

From the Pastor's Desk 1980-1989

Sing A New Song unto Jehovah!

In her book *Forever Music*, Edith Schaefer defines music as " a very basic part of understanding the difference between a human being and all else in the universe. Music is an integral part of who we are. It is part of being human. "Though I can't read a note, I love music. I can't imagine a world without it. The Bible traces the origin of music to God Himself. In Job 38: 4-7, God asked, "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth ... when the morningstars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?" Right from the beginning of history, music played an important role. Jubal is described as "the father of those who play the lyre and pipe" (Gen.4:20, 21).The establishment, of a professional guild of music makers was well advanced by the time Israel built its temple. As recorded in 1 Chronicles 15:22, "Chenaniah, leader of the Levites should direct the music, for he understood it."

Some scholars say that music is the "language of the emotions." And since we live in a fallen world, music too has been affected. It can either fray the nerves, disturb mind and soul or inspire us and draw us closer to God. In 1 Samuel we find the story of a search "for a man who is a skillful plat on the harp." David was found to be such a skillful player, as he played King Saul "would feel better, and the evil spirit would leave him" (1Sam.16: 23). What a refreshing effect of music for relaxation and emotional healing!

Music is never a neutral activity. We have been challenged to "have dominion" over God's world including the "world' of music. We glorify God through composing music, performing it, or listening to it. The kind of music we listen to can be a hindrance or a boost to our spiritual development. The music of Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750), German composer and organist, has been a source of inspiration and blessing for me. Bach's large output of choral music included more than two hundred cantatas. Bach was deeply influenced by Martin Luther. He was a musician of the Reformation. He strove for what, he called, "well-regulated church music to the glory of God." The total output of his music, especially the church cantatas have been called " the Fifth Gospel."

The Christian faith is a singing religion. As God's people we have a melody in our hearts; we sing at home and in our worship services. We just cannot imagine worship without singing. As we come together we want to sing about our salvation in Christ. In our songs we reveal the feelings of our soul. From Genesis to Revelation we find references to musical instruments and singing. The Bible is filled with texts of hymns, psalms and spiritual songs. Israel considered the making of music a command of the Lord. "Now write down for yourselves this song," said the Lord to Moses, "and have them sing it, so that it may be a witness for me against them" (Deut. 31.19). "So Moses wrote down this song that day

and taught it to the Israelites" (verse 22). We are encouraged to sing a new song unto Jehovah.

Sing to the Lord a new song;
Sing to the Lord, all the earth.
Sing to the Lord, praise His name;
Proclaim His salvation day after day (Ps. 96:1,2,).

The apostle Paul wrote to the church in Ephesus: "Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord" (Eph. 5:19).

Singing is an act of worship. Whenever there is reformation and revival in the church, there is a desire to compose and sing a new song; and the psalms of old receive their proper attention again. Martin Luther composed a number of hymns and so did John Calvin. Today we witness a trend towards the singing of Bible texts.

What do Christians sing about? They sing about and unto the Lord. Singing is a communal activity. The people of God sing in worship.

A contributor to a Dutch encyclopedia, published in 1929, complained that Christians don't sing enough. The song of the Christian, he stated, is a foretaste of the new song all the believers shall sing on the shores of the new earth. 'Sing your song,' someone wrote, "and I will tell you where you attend church." May everyone know by our songs that we love to praise our God!

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