

What is Good Music?

Part 1

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Music is an established part of every worship service. Though the styles are sometimes quite different, music can be heard in almost every church. The style varies with the country and age group. The spectrum goes from Gregorian (monotone chants) to songs, sung in a slow, melancholy manner to foot-stomping spirituals and to so-called Christian rock.

In Germany, evangelical publishers produce CDs with music similar in style to that which can be heard on popular radio stations. The only real difference is the “Christian” words which are not always wrong in their message, but as a rule are fairly superficial.

How do we know which music to choose? Should there be a difference between the music we choose in church and that which we choose at home or at other times? What place does classical music have for us? Should we be a part of worldly concerts, either in the audience or as one of the musicians? Is music good or bad in and of itself, or does it depend upon my attitude, the character of the composer, or the interpretation? What kind of music can we use in missionary work?

In this and the next edition of the *Youth Ministry* we want to consider what good music is and how to detect perversions.

Ephesians 5

¹⁹ Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.

Colossians 3

¹⁶ Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns

and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord..

God's Thoughts about Music

Even before the world was created, God's word says,

Job 38

⁴ Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?
Tell Me, if you have understanding.

⁷ When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of
God shouted for joy?

It is part of God's ways to have instrumental music accompany singing.

Testimonies for the Church, vol. 1, p. 146

I have been shown the order, the perfect order, of heaven, and have been enraptured as I listened to the perfect music there. After coming out of vision, the singing here has sounded very harsh and discordant.

I have seen companies of angels, who stood in a hollow square, everyone having a harp of gold. At the end of the harp was an instrument to turn to set the harp or change the tunes. Their fingers did not sweep over the strings carelessly, but they touched different strings to produce different sounds.

There is one angel who always leads, who first touches the harp and strikes the note, then all join in the rich, perfect music of heaven. It cannot be described. It is melody, heavenly, divine, while from every countenance beams the image of Jesus, shining with glory unspeakable.

There will also be music in the new earth. We read that the redeemed will express their thanks and joy in song.

Early Writings, p. 288

In the same manner the angels brought the harps, and Jesus presented them also to the saints. The commanding angels first struck the note, and then every voice was raised in grateful, happy praise, and every hand skillfully swept over the strings of the harp, sending forth melodious music in rich and perfect strains.

The first notes of music sung on this earth came from the birds on the fifth day of creation.

The Story of Redemption, p. 22

Adam and Eve were charmed with the beauties of their Eden home. They were delighted with the little songsters around them, wearing their bright yet graceful plumage, and warbling forth their happy, cheerful music.

To this day the singing of the birds has a healing influence. If you want to get well quickly, come into harmony with nature.

The Ministry of Healing, p. 265

The more the patient can be kept out of doors, the less care will he require. The more cheerful his surroundings, the more helpful will he be. Shut up in the house, be it ever so elegantly furnished, he will grow fretful and gloomy. Surround him with the beautiful things of nature; place him where he can see the flowers growing and hear the birds singing, and his heart will break into song in harmony with the songs of the birds. Relief will come to body and mind.

Testimonies for the Church, vol. 7, p. 86

...listening to the happy songs of the birds, has a peculiarly exhilarating effect on the nervous system.

Evangelism, p. 510

Good singing is like the music of the birds—subdued and melodious.

The birds can also help us in our decision about what good music is.

Evangelism, p. 510

Great improvement can be made in singing. Some think that the louder they sing the more music they make; but noise is not music. Good singing is like the music of the birds—subdued and melodious.

This statement is plain. Good singing is subdued [soft, gentle] and melodious [harmonious]. From the outset this statement excludes singing which is discordant and intrusive, harsh or shrill.

Why did God Create Music?

To resist the devil:

Manuscript 65, 1901 (see also Evangelism, p. 498)

When Christ was a child like these children here, He was tempted to sin, but He did not yield to temptation. As He grew older He was tempted, but the songs His mother had taught Him to sing came into His mind, and He would lift His voice in praise. And before His companions were aware of it, they would be singing with Him. God wants us to use every facility which Heaven has provided for resisting the enemy.

To impress spiritual truths upon our minds:

Review and Herald, June 6, 1912

Song is one of the most effective means of impressing spiritual truth upon the heart. Often by the words of sacred song, the springs of penitence and faith have been unsealed.

To annul the power of temptation:

Education, p. 168

How often to the soul hard-pressed and ready to despair, memory recalls some word of God's,— the long-forgotten burden of a childhood song,—and temptations lose their power, life takes on new meaning and new purpose, and courage and gladness are imparted to other souls!

To gain the victory:

Letter 5, 1850

I saw singing to the glory of God often drove the enemy, and praising God would beat him back and give us the victory.

Letter 53, 1896 (see also Evangelism, p. 499)

If there was much more praising the Lord, and far less doleful recitation of discouragements, many more victories would be achieved.

As a weapon against discouragement:

The Ministry of Healing, p. 254

Song is a weapon that we can always use against

discouragement. As we thus open the heart to the sunlight of the Saviour's presence, we shall have health and His blessing.

To bring joy into our daily work:

The Ministry of Healing, p. 52

With songs of thanksgiving He cheered His hours of labor, and brought heaven's gladness to the toil-worn and disheartened.

Child Guidance, p. 148

Make your work pleasant by songs of praise.

To hold communion with heaven:

Child Guidance, p. 73

Often He expressed the gladness of His heart by singing psalms and heavenly songs. Often the dwellers in Nazareth heard His voice raised in praise and thanksgiving to God. He held communion with heaven in song; and as His companions complained of weariness from labor, they were cheered by the sweet melody from His lips. His praise seemed to banish the evil angels, and, like incense, fill the place with fragrance. The minds of His hearers were carried away from their earthly exile, to the heavenly home.

The Fruits of Music

Jesus gave us a simple but effective rule enabling us to decide whether a thing is good or bad.

Matthew 7

¹⁶ You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles?

¹⁷ Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit.

¹⁸ A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit.

¹⁹ Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

²⁰ Therefore by their fruits you will know them.

When we apply this rule to the music we listen to, it means

that we will recognize whether this music is good or bad by the effect that it has upon us. With this in mind, we need only ask a few questions:

- What kind of influence does the music I listen to have upon me and others?
- Does it lead me closer to God or further away from Him?
- Does it empower me to do my duties and serve with unselfish zeal, or does it distract me from my service?
- What feelings does it generate in me?

Music has more influence on us than we realize. We often hear reports of increased vandalism after a rock concert. Sometimes the music is an indirect cause of the problem because usually at these concerts a large amount of alcohol is consumed.

With this in mind, some people even try to use rock concerts as a means of demonstrating against violence. The only problem here is that they are trying to drive out Satan with Satan (compare with *Mark 3:22-26*):

A concert, “Rock against Violence,” planned for Friday morning was canceled due to fear of a riot. “The management for the city park system, the Senate government for Sport, made this decision for security reasons because the meeting place was too close to a nearby park,” said a representative of the concert management. (from *The Berlin Morning Post*, May 1, 2006)

When we think about this kind of fruit, we often think that we are safe because our music does not lead us to rioting—at least not physically. But what about other influences our music has? Immediately after listening to our music, are we interested in reading a spiritual book, or does it take a little time before we are interested again? Does our music increase or decrease our interest in spiritual things? Does it lead us into a

dream-world?

Just imagine yourself in the presence of Christ and His angels. Would you really listen to the same kind of music as you usually do, or would you feel uncomfortable and quickly switch Cd's?

If you cannot answer this question in a straightforward manner, then it is high time for you honestly and critically to reconsider the type of music you listen to.

Exodus 15

²¹ And Miriam answered them: "Sing to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously! The horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea!"

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 382

Miriam's force of character had been early displayed when as a child she watched beside the Nile the little basket in which was hidden the infant Moses. Her self-control and tact God had made instrumental in preserving the deliverer of His people. Richly endowed with the gifts of poetry and music, Miriam had led the women of Israel in song and dance on the shore of the Red Sea. In the affections of the people and the honor of Heaven she stood second only to Moses and Aaron.

The Treasure and the Vessel

By considering music from the standpoint of the treasure and the vessel, we can open up more perspectives. In one sense the melody is the vessel, and the text is the treasure. We can see this, for example, in early Advent history. The believers of that era expressed in song their experience and their expectation of Christ's return.

The only problem was that the various churches of Advent believers had different tunes. Either the songs were passed on from memory which opened the way for variations, or a new tune altogether was attached to the text. If you visited another church, suddenly you wouldn't be able to sing with the oth-

ers.

For this reason, some believers took the responsibility and looked for a fitting melody from American folk songs which were known everywhere, so that they would be the same in every place. The treasure was now clothed in a vessel which was able to carry it. There is another way of looking at the treasure and the vessel. The text and the tune can be the vessel, and the treasure is the connection with God. This definition makes it plain that the text and tune can be changed.

Language develops. Our forefathers spoke differently from the way we do today, in fact, in many cases they probably would not completely understand us.

In like manner, a tune is dependent upon its place and time of origin as well as other factors.

Text and tune are the vessel while the connection with God is the treasure. The vessel should bring us closer to God who is the Source of all things. If the songs we sing and play fulfill this task, then the vessel has done its job even though it might be very weak.

An experience should make this clearer. Once I was invited to the wedding of two of our young people. Everything was thoroughly organized. At the beginning someone played music until the actual ceremony began. The sermon was introduced and concluded with two songs which were specially written for this occasion. During lunch background music was played. An older sister who knew the bride more personally, had composed a poem which she wanted to give the couple for their journey through life. Since she couldn't find anyone to sing it, she had to sing it herself, which was not easy for her to do. She was older and wasn't used to singing in front of a group. She also hadn't practiced the song because she was not expecting the task to fall on her. But she did it because she loved the couple and wanted to make her contribution.

Although her singing included a momentary break when she had to wipe away her tears, her musical contribution was the best of all that had been presented. She didn't stand up at the front to look good or attract attention and admiration. She only wanted to direct everyone's attention to Him who had become her best Friend, and she did this in simplicity without show. The vessel was truly weak, but the treasure moved everyone. Even unbelieving relatives testified afterward that her song particularly affected them.

Where does Music Lead Us?

Music leads us to lay aside all of our burdens, and we let ourselves fall. The question is, where? Either we fall into the arms of Jesus, or we fall into our dream world; that is, into the arms of the enemy. For this reason the music we hear has far-reaching consequences. It seriously influences the direction of our lives, either for good or evil.

Messages to Young People, p. 291

The history of the songs of the Bible is full of suggestion as to the uses and benefits of music and song. Music is often perverted to serve purposes of evil, and it thus becomes one of the most alluring agencies of temptation. But, rightly employed, it is a precious gift of God, designed to uplift the thoughts to high and noble themes, to inspire and elevate the soul.

Messages to Young People, p. 292

As a part of religious service, singing is as much an act of worship as is prayer. Indeed, many a song is prayer.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 594

Singing, as a part of religious service, is as much an act of worship as is prayer. The heart must feel the spirit of the song to give it right expression.

Music is also an expression of dedication. It is a statement that we are ready for whatever God should call us to do. One song which expresses this thought particularly well, is the following:

I Surrender All

All to Jesus I surrender,
All to Him I freely give;
I will ever love and trust Him,
In His presence daily live.

Chorus

I surrender all,
I surrender all,
All to Thee, my blessed Saviour,
I surrender all.

2. All to Jesus I surrender,
Humbly at His feet I bow;
Worldly pleasures all forsaken,
Take me Jesus, take me now.

3. All to Jesus I surrender,
Make me, Saviour, wholly Thine;
Let me feel the Holy Spirit—
Truly know that Thou art mine.

4. All to Jesus I surrender,
Lord, I give myself to Thee;
Fill me with Thy love and power,
Let Thy blessings fall on me.

Who is being Honored?

Messages to Young People, p. 293

Music was made to serve a holy purpose, to lift the thoughts to that which is pure, noble, and elevating, and to awaken in the soul devotion and gratitude to God. What a contrast between the ancient custom and the uses to which music is now too often devoted! How many employ this gift to exalt self, instead of using it to glorify God!

In this connection, what does it mean to exalt self?

Have a look at Cd's, cassettes, or any other form of musical media, for they all have something in common which stands out. Regardless of the religious persuasion of the singers, they

often have their picture on the front, title page or at least on the back together with their name. Sometimes also just a name like *The XYZ Singers*, or *The XYZ Quartet*, etc. Even if this is subconscious, the more the singer deviates from the will of God the more this is the case.

Some years back some of our young people in this movement made a cassette. It had some songs on it with instrumental accompaniment. The title was, *Just Brothers and Sisters*. If you weren't already familiar with the voice of the singers, then you would never know them, because there was nothing on the cassette to indicate who they were. Their goal was not self-exaltation. They exalted Him who gave them their experience: a change of heart. Their songs were designed to pass this experience on to others.

This spirit creates an atmosphere which influences everyone who listens to the music, whether they realize it or not.

Messages to Young People, p. 417

Every soul is surrounded by an atmosphere of its own, – an atmosphere, it may be, charged with the lifegiving power of faith, courage, and hope, and sweet with the fragrance of love. Or it may be heavy and chill with the gloom of discontent and selfishness, or poisonous with the deadly taint of cherished sin. By the atmosphere surrounding us, every person with whom we come in contact is consciously or unconsciously affected.

This influence glorifies either self or Christ. When you listen to a piece of music, you cannot escape this influence. The only question you have to answer is, to which influence do you want to expose yourself?

For this reason we are counseled not to choose worldly singers for spiritual meetings.

Evangelism, p. 127

Do not hire worldly musicians if this can possibly be avoided. Gather together singers who will sing with the spirit and with the understanding also.

The spirit of worldly singers cannot be anything but selfish because their lives have not been built on the foundation of selflessness. Therefore, the atmosphere they bring into our meetings is earthly and taints the spiritual atmosphere in which God works. It drags everything down to a level of selfishness and earthliness.

Revelation 14

⁷ Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come.

But the problem of a worldly atmosphere exists not only with worldly singers who build their lives on the principle of self-glorification. This problem also exists among church members who only appear to be Christians.

Evangelism, p. 510

There is nothing more offensive in God's sight than a display of instrumental music when those taking part are not consecrated, are not making melody in their hearts to the Lord.

Characteristics of Good and Bad Music

There are some things to look for when trying to decide if the music is good or bad. Let's start with the following statement:

Testimonies for the Church, vol. 9, p. 143

It is not loud singing that is needed, but clear intonation, correct pronunciation, and distinct utterance. Let all take time to cultivate the voice, so that God's praise can be sung in clear, soft tones, not with harshness and shrillness that offend the ear. The ability to sing is the gift of God; let it be used to His glory.

The following traits are contrasted: on the one hand are clear intonation, correct pronunciation, distinct utterance, clear and soft tones. On the other hand are harshness, shrillness, and loud singing.

What is loud, shrill singing?

Ellen White had experienced this and wrote about it to help us understand it:

Signs of the Times, June 22, 1882

I have often been pained to hear untrained voices, pitched to the highest key, literally shrieking the sacred words of some hymn of praise. How inappropriate those sharp, rasping voices for the solemn, joyous worship of God. I long to stop my ears, or flee from the place, and I rejoice when the painful exercise is ended.

We need more than a technical understanding of what is being said here. Naturally it is important to sing loud enough so that the words can be understood. The point is that the volume is the vessel, not the treasure. The same is true for enunciation and intonation. When the vessel enters the foreground and becomes the driving force, then it turns into a curse rather than a blessing.

To understand this better, let's compare two kind of statements. Preachers and singers alike are to speak so that they can be understood. For this purpose they need to pay attention to a few practical rules.

Manuscript Releases, vol. 2, p. 224

Ministers should stand erect, and speak slowly, firmly, and distinctly, taking a full inspiration of air at every sentence, and throwing out the words by exercising the abdominal muscles.

Evangelism, p. 670

Make the student stand erect, throwing back his shoulders. The ladies especially need to cultivate the voice.

But Ellen White advised a chorus conductor that

Selected Messages, vol. 3, p. 334

Your singing is far from pleasing to the angel choir. Imagine yourself standing in the angel band elevating your shoulders, emphasizing the words...

This might appear contradictory at first, but it really is not. This advice was given to the chorus conductor because he

was selfishly trying to make himself prominent. The context of the statement shows this.

Manuscript Releases, vol. 5, p. 198

I was shown the case of Brother S...You assume undignified attitudes. You put in all the power and volume of the voice you can. You drown the finer strains and notes of voices more musical than your own. This bodily exercise and the harsh, loud voice makes no melody to those who hear on earth and those who listen in heaven...

Brother S., exhibits himself. His singing does not have an influence to subdue the heart and touch the feelings...

Brother S. has thought that singing was about the greatest thing to be done in this world and that he had a very large and grand way of doing it. Your singing is far from pleasing to the angel choir. Imagine yourself standing in the angel band elevating your shoulders, emphasizing the words, motioning your body and putting in the full volume of your voice. What kind of concert and harmony would there be with such an exhibition before the angels?...

As your voice has been elevated in loud strains above all the congregation, you have been thoughtful of the admiration you were exciting. You have really had such high ideas of your singing, that you have had some thoughts that you should be remunerated for the exercise of this gift. The love of praise has been the mainspring of your life. This is a poor motive for a Christian. You have wanted to be petted and praised like a child. (*Testimony Concerning Brother Stockings, circa 1874*)

Other people sing with their faces turned downwards so that their voices are lost in their songbooks and they mumble the words so quietly that it is barely audible they are singing at all. This is not right either. There should be neither a proud spirit nor false humility.

1 Chronicles 25

⁷ So the number of them, with their brethren who were instructed in the songs of the Lord, all who were skillful, was two hundred and eighty-eight.

1 Chronicles 15

²² Chenaniah, leader of the Levites, was instructor in charge of the music, because he was skillful.

1 Corinthians 14

¹⁵ What is the conclusion then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding.

So we can see that it is not so much about the vessel, but rather about the treasure. When we try to sing in a way that can be understood, because we selflessly want others to be able to understand the important message, then our singing is good and in harmony with the following:

Christian Education, p. 127

When speaking of heavenly and divine things, why not speak in distinct tones, in a manner that will make it manifest that you know what you are talking about, and are not ashamed to show your colors?

Subdued and Melodious

Other traits of good singing are gentleness and self-control, as can be heard in the song of the birds.

Evangelism, p. 510

Great improvement can be made in singing. Some think that the louder they sing the more music they make; but noise is not music. Good singing is like the music of the birds—subdued and melodious.

In some of our churches I have heard solos that were altogether unsuitable for the service of the Lord's house. The long-drawn-out notes and the peculiar sounds common in operatic singing are not pleasing to the angels.

They delight to hear the simple songs of praise sung in a natural tone. The songs in which every word is uttered clearly, in a musical tone, are the songs that they join us in singing. They take up the refrain that is sung from the heart with the spirit and the understanding.

If the disciples on the Emmaus road had not invited Jesus and pressed Him to stay with them, He would have passed on,

for Jesus never forces an entrance into the heart.

Child Guidance, p. 466

In the work of redemption there is no compulsion. No external force is employed.

The same character will reveal itself in Christian music. Loud and intrusive music misrepresents the character of our Saviour.

Beauty, Pathos, and Power

Evangelism, p. 505

Music can be a great power for good; yet we do not make the most of this branch of worship. The singing is generally done from impulse or to meet special cases, and at other times those who sing are left to blunder along, and the music loses its proper effect upon the minds of those present.

Music should have beauty, pathos, and power. Let the voices be lifted in songs of praise and devotion. Call to your aid, if practicable, instrumental music, and let the glorious harmony ascend to God, an acceptable offering.

What is pathos?

It is a power which touches the heart directly and in a natural manner. People try to accomplish this in an unnatural manner by raising the voice to an unnatural key, but they fail to achieve the same results.

Evangelism, p. 55

Jesus uttered truth in a plain, direct manner, giving vital force and impressiveness to all His utterances. Had He raised His voice to an unnatural key, as is customary with many preachers in this day, the pathos and melody of the human voice would have been lost, and much of the force of the truth destroyed.

There is power in the voice that is unaffected and comes from the heart. It speaks to other hearts and its attractiveness is a powerful means for good.

Evangelism, p. 667

The human voice is a precious gift of God; it is a power for good, and the Lord wants His servants to preserve its pathos and melody. The voice should be cultivated so as to promote its musical quality, that it may fall pleasantly upon the ear and impress the heart.

Evangelism, p. 504

There is great pathos and music in the human voice, and if the learner will make determined efforts, he will acquire habits of talking and singing that will be to him a power to win souls to Christ.

Our task is to so use this gift that it will be the greatest possible blessing in missionary work.

Review and Herald, August 27, 1903

Students, go out into the highways and the hedges. Endeavor to reach the higher as well as the lower classes. Enter the homes of the rich and the poor, and as you have opportunity, ask, "Would you be pleased to have us sing? We should be glad to hold a song service with you." Then as hearts are softened, the way may open for you to offer a few words of prayer for the blessing of God. Not many will refuse.

Such ministry is genuine missionary work. God desires every one of us to be converted and to learn to engage in missionary effort in earnest. He will bless us in this service for others, and we shall see of his salvation.

Not funeral tones, but cheerful yet solemn melodies:

Signs of the Times, June 22, 1882

Those who make singing a part of divine worship should select hymns with music appropriate to the occasion, not funeral notes, but cheerful, yet solemn melodies.

Whenever I attended a camp in a certain eastern European country I noticed that the songs usually had a melancholic sound to them. It wasn't just that they were written in a minor key, but they were sung slowly and tended to produce sadness. The people there did have some happy songs, but these were more the exception than the rule.

This country had long been under communist rule and is still suffering the results. Poverty is widespread, and the citizens have few rights. The state taxes the people heavily, and if you are honest, you have to battle to survive. Therefore, the black market thrives, and corruption is the order of the day. Many people are discouraged because they have had no success in fighting against these evils; therefore, they have simply given up. Their feelings come out in their singing. The underlying tone and atmosphere of their singing expresses a feeling of helplessness and uselessness. "What else can we do? It all makes no sense!" It is no wonder that their singing is sad and melancholic.

It is a fact that our own words influence us.

Child Guidance, p. 323

But the words are more than an indication of character; they have power to react on the character. Men are influenced by their own words.

If we sing melancholic songs which express hopelessness, we shouldn't wonder if our feelings don't improve. The atmosphere that we foster reacts back upon ourselves and hardens us against change.

But if we follow the example of the birds and sing happy songs, this will have an uplifting influence upon us.

The Adventist Home, p. 510

We can but be cheerful as we listen to the music of the happy birds and feast our eyes upon flourishing fields and gardens. We should invite our minds to be interested in all the glorious things God has provided for us with a liberal hand. And in reflecting upon these rich tokens of His love and care, we may forget infirmities, be cheerful, and make melody in our hearts unto the Lord.

Harmony or Discord

Testimonies for the Church, vol. 1, p. 146

I saw that all should sing with the spirit and with the

understanding also. God is not pleased with jargon and discord. Right is always more pleasing to Him than wrong. And the nearer the people of God can approach to correct, harmonious singing, the more is He glorified, the church benefited, and unbelievers favorably affected.

Popular sheet music

Testimonies for the Church, vol. 1, p. 497

Frivolous songs and the popular sheet music of the day seem congenial to their taste. The instruments of music have taken time which should have been devoted to prayer. Music, when not abused, is a great blessing; but when put to a wrong use, it is a terrible curse. It excites, but does not impart that strength and courage which the Christian can find only at the throne of grace while humbly making known his wants and with strong cries and tears pleading for heavenly strength to be fortified against the powerful temptations of the evil one. Satan is leading the young captive. Oh, what can I say to lead them to break his power of infatuation! He is a skillful charmer, luring them on to perdition.

Dance hall music

There is a type of music you will hear where there is dancing and hilarity. Dance music is not appropriate for Christians who love their Lord, even if the words are Christian and the music is played in Christian places, where really the standard of music should be higher.

Testimonies for the Church, vol. 1, p. 506

Angels are hovering around yonder dwelling. The young are there assembled; there is the sound of vocal and instrumental music. Christians are gathered there, but what is that you hear? It is a song, a frivolous ditty, fit for the dance hall. Behold, the pure angels gather their light closer around them, and darkness envelops those in that dwelling. The angels are moving from the scene.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 594

Music forms a part of God's worship in the courts above,

and we should endeavor, in our songs of praise, to approach as nearly as possible to the harmony of the heavenly choirs. The proper training of the voice is an important feature in education and should not be neglected. Singing, as a part of religious service, is as much an act of worship as is prayer. The heart must feel the spirit of the song to give it right expression.

Fundamentals of Christian Education, p. 97

The art of sacred melody was diligently cultivated [in the schools of the prophets]. No frivolous waltz was heard, nor flippant song that should extol man and divert the attention from God.

Courting instead of singing

It is good when young people get together to sing and play music, but what is their motive? Often these sessions are used as opportunities to foster relationships with the opposite sex, to look for a partner, and similar purposes.

Manuscript 57, 1906

A decided religious feature should be encouraged in all our gatherings. Light has been given me decidedly again and again. Thirty years ago, when certain ones would assemble together for an evening of singing exercises, the spirit of courting was allowed to come in, and great injury was done to souls, some of whom never recovered.

This is a misuse of music. In such situations where music is used selfishly, it is no wonder that the fruit is bad.

Psalm 96

¹ Oh, sing to the Lord a new song! Sing to the Lord, all the earth.

Revelation 5

⁹ And they sang a new song, saying: You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation.

O Come, Eternal Spirit of Truth

Philipp Spitta (1801-1859) was a gifted musician. He played the guitar, harp, and piano. When he was four years old, he lost his father. In addition, he was a sickly child. These things led his mother to choose a watchmakers trade for him. He started his apprenticeship, but after his brother drowned while swimming, he asked his mother if he could take up his brother's line of study. She agreed and he began studies in theology. However, at first everything he studied was nothing more to him than knowledge. (*Well-known Songs*, Wolfgang Heiner, p. 280)

This continued until he read a book which led him to a thorough conversion.

He began to pray, and he read the Bible not merely as a part of his profession, but as a personal experience. In addition his singing changed. In 1826 he wrote to a friend, 'I don't sing in the same way I used to. I have dedicated to God my life, my love, and my song.' As early as 1833 he published his first song book entitled, 'Psaltery and Harp'. (*Well-known Songs*, Wolfgang Heiner, p. 280)

It is not surprising that his songs changed with his conversion. The same text will have a different effect depending on whether or not it is sung from a living experience. In his song, *O Come, Eternal Spirit of Truth*, he implores God to send the early rain again today. His prayer will soon be fulfilled in the latter rain.

1. O come, Eternal Spirit
Of truth, diffuse Thou light!
Shine in our soul and banish
All blindness from our sight!
Thy holy fire pour o'er us,
Touch heart and lip, that we
With faithful, good confession
Acknowledge Christ and Thee.

2. O Thou, whom our great Monarch
Hath promised unto us,
Blest Comforter, come to us,
And make us chivalrous.
In these times of indiff'rence

And dearth of faith, O come!
And ply the keen-edged weapons
Of early Christendom.

3. Rank unbelief is rampant,
Mad folly storms the sky,
Hence Thou Thyself must arm us
With weapons from on high:
With wisdom, grace, endurance,
And faith robust, and then
Entirely banish from us
All false respect for men.

4. These times call for decision,

Though foes 'gainst us inveigh;
For open, bold confession,
Whate'er the world may say:
In spite of all the glitter
Of gilded heathendom,
To praise, defend, and cherish
Christ's Gospel till He come.

5. Afar, o'er heathen darkness,
The powerful Word breaks day;
They cast, with Satan's shackles,
Their household-gods away;
From every side they hasten
Into the Savior's fold,
And oh! Shall it close to us
As to the lost of old!

6. Alas! We truly merit
Such judgment as our lot;
To us the light is shining,
But we receive it not!
O grant us greater fervor
T'implore Thy grace, dear Lord,
That from us be not taken
The light of Thy blest Word.

7. Pour, Spirit, o'er all nations
A Pentecostal shower,
The Word of testimony
Accompany with power,
The heart and lips may open—
The nations' and our own—
And we, through joy and sorrow,
Make Christ's salvation known.