural element with the Christian worldview, what is the weight that this arch is bearing? In regard to things of Christian culture and discipleship, what does the application of this worldview in the arts allow us to build? It allows us to build for Christ and for His Church an artistic culture of wholistic integrity. It acknowledges that God has real standards for the arts and capitalizes fully upon these standards in the devotion and disciple-making of the Church. In this, the standards of truth, goodness, and beauty as revealed in both Scripture and Creation, afford us a construct for godly freedom in our music making. When our artistic Creations are intentionally imitative of God's orderly, creative designs, it glorifies God as we enter the possibilities inherent therein to teach the fullness of objective truth as He has revealed it.

This in turn encourages the formation of rightly-ordered affections.<sup>47</sup> Such an approach gives action to loving God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength. It moves our hearts and minds toward God. This in no way means that we are forsaking Christ's command to love our neighbors as ourselves. To the contrary, it means that we love others with what is truly best for them. It means that we can no longer cater to what are still perceived by many as "subjective" preferences. Instead, leaders first must work to educate themselves regarding artistic beauty and meaning. It means that we must learn to differentiate the true, good, and beautiful from the bad, false, and ugly. This means that we must listen to enough music—a variety of styles—to be able to hear what an excellent match of text and music sounds like, and note what it accomplishes. It means that we need to ask of each piece of music we select, "Does this music fit in Scriptural worship?" In other words, does it match the *values* of Scriptural worship? Not all music equally offers a sense of cosmos, beauty, and suitable meaning to our theology. Some music points to chaos, ugliness, and meaninglessness. Also, while a given piece of music may have excellent text and music, if these are mismatched, the biblical purposes for music in worship may well be sabotaged. Pastors and leaders need to understand that the music

<sup>46</sup> *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 10<sup>th</sup> ed., s.v. "keystone." See also Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Arch". Encyclopedia Britannica, 17 Nov. 2008, <https://www.britannica.com/technology/arch-architecture>. Accessed 18 May 2021.

<sup>47</sup> Aniol, *Worship in Song*, 45-58. Dr. Aniol devotes chapter 4 of his book, entitled, "Affections—The Missing Link," to a discussion of right affection in worship, covering important writings of Jonathan Edwards and Saint Augustine. See also chapters 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9 for other relevant information.

we combine with text serves as an aesthetic and emotional commentary, and so we must have keen discernment in these areas.

I am not saying that this is easy work. What I am saying is that to be truly faithful to Christ, this is work that the twenty-first-century church needs to be busy accomplishing in order for us to realize the Christian worldview in those who are, or who would be, Christ's disciples. I would suggest the following steps toward facilitation of this work: 1.) May we teach our congregations that our operative worldview shapes our values in artistic creation; 2.) May we once again look to the fullness of Scripture to learn God's values for corporate worship; 3.) May we boldly consider the thinking, writing, and music of theologians and composers who came before the sweeping worldview changes brought by the Enlightenment to help us once again shape Christian values for worship music; 4.) May we look to Christ for the courage to reject the church's use of attractional methods grounded in secular culture's entertainment values for the arts; 5.) May we prayerfully apply biblical principles in order to worship our God in every way as transcendent and immanent, majestic, holy, and eternal.

Finally, may we remember that Christ Himself as author of the Christian worldview is the ultimate keystone of Christian culture—as He is Truth—He is the revealer and final fulfillment of all things. The unity of truth expressed to us through Scripture and Creation, the unity of truth, goodness, and beauty, and the capability of unity of expression via text and music are all things that are of Him. In Colossians 1:15-18, Paul makes this clear:

He is the image of the invisible God, the first born of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead that in everything he might be preeminent.

May we look then to Christ in all our artistic endeavors, to honor all that the Holy Spirit has established in Scripture and all that beautifully points to our glorious God in Creation. In this day of subjectivism and relativism, our task as pastors and musicians is to apply objective standards established by God to the arts, so that they may cultivate hearts to embrace the greater realities of God. In so doing we can take great strides to encourage the realization of the historic Christian worldview in the twenty-first-century Church. May the Church be girded with the strength, resolve, and wisdom of Christ in this noble task.