

ELLEN G. WHITE ESTATE

-MUSIC-  
ITS ROLE,  
QUALITIES, AND  
INFLUENCE



ARTHUR L. WHITE



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# **Music—Its Role, Qualities, and Influence**

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**Ellen G. White**

**1972**

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Ellen G. White (1827-1915) is considered the most widely translated American author, her works having been published in more than 160 languages. She wrote more than 100,000 pages on a wide variety of spiritual and practical topics. Guided by the Holy Spirit, she exalted Jesus and pointed to the Scriptures as the basis of one's faith.

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# **As Set Forth in the Writings of Ellen G. White**

A Compilation of Materials Assembled For the Study of the 1972  
Task Force on the Philosophy of Music

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## **Introduction—A Word From the Compiler**

In view of the forthcoming task force study of music, the White Estate was requested to compile E. G. White materials which would have a bearing on the matter to be considered by the Committee. In doing so, both published and unpublished sources have been drawn from. It is mainly as we think in terms of the counsels enunciating principles, then applying these principles, that E. G. White counsels can be brought to have direct bearing on some of the matters before us.

We do not in this document attempt to make a general presentation on music or to make an exhaustive presentation. It is altogether likely that we may have overlooked some choice statement that in the present study has been caught by one or another of the committee members.

We believe, however, that in the statements which follow basic principles are set forth which can be taken and applied effectively now. These embody the role and qualities of music; the impact of music for good or for evil; the effective use of music in the services of the church and some counsel that may be of interest to those who arrange for and lead music.

In the experience in Indiana in 1900 and 1901 in what is commonly referred to as the holy flesh movement (discussed in [Selected Messages 2:31-39](#)) music figured prominently. We have eye-witness descriptions of what took place. We have Ellen White's counsel based on a vision given to her in January, 1900, in Australia, at the very inception of the holy flesh movement, and on reports which came to her from Elder and Mrs. Haskell seven months after the vision.

From this combination of materials we may find certain principles which will give us guidance today.

So, without plans to make this compilation exhaustive, but in an attempt to embody statements which would have a bearing on the study of this committee, these materials are submitted.

A. L. White, Secretary  
Ellen G. White Estate  
Washington, D. C  
June 30, 1972

## Chapter 1—The Role of Music

### *The Power of Song*

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.

As the children of Israel, journeying through the wilderness, cheered their way by the music of sacred song, so God bids His children today gladden their pilgrim life. There are few means more effective for fixing His words in the memory than repeating them in song. And such song has wonderful power. It has power to subdue rude and uncultivated natures; power to quicken thought and awaken sympathy, to promote harmony of action, and to banish the gloom and foreboding that destroy courage and weaken effort.

It is one of the most effective means of impressing the heart with spiritual truth. 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!

The value of song as a means of education should never be lost sight of. Let there be singing in the home, of songs that are sweet and pure, and there will be fewer words of censure and more of cheerfulness and hope and joy. Let there be singing in the school, and the pupils will be drawn closer to God, to their teachers, and to one another.

As a part of religious service, singing is as much an act of worship as is prayer. Indeed, many a song is prayer.—[Education, 167, 168.](#)

[4]

*A Weapon Against Discouragement*

If there was much more praising the Lord, and far less doleful recitation of discouragements, many more victories would be achieved.—[Letter 53, 1896](#). ([Evangelism, 499](#))

Let praise and thanksgiving be expressed in song. When tempted, instead of giving utterance to our feelings, let us by faith lift up a song of thanksgiving to God.

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.—[The Ministry of Healing, 254](#). (1905)

*To Impress Spiritual Truth*

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.—[The Review and Herald, June 6, 1912](#).

*A Means to Conserve Christian Experience*

Evening and morning join with your children in God's worship, reading His Word and singing His praise. Teach them to repeat God's law. Concerning the commandments, the Israelites were instructed: "Thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." Accordingly, Moses directed the Israelites to set the words of the law to music.

If it was essential for Moses to embody the commandments in sacred song, so that as they marched in the wilderness, the children could learn to sing the law verse by verse, how essential it is at this time teach our children God's Word! Let us come up to the help of the Lord, instructing our children to keep the commandments to the letter. Let us do everything in our power to make music in our homes, that God may come in.—[The Review and Herald, September 8, 1904](#). ([Evangelism, 499](#))

*To Make Work Pleasant*

[5]

Make your work pleasant by songs of praise.—[Child Guidance](#), 148.

*Drives the Enemy Away*

I saw we must be daily rising and keep the ascendancy above the powers of darkness. Our God is mighty. 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 5](#), 1850.

*Song Helped Jesus Resist the Enemy*

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.—[Manuscript 65](#), 1901. ([Evangelism](#), 498)

*Bringing Heaven's Gladness*

The early morning often found Him in some secluded place, meditating, searching the Scriptures, or in prayer. With the voice of singing He welcomed the morning light. With songs of thanksgiving He cheered His hours of labor, and brought heaven's gladness to the toil-worn and disheartened.—[The Ministry of Healing](#), 52. (1905)

*He Sang Songs of Praise*

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 Desire of Ages](#), 73, 74.

## [6] Chapter 2—The Effective Use Of Music In Israel's Experience

### *Songs Fixed Lessons in Mind*

As the people journeyed through the wilderness, many precious lessons were fixed in their minds by means of song. At their deliverance from Pharaoh's army the whole host of Israel had joined in the song of triumph. Far over desert and sea rang the joyous refrain, and the mountains re-echoed the accents of praise, "Sing ye to the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously." [Exodus 15:21](#). Often on the journey was this song repeated, cheering the hearts and kindling the faith of the pilgrim travelers. The commandments as given from Sinai, with promises of God's favor and records of His wonderful works for their deliverance, were by divine direction expressed in song, and were chanted to the sound of instrumental music, the people keeping step as their voices united in praise.

Thus their thoughts were uplifted from the trials and difficulties of the way, the restless, turbulent spirit was soothed and calmed, the principles of truth were implanted in the memory, and faith was strengthened. Concert of action taught order and unity, and the people were brought into closer touch with God and with one another.—[Education, 39](#).

### *In the Schools of the Prophets: Part of the Curriculum*

In both the school and the home much of the teaching was oral; but the youth also learned to read the Hebrew writings, and the parchment rolls of the Old Testament Scriptures were open to their study. The chief subjects of study in these schools were the law of God, with the instruction given to Moses, sacred history, sacred music, and poetry.—[Education, 47](#).

### *What Music Accomplished*

Sanctified intellects brought forth from the treasure house of God things new and old, and the Spirit of God was manifested in prophecy and sacred song.

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! A love for music leads the unwary to unite with world lovers in pleasure gatherings where God has forbidden His children to go. Thus that which is a great blessing when rightly used, becomes one of the most successful agencies by which Satan allures the mind from duty and from the contemplation of eternal things. [7]

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.—[Patriarchs and Prophets, 591](#).

### *Looking Back*

The journey to Jerusalem, in the simple, patriarchal style, amidst the beauty of the springtime, the richness of midsummer, or the ripened glory of autumn, was a delight. With offerings of gratitude they came, from the man of white hairs to the little child, to meet with God in His holy habitation. As they journeyed, the experiences of the past, the stories that both old and young still love so well, were recounted to the Hebrew children. The songs that had cheered the wilderness wandering were sung. God's commandments were chanted, and, bound up with the blessed influences of nature and of kindly human association, they were forever fixed in the memory of many a child and youth.—[Education, 142](#).

## Chapter 3—Desirable Qualities

### *Clear Intonations- Distinct Utterance*

No words can properly set forth the deep blessedness of genuine worship. When human beings sing with the Spirit and the understanding, heavenly musicians take up the strain, and join in the song of thanksgiving. He who has bestowed upon us all the gifts that enable us to be workers together with God, expects His servants to cultivate their voices, so that they can speak and sing in a way that all can understand. 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.—[Testimonies for the Church 9:143, 144](#). (1909)

### *Factors in Effectual Music*

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.

But it is sometimes more difficult to discipline the singers and keep them in working order, than to improve the habits of praying and exhorting. Many want to do things after their own style; they object to consultation, and are impatient under leadership. Well-matured plans are needed in, the service of God. Common sense is an excellent thing in the worship of the Lord.—[Gospel Workers, 325](#). (1892) ([Evangelism, 505](#))



*Effective Pathos*

[9]

There is a 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.—[Manuscript 22, 1886](#). ([Evangelism, 504](#))

*Not Volume but Fine Qualities*

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.—[Manuscript 91, 1903](#). ([Evangelism, 510](#))

*With Solemnity and Awe*

The melody of song, poured forth from many hearts in clear, distinct utterance, is one of God's instrumentalities in the work of saving souls. All the service should be conducted with solemnity and awe, as if in the visible presence of the Master of assemblies.—[Testimonies for the Church 5:493](#).

*With Melody and Distinctness*

I am glad that a musical element has been brought into the Healdsburg school. In every school, instruction in singing is greatly needed. There should be much more interest in voice culture than is now generally manifested. Students who have learned to sing sweet gospel songs with melody and distinctness, can do much good as singing evangelists. They will find many opportunities to use the talent that God has given them, carrying melody and sunshine into many lonely places darkened by sin and sorrow and affliction, singing to those who seldom have church privileges.

[10]

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.—[The Review and Herald, August 27, 1903](#). (Portion in [Evangelism, 504](#))

### *One of God’s Entrusted Talents*

The human voice in singing is one of God’s entrusted talents to be employed to His glory. The enemy of righteousness makes a great account of this talent in his service. And that which is the gift of God, to be a blessing to souls, is perverted, misapplied, and serves the purpose of Satan. This talent of voice is a blessing if consecrated to the Lord to serve His cause.—[Letter 62, 1893](#). ([Evangelism, 498](#))

### *Choir and Congregational Singing*

In the meetings held, let a number be chosen to take part in the song service. And let the singing be accompanied with musical instruments skillfully handled. We are not to oppose the use of instrumental music in our work. This part of the service is to be carefully conducted; for it is the praise of God in song. The singing is not always to be done by a few. As often as possible, let the entire congregation join.—[Testimonies for the Church 9:144](#). (1909)

### *The Song Service*

The singing should not be done by a few only. All present should be encouraged to join in the song service.—[Letter 157, 1902](#). ([Evangelism, 507](#))

*More on Musical Instruments*

[11]

Let the talent of singing be brought into the work. The use of musical instruments is not at all objectionable. These were used in religious services in ancient times. The worshipers praised God upon the harp and cymbal, and music should have its place in our services. It will add to the interest.—[Letter 132, 1898](#). ([Evangelism, 500-501](#))

*Instrumental Music at the General Conference of 1905*

I am glad to hear the musical instruments that you have here. God wants us to have them. He wants us to praise Him with heart and soul and voice, magnifying His name before the world.—[The Review and Herald, June 15, 1905](#). ([Evangelism, 503](#))

## Chapter 4—Undesirable Qualities

### *Shrieking Sacred Words of Hymns of Praise*

Music forms a part of God's worship in the courts above. We should endeavor in our songs of praise to approach as nearly as possible to the harmony of the heavenly choirs. 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.

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. The voice can and should be modulated, softened, and subdued.—[The Signs of the Times, June 22, 1882.](#) ([Evangelism, 507-8](#))

### *No Jargon or Discord*

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.—[Testimonies for the Church 1:146.](#) (1857)

### *Sing With the Spirit and Understanding*

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 extra display which you sometimes make entails unnecessary expense, which the brethren should not be asked to meet; and you will find that after a time unbelievers will not be willing to give money to meet these expenses.—[Letter 51, 1902.](#) ([Evangelism, 509](#))

## Chapter 5—Religious Music Made Satan’s Snare

[13]

### A. The Music at the 1900 Indiana Camp Meeting Described by Eye Witnesses

#### *Its Almost Overwhelming Impact*

There is a great power that goes with the movement [Holy Flesh] that is on foot there. It would almost bring anybody within its scope, if they are at all conscientious, and sit and listen with the least degree of favor; because of the music that is brought to play in the ceremony. They have an organ, one bass viol, three fiddles, two flutes, three tambourines, three horns, and a big bass drum, and perhaps other instruments which I have not mentioned. They are as much trained in their musical line as any Salvation Army choir that you ever heard. In fact, their revival effort is simply a complete copy of the Salvation Army method, and when they get on a high key, you cannot hear a word from the congregation in their singing, nor hear anything, unless it be shrieks of those who are half insane. After an appeal to come forward for prayers, a few of the leading ones would always come forward, to lead others to come; and then they would begin to play on the musical instruments, until you could not hear yourself think; and under the excitement of this strain, they get a large proportion of the congregation forward over and over again.—S. N. Haskell report to E. G. White, September 25, 1900.

#### *Dance tunes and Sacred Words*

We have a big drum, two tambourines, a big bass fiddle, two small fiddles, a flute and two comets, and an organ and a few voices. They have “Garden of Spices” as the songbook and play dance tunes to sacred words. They have never used our own hymn books, except when Elders Breed or Haskell speak, then they open and close with a hymn from our book, but all the other songs are from the other book. They shout Amens, and “Praise the Lord,” “Glory to God,” just like a Salvation Army service. It is distressing to one’s soul.

The doctrines preached correspond to the rest. “The poor sheep are truly confused.”—Mrs. S. N. Haskell report to Sara McEnterfer, September 12, 1900.

### *Lively Songs and Self-Induced Hysteria*

I attended the camp meeting in September of 1900, which was held at Muncie, where I witnessed first-hand the fanatical excitement and activities of these people. There were numerous groups of people scattered all over the campground engaged in arguing and, when these fanatics conducted the services in the large pavilion, they worked themselves up to a high pitch of excitement by the use of musical instruments, such as: trumpets, flutes, stringed instruments, tambourines, an organ, and a big bass drum. They shouted and sang their lively songs with the aid of musical instruments until they became really hysterical. Many times I saw them, after these morning meetings, as they came to the dining tent fairly shaking as though they had the palsy.—Burton Wade account to A. L. White, January 12, 1962.

## [14] **B. Ellen G. White Comments on the Music at the 1900 Indiana Camp Meeting**

### *A Bedlam of Noise Which Confuses the Senses*

The things you have described as taking place in Indiana, the Lord has shown me would take place just before the close of probation. Every uncouth thing will be demonstrated. There will be shouting, with drums, music, and dancing. The senses of rational beings will become so confused that they cannot be trusted to make right decisions. And this is called the moving of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit never reveals itself in such methods, in such a bedlam of noise. This is an invention of Satan to cover up his ingenious methods for making of none effect the pure, sincere, elevating, ennobling, sanctifying truth for this time. Better never have the worship of God blended with music than to use musical instruments to do the work which last January was represented to me would be brought into our camp meetings. The truth for this time needs nothing of this kind in its work of converting souls. A bedlam of

noise shocks the senses and perverts that which if conducted aright might be a blessing. The powers of satanic agencies blend with the din and noise, to have a carnival, and this is termed the Holy Spirit's working. No encouragement should be given to this kind of worship. The same kind of influence came in after the passing of the time in 1844. The same kind of representations were made. Men became excited, and were worked by a power thought to be the power of God.—[Letter 132, 1900](#), to S. N. Haskell. (Published in [Selected Messages 2:36, 37.](#))

*Music Acceptable if “Properly Conducted,” Made Satan's Snare*

The Holy Spirit has nothing to do with such a confusion of noise and multitude of sounds as passed before me last January. Satan works amid the din and confusion of such music, which, properly conducted, would be a praise and glory to God. He makes its effect [15] like the poison sting of the serpent.

Those things which have been in the past will be in the future. Satan will make music a snare by the way in which it is conducted. God calls upon His people, who have the light before them in the Word and in the Testimonies, to read and consider, and to take heed. Clear and definite instruction has been given in order that all may understand. But the itching desire to originate something new results in strange doctrines, and largely destroys the influence of those who would be a power for good if they held firm the beginning of their confidence in the truth the Lord had given them.—[Letter 132, 1900](#) to S. N. Haskell. (Published in [Selected Messages 2:37, 38.](#)) (Emphasis Supplied)

These [in Indiana] were carried away by a spiritualistic delusion.—[Evangelism, 595.](#)

*Noise No Evidence of Sanctification*

I have been instructed by the Lord that this movement in Indiana is of the same character as have been the movements in years past. In your religious meetings there have been exercises similar to those I have witnessed in connection with those movements in the past.... There was much excitement, with noise and confusion. One could not tell what was piped or what was harped. Some appeared to be

in vision, and fell to the floor. Others were jumping, dancing, and shouting ....

The manner in which the meetings in Indiana have been carried on, with noise and confusion, does not commend them to thoughtful, intelligent minds. There is nothing in these demonstrations which will convince the world that we have the truth. Mere noise and shouting are no evidence of sanctification, or of the descent of the Holy Spirit. Your wild demonstrations create only disgust in the minds of unbelievers. The fewer of such demonstrations there are, the better it will be for the actors and for the people in general....

[16] Many such movements will arise at this time, when the Lord's work should stand elevated, pure, unadulterated with superstition and fables. We need to be on our guard, to maintain a close connection with Christ, that we be not deceived by Satan's devices.

The Lord desires to have in His service order and discipline, not excitement and confusion. We are not now able to describe with accuracy the scenes to be enacted in our world in the future; but this we do know, that this is a time when we must watch unto prayer; for the great day of the Lord is at hand. Satan is rallying his forces. We need to be thoughtful and still, and to contemplate the truths of revelation. Excitement is not favorable to growth in grace, to true purity and sanctification of the spirit...

God calls upon His people to walk with sobriety and holy consistency. They should be very careful not to misrepresent and dishonor the holy doctrines of truth by strange performances, by confusion and tumult. By this, unbelievers are led to think that Seventh-day Adventists are a set of fanatics. Thus prejudice is created that prevents souls from receiving the message for this time. When believers speak the truth as it is in Jesus, they reveal a holy, sensible calm, not a storm of confusion.—[The General Conference Bulletin, April 23, 1901](#). (Published in [Selected Messages 2:33-36](#))



## Chapter 6—The Lure of Worldly Music

[17]

### *No Frivolous Waltz or Flippant Song in the Schools of the Prophets*

The art of sacred melody was diligently cultivated. [In the schools of the prophets.] No frivolous waltz was heard, nor flip-pant song that should extol man and divert the attention from God; but sacred, solemn psalms of praise to the Creator, exalting His name and recounting His wondrous works.—[Fundamentals of Christian Education, 97.](#)

### *When Satan Takes Charge*

There has been a class of social gatherings in \_\_\_\_\_ of an entirely different character, parties of pleasure that have been a disgrace to our institutions and to the church. They encourage pride of dress, pride of appearance, self-gratification, hilarity and trifling. Satan is entertained as an honored guest, and takes possession of those who patronize these gatherings.

A view of one such company was presented to me, where were assembled those who profess to believe the truth. One was seated at the instrument of music, and such songs were poured forth as made the watching angels weep. There was mirth, there was coarse laughter, there was abundance of enthusiasm, and a kind of inspiration; but the joy was such as Satan only is able to create. This is an enthusiasm and infatuation of which all who love God will be ashamed. It prepares the participants for unholy thought and action. I have reason to think that some who were engaged in that scene heartily repented of the shameful performance.—[Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students, 339.](#) (Emphasis Supplied.)

### *Music Put to a Wrong Use*

I feel alarmed as I witness everywhere the frivolity of young men and young women who profess to believe the truth. God does not

[18] seem to be in their thoughts. Their minds are filled with nonsense. Their conversation is only empty, vain talk. They have a keen ear for music, and Satan knows what organs to excite to animate, engross, and charm the mind so that Christ is not desired. The spiritual longings of the soul for divine knowledge, for a growth in grace, are wanting.

I was shown that the youth must take a higher stand and make the word of God the man of their counsel and their guide. Solemn responsibilities rest upon the young, which they lightly regard. The introduction of music into their homes, instead of inciting to holiness and spirituality, has been the means of diverting their minds from the truth. 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.—[Testimonies for the Church 1:496-497](#). (Emphasis Supplied.)

### *Satan Uses it to Gain Access*

[19] Eternal things have little weight with the youth. Angels of God are in tears as they write in the roll the words and acts of professed Christians. 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. Sadness is upon their countenances. Behold, they are weeping. This I saw repeated a number of times all through the ranks of Sabbath keepers, and especially in \_\_\_\_\_.

Music has occupied the hours which should have been devoted to prayer. Music is the idol which many professed Sabbath keeping Christians worship. Satan has no objection to music if he can make that a channel through which to gain access to the minds of the youth.

Anything will suit his purpose that will divert the mind from God and engage the time which should be devoted to His service. He works through the means which will exert the strongest influence to hold the largest numbers in a pleasing infatuation, while they are paralyzed by his power. When turned to good account, music is a blessing; but it is often made one of Satan's most attractive agencies to ensnare souls. When abused, it leads the unconsecrated to pride, vanity, and folly. When allowed to take the place of devotion and prayer, it is a terrible curse.

Young persons assemble to sing, and, although professed Christians, frequently dishonor God and their faith by their frivolous conversation and their choice of music. Sacred music is not congenial to their taste. I was directed to the plain teachings of God's word, which have been passed by unnoticed. In the judgment all these words of inspiration will condemn those who have not heeded them.—[Testimonies for the Church 1:585-586](#). (Emphasis Supplied)

### *Low Songs and Lewd Gestures*

Among the most dangerous resorts for pleasure is the theater. Instead of being a school of morality and virtue, as is so often claimed, it is the very hotbed of immorality. Vicious habits and sinful propensities are strengthened and confirmed by these entertainments. Low songs, Lewd gestures, expressions, and attitudes, deprave the imagination and debase the morals.

Every youth who habitually attends such exhibitions will be corrupted in principle. There is no influence in our land more powerful to poison the imagination, to destroy religious impressions, and to blunt the relish for the tranquil pleasures and sober realities of life than theatrical amusements. The love for these scenes increases with every indulgence, as the desire for intoxicating drink strengthens with its use.—[Testimonies for the Church 4:652-653](#). (Emphasis Supplied)

*Israel Beguiled by Heathen Music*

Balaam knew that the prosperity of Israel depended upon their observance of the law of God, and that there was no way to bring a curse upon them but by seducing them to transgression. He decided to secure to himself Balak's reward, and the promotion he desired, by advising the Moabites what course to pursue to bring the curse upon Israel. He counseled Balak to proclaim an idolatrous feast in honor of their idol gods, and he would persuade the Israelites to attend, that they might be delighted with the music, and then the most beautiful Midianitish women should entice the Israelites to transgress the law of God, and corrupt themselves, and also influence them to offer sacrifice to idols. This Satanic counsel succeeded too well.—[Spiritual Gifts 4a:49](#). (Emphasis Supplied)

Beguiled with music and dancing, and allured by the beauty of heathen vestals, they cast off their fealty to Jehovah.—[Patriarchs and Prophets, 454](#).

*Musical Entertainments to Have a Religious Atmosphere*

It has been revealed to me that not all the families who have a knowledge of the truth have brought the truth into their practice. Every talent of influence is to be sacredly cherished for the purpose of gathering souls to Christ's side. Young men and young women, do not consider that your musical entertainments, conducted as they are in \_\_\_\_\_ are doing acceptable missionary work. A spirit has come into them that is of a different order. We had this same spirit to meet thirty years ago, and we bore decided testimony against it in Battle Creek.

[21] 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.—[Manuscript 57, 1906](#).

*The Peril of Worldly Entertainments*

It is not safe for the Lord's workers to take part in worldly entertainments. Association with worldliness in musical lines is

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looked upon as harmless by some Sabbath keepers. But such ones are on dangerous ground. Thus Satan seeks to lead men and women astray, and thus he has gained control of souls. So smooth, so plausible is the working of the enemy that his wiles are not suspected, and many church members become lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God.—[Manuscript 82, 1900](#).

## Chapter 7—Secular Music

### *Qualities of Acceptable Secular Music*

For about an hour the fog did not lift and the sun did not penetrate it. Then the musicians [on the ship] who were to leave the boat at this place entertained the impatient passengers with music, well selected and well rendered. It did not jar upon the senses as the previous evening, but was soft and really grateful to the senses because it was musical.—[Letter 6b, 1893](#), pp. 2, 3. (Written of the landing in New Zealand in February 1893.)

### *Beautiful Instrumental Music at the Swiss Beer Garden*

The same night there was beautiful music and fireworks close by across the road. There is an extensive beer garden owned by the city and carried on by the city. This garden is made attractive with flowers and shrubs and noble trees, giving a nice shade. There are seats that will accommodate hundreds, and little oval tables are adjusted before these seats and this most beautiful instrumental music is played by the band.—[Manuscript 33, 1886](#).

### *An Indescribable Concert*

We are having an indescribable concert. Nine are singing, - Dutch or German or French, I cannot tell which. The voices are just splendid, quite entertaining. I think it is a Sunday-school excursion company.—[Letter 8, 1876](#).

## Chapter 8—The Musical Performers

[23]

### *Ambition for Display*

Musical entertainments which, if conducted properly, will do no harm, are often a source of evil. In the present state of society, with the low morals of not only youth but those of age and experience, there is great danger of becoming careless, and giving especial attention to favorites, and thus creating envy, jealousies, and evil surmisings. Musical talent too often fosters pride and ambition for display, and singers have but little thought of the worship of God. Instead of leading minds to remembering God, it often causes them to forget Him.—[Letter 6a, 1890](#).

### *Singing for Display-Counsel to a Leader of Music*

I was taken into some of your singing exercises, and was made to read the feelings that existed in the company, you being the prominent one. There were petty jealousies, envy, evil surmisings, and evil speaking .... The heart service is what God requires; the forms and lip service are as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. Your singing is for display, not to praise God with the spirit and understanding. The state of the heart reveals the quality of the religion of the professor of godliness.—[Letter 1b, 1890](#). ([Evangelism, 507](#).)

### *Music That Offends God*

Display is not religion nor sanctification. 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. The offering most sweet and acceptable in God's sight is a heart made humble by self-denial, by lifting the cross and following Jesus. We have no time now to spend in seeking these things that only please the senses. Close heart searching is needed. With tears and heartbroken confession we need to draw nigh to God

that He may draw nigh to us.—[The Review and Herald, November 14, 1899](#). ([Evangelism, 510](#))

[24]

*Music Acceptable to God*

The superfluities which have been brought into the worship in \_\_\_\_\_ must be strenuously avoided .... Music is acceptable to God only when the heart is sanctified and made soft and holy by its facilities. But many who delight in music know nothing of making melody in their hearts to the Lord. Their heart is gone “after their idols.”—[Letter 198, 1899](#). ([Evangelism, 512](#))



## Chapter 9—Testimony to a Sensitive Choir Director [25]

### *A Message of Counsel Touching Many Facets of Music and the Musician*

I was shown the case of Brother S., that he would be a burden to the church unless he comes into a closer relation with God. He is self-conceited. If his course is questioned he feels hurt. If he thinks another is preferred before him, he feels that it is an injury done to him ....

Brother S. has a good knowledge of music, but his education in music was of a character to suit the stage rather than the solemn worship of God. Singing is just as much the worship of God in a religious meeting as speaking, and any oddity or peculiarity cultivated attracts the attention of the people and destroys the serious, solemn impression which should be the result of sacred music. Anything strange and eccentric in singing detracts from the seriousness and sacredness of religious service.

Bodily exercise profiteth little. Everything that is connected in any way with religious worship should be dignified, solemn, and impressive. God is not pleased when ministers professing to be Christ's representatives so misrepresent Christ as to throw the body into acting attitudes, making undignified and coarse gestures, unrefined, coarse gesticulations. All this amuses, and will excite the curiosity of those who wish to see strange, odd, and exciting things, but these things will not elevate the minds and hearts of those who witness them.

The very same may be said of singing. 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. This singing is defective and not acceptable to God as perfect, softened, sweet strains of music. There are no such exhibitions among the angels as I have sometimes seen in our meetings. Such harsh [26]

notes and gesticulations are not exhibited among the angel choir. Their singing does not grate upon the ear. It is soft and melodious and comes without this great effort I have witnessed. It is not forced and strained, requiring physical exercise.

Brother S. is not aware how many are amused and disgusted. Some cannot repress thoughts not very sacred and feelings of levity to see the unrefined motions made in the singing. Brother S., exhibits himself. His singing does not have an influence to subdue the heart and touch the feelings. Many have attended the meetings and listened to the words of truth spoken from the pulpit, which have convicted and solemnized their minds; but many times the way the singing has been conducted has not deepened the impression made. The demonstrations and bodily contortions, the unpleasant appearance of the strained, forced effort has appeared so out of place for the house of God, so comical, that the serious impressions made upon the minds have been removed. Those who believe the truth are not as highly thought of as before the singing.

Brother S.'s case has been a difficult one to manage. He has been like a child undisciplined and uneducated. When his course has been questioned, instead of taking reproof as a blessing, he has let his feelings get the better of his judgment and he has become discouraged and would do nothing. If he could not do in everything as he wanted to do, all in his way, he would not help at all. He has not taken hold of the work earnestly to reform his manners but has given up to mulish feelings that separate the angel from him and bring evil angels around him. The truth of God received in the heart commences its refining, sanctifying influence upon the life.

[27] 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?

Music is of heavenly origin. There is great power in music. It was music from the angelic throng that thrilled the hearts of the shepherds on Bethlehem's plains and swept round the world. It is in

music that our praises rise to Him who is the embodiment of purity and harmony. It is with music and songs of victory that the redeemed shall finally enter upon the immortal reward.

There is something peculiarly sacred in the human voice. Its harmony and its subdued and heaven-inspired pathos exceeds every musical instrument. Vocal music is one of God's gifts to men, an instrument that cannot be surpassed or equaled when God's love abounds in the soul. Singing with the spirit and the understanding also is a great addition to devotional services in the house of God.

How this gift has been debased! When sanctified and refined it would accomplish great good in breaking down the barriers of prejudice and hardhearted unbelief, and would be the means of converting souls. It is not enough to understand the rudiments of singing, but with the knowledge, must be such a connection with heaven that angels can sing through us.

Your voice has been heard in church so loud, so harsh, accompanied or set off with your gesticulations not the most graceful, that the softer and more silvery strains, more like angel music, could not be heard. You have sung more to men than to God. 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.

[28]

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. You have had much to contend with in your own nature. It has been hard work for you to overcome your natural besetments and live a self-denying, holy life.—[Manuscript 5, 1874](#).

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