

Godly Music

The music God loves



& The music God Hates

A "position" paper
by Peggy Carter

The Music God Loves...

New Testament Examples

The New Testament records many examples of singing. In Mt. 26:30 we read that when Jesus and the disciples departed after the Last Supper “they sang a hymn and went out.” In Luke 1: 46-55 Mary sang a song to express her joy when she was visited by an Angel who announced that she had been chosen to bear the Christ Child. In Acts 16:25 Paul was singing hymns in prison. In I Cor. 13:15 Paul says “I shall sing with the spirit and with the understanding.” (basically... with the heart and with the mind.) James writes in James 5:13, is anyone cheerful? Let him sing.” According to Pliny The Younger in 110 AD the followers of Christ gathered early in the morning to “chant a song to Christ.” Singing had become a standard Christian practice.



Christian music is acceptable to God when it offers to God the best of our talent and our adoration. The best Christian hymns are unmatched for depth, beauty and sound theology. God will accept worship music that exemplifies character and a sense of worship and holiness.



Old Testament Examples

The Old Testament is full of passages that describe the Hebrew worship and celebration music.

Samuel gave instructions for Saul to follow a band of prophets who were also musicians. In I Sam 10:5-6 we read about the prophets prophesying with their music and Saul would be made a new man. We must strive to produce music that will draw people to God. II Chron. 7, 11-14 tells of the

dedication of the Temple at which time the music was so glorious that the house was filled with a cloud so that the priests could not even stand to minister, for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of God.

The first reference to musical instruments is in Gen. 4:21...Jubal was referred to as “father of all who play the harp and flute.” Instruments were used at

celebrations including military victories. Starting with the Kings, instruments were used at court (I Sam. 19:19) as well as in temple worship. Although instruments were widely used for entertainment and boisterous parties (Isa. 5:12) they were also used for worship (Ps. 81:2; Ps 150:1-5 are examples.)

Miriam and Moses sang of triumph in battle (Ex. 15:21). In I Sam 18:7 we read of antiphonal singing by women. David sang solos and played the harp (I Sam 16:23). Deborah and Barak sang a duet in Judges 5:1-2.

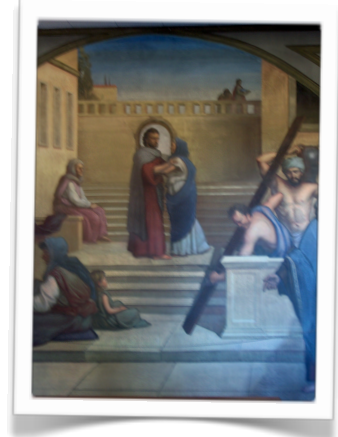
I Chron. 15:22 tells us about David's choir in around 1000 BC in which the musicians sang and played instruments. Solomon's Choir in I Chron 23:5 followed the same organization but was much larger. Ezra 2:65 and 3:10 tell about Zerubbabel's choir, and we read about Nehemiah's choir in Neh 12:27-28. The Heavenly choir described by John in Rev. 14:2-3 may be the largest choir in the Bible. In Rev. 5 John saw and heard singers with harps singing a "new song." In chapter 8 we read about the blowing of the trumpets by 7 angels, indicating that heaven is a place resounding with both instrumental and vocal music.

Biblical Theology vs. Paganism

In a comparison of the Egyptian "Hymn To Osiris" with "Psalm 78," a Psalm by Asaph the Gershonite, a Levite who led the singing in temple worship during the time of David & Solomon. He sounded the cymbals before the ark and in Neh.7:44 the singers referred to are believed to be students in a school of music set up by Asaph.

Psalms 73-83 were all either written by Asaph or collected by him from David's collection and they represent the repertoire of the Asaph Singers which seem to have depth in meaning and in musical value, and the style is contemplative and dignified. Psalm 78, with 56 verses, recites the history of God's *rule* over Israel from the exodus to the rule of David. It shows God as *sovereign* – punishing His people when they sinned, yet delivering them from oppression and slavery.

"Hymn to Osiris" is a pagan hymn from the 18th Dynasty of Egypt that celebrates the rule of Osiris over Egypt. It relates a myth in which Osiris was



was killed by his brother, the god Seth but was “restored” by his sister, the goddess Isis. Osiris became ruler over the dead and over Egypt.

The Egyptian cult of Isis and Osiris was active during New Testament times, and members participated in rituals and kept their teachings secret. Mystery religions flourished that promised personal “salvation” and a sense of community, but unlike Christianity the worship of these cults was in cave-like chambers with animals, reptiles and insects which “became” constellations. Members of the cult ascended through ranks to become part of the solar system. The focus is on fertility and erotic symbolism. Their rituals were either gory or orgiastic and some involved a kind of ecstatic madness. Osiris, lord of the dead was believed to be a source of life and renewal.

This hymn appeals to the emotions and the story appeals to the human sense of fantasy and fosters a belief in the power and invincibility of man. It promotes the belief that man can become a god.

In a nutshell, Psalm 78 proclaims the reign of the Lord God over Israel. It focuses on actual historical events and on God’s dealing with His people in a personal relationship with power and with love; while the Hymn to Osiris proclaims the reign of Osiris over the dead and over Egypt. It builds on a mythical theme with the slaying and rising of Osiris, and focuses on man’s self gratification and orgiastic ritual.

In today’s worship, music is not something to be merely attached to the periphery of church life, or relegated to a place of unimportance. Music ranks high as a great means of teaching and training. It can be a tremendous force to undergird the preaching of the Word and for conveying God’s message of salvation. Not only does it prepare the hearts of people for worship, but music is in itself a means of expressing worship and adoration of God.



God wants our best,, music that has character and a sense of worship and holiness... not merely music chosen only for its ability to add enthusiasm to the worship service. It is for His glory that we sing and play the instruments. Our music should tell the world that He is God and Savior.



Ruins of ancient Pompeii, a very wicked city during the century before Christ

God Hates Pagan Music!

The prophets warned... Many times throughout the Old Testament the prophets warned the people about adopting the culture and ideology of the pagan cultures around them. When **Moses** led God's people out of slavery in Egypt he was appalled when he returned from his personal encounter with God to find that the people were dancing, singing and worshipping a golden calf. In Ex. 32:17 Joshua thought it sounded like the noise of war, so the singing (if you could call it that) must have been furious and frenetic. Verse 18 tells us that Moses

recognized the sound as similar to the pagan singing he had heard in Egypt as he found them dancing and worshipping the calf and he became angry! He cried to Aaron that he had sinned greatly by copying the pagan culture of the Egyptians and leaving the God who loved them.

It is interesting that when Moses asked the people to choose between God's ways and the pagan ways, it was the sons of Levi who gathered together and stood with Moses. It was because of this that the tribe of Levi was consecrated for service in the tabernacle and became the leaders of the music used in worshipping the True God.

Elijah warned the wicked king, Ahab that he was leading the people away from the commandments of God and they were following Baal, a pagan god. (I Kings 18) Elijah challenged the prophets of Baal in verse 21 to prove that Baal was the god the Israelites should follow by calling on him to send down fire to burn the offering on the alter. They danced and cried aloud, cutting themselves as they sang and waved their arms frantically. Elijah simply prayed and fire fell from Heaven. The people proclaimed "The Lord is God!" Then Elijah prayed and God spoke in a still small voice. Quietness is essential to hearing God speak. Psalm 37:7 says, "Rest in the Lord, wait patiently for Him." God hated the people's loud, disorganized shouting and raucous singing, but responded to them in their quietness.

Isaiah warned the people against self-indulgence in Isaiah 5:11-12, and warned that they were tending to their own pleasure and had neglected the work of the Lord. They were spending too much time at their leisure, playing and listening to music and drinking strong drink, and forgetting to attend to their responsibilities to the One True God. In verse 20 he warns that the people have failed to differentiate between evil and good. They call evil good, and good evil, and they prefer darkness to light and have exchanged bitter for sweet. They were wise in their own eyes! (Is he saying they were educated fools?)

In the book of **Daniel**, Chapter 3 we read that King Nebuchadnezzar had decreed that when the people heard the king's special musical concert that they should bow down and worship a golden image. He knew the Children of Israel would be reluctant to worship the golden image after all their prophets had taught them, so he softened them up by presenting a beautiful concert of [pagan] music by some of his best musicians. Matthew Henry says, "... the music would serve to... soften the minds... This mirth and gaiety in the [pagan] worship would be

very agreeable to carnal sensual minds that are strangers to that spiritual worship which is due to GOD who is a spirit... They heard the sound of the music... the melody of which was ravishing and fit to excite the devotion they were to pay [to the golden image] and immediately they all, as soldiers that are exercised by the beat of a drum, fell down and worshipped the golden image... Here were the charms of music used to allure them into compliance [with the king's order to bow down and worship the golden image'. Thus beset with temptation they all yielded... the way that the senses direct, the most will go. There is nothing so bad which the careless world will not be drawn to by a concert of music" (Matthew Henry's Commentary, p. 1035-1036.)

Amos preached that God hated the noise of their songs (Amos 5:23). The people were asking for God's judgment if they continued to make sacrifices and offerings to pagan gods and desecrate their worship with their insincerity. Their songs were worldly because their hearts were far from God. In Amos 6:4-5 Amos accused them of lying upon beds of ivory, neglecting to make sacrifices and offerings to God, but taking the best lambs and calves for themselves and their own appetites. They were improvising songs for their own pleasure rather than using their voices and musical instruments in the worship of the True God as David had done.

We are desecrating God's temple when we use the "world's" music in our worship. Music that copies the rhythm and harmonies of pagan music or the music in a dance hall or lounge is displeasing to God. Godly music is reverent and has dignity, It calls attention to God, and to the message of the words, rather than to the performer or the listeners. I Chr. 16:29 compels us to "worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness." Holiness means *other than* or *different*. Our worship music should enhance the beauty of the service and should be defined by its *difference* from the world's music.

Next:

God Loves Godly Music

A side-by-side comparison of Biblical music and pagan (worldly) music.

Biblical Music

- 1) Ancient Hebrew poets and singers were from the priestly tribe of Levi and were highly esteemed for their dignity and wisdom. Music and hymnody played an important part in temple worship.
- 2) Old Testament prophecies find fulfillment in Christ.
- 3) Biblical music teaches rebirth and resurrection through Christ.
- 4) Draws people toward God.
- 5) Choirs sing with an attitude of devotion and consecration.
- 6) Deep and contemplative nature.
- 7) Early Christians gathered early in the morning to chant a song to Christ (Pliny the Younger, AD 110.)
- 8) Christian music was heavily influenced by Hebrew music of worship and celebration.
- 9) Some early Christian music has survived to the present. Lyrics to the "Gloria Patri" go back to 1st century AD.
- 10) Christian Music offers to God the BEST of our talent and our adoration.
- 11) Musical style was dignified and joyous.
- 12) Lyrics were spiritual and either glorified God or taught Christian principles, imparting wisdom. It appealed to the mind as well as the emotions.

Pagan Music

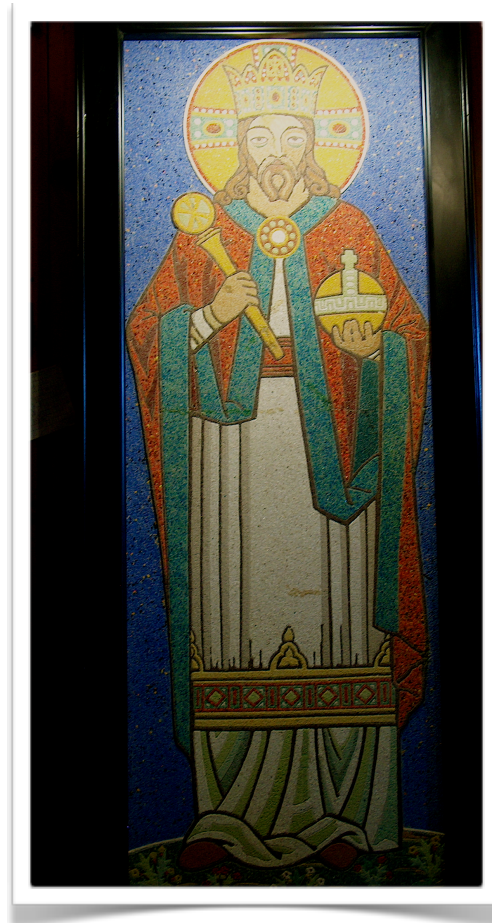
- 1) Pagan songs told stories of bloody wars between greater and lesser gods and were part of gory rituals of fertility, sensuality and masochism. They appealed to man's sensuality, and tended to glorify man.
- 2) Based on old myths involving morbid rituals and fear.
- 3) The cult initiate must go through ritualistic death and rebirth in an ecstatic frenzy.
- 4) Draws man to worldly pleasure.
- 5) Pagans sing with shouts and screeching and cut themselves to appease their gods.
- 6) Wild and boisterous in style.
- 7) Practiced their rituals at night and used percussion instruments in an undulating and pulsating rhythm for wild entertainment and boisterous parties.
- 8) Pagan music was influenced by lust and ancient fertility rituals.
- 9) Surviving pagan music praises man and idealizes animal-like behavior.
- 10) Pagan music glorifies man's baser emotions and animalistic instincts.
- 11) Music's hypnotic repetitions inspired self-mutilation, loud clapping and lycevious behavior.
- 12) Pagan music is common & simple in its meaning, as it "dumbs down" the intellect and lulls the participants into a low group mentality.

13) Words exemplify character and a sense of worship and holiness. The best Christian hymns are unmatched for depth, beauty and sound theology.

14) Good Christian music prepares the hearts of the people for worship and also is a means of expressing worship and adoration of God.

13) Words exemplify lack of character and acceptance of man's selfish desire baser emotions.

14) Pagan and worldly music glorifies man's FEELINGS using simplistic words and loud pulsating rhythms.



In conclusion: It can be seen that music used in worship should glorify God and that the true worshipper would endeavor to please God by choosing music that does NOT compromise with, or simulate worldly music. The standard by which a musical selection can be judged is taught in scripture. The standard is not the tradition of a church, or the opinion or preferences of the worshipper; Nor is it abstract or flexible. Today's worship music must be held up to God's standard, taught through His Word.