

Music's Moral Power: From Christianity to 2020 and Beyond

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In a recent conversation with Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon regarding the creation of new Holy Songs and whether we should compose "new songs in the old tradition," she mentioned she enjoyed Italian classical music because of its Christian heritage.

In another conversation with her, I inquired about including more popular styles in our request for new songs for the ongoing Holy Song competitions. She cited the need for songs younger Unificationists could identify with, and as such, there should be a willingness to be open to all musical genres.



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As we move toward 2020 and beyond, Mother Moon is emphasizing mentoring the next generations of musicians with regard to having a principled view of their creative gifts.

Her comment about the Christian heritage of music reminded me of Arnold Toynbee's observation that the Christian church was the "chrysalis" out of which our Western society emerged, "the germ of creative power." As Christianity in Europe emerged from its chrysalis, a substantial body of liturgical music was created as an expression of the faith.

Gregorian Chant and the early settings of the Catholic mass by Renaissance composers Jacob Obrecht and Josquin des Prez, and eventually Mozart, Haydn, Beethoven, and Schubert, as well as the sacred motets by Léonin and Pérotin in 13th century France and cantatas and oratorios of Bach and Handel, point to the importance of music in the evolution of Christian ritual and worship. Well-known hymns such as *How Great Thou Art*, *Praise to the Lord*, *Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing*, and *Be Thou My Vision* remain staples for many church choirs and congregations.

Initially having a timorous distrust about music being performed in the church, St. Augustine eventually came to view music as having benefits in the process of developing a devotional frame of mind toward the Almighty, thus aiding one's spiritual growth. Augustine's epiphany concerning music as a facilitator of spiritual enlightenment was a precursor to Emmanuel Kant's assertion that beauty was the archetype of revelation due to its transcendent potentialities.

Divine Principle and Unification Thought teach that when assessing art according to the Platonic ideal of beauty, truth and goodness, we should not overlook the axiological perspective: specifically values *vis-à-vis* morality and ethics when creating art. The concept of the moral power of the arts has been a narrative in virtually every culture and will remain so as we advance beyond 2020 into the age of "settlement."

The Chinese, Greeks and Hebrews of ancient Israel shared an understanding that music had moral power and thus musicians had a certain moral responsibility in the communities in which they lived and worked. Their attitudes about music and musicians comport with the concept of Godism as articulated by the FFWPU founders.

Confucius readily linked the moral condition of a society to the quality of its music. The Greeks intuited that people's attitudes were influenced by the music they listened to and the recreations they engaged in.

The influence of the Greeks on early Christian culture and its art and music is easy to trace. Echoing the ideas of Plato and the relationship between music and society, the 6th century Christian philosopher Boethius stated in his influential treatise, *De institutione musica*, that "music is related to us by nature, and that it can ennoble or debase our character."



The author conducting the Hyo Jeong Youth Orchestra

Martin Luther considered music to be "a sermon in sound." Johann Sebastian Bach, the greatest composer of liturgical music, asserted that the musical technique known as figured bass was the most efficacious way to "praise and glorify God" and to "recreate" one's mind and soul. Johannes Brahms, a good Lutheran, read scripture on a daily basis and considered his relationship with God to be essential in order "to compose something that will uplift and benefit humanity -- something of permanent value." Schiller, Goethe and Kant considered aesthetic beauty to be a gateway to moral and ethical insight due to its transcendental aspects. For these European philosophers, art wasn't merely entertainment but could also be a repository of moral knowledge.

Friedrich Schiller, who as a young man possessed a desire to study theology and pursue a life as a cleric, believed that one's soul state (*Seelenzustand*) was edified through experiencing beauty. For Schiller, "aesthetic education" could be the basis for a moral society that would help establish the freedom that political revolution failed to achieve. Kant, who was greatly influenced by Schiller's ideas about "aesthetic education," understood that the pleasure we derive from beauty was beyond pure reason, yet those experiences were valid and universal -- everyone had them.

In his observations of Schiller's influence on Kant with regard to the nexus of aesthetics and morality, Roger Kimball, publisher of *The New Criterion*, writes:

The feeling of freedom and wholeness that aesthetic experience imparts is thus not merely private but reminds us of our vocation as moral beings. In this context, Kant famously spoke of beauty as being "the symbol of morality" because in aesthetic pleasure "the mind is made conscious of a certain ennoblement and elevation... a faculty for judging the sensible illustration of moral ideas."

We understand that love is realized through action. How we act and relate to our family and fellow citizens becomes the essential trial in our attempts to establish a more humane culture. Our behavior, and that which we create, has consequences. Artists do not create in a vacuum. In short, that's what being a "community" is all about. Being responsible for our actions in relationship to our fellow travelers in our earthly journey *ought* to be our primary consideration. In that context, creating art that fosters goodness in the spirit of Godism remains a significant factor.

Another fundamental narrative in Unification Thought and the Theory of Art is that an "artist should have the attitude of wanting to comfort God, who has been grieving with sorrow throughout human history." The concept of the "suffering heart of God" and humankind's attempt to alleviate that suffering has been a prevailing tenet of Unificationism. As theologian Ronald Goetz points out, "The age-old dogma that God is impassible and immutable, incapable of suffering, is for many no longer tenable. The ancient Theopaschite heresy that God suffers has, in fact, become the new orthodoxy." From the Unificationist perspective, artists ought to be aware of this reality as they go about their work.

Divine Principle instructs that God created human beings and the universe to obtain joy and therefore endowed human beings with the gift of creativity. True Mother is emphasizing the creation of a culture that embodies Godism -- a way of living that comports with the Three Blessings as the foundational modality for artists, scientists, educators, journalists, economists, environmentalists, and politicians. Her support of the Hyo Jeong Youth Orchestra (founded in 2018) and the new cultural academy, concert hall and recording studio being built on the Chung Pyung campus testifies to her commitment to the centrality of art in the settlement era of heaven's providence.

These projects will emphasize character education as well as musical development in the spirit of creating a Godly culture. True Mother's emphasis on attaining and practicing family values as articulated in Divine Principle and Unification Thought remains a central concern. Her instruction to artists has been to understand that before we are artists we are children of our Heavenly Parent and parents to our children. With this fundamental consideration we can then practice our art in the spirit of Godism.

Furthermore, we will likely see more cross-cultural artistic expressions as we move beyond 2020. In 1983, at the Sixth World Media Conference in Cartagena, Colombia, Rev. Sun Myung Moon instructed several musicians (I among them) to study and master the classical tradition and then "combine the Abel-type aspects of other traditions -- rock, jazz, folk -- with the classical tradition." In his estimation this juxtaposition of genres would be "new age music."

Taking his cue, I have created music that merges Asian and Western styles, classical and hip-hop styles and Western classical and Middle Eastern styles. I've also created music that attempts to synthesize classical ballet and martial arts utilizing Western and Asian musical modalities.

In the current providence in the United States, it's interesting to witness how American Gospel music has taken center stage at the various "Peace Starts With Me" events with the emphasis on creating God-centered families. Moreover, young people have been attracted to the "praise-and-worship" music of Christian ministries such as Hillsong, Mosaic and The Rock. Citing the importance of music in his book, *The Purpose Driven Church*, pastor Rick Warren states that if he could go back and do one thing differently when he launched his Saddleback ministry he would have started by creating a first-class music ministry.

In the context of community worship, it will be important to educate young Unificationist musicians according to a principled view of worship music, no matter the style or genre. In the three Hyo Jeong Holy Song competitions that have taken place since 2017, nearly all 330 submissions have been in popular styles -- rock, rap, praise-and-worship, Gospel, folk -- but with lyrics that express the ideals of Unificationism.

Many artists are idealists at heart and wish to use their talent for a "higher purpose." Any attempt to determine just what the *highest* purpose in life might be requires that we be open to the idea of a higher authority. If there exists a chief author and propagator of truth that exists beyond the earthly realm ("beyond the starry canopy" as Schiller and Beethoven put it), we would do well to seek out and know that deity. Knowing the causal dimension of life and creativity can then be a way to achieve the true essence of ourselves as children of our Heavenly Parent and principled artists. Moreover, if artists can come to know the heart of the Creator they will be better suited to create art and music that embodies the attributes that our Heavenly Parent finds appealing -- and good.

Musicologist Richard Taruskin notes: "As long as some music somewhere is considered *tref* [not kosher], we have not forgotten that music is a powerful form of persuasion that does work in the world, as serious art that possesses ethical force and exacts ethical responsibilities."

As co-creators with our Heavenly Parent in creating an ideal culture it is our portion of responsibility to use our talents and abilities to assist in that process. Regardless of the style or genre of music it is the motivation and intent behind our creative endeavors that ought to be central to the creative process. As such, the moral and ethical power of music will remain an important consideration in the age of settlement.

For more information about the award-winning songs of the CIG Holy Song contests visit www.hyojeongculture.org or email: cighollysongcompetition@gmail.com.

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