

# An Adventist Theology Of Church Music

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#### Dear Members of the Endtime Issues Newsletter:

Sometimes I wish that I could share with you the many reports arriving from different parts of the world about the problems caused by the adoption of religious rock music in some Adventist churches. It is evident that some of our pastors sincerely believe that the adoption of pop music will revitalize Adventist worship. In fact, one pastor emailed to me an interesting telegraphic message: "Hi Sam: I love rock, I love you, and I love the Lord. Signed Pastor . . ." It was reassuring to know that he still loved me in spite of the information I posted about rock music.

This newsletter will help you to understand why some Adventist pastors and youth leaders today are adopting pop music for their church services. A fundamental problem is their ignorance of what the Bible really teaches about church music. They wrongly assume that the Bible gives them the license to choose music on the basis of their personal taste and cultural trends. Some pastors have sent me lists of Bible texts which in their view sanction the use of percussion instruments, rhythmic music, and even dancing during a worship service. Some of these texts are examined in this chapter and the rest in the following chapter dealing specifically with "Music in the Bible."

It came as a total surprise to me to discover that the popular arguments used to defend the use of religious rock in the church, are based on plain ignorance of what the Bible really teaches about church music. Time and again I have learned that ignorance breeds arrogance.

I owe a debt of gratitude to several scholars who have enlighten me on this subject. Some of them have written doctoral dissertations on music in the Bible. Their studies are mentioned in this chapter. For example, one published dissertation on *The Basis, Function and Significance of the Choral Music in Chronicles*, was presented at the University of Cambridge in England by John W. Kleinig. This research clearly shows that the music at the Temple was rigidly controlled to ensure that it would be in harmony with the sacredness of the place. In fact, the music and instruments associated with secular entertainment were not allowed in the Temple services. Did you know that? I did not. This is why I love to do research. I hate to be ignorant.

A similar conclusion is presented in another doctoral dissertation by Thomas Allen Seel, and published under the title *A Theology of Music for Worship Derived from the Book of Revelation*. Seel shows that the various choirs that perform around the throne of God are accompanied by harps ensembles that blend with the human voice, and not by secular percussion instruments. More vital information will be forthcoming in the next chapter, dealing specifically with "Music in the Bible."

The chapter you are about to read represents a first attempt to discuss how the three distinctive Seventh-day Adventist beliefs of the Sabbath, Christ's ministry in the heavenly sanctuary, and the Second Advent, should impact the choice and the performance of music in the church service. May I urge you to take time to read the whole chapter. If you find it timely and enlightening, be sure to share it with your fellow believers, and especially your pastor. Unfortunately, as Bible teachers, we have failed in the past to provide our ministerial students with a theological understanding of church music and worship. Thus, it is not surprising that some of our pastors are guided by personal taste rather than Scripture.

## How Rock Music is Rocking Some Adventist Churches

The numerous reports I have received from different parts of the world, indicate that the adoption of religious rock music is rocking an increasing number of Adventist churches. Let me share with you few of them (omitting names and references to places) in order to help you see the extent of the problem.

From Europe a brother who is completing a degree in music and who serves as church musician for an SDA conference tells me about weekend Youth Music workshops organized to introduce our young people to modern music, including rock. He says that the argument used is: "Style is only a question of education and culture. Music is only a vessel. Not to do rock music would drive youth out of the church. Dancing must be favored, since 'the angels don't know what to do with you if you don't know how to dance' (Augustine?)." Incidentally, this brother does not support this philosophy.

A concerned mother and wife of an Adventist minister wrote: "I am finding your articles very interesting. These are issues that we have been talking about at our house since our daughter went off to academy. Although I believe personally what you are saying, I am having difficulty convincing my children of this. It is difficult when your child goes to programs at campmeeting or academy and hears the opposite of what is being said at home. Mom and dad are square and conservative. What purpose is it to say something and then send them off to SDA institutions where they are having these principles disputed. What is the real, practical, most healthy answer for parents. Home schooling? Sending them to self-supporting schools? I am not really wanting to do that. My husband is a minister. My parents did not face these problems when they sent me off to academy. I am feeling very frustrated and powerless." I share the frustration and I surely hope that the problem will be resolved when our leaders become better acquainted with it.

Another brother writes: "Here where I am in . . . , we even have a paraministry GC sponsored radio station at our only boarding academy in ----, known as ----; which constantly plays 'Christian Rock/Contemporary Music' day in and day out and is #6 in their radio market. . . . In addition, ----Academy, is using the very type of 'Christian' rock music you have described, in conjunction with pantomime skits and drama skits in their monthly ---- services for all of the Adventist teenage youth in ----. This service features a complete rock drum set (that lights up the bass drum when the foot pedal is pushed) in the back center of the uplifted stage. Electric guitars are used along with an electronic piano. Clapping to the beat of the music is a regular part of the musical portion along with video clips or slides on a large rear projection screen. Wireless microphones for groups of youths are used on stage which features regular stage lighting and audio monitors across the front of the stage. All overhead lighting in the Academy gym is turned off, except for the stage lighting. There is no way the audience can read their Bibles or use any hymnbooks in this kind of service."

This description reminds me of what I saw overseas in the youth tent at a campmeeting where I was invited speak. In fact it was that shocking experience, that caused me to change my research plans, and work on this symposium on *THE CHRISTIAN AND ROCK MUSIC*.

## **UPDATE ON THE SYMPOSIUM *THE CHRISTIAN AND ROCK MUSIC***

You will be pleased to know that our symposium is progressing well. Three contributors have already sent me their chapters. The remaining four contributors have informed me that their chapters should reach me within the next few days.

On my part I have already contributed five chapters, which I will be reworking in the light of the many valuable suggestions many of you have made. I plan to research and write one more chapter on "Music in the Bible," where I will examine those texts that many have presented to me to justify their adoption of rock music in the Adventist church.

To ensure that the book will be out by the end of May 2000, that is, before the General Conference, I am dedicating every spare moment to this project—an average of 12-13 hours a day. If you have not received a reply from me for several weeks, it is simply because I have not had the time to look at the hundreds of email messages that have accumulated in my mail box. Be patient with me. Eventually I will get to your message. To make full use of the time, I have not accepted any speaking engagements for the months of February and March.

The whole manuscript will be proof-read and edited by two professional editors who work full time for Andrews University Press. The total cost of the project, including the compensation to each contributor, is going to be considerable. I believe that the cost is justified by the seriousness of the issue. Pray that the Lord may give us wisdom and grace in bring this project to completion.

In the next newsletter (No. 38) I plan to post the gripping testimony "FROM ROCK MUSIC TO THE ROCK OF AGES," by Brian Nuemann. He is an accomplished musician from South Africa. You will be thrilled to read, not only Brian's spiritual pilgrimage from rock music to the Rock of Ages, but also his wise counsels on how to make good musical choices. His testimony (almost 50K) is one of the chapters of the symposium.

## **BOOK COVER FOR *THE CHRISTIAN AND ROCK MUSIC***

A couple of people have expressed an interest to design the cover for this symposium, but so far I have not received any sketch. If you or someone you know, is a gifted graphic artist, please let me know. I am willing to pay for an attractive cover.

A heartfelt thanks to each one of you for your messages of encouragement and prayers. They mean a lot to me, especially at this time when some of the messages are rather hostile.

Thank you also for sharing this important chapter with your friends. I feel that this chapter may be the most important I have written so far. Perhaps the next will be equally important. Let me know what you think. I look forward to hearing from you.

## Chapter 6

### AN ADVENTIST THEOLOGY OF CHURCH WORSHIP

The controversy over the use of religious rock music in church worship is fundamentally theological, because music is like a glass prism through which God's eternal verities shine. Music breaks this light into a spectrum of many beautiful truths. The hymns sang and the instruments played during the church service, express what a church believes about God, His nature and His revelation for our present life and ultimate destiny.

Music defines the nature of the worship experience by revealing the manner and object of worship. When music is oriented toward pleasuring self, then worship reflects our culture elevation of people over God. The hedonistic bent of our culture can be seen in the increasing popularity of various forms of rock music used for church worship, because they provide easy self-gratification.

Many Christians complain that the traditional hymns of the church are dead, because they do not appeal to them anymore. By contrast, contemporary religious rock music gives them a "kick,"—a pleasurable sensation. Those who clamor for church music that offers them personal gratification, ignore that they are seeking for a self-centered physical stimulation, rather than a God-centered spiritual celebration of His creative and redemptive activities.

In chapter 2 we noted that there is a close connection between music and theology. During Christian history the production of music has been largely influenced by the evolution of the understanding of God. The historical shift from the transcendental understanding of "God beyond us" during the medieval period, to the immanent conception of "God for us" during the sixteenth century reformation, and to "God within us" perception from the seventeenth-century to our times, is reflected in the gradual evolution of church music from the medieval chant, to the Lutheran chorale, to today's religious rock.

The modern manifestation of a strong immanent "God within us" conception, has caused people to seek an immediate emotional experience of God through the stimulus of rhythmic and loud pop music. Such music, often used during the church service, reflects to a large extent the theological outlook of the congregation and, most likely, of the denomination which they represent.

**Insufficient Theology.** The increasing number of Christian churches in general and of SDA churches in particular that are adopting contemporary worship styles where various forms of religious rock music are performed, suffer from a condition that may be called "theological impoverishment." The defining characteristic of this condition is the choice of music strictly on the basis of personal taste and cultural trends, rather than clear theological convictions.

The problem has been recognized even by some contemporary Christian musicians. In his book *At the Cross Roads* (1999), Charlie Peacock, an award-winning recording artist, producer and songwriter of such popular songs as "Every Heartbeat" (recorded by Amy Grant), frankly acknowledges that Contemporary Christian Music (CCM) has been operating "under insufficient theology."<sup>1</sup> He writes: "What is missing from CCM is a comprehensive theology of music in general, and a theology of CCM artistry, industry, and audience in particular. In order to begin to rethink contemporary Christian music, we will first have to recognize the necessity of developing a comprehensive theology."<sup>2</sup>

Peacock finds that the theologies of contemporary music "often miss the mark" because they are based on personal tastes or popular demand rather than Biblical teachings. "Without God's thoughts and God's ways, we are left with our own dim and insufficient ideas. If we willfully choose to neglect the work of building truthful theologies for our callings, we will find ourselves waving good-bye to the brightness which

illuminates life. We will find ourselves stumbling blindly down the way which seems right to a man but leads to nothing but darkness.”<sup>3</sup>

The challenge of rethinking the theological undergirding of contemporary music, affects not only the CCM movement, but Christian churches in general, including the Seventh-day Adventist Church. All too often the popular songs sang during church service are based on an inadequate or even heretical theology oriented toward self-satisfaction. This is true not only of religious rock but of other songs as well.

An example is the song, “We Get Lifted Up,”<sup>4</sup> which begins: “I’ve learned a little secret that you may already know.” The secret turns out to be that praising the Lord “does as much for us as it does for Him ‘Cause we get lifted up.” The refrain repeats the same message: “We get lifted up, we get lifted up, we get lifted up when we praise the Lord; Oh, we get lifted up, we get lifted up, we get lifted up when we praise the Lord.” The second stanza begins, “I used to think my praise was only meant to serve the King,” but now we have discovered that praising the Lord “does as much for us as it does for Him.”

Indeed, worship does lift us up, but if the reason for worship is just to get an emotional lift, then worship becomes self-centered gratification, rather than God-centered adoration. Ultimately we sing about ourselves rather than about God’s glory, beauty, and holiness manifested in creation and redemption.

**Feeling-oriented Music.** Inadequate and misleading theology is often present also in children songs. For example, in the popular children tape series *Psalty*, produced by Maranatha Music, the smallest child asks: “Psalty, I’m so little. How can I praise the Lord?” Psalty replies: “Can you jump up and down? Can you get down on the ground? Can you shout with all your might, ‘Praise the Lord?’ If you do that with all your heart, then you can praise the Lord.” The next song with a decidedly contemporary sound begins with all the children singing: “I’m gonna jump down / turn around / touch the ground / and praise the Lord.”

The false message of this song is typical of the feeling-oriented music and worship. We do not praise God simply by jumping up and down or shouting His name. Praising God is not simply a matter of external exercises, but internal, heartfelt response.

It is amazing that many adults are content to sing simple choruses fit for children. In fact chorus singing has encouraged many churches to ignore completely the hymnal, opting instead for easily memorizable choruses which can be sung and danced as if one were at a party. “I’m-happy-happy-happy-all-the-day,” is repeated a dozen of times. Another example, “I’ve got a feeling everything’s gonna be all right. I’ve got a feeling everything’s gonna be all right. I’ve got a feeling everything’s gonna be all right, all right, all right, all right.”

Such choruses are not only trite, but also heretical by making one’s feeling, rather than God’s promises, the basis of certainty. “In worship . . . faith, not feeling, should be the frame of reference. A faith practiced on the basis of feeling is no faith at all. Such songs may be fun to sing and make us feel good, but their effect on worship and life is devastating.”<sup>5</sup>

**Obscure Spirituality.** The emphasis of many contemporary religious songs on “me,” “my,” and “I” reflects the self-centered theology which is so prevalent today. In his article “Gospel Music Finds Its Amazing Grace,” Philip Gold points out that the message of contemporary religious songs “rarely varies: I’m OK, you’re OK, God’s OK, and it’s gonna be OK.”<sup>6</sup>

The self-centered theology of contemporary songs is reflected in those lyrics which contain only vague and obscure references to spiritual things. Take, for example, the popular contemporary Christian song “You Light Up My Life.” The song speaks of a

nebulous *you*, which could easily be a reference to a boyfriend, lover, husband, or wife, or possibly the Lord.

And you light up my life.  
You give me hope, to carry on.  
You light up my days and fill my nights with song.  
It can't be wrong when it feels so right,  
'Cause you—you light up my life.

Because of its nebulous theology, this song is sung in virtually any setting, from Las Vegas casino halls to evangelistic crusades “as a background song during an invitation to accept Jesus Christ as Savior.”<sup>7</sup>

The implications of this so-called Christian song is that if it feels right, it cannot be wrong. If it feels good, do it! Incidentally, this was the nature of Eve's temptation. She found that the forbidden fruit tasted “good,” so she took it and “gave some to her husband” (Gen 3:5-6). The Bible warns through examples and precepts that our feelings are not a safe moral guide for Christian conduct, because our carnal mind is at enmity with God (Rom 8:7).

Another example of obscure spirituality, is Amy Grant's popular song “Who To Listen To:”

Don't take a ride from a stranger  
No way to know where they go  
You may be left on a long dark road  
Lost and alone  
Don't you recall what your Mama told you  
You've got to learn hot from cold.

This song hardly teaches any substantive spiritual values. It gives no Biblical direction or purpose to people. Note the comments of a Boston newspaper reporter who reviewed one of Amy's concerts where she sang “Who To Listen To:” “ ‘You want to sing, sing out! You want to dance, dance your brain out! Tonight we celebrate!’ With those words, she [Amy Grant] kicked off her own brand of revival meeting at the Worcester Centrum Monday night. . . . For nearly two hours, she kept the spirit moving—laying down strong but gentle vocals over a blend of electronic pop that seemed better suited for a dance party than a church. ‘Who To Listen To,’ one bouncy number, has even figured in a ‘Miami Vice’ episode.”<sup>8</sup>

Music that is fitting for “Miami Vice,” can hardly be suitable for worship in God's sanctuary. This is especially true for the Seventh-day Adventist church, where the music used in the worship service should express her theological identity as a prophetic movement called to prepare a people for the soon-coming Savior. In fact, many of the songs in the Adventist hymnal embody such distinctive beliefs as creation, the Sabbath, the atonement, Christ's heavenly priesthood, the judgment, the Second Advent, and the world to come.

**Objectives of this Chapter.** This chapter attempts to rethink the theological basis that should guide the choice of the music used in the worship service of Adventist churches. Specifically we shall consider how the three distinctive Seventh-day Adventist beliefs of the Sabbath, Christ's ministry in the heavenly sanctuary, and the Second Advent, should impact the choice and the performance of music in the church service.

What is being presented in this chapter should be regarded as a first feeble attempt to address a most important subject which has been largely ignored. The author is not aware of any significant study produced by Adventist scholars who examine Adventist church music in its theological context. This means that the theological reflections presented in this chapter are an initial attempt to lay a foundation upon which other competent Adventist scholars may build.

## Part I CHURCH MUSIC IN THE CONTEXT OF THE SABBATH

The Seventh-day Adventist Church draws the inspiration for her music and worship from three major doctrines: (1) the Sabbath, (2) Christ's atoning sacrifice and His ministry in the heavenly sanctuary, (2) the certainty and imminence of Christ's return. Each of these beliefs contributes in its own way to define the nature of Adventist church music.

Unfortunately, the ongoing debate over the use of contemporary pop music in Adventist worship, largely ignores the theological presuppositions that should undergird the worship experience of Adventist believers. Some Adventist worship leaders are pushing for the adoption of contemporary religious rock in Adventist worship service strictly on the basis of personal taste and cultural considerations. But, the music and worship style of the Adventist church, cannot be based solely on subjective tastes or popular trends. The prophetic mission and message of the church should be reflected in her music and worship style.

Regretfully, the music and worship style of most Adventist churches is largely based on the uncritical acceptance of the worship style of other churches. But, as Norval Pease, my former professor of worship at the Andrews University Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, taught us, "We are Adventists, and we must approach worship as Adventists. A worship service that meets the needs of Methodists, Episcopalians, or Presbyterians may be unsatisfactory for us."<sup>9</sup>

The answer to the Adventist worship renewal is to be found, not in the adoption of religious rock music, but in a re-examination of how our distinctive Adventist beliefs should be reflected in the various parts of the church service, including music. Such an ambitious undertaking is beyond the limited scope of this chapter which focuses primarily on the music aspect of the worship service.

**The Sabbath Offers Reasons for Worship.** Of the three major biblical doctrines that identify the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the Sabbath occupies a unique place because it provides the basis for the true worship of God. Such basis is to be found in the three fundamental truths that the Sabbath contains and proclaims, namely, that the Lord has *created us perfectly*, He has *redeemed us completely*, and He will *restore us ultimately*. These three fundamental meanings of the Sabbath are examined at great length in my two books *Divine Rest for Human Restlessness* and *The Sabbath Under Crossfire*. The reader is referred to these studies for an exposition of the theology of the Sabbath.

To worship means to acknowledge and praise the worthiness of God. Would God be worthy of praise if He had not originally created this world and all its creatures perfectly and made provision for their ultimate restoration? No one praises a manufacturer that produced a car with mechanical problems and without taking responsibility for repairing them. In the same way it would be hard to find reasons to praise God with songs, prayers, and sermons, if He had not created us perfectly and redeemed us completely.

The Sabbath worship service is the occasion for believers to celebrate and rejoice over the magnitude of God's achievements: His wonderful creation, His successful redemption of His people; and His manifold manifestations of constant love and care. These are the fundamental themes that should inspire the composition and the singing of hymns of praise to God.

Some of these themes appear in Psalm 92, which is "A Song for the Sabbath." Here the believers are invited to celebrate the Sabbath by giving thanks, singing praises and playing the lute, the harp and the lyre (Ps 92:3). The purpose of this joyful celebration is to declare God's steadfast love and faithfulness (Ps 92:2); to praise the great works of His creation (Ps 92:4-5); to acknowledge God's care and power (Ps 92:12-15).



The celebration of God's goodness and mercy constitute the basis for all the music and worship offered to God on any day of the week. But, on the Sabbath the music and the worship experience reaches its fullest expression, because the day provides both the time and the reasons for celebrating joyfully and gratefully God's creative and redemptive love.

**The Conflict Between True and False Worship.** To appreciate the importance of the Sabbath worship, of which music is a major component, we need to note that in a sense the Bible is the story of the conflict between true and false worship. God's summon to "put away the foreign gods" (Gen. 35:2), which occurs in the first book of the Bible, is reiterated in different forms in all subsequent books. In Revelation, the last book of the Bible, the summon is renewed through the imagery of three flying angels.

These angels call upon "every nation and tribe and tongue and people" (Rev 14:6), on the one hand, to renounce the perverted system of worship promoted by "Babylon," "the beast and its image" (Rev 14:8-11) and on the other hand to "fear God and give him glory, for the hour of his judgment has come," and to "*worship* him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the fountains of water" (Rev 14:7).

This solemn call to abandon the false worship of Babylon and to restore the true worship of God is presented in Revelation 14 as part of the preparation for "the harvest of the earth" (Rev 14:15), when the Lord shall come to gather the believers and punish the unbelievers. This preparation entails the abandonment of the false worship promoted by Babylon and the restoration of the true worship by God's people.

We noted in chapter 4 that the apocalyptic imagery of the false worship promoted by Babylon is derived from the historical chapter of Daniel 3, which describes an event of prophetic endtime significance. On the Plain of Dura all the inhabitants of the Babylonian empire were called to worship the golden image of king Nebuchadnezzar. A fiery furnace was prepared for those who refused to do homage to the golden image. Twice Daniel mentions that "every kind of music" (Dan 3:7, 10) was used to cause all classes of people from all the provinces of the empire to corporately worship the golden image (Dan 3:10).

The eclectic music produced by "the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe," and other instruments, served to induce the people "to fall down and worship the image" (Dan 3:15). Could it be that like in ancient Babylon, Satan is using today "every kind of music" to lead the world into the endtime false worship of the "beast and its image" (Rev 14:9)? Could it be that a Satanic stroke of genius will write Gospel songs that will have the marking of every taste of music: folk music, jazz, rock, disco, country-western, rap, calypso, etc.? Could it be that many Christians will come to love this kind of Gospel songs, because they sound very much like the music of Babylon?

The summon of the Three Angels Message to come out of spiritual Babylon, by rejecting its false worship, could well include also the rejection of the rock music of Babylon. Soon the whole world will be gathered for the final showdown in the antitypical, apocalyptic Plain of Dura and "every kind of music" will be played to lead the inhabitants of the earth to "worship the beast and its image" (Rev 14:9).

**The Music of Babylon.** The use of music to promote the end-time false worship, is suggested by the description of the final overthrow of Babylon: "So shall Babylon the great city be thrown down with violence, and shall be no more; and the sound of harpers and minstrels, of flute players and trumpeters shall be heard no more" (Rev 18:21-22).

The final silencing of the musicians of Babylon, indicate that they play an active role in promoting false worship. It is instructive to note the contrast between the music of Babylon which is primarily instrumental, with minstrels (professional entertainers), and the music of the heavenly choirs, which is primarily vocal. The only instrument used to accompany the heavenly choirs, is the harp ensemble. No flutes or trumpets accompany

them. Why? Because, as we shall see, the timbre of the harp blends harmoniously with the collective human voices. The use of other instruments would overshadow the singing.

The apocalyptic description of the music of Babylon, reminds us of the instruments used by rock bands. Their music is so loud that the lyrics can hardly be heard. The reasons, as we have seen in earlier chapters, is to stimulate people physically through the loud, incessant beat. This is the music that ultimately the Lord will silence at the final overthrow of the apocalyptic Babylon. By contrast the triumphant music of eternity is driven, not by the hypnotic beat of percussion instruments, but by the marvelous revelation of God's redemptive accomplishments, which inspires the redeemed to sing their heart out. To this point we shall return shortly.

**An Antidote Against False Worship.** The mission of the Church at this time, as portrayed effectively by the three apocalyptic angels, is to promote the *true worship* of "him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the fountains of water" (Rev 14:6). The Sabbath is a most effective means to promote the restoration of true worship, because it calls upon people to worship Him who "in six days made heaven and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them" (Ex 20:11).

By focusing on God's creative and redemptive accomplishments, the Sabbath functions as an antidote against false worship. It challenges men and women to worship not their human achievements, and pleasures, but their Creator and Redeemer.

The temptation to worship man-made realities such as money (Matt. 6 :24), power (Rev. 13 :8; Col. 3 :5), and pleasure (Rom. 6:19; Titus 3 :3), has been present in every age. Today, however, the problem is particularly acute, because the triumph of modern science and the hedonistic bent of our culture, have led many people to worship personal profit and pleasure, rather than God's power and presence.

The pleasure syndrome of our time can be seen in the church's worship practice. People have become so attuned to amusements that they expect church music also to be entertaining, self-satisfying, and stimulating. The Sabbath can serve like an antidote against the search for pleasure in worship, by reminding believers that God invites them on His Holy Day to come into His sanctuary, not to seek for their "own pleasures" (Is 58:13), but to delight in the goodness of His creative and redemptive love.

**Holiness in Time as Holiness in Church Music.** As holiness in time, the Sabbath effectively challenges believers to respect the distinction between the *sacred* and the *secular*, not only in time, but also in such areas as church music and worship. After all, music and worship constitute an important aspect of the observance of the Sabbath.

The fundamental meaning of the holiness [Hebrew *qadosh*] of the Sabbath, which is frequently affirmed in the Scripture (Gen 2:3; Ex 20:11; Ex 16:22; 31:14; Is 58:13), is the "setting aside" the twenty four hours of the seventh day to cultivate the awareness of God's presence in our lives. It is the manifestation of God's presence that makes time or space holy.

The holiness of the Sabbath is to be found, not in the structure of the day which is the same as the rest of the weekdays, but in God's commitment to manifest in a special way His Holy presence through the Sabbath day in the life of His people. Isaiah, for example, pictures God as refusing to be present at the Sabbath assembly of His people, because of their "iniquity" (Is 1:13-14). God's absence makes their worship experience not holy but rather an "abomination" or a "trampling of my courts" (Is 1:12-13).

As the symbol of God's free choice of His special time to manifest His Holy presence, the Sabbath can constantly and effectively remind believers who keep it, of their special divine election and mission in this world. *Holy Day* for a *holy people*. As the Sabbath stands as the *Holy Day* among the weekly days, so the believer who keeps it, is constantly invited to stand as God's chosen *holy person* among a secularly minded and perverse generation. In other words, as the Bible puts it, Sabbathkeeping serves as

“a sign between me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I, the Lord, sanctify you” (Ex. 31:13; cf. Ezek. 20:12).

**The Mixing of the Sacred with the Secular.** The distinction between the *sacred* and the *secular* which is embedded in the Sabbath commandment, is foreign to those Christians who view their Lord’s Day as a *holiday* rather than a *Holy Day*. In Western Europe less than ten percent of Catholic and Protestant go to church on Sunday. The vast majority of Christians choose to spend their Lord’s Day, seeking for personal pleasure and profit. Even in America, where church attendance runs close to fifty per cent, the same Christians who on Sunday morning go to church, in the afternoon most likely will go to the shopping mall, ball games, restaurants, or other places of entertainment.

The mixing of sacred with secular activities on what many Christians view as their Lord’s Day, facilitates the mixing of sacred with secular music in church worship itself. The common contributory factor is the loss of the sense of the sacred—a loss which affects many aspects of the Christian life today.

For many people today nothing is sacred anymore. The *Holy Day* has become a *holiday*. Marriage is viewed a *civil contract* that can be easily terminated through the legal process rather than a *sacred covenant* witnesses and guaranteed by God Himself. The church is treated as a *social center* for entertainment, rather than a *sacred place* for worship. The preaching draws its inspiration from *social issues* rather than the *Sacred Word*. By the same token, church music is often influenced by the *secular rock beat*, rather than by the *sacred Scripture*.

**Cultural Relativism.** The adoption of modified versions of rock music for church worship, is symptomatic of a larger problem, namely, the loss of the sense of the sacred in our society. The process of secularization which has reached new heights in our time, has gradually blurred the distinction between sacred and secular, right and wrong, good and bad. “All values and value systems, regardless of their conflicting perspectives, are equally valid. Right and wrong are reduced to mere opinion, one is as good as the other. Truth is not fixed but changeable, relative to the whims which define it.”<sup>10</sup>

The cultural relativism of our time has influenced the church especially in the field of aesthetic, such as music, which has become but a matter of personal preference. “I like rock, you like classic—so what?” One is supposed to be as good as the other. For many there is no longer a distinction between sacred and secular music. It is simply a matter of taste and culture.

The subjectivism in the field of aesthetic stands in stark contrast to the objective, non-negotiable doctrinal beliefs which are passionately defended by evangelical Christians. Dale Jorgensen correctly observes that “The same preacher who believes that he is obligated to preach objective righteousness in morality, often implies that ‘anything goes’ in the music of the church. This is one area where naturalistic humanists find, perhaps with good reason, a wide crack in the Christian door.”<sup>11</sup>

The Sabbath challenges believers to close the door to the humanistic pressure of cultural relativism, by reminding them that the distinction between the sacred and the secular extends to all the facets of Christian life, including church music and worship. To use secular music for the church service on the Sabbath, means to treat the Sabbath as a secular day and the church as a secular place. Ultimately no real worship is offered to God, because true worship entails recognizing the boundaries between what is sacred for God’s use and what is secular for our personal use.

## Part 2 CHURCH MUSIC IN THE CONTEXT OF THE HEAVENLY SANCTUARY

For many Christian churches their worship service centers on what Christ has already accomplished in the *past* through His perfect life, atoning death, and glorious resurrection. By contrast, Seventh-day Adventist worship centers, *not only on the past* redemptive accomplishments of our Savior, *but also on His present ministry* in the heavenly sanctuary, and *on His future coming* to bring to consummation His redemption. Thus, all the three dimension of Christ's ministry—past, present, and future—are involved in Adventist worship.

**Meeting with the Lord.** It is noteworthy that the three distinctive Adventist doctrines—the Sabbath, the Sanctuary, and the Second Advent—share a common denominator, namely, *meeting with the Lord*. On the Sabbath we meet the invisible Lord in *time*. In the Heavenly Sanctuary we encounter by faith the ministering Savior in *place*. At the Second Advent we shall be reunited with the Lord in *space*.

Meeting with the Lord in *time* on His Sabbath day, in *place* in His holy Sanctuary, and in *space* on the glorious day of His coming, should constitute the focal points of Adventist worship. When Adventists assemble for worship, their desire should be to meet the Lord. By faith they should wish to meet the Lord, not only at Calvary on the Cross, where He paid the penalty of their sins, but also at the throne of God in heaven itself, where He ministers on their behalf.

In his book *Sing a New Song! Worship Renewal for Adventists Today*, Raymond Holmes wrote: "In our [Adventist] worship we enter the heavenly sanctuary by faith and are able to see the world, the purpose of the church, the ministry of our Lord, and our own lives from God's all-encompassing perspective and not just from our own limited, self-centered, and narrow point of view."<sup>13</sup>

The focus of the Adventist worship should be on the heavenly sanctuary where Jesus continually ministers in the heavenly liturgy on behalf of His people. "We have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, a minister in the sanctuary and the true tent which is set up not by man but by the Lord" (Heb 8:1-2). It is because we have such a High Priest ministering in heaven that Hebrews says: "Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb 4:16).

**Church Worship to Reflect Heavenly Worship.** The invitation to "draw near to the throne of grace" is obviously an invitation to worship by offering to our Lord our prayers, praises, and songs. The church on earth joins heavenly beings in praising Christ: "Let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name" (Heb 13:15).

The music and worship of the church on earth should draw its inspiration from the music and worship of the heavenly sanctuary, because they two are united by the worship of the same Creator and Redeemer. Hebrews invites believers to "come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to the innumerable angels in festal gatherings, and to the assembly of the first born who are enrolled in heaven." (Heb 12:22-24).

What a challenge for the church of the last days to let the glory and majesty of the heavenly worship shine through its music, prayers, and preaching. As Richard Paquier suggests, "something of the royal majesty and glory of the risen One who ascended to heaven has to come through in the worship of the church."<sup>14</sup> When glimpses of the majesty and glory of the Risen Savior and heavenly High Priest come through the music and worship of the church, there will be no need to experiment with religious rock, drama, or dance to revitalize church worship. The vision of Lord's glory and majesty provides all the dramatic ingredients believers could ever wish for an exciting worship experience.

**The Worship of the Heavenly Sanctuary.** To catch a glimpse of the majestic worship conducted in the heavenly sanctuary, we turn to the Book of Revelation where we find the largest number of choral ensembles to be found anywhere in the Bible. Scholars who have studied the music of Revelation have come up with different number of hymn texts in the book. Oscar Cullman has identified six hymns (Rev 5:9; 5:12; 5:13; 12:10-12; 19:1-2; and 19:6),<sup>14</sup> while Michael Harris enumerates seven (Rev 4:8-11; 5:9; 7:10; 11:17-18; 12:10-11; 15:3; and 15:4b).<sup>15</sup> Forrester Church and Terrance Mulry identify eleven hymns in Revelation (Rev 1:5-8; 4:11; 5:9-11; 5:12-13; 11:17-18; 12:10-12; 15:3-4; 18:22-23; 19:1-9; 22:16-17; and 22:20).<sup>16</sup>

The exact number of hymns and choruses performing in Revelation is less important than their witness to the important role that music plays in the eschatological worship of God in the heavenly sanctuary. The three major choruses that participate in the heavenly worship are: (1) The 24 elders (Rev 4:10-11; 5:8-9; 11:16-18; 19:4); (2) The countless multitude of angels and redeemed (Rev 5:11-12; 7:9-12; 14:2-3; 19:1-3, 6-8); (3) The all-inclusive ensemble of every creature in heaven and earth (Rev 5:13).

The text of the hymns is very instructive. The chorus of the 24 elders sings first before God's throne a hymn about His *creative power*: "Worthy art thou, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for thou didst create all things, and by thy will they existed and were created" (Rev 4:10-11). Then they sing before the Lamb a hymn accompanied by harps about His *redemptive accomplishments*: "Worthy art thou to take the scroll and to open its seals, for thou wast slain and by thy blood didst ransom men for God from every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and thou made them a kingdom and priest to our God, and they shall reign on earth" (Rev 5:8-9).

Finally, the 24 elders sing before God about the *vindication of the redeemed* and the inauguration of the eternal kingdom: "We give thanks to thee, Lord God Almighty, who art and who wast, that thou has taken thy great power and began to reign. The nations rages, but thy wrath came, and the time for the dead to be judged, for rewarding thy servants, the prophets and saints, and those who fear thy name, both small and great, and for destroying the destroyers of the earth" (Rev 11:16-18; cf. 19:4). One notices a thematic progression in the hymns of the 24 elders, from the praising of God's creation, to that of Christ's redemption and the final vindication of His people.

Similar ascriptions of praises are found in the hymns sang by the countless multitude of angels (Rev 5:11-12) and by the redeemed (Rev 7:9-12; 14:2-3; 19:1-3; 19:6-8). "After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no man could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying with a loud voice, 'Salvation belongs to our God who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb!'" (Rev 7:9-10).

In his dissertation, published under the title *A Theology of Music for Worship Derived from the Book of Revelation*, Thomas Allen Seel finds a crescendo in the participation of the heavenly choirs. "The chorus of the 24 elders appears to lead the larger choirs as the action in the text builds in a mighty crescendo of participation and sound; it initiates with the chorus of the 24 elders singing, followed by an antiphonal response of the creatures of heaven, and culminates when these antiphonal forces participate in a joined response with the remainder of creation, including the Redeemed. Together they corporately direct their praise to the Godhead."<sup>17</sup>

The dynamics of the antiphonal and responsorial responses of the various groups, reveal an amazing unity. "They respond in an orderly and balanced manner which witnesses the totally complete, uncompromising unity of all of the Godhead's creation. Worship in the Apocalypse is 'genuinely congregational' and inclusively unites variegated levels of creation into a sea of doxological praise to the Godhead."<sup>18</sup>

**Triumphant Music Without Beat.** A careful study of the various hymns of Revelation reveals that in spite of all the references to the suffering of God's people, the

book still may prove to be one of the happiest composition ever written. As *The Interpreter's Bible* comments: "The music of eternity [in Revelation] sends its triumphant joy back into the life of time. The justification of glorious Christian music in the world is always justification by faith . . . The writings of Paul also have this characteristic of bursting into song. You can judge an interpretation of the Christian religion by its capacity to set men singing. There is something wrong about a theology which does not create a triumphant music."<sup>19</sup>

The triumphant music of Revelation is inspired, not by the hypnotic beat of percussion instruments, but by the marvelous revelation of God's redemptive accomplishments for his people. As the worshippers of the heavenly sanctuary are privileged to review the providential way in which Christ, the Lamb that was slain, has ransomed people of every nation, they sing with dramatic excitement in their doxological praise of the Godhead.

Worship leaders who are urging the use of an array drums, bass guitars, rhythmic guitars to give a rocky beat to their church music, should take notice of the fact that both in the Jerusalem Temple and in the heavenly sanctuary, no percussion instruments were allowed. The only instrument used by the heavenly choirs is a harp ensemble (Rev 5:8; 14:2). The reason is, that, as Thomas Seel explains, "the distinctive timbre of the harp in worship blends harmoniously with the worshippers' collective voices. It should be noted that the instrumental support does not supplant the important of the words of the text nor does it contain a mixture of diverse instruments. The instrumental ensemble contains a singular type of instrument [the harp] which blends with the voice."<sup>20</sup>

**No Secular Music Allowed in the Temple.** The distinction between sacred and secular music which is present in the heavenly sanctuary, was also evident in the Jerusalem Temple. In the next chapter "Music in the Bible," we shall see that only a selected group of Levites made up the Temple choir. They played *only four instruments* at specific times during the service: the trumpets, cymbals, lyres and harps (1 Chron 15:16; 16:5-6). Of the four, only the last two, the lyre and harps (both string instruments that blended with human voices), were used to accompany the singing.

The trumpets were used only to give various signals, such as when the congregation was to prostrate or the choir was to sing during the presentation of burn offerings (2 Chron 29:27-29). The cymbals were used to announce the beginning of a song or of a new stanza. "Contrary to common opinion, the cymbals were not used by the precentor to conduct the singing by beating out the rhythm of the song."<sup>21</sup> The reason is that the music in ancient Israel, as Anthony Sendrey has shown, lacked a regular beat and a metrical structure.<sup>22</sup> It is evident that there was no possibility for any Jew who could play an instrument to be invited to join the Temple rock band and turn the service into a music festival.

In his doctoral dissertation presented at Cambridge University and published under the title *The Lord's Song. The Basis, Function and Significance of Choral Music in Chronicles*, John Kleinig notes that: "David determined the particular combination of instruments to be used in worship. To the trumpets which the Lord had ordained through Moses, he added the cymbals, lyres, and harps (1 Chron 15:16; 16:5-6). The importance of this combination is emphasized by the insistence in 2 Chronicles 29:25 that the instruments for sacred song, like the place of the musicians in the temple, had been instituted at the Lord's command. It was this divine command which gave them their significance and power."<sup>23</sup>

2 Chronicles 29:25 explicitly states that king Hezekiah "stationed the Levites in the house of the Lord with cymbals, harps and lyres, according to the commandment of David and Gad the king's seer and of Nathan the prophet; for the commandment was from the Lord through his prophets." By appealing to the prophetic directives of Gad and Nathan, the author of Chronicles emphasizes that David's addition of the cymbals, harps and lyres to the use of trumpet (Num 10:2), was not based on the king's personal taste, but on a commandment "from the Lord."

**Sacred Music for a Sacred Place.** Those who believe that the Bible gives them the license to play in church any instrument and music they want, ignore that the music at the Temple was not based on personal taste or cultural preferences. This is indicated by the fact that other instruments like the timbrels, the flutes, the pipes, and the dulcimers, could not be used in the Temple, because of their association with secular entertainment.

In his book *Music of the Bible in Christian Perspective*, Garen Wolf points out that “the use of tabret, timbrel, toph, and dancing by women or men had no connection with worship in the Temple, but rather for the purpose of show, ecstasy and secular entertainment or for religious music making outside the Temple.”<sup>24</sup>

Music was rigidly controlled in the Temple worship to ensure that it would be in harmony with the sacredness of the place. Just as the Sabbath is a Holy Day, so the Temple was a Holy Place, where God manifested his presence “among the people of Israel” (Ex 25:8; cf. 29:45). Respect for God’s Holy Day and Holy Place of worship, demanded that no music or instruments associated with secular life were to be used in the Temple.

The connection between the Sabbath and the sanctuary is clearly affirmed in Leviticus 19:30: “You shall keep my Sabbaths and reverence my sanctuary: I am the Lord.” Keeping the Sabbath is equated with reverence in God’s sanctuary, because both are sacred institutions established for the worship of God. This means that secular music that is inappropriate for the Sabbath is also inappropriate for the church, and vice versa. Why? Simply because God has set aside both of them for the manifestation of His Holy presence.

**Lessons from the Temple’s Music.** Four major lessons can be learned from the music performed at the Jerusalem Temple as well as in the heavenly sanctuary. First, church music should respect and reflect the sacredness of the place of worship. This means percussion instruments and entertainment music which stimulate people physically, are out of place in the church service. Out of respect for the presence of God, such a music was not allowed in the Temple services, nor is used in the liturgy of the heavenly sanctuary. The same respect should be found in church services today.

Second, both the music of the earthly and heavenly Temples teaches us that instrumental accompaniments are to be used to aid the vocal response to God and not to drown the singing. In Revelation, it is the harps’ instrumental ensemble that accompanies the singing of the choirs, because the harp’s sound blends well with the human voice, without supplanting it. This means that loud, rhythmic rock music that drowns the sound of the lyrics, is inappropriate for church worship.

Third, church music should express the delight and the joy of being in the presence of the Lord. The singing of the various choirs in Revelation is heartfelt and expressive. They sing with a “loud voice” (Rev 5:12; 7:10) and express their emotions saying “Amen, Hallelujah” (Rev 19:4).

There must be a balance between the emotional and intellectual sides of life in religion and worship. “Musical expression in worship must have an emotional and intellectual aspect because that is the nature of man, the nature of music, and the nature of religion. At its best, music should demonstrate this life-religion-music unity in worship by a well-proportioned, reasoned, feeling approach to composition.”<sup>25</sup>

**Reverence in God’s Sanctuary.** Lastly, church music should be reverential, in tune with the sacred nature of worship. It is significant that of the eight words used in the New Testament to express a worship response to God, only one of them is used in Revelation.<sup>26</sup> It is the Greek word *prokuneo*, which is commonly translated “to worship” or “to prostrate.” The term appears 58 times in the New Testament, 23 of which occur in Revelation.<sup>27</sup>

The term *prokuneo* is compound of two roots: *pros* meaning “toward” and *kuneo* meaning “to kiss.” When combined, they imply the honor and respect demonstrated toward a superior. Time and again we are told in Revelation that heavenly beings “fell down and worshipped Him” (Rev 4:10; 5:14; 7:11; 11:17; 15:4; 19:4).

It is significant that John the Revelator uses only *prokuneo* to describe the reverential worship of end-times. The reason could be the need to warn the end-time generation not to be misled by the false worship of Babylon, characterized by feverish excitement. God is holy and we worship Him with deep respect, awe, and affection. Both in the Jerusalem Temple and in the heavenly sanctuary God is worshipped with great reverence and respect. The same attitude should be manifested in our worship today, because God does not change.

Today we live in a world of feverish activity, constant entertainment, and close familiarity. This is reflected also in some of the contemporary Christian music that treats God with frivolity and irreverence. The worship in the earthly and heavenly Temples teaches us that we need to bow in humility before our great God. Sacred music can help to quieten our hearts and souls so that we can more clearly recognize who our God really is and respond to Him in reverence.



### Part 3 CHURCH MUSIC IN THE CONTEXT OF THE SECOND ADVENT

The belief in the certainty and imminence of Christ's return is the driving force of Adventist church worship and life-style. To be an Adventist Christian means first and foremost to live looking forward to the glorious day of Christ's coming. Peter urges this forward look, saying: "Set your hope fully upon the grace that is coming to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet 1:13). Paul eloquently expresses this forward look, saying: "One thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil 3:13-14).

**Pilgrim's Outlook.** To live with this forward look means to view our present life as a pilgrimage, a journey to a better land. The writer of Hebrews notes that Abraham and all past true believers were pilgrims, with no permanent home on this earth. "They admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth. People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them" (Heb 11:13-16, NIV).

Someone has said that twentieth-century Christians are "the best-disguised set of pilgrims this world has ever seen." Many have come to view this world as the "living room" in which to live as though Christ may never come, rather than the "waiting room" to the world to come.

The forward look to the future Kingdom of God challenges us not to invest present religious or political institutions with permanent value and functions because they are not the method by which the Kingdom of God is to be established. It challenges us to recognize that when Jesus comes all our human institutions, including our churches, will come to an end.

This means that we must build for the future while recognizing that the future does not belong by right to what we build. The ultimate effect of living with a forward look is to view all our institutions and personal decisions in the light of the Advent of our Lord.

**Worship in Anticipation.** The expectancy of Christ's soon coming gives a special texture to Adventist worship and music. Through worship we break through the barriers of time and space and experience a foretaste of the blessedness of the future heavenly worship that awaits us at the glorious coming of the Lord. The writer to the Hebrews speaks of this vital function of worship, saying: "You have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven" (Heb 12:22).

The communal worship with fellow believers enables us temporarily to forget and transcend the unpleasant realities of this present life and to catch a glimpse of the blessedness of the world to come. The music, the prayers, the proclamation, the witness of and fellowship with fellow members can give us a foretaste of the future heavenly Jerusalem and the festal gathering of God's children. Such an experience nourishes and strengthens the Advent Hope in our hearts by giving us a vision and a foretaste of the glories of the Second Advent.

The expectancy of Christ's coming gives a sense of urgency to the Adventist church worship. Hebrews admonishes believers "to stir up one another to love and good works, *not neglecting to meet together*, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and *all the more as you see the Day drawing near*" (Heb 10:23-25).<sup>28</sup>

The need to assemble together for worship and mutual encouragement is presented in this passage as all the more pressing as the Day of Christ's Coming draws near. The reason is that the nearer we draw to the return of Christ, the more intense will be Satan's efforts to undermine the work of God in our lives and in this world. "Woe to you, O earth

and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!” (Rev 12:12). The inspiration and encouragement we receive from worshiping together with fellow believers can help us to hold fast to our faith and hope in the soon-Coming Savior.

**Advent Music.** Church music plays a vital role in strengthening the faith and nourishing the hope of Christ’s coming. Through hymn singing, believers rehearse the day when they will see Jesus and speak with Him face to face. “Face to face shall I behold Him, Far beyond the starry sky; Face to face in all His glory I shall see Him by and by.”

It is not surprising that in the new *Seventh-day Adventist Church Hymnal*, there are 34 hymns about the Second Advent.<sup>29</sup> They far outnumber the hymns about any other subject, including the 18 hymns about the Sabbath.<sup>30</sup> The music and text of the Advent hymns express a variety of moods. For example, “O, we see the gleams of the golden morning Piercing through the night of gloom,” envisions the excitement at the appearing of the Lord in the golden sky. “O Lord Jesus, how long, how long Ere we shout the glad song? Christ returneth, Hallelujah!” expresses the longing and impatience to see the Lord. “O it must be the breaking of the day!” gives the reassurance that the end-time signs are fast-fulfilling.

“Lift up the trumpet and loud let it ring” challenges believers to boldly proclaim that “Jesus is coming again.” “We have this hope that burns within our hearts,” captures in a marvelous way the belief that the “time is here, When the nations far and near Shall awake, and shout, and sing, Hallelujah! Christ is King.” “When the roll is called up yonder, I’ll be there,” enthusiastically reaffirms the commitment to be ready for the day “When the trumpet of the Lord shall sound, and time shall be no more.”

**Advent Inspiration.** The glorious vision of Christ’s return has inspired the composition of many faith-instilling hymns that have enriched church life and worship through the centuries. Today, as we stand at the threshold of the Lord’s return and “see the Day drawing near” (Heb 10:23-25), the Blessed Hope should inspire the composition of new songs that can rekindle the flame and encourage believers “to live sober, upright, and godly lives in this world, while awaiting our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13).

New upbeat Advent songs are needed today to appeal especially to the younger generation that has been captivated by the fast moving, rhythmic, loud, electronically amplified sounds, and uninhibited lyrics of rock music. To reach the younger generation is a formidable task, because in many cases their senses have become so dulled by their overexposure to the loud, rhythmic sounds of rock music, that they can no longer hear “the still small voice.” In his *Decline of the West*, Oswald Spengler gave an ominous warning years ago: “In the last stages of a civilization all art becomes nothing but titillation of the senses (nerve excitement).”<sup>31</sup>

Indeed, we live today in the very last stage of the end-time civilization when “the titillation of the senses” through the rock idiom has invaded even the evangelical community, including an increasing number of Adventist churches. Rock music provides for many a deceptive substitute for the inner feelings of “love, joy, and peace” that comes when the Holy Spirit works in our lives (Gal 5:22).

Our challenge today is to help our rock and roll generation to capture the vision of that glorious day that is coming when they will be able to experience the most exciting audiovisual extravaganza they have ever imagined—the glorious coming of the Rock of Ages. The band of angels that will accompany Him will produce the most thundering sounds this planet has ever heard. The splendor of His presence and the vibrations from the sound of His voice, will be so powerful to annihilate the unbelievers and to bring new life to believers.

Such a glorious event can fire up the imagination of musicians today to compose new songs that will appeal to many who are looking for meaning and hope in their lives. A song that comes to mind, is "Welcome Home Children," by Adrian King. The song helps to capture the delight and emotional excitement of the glorious day that is coming when "heaven's gates will open wide and all who love the Lord will enter in." The Lord Himself will greet His children, saying, "Welcome home children, this is a place I prepared for you. Welcome home children, now that your work on earth is through. Welcome home children, you who have followed so faithfully."

New Advent songs, like "Welcome Home Children," which are theologically correct and musically inspiring, can enrich the worship experience of believers, and appeal to those who are receptive to the working of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

## CONCLUSION

We noted at the outset that music is like a glass prism through which God's eternal truths shine. Through church music a whole spectrum of Biblical truths can be taught and proclaimed. Throughout church history people have learned through music the great truths of the Christian faith and the claims of Christ upon their lives.

In their attempt to bring about worship renewal, many evangelical churches today are adopting religious rock songs on the basis of personal taste and cultural trends, rather than of clear theological convictions. The result is that some popular songs sang during church service have an inadequate or even heretical theology oriented toward self-satisfaction.

The choice of appropriate church music is crucial especially for the Seventh-day Adventist Church, because through her music she teaches and proclaims the end-time truths entrusted to her. Regretfully, the music and worship style of most Adventist churches is largely based on the uncritical acceptance of the worship style of other churches.

To provide a theological basis for the choice and performance of music during the worship service of Adventist churches, we have considered in this chapter the implications of Sabbath, Christ's ministry in the heavenly sanctuary, and the Second Advent. We have found that each of these three distinctive Adventist beliefs contributes in its own unique way to define what good church music should be like.

The Sabbath teaches us to respect the distinction between the *sacred* and the *secular*, not only in time, but also in such areas as church music and worship. At a time when cultural relativism has influenced many churches to blur the distinction between sacred and secular music, the sabbath teaches us to respect such a distinction in all the facets of Christian life, including church music and worship. To use secular music for the church service on the Sabbath, means to treat the Sabbath as a secular day and the church as a secular place.

The study of the music and liturgy of the Jerusalem Temple as well as the heavenly sanctuary, have been very instructive. We have found that out of respect for the presence of God, percussion instruments and entertainment music which stimulate people physically, were not allowed in the Temple services, nor are they used in the liturgy of the heavenly sanctuary. On account of the same reason, rhythmic instruments and music that stimulates people physically rather than elevating them spiritually, are out of place in the church today.

The worship in the earthly and heavenly Temples teaches us also that God is to be worshipped with great reverence and respect. Church music must not treat God with frivolity and irreverence. It should help to quiet our souls and respond to Him in reverence.

The belief in the certainty and imminence of Christ's coming should be the driving force of the Adventist life-style and church music. The soon-appearing of the Rock of Ages, with the greatest band of angels this world has ever seen, can fire up the imagination of musicians today to compose new songs to appeal to those who are looking for meaning and hope in their lives.

At the threshold of a new millennium, the Seventh-day Adventist Church faces an unprecedented challenge and opportunity to re-examine the theological basis for the choice and performance of her music. We hope and pray that the church will respond to this challenge, not by accepting uncritically contemporary pop music which is foreign to the mission and message of the church, but by promoting the composition and singing of songs that fittingly express the hope that burns within our hearts (1 Pet 3:15).

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