



### **Rock music from a Christian point of view**

The Bible tells us that when King Saul of Israel became violent, his courtiers called the youth David to the palace, in order that the latter play the lyre for the king. The tender and melodious sounds calmed Saul down, and he once again became a normal person. Thus even in ancient times people knew that tender melodies have a beneficial effect on a person's mood. Modern rock music, especially its "heavy metal" version, have an opposite effect on its listeners: it throws even previously calm people into a state of violence, agitation and anger.

Rock music appeared about forty years ago. Over the course of this time, the music evolved more and more towards viciousness. In our days involvement with rock music has become practically universal, and includes hundreds of millions of adherents. For many young people rock music and its more violent "heavy metal" version have become a style of life, in which depravity, use of narcotics, violence and nihilism are encouraged.

#### ***The power of music***

Music is one of the most inspired forms of art. With its rhythm, melody, harmony of tones, dynamics, variety of sounds, color and nuances, music produces an endless scale of feelings and moods. Its power lies in the fact that it bypasses the mind and penetrates directly into the soul and the subconscious, thus creating a person's mood. In accordance with its content, music can raise the most elevated and noble feelings in a person, can, for example, promote a prayerful mood, or, on the contrary, can raise the most sinful and darkest desires.

From olden times a melodic musical accompaniment formed part of prayer and service to God. King David, who lived a thousand years before Christ, and who was endowed by God with an extraordinary poetic talent, composed inspired prayers-psalms, accompanying them with playing on the lyre. After he became king of Israel, David introduced the singing of psalms into the services, and established positions for regular singers and musicians at the temple of Jerusalem. Enjoying huge success, the psalms of David have become an inherent part of both Old Testament and subsequent Christian services.

The Scriptures have always encouraged calm singing, which gives rise to a prayerful mood. The philosopher Plato believed that God instilled into man a disposition to create and unite sounds not accidentally or randomly, but in imitation of the harmony found in the spiritual world. Aristotle noted the importance of music in the education of youth. In his "Politics" he wrote that "the influence of music is so great that its various forms and genres can be classified in accordance with their influence on a person's character."

The 6th century musicologist M. Bothius wrote: "Music is part of our being. It can either ennoble or act destructively on our behavior." And W. Tozer remarked: "If you love and listen to improper music, your inner life will wither away and die."

Contemporary medical experiments have established the positive influence of classical music on the process of healing. The New York doctor Matthew Lee says: "We have the possibility to confirm the beneficial influence of music in eliminating complications during illness, in strengthening the patients' health and in curtailing the period of their hospital stay." And Deforia Lane, a music therapist from Cleveland, says: "Both at home and in the hospital music is a powerful resource for curing the young and the old." Doctor Howard Hansen commented in the American Journal of Psychiatry: "Music is an art that is particularly hard to define, possessing countless emotional connotations. It consists of many elements, and in accordance with their proportions it can either calm or energize, ennoble or vulgarize, incline towards meditation or towards violence. Music is a powerful force both for good and for evil."

Music is not only a means of amusement, but to a certain degree it is a form of "preaching." It invariably expresses the world view of the composer and can be a powerful weapon both for good and for evil. By inspiring good-natured composers, through their music God influences the spiritual condition of the listeners. But Satan attempts to do the same thing through people who have turned away from God. Although every person has the right to a personal taste in music, nevertheless one must not lose one's common sense in objectively evaluating musical compositions. A Christian must be able to differentiate between goodness and vice in music, as well as in the movies, arts, literature. In all these artistic fields of endeavor there is often a mixture of good and evil, and one's Christian perspicacity should help one determine where to draw the line. In this case one's religious feeling, guided by the Holy Scriptures, is a Christian's best guide.

### *The narcotic power of rock music*

Contemporary composers of rock music agree that their music has great power. Thus, for example, Frank Zappa wrote in "Life" magazine: "The means by which music influences a person's feelings are varied and not easily defined... The loud sounds and bright changing lights of today's music are a powerful means of indoctrination." Slash, the leading guitar player in the group "Guns N'Roses," declares: "I see that this is very serious: my music influences the lives of people whom I do not know at all... It is truly terrible that I possess such great power."

Hal Ziegler, one of the first disseminators of rock music, wrote way back in the '50's: "I came to realize that this music easily infiltrates young people because its rhythm coincides with the rhythms within their bodies. I knew that no one and nothing would be able to knock this music out of them... They will carry it within themselves their entire life."

Parents must not disregard the great influence of rock music on their children. A person's system of values is formed during the teen years. Psychologists who specialize in studying the influence of music on people have repeatedly expressed their fears concerning rock music. The observations of the prominent psychologist John Kappas have shown that people are "extremely receptive to all that

is said in a song. And by means of satiating their feelings, music can arouse in its listeners either agitation or melancholy. Each time that the consciousness is overloaded, people will be receptive to everything that is being impressed upon them at that time, because they have lost their self-defense. People leave concerts in a highly receptive frame of mind. Music tends to weaken reasoning and create moods, at which point external impressions are easily assimilated.”

The influence of some forms of rock music is so serious that the laws of many states in America require that the covers of harmful musical albums include a rating of their content. Organizations such as the National Teachers’ Association, the American Academy of Pediatricians and the U.S. Surgeon General have expressed concern over the negative influence of many contemporary songs. Thus, while discussing the passing of laws on this matter, the following facts were established:

- (1) From the very inception of the movie and song industry, melodies, words and pictures have had a powerful influence on society and on individuals - both in a positive and in a negative direction.
- (2) By means of suggestion, some forms of music and videos encourage the inculcation of unworthy feelings in people, which give rise to violent desires and actions, and justify and encourage violence, vandalism, rape, murder, use of drugs, suicide, human sacrifice, the degradation of women, children and the human race, bestiality, sadism, masochism and other forms of depravity.
- (3) Similar amoral material is primarily directed at our youth in its age of greatest receptiveness.
- (4) This material is widely accessible, with a total disregard for age limits, as long as money is available.

Besides psychologists, doctors are also concerned with the negative influence of rock music on young people. An investigation conducted by the “Journal of the Medical Association” concluded that “from a tender age young people must begin to develop their standards of behavior and must correlate them with adult standards. In this context rock music - a powerful stimulus in the life of young people - has gone off in a dubious direction. The words of some of the songs, full of amoral and violent content, enter into open conflict with the instructions of the older generation concerning abstention and reasonable behavior... Doctors must take into consideration the significance of music in the life of young people, and regard the latter’s musical tastes as indicators of their emotional and mental health.”

In the book “The Closing of the American Mind,” the famous sociologist Allan Bloom expressed concern over the influence of rock music on children, teenagers and students. Doctor Bloom asserts that the young people who have an immature understanding of sex will not be able to develop normally. On the contrary, rock music bombards them with preachment of adult sex and even sexual deviations, pushing them towards sexually deviant behavior. And this they learn at a time when their understanding of love, responsibility and mutual care is still at a stage of development. In Bloom’s opinion, rock music in American culture undermines parental authority in the moral education of children.

A certain school specialist, with large experience in working with difficult teenagers, asserts: “During my many years of counseling young people, I have constantly run against the problem of their being influenced by rock music. I have often observed in the actions of young people a reflection of the amoral behavior of their pop idols. The young people manifested their complete dedication to these idols in the use of their specific expressions, in writing the names of their songs on books, in decorating their bedrooms with their idols’ photographs, in listening to their loud music while driving in cars, and in copying the clothes they wear.”

Al Menconi, a school consultant and a specialist in rock music, declares: “It is very sad that the majority of Christian youngsters with whom I am in contact are dedicated more to their music than to Christ. Rock music is the language of the modern generation. I already thought I understood the

powerful influence of the surrounding environment, but I became even more convinced of this influence in the case of my 12-year-old daughter Anna. The pressure upon her to imitate the way of life of rock groups such as Bon Jovi, Guns N' Roses, and singers such as Bobby Brown, Madonna, George Michael - was great... Teenagers like my daughter identify with their idols from the world of rock. These idols determine their world view and their system of values. And this system of values, in turn, determines their human essence. Today's youth does not simply listen to this music, it lives this music. Rock music becomes the entire content of their life."

It is quite edifying to become acquainted with the documentary data collected in a series of interviews by MTV "Rockumentary" with leading rock groups. Here one can clearly witness the self-destructive way of life of leading rock musicians - substance abuse, sexual license, alcoholism, nihilism, hedonism, rebellion, anarchy and involvement with the occult. Thus, for example, in August of 1991 the musicians of the rock group "Motley Crue" confessed their total dissipation, which had become routine to them. Their life had degraded to such a bestial level that they had finally come to a realization that they had only two choices: either to radically change their way of life, or prepare for death... Unfortunately, not everyone by far understands this, and the rock idols' self-destructive way of life continues to infect young people.

No matter how one looks upon rock music in general, one cannot deny the fact of its dominant influence on the world view and behavior of our youth. In the following chapters we will proffer factual proof of the negative influence of rock music on the feelings, behavior and the religious mood of young people.

### *Rock music and rage*

On a par with external aggression, the destructive mood of rock music can turn even against the listener of such music. Some rock composers preach suicide - sometimes hinting at it and other times quite directly. Thus, Ozzy Osbourne says in his song "Suicide Solution": "Suicide is the sole path to liberation." The song "Suicide's Alternative" contains the following lyrics: "I am tired of life - it is unbearable. I am depressed and tired - and nobody cares. I hate myself - I don't want to live. I am tired of life - it is time to die. Suicide is the solution." "Sacrifice your life and commit suicide. If you do this in the name of Satan - you will become immortal just like him!" - such are the words found in one of the songs dedicated to Lucifer by a "heavy metal" group.

Research conducted by psychologist Dr. Hannelore Wass, an eminent specialist in the field of dying, shows that although only 17% of young people listen to music with an openly destructive content, the number of teenage criminals who listen to such music has reached 40%. Moreover, half of those who were surveyed agreed to the possibility that such songs may truly encourage unstable or depressed youths to commit suicide. As a result of the survey, Dr. Wass concluded that it is extremely important for parents to monitor the music to which their children are listening, and to pay attention to any abnormal symptoms which the latter may exhibit.

This kind of research forced the National Education Association to conclude that the annual rate of almost 6,000 teen suicides is due to the influence of nihilistic and fatalistic rock music. Dr. Morton Kurlan, a well-known psychiatrist from Palm Springs, California, one of whose patients committed suicide after listening to Ozzy Osbourne, declared: "Sado-masochism, blood and violence undoubtedly bring in great profits to the producers of rock music CDs and videos. However, these productions are capable of pushing an emotionally unstable teenager over the edge." It is a known fact that millions of young people nowadays suffer from internal imbalance.

It should also be noted that the alienated, nihilistic and destructive content of rock music reflects the

actual life of rock stars. Authors Schwarz and Empey assert: "From conversations with several musicians who are involved with Satanism, the following picture emerges quite clearly: all those who prefer Satanism to Christianity, thirst for an immediate satisfaction of all their desires - wealth, power and life without control. Many of the rock stars who were surveyed dream of living in a fairy-tale world of fabulous wealth, and are ready to die young in exchange for having their desires satisfied." The truth of this statement becomes self-evident when one becomes acquainted with the obituaries of these rock stars. Many of them died prematurely from alcoholism and drug use, or from accidents resulting from the above.

The actual names of some of the "heavy metal" groups, known also as "metal of death," speak of the glorification of death and destruction. Here are some examples: "Rapturous Death," "Cannibal," "Destruction," "Malice," "Murder," "Rotting Corpse," "Violence," etc.

The journal of the American Medical Association writes: "The destructive and sexual content of rock videos upsets many people. One of our researches showed that in the 200 videos that were reviewed, violence predominated in 57% of them, and sexual scenes in 75%." The same article offered examples of how beastly crimes were committed as a result of a fascination with "heavy metal" music. Moreover, sometimes the crimes were committed directly after viewing these rock videos.

A psychiatrist from Tennessee declared at a Senate Committee hearing that "heavy metal" rock music is poison to fledgling teenagers and also to those who are involved in the use of drugs and stimulants. "This music is like adding gas to a flame burning with hate and anger," - said Dr. Paul King, a professor of child psychiatry. According to Dr. King, 80% of his young patients had listened daily to "heavy metal" rock.

For a Christian there is no doubt that the blasphemy, lechery and violence preached by modern rock music go against the Divine plan for the salvation of mankind.

### ***Rock music and drugs***

Aside from sex and violence, rock music encourages the use of drugs. Back in 1969, "Time" magazine commented that "rock music composers use drugs frequently and openly, and their songs are filled with hints about drugs. Facts confirm that, as a rule, rock music stimulates the use of drugs, indiscriminate sexual relationships and violent behavior. However, despite the fact that the use of drugs is such an extreme problem in modern society, rock music continues to encourage such use. Thus, rock music is greatly to blame for the current widespread use of drugs.

### ***Rock music and the occult***

It is evident from some of the names and phrases of rock music that it has some elements in common with religion. For example, rock music recognizes a higher power that rules the world. However, it soon becomes evident that this power which is glorified is not the Supreme Being of Goodness we call God, nor is it the blind "fate" of pagan poets, but something or someone dark and cruel.

On the periphery of mainstream rock music there are groups with a heavily anti-Christian slant. The cacophony of some of the heavy metal groups is permeated with motifs of Satanism and the occult. Those who listen in fascination to these icy sounds are pulled down straight into hell. Some of the

groups use rituals from the black mass. For example, during a concert of the group "Gwart," one of its members cut off the image of a human head from an effigy onstage, and then made motions of sprinkling the listeners with blood. Afterwards members of the orchestra brought animals onstage and tore out their intestines.

Way back in 1966 John Lennon boasted that Christianity would disappear and that the "Beatles" would become more popular than Christ. "Rock music was always diabolic," - declared David Bovey, a leading rock star. According to the January 1991 issue of the magazine "Spin," the singer Danzing extols occult rituals and spiritual anarchy in his compositions.

It is well-known that from its very beginning rock music was revolutionary and opposed to the authority of parents and society. Now some of the new rock groups have openly begun to encourage a repudiation of traditional Christian principles. Singer David Crosby from the group "Crosby, Stills & Nash" declares: "I have decided that the most important thing is to abduct their children. I am not talking about physical abduction. What I have in mind is to change their scale of values, which will take them out of the world in which their parents are living." And Paul Kanter admits: "The goal of our music is to increase the rift between generations, to disassociate children from their parents." John Cougar states quite openly: "I use offensive language and curses in my songs because they are unacceptable to society. I hate everything that is considered to be necessary or customary. This is why I reject schools, governments and churches."

There is a strong influence of the occult in rock music. Composer Cyril Scot studied theosophy with a view towards using the occult in his music. In his own words, both books which he has written were inspired by the same spirit that had formerly spoken through Madame Blavatsky (foundress of the theosophic movement in pre-revolutionary Russia). Scot avers that the spirit which had inspired him was particularly interested in the evolution of Western music... He thought it worthwhile for students of all forms of the occult to appreciate music as a power which can foster the success of the occult. Scot believes that people who are initiated into the mysteries of spiritism are faced with a great task in the realm of the development of music. And what is that task? To use music as an occult medium through which one can create certain psychological conditions among its listeners, summon psychic capabilities for establishing contact with the world of the spirits. According to Scot, "music should be directed towards establishing closer contact between people and the spirits... We are entering the era of the New Age. We are primarily attempting, by means of inspired music, to spread the spirit of the occult, in order to unite everyone into a single brotherhood and thus revive the spiritual vibrations of our planet." Some of the New Age songs are filled with spiritism and are designed to create an occult atmosphere. Composers of New Age music assert that their melodies encourage meditation (in the Hindu sense), develop psychic powers and transform consciousness, lead their listeners towards astral travel and produce personality changes.

Many successful rock music stars not only dabbled with the occult, but also with Satanism. Trying to describe his personal "inspired" processes, John Lennon says: "This state is similar to possession, something like psychosis or the mediumistic state." Mark Storace, a singer in a heavy metal rock group, said in his interview with the "Circus" magazine: "It is impossible to explain it precisely, but one can only say that it is similar to a mysterious energy, similar to the mediumistic state." Little Richard experienced similar states and indicated Satan as his inspiration: "I was being guided and ordered by a different power. That was the power of darkness, in which many people do not even believe. That power was Satan himself." Jim Morrison called the spirits that possessed him from time to time - "the lords."

The inventiveness of the popular rock star Joni Mitchell came to her from a guiding spirit by the name of Art. She was so dependent upon this spirit that when he summoned her, no power could keep her away from him. The frequent influences of such spirits upon rock composers show that these are not random cases. Fayne Pridgon, former girlfriend of superstar Hendrix, said that "he

always said that the devil possessed him, so that he had no control over himself... Songs always poured out from him on their own.”

Ozzy Osbourne once remarked: “I never knew in advance what to compose. I prefer to do what the spirits inspire me to do.” As the lead singer at a concert of the group “Black Sabbath” in Canada, Osbourne solemnly called upon Satan. This group always calls upon Lucifer in its concerts, calling him “the lord of this world.”

### *Conclusion*

Thus, from ancient times music, as a rule, expressed the loftiest and noblest feelings of the composer. It brought peace, joy and often a prayerful state to the listener. Music, like poetry, always reflected something that was “not of this world,” a creative gift. We read in the book of Revelation that the angels and the saints in heaven glorify God with their singing. But does music exist in hell? If it does, then it probably is similar to contemporary heavy metal rock. One comes to such a conclusion upon seeing the violent feelings of rage which this music produces. It raises from the depths of its listeners’ souls all their darkest and most sinful attributes. The following words of Revelation come to mind: “*Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! For the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time*” (Rev. 12:12).

A spiritually perceptive person cannot but see the influence of the devil upon contemporary music, upon the content of television programs and movies, upon the attraction to Oriental mysticism, transcendental meditation, yoga; upon the ever-increasing popularity of spiritism, astrology and extrasensual forms of healing. The tentacles of the prince of darkness penetrate deeper and deeper into the life of contemporary mankind. “*By the fruits of their labor shall ye know them!*”

Children and teenagers are the primary consumers of modern violent music. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) concluded that the majority of contemporary rock compositions threatens the psychological well-being of children and teenagers to a greater degree than the disease of polio several years ago. AAP representatives express the opinion that a continuous listening to heavy metal music can spiritually disfigure a young person and leave indelible scars in his psyche. Even worse is the fact that rock and heavy metal music have also become the conveyors of anti-Christian ideas.

The problem of contemporary violent music uncovers even deeper problems of modern society. To some degree rock music attracts young people because they have not found higher guidance in life and do not believe in the ideals of their parents’ generation. Through this music they express their protest against their parents, in whom they are disappointed.

From this point of view parents have to seriously consider how sincere is their belief in God and how well their family life accords with Christian teaching. Do all family members regularly pray to God, go to church, take communion, keep the fasts and church feasts, read the Gospel together, talk about God? If that is not so, then invariably a spiritual vacuum is formed within the children, which they will fill with anything that comes their way.

Of course, the influence of the surrounding environment is also quite strong, and parents often find themselves helpless to fight against it. However, they must not despair. They must openly talk with their children about current problems and open their eyes to what threatens them. The main thing is to pray to God, that He may lead them to salvation by whatever means He chooses, for “*that which is impossible for men is possible for God.*”