

mathematical instruction of the covenant child and then seek that goal. What is basic is not simply that we train our children to be very expensive human calculators.

The Crisis in Music

Gerald Kuiper

The aim of this article is two-fold—to point out the need for music instruction in the schools and homes of today, and more importantly, to make each of us, especially parents and teachers, aware of our responsibility to be an example to our children and students regarding our use of music.

Our children and we are constantly exposed to music, much of which is unfortunately very poor music. The recording industry annually takes in over \$2,500,000,000. 60% of these sales are rock music, 6% of the sales jazz, and 5% is classical music. This total of over 70% does not include country music recordings and the so-called gospel music industry which is rapidly growing. Young people of today, and our children too, are spending a larger share of this 2½ billion dollars than they did before.

Ten to fifteen years ago the Reformed covenant youth with a record cabinet or tape storage full of rock music was an exception rather than the rule. Amazingly, today the situation is virtually reversed. Most of our children's rooms have become their "castle", and parents in most cases either do not know the stuff their children listen to in their rooms and cars, do not care, or are afraid to comment fearing yet another unpleasant confrontation. If you do not believe this, check out the tapes on the front seats of cars in your church or school parking lot, or in your own driveway. In the world today, rock music has become a confession, a way of life. Too many of our own young people make their frequent seven or eight dollar offerings in pursuit of

this idol when they purchase records and tapes.

Rock music and much of country music can be characterized by its "two R's"—Romance and Rebellion. These two themes have long been dominant in music popular to young people. Add to these two R's today's "punk rock" and its themes—drugs, violence, sex, and social issues ranging from juvenile delinquency to the state of the environment, and you discover the essence of the musical experience of most of our young people. More disturbing yet is that in recent years two new elements have been added to rock music. The first is that the words have taken on more than ever before a tone of futility, sometimes to the point of incoherence, and secondly, no longer are the singing and the words as important—but the effect, the feeling produced, is becoming increasingly important. The majority of the recordings released today are manufactured in studios with the help of electronic aids and are calculated to lambast the listener, to hit him hard and make an effect.

That music is what many of our young people thrive on. But somehow we don't get too bothered when we see this. What if our literature students were reading obscene novels of violence and adultery daily? Would we be concerned? What if our art students spent their time drawing scenes portraying illicit and perverted sex? Would we be concerned? Or what if our children in the laboratory at school concocted illegal drugs? Would we be concerned? Of course, the answer to all these questions is a resounding "Yes!" But you realize, I hope, that the above subjects are what most of today's country and rock music are all about. That's the crisis we had better face up to.

We desire a better way for our children. But how concerned are we with music? Consider the following facts. Our own Psalter tunes are in many cases not suited to the words, or are virtually unsingable for the average worshipper, and yet attempts at revision have had a hard time getting off the ground. In addition to this, many of our church and school leaders are sadly lacking in even an elementary knowledge concerning music as a vehicle of *worship* and *praise*. And as a result, much of our music is not worshipful and praise-worthy. Many of us, I fear, look at music as a "spectator sport", a passive activity. We go to concerts, for example, to hear a "performance", and remark to our children about the skills of the chorus or instrumentalists without having become involved in the music. The next step, I am afraid, is that

we want to be entertained with our music, instead of using it to return praise to God. All we have to do is look at the church music of the day to see that worship and musical entertainment are totally incompatible, and God is left out.

Perhaps before we speak further to our children we should examine our own record cabinets and our own listening habits. Our children's musical tastes and attitudes are developed at a very early age, and a home devoid of good music is one which deprives the children there of a necessary part of their training for future days. We also should look at ourselves as we sing and listen to music in the worship services, for our children certainly look at us.

The Holy Scriptures give us instruction concerning music in our lives. Music, in the first place, gives expression to the vertical relationship we have with our God. It is God's gift to us, and is intended for His glorification. Music also is our response of thanksgiving to God, and our active expression of praise. What makes our beloved Psalms so unique and so precious is that they point this out to us again and again. Music, in the second place, is a means of speaking to one's self messages of comfort, courage, and exhortation.

In James 5 and Psalm 13 we are instructed concerning this. Never is singing or listening to be a mere exercise but we are to be involved with it. And, thirdly, not only is there a man to God and a man to self relationship in music, but music is also a means by which we may speak to one another. Colossians 3:16 and Ephesians 5:18&19 instruct us to speak to one another in Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, making melody to the Lord.

I would like to suggest that there are several things we can do in order to be a better example to our children. First of all, we should not be neutral when confronted with rock music, or with much of the "gospel" music of today. We have to get rid of the notion that we may not condemn rock music, or that we cannot stop those who bring into the church music which is shallow and trite, or music which is unfitting to a divine worship service. We must insist that music in our circles be God-glorifying, music that is singable, and which is fitting to the words which accompany it. We must see to it, too, that music is understandable. Many of the feelings and drives expressed by the rock musicians or the Arminian gospel singers are sinful lusts with which we are all too familiar. That music is easily

understood, therefore. To combat this we should make an effort to instruct our children and ourselves concerning the elements of good music, so that we can better learn how good music can be used in the home, school, and church to its intended purposes.

Two publications come to mind that would be helpful to us as parents and teachers. The first is a book by Dale Topp, *Music in the Christian Community*, published by Eerdmans. The second is a series of cassette tapes and workbooks put out by the National Union of Christian Schools, which teaches some of the elements of music using a programmed approach to listening to the oratorios, choirs, organ and piano. This series would be useful in home or school, and would greatly enhance our understanding of the music we hear and perform today. God grant that we all may strive to make our music an ascending expression of praise of God.

Report on the Bible Curriculum

by Gertrude Hoeksema

For some years prior to 1973, some of the teachers in our schools had complained about the lack of unity and continuity in the Bible curriculum of our schools. Not only did each teacher "do his own thing" without knowing exactly what Biblical instruction his pupils already had, but the Bible program had no