

# A Dialogue on Music between Eugene Prewitt and David Asscherick

\*This dialogue was conducted between January 2, 2013 and August 29, 2013. It was initiated by Eugene following David and Jeffrey Rosario's *Mere Adventism: Biblical Living in a Complex World* seminar at the 2012/2013 GYC annual convention in Seattle, Washington. The decision to make the conversation available was a mutual decision between Eugene and David, and our hope is that this conversation will prove a blessing to those who waded through it. It was agreed by both Eugene and David that the dialogue needed some kind of closure, so summary statements by each were written and can be found at the end of the document.

## **Eugene's original email, January 3, 2013.**

Dear David,

I hope this letter finds you well and rejoicing in the Lord. I am writing you from the sunny resort of Lake Ekala Nurra in Australia. I am enjoying one of those jet-lag induced treasures...a quiet morning far longer than average when one can get a lot of work done before others rise from their slumber.

This morning I studied for some time an important topic for my own soul. You and I live in an age of apostasy. And so I was studying about how to help an erring brother. (And, by extension, how to get help myself when I am the erring brother.)

While conducting that study, I came across a surprising statement.

"Above all things," the apostle writes, "have fervent charity among yourselves" (1 Peter 4:8). . . . Go to your brother and tell him his fault between him and you alone. Do not excuse yourself from this, saying, 'There is no personal grievance between the one who is accused and myself.' The rules given by Christ are so definite, so explicit, that this excuse is not valid. {HP 292.2}

Whether or not the grievance is between you and the one accused, the injunction of Christ is the same. Your brother needs help. Tell him, not someone else, that reports are being circulated about him. Give him opportunity to explain. It is possible that the reports are false and that the difficulties may be adjusted by some simple explanation. This treatment is due every one supposed to be in error. {HP 292.3}

Now I have, David, used this very excuse repeatedly. I have heard rumors about public figures (as yourself) and their errors and have disengaged from the whole thing. Let everyman bear his own burden. I have enough issues to deal with in my personal interactions with people I really know personally.

And I still think that this is a valid approach to most distant mistakes. The Christian life is not a mass of obligatory confrontations of strangers regarding reports.

But regarding persons that we know and see and regarding whom we have some potential influence, this passive stance is the opposite of “fervent charity.” As Ellen White says, it is an invalid excuse.

I recall that you do not like long letters, so let me get to my point.

Reports are being circulated regarding you in regard to your view of the music issue. And I have, to my discredit, had a hand in circulating one such report to several persons without even having given you the privilege of explaining yourself.

Let me be particular. While at GYC a friend of mine, Christen Miller, submitted a question to you during a Q and A session. Her husband recorded your answer and played it for me on our way to their home. (My wife and I stayed with them during the GYC as they live 20 miles from the convention center.)

From that answer I gathered the following ideas: That you believe music (as opposed to lyrical content) to be amoral except by subjective association. That you believe this position is substantiated by the silence of scripture on various genres of music. That you do not acknowledge Ellen White’s authority regarding music if it substantiates a standard more particular than that expressed in Scripture. (You never said this. This is what I understood by “I must insist on Sola Scriptura.”)

I discussed these three ideas (and my critique of them) with Christen and her husband John and with Don Machintosh (when he missed his flight on Sunday and thus had some sit-down time with me at SEA- TAC).

Christen and John doubted that my third idea was an accurate understanding of your intent. They affirmed that you have quoted Ellen White extensively even in the seminar. And so, if I have erred in my understanding of your answer, I eagerly accept the idea that you intended nothing more by Sola Scriptura than that you reject as an unpersuasive the claims of experience, science, and philosophy that are sometimes used to make points regarding music.

Based on what I read this morning, in Christian charity, I owe you the right to make explanation. And I am writing this letter to apologize for excusing myself from contacting you. Secondly, I am writing to give you the chance to explain. And thirdly, I am writing to express what I think are sound and sensible views regarding music.

Finally, I will close with brief and sad history that transpired long before either your or I were born. But it involves us. And so I will share it.

I am sorry. I have not taken the personal interest in helping you (or in helping several other brethren for that matter) that I should have. Please pardon me for this neglect. This letter is a first installment in trying to make amends for this.

On the second point, please feel free to explain if, in any particular, I have misapprehended your view and public teaching on this point. Other than rumors (from ARISE graduates), all I have ever heard on this was that brief recording from the Q and A session. I am willing to be well informed.

On the third point, it seems irrational to me to lay on God the burden of having written to rebuke dangers and errors in the Bible that would not even exist until centuries after the invention of printing. The Bible enforces respect for last-day prophecy and so Sola Scriptura sufficiently made provision for exposing end-time delusions with end-time revelation.

(On the other hand, Daniel 3 would be the only chapter in the Bible to use the word “genre” in an [imaginary] modern translation. And it would say repeatedly that all Babylonian genres of music were used by Babylon to encourage image worship. That is a pretty well-placed hint that music genres and worship might become end-time issues.)

What does Ellen White say on music? What did God show her regarding future dangers in particular? I have attached a compilation I have done on this topic (read it and you will find interesting statements regarding the timing of music lessons for children that might be fascinating to you and your dear wife.)

In there I think the following points are well substantiated:

1. Demons have a carnival in worship services where certain types of music are played.
  - a. The “din” and the “noise” work to confuse the thinking processes
  - b. The feeling of excitement is confounded for the moving of the Spirit of God.
  - c. God’s Spirit never operates in such a bedlam-like performance
2. Just before the close of human probation our Adventist camp-meetings would be tragically scourged with music similar to the genre that accompanied the Holy-Flesh fanaticism.
3. Popular music is not sacred and sacred music is not popular.
4. Youth do not prefer sacred music; they rather have a taste for the popular music “of the day.”
5. Satan knows how to use music to excite certain organs of the body.
  - a. The result of those organs being excited is a loss of appetite for real spiritual food.
  - b. Many youth are lost as a result.

6. Music is a favorite idol of Sabbath keeping youth. Even wholesome music may be so. But tunes “fit for the dancehall” particularly sadden and repel holy angels.

Based on what is written, any candid reader and believer of the revelations given to Ellen White would be compelled to recognize that music, in its sound qualities, has strong moral influence. Bad music may impart excitement, but not moral strength. And it serves to confuse issues and to dampen contrite devotion.

And those are the points I make when teaching about music. They are inspired, solid, authoritative. Unlike reports of rat aggression or deformed snowflakes, these things are based on a thus-saith-the- Spirit. They were given at the right age and have proved themselves to be infused with foreknowledge of events in every secular way unlikely to have been predicted by their author when she wrote them.

Would you agree?

And now to the fourth and final point. I will probably develop the following into an article and send it to twenty persons or so. But you will get it first and shorter. And I think, perhaps, that it will be more helpful to you that way.

If you had asked some average on-fire then-contemporary Adventist, “who were the best preachers and teachers in Adventism in the 1880’s?” the answer would likely look like this:

Ballenger

Jones

Waggoner

Haskell

Kellogg

Butler

Conradi

Smith

Loughborough

Canright

These ten men would have been the invitees to annual GYC meetings in the 1880’s and they would have taken most of the preliminary sessions. Each of them did a great deal of work to promote the SDA movement. And most of them were brilliant men. But I only expect to see four of these men in heaven. And of those four, two of them barely qualified as overcomers. Both Smith and Butler were saved from near-apostasy by long

and hard personal work by Ellen White. Butler, twice GC president, was converted to God after he had resigned the presidency the second time.

Four out of ten. Those are bad odds. And they are better than the odds in the 1840's. Forty years ago, in the 1970's, the list would have included Brinsmead. He distinguished himself as an opponent to the locally popular Desmond Ford. Brinsmead had a large following both in Australia and in the USA who looked to him as the champion of truth and righteousness. He lives today, a skeptical owner of a night club near Avondale.

David, you are a prominent teacher today. To a far lesser extent, I am also. And when I look at Adventist history, I tremble for myself and for other public figures like yourself. I am amazed at how God spared Miller and Fitch by death. I am encouraged at how Himes came to love the third angel's message while dying of throat cancer in his 80's. I marvel at the success God had in bringing back Daniels from waywardness.

But I find no consolation in the stubborn slide that left mighty men outside the fold. Be careful, David, for your own sake. Love the testimonies. Treasure correction. Know what God did to save Kellogg and be sure that if God did the same to save you, God would be successful.

I write these things for myself as well as for you. I am not out of the woods. Psalm 121 is fast becoming one of the most valuable gems in my satchel. I memorized this part on the plane ride here to Australia:

3 He will not allow your foot to be moved; He who keeps you will not slumber. 4 Behold, He who keeps Israel Shall neither slumber nor sleep. 5 The LORD is your keeper; ... 7 The LORD shall preserve you from all evil; He shall preserve your soul. 8 The LORD shall preserve your going out and your coming in From this time forth, and even forevermore.

I appreciate your work and zeal. May God succeed in saving us both from our fooleries and appetites.

I appeal to you on the issue of music to preach in harmony with what has been revealed. And in regard to your personal spirituality, I bid us both to take heed lest either of us fall.

Be faithful,

Eugene Prewitt

## **David's initial responses, January 4 and 5, 2013**

### **Response #1, January 4, 2013**

Eugene

A 33-paragraph letter? In response to a 2-3 minute on-the-spot answer? On music?

Forgive me, a bit surprised.

Would be more than happy to discuss the music issue (or any other issue). My phone number is XXX-XXX-XXXX.

Give me a call anytime before Jan 22, as I leave for an extended overseas trip. Tomorrow, for example, is great.

Or send me your number, and I'll happily call you. Happy New Year!

Courage in Christ,  
David Asscherick

## **Response #2, January 5, 2013**

Eugene,

Like yourself, I find myself with a morning which lends itself to some writing.

Firstly, I appreciate your concern and fraternal overtures. Thank you for caring enough to write. I am humbled and honored by it. Wonderfully, your stated hope is the case: your letter does find me rejoicing in Jesus! I trust the same is true of you.

Regarding rumors, I am perfectly indifferent. My position on the subject of music has been stated repeatedly and, I'd like to think, clearly over the last several years. That my position is regarded by some as scandalous has not been lost on me. This is hardly a surprise since in certain quarters my positions on several things have been regarded thusly. For example, I count you among my warmest detractors. I would very much love to be wrong about this identification.

My aim is not now, and never has been, popularity. My goal is truth and an authentic relationship with Him who is the Truth. That I may be, as you suggest, "popular" is rather beside the point, since it is not something I've either desired or sought. It is what it is. My influence, whether small or great, is God's business, and I thank Him for it, whatever its measure.

So, music.

I'll begin by addressing your specific concerns, then close with an itemized and representative summary of my present understanding.

1. The word “amoral” is a kind of buzzword in these discussions, and, so far as I can recall, I’ve never used it with regards to music. Better to stick with what I’ve actually said, rather than inserting words that carry additional and unwelcome baggage.
2. In thinking back on my answer (I don’t have a transcript or recording of it available to me here, so I’m going on memory), I think I could’ve stated one of my points more precisely, and have done so in the past. While what I did say is consistent with my position, I would’ve preferred to have articulated this particular point more like this: “Scripture has nothing to say in terms of endorsing one particular style or genre of music above another as somehow sacred, holy or preferred. Music is wonderfully varied, from bluegrass to classical to folk to Celtic and much more beyond. Moreover, we have no idea, for example, what David’s music, composed in Palestine’s ancient pastures, sounded like. God could’ve prescribed a particular style or type of music had he so desired—music with certain a pace, choice of instruments, lyrical content, and/or rhythmic profile, for example—but he didn’t. I believe at least part of the reason for this is seen in the natural world, whether with birds, insects, fish, plants or people: God seems to value variety, and value it highly.”
3. Christen and John are correct, quite so, in their doubt regarding your understanding of my position on sola Scriptura. Ellen White’s additional and inspired commentary is never, so far as I am aware, out of harmony with the principles of Scripture. Her applications are often appropriately contemporary (bicycles, tobacco, saloons, etc.), but the principles she communicates do not run against the grain of sola Scriptura. That you would imagine my position to be otherwise is surprising.
4. You regard Daniel 3 as possessing “a pretty well-placed hint” regarding music. You may be correct. Who can say? Perhaps the “furnace” is also a hint. Could be, I suppose. Or perhaps the furnace, the music, the gold, etc. are simply what they appear to be: actual elements in the historical account. It is, of course, possible that music will make an eschatologically significant appearance with regards to the mark of the beast and the final crisis; I am in no way hostile or averse to this possibility. However, it cannot, I don’t think, be inferred conclusively from Daniel 3. I gather that you agree with this, since you refer to it rather modestly as a “hint.” That John in Revelation 13 and 14 does not pick up on this hint, when clearly he has Daniel 3 in mind, is worth noting. Tellingly, neither furnaces nor gold (among other historical elements) are mentioned either.
5. I heartily support and endorse Ellen White’s counsel regarding music. Too, I appreciate your “appeal” to me “to preach in harmony with what has been revealed.” Of course this was (and is) my desire rather prior to your appeal. I would be interested to know, from your perspective, where the points of conflict are between my stated position and “what has been revealed.” In your 33 paragraphs I find no such conflict. Not on my first, second, or third reading thereof. Too, I read your music compilation. To repeat, I am deeply resonant with Ellen White’s passion and counsel regarding music. Was I expected to see a glaring conflict between my own position and hers?

6. Your fourth and final point regarding popular speakers is much appreciated, and I shall read it again. Out of curiosity, have you sent a similar warning to Doug, Mark, Shawn, John, Ty, James, Dwight, Ivor, Stephen, and others? I am thankful for your words of counsel and for the historical context. I'm not sure what to say, really. My alleged popularity is, again, not something I've either desired or sought. It has just happened. I would like to believe that God has had something to do with it, since I've dedicated my life to preaching the gospel, winning sinners, and discipling believers. Should I flee from the influence God has vouchsafed me? It occurs to me that I should use it, as best as I can, for the upbuilding of His kingdom. Am I perfect in this regard? No, I cannot say that I am. But I have confidence that God is, in His providential care, dispensing only that which I can consistently responsibly handle. He knows that I'd be perfectly happy to be pastoring a little country church on New Zealand's South Island, but, as yet, He's not freed me to do that. Should I be aware of the dangers of my apparent popularity? Certainly! This is what I hear you saying. And, believe me, I genuinely appreciate your concern and I hear you loud and clear. Fortunately, I am surrounded by a team of godly ministers and preachers (James, Ty, Jeffrey, Nathan, and others) who know me and love me enough to, how shall we say, keep me humble. In keeping with my own Christian and brotherly responsibility, I return the favor. I wouldn't want it any other way. I am now, and always have been, a team player. There is in me no desire to be "the man" and to lead out in my own mega-ministry. God knows, I've had opportunities and invitations to do so, but it just doesn't resonate with me. So, again, thank you, sincerely, for your concern in this regard; it is absolutely appreciated.

I'll briefly state my present take on music. This should not be regarded as permanent, as I reserve the right to change my mind on this (and all other!) non-essential issue(s).

- A. The music question should be divided into (at least) two major sub-headings: 1)music in church and 2)music in one's personal experience, whether for worship, relaxation, or entertainment. These are two related but different issues. The first is primarily an ecclesiastical issue that should be addressed utilizing the principles of Romans 14 (and other passages) regarding "doubtful disputations" in a church setting. The second is more of a pure music issue. (For clarification, the question that was asked and answered, and which prompted your email, was not in regards to music in a church setting.) Not all "personal" music need be appropriate for church, any more than all clothes a Christian can conscientiously wear need be appropriate for church.
- B. The primary means by which music's correspondence or conflict with the Christian worldview is communicated is lyrical content. Note: primary, not only. Some music is just plain bad music, a reality I certainly recognize; however, it is not at all easy to communicate just how I know this to be the case. I defer to musicologists like Lilianne Doukhan, an Adventist, on the precise details of this.

- C. I find no definitely clear prescriptions (or proscriptions for that matter) in Scripture or Ellen White regarding rhythm, syncopation, pace, harmony, or style. Neither treats the subject of music in a systematic way.
- D. Music, perhaps like food, is an important, though non-“landmark,” issue that, by its essential nature, demands some elasticity in understanding and application. Culture, rearing, preference, disposition, context, and many other things have a bearing on a person’s music choices and likes. Note: from inspiration we know more specifics about right food choices—far more, I would say—than about music choices, and yet even here there is the need for elasticity. Do you prefer Indian or Italian? Perhaps Mexican is your thing? Or you’re a salad guy? None of these? How about Thai? Or Ethiopian? The list is long (and delicious!); the point is made.
- E. Drums are not evil, bad, or otherwise possessed, no matter their physical configuration (e.g. a single drum versus a multi-drum trap set). Neither is any other instrument (that I know of).
- F. Music labeling is not an exact science, and often tells us more about the culture associated with that music than the music itself. Take “Rock and Roll.” Just what is rock music? No one quite seems to know. Yes, we can agree that AC/DC and Led Zeppelin are rock bands, but what about the music and melodies to, say, the Beatles’ “Yesterday” or Simon and Garfunkel’s “Are you going to Scarborough Fair?” Apart from the lyrics, could we say, were the context changed, that these are “rock” melodies? It certainly doesn’t seem so. (Interestingly, one of the most musically “conservative” people I know, Steve Henton, who lives just down the road from me and was Laurelwood Academy’s principle for nearly 20 years, has written a lovely Christian song to the tune of “Yesterday.”) Or what about some “rock” songs even with their lyrics still intact? James Taylor’s “Fire and Rain” and Dan Fogelberg’s “Leader of the Band” come to mind. Is this “rock” music? If so, what is “rock” but an exceedingly nebulous and decidedly unhelpful label? If not, then what is it? Examples could be multiplied. Labels are tricky and often unhelpful. It’s better to just evaluate the music, rather than seeking to proscribe it by means of a label.
- G. The genetic argument for drums, certain beat patterns, certain music genres, etc. is entirely unpersuasive. This includes the old canard about voodoo music from West Africa making its way to the Caribbean then the United States via slaves. My response is: who cares? Someone with a voodoo or spiritualistic worldview regards all things through his/her voodoo lens. Of course they think their music and rhythms summon the dead. What else would they think? Several years ago I listened to a fascinating NPR report on Ghanaian bell makers and a particular “five note pattern” that had found its way from their shores into the music of the Caribbean, South America, and North America via the slave trade. When asked by the anthropologist, why this particular “five note pattern,” the bell maker did not hesitate: “it summons the spirits of our ancestors.” He was then asked about the particular metal used in the bell, and he was again unequivocal: “it summons the spirits of our ancestors.” And why make the stick with which to beat the bell from this particular tree? “Our

ancestors live in that tree.” Ahhhh, so this is coming clear, is it not? He believes the pattern summons his ancestors because his whole worldview is built around his ancestors. This tells us nothing about the actual nature of the beat pattern, the metal, or the wood, though, anthropologically speaking, it does tell us a great deal about the man and his culture. So should I fear this pattern? Or that wood? Or that bell? I’m sure Paul would say, “an idol is nothing in the world.” My associations are not the Ghanaian spiritualist’s, therefore I have nothing to fear from his voodoo-esque beliefs and associations. Symbols do not possess inherent meaning; their meanings are always, necessarily conventional. And God is in the business, among other things, of redeeming corrupt symbols. Exhibit A would be the cross.

H. Adventist “conservatives” (whatever that is) have, I believe, spent far too much time barking up the music tree. Too, their posture has largely been negative and cautionary, rather than positive and creative. Music has become an issue, in part, because some have made it an issue. It’s time to move on somewhat, and to stop beating this drum so insistently and direly (pun intended, sorry). Should we still speak and write of music? Sure! Yes! But the issue cries out to be reframed in a positive, encouraging, and biblical light. Some of the evidences and arguments that are used to persuade or dissuade regarding music are an embarrassment to serious hermeneutics, reasoning, and evidence. Many young (and not so young) people can see this, and are turned off by it. How many talented, creative musicians have been chased away by various narrow prescriptions and proscriptions regarding music? Only heaven knows. What a tragedy. But the message is often clear: we don’t need your talents and creativity here, not unless you acquiesce to this particular genre, philosophy, and/or style of music. It maketh the blood to boil.

I. Finally, yes, yes let’s give Scripturally-based guidelines, warnings, and encouragements! But let us be sure that they are, in fact, Scripturally-based, and not just the cultural or personal biases and preferences of a certain sector of Adventism. Our prescriptions and proscriptions should not go one inch further than does inspiration.

Well, there you have it. More than two hours later. Would still be happy for a phone call. Be sure to save my number, and consider calling next time, or anytime. For a more thorough and systematic treatment of music, I recommend Lilianne Doukhan’s *In Tune with God*. That’ll give you a good feel for where I’m coming from, though I do find myself disagreeing with her occasionally.

Hope this helps. Looking forward to hearing your response, hopefully via a phone call. Thank you sincerely for your fraternal care and concern. I mean this.

Courage in Christ,  
David Asscherick

P.S. -- Would you be so kind as to forward this email to Christen, John, and Don? And let them know they're welcome to interact with me directly on anything I've written here. Thanks brother!

P.P.S -- I've taken the liberty of CC'ing Jeffrey, as he was my co-presenter in the seminar.

### **Eugene's second email, January 5, 2013**

Dear David,

Thank you for writing. I was somewhat stressed over trying to find a time to call you that fits with the schedule here at the Do and Dare Camp and with your schedule some 8,000 miles away.

When you identify me with one of your "warmest detractors" I am guessing that "warmest" does not so much mean friendly as it does active. The good news for you is that it has not been very active : ). I just searched through several thousand emails written by me in the calendar year of 2012 and cannot find a single one that mentions you that does not include you as one of the recipients. (Regarding men like Tim Jennings and Ernie Knowl and Jeff Pippenger, these are all men who view me as a personal enemy of their version of truth.)

And I have never supposed that you were aiming for popularity. I have seen you make courageous stands (as regarding evolution at LLU). Where I have considered you wrong, I have considered you to be honestly so. And where I view you as dangerously wrong, I view you as just as honestly so.

It seems like you articulated your view of music quite well in the Q and A as what you mention in point 2 sounds just like what I recall you as having said.

So you ask sensibly that I address how I perceive your answer to differ in content or accuracy from what has been revealed in Ellen White's writings on music.

Here is my best brief attempt.

1. Ellen White indicates that music, the kind conducted in Indiana (shall we call it Charismatic Blue Grass for a genre title?), was contrary to the Spirit's plan for worship and in harmony with Satan's plan for the same. Its characteristics of prominent rhythm and loudness, were noted both by her and by Haskell, the primary secondary source regarding the event she saw in vision.

2. Ellen White indicates that what happened there in Indiana will happen again in Adventist worship services and the excitement felt will be erroneously confounded with the Holy Spirit.
3. But God's Spirit never works in such a bedlam of noise where the senses are "shocked."
4. Good singing is like the music of the birds, soft and melodious.
5. Certain types of music inflame "organs" that war against spiritual interests. Satan knows how to use such music to weaken spiritual resolve by exciting without empowering.
6. These five points, above, proscribe quite a number of genres of music (even most) as being demonic tools for confusing mankind. Whether in their bedrooms or in church, rational beings under the influence of this kind of music, cannot be "trusted to make right decisions."
7. But you are teaching that these same genres, in the name of artistic variety, may be harmless at home and (if the audience agrees thoroughly) perhaps useful as worship agents.

I see points 5-7 as encapsulating how your position differs from the plainly revealed information. And it seems to me to be a dangerous difference.

Regarding the popular speaker part of the letter...David, it is a brand new revelation to me (as I shared in the letter I wrote you) that I have a responsibility to you and to these public men. But, in answer to your question, yes, it is my intention to develop this idea into an article and send it to some twenty persons that I have had some personal interaction with. They would include Doug, John, Ty, James, Dwight, Ivor, but not Mark, Shawn or Stephen. I just have never spent even five minutes talking to the latter three men. And I don't think that my responsibility to warn brethren extends infinitely.

OK, David, I wrote this as I worked my way through your letter and just now as I am finishing it I come to the words: "hopefully via a phone call."

So I will try to find a time to call. But I will send this any way : ). Thank you for writing back 2400 words to my initial 1900 : ).

Be faithful,  
Eugene

## **David's second response, January 11, 2013**

Eugene,

Thank you for the reply.

By “warm” I meant friendly. You had the courtesy to contact me directly, and my interactions with you have always been, so far as I can recall, friendly and fraternal.

I would be interested to know where you think I am, to use your language, “dangerously wrong.”

To music.

Why, pray tell, should we even consider calling the music from the 1900 Indiana campmeeting “charismatic bluegrass?” Willie White records Haskell as reporting that, “[the] revival effort is a complete copy of the Salvation Army method.” Bluegrass? If anything, our best guess would probably be something more like marching band music, ala John Philip Sousa (1854-1932). And where does Ellen White speak of the music’s possessing “prominent rhythm?” “Loudness” I grant you, given Ellen White’s account, but “prominent rhythm?” I missed that part. In fact, I couldn’t find the word “rhythm” in the whole of her published corpus.

Certainly, this passage (2SM 36) is a kind of Rosetta Stone for many a “conservative” (again, whatever that is) Adventist on music. But what does the statement actually say? Several observations are in order, but first my personal experience.

I’ve heard this passage quoted hundreds of times by various ministers and laypersons. In my earlier years in the church, music wasn’t a particular theological interest of mine, so I just assumed that the case against various “liberal” types of music was as robust as some were suggesting it was, and went along on my merry way, studying other things. Then, about eight years ago, I decided, quite without provocation, to study into this music issue. I started, perhaps predictably, with 2SM 31-39. A problem emerged when I studied the passage, and understood the context and background: I did not see what I expected to see. This wasn’t exactly a tectonic revelation, but I did regard it as somewhat startling at the time. So I pressed on in my study. I remember doing a search on “drum” and “drums” and finding, to my increasing surprise, that Ellen White had very nearly nothing to say about them. This was getting interesting.

As my study continued it became inescapably clear that the various permutations of “conservative” Adventist music philosophy were textually unsustainable. I shouldn’t have been particularly shocked, as Adventists can also be prone to cultural and contemporary traditions. Finally, I turned to the material of some of the ministers I knew of who were speaking with regularity on the music issue. I’ll be generous and say that I found most of their evidence and reasoning unpersuasive. Not surprisingly, all of them

resorted (retreated may be a better word) to assumedly scientific evidences to support their positions. This evidence, though, was hardly compelling, either in content or quantity.

You seem to appreciate this point when, in your first email, you write of “reports of rat aggression or deformed snowflakes” and hold them in apparently contemptible contrast to a plain “a thus-saith-the-Spirit.” Aha! We seem to agree about something with regards to this issue!

Why was the appeal to science being made? Simple: the textual data was nothing like voluminous, and, what’s more, it hardly pointed in the direction many were vigorously advocating.

There was, of course, one seeming exception: 2SM 36. No wonder I was hearing it quoted continually in this context. Some observations about this passage are now in order.

--The passage addresses music in a corporate worship setting, and not one’s personal music choices. Recall my two sub-categories: 1)music in church and 2)music in one’s personal experience, whether for worship, relaxation, or entertainment. This passage, clearly, is not a systematic commentary on the latter (or the former, for that matter). Which, I remind you, was the burden of the particular question that was asked of me at the GYC.

--The passage gives us no indication about the style or genre of music, your suggestion of the “charismatic bluegrass” title notwithstanding.

--Actually, the music is repeatedly described in very non-musical terms: “noise and confusion”, “noise and shouting”, “bedlam of noise”, “din and noise”, “confusion of noise”, and “multitude of sounds.” What’s the recurrent theme here? Noise, noise, and more noise. Moreover, the word din means, “a loud, unpleasant, and prolonged noise.” It sounds less like music and more like total auditory chaos (that is, after all, what the word bedlam means), especially when you read Willie White’s material in 5BIO. For example, he quotes Haskell as recalling the “shrieks of those who are half insane.” Shrieks? Yikes! Now, add this: “jumping, dancing, and shouting”, “wild demonstrations”, and “excitement and tumult.” By the way, tumult means, “a loud, confused noise.” Given all this, how does my answer at the GYC, in any conceivable way, merit this passage as a response? Let me answer that for you: it doesn’t. (A quick note: no quality bluegrass could possibly be characterized as “noise”, “din”, or “tumult.” Quite the opposite, actually. It’s usually very melodic, often complex, and not particularly or inherently loud.)

--A timeline is helpful. Haskell attended the Indiana campmeeting in September of 1900 and wrote Ellen White shortly thereafter. Ellen White replied to Haskell sometime in late 1900, likely November or December. On April 17, 1901, Ellen White addressed the ministers at the General Conference (GC) about the Indiana situation.

Ellen White had some six months to formulate her address to the GC. Yes, in her personal letter to Haskell (2SM 36-39) she speaks about the music and the “drums” (once); however, in her address to the GC (2SM 31-36), she doesn’t mention the “drums” and says very little, if anything, about the music specifically. Her concern and burden which she shared with the GC, appears to be primarily two-fold: 1) a false view of sanctification (“holy flesh”) through a loss of Bible-based primacy (“Keep within the bounds of the Bible” 2SM 33.) and 2) various charismatic demonstrations. Did the music help facilitate this? Yes, it seems to have. But, and here’s the point, the music was not at all her primary concern, much less its rhythm or its use of drums. We know this because after having five or six months to prepare her remarks, she mentions nothing to the GC about rhythm, drums, tambourines, etc. Nothing. Furthermore, this is the only place she ever writes about drums. Let that sink in. She speaks more, by far, about pickles, pepper, and mustard than she does about drums. You are a systematically-minded person. Please appreciate the force of the (lack of) evidence. But what’s more, when we turn to Scripture, we find nothing that would indicate some kind of proscription against percussive instruments (or certain rhythms or styles of music). Quite the opposite, actually, as we find express endorsements of such instruments (Psalm 150, comes to mind).

--Yes, it will happen again. She says so. And we’ll know it when: sound scriptural teaching is replaced by various charismatic elements (e.g. “wild demonstrations”), and “dancing”, and “shouting”/shrieking, and “every uncouth thing”, and “a bedlam of noise which shocks the senses”, and it’s all called “the moving of the Holy Spirit.” The appearance, gasp!, of a drum(set) or a praise band are simply not Ellen White’s burden and caution in this passage. And, what’s more, none of this, has much at all to do with the answer I gave at GYC.

So I’ve addressed your first two points.

Regarding your third contention, there is no conflict between us, as I fully agree that, as you put it, “God’s Spirit never works in such a bedlam of noise where the senses are ‘shocked.’”

As an avid birder, I resonate with your fourth point. In fact, I love this analogy. Suffice it to say, not all birds sound the same. Their calls are phenomenally diverse, buttressing my earlier contention about God’s valuing variety. Actually, as I type these very words, I am listening to Eric and Monique Johnson’s new album, Live at Psalter Studios. The particular song I am listening to right now actually, coincidentally (providentially?), reminds me of one of my most favorite bird calls, that haunting, distant, and melancholy trill of the Swainson’s Thrush. I’d advise you to check them both out, the call and the new album. So, as with your third point, there is no conflict here, either between you and I, or between my answer and “what has been revealed.”

And happily, I have no disagreement with your fifth point either. We’re moving right along! Until... uh oh...

Number 6. Can you say, “logical leap?” Forgive my incredulity here, but, seriously, do you think your sixth point, which insouciantly “proscribes... most... genres of music,” actually somehow follows from your five preceding points? Please, revisit your line of argumentation here, and see if my calling it a “line of argumentation” isn’t rather generous. I’m not being purposefully truculent here. I’m just trying to get you to feel the force of my point, which is the weakness of your argument. You’re prepared to just wipe away “most genres of music” with one fell swoop of 2SM 36, the bird analogy, and the fact that certain, as yet undefined, styles of music inflame bodily organs? To say that your conclusion has exceeded the reach of your rather modest premises would be a marvelous understatement! Forgive me, but this kind of “reasoning” falls directly under my earlier observation that: “Some of the evidences and arguments that are used to persuade or dissuade regarding music are an embarrassment to serious hermeneutics, reasoning, and evidence.” Let me be clear, I do not doubt for one moment your intelligence. You are, by all accounts, not one to be trifled with intellectually. So it is not your IQ which I am questioning here, not at all. It’s the particular reasoning you are seeking to establish in this particular case. (Hey, even the incomparably great Isaac Newton was entirely wrong about alchemy. It happens.) How it is that you see your line of argumentation—premises 1 to 5, followed by your conclusion in 6—as robust and persuasive is perfectly inexplicable to me.

You also made a quick transition from the obvious historical context and intent of the statement, namely a corporate worship setting, to a private and personal setting. But is your transition warranted by the data you cite? I’d say no for a few reasons, quickly.

Firstly, Ellen White’s whole point in 2SM 31-39 really isn’t about music at all. It’s a secondary issue.

Secondly, she clearly isn’t here making any kind of a systematic statement about genres, types, or styles of music.

Thirdly, the concept of “personal” music hardly existed in her day, at least not compared with our own. If you wanted music, you went to a concert or performance, or played it yourself. She did not see modern recording technology, iPods, and the like. This being the case, her burden in the 2SM 36 passage cannot possibly be, in her original intent, about personal musical choices, in the “bedroom” as you put it. Might the general principles apply? Sure! But the appropriateness of this application cannot be simply assumed, it would need to be established upon sound exegesis. This you have not done. And, to repeat, my own exegesis and contextual, historical analysis of the passage indicates that music genres, types, and styles of music are not her point. And finally, a quick review of my first email would, I think, be in order.

First the numbers,

1. Thank you for dropping “amoral” from the conversation.

2. Thank you for your affirmation of the clarity of my initial answer at GYC. I prefer my second answer, possessing as it does more nuance and precision.
3. You did not respond to my clarification of your unwarranted and unfortunate assumption regarding my understanding of sola Scriptura in the context of Ellen White's writings. I'd take an apology on this, should you be so inclined.
4. You did not interact with my critique of your "well placed hint" idea in Daniel 3.
5. See above. I still see no conflict between my answer and "what has been revealed." Your most recent letter only serving to further demonstrate to me that the music issue is one which generates more negative and cautionary attention than is merited by the inspired data.
6. Thank you very much, again, for the cautions regarding popularity.

Now the letters,

- A. You seem to either not appreciate or understand the reason for sub-dividing the music question into at least two sub-categories. These are different, though overlapping, issues which need to be addressed by employing somewhat different, yet complimentary, principles.
- B. You did not interact with my contention here. Do we agree on this?
- C. You do not appear to deny my contention that neither Scripture nor Ellen White addresses music in a systematic way. Do we agree on this?
- D. You do not interact with my food analogy, which, I am persuaded, contains a concept that may well hold the key to resolving many (most?) of the music controversies in the church, provided the disagreeing parties are reasonable, humble and generally converted.
- E. You did not interact with my contention here. Do we agree on this?
- F. You did not interact with my contention here. Do we agree on this?
- G. You did not interact with my contention here. Do we agree on this? To remind you, this was the actual question which was put to me at the GYC, that is, "does the genetic fallacy apply to music as well?" My answer went somewhat beyond the actual question because there was another question on the paper which indicated that the questioner was looking for a general answer and direction on music in light of the foregoing six hours of seminar presentations. Completely predictably, the other question on the paper centered around, you guessed it, 2SM 36.

H. That your response communicates that you are prepared to sweep away “most genres of music” with rather limited warrant, evinces my very point that the issue is generally, and sadly, framed in the negative rather than the positive by many “conservative” Adventists, apparently yourself included.

I. From my perspective, you are willing to go miles and miles beyond what is merited by either Scripture or Ellen White. Let’s allow the statements and passages to say what they say, and be satisfied with that. There is, again, no conflict between my answer and the 2SM 31-39 passage, or any other passage with which I am familiar.

To conclude: from my perspective, you have not even begun to demonstrate that there is anything like genuine conflict between my GYC answer and “what has been revealed.” And this was, I think, your primary reason for writing, was it not?

I have no particular burden to persuade you on this issue. It is a patently non-essential issue. Frankly, what you think and believe about music is of no real concern to me. My primary reasons for interacting on this issue are 1)it’s stimulating and enjoyable to dialogue with another believer about God’s will and words, and 2)I want you to be able to speak with accuracy, if at all, on my position on music. My preference would be that you simply direct any and all concerns about this topic directly to me, and that you not make a special point to raise it with others. Should the issue rise in the course of some conversation, you are welcome to share this dialogue with whoever you think may benefit from it. I would ask only that you CC me anytime you include these documents.

Speaking of that, did you forward to my letter to Christen, John, and Don? Would you be so kind as to forward this one as well, and remind them that they’re more than welcome to interact with me directly.

Forgive me for the length of this email. I was just thoroughly enjoying the interaction. Do not feel at all obligated to respond as lengthily as I have.

Do you own, or have you read the book by Dr. Lilliane Doukhan which I recommended? Would be interested to hear your thoughts.

Thank you for your friendship and care.

Warm regards,  
David Asscherick

PS--Once again, I’ve taken the liberty of CCing Jeffrey on this exchange.

PPS--I shared this dialogue with a solid and inveterate worker in God’s vineyard, who also happens to be rather “conservative” on the music issue, and this was his brief reply to me: “Being perhaps more conservative on this issue than most, I find your arguments very persuasive.”

## **David checks in on February 21, 2013, after receiving no response**

Eugene,

I sent the email and attachment below on January 11, more than a month ago. I've been backpacking in the NZ bush for a couple weeks and expected a reply from you when I got out. Alas, I was to be disappointed. Then the thought occurred to me that perhaps you'd never received the email and you were actually waiting for me to reply to you! So just in case, I'm resending that original email and attachment.

You are under no particular obligation to reply, but since you initiated this dialogue it would seem odd if you opted not to.

So I'm just checking in to see where we're at.

Courage brother,

David

## **Eugene replies to David's checking in, February 26, 2013**

Blessings to you, David,

I did receive it, read it with interest...thought about an immediate reply...didn't make one...headed to the Theology of Ordination Study Committee straight from Australia (just a few days after your January 11 letter)...and life has been full of more solemn theological fireworks ever since. (I have written more than 50,000 words of formal writing since that January 11 letter.)

So, now, I will have to read the letter again. And then reply. (Am smiling.)

Hope you enjoyed your time in NZ. Just returned from a vacation in Honduras.

--Eugene

## **David replies to Eugene's confirmation of receipt, February 26, 2013**

Eugene,

No hurry. Take as long as you'd like. I just wanted to be sure you received it. I'm still in NZ and travel to AUS from here. Will not be back in the States until April 26.

Sorry to hear you've been in the middle of a bunch of theological fireworks. Over what, if I may ask. 50,000 words? You might be better off writing books.

Glad you're smiling.

Please, don't write me 50,000 words. ; )

David

### **Eugene sends a more lengthy email (his third), March 17, 2013**

Dear David,

Today, March 17, I have it on my list of things to accomplish to write you. Mom wasn't available when I called her, so here goes... : )

First, I was relieved to learn that you viewed my email as socially warm. Phew.

Second, "dangerously wrong" is my way of saying: "If contemporary music is, as I understand it, an undermining influence in the spiritual welfare of listeners, then such music is dangerous. We live in a perilous age and need the way to heaven to be as level and stoneless as possible. If David advocates that such music is harmless except as its lyrics or social associations might make it harmful, then his position is dangerously wrong."

Third, regarding my speculative statement "charismatic bluegrass" I am gathering this idea from the instruments, the use, the effect on the listeners, and the effect on Haskell. Band music has never been the kind to cause a frenzy. But our generation knows better than most what kind of music does cause frenzy. Pentecostals had the edge on this, introducing frenzied worship early in their development.

EGW's visions regarding the Holy Flesh experience were not her first experience with religious frenzy. She had met such earlier and describes how those who could not get into the "scenes of excitement and tumult" sometimes lost their sanity trying to harmonize their own spiritual experience with what they came to believe was God's work.

Then, of course, there is the backwards parallel. What happened in Indiana would happen in SDA camp- meetings just before the close of probation, with dancing, drums, shouting, etc. While we can't speak of genres of music from 110 years ago with great certainty, we know today that (whether in Africa, Australia, Walla Walla, or Sligo) no one is going to be raising a frenzy in religious service with marching music. That isn't the effect of marching music. It doesn't help when what the performer wants is religious "dancing."

The things you have described as taking place in Indiana, the Lord has shown me would take place just before the close of probation. Every uncouth thing will be demonstrated. There will be shouting, with drums, music, and dancing. The senses of rational beings will become so confused that they cannot be trusted to make right decisions. And this is called the moving of the Holy Spirit. {2SM 36.2}

The “salvation army” method was, for Haskell, a way of expressing loud religious fervor, such as pleased the lower classes. But this was before you could expect a man to differentiate in his dising of the music between syncopated and not-syncopated music.

Though Ellen White doesn't use the word “rhythm,” she does say enough to give you the idea that the music was, in her words, “A bedlam of noise [that] shocks the senses.” And she mentions only one type of instrumentation in the paragraph quoted above. “Drums” were, in her view, symptomatic both of Indiana and of the end time issue with worship. If you are supposing that a new wave of marching music will fan out over Adventism robbing men of their senses, ok. But I think the evidence, both inspired and experiential, is against that. You mention that EGW has almost nothing to say about “drums.” OK, so she was writing at a time when those were not being used in church. Except in Indiana. And did she mention them there? Yes, and she extrapolated a warning from that experience regarding the future.

Paul's writings do not say much in favor of Sabbath keeping. One sideways reference in Hebrews 4, and some confusing statements that aren't on topic, that is all we find. But it is a big issue today. It wasn't. Now it is. And we find in his writings plenty on the law that helps us defend the Sabbath.

I am just illustrating that the paucity of EGW's use of “drum” is sensible even if the issue of drummy music was later to be a big one. (I just coined that silly word as a substitute for trying to remember how to spell r..m..t..c. I am a poor speller.)

Regarding the unpersuasive reasoning of music presenters....Here you and I are very close to harmony. I have heard very poor reasoning accepted by audiences as if it were very good reasoning. Yuck. The shapes of snowflakes, the resonations of cells, the hearsay testimonies of performers and x-performers and of demons-confiding-in-spiritualists-who-later-became-believers. . . . Yuck. Yuck. Yuck.

What I have presented last summer at YD camp (I think they have it on their site somewhere) is what makes sense to me...a rational approach from inspired sources, combined with sensible caution. By sensible caution, I mean the kind that would have led a man to stop smoking in 1850. The science wasn't conclusive. Much wasn't even persuasive. But there was enough to warrant being careful with something as precious as life. The data on music is still out. You get my drift.

You make, David, a distinction between worship music (corporate and personal), relaxation music and entertainment. This is helpful. Happy Birthday isn't worship music. The Star-Spangled Banner is a good song. Handel's Water Music is nice.

But music that allows demons to have a carnival and that causes the senses of rational beings to become confused...would be unhealthy for personal use too, even if it was used famously in a corporate setting.

While 2SM is not a "systematic commentary" on any type of music, it most certainly is a thorough warning against something large, dark, end-timish, and identifiable. We should be warned.

You mention the many non-musical terms used for the music at Indiana. Remember that it was written by someone who had heard angels sing. After hearing YD campers sing scripture songs, much on AFR Radio would be described by me in unmusical terms also. But it would not be sensible to infer that I was listening to songs without melody. Rather, it would be sensible to infer that I found the melody to be drowning in a context of driving beat.

OK, you get to neat material when you make your case for the noisiness of what happened. Here is what I think you miss. To cook the toad, you must not begin with the shrieks. Charismatics don't approach the church door jumping and hallooing. They start standing, with a good rousing first verse. And each verse warms up. Each chorus requires a little more noise and a little more harlem-wannabe. Then, someone gets the spirit and lookout...it gets exciting.

But it starts with music. That is why Satan had to "invent" the idea. It doesn't happen naturally. Not here, not in Africa, not in India. Anywhere you want that kind of behavior, you need a good planned warming-up period of either beat-driven music, or beat-driven non-music.

So if the prophet looks and sees the active ingredient (not the melody, not the harmony) and makes uncharacteristic comments about its noisiness, let us not infer that the tumult was unrelated to excitement in the music. Nor let us infer that it was merely decibels that caused the excitement. Jet engines do not induce human gyrations.

Though Ellen didn't mention the music to the 1901 GC, remember that she had plenty of immediate concerns to address there. The music concern was a future one. Oh, and we do know a bit more about what happened in the Indiana precursor to modern times, than what can be seen in 2SM. I suppose that none of the following are new to you, but key phrases are bolded by me. You will notice regarding the Salvation Army, that Stephen and Betty mention both the high skill of the musicians and the audience feedback, as being the parallel features. So the bedlam wasn't the result of musical clumsiness. Also, notice the nature of the appeal, with musical crescendo being the

means of reaching a large part of the congregation. Betty's testimony was that they used "dance" tunes with religious words. That was Indiana and that is relevant.

**There is a great power that goes with the movement** [Holy Flesh] that is on foot there. It would almost bring anybody within its scope, if they are at all conscientious, and sit and listen with the least degree of favor; **because of the music that is brought to play in the ceremony.** They have an organ, one bass viol, three fiddles, two flutes, three tambourines, three horns, and a big bass drum, and perhaps other instruments which I have not mentioned. **They are as much trained in their musical line** as any Salvation Army choir that you ever heard. In fact, their revival effort is simply a complete copy of the Salvation Army method, and when they get on a high key, you cannot hear a word from the congregation in their singing, nor hear anything, unless it be shrieks of those who are half insane. After an appeal to come forward for prayers, a few of the leading ones would always come forward, to lead others to come; **and then they would begin to play on the musical instruments,** until you could not hear yourself think; and under the excitement of this strain, they get a large proportion of the congregation forward over and over again. —S. N. Haskell report to E. G. White, September 25, 1900.

We have a big drum, two tambourines, a big bass fiddle, two small fiddles, a flute and two comets, and an organ and a few voices. They have "Garden of Spices" **as the songbook and play dance tunes to sacred words.** They have never used our own hymn books, except when Elders Breed or Haskell speak, then they open and close with a hymn from our book, but all the other songs are from the other book. They shout Amens, and "Praise the Lord," "Glory to God," just like a Salvation Army service. It is distressing to one's soul. The doctrines preached correspond to the rest. "The poor sheep are truly confused." —Mrs. S. N. Haskell report to Sara McEnterfer, September 12, 1900.

I attended the camp meeting in September of 1900, which was held at Muncie, where I witnessed first-hand the fanatical excitement and activities of these people. There were numerous groups of people scattered all over the campground engaged in arguing and, when these fanatics conducted the services in the large pavilion, **they worked themselves up to a high pitch of excitement by the use of musical instruments,** such as: trumpets, flutes, stringed instruments, tambourines, an organ, and a big bass drum. **They shouted and sang their lively songs with the aid of musical instruments until they became really hysterical.** Many times I saw them, after these morning meetings, as they came to the dining tent fairly shaking as though they had the palsy. —Burton Wade account to A. L. White, January 12, 1962.

You write, kindly, "You are a systematically-minded person. Please appreciate the force of the (lack of) evidence." But, David, evidence is a plenty that prophets address current issues. If, by the 1901 GC, the movement was gone, but the doctrines would

come again, then it was the doctrines that needed addressing immediately. And it was the music that would need addressing eventually. And don't gather from the musical silence of 1901 a more general silence on music. It would be an odd hermeneutic to say, for example, that since Acts 15 doesn't address eating with Gentiles, that the private issue between Peter and Paul in Galatians 2 wasn't really critical.

So, maybe the above helps fill in the leap of logic that you found between points 1-5 and point 6.

And I will add a little more about "most genres." David, it isn't most "styles." I don't know how to express this point well, so am glad you are familiar with music. But YD scripture songs, my own scripture songs, Christmas hymns, Belden hymns, Luther's hymns (let's not get into that one), "As Water to the Thirsty," "No More Night," etc., differ widely in styles of harmony, melody, ideal instrumentation, speed, timing structure, emotive impact, and in many other ways.

But the way genres are divided is so lopsided, that it generally divides sounds on the basis of the nature of their driving drumminess. This is so true that when you buy a cheap keyboard, it has buttons for each genre and ... all those buttons do is give you the background beat for you to use. So Joy to the World can be arranged as Rock, R&B, Disco, etc. Almost same melody, similar chord structure...but the one song can be umpteen different genres.

In other words, when I say in point 6 that "most genres" are Satan's tool to do such and such, I am (emphatically) not saying that most of what could be called music is Satanic. I am just saying that most of what is played is part of oddly small and particular subset of what could be played. And it is the same subset that we were warned would be played in our day by those claiming to be moved by the Holy Ghost. (OK, this happens within a few miles of my home every Sunday already; Several genres are used, but they are all used for the same purpose and with the same effect.)

Now you make a point that I have not substantiated any claim that your view differs from what Ellen White revealed. (And you hinted that you would accept an apology regarding what I said to Christine and John...but this is CC to them and I will confess instead that I over expressed to you how I had reacted so as to clear Christine and John from any suspicion of doubting your loyalty to the testimonies. In truth, I also expressed doubt to them that you really doubted the testimonies. And I think I did it with sufficient charity as to not owe any further apology on that point.)

So I can't pin you with disregard for any EGW statement. But it seems to me that your view runs counter to these revealed EGW ideas:

1. Popular music is not sacred and sacred music is not popular.
2. Youth do not prefer sacred music; they rather have a taste for the popular music "of the day."

3. Satan knows how to use music to excite certain organs of the body.
  - a. The result of those organs being excited is a loss of appetite for real spiritual food.
  - b. Many youth are lost as a result.
4. Music is a favorite idol of Sabbath keeping youth. Even wholesome music may be so. But tunes “fit for the dancehall” particularly sadden and repel holy angels.

OK, now you indicated that you didn't want a 50 page response. Currently this is five pages. But if we get into issues of Daniel 3 and music, that will be long. (I mean, it could be long to discuss the interesting wording of Daniel 3 that seems to me, and not to you, to over emphasize the role of music in the story. What would be long is trying to resolve whether my view was justified.

And as to the letters, your comments, A-I, they are partly addressed above and partly not. And the partly not...if we finish with the above and you are still interested, then we can get into what isn't addressed.

But, regarding the food analogy...yes, I agree that where danger doesn't warrant universal caution, taste and meekness warrants wide room for accepting each other's differences.

And regarding the “genetic fallacy,” I have written on this also. And what I have written (an article titled “Pagan Influence and Demonic Doors”) also expresses my opposition to the idea that origins incriminate.

But I think it is an unwarranted assumption on your part when you say “who cares.” If beat-driven music forms the basis for spiritualistic experiences where people get excited and then get possessed, and if this happens in Africa and India and PNG in cultures that use different scales and unrelated melodies, but are united in their method of summoning spirits, then someone ought to at least question, “is it a coincidence? Or did spirits have a hand in developing the rudiments of spirit worship?” And if inspiration chimes in on how spirits try to design carnivals for themselves here in the USA, and if it matches what is done worldwide...then the argument isn't really the genetic argument. It is the compelling-correlation argument instead.

If I go any further, over five pages I go. And, as per your request, this is CC to Jeffrey, Don, and Christine [and John]. Yes, I think I did send them the previous letter, but as I am not sure, it is below for all to see. And, yes, thank you for writing a thought-provoking letter that gives evidence of caring seriously about truth.

Be faithful,  
Eugene Prewitt

## David's third response, March 19, 2013

Dearest Eugene,

In the interest of time, I've opted to just write my responses in **bold** in the body of your most recent letter.

Dear David,

Today, March 17, I have it on my list of things to accomplish to write you. Mom wasn't available when I called her, so here goes... :)

First, I was relieved to learn that you viewed my email as socially warm. Phew.

Second, "dangerously wrong" is my way of saying: "If contemporary music is, as I understand it, an undermining influence in the spiritual welfare of listeners, then such music is dangerous. We live in a perilous age and need the way to heaven to be as level and stoneless as possible. If David advocates that such music is harmless except as its lyrics or social associations might make it harmful, then his position is dangerously wrong." **"Such music"? What music are you referring to? Have either you or I even begun to describe music types or styles that we are either advocating or proscribing? I don't remember us having done so. Perhaps you mean just "contemporary" music? If so, what do you mean since "contemporary" simply means "of the time" or "modern." Surely, we can agree that there is both excellent and deplorable "contemporary" music.**

**So, since I've neither advocated nor identified any type or style of music thus far in this discussion, I am at a loss to understand what you mean by the phrase "such music."**

**Also recall that I have said lyrics are the *primary* means by which music's message is communicated. Not the only, but the primary. I was very clear on this point in my answer at the GYC as well. Please labor to represent my position accurately, as this will enable genuine dialogue. In addition to my having stated this point both intentionally and clearly at the GYC, in my first response to you, under letter B, I wrote: "The primary means by which music's correspondence or conflict with the Christian worldview is communicated is lyrical content. Note: primary, not only. Some music is just plain bad music, a reality I certainly recognize; however, it is not at all easy to communicate just how I know this to be the case. I defer to musicologists like Lilianne Doukhan, an Adventist, on the precise details of this."**

**That is, then, three times that I've stated that non-lyrical content can make music inappropriate for a follower of Christ. So just how do you feel justified in employing the phrase "...harmless except as its lyrics of social associations might make it harmful..."?**

**Perhaps my position, when accurately represented, is not so "dangerous" after all, even by your own standards.**

Third, regarding my speculative statement "charismatic bluegrass" I am gathering this idea from the instruments, the use, the effect on the listeners, and the effect on Haskell. Band music has never been the kind to cause a frenzy. But our generation knows better than most what kind of music does cause frenzy. Pentecostals had the edge on this, introducing frenzied worship early in their development. **Do you have any evidence for this speculation, or are you just "gathering" it? The bluegrass music that I listen to and am familiar with (it's a favorite genre) usually has a guitar(s), mandolin(s), and/or a banjo. Furthermore, I've not personally heard much bluegrass with an organ or flutes or, so far as I can now remember, horns. And since these are half the instruments described by Haskell, I remain nonplussed about the speculative suggestion of "charismatic bluegrass."**

**And regarding your claim that, "Band music has never been the kind to cause a frenzy" you are most seriously mistaken, as attendance at any college football game (particularly "bow!" games!) would demonstrate. The bottom line here appears to be: neither of us know what kind of music was being played in Indiana. Or, perhaps you do. If so, do tell. Not with "gathering" or generalizations or speculations, but with actual data.**

EGW's visions regarding the Holy Flesh experience were not her first experience with religious frenzy. She had met such earlier and describes how those who could not get into the "scenes of excitement and tumult" sometimes lost their sanity trying to harmonize their own spiritual experience with what they came to believe was God's work. **No disagreement here.**

Then, of course, there is the backwards parallel. What happened in Indiana would happen in SDA camp-meetings just before the close of probation, with dancing, drums, shouting, etc. While we can't speak of genres of music from 110 years ago with great certainty, we know today that (whether in Africa, Australia, Walla Walla, or Sligo) no one is going to be raising a frenzy in religious service with marching music. That isn't the effect of marching music. It doesn't help when what the performer wants is religious "dancing." **Again, your ignorance of just what "marching music" can produce is on display here. Did you attend a public university? I did, the University of Wyoming. As someone with firsthand experience, I know of what I speak. Furthermore, it should be noted that I have no burden to insist that the music in Indiana was, in fact, "marching music." My point was, and is, that calling it "charismatic bluegrass" is, so far as I am presently informed, unwarranted. I have no burden**

whatever to advocate for or against the notion that “marching music” is an accurate descriptor of what was happening in Indiana. Nearly all types of music can, when played with the intent to do so, create a “frenzy” or a “bedlam of noise.” My larger point was, as still is, this: the passage in 2SM cannot be used to endorse a certain style or genre of music, as such. It can and should, however, serve as a warning against false and demonstrative expressions of what sanctification is, and of the role that music can play in promoting those manifestations.

The things you have described as taking place in Indiana, the Lord has shown me would take place just before the close of probation. Every uncouth thing will be demonstrated. There will be shouting, with drums, music, and dancing. The senses of rational beings will become so confused that they cannot be trusted to make right decisions. And this is called the moving of the Holy Spirit. {2SM 36.2}

The “salvation army” method was, for Haskell, a way of expressing loud religious fervor, such as pleased the lower classes. But this was before you could expect a man to differentiate in his dissing of the music between syncopated and not-syncopated music. **Not sure what the point is here.**

Though Ellen White doesn't use the word “rhythm,” she does say enough to give you the idea that the music was, in her words, “A bedlam of noise [that] shocks the senses.” And she mentions only one type of instrumentation in the paragraph quoted above. “Drums” were, in her view, symptomatic both of Indiana and of the end time issue with worship. If you are supposing that a new wave of marching music will fan out over Adventism robbing men of their senses, ok. But I think the evidence, both inspired and experiential, is against that. You mention that EGW has almost nothing to say about “drums.” OK, so she was writing at a time when those were not being used in church. Except in Indiana. And did she mention them there? Yes, and she extrapolated a warning from that experience regarding the future. **This paragraph has problems. Your quick retreat away from your earlier point about rhythm is telling. Let me quote you exactly: “It [sic] characteristics of prominent rhythm and loudness, were noted both by her...” You are, of course, wrong here since she says nothing at all about the music's “prominent rhythm.” Why, then, would you have thought so? The answer, I would guess, lies in your presuppositions about the passage. Am I mistaken? And if I am, could you then please explain, then, where you got the notion of “prominent rhythm” from?**

**As already mentioned above, I have no burden at all to suggest, as you put it, “a new wave of marching music fanning out over Adventism.” This is silly.**

**As for the paucity of Ellen White counsel or reproofs on “drums,” your argument here is decidedly unpersuasive. How do you know that drums were not being used in church music? Do you have evidence for this? Or, as above, are you just**

**“gathering” it? Furthermore, why does she mention nothing about the particular concern of the “drums” when addressing the GC? The answer is obvious if you’ll but see it: her concern was not about the drums, per se. It wasn’t even about about the music, per se, but, as the whole chapter in 2SM makes clear, about false and demonstrative expressions of sanctification. The music matters, yes, but your (and others’) extrapolations from this single passage concerning “drums”, rhythm, syncopation, etc. are wrongheaded and misleading.**

Paul’s writings do not say much in favor of Sabbath keeping. One sideways reference in Hebrews 4, and some confusing statements that aren’t on topic, that is all we find. But it is a big issue today. It wasn’t. Now it is. And we find in his writings plenty on the law that helps us defend the Sabbath. **See below.**

I am just illustrating that the paucity of EGW’s use of “drum” is sensible even if the issue of drummy music was later to be a big one. (I just coined that silly word as a substitute for trying to remember how to spell r..m..t..c. I am a poor speller.) **This is a poor analogy. True, Paul does not speak often about the Sabbath, but much of the rest of the New Testament does. Including, importantly, the book of Revelation. Here we find that the end-time crisis will revolve around the law of God generally, and the Sabbath particularly. So there is hardly an analogous silence between Paul on the Sabbath and Ellen White on the drums. Furthermore, Ellen White, a modern prophet, speaks at length about the end-time centrality and significance of the Sabbath. It could theoretically be the case, I suppose, that another end-time prophet could be raised up to speak at length about the end-time centrality and significance of drums and rhythm. If this happened then you would have a stronger case and a much better analogy! In the absence of this, however, your comparison with Paul’s relative silence on the Sabbath is rather strained.**

**But your analogy is weaker still, since it *assumes* that “drummy” music will become a “big” issue. Sure it may, but this is not easily deduced from 2SM. What *is* easily deduced is that there will be end-time deceptions regarding sanctification and that these will be accompanied by “wild demonstrations” and general “bedlam.” Drums may well be involved, but they needn’t be, as they are not an essential ingredient in human frenzy and folly. Drums can, of course, be played very nicely, beautifully, soothingly, and contemplatively. Clarinets can be played noisily and obnoxiously. So too oboes, harps, trombones, pan flutes, saws, trumpets, harmonicas, and guitars. The instrument isn’t the issue.**

**This conclusion is further buttressed by the fact that, again, this is the *only* time Ellen White ever speaks about drums. Ever.**

Regarding the unpersuasive reasoning of music presenters....Here you and I are very close to harmony. I have heard very poor reasoning accepted by audiences as if it were very good reasoning. Yuck. The shapes of snowflakes, the resonations of cells, the

hearsay testimonies of performers and x-performers and of demons-confiding-in-spiritualists-who-later-became-believers. . . . Yuck. Yuck. Yuck. **We are singing out of the same hymnal here! Pun intended. It's fun to agree!**

What I have presented last summer at YD camp (I think they have it on their site somewhere) is what makes sense to me...a rational approach from inspired sources, combined with sensible caution. By sensible caution, I mean the kind that would have led a man to stop smoking in 1850. The science wasn't conclusive. Much wasn't even persuasive. But there was enough to warrant being careful with something as precious as life. The data on music is still out. You get my drift. **I'm sure that your presentation "[made] sense to [you]." I find that my presentations nearly always make sense to me; whether they are true is, of course, another matter altogether. ; )**

You make, David, a distinction between worship music (corporate and personal), relaxation music and entertainment. This is helpful. Happy Birthday isn't worship music. The Star-Spangled Banner is a good song. Handel's Water Music is nice.

But music that allows demons to have a carnival and that causes the senses of rational beings to become confused...would be unhealthy for personal use too, even if it was used famously in a corporate setting. **I've never attended a demonic carnival, so I have no idea what one would look like or what kind of music would accompany one. I have a guess, sure, but no hard evidence. You?**

While 2SM is not a "systematic commentary" on any type of music, it most certainly is a thorough warning against something large, dark, end-timish, and identifiable. We should be warned. **True! And the warning is, first and foremost, about false views of sanctification and holiness. It is also a warning about "wild demonstrations," "shrieking," "noise," etc. It is not, I am persuaded, about praise music, drums, rhythm, or syncopation.**

**But let's remind ourselves that both the question and the answer I gave at the GYC were not about church music at all, but personal music choices and the genetic fallacy. So we are pretty far afield of the original inquiry here.**

You mention the many non-musical terms used for the music at Indiana. Remember that it was written by someone who had heard angels sing. After hearing YD campers sing scripture songs, much on AFR Radio would be described by me in unmusical terms also. But it would not be sensible to infer that I was listening to songs without melody. Rather, it would be sensible to infer that I found the melody to be drowning in a context of driving beat. **This is a weak argument and quite a jump. Just how is it "sensible to infer" a "driving beat" from Ellen White's repeated usage of "noise" and similar words? Huh? Did I miss something? I can think of plenty of other kinds of semi-musical "noise" that have little to do with the beat, much less a "driving" one. Why not just let the prophet say what she says? That seems the "sensible" thing to me. For the record, she says nothing at all about beats (much**

less “driving” ones), rhythms, syncopation etc. What she does say, repeatedly in fact, is: “noise.” So what can we *actually* safely infer? Simple, it was very *noisy* music.

OK, you get to neat material when you make your case for the noisyiness of what happened. Here is what I think you miss. To cook the toad, you must not begin with the shrieks. Charismatics don’t approach the church door jumping and hallooing. They start standing, with a good rousing first verse. And each verse warms up. Each chorus requires a little more noise and a little more harlem-wannabe. Then, someone gets the spirit and lookout...it gets exciting. **The old slippery slope argument, eh? Not really sure what to say here. I’m just content to stick with what she actually says rather than invoking some slippery gradient and then appointing myself as the determiner of how far along church A, B, and C is on said slope.**

But it starts with music. That is why Satan had to “invent” the idea. It doesn’t happen naturally. Not here, not in Africa, not in India. Anywhere you want that kind of behavior, you need a good planned warming- up period of either beat-driven music, or beat-driven non-music. **Are you suggesting that people can’t act wild, demonstrative, frenzied, possessed, out of control, and insane in the absence of music?**

So if the prophet looks and sees the active ingredient (not the melody, not the harmony) and makes uncharacteristic comments about its noisiness, let us not infer that the tumult was unrelated to excitement in the music. Nor let us infer that it was merely decibels that caused the excitement. Jet engines do not induce human gyrations. **There are so many assumptions here. First, why place only “melody” and “harmony” in parenthesis? Why not “rhythm” too? I’d wager that the presupposition that causes you to leave it out here is the same that caused you to mysteriously insert it when you wrote, incorrectly, of Ellen White’s “noting” the “characteristics of prominent rhythm and loudness.” Loudness, yes; rhythm, no. Second, I never suggested that the “tumult was unrelated to the excitement in the music.” Here is what I actually said: “Did the music help facilitate this [wildness and error]? Yes, it seems to have.” Why shouldn’t we infer that the “decibels” contributed majorly to “the excitement”? It seems as likely a candidate as any.**

Though Ellen didn’t mention the music to the 1901 GC, remember that she had plenty of immediate concerns to address there. The music concern was a future one. Oh, and we do know a bit more about what happened in the Indiana precursor to modern times, than what can be seen in 2SM. I suppose that none of the following are new to you, but key phrases are bolded by me. You will notice regarding the Salvation Army, that Stephen and Betty mention both the high skill of the musicians and the audience feedback, as being the parallel features. So the bedlam wasn’t the result of musical clumsiness. Also, notice the nature of the appeal, with musical crescendo being the means of reaching a large part of the

congregation. Betty's testimony was that they used "dance" tunes with religious words. That was Indiana and that is relevant.

**There is a great power that goes with the movement** [Holy Flesh] that is on foot there. It would almost bring anybody within its scope, if they are at all conscientious, and sit and listen with the least degree of favor; **because of the music that is brought to play in the ceremony.** They have an organ, one bass viol, three fiddles, two flutes, three tambourines, three horns, and a big bass drum, and perhaps other instruments which I have not mentioned. **They are as much trained in their musical line** as any Salvation Army choir that you ever heard. In fact, their revival effort is simply a complete copy of the Salvation Army method, and when they get on a high key, you cannot hear a word from the congregation in their singing, nor hear anything, unless it be shrieks of those who are half insane. After an appeal to come forward for prayers, a few of the leading ones would always come forward, to lead others to come; **and then they would begin to play on the musical instruments, until** you could not hear yourself think; and under the excitement of this strain, they get a large proportion of the congregation forward over and over again. —S. N. Haskell report to E. G. White, September 25, 1900.

**Haskell's evaluation is very helpful. So let me set the record straight, at least in my own experience. I've preached in hundreds of Adventist churches, conventions, campmeetings, crusades, etc. and I've never seen anything resembling Haskell's description. Never. Nothing even close, actually.**

**That line about the "shrieks of those who are half insane" is a telling one. Have you ever experienced this in an Adventist setting? I sure haven't. But I'm pretty sure I'll recognize it if and when I ever see it. So let's keep our eyes and ears open. In the meantime, let's not extrapolate Ellen White's specific and clear counsel in 2SM to our own purposes and ends, however well-intentioned we may think them to be.**

We have a big drum, two tambourines, a big bass fiddle, two small fiddles, a flute and two comets, and an organ and a few voices. They have "Garden of Spices" **as the songbook and play dance tunes to sacred words.** They have never used our own hymn books, except when Elders Breed or Haskell speak, then they open and close with a hymn from our book, but all the other songs are from the other book. They shout Amens, and "Praise the Lord," "Glory to God," just like a Salvation Army service. It is distressing to one's soul. The doctrines preached correspond to the rest. "The poor sheep are truly confused." —Mrs. S. N. Haskell report to Sara McEnterfer, September 12, 1900.

I attended the camp meeting in September of 1900, which was held at Muncie, where I witnessed first-hand the fanatical excitement and activities of these people. There were numerous groups of people scattered all over the

campground engaged in arguing and, when these fanatics conducted the services in the large pavilion, **they worked themselves up to a high pitch of excitement by the use of musical instruments**, such as: trumpets, flutes, stringed instruments, tambourines, an organ, and a big bass drum. **They shouted and sang their lively songs with the aid of musical instruments until they became really hysterical.** Many times I saw them, at these morning meetings, as they came to the dining tent fairly shaking as though they had the palsy. —Burton Wade account to A. L. White, January 12, 1962.

**And here again, we'll know this when we see it. People were, he says, "shaking as though they had the palsy." Yikes. They were "hysterical." Yikes. Haskell says there were "shrieks" as if from people "half insane." YIKES! So let me ask you, have you ever seen or experienced this in an Adventist setting? I can say with certainty that I most definitely have not. I can also say, again, that I'll certainly recognize it when I see it. I'm confident of this. You?**

You write, kindly, "You are a systematically-minded person. Please appreciate the force of the (lack of) evidence." But, David, evidence is a plenty that prophets address current issues. If, by the 1901 GC, the movement was gone, but the doctrines would come again, then it was the doctrines that needed addressing immediately. And it was the music that would need addressing eventually. And don't gather from the musical silence of 1901 a more general silence on music. It would be an odd hermeneutic to say, for example, that since Acts 15 doesn't address eating with Gentiles, that the private issue between Peter and Paul in Galatians 2 wasn't really critical. **Was the movement gone by April 1901? Are you sure of this? If it was gone, then why did she address it? The fact that she addresses it at all strongly suggests that its influence was still a danger. Similarly, the fact that she doesn't address the "drums" (or the rhythm, syncopation, genre etc.) suggests, rather persuasively to my mind, that this was not her real concern at all.**

**My hermeneutic isn't odd at all, so far as I can tell. I'm advocating that we hear what Ellen White *actually* wrote. Furthermore, whether you are willing to concede it or not, Ellen White's not speaking about "drums" in any other place in her voluminous writings is, in fact, hugely significant. Too, her never mentioning "rhythm" or "syncopation" are equally significant, your protestations notwithstanding.**

So, maybe the above helps fill in the leap of logic that you found between points 1-5 and point 6.

And I will add a little more about "most genres." David, it isn't most "styles." I don't know how to express this point well, so am glad you are familiar with music. But YD scripture songs, my own scripture songs, Christmas hymns, Belden hymns, Luther's hymns (let's not get into that one), "As Water to the Thirsty," "No More Night," etc.,

differ widely in styles of harmony, melody, ideal instrumentation, speed, timing structure, emotive impact, and in many other ways.

But the way genres are divided is so lopsided, that it generally divides sounds on the basis of the nature of their driving drumminess. This is so true that when you buy a cheap keyboard, it has buttons for each genre and ... all those buttons do is give you the background beat for you to use. So Joy to the World can be arranged as Rock, R&B, Disco, etc. Almost same melody, similar chord structure...but the one song can be umpteen different genres. **That you do not recognize this as a gross oversimplification of the whole process and phenomenon of music is astounding. It is not at all the case that “drumminess” “generally divides” styles or genres of music. Music genres and styles are divided by, among other things: melody, harmony, rhythm, pace, time signature, instrumentation, timbre, volume, lyrics, complexity, culture, purpose, and so much more. Your black and white world is, I think, finding it difficult to understand and appreciate the many colors, hues, shades, nuances, and subtleties of musical identity and variation. I do not say this to insult you, but to chasten you, if mildly, for your pedestrian oversimplification. Music is a wonderful, glorious, nuanced, varied, colorful, expressive, joyous, and grand reality which should be celebrated, appreciated, and understood. I do not see a valuing of the depth of musical richness and beauty in your writings and reasoning. Forgive me for asking, but do you even like music? I mean *really* like it. Do you *love* it? How important, 1 to 10, would you rate music in your personal walk with God (with 10 being extremely important and 0 not at all important)? I am sincerely interested. For me, I’d say an 8 or 9. You?**

In other words, when I say in point 6 that “most genres” are Satan’s tool to do such and such, I am (emphatically) not saying that most of what could be called music is Satanic. I am just saying that most of what is played is part of oddly small and particular subset of what could be played. And it is the same subset that we were warned would be played in our day by those claiming to be moved by the Holy Ghost. (OK, this happens within a few miles of my home every Sunday already; Several genres are used, but they are all used for the same purpose and with the same effect.) **I really don’t understand what you’re saying here. You lost me, can you explain it again? I do, however, understand your first sentence, and it brings me great relief to read it.**

Now you make a point that I have not substantiated any claim that your view differs from what Ellen White revealed. (And you hinted that you would accept an apology regarding what I said to Christine and John...but this is CC to them and I will confess instead that I over expressed to you how I had reacted so as to clear Christine and John from any suspicion of doubting your loyalty to the testimonies. In truth, I also expressed doubt to them that you really doubted the testimonies. And I think I did it with sufficient charity as to not owe any further apology on that point.) **Thank you for the clarification on this. Really appreciate it.**

So I can't pin you with disregard for any EGW statement. But it seems to me that your view runs counter to these revealed EGW ideas:

1. Popular music is not sacred and sacred music is not popular. **Provided that these terms are sufficiently and accurately defined, I have no argument with this.**
2. Youth do not prefer sacred music; they rather have a taste for the popular music "of the day." **This is no different from saying that, "unconverted youth don't like Bible study." Or prayer meeting. Or the GYC. Or sermons. Or ARISE. So what of it? I have no argument with this.**
3. Satan knows how to use music to excite certain organs of the body.
  - a. The result of those organs being excited is a loss of appetite for real spiritual food. **No argument here.**
  - b. Many youth are lost as a result. **People, young and old, are lost because they refuse to accept Jesus' offer of salvation. Music, like any potential idol, can cause people to be lost. So can cars, sports, academics, and relationships. The list is a long, long one.**
4. Music is a favorite idol of Sabbath keeping youth. Even wholesome music may be so. But tunes "fit for the dancehall" particularly sadden and repel holy angels. **Can you send me the reference(s) for this? Thanks. But, no argument with it, provided, like anything, it is sufficiently and accurately explained and understood.**

OK, now you indicated that you didn't want a 50 page response. Currently this is five pages. But if we get into issues of Daniel 3 and music, that will be long. (I mean, it could be long to discuss the interesting wording of Daniel 3 that seems to me, and not to you, to over emphasize the role of music in the story. What would be long is trying to resolve whether my view was justified. **So five pages and you've really only interacted with my material on 2SM. Hmmm. As for Daniel 3, there is no question or debate that music played an important, even determinative, role on Dura's plain. If you mean to extrapolate that music's presence and prominence in Daniel 3 has end-time implications, then you'll have to argue for that. I tend to think your earlier assessment is generally correct: that, at best, it's a "hint." One, strangely, that John in Revelation or Ellen White in *The Great Controversy* did not pick up on. (Note: I count six uses of "music" in *The Great Controversy*, none of them referencing either Daniel 3 or an end-time worship-music-drums-rhythm deception.)**

And as to the letters, your comments, A-I, they are partly addressed above and partly not. And the partly not...if we finish with the above and you are still interested, then we can get into what isn't addressed. **So near as I can tell you've only interacted with my material regarding 2SM. You've dropped several of my points that I regard as important and informative. You are at liberty to interact with them or not; I have no great burden, as I've said, to persuade you one way or the other. I am open to any and all inspired evidence you can marshal to persuade me that I am presently out of harmony with the inspired counsel. That was, I think, your original purpose in writing, was it not?**

But, regarding the food analogy...yes, I agree that where danger doesn't warrant universal caution, taste and meekness warrants wide room for accepting each other's differences. **HALLELUJAH!!!!!!!!!! This is the brightest spot in the whole dialogue right now. I am SO happy to read these words. Let's put things in perspective. We both affirm, among other things: the Sabbath, 1844, the nature of man, the sanctuary, the Spirit of Prophecy, and much more. We appear to not completely agree on the music issue. Why might this be? Simple: Scripture is not as explicit regarding this subject as it is with, say, the Sabbath. We should recognize this difference for what it is: an important, though non-essential one. (This was precisely the point Jeffrey and I made repeatedly in our seminar, *Mere Adventism*.) I'm happy to move on and rejoice in our common Savior, doctrine, sonship, church, etc. If, however, we elect to continue this discussion, then you're going to have to bring better evidence and arguments, because so far, and I'm just being honest here, I have not been overwhelmed by the persuasiveness of your position. If anything, this discussion has served to further confirm my already-held convictions and beliefs regarding this subject.**

And regarding the "genetic fallacy," I have written on this also. And what I have written (an article titled "Pagan Influence and Demonic Doors") also expresses my opposition to the idea that origins incriminate. **We agree again!!! This is getting better all the time. Yes, I'd like to read this paper, as this is a particular interest of mine. Please, by all means, send it!**

But I think it is an unwarranted assumption on your part when you say "who cares." If beat-driven music forms the basis for spiritualistic experiences where people get excited and then get possessed, and if this happens in Africa and India and PNG in cultures that use different scales and unrelated melodies, but are united in their method of summoning spirits, then someone ought to at least question, "is it a coincidence? Or did spirits have a hand in developing the rudiments of spirits worship?" And if inspiration chimes in on how spirits try to design carnivals for themselves here in the USA, and if it matches what is done worldwide...then the argument isn't really the genetic argument. It is the compelling-correlation argument instead. **In the absence of any plain "thus saith the Lord" on this certain-beats-summon-demons argument, it's probably best to recognize the argument for what it is: weak and**

unpersuasive. For example, I count four “ifs” in the chain of your argument. I seriously doubt the first. I find the second to be an irrelevant generalization. The third, regarding demonic carnivals is also weak, since, so far as I’m aware, inspiration does not suggest that it is the drum, beat, rhythm, or syncopation that characterizes these carnivals. Your fourth “if” is essentially a restatement of your second. If you find this compelling, then, hey, more power to you. Do not be surprised, however, if people who are not already predisposed to you and your position find it otherwise.

If I go any further, over five pages I go.

And, as per your request, this is CC to Jeffrey, Don, and Chris2ne [and John]. Yes, I think I did send them the previous letter, but as I am not sure, it is below for all to see.

And, yes, thank you for writing a thought-provoking letter that gives evidence of caring seriously about truth. **Thank you for recognizing this fact.**

**A word about the methodology of exhortation is, I think, in order.**

Eugene, I do not mind you contact me and admonishing me. I rather appreciate it, actually. And yet as I read parts of your first letter I observe that it lacks a certain self-doubt and attendant humility. You communicate as someone who is just sure that you are correct. So much so, that you feel at perfect liberty to write at the close of your initial letter: “I appeal to you on the issue of music to preach in harmony with what has been revealed.” And yet the ensuing dialogue has revealed, to my reading (and Jeffrey’s), the tenuousness of your position. Methinks that perhaps you protest too much.

Even your email address evinces a kind of I’ll-set-them-straight schtick: [adventexpositor@gmail.com](mailto:adventexpositor@gmail.com). I don’t say this to be insulting, but to be honest. I mean, really, why not something a little more humble? Maybe something like [eugeneprewitt@gmail.com](mailto:eugeneprewitt@gmail.com)? Yes, I’m busting your chops a bit here, but don’t you kind of deserve it? I mean you send me this very solemn exhortation to, “preach in harmony with what has been revealed” as if, number one, I am not, and, number two, you are in perfect possession of just what “has been revealed.”

So I’m not taking issue with the exhortation, not at all. Bring it on. But, as a brother, I want you to hear from someone who is your spiritual, chronological, and influential equal that the *method* and *language* of exhortation has you appearing pretty self-important. This reality is then exacerbated when your evidence and arguments with regards to your convictions about “what has been revealed” are hardly watertight.

**A word to the wise is sufficient.**

**To recap: where are we now then?**

**Perhaps at an impasse; and perhaps at a kind of quasi-agreement. Here are two things you've written that I really like and resonate with:**

**First: "But, regarding the food analogy...yes, I agree that where danger doesn't warrant universal caution, taste and meekness warrants wide room for accepting each other's differences."**

**And second: "And, yes, thank you for writing a thought-provoking letter that gives evidence of caring seriously about truth."**

**Ought we just leave it there?**

**Your brother,  
David**

**PS--with your permission, I'd like to be able to share this dialogue with those who inquire of me about the music issue. I've already shared it with my work colleagues, but would like to be able to share it as opportunity arises. There would be no additional comments to the dialogue, just the email exchanges themselves.**

### **Eugene's fourth email, March 20, 2013**

Dear David,

Wow, you didn't need much time to respond to that last email. But as I don't foresee myself soon taking time to dig up good evidence for my various points that you find unsupported, I think dropping things until then is sensible.

But on the personal questions and comments (unrelated to who is right or otherwise regarding music) here are brief answers:

1. Music is highly important to me. I compose music, play the guitar and piano in my own home routinely, sing wherever I go (so that this is one of my defining personal characteristics.) I consider spiritual composition to be an evidence of the movement of God's Spirit on a school and have rejoiced to see that evidence at Ouachita Hills College when I was there.
2. [adventexpositor@gmail.com](mailto:adventexpositor@gmail.com) was an email address invented seven years ago when a group of my students at OHC, as part of an assignment, started a new publication: Advent Expositor. The "expositor" was the publication, not a person. I have used, as

my personal email, [canvassing@canvassing.org](mailto:canvassing@canvassing.org) for literally 21 years (like a record for email addresses). But during that time it ended up on so many spamable lists that I often get multiple copies of spam messages. So someone showed me that I could use a gmail account to have [canvassing@canvassing.org](mailto:canvassing@canvassing.org) filtered. Yeah! And since I had a gmail account already, doing nothing, I used it without any thought that it might appear arrogant. Oops.

3. Humility is hard to see in print, and hard to communicate that way also. It is sometimes seen in the word “if” and in phrases like “as I understand it.” But I appreciate the idea that I should work more to make it apparent. In exhortations and appeals, it is necessarily obscure as the human heart would rather not see it in those cases.
4. Find attached the article requested.

Eugene

### **David briefly thanks Eugene, March 23, 2013**

Thanks Eugene. God's peace and power be with you.

David

### **Eugene's fifth email, July 28, 2013**

Dear David,

Find attached, finally, a reply. I have been home from the TOSC (Ordination) meetings for just a couple days.

This reply amounts to throwing-in-the-towel in some ways. Not that I see things differently. I just give up.

I have put it together in a way that lends itself to sharing. It is CC to all the normal people here and I will send it to others as the need arises.

When you reply, if I perceive any truly new material in the reply, I will try to include that in the document with any needed reply. But in circles we have gone long enough.

It is 14,000 words, almost. But I think you wrote 1/3 of them and have already read most of the rest, so I am well under the proscribed 50K J. It contains little that is new.

Be faithful,

Eugene

**Here is the text from the attached document:**

(Note: At this point, Eugene opted to colorize the dialogue. Rather than reformatting his document to match the style of this combined document, we are leaving his original document as is. We hope this isn't confusing to the reader, but if it is, we apologize. For the record, David found it confusing and hard to follow.)

Dear David,

For my fourth response I have taken your last email and spliced my replies between the paragraphs of your letter. As you have done the same in that email, it could be quite confusing to you or any other reader. So I have tried to use colors to make it easier to follow.

Your writings are in purple. My responses are in blue. Your first line, "such music?..." requires some background. So here, as elsewhere in the document, I quote statements from previous emails by highlighting only our names in color. Black writing represents items taken from earlier letters than your most recent. Other colors that you find throughout the document are used for outside sources (such as Wikipedia, Betty Haskell, etc.) and for the highlighting of the same. Also, one explanatory statement by me for other readers is in brown. The statement really isn't for you.

David: I would be interested to know where you think I am, to use your language, "dangerously wrong?"

Eugene: "Dangerously wrong" is my way of saying: "If contemporary music is, as I understand it, an undermining influence in the spiritual welfare of listeners, then such music is dangerous. We live in a perilous age and need the way to heaven to be as level and stoneless as possible. If David advocates that such music is harmless except as its lyrics or social associations might make it harmful, then his position is dangerously wrong."

David: "Such music"? What music are you referring to? Have either you or I even begun to describe music types or styles that we are either advocating or proscribing? I don't remember us having done so. Perhaps you mean just "contemporary" music? If so, what do you mean since "contemporary" simply means "of the time" or "modern." Surely, we can agree that there is both excellent and deplorable "contemporary" music.

Eugene: By "contemporary music" I mean what is generally meant by that initials CCM in discussions of musical values. Whether you have stated it, or whether I have just gleaned it from what you have written, I don't know. But it seems obvious that you would find a good deal of CCM music to be edifying that I would find detrimental on the basis of its percussion.

David: Also recall that I have said lyrics are the primary means by which music's message is communicated. Not the only, but the primary. I was very clear on this point in my answer at the GYC as well. Please labor to represent my position accurately, as this will enable genuine dialogue. In addition to my having stated this point both intentionally and clearly at the GYC, in my first response to you, under letter B, I wrote: "The primary means by which music's correspondence or conflict with the Christian worldview is communicated is lyrical content. Note: primary, not only. Some music is just plain bad music, a reality I certainly recognize; however, it is not at all easy to communicate just how I know this to be the case. I defer to musicologists like Lilianne Doukhan, an Adventist, on the precise details of this."

Eugene: Yes, David, I have duly noted that you believe that there is some "just plain bad music" out there. And as it is "not at all easy" for you "to communicate just how" you "know this to be the case," be patient with those who are trying to do that "not at all easy" task.

But as if you have suggested that these discussions be shared somewhat publicly, let's get it all out there. Are there CCM bands that you think generally play wholesome music? Am I being a bit paranoid when I suppose that you might be comfortable at what common people would call a well-orchestrated Christian rock concert? Let me be very transparent and say that though I value rumors very lightly, I have probably been influenced in my thinking by a rumor that you have taken Arise students to such a concert of a favorite group of yours. But I would welcome a repudiation of the rumor as more reliable by far than the fading memory of it.

David: Perhaps my position, when accurately represented, is not so "dangerous" after all, even by your own standards.

Eugene: That would be a wonderful discovery. And I certainly wouldn't want to misrepresent your position. The feel I get from talking to those that have heard you is that you differ substantially from what I consider safe. That is why I am interacting with you. I would like you, your wife, and your children to be safe.

Eugene: Third, regarding my speculative statement "charismatic bluegrass" I am gathering this idea from the instruments, the use, the effect on the listeners, and the effect on Haskell. Band music has never been the kind to cause a frenzy. But our generation knows better than most what kind of music does cause frenzy. Pentecostals had the edge on this, introducing frenzied worship early in their development.

David: Do you have any evidence for this speculation, or are you just "gathering" it? The bluegrass music that I listen to and am familiar with (it's a favorite genre) usually has a guitar(s), mandolin(s), and/or a banjo. Furthermore, I've not personally heard much bluegrass with an organ or flutes or, so far as I can now remember, horns. And since these are half the instruments described by Haskell, I remain nonplussed about the speculative suggestion of "charismatic bluegrass."

Eugene: I was mostly just being creative in looking for a word that would group the instruments well – but didn't think of the horn. Good point. Also, guitar, mandolin and banjo are the music of this part of Arkansas where I have lived for twelve years. (My sister-in-law

plays banjo; my step-dad plays mandolin; I play guitar.) I wasn't intending to diss your favorite genre. It is the "charismatic" aspect, not the folk aspect, at which I am aiming.)

David: And regarding your claim that, "Band music has never been the kind to cause a frenzy" you are most seriously mistaken, as attendance at any college football game (particularly "bowl" games!) would demonstrate. The bottom line here appears to be: neither of us know what kind of music was being played in Indiana. Or, perhaps you do. If so, do tell. Not with "gathering" or generalizations or speculations, but with actual data.

Eugene: Regarding bowl games, let me confess that team sports are able to create a frenzy even in the absence of music. Each year some poor souls are trampled to death at soccer games. Add testosterone, beer, leisure, big-screen close-ups of cheer-leaders, group think; combine these with a tune as unexciting as Snowy the Snowman, and you could see some insane behavior. But to know whether the song would cause it, you would need to play it outside of an atmosphere of frenzy. Also, band instruments (I forgot to tell you that I use to play alto sax in a band) can be used for heavily syncopated music and if at football games such music is called "band music" then I retreat and profess that when I said "band music" I meant "classic marching music."

But I will do some checking on the documented effects of marching band music. You did create an interest in me to do that. Thank you. Do toddlers dance to marching music the way they do (without encouragement) to other genres? I am curious.

I have observed, however, that toddlers dance without encouragement at certain types of music, even when they have been raised without generally hearing such music.

What you and I know about the music in Indiana is:

It was loud. (And, at its peak crescendos, it was perhaps punctuated by shrieks of frenzied persons – Haskell.)

It was played professionally.

It was used to create emotional appeals that were highly effective.

It was (Betty said) "dance tunes to sacred words."

It was punctuated by extemporaneous amens and "Praise the Lord", etc.

Its instrumentation was characterized by a large base drum, three tambourines, and a base viol, as well as by the other instruments you mentioned earlier.

It was played as a means of developing frenzy.

It was continued until the nerves of the participants were frayed.

What we know about the end-time parallel is:

There will be uncouth actions.

"There will be shouting, with drums, music, and dancing."

"The senses of rational beings will become so confused that they cannot be trusted to make right decisions. And this is called the moving of the Holy Spirit." {2SM 36.2}

David: That line about the “shrieks of those who are half insane” is a telling one. Have you ever experienced this in an Adventist setting? I sure haven’t. But I’m pretty sure I’ll recognize it if and when I ever see it. So let’s keep our eyes and ears open. In the meantime, let’s not extrapolate Ellen White’s specific and clear counsel in 2SM to our own purposes and ends, however well---intentioned we may think them to be. And here again, we’ll know this when we see it. People were, he says, “shaking as though they had the palsy.” Yikes. They were “hysterical.” Yikes. Haskell says there were “shrieks” as if from people “half insane.” YIKES! So let me ask you, have you ever seen or experienced this in an Adventist setting? I can say with certainty that I most definitely have not. I can also say, again, that I’ll certainly recognize it when I see it. I’m confident of this. You?

Eugene: I am confident that I have already seen it. But it has never been like the devil to be obvious. Shrieks and nervous post-trauma shaking are not the hallmarks of which we have been warned. They are not at all likely to be observed until the prophesied movement is far out of bounds. *And they are not even part of 2SM’s counsels.*

But they do happen around my community routinely. Pentecostalism is just what Ellen White describes and matches Haskell’s observations too.

Ellen White describes the future danger, not as something done in an obscure corner, but as a “supposed revival” that undermines the power of camp-meeting preaching while creating a false revival:

When the camp meeting is ended, the good which ought to have been done and which might have been done by the presentation of sacred truth is not accomplished. Those participating in the supposed revival receive impressions which lead them adrift. They cannot tell what they formerly knew regarding Bible principles. {2SM 37.1}

Eugene: EGW’s visions regarding the Holy Flesh experience were not her first experience with religious frenzy. She had met such earlier and describes how those who could not get into the “scenes of excitement and tumult” sometimes lost their sanity trying to harmonize their own spiritual experience with what they came to believe was God’s work.

David: No disagreement here.

Eugene: Then, of course, there is the backwards parallel. What happened in Indiana would happen in SDA camp-meetings just before the close of probation, with dancing, drums, shouting, etc. While we can’t speak of genres of music from 110 years ago with great certainty, we know today that (whether in Africa, Australia, Walla Walla, or Sligo) no one is going to be raising a frenzy in religious service with marching music. That isn’t the effect of marching music. [Marching music] doesn’t help when what the performer wants is religious “dancing.”

David: Again, your ignorance of just what “marching music” can produce is on display here. . . Nearly all types of music can, when played with the intent to do so, create a “frenzy” or a “bedlam of noise.” My larger point was, and still is, this: the passage in 2SM cannot be used to endorse a certain style or genre of music, as such. It can and should, however, serve as a warning against false and demonstrative expressions of what sanctification is, and of the role that music can play in promoting those manifestations.

Eugene: The connection between the false view of sanctification and the music was two-fold. Haskell, like you, observed that it was used to promote the false views. Ellen White, going a step further, was shown that the music made man’s rational faculties unreliable so that he could not be “trusted to make right decisions.” {2SM 36.2}. In application this means that the music could be used by Satan to promote any number of erroneous opinions, all of which would be associated with the special blessing of the Spirit.

Here in Arkansas I have given studies to a dear lady that was part of a strange Pentecostal church, the Unity Pentecostals. They are sure that Jesus, the Father, and the Spirit are all just three names for one individual. They are sure. They had this revelation by the spirit.

I am just illustrating that the danger of dangerous music is that it makes the mind vulnerable to delusions. If an Adventist meeting is characterized by such music, then the audience is comparatively dupable.

Eugene: The “salvation army” method was, for Haskell, a way of expressing loud religious fervor, such as pleased the lower classes. But this was before you could expect a man to differentiate in his dising of the music between syncopated and not-syncopated music.

Though Ellen White doesn’t use the word “rhythm,” she does say enough to give you the idea that the music was, in her words, “A bedlam of noise [that] shocks the senses.” And she mentions only one type of instrumentation in 2SM 36.2. “Drums” were, in her view, symptomatic both of Indiana and of the end time issue with worship. If you are supposing that a new wave of marching music will fan out over Adventism robbing men of their senses, ok.

[David made it clear that he was advocating no such idea, only that the genres of yesteryear couldn’t be pinned on any particular genre today.]

But I think the evidence, both inspired and experiential, is against that. You mention that EGW has almost nothing to say about “drums.” OK, so she was writing at a time when those were not being used in the Adventist church. Except in Indiana. And did she mention them there? Yes, and she extrapolated a warning from that experience regarding the future.

David: This paragraph has problems. Your quick retreat away from your earlier point about rhythm is telling. Let me quote you exactly: “Its characteristics of prominent rhythm and loudness, were noted both by her...” You are, of course, wrong here since she says nothing at all about the music’s

“prominent rhythm.” Why, then, would you have thought so? The answer, I would guess, lies in your presuppositions about the passage. Am I mistaken? And if I am, could you then please explain, then, where you got the notion of “prominent rhythm” from?

Eugene: Brother David, I fail to see my retreat. The “drum” was, as I said above, noted uniquely in the paragraph. It is a purely percussion instrument. Though the cadence of the beats is not mentioned, the prominence of the drums use is highlighted by its unique mention.

But since you ask, I gather the prominence of the percussion from the prominence of its mention by the three persons we are referencing repeatedly: Ellen, Stephen, Betty.

David: As already mentioned above, I have no burden at all to suggest, as you put it, “a new wave of marching music fanning out over Adventism.” This is silly. As for the paucity of Ellen White counsel or reproofs on “drums,” your argument here is decidedly unpersuasive. How do you know that drums were not being used in church music? Do you have evidence for this? Or, as above, are you just “gathering” it? Furthermore, why does she mention nothing about the particular concern of the “drums” when addressing the GC? The answer is obvious if you’ll but see it: her concern was not about the drums, per se. It wasn’t even about the music, per se, but, as the whole chapter in 2SM makes clear, about false and demonstrative expressions of sanctification.

Eugene: I have some personal experience with this, David. When in India a little over a year ago, the drums were the cardinal aspect of the music. No one had taught the locals to sing well and so they all sang the melody except the large number that sang monotone. The music was loud. It was, as the Haskells might say, hard to think. Due to the amplifier, my wife could not understand what I was saying from 18 inches away, next to me on the pew.

I talked to several there and requested that during my sermon that there be only vocal singing. Afterward I sat down with the ministers. They explained to me that the particular type of drum was a cultural item that had always been used in Indian worship services. Later that day I met a special type of person in south central India...an old man that had been an Adventist since his youth. We talked. I learned from him (and confirmed it with others) that the music with the driving beat, and even the use of the drum, were new comers. The Adventists didn’t use those things even thirty years ago. But these young ministers brought them from the Pentecostal churches where they were raised.

Here in the states I have experienced evidence of drums-come-lately repeatedly. The use of drums in the Adventist church has, David, come into use even since you were weaned, though in some evangelical churches it happened a few years earlier. Ask grey-headed elders in drum-using SDA churches about when they began to use them. You *might* find one that used a drum before you learned to talk.

When you challenge conventional wisdom, the burden of proof lies on you. And it is conventional wisdom that drums have made their way into non-Pentecostal churches during

the last fifty years via Pentecostalism and the entertainment industry. (Representing conventional wisdom is this item from the Wikipedia article on worship:)

Since the beginning of charismatic movement of the 1960s there have been significant changes to Christian worship practices of many denominations. First, contemporary worship music is now widespread and can be found in many churches, including those that do not subscribe to a charismatic theology. This music is written in the style of popular music or folk music and therefore differs considerably from traditional hymns. It is frequently played on a range of instruments that would not have previously been used in churches such as guitars (including electric) and drum kits. Use of the pipe organ is therefore less prevalent.

The references to drums in our Adventist periodicals (there are about 50 of them up to 1950) are to wars, circuses, and to the ... you guessed it... Salvation Army. The latter was discussed (criticized) several times for its syncretic approach to inner city witnessing.

David: The music matters, yes, but your (and others') extrapolations from this single passage concerning "drums", rhythm, syncopation, etc. are wrongheaded and misleading.

Eugene: Let's set a few things straight. First, this single passage does say a lot. But I, for one, am not building my view on music uniquely from this. The structure is sturdier than that.

In the soil are the footings. The 2SM passage tells of a dangerous false revival that would come during the end-time period. It would be a satanic plan to unsettle the doctrinal position of Adventists so that they would know less than they once knew regarding doctrine. See 2SM 37.1 quoted above. Men would not be able to think well.

Elsewhere we find the rebar. Satan knows about music and uses it to charm the minds of listeners by excited unnamed organs.

Satan knows what organs to excite to animate, engross, and charm the mind, so that Christ is not desired.-- SD 179

What is played often in churches today is, IMO, fit for a dance hall. Angels withdrew from [dance-hall-like] music (this is not just an opinion), even when it was played outside of a worship environment for simple social pleasure.

Christians are gathered there, but what is that you hear? It is a song, a frivolous ditty, fit for the dance hall. Behold, the pure angels gather their light closer around them, and darkness envelops those in that dwelling. – MYP 295.

Additionally, when young Adventists assembled to sing songs, their taste and consequent choice in music was frequently dishonoring to God.

Young persons assemble to sing and, although professed Christians, frequently dishonor God and their faith by their frivolous conversation and their choice of music. Sacred music is not congenial to their taste. 1T 506.

On top of this inspired foundation (the half of which is not described here, though the most relevant pillars are mentioned) is built a temporary structure.

Men have tried to figure out just how it is that music can dishonor God, excite organs, and render rational beings unreliable. The inspired data doesn't specify the "how." But experiential data has supplied much data on this point. Which data is useful, that is a good question. Voodoo history? Maybe not. Maybe so. Anecdotal materials from the subcontinent of India? Maybe not. Maybe so.

Musicologists (yes, I have poured over the titles of their dissertations looking for useful material) have only rarely aimed their experiments at questions that would help us.

On another point, I tried to illustrate the weakness of an argument built on the paucity of uses Ellen White makes of drum. The argument and your response are below:

**Eugene:** Paul's writings do not say much in favor of Sabbath keeping. One sideways reference in Hebrews 4, and some confusing statements that aren't on topic, that is all we find. But it is a big issue today. It wasn't. Now it is. And we find in his writings plenty on the law that helps us defend the Sabbath. I am just illustrating that the paucity of EGW's use of "drum" is sensible even if the issue of drummy music was later to be a big one. (I just coined that silly word as a substitute for trying to remember how to spell r.th.m..t..c. I am a poor speller.)

**David:** This is a poor analogy. True, Paul does not speak often about the Sabbath, but much of the rest of the New Testament does. Including, importantly, the book of Revelation. Here we find that the end-time crisis will revolve around the law of God generally, and the Sabbath particularly. So there is hardly an analogous silence between Paul on the Sabbath and Ellen White on the drums. Furthermore, Ellen White, a modern prophet, speaks at length about the end-time centrality and significance of the Sabbath. It could theoretically be the case, I suppose, that another end-time prophet could be raised up to speak at length about the end-time centrality and significance of drums and rhythm. If this happened then you would have a stronger case and a much better analogy! In the absence of this, however, your comparison with Paul's relative silence on the Sabbath is rather strained.

**Eugene:** If I was trying to say that the world will be tested over drums, then that would be strained. But I am saying that in a particular lecture, or a particular book, or a particular prophetic author, silence is not very significant. That isn't strained. What is strained, David, is to gather from the absence of musical references in the anti-holy-flesh GC lecture, anything about music at all. Ellen White has important statements on music. She has other important statements on holy flesh. The categories overlap briefly in 2SM. But the lack of a wider overlap takes nothing from the value or significance of either.

Similarly, as drums were not a contemporary issue except in one corner of the Adventist vineyard, the history of inspiration would not authorize us to expect much to be written

regarding them by prophets. Bible prophets anticipate a billion tobacco smokers by [only] the most general principles, and that is because tobacco users were not in Judea. Ellen White anticipates modern worship music trends in the most general way (rebuking fanaticism, religious excitement, sensationalism, and by one well-placed references to future drum use) and that is because ... you get it.

David: But your analogy is weaker still, since it assumes that “drummy” music will become a “big” issue. Sure it may, but this is not easily deduced from 2SM. What is easily deduced is that there will be end-time deceptions regarding sanctification and that these will be accompanied by “wild demonstrations” and general “bedlam.” Drums may well be involved, but they needn’t be, as they are not an essential ingredient in human frenzy and folly. Drums can, of course, be played very nicely, beautifully, soothingly, and contemplatively. Clarinets can be played noisily and obnoxiously. So too oboes, harps, trombones, pan flutes, saws, trumpets, harmonicas, and guitars. The instrument isn’t the issue. This conclusion is further buttressed by the fact that, again, this is the only time Ellen White ever speaks about drums. Ever.

Eugene: The further we get from the statements, the more muddled [our] memory of them might become. I think, David, if you will reread the letter to Haskell you will find what might surprise you. For starters, the letter is about music and its relation to doctrinal innovation and not about false-sanctification, the particular doctrinal error of the [Indiana] participants. That is right. Just as the 1901 [General Conference] lectures were about the particular doctrine and mentioned nothing about the music, so this letter is about the music and mentions nothing about the particular doctrine. On the contrary, it shows that Satan was laying broad plans to make music a curse by its manner of performance. This could accompany any number of new and strange doctrinal aberrations and would have the purpose of neutering the evangelistic power of the camp-meetings. The root idea is that Satan intended to obscure the simple truth by means of music characterized as noted below.

“Those things which have been in the past will be in the future. Satan will make music a snare by the way in which it is conducted. God calls upon His people, who have the light before them in the Word and in the Testimonies, to read and consider, and to take heed. Clear and definite instruction has been given in order that all may understand. But the itching desire to originate something new results in strange doctrines, and largely destroys the influence of those who would be a power for good if they held firm the beginning of their confidence in the truth the Lord had given them.” {2SM 38.1}

I will not go into all the painful history; it is too much. But last January the Lord showed me that erroneous theories and methods would be brought into our camp meetings, and that the history of the past would be repeated. I felt greatly distressed. I was instructed to say that at these demonstrations demons in the form of men are present, working with all the ingenuity that Satan can employ to make the truth disgusting to sensible people; that the enemy was trying to arrange matters so that

the camp meetings, which have been the means of bringing the truth of the third angel's message before multitudes, should lose their force and influence. {2SM 37.3}

The Holy Spirit never reveals itself in such methods, in such a bedlam of noise. This is an invention of Satan to cover up his ingenious methods for making of none effect the pure, sincere, elevating, ennobling, sanctifying truth for this time. Better never have the worship of God blended with music than to use musical instruments to do the work which last January was represented to me would be brought into our camp meetings. The truth for this time needs nothing of this kind in its work of converting souls. A bedlam of noise shocks the senses and perverts that which if conducted aright might be a blessing. The powers of satanic agencies blend with the din and noise, to have a carnival, and this is termed the Holy Spirit's working. {2SM 36.3} No encouragement should be given to this kind of worship. The same kind of influence came in after the passing of the time in 1844. The same kind of representations were made. Men became excited, and were worked by a power thought to be the power of God....

**Eugene:** Regarding the unpersuasive reasoning of music presenters...Here you and I are very close to harmony. I have heard very poor reasoning accepted by audiences as if it were very good reasoning. Yuck. The shapes of snowflakes, the resonations of cells, the hearsay testimonies of performers and x-performers and of demons-confiding-in-spiritualists-who-later-became-believers. . . . Yuck. Yuck. Yuck.

**David:** We are singing out of the same hymnal here! Pun intended. It's fun to agree!

**Eugene:** What I have presented last summer at YD camp (I think they have it on their site somewhere) is what makes sense to me...a rational approach from inspired sources, combined with sensible caution. By sensible caution, I mean the kind that would have led a man to stop smoking in 1850. The science wasn't conclusive. Much wasn't even persuasive. But there was enough to warrant being careful with something as precious as life. The data on music is still out. You get my drift.

**David:** I'm sure that your presentation "[made] sense to [you]." I find that my presentations nearly always make sense to me; whether they are true is, of course, another matter altogether. ; )

**Eugene:** You make, David, a distinction between worship music (corporate and personal), relaxation music and entertainment. This is helpful. Happy Birthday isn't worship music. The Star-Spangled Banner is a good song. Handel's Water Music is nice. But music that allows demons to have a carnival and that causes the senses of rational beings to become confused...would be unhealthy for personal use too, even if it was used [and condemned] famously in [only] a corporate setting.

**David:** I've never attended a demonic carnival, so I have no idea what one would look like or what kind of music would accompany one. I have a guess, sure, but no hard evidence. You?

**Eugene:** Let's start by saying that we have been warned that demons want to bring some sort of music into our camp-meetings. They enjoy nonsensical dancing that results from a crescendoing performance. And, oh, have I seen this before? Yes sir. On TV. Benny Hinn. On You-Tube. Pentecostal mania. Yes, I have seen it. And what kind of music was it that

accompanied these strange doctrines and behaviors? The make-you-wanna-dance worship music that is frequently played in non-charismatic churches today. So has Satan given up on his plan to neuter our camp-meetings? Or has he just broadened it to neuter our preaching now that the camp-meetings have lost nearly 100% of their evangelistic thrust?

This, David, is where those key words, “sensible caution” come in. If my reason is very valuable to me, and if I despise the idea of worshipping with demons in “human form”, I will be the wise man that needs only be warned to be cautious. I will not need “hard evidence” before I avoid danger. Let me illustrate what I mean.

If you were in an airport and an announcement was made, “attention: calmly make your way to the nearest exit or emergency exit. There has been a bomb threat. Calmly ma...” and then screaming. People, nervous people tripping over each other trying to look calm while exiting, head for the doors. Now what about you, David? There is no hard evidence of a bomb. Most bomb threats are false alarms. Eighty percent chance, there is no bomb. And 99% chance that if there is one, it isn’t near enough to you to harm you. So, do you walk out? We don’t gamble with our physical lives, even 1% gambles, because we value life too highly. Value determines the level of significant caution.

When ten-thousand studious and faithful persons seek God’s will for their personal life and find in the Testimonies the same answer – namely that they should repudiate CCM – then that proves nothing. But it does indicate something. If another ten-thousand studious persons take the opposite position, that promises to make an interesting experiment. After ten years, will the groups have equal respect for the holiness of the Sabbath? For the seriousness of the Judgment? For the value of the nine volumes of the Testimonies? For the truthfulness of the 1844 Judgment? If I am wrong, then you should expect similar results from both groups. But if I am right, you should expect generally divergent results. I don’t say “universally divergent.” Stubborn strong-willed men with a reputation to defend and a job to keep...these men can hold on to true doctrine that they inwardly doubt much longer than do their nephews, nieces, children and friends.

And this isn’t just a case of conservative-mindset versus liberal mindset. Ten years is long enough to spoil the religious experience, for example, of many feast-day keepers. As Paul said, “Don’t be deceived, false doctrines bring bad behavior.” (my paraphrase of 1Cor 15.)

Among students that have personally studied under me, during the last 20 years, this has been played out repeatedly. You have been teaching now for ten years, I think. Look back.

Martin Weber, Clifford Goldstein, and, hmm, you. (I stayed with a group of canvassers in Martin’s MD church years ago while Clifford taught a Sabbath-school class there). That was a church with CCM and fairly conservative doctrines... the New Life SDA Church. What is it like today? Leave that question alone and the number of people I know that hold a position like the one I imagine you holding (because, yes, I am aware that you haven’t really said anything about the edges of your personal music approvals) is not large enough for me to see where it tendeth.

Except among my students. There the answer is very obvious. Those choosing the CCM route aren't doing as well as the rest, music aside.

**Eugene:** While 2SM is not a "systematic commentary" on any type of music, it most certainly is a thorough warning against something large, dark, end-timish, and identifiable. We should be warned.

David: True! And the warning is, first and foremost, about false views of sanctification and holiness. It is also a warning about "wild demonstrations," "shrieking," "noise," etc.

**Eugene:** Not True! The warning in 2SM wasn't about false views about sanctification. It was about many false views that would be connected to music of an exciting nature. But the "shrieking" wasn't mentioned by Ellen at all and, frankly, was a hypothetical comment by Haskell. If it caught his attention, it didn't catch Ellen's.

David: [The warning] is not, I am persuaded, about praise music, drums, rhythm, or syncopation. But let's remind ourselves that both the question and the answer I gave at the GYC were not about church music at all, but personal music choices and the genetic fallacy. So we are pretty far afield of the original inquiry here.

**Eugene:** My point, above, was that whatever music has the 2SM-specified impact in church is not one that you would want in your ipad. But let us be far afield. We are aiming to help each other. 😊

**Eugene:** You mention the many non-musical terms [like "noise," "bedlam," etc.] used for the music at Indiana. Remember that it was written by someone who had heard angels sing. After hearing YD campers sing scripture songs, much on AFR Radio would be described by me in unmusical terms also. But it would not be sensible to infer that I was listening to songs without melody. Rather, it would be sensible to infer that I found the melody to be drowning in a context of driving beat.

David: This is a weak argument and quite a jump. Just how is it "sensible to infer" a "driving beat" from Ellen White's repeated usage of "noise" and similar words? Huh? Did I miss something? I can think of plenty of other kinds of semi-musical "noise" that have little to do with the beat, much less a "driving" one. Why not just let the prophet say what she says? That seems the "sensible" thing to me. For the record, she says nothing at all about beats (much less "driving" ones), rhythms, syncopation etc. What she does say, repeatedly in fact, is: "noise." So what can we actually *safely* infer? Simple, it was very *noisy* music.

**Eugene:** OK, you get to neat material when you make your case for the noisiness of what happened. Here is what I think you miss. To cook the toad, you must not begin with the shrieks. Charismatics don't approach the church door jumping and hallooing. They start standing, with a good rousing first verse. And each verse warms up. Each chorus requires a little more noise and a little more harlem-wannabe. Then, someone gets the spirit and lookout...it gets exciting.

David: The old slippery slope argument, eh? Not really sure what to say here. I'm just content to stick with what she actually says rather than invoking some slippery gradient and then appointing myself as the determiner of how far along church A, B, and C is on said slope.

**Eugene:** But it starts with music. That is why Satan had to “invent” the idea. It doesn’t happen naturally. Not here, not in Africa, not in India. Anywhere you want that kind of behavior, you need a good planned warming-up period of either beat-driven music, or beat-driven non-music.

**David:** Are you suggesting that people can’t act wild, demonstrative, frenzied, possessed, out of control, and insane in the absence of music?

**Eugene:** So if the prophet looks and sees the active ingredient (not the melody, not the harmony) and makes uncharacteristic comments about its noisiness, let us not infer that the tumult was unrelated to excitement in the music. Nor let us infer that it was merely decibels that caused the excitement. Jet engines do not induce human gyrations.

**David:** There are so many assumptions here. First, why place only “melody” and “harmony” in parenthesis? Why not “rhythm” too? I’d wager that the presupposition that causes you to leave it out here is the same that caused you to mysteriously insert it when you wrote, incorrectly, of Ellen White’s noting” the “characteristics of prominent rhythm and loudness.” Loudness, yes; rhythm, no.

Second, I never suggested that the “tumult was unrelated to the excitement in the music.” Here is what I actually said: “Did the music help facilitate this [wildness and error]? Yes, it seems to have.” Why shouldn’t we infer that the “decibels” contributed majorly to “the excitement”? It seems as likely a candidate as any.

**Eugene:** Good point. The volume was then, and is now, an important element in the effects of the music. As an interesting aside, lets imaging 1000 teenagers in front of us. They are all listening to the music of their choice at the volume of their choice. They represent a wide range of genres. Some are playing classical music. A few are playing bluegrass. Most are playing music from popular bands. Two hundred of them are playing their music much louder than the others. Do you think, David, that those 200 have a similar mix of genres as the other 800? Or do their musical choices lean toward one end of the spectrum? [Are there types of music that lend themselves more naturally to loudness?]

**Eugene:** Though Ellen didn’t mention the music to the 1901 GC, remember that she had plenty of immediate concerns to address there. The music concern was a future one. Oh, and we do know a bit more about what happened in the Indiana precursor to modern times, than what can be seen in 2SM. I suppose that none of the following are new to you, but key phrases are bolded by me. You will notice regarding the Salvation Army, that Stephen and Betty mention both the high skill of the musicians and the audience feedback, as being the parallel features. So the bedlam wasn’t the result of musical clumsiness. Also, notice the nature of the appeal, with musical crescendo being the means of reaching a large part of the congregation. Betty’s testimony was that they used “dance” tunes with religious words. That was Indiana and that is relevant.

There is a great power that goes with the movement [Holy Flesh] that is on foot there. It would almost bring anybody within its scope, if they are at all conscientious, and sit and listen with the least degree of favor; because of the music that is brought to play in the ceremony. They have an organ, one bass viol, three fiddles, two flutes, three tambourines, three horns,

and a big bass drum, and perhaps other instruments which I have not mentioned. **They are as much trained in their musical line as any Salvation Army choir** that you ever heard. In fact, their revival effort is simply a complete copy of the Salvation Army method, and when they get on a high key, you cannot hear a word from the congregation in their singing, nor hear anything, unless it be shrieks of those who are half insane. After an appeal to come forward for prayers, a few of the leading ones would always come forward, to lead others to come; **and then they would begin to play on the musical instruments, until you could not hear yourself think**; and under the excitement of this strain, they get a large proportion of the congregation forward over and over again. —S. N. Haskell report to E. G. White, September 25, 1900.

David: Haskell's evaluation is very helpful. So let me set the record straight, at least in my own experience. I've preached in hundreds of Adventist churches, conventions, campmeetings, crusades, etc. and I've *never* seen anything resembling Haskell's description. Never. Nothing even close, actually. That line about the "shrieks of those who are half insane" is a telling one. Have you ever experienced this in an Adventist setting? I sure haven't. But I'm pretty sure I'll recognize it if and when I ever see it. So let's keep our eyes and ears open. In the meantime, let's not extrapolate Ellen White's specific and clear counsel in 2SM to our own purposes and ends, however well-intentioned we may think them to be.

Eugene: I am pleased that you have never witnessed anything like this. You are, of course, mostly invited to speak at the more conservative venues of the Adventist church. Try searching Youtube for "Are you ready for Church?" and see if anything interesting turns up. Where I am confident you have witnessed this kind of thing is in venues outside the Adventist church.

And this is the big change since Ellen White's day: many Adventist persons who have never heard their favorite genres in an Adventist setting yet hear them every day in the privacy of their own homes. Let's get back to the quotes.

We have a big drum, two tambourines, a big bass fiddle, two small fiddles, a flute and two comets, and an organ and a few voices. They have "Garden of Spices" as the songbook and play dance tunes to sacred words. They have never used our own hymn books, except when Elders Breed or Haskell speak, then they open and close with a hymn from our book, but all the other songs are from the other book. They shout Amens, and "Praise the Lord," "Glory to God," just like a Salvation Army service. It is distressing to one's soul. The doctrines preached correspond to the rest. "The poor sheep are truly confused." —Mrs. S. N. Haskell report to Sara McEnterfer, September 12, 1900.

I attended the camp meeting in September of 1900, which was held at Muncie, where I witnessed first-hand the fanatical excitement and activities of these people. There were numerous groups of people scattered all over the campground engaged in arguing and, when these fanatics conducted the services in the large pavilion, they worked themselves up to a high pitch of excitement by the use of musical instruments, such as: trumpets, flutes, stringed instruments, tambourines, an organ, and a big bass drum. They shouted and sang their lively songs with the aid of musical instruments until they became really hysterical. Many times I

saw them, after these morning meetings, as they came to the dining tent fairly shaking as though they had the palsy. —Burton Wade account to A. L. White, January 12, 1962.

David: And here again, we'll know this when we see it. People were, he says, "shaking as though they had the palsy." Yikes. They were "hysterical." Yikes. Haskell says there were "shrieks" as if from people "half insane." YIKES! So let me ask you, have you ever seen or experienced this in an Adventist setting? I can say with certainty that I most definitely have not. I can also say, again, that I'll certainly recognize it when I see it. I'm confident of this. You?

Eugene: David, maybe you are reading this the same as I am. But let me make sure. Most of the time there wasn't anything related to shrieking. When they hit their highest key they were loudest and then normal speech couldn't be heard in the room. A shriek could, perhaps, Haskell said. No one was hysterical early on. It took a-while to get that way. But after being that way for some time, the nerves were tired and one man noted that they were shaking from the excitement on exiting the tent. Now this is Benny Hinn prime-time television on whatever channels will sell him airtime. Now that same music is in the ipods of your youth group. You know how the devil uses it in Benny's meetings. But it is safe at home? Let's say it is dangerous there too. But if we sing those songs in our youth meetings, we do it without the accompaniment. It is quieter and far less exciting. No hysterics, just "amen" and "praise the Lord." This is where you and I see it when we are preaching.

Eugene: You write, kindly, "You are a systematically-minded person. Please appreciate the force of the (lack of) evidence." But, David, evidence is a plenty that prophets address current issues. If, by the 1901 GC, the movement was gone, but the doctrines would come again, then it was the doctrines that needed addressing immediately. And it was the music that would need addressing eventually. And don't gather from the musical silence of 1901 a more general silence on music. It would be an odd hermeneutic to say, for example, that since Acts 15 doesn't address eating with Gentiles, that the private issue between Peter and Paul in Galatians 2 wasn't really critical.

David: Was the movement gone by April 1901? Are you sure of this? If it was gone, then why did she address it? The fact that she addresses it at all strongly suggests that its influence was still a danger. Similarly, the fact that she doesn't address the "drums" (or the rhythm, syncopation, genre etc.) suggests, rather persuasively to my mind, that this was not her real concern at all. My hermeneutic isn't odd at all, so far as I can tell. I'm advocating that we hear what Ellen White actually wrote. Furthermore, whether you are willing to concede it or not, Ellen White's not speaking about "drums" in any other place in her voluminous writings is, in fact, hugely significant. Too, her never mentioning "rhythm" or "syncopation" are equally significant, your protestations notwithstanding.

Eugene: I think we won't make any more progress on this point. You say "she only mentioned drums once. They can't be a big problem." I say, "She mentioned them the first time and last time we know of them being used in an Adventist context and prophesied of their relevance in the end-time scenario." You say, "she only mentioned drums once. They can't be a big problem. She wrote a lot." I say, "her statements on the final false revival are plain and simple. One good warning ought to make us reverentially cautious." You say, "she only mentioned drums once and never mentioned rhythm or syncopation." I say, "She condemns tea and

coffee and describes their effects. She doesn't use the word 'caffeine.' But it is plainly the caffeine in the coffee that brings the effects. She mentioned drums as the only instrument worth noting that will be in the end-time false-revival and says it will bring excitement like that of Indiana. And it is plain to those who care to see that it is the drums that were mentioned that bring the excitement via syncopated rhythm." You say, "You can't prove it." I say "this warning is about something large enough and mainstream enough as to be in Adventist campmeetings before the end comes." You say, "it includes shrieks." I say, "Ellen White never said that. She warned of something less odd and more sinister. The devil isn't obvious." You say, "it includes shrieks." I say, "Haskell didn't even really say that except as a figure of speech." You say, "yikes, it included shrieks." I say, "it certainly included singing from a song-book of hymns put to dance tunes." You say, "yikes, it included shrieks!" I say, "It would deceive almost any conscientious person according to Haskell." You say, "I'll know it when I see it...it is too strange to be mistaken."

**Eugene:** So, maybe the above helps fill in the leap of logic that you found between points 1---5 and point 6. And I will add a little more about "most genres." David, it isn't most "styles." I don't know how to express this point well, so am glad you are familiar with music. But YD scripture songs, my own scripture songs, Christmas hymns, Belden hymns, Luther's hymns (let's not get into that one), "As Water to the Thirsty," "No More Night," etc., differ widely in styles of harmony, melody, ideal instrumentation, speed, timing structure, emotive impact, and in many other ways. But the way genres are divided is so lopsided, that it generally divides sounds on the basis of the nature of their driving drumminess. This is so true that when you buy a cheap keyboard, it has buttons for each genre and ... all those buttons do is give you the background beat for you to use. So Joy to the World can be arranged as Rock, R&B, Disco, etc. Almost same melody, similar chord structure...but the one song can be umpteen different genres.

That you do not recognize this as a gross oversimplification of the whole process and phenomenon of music is astounding. It is not at all the case that "drumminess" "generally divides" styles or genres of music. Music genres and styles are divided by, among other things: melody, harmony, rhythm, pace, time signature, instrumentation, timbre, volume, lyrics, complexity, culture, purpose, and so much more. Your black and white world is, I think, finding it difficult to understand and appreciate the many colors, hues, shades, nuances, and subtleties of musical identity and variation. I do not say this to insult you, but to chasten you, if mildly, for your pedestrian oversimplification. Music is a wonderful, glorious, nuanced, varied, colorful, expressive, joyous, and grand reality which should be celebrated, appreciated, and understood. I do not see a valuing of the depth of musical richness and beauty in your writings and reasoning. Forgive me for asking, but do you even like music? I mean really like it. Do you love it? How important, 1 to 10, would you rate music in your personal walk with God (with 10 being extremely important and 0 not at all important)? I am sincerely interested. For me, I'd say an 8 or 9. You?

**Eugene:** This gets too personal to be useful. But for the record, 6 or 7. I sing all the time and enjoy thoroughly what I identify as sacred music. I do not dabble with what I consider dangerous. And if I have criminally oversimplified the music I avoid, this is still remarkably true: Whatever genres the various radio stations carry, they are amazingly consistent with a

pattern of playing music with a prominent percussion orchestration. In other words, if I am wrong about music, it is a fascinating coincidence that during the changes in musical compositions of the last century, nearly all popular music has ended up on the side I have identified as dangerous. As Ellen White taught, the popular sheet music of the day, the music that is congenial to the tastes of the youth, is not sacred music.

**Eugene:** In other words, when I say in point 6 that “most genres” are Satan’s tool to do such and such, I am (emphatically) not saying that most of what could be called music is Satanic. I am just saying that most of what is played is part of an oddly small and particular subset of what could be played. And it is the same subset that we were warned would be played in our day by those claiming to be moved by the Holy Ghost. (OK, this happens within a few miles of my home every Sunday already; Several genres are used, but they are all used for the same purpose and with the same effect.)

**David:** I really don’t understand what you’re saying here. You lost me, can you explain it again? I do, however, understand your first sentence, and it brings me great relief to read it.

**Eugene:** I can try. The various churches in this area all generally using CCM in its various genres to produce exciting worship services. What is being played in these churches is such a small subset of what could be played that I think you could have wandered the planet for centuries (in ages past) without hearing anything like it. You would have heard panpipes and harpsichords, fiddles and conch shells, but nothing like you would now hear in evangelical and pentecostal churches from Denmark to Kenya and from Jakarta to Beijing and from Sydney to LA. This music has plowed over culturally local music on the planet. (And you travel, so you know what I am talking about. You can find lyrics from pop US songs written as graffiti in every one of the 35 or so nations I have visited.)

**Eugene:** Now you make a point that I have not substantiated any claim that your view differs from what Ellen White revealed. (And you hinted that you would accept an apology regarding what I said to Christine and John...but this is CC to them and I will confess instead that I over expressed to you how I had reacted so as to clear Christine and John from any suspicion of doubting your loyalty to the testimonies. In truth, I also expressed doubt to them that you really doubted the testimonies. And I think I did it with sufficient charity as to not owe any further apology on that point.)

So I can’t pin you with disregard for any EGW statement. But it seems to me that your view runs counter to these revealed EGW ideas:

1. Popular music is not sacred and sacred music is not popular.
2. Youth do not prefer sacred music; they rather have a taste for the popular music “of the day.”
3. Satan knows how to use music to excite certain organs of the body.
  - a. The result of those organs being excited is a loss of appetite for real spiritual food.
  - b. Many youth are lost as a result.

4. Music is a favorite idol of Sabbath keeping youth. Even wholesome music may be so. But tunes “fit for the dance hall” particularly sadden and repel holy angels.

[David responded that he was in agreement with these four points, adding that many things are idols. He asked for a reference for idea #4. It is MYP 295, quoted partially about 40% of the way to this point in the document.]

**Eugene:** OK, now you indicated that you didn’t want a 50 page response. Currently this is five pages. But if we get into issues of Daniel 3 and music, that will be long. (I mean, it could be long to discuss the interesting wording of Daniel 3 that seems to me, and not to you, to over emphasize the role of music in the story. What would be long is trying to resolve whether my view was justified.)

**David:** As for Daniel 3, there is no question or debate that music played an important, even determinative, role on Dura’s plain. If you mean to extrapolate that music’s presence and prominence In Daniel 3 has end-time implications, then you’ll have to argue for that. I tend to think your earlier assessment is generally correct: that, at best, it’s a “hint.” One, strangely, that John in Revelation or Ellen White in The Great Controversy did not pick up on. (Note: I count six uses of “music” in The Great Controversy, none of them referencing either Daniel 3 or an end-time worship-music-drums-rhythm deception.)

**Eugene:** You much overuse, methinks, the argument from silence. The GC was written for public distribution and does have an entire chapter on false revivals that could be written generically enough to catch them all in the net. Not all false revivals use inappropriate music.

**Eugene:** And as to the letters, your comments, A-I, they are partly addressed above and partly not. And the partly not...if we finish with the above and you are still interested, then we can get into what isn’t addressed.

**David:** So near as I can tell you’ve only interacted with my material regarding 2SM. You’ve dropped several of my points that I regard as important and informative. You are at liberty to interact with them or not; I have no great burden, as I’ve said, to persuade you one way or the other. I am open to any and all inspired evidence you can marshal to persuade me that I am presently out of harmony with the inspired counsel. That was, I think, your original purpose in writing, was it not?

**Eugene:** For the Third Party Reader: The nine points David refers to here are, in Eugene’s words,

- A. Personal music and corporate worship music are separate issues. [[This is addressed here.](#)]
- B. The primary way (not the unique way) that music affects us is by its lyrical content. [**Eugene:** The discussion is about the other ways that music affects us, but we agree that lyrics are important.]
- C. Inspiration does not treat music in any systematic way. It offers neither clear prescriptions nor proscriptions regarding rhythm, syncopation, etc. [[This is addressed here.](#)]
- D. Music is like food, taste oriented when not plain counsel guides us. [[This is agreed as noted here.](#)]

- E. Drums are not evil. [True, but they are uniquely mentions in our only warning about end-time music. [This is addressed here](#) and elsewhere.]
- F. Music labels (of genres) are not scientific and are even highly subjective. [Ok. Then I don't feel so bad about [over simplifying](#) on this issue.]
- G. The genetic argument is false. [[We agree. See here.](#)]
- H. Conservatives have made the issue of music a negative one. Shame. [Ouachita Hills College, Fountain View Academy, Young Disciple Camp; all places where music performance and composition are common; all produce radiate a positive message through music and regarding the same. Nevertheless, I agree with David that hobby-horse preaching isn't generally the most helpful. Still, if I am right regarding 2SM, then warnings are in order.]
- I. Our warnings and counsels shouldn't go an inch further than inspiration does. [This is both true and fool-hardy. It is true that fanaticism can be well-defined as going beyond inspiration. But it is fool-hardy to refuse to apply ancient warnings on the basis that they are not written with today's vocabulary. I mean, the body is the temple. But "weed" isn't mentioned. Drums and dancing will be part of the end-time revival, but syncopation isn't mentioned.]

**Eugene:** But, regarding the food analogy...yes, I agree that where danger doesn't warrant universal caution, taste and meekness warrants wide room for accepting each other's differences.

David: HALLELUJAH!!!!!!!!!! This is the brightest spot in the whole dialogue right now. I am SO happy to read these words. Let's put things in perspective. We both affirm, among other things: the Sabbath, 1844, the nature of man, the sanctuary, the Spirit of Prophecy, and much more. We appear to not completely agree on the music issue. Why might this be? Simple: Scripture is not as explicit regarding this subject as it is with, say, the Sabbath. We should recognize this difference for what it is: an important, though non-essential one. (This was precisely the point Jeffrey and I made repeatedly in our seminar, Mere Adventism.) I'm happy to move on and rejoice in our common Savior, doctrine, sonship, church, etc. If, however, we elect to continue this discussion, then you're going to have to bring better evidence and arguments, because so far, and I'm just being honest here, I have not been overwhelmed by the persuasiveness of your position. If anything, this discussion has served to further confirm my already-held convictions and beliefs regarding this subject.

**Eugene:** We can move on, David. I won't be able to help worrying about you. I apparently failed to make the snare apparent and I don't know what else to do. I hope you don't get caught. We agree on all these things you mentioned. So did Ballenger, Ford, Waggoner, Jones, Kellogg, Snook, etc. They changed for them. I doubt it was on the basis that the Bible wasn't clear enough (though they would all claim this was it). They held onto some unknown-to-us folly (sin).

**Eugene:** And regarding the "genetic fallacy," I have written on this also. And what I have written (an article titled "Pagan Influence and Demonic Doors") also expresses my opposition to the idea that origins incriminate. But I think it is an unwarranted assumption on your part when you say "who cares." If beat-driven music forms the basis for spiritualistic experiences where people get excited and

then get possessed, and if this happens in Africa and India and PNG in cultures that use different scales and unrelated melodies, but are united in their method of summoning spirits, then someone ought to at least question, “is it a coincidence? Or did spirits have a hand in developing the rudiments of spirit worship?” And if inspiration chimes in on how spirits try to design carnivals for themselves here in the USA, and if it matches what is done worldwide...then the argument isn’t really the genetic argument. It is the compelling-correlation argument instead.

David: We agree again!!! This is getting better all the time. Yes, I’d like to read this paper, as this is a particular interest of mine. Please, by all means, send it!

[Note: it was sent.]

David: In the absence of any plain “thus saith the Lord” on this certain-beats-summon-demons argument, it’s probably best to recognize the argument for what it is: weak and unpersuasive. For example, I count four “ifs” in the chain of your argument. I seriously doubt the first. I find the second to be an irrelevant generalization. The third, regarding demonic carnivals is also weak, since, so far as I’m aware, inspiration does not suggest that it is the drum, beat, rhythm, or syncopation that characterizes these carnivals. Your fourth “if” is essentially a restatement of your second. If you find this compelling, then, hey, more power to you. Do not be surprised, however, if people who are not already predisposed to you and your position find it otherwise.

Eugene: Even if the arguments were water-tight, I would not be surprised when people did not find them so. John 7:17 is ever at work. Logic can’t get men all the way to truth. Nonetheless, National Geographic articles have well-articulated the first affirmative of the first “if” and second “if” for several cultures, complete with pictures of persons losing their senses. (This is a memory, not a recent research.) On the third “if” I am merely paraphrasing the 2SM passage we are discussing. And, yes, the fourth is just the first and second.

Eugene: If I go any further, over five pages I go. And, as per your request, this is CC to Jeffrey, Don, and Christine [and John]. Yes, I think I did send them the previous letter, but as I am not sure, it is below for all to see. And, yes, thank you for writing a thought-provoking letter that gives evidence of caring seriously about truth.

David: Thank you for recognizing this fact. [David followed this with some personal matter that warranted a personal response.]

Be faithful,

Eugene Prewitt

## **David’s final response, August 21, 2013**

Eugene

Finally, after four months, a reply!

By my calculations, in the first three exchanges you waited for my responses, in total, 11 days. By contrast, I've waited for your three responses more than six months. Honestly, I thought the conversation was all but over after you sent the following email on March 20th:

"Wow, you didn't need much time to respond to that last email. But as I don't foresee myself soon taking time to dig up good evidence for my various points that you find unsupported, I think dropping things until then is sensible."

Alas, to my surprise, the conversation continueth!

I'm going to venture a guess that your time is well-occupied with other pressing matters, and that this dialogue is low-ish on your priorities. No problem with me! I understand and empathize with the press of opportunities, responsibilities, and family. Consequently, I'm going to strive for brevity here. Therefore, rather than aiming, as I have in past responses, to address each point (and add a few of my own!), I'm going to be selective and interact with what I take to be the high points of your most recent response. Here we go, this should be fun...

1. Regarding CCM, I'm not sure what to say. Firstly, I'm not certain just what it is, but for simplification purposes I'll treat it like you apparently do: as a kind of well-defined genre. Given this qualification, I can tell you that I find some of it perfectly insipid and biblically vacuous and some of it perspicaciously beautiful and biblically sound.
2. The rumor about my having "taken ARISE students to such a concert" is a new one. Firstly, ARISE students are adults, all of them being older than 18. Most are in their 20s and 30s, so I'm not sure how I would "take" them somewhere apart from their own willingness to go; they're not elementary children going with Mr. Asscherick on a field trip. But more to the point, I can count the number of "CCM" concerts I've been to on five fingers: Andrew Peterson, Fernando Ortega, Sara Groves, and Sons of Korah twice. None of these have been ARISE functions as such, though it's likely that past, present, and/or future ARISE students accompanied me to some of them. I can confirm that each of the concerts was excellent and spiritually edifying. I would've been perfectly happy for any ARISE student, or anyone else for that matter, to have accompanied me. One of the concerts, Andrew Peterson, was hosted by the Troy, Michigan Seventh-day Adventist Church while I was the senior pastor there. It was positively received by all who attended; that was 10 years ago. I'm not sure if, for you, this confirms or dispels the rumor you heard, but at least now you have the facts.

3. I'm happy that you want me, my wife, and my children to be safe. Your love and concern is, once again, both noted and appreciated. However, you should know that people who are every bit as committed as you are to Scripture, the Spirit of Prophecy, and the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and who happen to know me far better than you, do not share your concern. I am no Lone Ranger and never have been; I am now, and always have been, surrounded by an excellent and godly team of fellow ministers and believers. I've shared this dialogue with some of them and they, like me, find both your concern and basic perspective unpersuasive. I don't say this to be dismissive of your overtures, but informative.
4. I think we've adequately covered our differing perspectives on the 2SM passage. I remain committed to my understanding of that passage, as nothing you've said has succeeded in overturning my analysis. I continue to find my evaluation, which I've already articulated with sufficient length and clarity, positively persuasive and true to the historical, grammatical, systematic, and larger biblical context.
5. You unashamedly expose the anecdotal nature of much of your approach in your story of the Unitarian Pentecostal. There are, of course, people who listen to and enjoy what you would undoubtedly call "wholesome music" whose doctrine is far afield of Scripture. Too, there are people who listen to and enjoy music you would undoubtedly call "dangerous" whose doctrine is roundly and solidly biblical. Causation and correlation are not at all the same thing. And simply telling the story of the Pentecostal woman does nothing at all to establish or buttress your central thesis.
6. You wrote that Ellen White noted the music's "prominent rhythm," even placing that phrase in quotation marks, suggesting that she had written it. The fact remains that she did not write that phrase. Moreover, she never wrote on the issue of rhythm in music at all, so far as I am aware.
7. Thank you for the "IMO" in the following sentence: "What is played often in churches today is, IMO, fit for a dance hall." So long as you can stick to your own convictions and your own "IMO," all will be well. Not surprisingly, I have my own "IMO," as does everyone else. Of course you wouldn't say, nor would I, that "Saturday is the Sabbath, IMO" or "Pork is unclean, IMO." Opinions, it has been said, are like noses: everyone has one.
8. Thank you for recognizing the anecdotal nature of your India experience with the following sentences: "Anecdotal materials from the subcontinent of India? Maybe not. Maybe so."
9. I do not deny, of course, that the 2SM passage speaks to the issue of music. You have never heard that from me, and never will. Anyone with a modicum of reading comprehension can see that Ellen White has something significant to

say about music there. The question, though, is what is she saying? I have made my case, which I continue to find persuasive, that music was a contributing factor but not her central concern. This is evidenced by the historical fact that when she addressed the General Conference in 1901 about the Indiana situation, she mentioned little about the music and nothing about the drums specifically. You concede this point when you write, in your recent reply: “Just as the 1901 [General Conference] lectures were about the particular doctrine and mentioned nothing about the music, so this letter is about the music and mentions nothing about the particular doctrine.” Actually though, you overstate the case, as she does speak about the music somewhat, but it clearly isn’t her primary burden. This, then, is helpful to us on another level: Ellen White’s only mention of “drums” was in a private letter to Haskell. If you cannot see the significance of this, then there is very likely nothing that I could say which you would find persuasive. To summarize: music is a powerful (and wonderful!) force which can be used for good or, sadly, for ill. We should be aware of Ellen White’s counsel that, “Satan will make music a snare by the way in which it is conducted.” We should be especially on the lookout for instances in which doctrinal integrity is sacrificed at the hands of wild demonstrations and emotionalism. As someone who takes the writings of Ellen White seriously, my eyes are open, looking for this. This was true before this conversation started, and will continue to be true when it’s over.

10. You will forgive me for not interacting with your airport/bomb analogy and just sticking to the inspired data. I find the analogy interesting but ultimately unhelpful.
11. Too, your “ten-thousand studious and faithful persons” analogy is, to me, entirely unilluminating. The whole analogy hinges on, among other things, the assumption that CCM is a well-defined and uniformly harmful genre. Something that has become clear, to me at least, in this dialogue is your propensity to oversimplify issues that are by their very nature nuanced and personal. Have you, for example, ever heard the song *How Deep the Father’s Love for Us*? My question is not whether or not you like it; that would be a subjective matter of taste. My question is do you find it dangerous? If you’ve not heard it, check out Fernando Ortega’s superb version. This song was written within the last 20 years, so that makes it definitionally “contemporary.” It’s also a patently “Christian” song lyrically. And it’s made up of melody, harmony, and rhythm; that is, it’s music. Voila! It’s CCM—Contemporary Christian Music. Are you ready to color this song as “dangerous” and as a threat “to spoil the religious experience”? Furthermore, it was written by a non-Seventh-day Adventist. Too, Fernando Ortega, the performer, is a non-Seventh-day Adventist. What are we to do? To make of this? Examples could be multiplied. To recap: is there bad CCM? Sure, no one with a brain disputes this. Is there beautiful and good CCM? Yes, of course there is. This being the case, your oversimplifications and analogies only serve to muddy the waters. As I wrote earlier: I can tell you that I

find some of it [CCM] perfectly insipid and biblically vacuous and some of it perspicaciously beautiful and biblically sound.

More could, of course, be written. But to what end? To allay your concerns? Or to persuade you of the tenuousness of your position? Neither of these is likely.

Might we now draw the curtain of charity over this protracted exchange? Your points have been made and understood. Your concerns have been registered. If you have new (preferably inspired!) material to bring to bear on the conversation, please do so. If not, then perhaps we should, in the interest of the other claims on our time, wrap this up.

Have a great day!

David Asscherick

### **Eugene's summary, August 22, 2013**

Hi David,

See attached...a faster response than average.

Listened to Sons of Korah, Psalm 117 this morning during breakfast. Yes, this is just what I mean by CCM, so we aren't just talking past each other. (Once you mentioned Sons of Korah, it jogged my memory that that was indeed the group the student had been talking about.)

The attached is 1600 words rather than 1500. Please take 1700 if you wish and call it good. I couldn't find 100 words to cut without feeling bad about it.

After you write your reply, I understand that you will put all these together into a document that we can distribute.

--Eugene

### **Here is the text from the attached document:**

Dear David,

Yes, let's wrap it up. As we agreed a few weeks ago, let's each make a purposeful and brief summary and make it as tidy as possible. Here is mine. This is really more for the persons that are faced with pawing through our ponderous exchange. It gives them something short to remember.

When Moses came down from the mount he heard singing. It was dance music. And in the tradition of yesterday's English, what he heard is called "noise."

Ex 32:18 And he said, It is . . . the noise of them that sing do I hear. 19 And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing:

These are key elements in the 2SM passage, a prediction of a future fanaticism...

Every uncouth thing will be demonstrated. There will be shouting, with drums, music, and dancing. The senses of rational beings will become so confused that they cannot be trusted to make right decisions. And this is called the moving of the Holy Spirit. {2SM 36.2}

You have argued that this prophecy of corporate worship has little bearing on private use of music. I have countered that it is not even safe in private to have our senses so confused that we cannot be trusted to make wise decisions.

You have argued that this prophecy is of a coming doctrinal error, of false views regarding sanctification. I have countered that it is a prophecy of *how* error comes, not of *which* error will come.

This is an invention of Satan to cover up his ingenious methods for making of none effect the pure, sincere, elevating, ennobling, sanctifying truth for this time. Better never have the worship of God blended with music than to use musical instruments [as] ... was represented to me would be brought into our camp meetings. {2SM 36.3}

You have argued that God has gifted young men and women with musical skills that are unappreciated because of the way persons like me misapply this passage. I counter that it isn't the Holy Spirit that gives this type of musical skill to men. As the statement says above, it is an "invention of Satan."

The truth for this time needs nothing of this kind in its work of converting souls. {2SM 36.3}

You have argued extensively that the predicted danger would be extreme, being already preceded by the screams of the half insane, of nerves frayed to the point of physical exhaustion, and of volume so loud that words were inaudible. I have countered that, first, you have abused Haskell's picturesque description of certain high-pitched crescendos. From his wording I can't even be certain he ever heard a shriek, only that he said it would take something that piercing to be audible at the loudest points.

I have countered, second, that when Ellen White was shown the future, she mentioned nothing that doesn't describe well what it already done in some youth tents in

Adventist gatherings today. (And Ron Duffield kindly emailed both of us with detailed confirmation of the same.)

Many of Ellen White's statements on music are to youth. She warns them against following their "tastes" in their choice of music as this will not lead them to select "sacred" music.

While we have agreed that much public reasoning on music is flawed in terms of science and credibility, we have not agreed in regard to how to proceed. While you demand proof before taking a cautious approach to CCM (think *CCM Magazine*, not music-composed-lately), I argue that caution is warranted by the Ellen White statements alone. In the famous vision of the "narrow way" as the Adventist pilgrims were left to support their entire weight on the green cord, they heard *music* and the "*dance song*." It came, with other evidence of profane living, from far below.

We then suspended nearly our whole weight upon the cords, exclaiming: "We have hold from above! We have hold from above!" . . . As we heard the sounds of mirth and revelry that seemed to come from the abyss below, we shuddered. We heard . . . low, vile songs. We heard the war song and the dance song. We heard instrumental music, and . . . were more anxious than ever to keep upon the narrow, difficult pathway. {LS 191.2}

Regarding the 2SM use of the word "drums," you have argued that this is a unique statement and a private letter. Hence, it should not be made a foundation for practice. In effect, you have argued that these facts belittle its relevance, as if something important would be repeated more times and given more publicly.

I counter that in the *one time* when we know of drums being used in Adventist meetings, Ellen White was shown in vision that it would happen again later at the instigation of Satan. The problem was rare in the prophet's day, but her one statement didn't predict that it would be rare or inconsequential in the future. Rather, she predicted it would be in "our campmeetings" and that it would be a serious danger. And though she sent it as a private letter to a prominent worker, she preserved a copy in her file for broader and general use later (as per her diary.)

I confess, David, that you seem oblivious to the idea that the changes in music during the last century are part of a demonic scheme. Your position almost seems to be, "each generation has its contemporary music. One generation's tastes are as good as another's. Satan isn't really behind the general trends."

Do you remember the cooked toad illustration?

While you believe Ellen White's statement that Satan uses music to stimulate "organs" of the youth and to reduce spiritual power, you seem unimpressed by the idea that music is a serious danger for the youth. "Many things can be an idol," you seem to say,

as if Satan wasn't particularly using popular music to undermine the spirituality of youth.

Music, when not abused, is a great blessing; but when put to a wrong use, it is a terrible curse. It excites, but does not impart that strength and courage which the Christian can find only at the throne of grace while humbly making known his wants and, with strong cries and tears, pleading for heavenly strength to be fortified against the powerful temptations of the evil one. Satan is leading the young captive. Oh, what can I say to lead them to break his power of infatuation! He is a skillful charmer luring them on to perdition. {AH 407.4}

You have challenged me repeatedly regarding my ignorance of music, its genres, its effects, and even of the rowdiness of bowl games on public campuses. Now, by all accounts, I have a deep interest in harmonics and the math behind music. I thoroughly enjoy the non-CCM contemporary productions of modern schools-of-the-prophets. I make a hobby of picking up new instruments and learning to play them.

But I view your public exposure to music in your pre-Christ years as rather a detriment to you and your ability to conclude accurately. And my experience with Ouachita Hills and Young Disciple Camp, I believe, has exposed me to what the Spirit really is doing in terms of musical composition today. It is in an article titled "The Schools of the Prophets" that Ellen White wrote:

Parents should not employ to instruct their children, a teacher of music who has no reverence for sacred things, nor should they allow them to learn and practice dance songs and frivolous music. How wide the difference, between the schools of ancient times, under the supervision of God himself, and our modern institutions of learning. {ST, June 22, 1882}

You have argued that we have so much in common – our doctrinal positions on the Sanctuary, the 2300 days, the Spirit of Prophecy, the Seal of God, the Three Angel's Messages, that we ought to be able to get along while differing on music.

I give you all of that. We should be able to get along. But, David, almost every fanatic I have ever known holds these same truths in common with me. The Shepherd's Rod, the antitrinitarians, the lunar sabbatarians, the followers of Ernie Knoll, etc., all hold these same positions.

My point is only this: If you are a force that encourages Adventist youth to be less cautious regarding their musical choices, then you are a danger to the youth. You should be publicly opposed and, by all legitimate means, discredited regarding your position on music.

As per our agreement, you get the last 1500 words. I won't have a chance to respond to them before our dialogue becomes quite public. So I hope the readers will study the material in the Testimonies personally.

We live in a dangerous age, “perilous times” as Paul says. The “shaking.” We live in the antitypical Day of Atonement when God calls for us to humble our hearts. (I hope our readers will study this idea until they understand its relevance.)

Joel 2:12 Therefore also now, saith the LORD, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning:

Adventists know these things. More than others, we ought to see through Satan’s end-time efforts to reduce soul-searching and to replace it with stimulation that can be confounded with the moving of the Spirit.

We should see method to Satan’s madness. I wish I could make you see it.

Be faithful,  
Eugene

### **David's summary, August 29, 2013**

Eugene

Thank you for the summary.

I have found our interaction enjoyable and intellectually and spiritually edifying. I am satisfied that my last response to you, dated August 21, serves as a representative summary of our dialogue. This being the case, I refer you, and other potential readers, back to that email.

Regarding your final summary, in my March 19 email I made the following request: “Please labor to represent my position accurately, as this will enable genuine dialogue.” In your summary I count seven times where you employ the phrase: “you have argued.” Your purpose, no doubt, is to summarize what you take to be my central points, and then to refute them. This would be a sound strategy if 1) this were a debate and 2) you had, in keeping with my request, “represented my position accurately.”

Regarding the first, this is not a debate but a dialogue. The distinction is not a meaningless one. You wrote me, initially, as a concerned brother. You invited me to “to preach in harmony with what has been revealed.” There was a mutuality in your tone when you added, “I bid us both to take heed lest either of us fall.”

So this is no debate.

I have not “argued” as much as I have offered my sincere responses to your queries. I have maintained my position not out of polemical necessity or, I hope, stubbornness,

but because I have found both your concern and the reasoning upon which it is based to be unpersuasive, anecdotal, and stretched. Your overtures are appreciated, and they have been given their proper and considered attention.

Regarding the second, your repeated phrase “you have argued” suffers, as does much of your end of the conversation, from oversimplification and an apparent aversion to nuance. Unsurprisingly, I rather prefer my own articulation of my position to your inexact summaries.

Let me treat each of them briefly.

1. *“You have argued (#1) that this prophecy of corporate worship has little bearing on private use of music.”*

What I’ve actually said (from my initial reply, dated January 5):

“The music question should be divided into (at least) two major sub-headings: 1)music in church and 2)music in one’s personal experience, whether for worship, relaxation, or entertainment. These are two related but different issues. The first is primarily an ecclesiastical issue that should be addressed utilizing the principles of Romans 14 (and other passages) regarding ‘doubtful disputations’ in a church setting. The second is more of a pure music issue. Not all ‘personal’ music need be appropriate for church, any more than all clothes a Christian can conscientiously wear need be appropriate for church”

2. *“You have argued (#2) that this prophecy is of a coming doctrinal error, of false views regarding sanctification.”*

This is not an altogether inaccurate summary of what I’ve said, but neither is it complete. Here’s what I’ve actually said (from my January 11 email):

“[Ellen White’s] concern and burden which she shared with the GC, appears to be primarily two-fold: 1)a false view of sanctification (‘holy flesh’) through a loss of Bible-based primacy (‘Keep within the bounds of the Bible’ 2SM 33.) and 2)various charismatic demonstrations. Did the music help facilitate this? Yes, it seems to have. But, and here’s the point, the music was not at all her primary concern, much less its rhythm or its use of drums.

And (from my August 21 email):

I have made my case, which I continue to find persuasive, that music was a contributing factor but not her central concern. This is evidenced by the historical fact that when she addressed the General Conference in 1901 about the Indiana situation, she mentioned little about the music and nothing about the drums specifically.

3. *“You have argued (#3) that God has gifted young men and women with musical skills that are unappreciated because of the way persons like me misapply this passage. I counter that it isn’t the Holy Spirit that gives this type of musical skill to men. As the statement says above, it is an ‘invention of Satan.’”*

This one, frankly, is a shocker. Firstly, you’ve conflated a couple ideas of mine into a single point. Secondly, I marvel that you can so insouciantly proscribe the musical skill of all who fall outside your own personal (and narrow!) definition of what constitutes “wholesome music” as Satanic. Umm, yea, I’ll just let that one alone, as I cannot now easily marshal a response that would convey the depth of my incredulity at your confident dismissal of others’ talents, skills, and passions. Thirdly, here is what I’ve actually said (from my January 5 email):

“How many talented, creative musicians have been chased away by various narrow prescriptions and proscriptions regarding music? Only heaven knows. What a tragedy. But the message is often clear: we don’t need your talents and creativity here, not unless you acquiesce to this particular genre, philosophy, and/or style of music.”

4. *“You have argued (#4) extensively that the predicted danger would be extreme, being already preceded by the screams of the half insane, of nerves frayed to the point of physical exhaustion, and of volume so loud that words were inaudible.”*

Firstly, I have not, at any point in this conversation, used the words/phrases “extreme”, “frayed”, “nerves”, “physical exhaustion”, “volume so loud that words were inaudible”, or even “inaudible” by itself. So this is already a manifestly poor *summary* of anything I’ve said. But what’s more, you’re the one who has employed some of these very words and phrases!

Here’s what I’ve actually said (from my March 19 email):

“That line about the ‘shrieks of those who are half insane’ is a telling one. Have you ever experienced this in an Adventist setting? I sure haven’t. But I’m pretty sure I’ll recognize it if and when I ever see it. So let’s keep our eyes and ears open. In the meantime, let’s not extrapolate Ellen White’s specific and clear counsel in 2SM to our own purposes and ends, however well-intentioned we may think them to be.”

And (from my August 21 email):

“We should be aware of Ellen White’s counsel that, ‘Satan will make music a snare by the way in which it is conducted.’ We should be especially on the lookout for instances in which doctrinal integrity is sacrificed at the hands of wild demonstrations and emotionalism. As someone who takes the writings of Ellen

White seriously, my eyes are open, looking for this. This was true before this conversation started, and will continue to be true when it's over."

5. *"Regarding the 2SM use of the word 'drums,' you have argued (#5) that this is a unique statement and a private letter. Hence, it should not be made a foundation for practice. In effect, you have argued (#6) that these facts belittle its relevance..."*

What I've actually said is that Ellen White wrote the word "drums" basically *once*, and that in a private letter. These are facts, however inconvenient. Furthermore, after months of reflection on the Indiana situation she, in her 1901 address to the General Conference, made no mention of drums (or rhythm, syncopation, beat, etc.) I have not, in any sense, "belittled" her 2SM statement. What I have sought to do is to *contextualize* it. That is, to understand it in both its specific historical and larger systematic contexts. This is the responsible thing to do, and in no way constitutes a "belittling" of her giftedness, generally, or of the 2SM statement, specifically. If anything, you (and others) have hyper-magnified this single statement into a kind of Rosetta Stone that was never intended. It's you who must explain the paucity of inspired data on drums (rhythm, syncopation, beat, etc.).

6. *"You have argued (#7) that we have so much in common – our doctrinal positions on the Sanctuary, the 2300 days, the Spirit of Prophecy, the Seal of God, the Three Angel's Messages... I give you all of that. We should be able to get along. But, David, almost every fanatic I have ever known holds these same truths in common with me."*

Alas, you are attracted to the anecdotal like a moth to flame! My point, which I cannot believe you could've missed, is that Scripture is not explicit with regards to an endorsement or proscription of one genre of music versus another. Here is what I've actually said:

"Scripture has nothing to say in terms of endorsing one particular style or genre of music above another as somehow sacred, holy or preferred. Music is wonderfully varied, from bluegrass to classical to folk to Celtic and much more beyond. Moreover, we have no idea, for example, what David's music, composed in Palestine's ancient pastures, sounded like. God could've prescribed a particular style or type of music had he so desired—music with certain a pace, choice of instruments, lyrical content, and/or rhythmic profile, for example—but he didn't. I believe at least part of the reason for this is seen in the natural world, whether with birds, insects, fish, plants or people: God seems to value variety, and value it highly."

Your suggestion and charge that I may somehow be "a force that encourages Adventist youth to be less cautious regarding their musical choices" is a fascinating one. Of course, I have done no such thing. What I have done, and will continue to do, is to encourage people (young and old, Adventist and non-Adventist) to think and act *biblically* with regards to their music, entertainment, and recreation choices.

If you determine that that is something you should oppose “publicly... by all legitimate means,” then, well, more power to you, I suppose.

But be sure of this: while you’re opposing, I’ll be doing what I love and live to do: preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the context of the Three Angels’ Messages.

*Praise Him with the sound of the trumpet;  
Praise Him with the lute and harp!  
Praise Him with the timbrel and dance;  
Praise Him with stringed instruments and flutes!  
Praise Him with loud cymbals;  
Praise Him with clashing cymbals!  
Let everything that has breath praise the LORD!*

—Psalm 150

Peace!  
David

## **Appendix: some relevant Ellen White statements compiled by Eugene**

### **MYP 295**

Angels are hovering around yonder dwelling. The young are there assembled; there is the sound of vocal and instrumental music. Christians are gathered there, but what is that you hear? It is a song, a frivolous ditty, fit for the dance hall. Behold, the pure angels gather their light closer around them, and darkness envelops those in that dwelling. The angels are moving from the scene. Sadness is upon their countenances. Behold, they are weeping. This I saw repeated a number of times all through the ranks of Sabbath keepers, and especially in \_\_\_\_\_. Music has occupied the hours which should have been devoted to prayer. Music is the idol which many professed Sabbath-keeping Christians worship. Satan has no objection to music, if he can make that a channel through which to gain access to the minds of the youth. Anything will suit his purpose that will divert the mind from God, and engage the time which should be devoted to His service. He works through the means which will exert the strongest influence to hold the largest numbers in a pleasing infatuation, while they are paralyzed by his power. When turned to good account, music is a blessing, but it is often made one of Satan’s most attractive agencies to ensnare souls. When abused, it leads the unconsecrated to pride, vanity, and folly. When allowed to take the place of devotion and prayer, it is a terrible curse. Young persons assemble to sing and, although professed Christians, frequently dishonor God and their faith by their frivolous conversation and their choice of music. Sacred music is not congenial to their taste. I was directed to the plain teachings of God’s word, which had been passed by unnoticed. In the judgment all these words of inspiration will condemn those who have not heeded them.--"Testimonies for the Church," Vol. 1, p. 506.

### **ISM 334**

Music is of heavenly origin. There is great power in music. It was music from the angelic throng that thrilled the hearts of the shepherds on Bethlehem’s plains and swept round the world. It is in music that our praises rise to Him who is the embodiment of purity and harmony. It is with music and songs of victory that the redeemed shall finally enter upon the immortal reward.

**Ev 505**

Music can be a great power for good; yet we do not make the most of this branch of worship. The singing is generally done from impulse or to meet special cases, and at other times those who sing are left to blunder along, and the music loses its proper effect upon the minds of those present. Music should have beauty, pathos, and power. Let the voices be lifted in songs of praise and devotion. Call to your aid, if practicable, instrumental music, and let the glorious harmony ascend to God, an acceptable offering.

**SD 179**

I feel alarmed as I witness everywhere the frivolity of young men and young women who profess to believe the truth. . . . They have a keen ear for music, and Satan knows what organs to excite to animate, engross, and charm the mind, so that Christ is not desired. . . . Solemn responsibilities rest upon the young, which they lightly regard. The introduction of music into their homes, instead of inciting to holiness and spirituality, has been the means of diverting their minds from the truth. Frivolous songs and the popular sheet music of the day seem congenial to their taste. The instruments of music have taken time which should have been devoted to prayer. Music, when not abused, is a great blessing; but when put to a wrong use, it is a terrible curse. | | It excites, but does not impart that strength and courage which the Christian can find only at the throne of grace while humbly making known his wants and, with strong cries and tears, pleading for heavenly strength to be fortified against the powerful temptations of the evil one. Satan is leading the young captive. Oh, what can I say to lead them to break his power of infatuation! He is a skillful charmer luring them on to perdition.

**Ev 510**

Great improvement can be made in singing. Some think that the louder they sing the more music they make; but noise is not music. Good singing is like the music of the birds--subdued and melodious.

**II****MYP 291**

The history of the songs of the Bible is full of suggestion as to the uses and benefits of music and song. Music is often perverted to serve purposes of evil, and it thus becomes one of the most alluring agencies of temptation. But, rightly employed, it is a precious gift of God, designed to uplift the thoughts to high and noble themes, to inspire and elevate the soul.

**3SM 333**

Brother U has a good knowledge of music, but his education in music was of a character to suit the stage rather than the solemn worship of God. Singing is just as much the worship of God in a religious meeting as speaking, and any oddity or peculiarity cultivated attracts the attention of the people and destroys the serious, solemn impression which should be the result of sacred music. Anything strange and eccentric in singing detracts from the seriousness and sacredness of religious service.

**2SM 36**

It is impossible to estimate too largely the work that the Lord will accomplish through His proposed vessels in carrying out His mind and purpose. The things you have described as taking place in Indiana, the Lord has shown me would take place just before the close of probation. Every uncouth thing will be demonstrated. There will be shouting, with drums, music, and dancing. The senses of rational beings will become so confused that they cannot be trusted to make right decisions. And this is called the moving of the Holy Spirit.

**Ev 512**

The superfluities which have been brought into the worship in \_\_\_\_\_ must be strenuously avoided. . . . Music is acceptable to God only when the heart is sanctified and made soft and holy by its facilities. But many who delight in music know nothing of making melody in their hearts to the Lord. Their heart is gone "after their idols."

**SpTB05 42**

On one occasion, when the armies of Israel were to go up to battle, the Lord commanded that they take with them singers and instruments of music. They went into the battle singing the high praises of God. When their enemies heard this music, the Lord caused fear to fill their hearts, and they fled. We need to have more music and less groaning. May God help us to put faith into our work, remembering that if trial comes, it will be because we need it.

### III

#### 2MR 347

Item 2. [Requested by A. L. White for use in answering questions on Ellen G. White's attitude toward secular music.]

For about an hour the fog did not lift and the sun did not penetrate it. Then the musicians, who were to leave the boat at this place, entertained the impatient passengers with music, well selected and well rendered. It did not jar upon the senses as the previous evening, but was soft and really grateful to the senses because it was musical.--Letter 6b, 1893. (Regarding the landing in New Zealand in Feb., 1893.)

#### CT 145

The first lessons are of great importance. It is customary to send very young children to school. They are required to study from books things that tax their young minds, and often they are taught music. Frequently the parents have but limited means, and an expense is incurred which they can ill afford, but everything must be made to bend to this artificial line of education. This course is not wise. A nervous child should not be overtaxed in any direction and should not learn music until he is physically well developed.

#### Ev 505

I have been shown the order, the perfect order, of heaven, and have been enraptured as I listened to the perfect music there. After coming out of vision, the singing here has sounded very harsh and discordant. I have seen companies of angels, who stood in a hollow square, every one having a harp of gold. . . . There is one angel who always leads, who first touches the harp and strikes the note, then all join in the rich, perfect music of heaven. It cannot be described. It is melody, heavenly, divine, while from every countenance beams the image of Jesus, shining with glory unspeakable.

#### Ev 508

In their efforts to reach the people, the Lord's messengers are not to follow the ways of the world. In the meetings that are held, they are not to depend on worldly singers and theatrical display to awaken an interest. How can those who have no interest in the Word of God, who have never read His Word with a sincere desire to understand its truths, be expected to sing with the spirit and the understanding? How can their hearts be in harmony with the words of sacred song? How can the heavenly choir join in music that is only a form?

#### VSS 448

Music was made to serve a holy purpose, to lift the thoughts to that which is pure, noble, and elevating, and to awaken in the soul devotion and gratitude to God. What a contrast between the ancient custom and the uses to which music is now too often devoted! How many employ this gift to exalt self, instead of using it to glorify God! A love for music leads the unwary to unite with world-lovers in pleasure-gatherings where God has forbidden His children to go. Thus that which is a great blessing when rightly used, becomes one of the most successful agencies by which Satan allures the mind from duty and from the contemplation of eternal things.--PP 594.

### IV

#### AH 407

I feel alarmed as I witness everywhere the frivolity of young men and young women who profess to believe the truth. God does not seem to be in their thoughts. Their minds are filled with nonsense. Their conversation is only empty, vain talk. They have a keen ear for music, and Satan knows what organs to excite to animate, engross, and charm the mind so that Christ is not desired. The spiritual longings of the soul for divine knowledge, for a growth in grace, are wanting.

#### LDE 86; EV 496

As the children of Israel journeying through the wilderness cheered their way by the music of sacred song, so God bids His children today gladden their pilgrim life. There are few means more effective for fixing His words in the memory than repeating them in song. And such song has wonderful power. It has power to subdue rude and uncultivated natures, power to quicken thought and to awaken sympathy, to promote harmony of action, and to banish the gloom and foreboding that destroy courage and weaken effort. ||

It is one of the most effective means of impressing the heart with spiritual truth. How often to the soul hard-pressed and ready to despair, memory recalls some word of God's--the long forgotten burden of a childhood song--and temptations lose their power, life takes on new meaning and new purpose, and courage and gladness are imparted to other souls!--Education, pp. 167, 168. (1903)

**1T 676**

Yet no one took the interest in her case that we did. I even spoke to the large congregation before we went East last fall, of their neglect of Sister More. I spoke of the duty of giving honor to whom it is due; it appeared to me that wisdom had so far departed from the prudent that they were not capable of appreciating moral worth. I told that church that there were many among them who could find time to meet, and sing, and play their instruments of music; they could give their money to the artist to multiply their likenesses, or could spend it to attend public amusements; but they had nothing to give to a worn-out missionary who had heartily embraced the present truth and had come to live with those of like precious faith. I advised them to stop and consider what we were doing, and proposed that they shut up their instruments of music for three months and take time to humble themselves before God in self-examination, repentance, and prayer until they learned the claims which the Lord had upon them as His professed children. My soul was stirred with a sense of the wrong that had been done Jesus, in the person of Sister More, and I talked personally with several about it.

**2T 297**

Music has been a snare to you. You are troubled with self-esteem; it is natural for you to have exalted ideas of your own ability. Teaching music has been an injury to you. Many women have confided their family difficulties to you. This has also been an injury to you. It has exalted you and led you to still greater self-esteem.

**VSS 416**

Music forms a part of God's worship in the courts above. We should endeavor in our songs of praise to approach as nearly as possible to the harmony of the heavenly choirs. I have often been pained to hear untrained voices, pitched to the highest key, literally shrieking the sacred words of some hymn of praise. How inappropriate those sharp, rasping voices for the solemn, joyous worship of God. I long to stop my ears, or flee from the place, and I rejoice when the painful exercise is ended.--Ev 507, 508.

**V****VSS 426**

Singing should not be allowed to divert the mind from the hours of devotion. If one must be neglected, let it be the singing. It is one of the great temptations of the present age to carry the practice of music to extremes, to make a great deal more of music than of prayer. Many souls have been ruined here. When the Spirit of God is arousing the conscience and convicting of sin, Satan suggests a singing exercise or a singing school, which, being conducted in a light and trifling manner, results in banishing seriousness, and quenching all desire for the Spirit of God. Thus the door of the heart, which was about to be opened to Jesus, is closed and barricaded with pride and stubbornness, in many cases never again to be opened.

**VSS 447**

The chief subjects of study in these schools [of the prophets] were the law of God, with the instruction given to Moses, sacred history, sacred music, and poetry. . . . Sanctified intellect brought forth from the treasure house of God things new and old, and the Spirit of God was manifested in prophecy and sacred song.--Ed 47.

**Historical Sketches of the Foreign Missions of the Seventh-day Adventists, 190**

Mr. Johanneson was training his children in singing, and we enjoyed the music of their little voices blending together in sacred songs. If parents generally would give more time to the education and training of their children, having really a home school for them, their families would be far happier. Children who are gifted with the talent or love of music may receive impressions that will be lifelong by a judicious use of these susceptibilities as the medium for religious instruction. Less time should be spent in the ornamentation of clothing, and far more attention should be given to making the character lovely. It is the inward adorning that will endure; the influences which give direction to these young lives will be far-reaching as eternity.

**ST 6-12-82**

The proper training of the voice should be regarded as an important part of education. The singer should train himself to utter every word distinctly. It should be remembered that singing as a part of religious service is as much an act of worship as is the prayer. The heart must feel the spirit of the words, to give them right expression. Parents should not employ to instruct their children, a teacher of music who has no reverence for sacred things, nor should they allow them to learn and practice dance songs and frivolous music.

**21MR 421**

This day I thank the Lord He has given me strength to bear my message under the large tent one mile from the sanitarium. The seats were all occupied. There was singing accompanied with music, and the music was distinct in sound and made a good impression

upon the people. Then I spoke one hour and the Lord strengthened me, for which I praise His holy name. I presented the first chapter of First Peter, and the people listened with much interest.

## VI

### **AH 514**

A view of one such company was presented to me, where were assembled those who profess to believe the truth. One was seated at the instrument of music, and such songs were poured forth as made the watching angels weep. There was mirth, there was coarse laughter, there was abundance of enthusiasm and a kind of inspiration; but the joy was such as Satan only is able to create. This is an enthusiasm and infatuation of which all who love God will be ashamed. It prepares the participants for unholy thought and action. I have reason to think that some who were engaged in that scene heartily repented of the shameful performance.

### **AH 515**

Many of the amusements popular in the world today, even with those who claim to be Christians, tend to the same end as did those of the heathen. There are indeed few among them that Satan does not turn to account in destroying souls. Through the drama he has worked for ages to excite passion and glorify vice. The opera, with its fascinating display and bewildering music, the masquerade, the dance, the card table, Satan employs to break down the barriers of principle and open the door to sensual indulgence. In every gathering for pleasure where pride is fostered or appetite indulged, where one is led to forget God and lose sight of eternal interests, there Satan is binding his chains about the soul.