

THE CHRISTIAN AND ROCK MUSIC
A STUDY OF BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES OF MUSIC

This book is authored by seven scholars
and consists of 14 chapters

Chapter 1
AN OVERVIEW OF
THE MUSIC DEBATE

by

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"To rock or not to rock," this is the critical question rocking many Christian churches today, including an increasing number of Seventh-day Adventist churches. A generation ago there was almost universal agreement that rock music, in whatever version, was inappropriate for personal and church use. At that time, young people who wanted to listen to the "worldly music" had to look for a hiding place, away from the hearing of their parents, teachers, and even some of their friends. Today, if a Christian teenager wants to listen to the same "worldly music"—and in many cases much worse—he can do so with the *encouragement* of his family, church, Christian school, and friends. It is not uncommon to hear rock music blaring out of dormitory rooms in Adventist academies and colleges.

Frankly, I must confess that it was *only* during 1999 that I became aware of the increasing popularity of "Christian" rock in Adventist churches. Some may quip that I must have been living on the moon. Perhaps it is true. I have been so absorbed with my research, writing, and lecturing that I have failed to observe the new musical development in my own Adventist church. This may be partly due also to the fact that until 1999 in my itinerant ministry around the world, I had not been confronted with actual rock bands playing in Adventist churches before I preach. By rock band I mean half a dozen youths playing the standard instruments: amplified electrical guitars, electrical base, drum-set, and keyboard instruments like synthesizers. For the first time I witnessed such bands playing before my preaching during my 1999 speaking engagements in North America and overseas.

At an Adventist youth rally overseas, I witnessed one night for the first time a band of hippie-looking-young people blasting high-decibel, heavy-beat, rock music with pulsating lights, smoke effects, and all the trimmings typical a night club. Nobody could tell what they were singing about because the excessive volume drowned out the words. Truly, it was a shocking experience for me. I felt that I had landed in a night club and not at a place of worship.

A few weeks later I had some similar experiences in Adventist churches in North America. When I shared these experiences with the 7,000-plus subscribers to my "Endtime Issues Newsletter," I received hundreds of email messages from different parts

of the world. They all expressed the same concern about rock bands playing inappropriate music in their churches, schools, or youth rallies. Incidentally, to receive the free biweekly newsletter, simply email me your request at: <sbacchiocchi@qtm.net>

The reports coming in from many countries made me forcefully aware of the gravity of the situation. It became evident to me that the adoption of rock types of music is no longer an isolated problem, but a worldwide trend that is gaining momentum in Adventist churches, as in the rest of the Christian world. Many readers of my newsletters encouraged me to address the issue in a book. Initially I was reluctant to do so because I am no authority on music.

Surprisingly, a dozen professional musicians from different parts of the world offered to contribute chapters to this symposium. I took this as a sign that I should move ahead with this project. I decided that I could address the question of rock music from biblical, historical, and ethical perspectives, while competent musicians would examine more directly the musical aspects of rock. The project took off, and by God's grace it was completed in a record time of about six months.

A Needed Clarification. Before proceeding to explain the objectives, procedures, and overall content of this book, it is important to clear the air of possible misconceptions. The aim of this symposium is not to dismiss all contemporary music as "rock." I believe that I speak not only for myself but also for the contributors to this project when I say that there are many contemporary songs with music and words suitable for divine worship.

During the past ten years I have preached in many Adventist churches where small groups lead out in the "Praise Service," using hymns and contemporary songs, which are usually projected on a screen. Some of the songs are trivial and shallow in both tunes and words, but the same is true of some hymns. I can bear a few trivial choruses that repeat the same word ad nauseam, as long as they are not the only repertoire of the church service.

Some of the contemporary songs, however, breathe genuine devotion such as "As the deer pants after the water, so my soul longs for Thee." Both the tune and the words of this song fittingly express the spiritual longing of a sincere soul. So, it would be unfair to label all contemporary songs as "rock." Incidentally, my youngest son, Gianluca, informs me that the song "Welcome Home Children," which we used a few years ago for a special video-recording entitled "Sabbath in Songs," is a contemporary song. This goes to show that I have used contemporary songs in my ministry without even realizing it.

For me, the criterion is not whether a song is old or contemporary but whether its music, words, and manner of singing conform to the biblical principle of worship music. Contrary to prevailing misconceptions, the Bible clearly differentiates between the music used for social entertainment and the music worthy of the worship of God. This vital distinction is brought out in Chapter 7, "Biblical Principles of Music," which is the longest and, most likely, the most important chapter of this book.

Some readers of Chapter 7 will be surprised to discover that in Bible times, the music and instruments associated with social entertainment (which was mostly of a religious nature) were not allowed in the worship service of the Temple, synagogue, and early church. There is no question that God's people in Bible times clearly distinguished between sacred music used for divine worship and secular music employed for social entertainment. Those who deny this fact need to do some homework.

Some contemporary songs conform to the biblical principle of worship music. For example, the song mentioned earlier, "Welcome Home Children," has both a tune and words that speak to my heart when sung reverentially. Listen to the words:

A great day is coming
heaven's gates will open wide,
and all who love the Lord will enter in.
Joined with our loved ones
who in Jesus Christ have died
our eternal life together we'll begin.

It is hard not to be moved by the music and message of this contemporary song. These personal experiences and comments are designed to reassure readers that this book is not written by a "bunch of fanatics" determined to bash all contemporary music as "satanic rock." Our goal is to be constructive and not destructive. We want to help sincere Christians of all persuasions to better understand the biblical principles that should guide us in the choice of music suitable for personal and church use.

Objectives of This Book. This study has two major objectives. The first is to help people understand what makes rock music so different from any other form of music. Why is it that rock music has been the greatest propagator of moral, social, and aesthetic values during the past fifty years? What is it that makes rock music so attractive and irresistible to so many people worldwide, in spite of its revolutionary anti-Christian and countercultural values? Is there something unique in the structure of rock music itself that makes it substantially different and more addictive than any other forms of music? What are the problems in transforming rock music into a medium for Christian worship and evangelism? These important questions are examined in several chapters, as explained below.

The second objective of this study is to ascertain the major biblical principles of music. These principles are formulated in Chapters 6 and 7. The former considers how the unique Seventh-day Adventist beliefs of the Sabbath, Sanctuary, and Second Advent should impact the worship service, including the music. The latter examines the overall teachings of Scripture regarding music. Other chapters contribute in different ways to define biblical principles for making good musical choices.

The introduction is divided in two parts. The first defines the phrases "rock music" and "Contemporary Christian Music (CCM)." Since these two phrases are frequently used throughout this study, we want the reader to know what we mean by them. This section includes also the acknowledgments and an explanation about procedure and style. The second part gives an overview of the major issues we are addressing in this book. This section helps the readers to understand what are some of the important issues of the music controversy.

Part 1

DEFINING THE TERMS

Rock Music. Defining "rock music" is a most difficult task because, as Guenter Preuss explains in Chapter 11 of this book, "during its half-century of existence, it has generated a whole tribe of children and grandchildren. The old 'Stones' are still 'Rolling,' and they have become the literal grandfathers of the newest techno and rap freaks. The old man, called 'Rock 'n' Roll' married all kinds of famous women who have given birth to milk-and-coffee babies, such as jazz-rock, classic-rock, latin-rock, polit-rock and others.

"No drug has been left untouched leading to psychedelic, acid rock and ecstasy-punched rave parties. Techno freaks claim that 'their' music is a world of its own, not just another 'rock' style. . . . The basic musical elements of rock, including 'Christian' rock, are volume, repetition and beat. It is a music designed not to be heard, but to be felt, to be drowned in. 'Turn on, dive in and drop out,' this is the motto and the effect searched for. . . . The lyrics are secondary to the music. Researchers speak about 'signal listening,' which means that the mention of a word or a short phrase suffices to evoke the topic and to stir up the listener's emotions. Each one of the hundreds of different youth culture groups have their own 'signal vocabulary.'"¹

Preuss's definition of "rock music" applies specifically to secular rock. In this symposium, however, the phrase "rock music" is often used with a broader meaning. It includes all the music, whether secular or religious, where the rhythm, text, performers, and performance practices imitate rock music and musicians by stimulating people physically rather than elevating them spiritually. In other words, the phrase "rock music" is used in this book with the broad meaning of popular music used today for entertainment, often referred to as "pop music." In fact, in Chapters 9 and 10, Prof. Calvin Johanssen uses the phrase "pop music" as an all-inclusive term for the various versions of secular and religious rock music.

To illustrate my broader definition of "rock music," let me share an experience. I was invited to speak at a church where a rock band of four young men led out in the singing. Something surprising happened when they led out in the singing of "Amazing Grace." It was not long before the whole congregation was in a swinging mood. Some even stepped out of the pews and started dancing on the aisles. It was evident that the way the band was playing the hymn with the typical rock beat had caused the people to forget the words of the hymn, which are not an invitation to dance but to reflect on the amazing grace of God "that saved a wretch like me."

This example serves to illustrate the point that rock music is all pervasive. Sometimes it finds its way even in the singing of traditional hymns. Its impact is *musical* rather than *lyrical*. Many people love to sing even traditional hymns with a rock beat, because such music stimulates them physically. We live today in an entertainment oriented society where people seek for physical gratification every where, including the school and the church.

After 35 years of teaching, I can testify that teaching college freshmen is far more challenging today than it was 25 years ago. Young people have become so conditioned by the entertainment world, especially rock music, that if I do not make my lecture "fun," "physically stimulating," about one-third of the class falls asleep right in front of me. There is no satisfaction in teaching a sleeping class. The same is true in the church. The music and the sermon must be entertaining, otherwise members go to worship somewhere else. We shall return to this point shortly.

Contemporary Christian Music. To define "Contemporary Christian Music" (CCM) is just as problematic as defining "rock music" because it comes in a variety of species. We noted earlier that not all CCM is rock music, although the two are often confounded. It is estimated that between 80 to 90 percent of CCM comes in a wide variety of rock styles.²

In Chapter 11 Preuss explains: "The multicolored spectrum of this industry reaches out from the 'pastel' of folk, youth choir music, country, chanson, ballad, gospel, to the 'brighter tones' of folk rock, country rock, gospel rock, and finally the incredible 'blinding colors' of Christian hard core, heavy metal and techno. In between these extremes is the "glitter" of rap, hip-hop, latin, reggae, all "sanctified" through "Christian" lyrics and an ever-increasing audience of believers and unbelievers."³

"Christian" rock is becoming more and more the only music to be found in Christian bookstores. A humorous experience by my former music professor Bjorn Keyn illustrates this point. In an essay Keyn prepared for this symposium, (but which I was unable to use because of duplication with the content of other chapters) he wrote: "Some years ago I visited one of the largest Christian bookstores in California hoping to find a special recording of Handel's oratorio, 'The Messiah.' This store was well-known for its large stock of religious records. When I asked for the record, the lady behind the counter answered me politely but somewhat condescendingly that they didn't carry 'that kind of music,' because, as she said, 'We carry only Christian music here' (sic!). As I examined the enormous supply of recordings I found only rhythmically based music (beat music), like rock, gospel, blues, jazz, country, and related forms. This is what today is called 'Contemporary Christian Music' or 'Christian Rock.'"⁴

Major Christian bookstores usually carry a large selection of CCM classified under the major headings of secular rock such as metal, rap, techno-drive, punk, ska, retro, industrial, etc. These records are supposed to offer a "Christian" version of their secular counterpart. To help young people make the selections, Christian magazines provide charts listing in one column the secular rock bands and in another column the corresponding 'Christian' bands that play the same music, but with difference words.

It came as a total surprise to find a similar chart on the January 13, 1996, issue of *Insight*, the official Seventh-day Adventist magazine for teenagers. The article is entitled "Make the Switch," and lists thirty-two "Christian" artists who sound like their corresponding secular counterpart. The deception is self-evident. Christians addicted to the secular rock band can satisfy their craving for rock just by listening to a "Christian" version. They can still get the same physical stimulation, since the music is the same.⁵

The same issue of *Insight* carries an interview with Roger Record, "Contemporary Christian Music: Is It Better than Secular Music?" Record is an Adventist Academy Bible teacher who sings with a band called "Imagination." In response to the question, "What is wrong with rock music and MTV?" Record said: "First, I don't believe that the *form* of music is wrong. But I believe that many *people* who use it—pop, rock, rap, or whatever—have been indirectly or directly influenced by the devil."⁶ The solution that Record proposes to young people in his seminars is to switch from secular rock to CCM, because he said: "I would say any form of Christian music can be enjoyed."⁷ The fundamental problem with Record's view, which is shared by many youth leaders and pastors today, is the failure to recognize that rock makes its impact *musically*, not *lyrically*. Changing the words does not alter the effects of rock on the mind, muscles, and hormone productions. This fact has been established by numerous scientific studies reported in both Chapters 5 and 9.

"Related to CCM and dependent upon it, is Contemporary Worship Music (CWM). Many of the same artists involved in CCM are also active in CWM, often recording in the same secular corporations. The significant difference is in the lyrics, which are more biblically based. An example is the song "How Majestic Is Your Name" by Michael W. Smith. It mostly represents a type of soft rock. Two major problems with CWM is that it generally incorporates rock rhythms with a heavy bass line and it is very repetitious. Jesus warned against using vain repetitions in worship (Matt 6:7). This type of music is adopted by more and more Adventist young people who are organizing bands⁸ and in some cases achieving professional status."⁹

Summing up, the distinction between secular rock music and much of CCM is in most cases relative, because the music is the same, only the words are different. And the words do not neutralize the harmful effects of rock music. For this reason, the phrase "rock music" is used in this book in its broader meaning, inclusive of all versions of rock, whether secular or religious. Sometimes the phrase "pop music" is used with the same

inclusive meaning. When the term "Christian" is used to qualify rock, usually it is placed between quotations marks, simply because in our view to speak of "Christian rock" is an oxymoron, that is, a contradiction of terms.

Acknowledgments. It is most difficult for me to acknowledge my indebtedness to the many persons who have contributed to the realization of this symposium. First of all, I am indebted to the six scholars (musicians) who have contributed chapters to this book. Each one of them has gone beyond the call of duty by preparing an enlightening study on vital aspects of the rock-music debate.

Each contributor is introduced twice. First, some information about each contributor is given in this chapter in conjunction with their contribution to the discussion of rock music. Second, the basic biographical information is given at the beginning of the chapter each one has authored.

It is significant that the seven contributors (including this writer) represent six different nationalities. Prof. Calvin M. Johansson is an American, Musician Brian Neumann is South African, Dr. Eurydice V. Osterman is Afro-American, Musician Güenter Preuss is German, Dr. Wolfgang H. M. Stefani is Australian, Lecturer Tore Sognefest is Norwegian, and I, the writer, am an Italian. Our different cultural and national backgrounds bring to this symposium a broader perspective.

A special acknowledgment must be given to five scholars who prepared essays that I was unable to include in this symposium. In some instances the essays were very profound and technical, above the comprehension of the average reader. In other instances, much of the material presented duplicated the content of other chapters. I wish to express my sincere apologies to these people for being unable to include their essays in this symposium. There is no question that I have personally benefited from their writings.

A special word of thanks goes to Joyce Jones and Deborah Everhart from Andrews University for correcting and improving the style of the manuscript. Jarrod Williamson from La Sierra University deserves special mention for taking time to correct and react to the manuscript. His comments have been most helpful.

My sincere gratitude goes to Donald J. Wood for designing a most attractive cover. Currently Wood is a student in the School of Journalism at Indiana University. In his busy schedule he took time to design this cover and to modify it several times on the basis of valuable comments received. Last but not least, I express my special thanks to my wife who has been my constant source of encouragement and inspiration during the past thirty-eight years of our married life. We saw little of one another while I was researching and writing this book. The same has been true while writing the previous fourteen books. Yet, without her love, patience, and encouragement, it would have been most difficult for me to complete this project in such a relatively short period of time.

Method and Style. This symposium is written from a biblical perspective. To my knowledge, each contributor accepts the Bible as normative for defining Christian beliefs and practices. Because the words of the Bible contain a divine message written by human authors who lived in specific historical situations, every effort must be made to understand their meaning in their historical context. This conviction is reflected in the methodology followed in the analysis of the biblical texts related to singing, musical instruments, and dancing.

As one would expect with seven contributors, the style of the book is not uniform. You will soon discover that some chapters are easier to read than others. To facilitate the reading, I took the liberty as editor to divide each chapter into major parts and to

subdivide the text under appropriate headings. This gives some consistency to the layout of the book. Unless otherwise specified, all Bible texts are quoted from the Revised Standard Version, copyright 1946 and 1952.

Authors' Hope. It would be presumptuous to hope that this book will change every one's minds, especially those that are already made up. But many people are confused, but open. They are sincere but sincerely wrong in what they believe. Several examples are given below in the second part of this chapter.

A pastor told me: "I used to be known as 'Tambourine Pastor' because I used it all the time to accompany the church music. But after I read in your newsletter that the tambourine and other instruments associated with entertainment music were not allowed in the Temple, synagogue, or early church, I decided that I would never again bring the tambourine to church." These are the kind of people we hope to help with this book.

Many pastors, Bible teachers, youth leaders, lay members, and young people have a limited understanding of the threat rock music poses the Christian faith, and of the biblical teachings regarding music. They assume that music is all a matter of taste and culture and the Bible gives us no directives in the area of music. I shared the same view until I became involved in this research.

Digging up all the information has been very time consuming. For the past six months I have spent an average of 12-15 hours a day on this project, as my wife can testify. It is obvious that busy pastors or lay people can hardly find time to undertake a research of this nature. Those of us who have the time and the skill to investigate new truths, have the obligation to share them. This is what Christianity is all about. It is with this spirit that each contributor presents his/her findings in this book.

Part 2

AN OVERVIEW OF THE ISSUES

Out of consideration toward those who appreciate an overview of the major controversial issues examined in this symposium, I briefly list the eight major issues, together with a summary of the response provided by each contributor in their respective chapters. Hopefully, this overview will wet the appetite for reading the rest of the book.

(1) The Morality of Music

Defenders of the use of "Christian" rock music for worship and evangelism maintain that music is void of moral qualities for either good or bad. Consequently, nothing is wrong in adopting rock music by changing its lyrics, because the message is not in the music but in the words. This view is emphatically stated in what is known as the *Christian Rocker's Creed* published in the popular *CCM Magazine*: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all music was created equal, that no instrument or style of music is in itself evil—that the diversity of musical expression which flows from man is but one evidence of the boundless creativity of our Heavenly Father."¹⁰

Similar statements could be multiplied as they abound in evangelical literature.¹¹ A couple of samples from Adventist literature suffice to show that this view is becoming popular in Adventist circles. In an article "Contemporary Music Is *Christian* Music," which appeared in *Ministry* (September 1996), Michael Tomlinson states: "I believe music itself is without moral qualities, either for good or evil. The question has more to do with what the music is employed to say or to do than with the music per se"¹² He goes so far as to say: "Do some church leaders denounce Christian 'rock' because they do not understand it or perhaps because they are blinded by the generational prejudice or personal

preference?"¹³ Tomlinson's view is clear. Music is morally neutral. Those church leaders who denounce "Christian" rock are either ignorant about it or prejudiced against it. Is this true? We shall soon find out.

Harold B. Hannum, a well-known and respected Adventist musician, expresses the same view, saying that "moral matters have to do with human actions and relations to others, not with the notes of a composition."¹⁴ Later in the same book Hannum affirms: "Moral and religious values should be kept separate from purely aesthetic ones."¹⁵

The Response. The major response to the alleged moral neutrality of music is found in Chapter 13, "Music and Morality," authored by Wolfgang H. M. Stefani, an Australian musician, scholar, pastor, who has earned graduate degrees in music, and a Ph. D. in Religious Education at Andrews University in 1993. His dissertation was on "The Concept of God and Sacred Music Style." He taught music for nine years at the undergraduate and graduate level, including at the Andrews University SDA Theological Seminary.

I must confess that when I first read Stefani's essay, I was worried that it might be too deep for the average reader. He is a brilliant scholar whom I highly respect, but his writings tend to be above the comprehension of the average reader. A trusted friend encouraged me to include Stefani's essay in this symposium because some of the readers are well-educated and will appreciate his scholarly and compelling response to the alleged moral neutrality of music.

Simply stated, Stefani presents four major arguments. The first argument is historical. For the past two and half millennia, music has been considered to be such a potent and influential force in society that leading philosophers and politicians advocated its control by the nation's constitution. Thus, historically, music and morality have been intimately connected.

The second argument is theological. In a sin-infested world, every human creation reflects a degree of moral involvement. The notion that creative arts, like music, were not touched by the Fall was developed during the Middle Ages when the Catholic Church controlled artistic productions.

When the church lost its hold and society became secular, the notion that aesthetic arts are not subject to moral accountability continued. The result has been that "rock, rap, thrash metal, classical, jazz, Country and Western, soul, and a host of other musics, each with their own individual aesthetic standards, have inevitably become acceptable forms of musical expression, even in worship contexts."¹⁶

Stefani notes that this popular view ignores the radical distortion that sin has wrought in every field of human endeavor, including music. Christians are called to examine music, not only to determine if it is beautiful, but also to establish if it is morally compatible with biblical teachings.

The third argument is based on the scientific research of the past several decades which has shown that music "dictates feelings." "For example, incorporating music on a film soundtrack takes for granted that music impacts all people similarly. Indeed, if this were not the case a music soundtrack would be pointless."¹⁷ "A body of research now exists that demonstrates that music does communicate meaningfully in a way that can and ought to be evaluated for appropriateness, and even rightness or wrongness in a given context."¹⁸

The fourth argument is philosophical and yet very practically stated: "What rules the heart, forms the art."¹⁹ Stefani shows with compelling logic that musical styles are

not neutral, but value-laden. "They are veritable embodiment of beliefs."²⁰ In his dissertation he traces with compelling clarity the correlation between the evolution in the understanding of God and the development of new musical styles during the course of Christian history..

This is an important concept that I have explored in Chapter 2, because it shows that ultimately the battle over music styles is a theological battle over our understanding of God. Rock music today, both in its secular and "Christian" version, reflects an immanent "God within us" perception. This view of God promotes a strong physical and emotionally stimulating music by means of repetitive rhythms in order to achieve a direct contact with or experience of the divine.

Ultimately, what is at stake in the battle over music is the understanding of the very nature of God being worshipped. The question is: Does the church music serve to worship the holy and transcendent God of biblical revelation or a casual, personal-lover type of Being created by human imagination? The debate over this question is intense and will not go away because, intuitively, people sense that their music stands for the God whom they want to worship.

The non-neutrality of music is clearly recognized by musicians themselves. For example, Howard Hanson, famous composer and former head of the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York, said: "Music is made up of many ingredients and, according to the proportion of these components, it can be soothing or invigorating, ennobling or vulgarizing, philosophical or orgiastic. It has power for evil as well as good."¹⁹

Rock star Jimi Hendrix states the same view most emphatically: "You can hypnotize people with the music and when they get at their weakest point you can preach into their subconscious minds what you want to say"²⁰

The truth of Hendrix's words have been known to the business world for long time. Businesses know that certain kinds of music can increase sales while other kinds of music can actually reduce sales. The Musak Corporation, which distributes music for businesses, advertises its services saying: "The science of stimulus progression employs the inherent power of music in a controlled pattern to achieve predetermined psychological and physiological effects on people. Leading companies and commercial establishments now employ the Musak concept to improve environment, attitudes, and performance."

The Bible itself discredits the notion of the neutrality of music through the story of David, who was called to soothe King Saul whenever troubled by an evil spirit. "Whenever the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, David took the lyre and played it with his hands; so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him" (1 Sam 16:23). Note that Saul was affected physically, emotionally, and spiritually, not by the singing of David, but purely by the instrumental music.

The notion that music is neutral apart from its words is discredited by Scripture, science, and common sense. Yet it still remains a popular deception used to justify the acceptance in Christian homes and churches of the pop music that stimulates people physically rather than elevating them spiritually.

(2) Rock Music Is Not Immoral

Closely related to the alleged moral neutrality of music is the popular assumption that the various types of rock music are just another musical genre that people may like or dislike, depending on their musical preferences or culture. Thus, nothing is immoral

with rock music per se. It is only its improper use that is morally wrong. By changing its lyrics, Christians can legitimately use rock music to worship God and proclaim the Gospel.

This view, popular among many evangelical churches, is gaining credence in the Adventist church as well. For example, Steve Case, a veteran Adventist youth pastor and president of Piece of the Pie Ministries for youth, often answers questions about "Christian rock" in *Insight*, the official Adventist magazine for teenagers. To the question: "Is there really any such thing as 'Christian rock'? Would God listen to it or approve it?" Case replies: "I used to answer this question by saying that Christian rock is the devil's attempt to sneak into the church. . . . Now I answer questions on 'Christian rock' by asking, What is your bias about 'Christian rock'? Do you already think it's OK or not OK?"²¹

For Case, the private or church use of "Christian rock" is a matter of personal bias. He wrote in another article: "Musical preferences are personal. Which also means that musical tastes/preferences can change."²² The advice that Case gives to teenagers about listening to "Christian rock" is as follows: "Does your music increase your faith in God and love for Him? If so, keep listening to it? If not, be willing to make good changes or turn it off."²³

A similar view is expressed in the symposium *Shall We Dance*, which is sponsored by several Adventist organizations, including the North American Division of SDA. For the sake of accuracy, it must be stated that the opening statement of the introduction makes this disclaimer: "This book is *not* an official statement of the Seventh-day Adventist Church regarding standards and values."²⁴ It is comforting to know that the book, though sponsored by major Adventists institutions, *does not* reflect the church standards and values.

Regarding the use of "Christian rock," the symposium suggests that its use is a matter of personal taste and experience. "Some have experienced the [spiritual] impact through the loud, rhythmic demands of rock. Many more are learning the wider joys of an eclectic musical taste, accepting the impact of a variety of styles on a variety of moods and needs. Each of us must give our own answer to the question of the music itself. If its physical and emotional impact is in harmony with the spiritual song I want to sing, then I can judge it to be acceptable. If that impact battles against my spiritual sense, then I must conclude that music is wrong for me."²⁵

The Response. Is the personal taste or preference of teenagers a valid criterion for determining whether or not they should listen to "Christian rock"? Can we expect teenagers to understand the ethical, social, and religious values communicated by rock music in any form? Can we blame young people for listening to rock music if we do not help them to see the dangers posed by such music?

It would appear to me that part of the problem of the increasing number of Adventist youth becoming addicted to various forms of rock music is the lack of strong leadership in the home, church, and school. A contributing factor is a lack of understanding of the intrinsic nature of rock music. Unfortunately, most people fail to realize that there is more to rock music that meets the eye or ear. I must confess that I myself was ignorant on this matter until I became involved in this research. Truly I can say that this research has been an eye-opening experience for me and I can only hope that the results of our labors will benefit many people.

The many months of painstaking investigation into the philosophical, ethical, social, and religious aspects of rock have convinced me that this music is a revolutionary "religious" countercultural and anti-Christian movement which uses its rhythm, melodies,

and lyrics to promote, among other things, a pantheistic/hedonistic worldview, sexual perversion, civil disobedience, violence, satanism, occultism, homosexuality, masochism, and an open rejection of the Christian faith and values.

My analysis of rock music is in Chapters 2, 3, 4, 5. Briefly stated, this is what I learned. In Chapter 2 on "The Worldview of Rock Music," I found that rock music reflects a pantheistic conception of God as an immanent, impersonal, supernatural power which the individual can experience through the hypnotic rhythm of rock music and drugs. The pantheistic conception of God has facilitated the acceptance of rock music among Christians and secularly minded people, since both groups seek to fulfill the inner urge for a pleasurable experience of the supernatural through the hypnotic effects of rock music.

In Chapter 3 on "Rock Music from a Historical Perspective," I learned that rock music has gone through an easily discernible hardening process from rock 'n' roll to hard rock, acid rock, heavy metal rock, rap rock, thrash rock, etc. New types of more perverted forms of rock music are constantly appearing because rock addicts constantly demand something stronger and stronger to meet their craving.

In Chapter 4 on "The Rock and Roll Religion," I found that the pantheistic worldview promoted by rock music has eventually led to the rejection of the Christian faith and to the acceptance of a new kind of religious experience. The latter involves the use of rock music, sex, drugs, and dance to transcend the limitation of time and space and to connect with the supernatural.

In Chapter 5 on "The Rock Rhythm and a Christian Response," I discovered that rock music differs from all other forms of music because of its driving, loud, relentless beat. Scientific studies have shown that the rock beat can alter the mind and cause several physical reactions, including sexual arousal. The latter are discussed more fully in Chapter 8 on "The Effects of Rock Music," authored by Tore Sognefest, A Norwegian musician and author of the book *The Power of Music*.

The factual information gathered about the nature of rock music during the course of this investigation makes it abundantly clear that such music cannot be legitimately transformed into Christian music by changing its lyrics. In whatever version, rock music is and remains a music that embodies a spirit of rebellion against God and the moral principles he has revealed for our lives.

By stimulating the physical, sensual aspect of the human nature, rock music throws out of balance the order of the Christian life. It makes the gratification of the carnal nature more important than the cultivation of the spiritual aspect of our life.

Christians should respond to rock music by choosing instead good music that respects the proper balance among melody, harmony, and rhythm. The proper balance among these three reflects and fosters the order and balance in our Christian life among the spiritual, mental, and physical components of our being. Good and balanced music can and will contribute to keep our "spirit and soul and body . . . sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess 5:23).

(3) Rock Music and Evangelism

The debate over whether "to rock or not to rock" in evangelism is taking place across denominational lines. The defenders of the use of rock in evangelism appeal to practical considerations. They argue that rock is part of today's culture and thus it is needed to penetrate the rock generation.

A recent cover article in *Christianity Today* (July 17, 1999), entitled "The Triumph of Praise Songs—How Guitars Beat Out the Organ in the Worship Wars," captures vividly how pop music is replacing traditional music in many churches today. The author of the article, Michael S. Hamilton, reports that praise bands and worship teams are fast replacing organs and choirs. The baby-boomers' taste for rock music that has reshaped our society is now ruling the worship service as well.²⁶

"Since the 1950s, denominational divisions have steadily become less important in American church life. We have the baby-boom generation to thank for much of this. But at bottom we are all still sectarians; we still prefer to congregate with the like-minded. Our new sectarianism is a sectarianism of worship style. The new sectarian creeds are the dogmas of music."²⁷

This new "sectarianism of worship style" is characterized by the adoption of religious rock, which reflects the baby-boomers' taste, sound, and identity. The rock beat has become so much a part of their lives that they inevitably want to hear it in their church music as well. If the church wants to attract the rock-and-roll generation, then it had better offer them the music to which they are addicted—or else.

This popular view is embraced by increasing numbers of Adventists. In the article "Worship and Praise: One Model for Change in the Worship Hour," which appeared in *Ministry* (February 2000), John A. Solomon argues that if we want to reach the Baby Boomer generation, the church must offer them the kind of music they are accustomed to.²⁸

Citing recent research, Solomon writes: "Baby Boomers have been heavily influenced by music with a beat. Only six percent listed classical music as music of their choice, with a bias against organ music. Overhead have replaced hymn books; synthesizers have replaced organs; and drums and guitars have taken their place in the repertoire of church music instrumentation."²⁹

To justify the adoption of pop music for worship and evangelism, Solomon appeals to Moses, Miriam, and David who used "exuberant" music. "David and others who wrote the Psalms composed some of the greatest songs and lyrics in literature, and when they sang accompanied by tambourines and cymbals and the trumpet, ecstasy filled the air (Ps 145-150). The point is that God used this music, these instruments, and actions to bring glory to Himself. If He did it then, it may certainly be done in a variety of ways now."³⁰ Later we show that none of the "exuberant" music mentioned above was ever used in the worship of God in the Temple, synagogue, or early church.

The notion that the Bible sanctions rhythmic, "exuberant" music for divine worship is encouraging the adoption of CCM in Adventist worship and evangelism, besides giving rise to numerous bands. The article "Making Waves" which appeared in *Adventist Review* (July 17, 1997), reports on eight successful Adventist bands. "These artists see their style of music not as rebellion against the system, but as a ministry tool to rescue a new generation from rampant secularism and show them the saving grace of Jesus."³¹

The Response. The major response to the use of rock music in evangelism is found in Chapters 10 and 11. Chapter 10, "Pop Music and the Gospel," is authored by Calvin A. Johansson, D. M. A., Professor of Church Music at Evangel University and author of two major books, *Music and Ministry: A Biblical Counterpoint* and *Discipling Music Ministry: Twenty-first Century Directions*. Prof. Johansson is a leading authority on church music and is frequently quoted by authors dealing with this subject. I feel greatly honored by his willingness to contribute two chapters to this symposium.

In Chapter 10, Prof. Johansson compares and contrasts the values of pop music with those of the Gospel in eight specific areas. He concludes that "Pop characteristics are antipathetic to gospel characteristics. It seems obvious that a music (pop) which is so unlike the thing it is supposed to represent (the gospel) is unable to embody the gospel in its medium of witness (music). Hence, pop is useless in spiritual endeavor. If it is used, it does the cause of Christ much harm by painting an untrue picture of what the Christian life is."³²

Chapter 11, "Christian Rock and Evangelism," is written by Güenter Preuss, a German Adventist musician, who for the past 15 years has served, first as Chairman of the Music Department of the Adventist College and Theological Seminary at Collonges-sous-Salève in France (1985-1995), and currently as Music Director of the SDA Baden-Wuerttemberg Conference in Germany (1995-2000).

Preuss has been deeply involved in the Adventist rock scene in Germany, endeavoring to help young people overcome their addiction to rock music. He is currently working on his doctoral dissertation on reformed hymnody between 1700 and 1870 at the Sorbonne University, in Paris. He submitted to me a manuscript of almost 100 pages loaded with documentation and argumentation. He convinced me immediately that he is a *true German scholar*, eager to be comprehensive and thorough. Let me assure you that it was not an easy task for me to reduce his essay to one fourth of its original length. I hope that someday he can publish his unabridged research.

Preuss commends the search for effective ways to reach secular-minded people with the Gospel, but questions the legitimacy of using rock music, partly because he has witnessed the impact of rock music on Adventist youth in Germany. He wrote: "Rock music in evangelism works on imagination, on thought associations, as any music. It misrepresents the claims of the Gospel by encouraging worldly values. It makes people believe that they are all right, when in reality they desperately need a radical change in their lives—a conversion experience."³³

Preuss finds that the idiom of rock music is unsuitable to communicate the Gospel because *the medium affects the message*. The medium used to win the youth determines the nature of the message to which they are won. If the church uses an entertainment type of rock music, which is associated with sex, drugs, and violence, it obviously is not able to challenge the youth with the moral claims of the Gospel.

The New Testament summons us to present clearly and compellingly the holiness of God's character, the desperate human plight, and the amazing grace of the Gospel. These are issues of life and death which cannot be presented with the frivolity and flippancy of pop music.

Listeners to religious rock will never be humbled by the majesty of God, nor will they be convicted of God's moral claims upon their lives. The relentless rock rhythm, the movements, the lights, and the demeanor of pop singers contain so much that is sensual and sexually suggestive that they can hardly communicate the holiness and purity of the Kingdom of God.

If we adopt a worldly appearance to attract the crowd, how can we paint in vivid colors the contrast between the kingdom of this world and the Kingdom of God? Paul recognized that the Gospel cannot be proclaimed through deceptive, worldly gimmicks. Thus he told the Corinthians: "My speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom [or we might say "with the exciting sounds of Greek songs"], but in the demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith may not rest in the wisdom of men [or we might say "in worldly excitements"], but in the power of God" (1 Cor 2:4-5).³⁴

"God's proven method of evangelism is the 'foolishness of preaching.' He has committed to us the message of reconciliation (2 Cor 5:18). Our responsibility is not to contaminate this message with worldly idioms, like rock music. There is no need for the manipulation and stimulation of rock music to get people saved. Evangelism has been and is greatly aided by Christlike music presented by Christlike performers, but ultimately it is the proclamation of the Word of God, accompanied by the convicting power of the Holy Spirit, that brings people into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ."³⁵

(4) Rock Music and Black Heritage

In the Black community there is a prevailing assumption that rock music is part of the African-American heritage and, consequently, is a legitimate form of expression. Each culture defines its music according to its own criteria, and rock music allegedly reflects the roots of the African-American culture which can be traced back to West African slave culture. To deny to the Blacks the right to play rock music in their churches means to deprive them of their cultural heritage.

The Response. This important issue is examined in Chapter 12, "Rock Music and Culture," by a highly respected Afro-American musician, Eurydice V. Osterman, D. M. A., Professor of Music at Oakwood College, composer, and author of several publications, including the book *What God Says About Music*.

Dr. Osterman points out that "prevailing assumption that rock music is a legitimate expression of African American heritage ignores the significant differences that exist between the two. African American heritage music is predominantly melodic and is based upon the rhythm of the dialect. Rock music, on the other hand, is based upon and is driven by a beat that overshadows and dominates all other musical elements. Heritage music preserves and fosters unity, while rock music creates division and influences rebellious attitudes toward moral values and a disrespect for authority."³⁶

"The roots of the rock beat are to be found not on the religious music of the African-American heritage, but on secular and often irreligious music known as 'Rhythm and Blues.' This music became the expression of those Blacks who strayed away from or rejected the Christian faith. They wanted to become respected entertainers by playing a secular music. The mood of the Blues is one of sadness, punctuated by a regular, heavy beat. The emphasis is on the pleasures of this world, especially the enjoyment of illicit sex before or outside marriage."³⁷

"The distinction that we find in African-American music between the religious Negro Spiritual and the secular, irreligious Rock and Roll reminds us of the simple fact that in all cultures we can expect to find some music which is pro-Christian and some which is anti-Christian in its values. This is the result of the fall of humankind which is present in every age, country, and culture. "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23).³⁸

(5) Rock Music and the Bible

Perhaps the most significance aspect of the defense of "Christian" rock, is the appeal to certain Bible texts to defend the use of such music for church worship and evangelism. The prevailing assumption is that the Bible sanctions the use of rhythmic, dancing music and percussion instruments for divine worship.

In his book *The Contemporary Christian Music Debate*, Steve Miller writes: "The most striking observation of biblical worship is its wealth of variety and few restrictions on form."³⁹ He continues listing the variety of instruments, volumes and sounds,

worshippers, manner, locations, occasions, times of the day, postures, and moods mentioned in the Bible. He concludes his survey saying: "Several implications concerning the present controversy can be noted. First, our creative Lord has allowed His creatures to exercise great creativity in worship. And God's Word does not even restrict us to the array of forms listed in the Bible."⁴⁰ Surprisingly, Miller is unaware that the Bible is very restrictive of the music and instruments to be used for divine worship.

The same view is found in Adventist literature. In her article "Sing the Song of Gladness," which appeared in *Ministry* (September 1996), Anita J. Strawn de Ojeda argues that, like us today, people in Bible time worshipped the Lord by praising Him with "timbrels, stringed instruments, organs, harps, cymbals, lyres, trumpets, and psalters. . . . First Chronicles 13:8 tells us that David and the Israelites played before God with all their might. . . . If my foot taps or my hands clap during a song, I am singing with 'all my might.' That is, my whole being is involved."⁴¹

"If David had been writing today, would he have said, 'Praise Him with drums and clapping; praise Him with guitars, and banjos, and synthesizers; praise Him with loud drums; praise Him upon the electric guitar' (see Ps 150:3-5)? Putting it all into context, he may well have said something similar to this."⁴² Is this really what David would say today regarding the praise of God during the divine service? A close look at the ministry of music established by David shows otherwise.

The Response. This popular argument is examined especially in Chapter 7 "Biblical Principles of Music," where I survey the biblical teachings regarding music. Those who appeal to biblical injunctions to praise the Lord with a variety of instruments and volume to justify the use of rock music today ignore two important points.

First, in most cases the language of praise is figurative and hardly allows for a literal application to the divine service in God's House. For example, Psalm 149:5 encourages people to praise the Lord on the "couches." In verse 6 the praising is to be done with "two-edged swords in the hands." In verses 7 and 8 the Lord is to be praised for punishing the heathen with the sword, binding kings in chain and putting nobles in fetters. It is evident that the language is figurative because God would hardly expect people to praise Him during a divine service by standing or jumping on couches or while swinging a two-edged sword.

The same is true of Psalm 150 which speaks of praising the Lord "for his mighty deeds" (v. 2) in every possible *place* and with every available musical *instrument*. The *place* in which to praise the Lord is "his sanctuary," and "his mighty firmament." The *instruments* include eight familiar instruments.

This psalm makes sense only if we take the language to be highly figurative. For example, there is no way in which God's people on earth can praise the Lord "in his mighty firmament." The purpose of the psalm is not to specify the *location* and the *instruments* to be used for praise during the divine service, but rather to invite *everything* that breathes or makes sound to praise the Lord *everywhere*. The psalmist is describing with highly figurative language the attitude of praise that should characterize the believer at all times and in all places. To interpret this psalm as a license to dance, or to play drums in the church, is to misinterpret its intent.

A second important point ignored by those who believe that the Bible authorizes them to play any instrument and music in church is the biblical distinction between secular music produced for entertainment and sacred music performed in God's House. As shown in Chapters 6 and 7, the music and instruments used to praise the Lord outside the Temple during festival celebrations were different from the music played inside the Temple. Instruments like timbrels, flutes, pipes, and dulcimers could not be used in the

Temple because of their association with secular entertainment. The same principle was respected also in the synagogue and early church, where no instruments of any kind were allowed.

Had the instruments and the music associated with social (religious) entertainment been used in God's House, the Israelites would have been tempted to turn their place of worship into a place of entertainment, as sometimes happens in some churches today. To prevent this thing from happening, instruments and music associated with entertainment were excluded from the Temple, synagogue, and early church. It is the ignorance of these facts that leads people to believe that the Bible sanctions the use of rock music for worship and evangelism. The lesson of Scripture and history is evident. Music, like rock, which is associated with secular entertainment is out of place in God's House in which we gather to worship and not to be entertained.

(6) The Role of Luther

A popular argument used to defend the adoption of rock tunes for church music today is the alleged borrowing of secular music by Christian songwriters in the past. Anita J. Strawn de Ojeda wrote in *Ministry*: "History shows that Christian songwriters borrowed elements from secular music."⁴³ She refers specifically to the early Christians and Luther. The reasoning is that if Christians in the past adopted and adapted secular music for church use, we can do the same today.

The example of Luther is often cited because of his enormous influence in introducing congregational singing at the time of the Reformation. Steve Miller wrote: "The models for his [Luther's] lyrics were the popular ballads of his day. The tunes were borrowed from German folk songs, the music of the masses, and even a hymn to Mary. Luther was not concerned with the association or origin of the tunes as he was with their ability to communicate truth."⁴⁴

In a similar vein, Michael Tomlinson wrote in *Ministry*: "Eliminating the secular roots of Christian music would mean to say good-bye to the hymns of Martin Luther, whose music was borrowed from secular German folk tunes."⁴⁵

The Response. In view of the popularity of this argument, I took time in Chapter 2 to investigate if it is true that Luther borrowed from the secular, popular tunes of his day to compose his chorales. What I found is that this argument is just as misleading and inaccurate as the previous ones mentioned so far. Let me mention here only three facts, since the rest of the information is available in Chapter 2.

First, of the thirty-seven chorales composed by Luther, only *one* tune came directly from a secular folk song. Fifteen were composed by Luther himself, thirteen came from Latin hymns or service music, two had originally been religious pilgrims' songs, four were derived from German religious folk songs, and two are of unknown origin.⁴⁶ What most people ignore is that even the one tune borrowed from a folk song, which "appeared in Luther's hymnal of 1535, was later replaced by another melody in the 1539 song book. Historians believe that Luther discarded it because people associated it with its previous secular text."⁴⁷

Second, Luther changed the melodic and rhythmic structure of the tunes he borrowed from secular sources in order to eliminate any possible worldly influence. In his scholarly book, *Martin Luther, His Music, His Message*, Robert Harrell explains: "The most effective way of [negating] worldly influence would be to 'de-rhythm' the music. By avoiding dance tunes and 'de-rhythming' other songs, Luther achieved a chorale with a marked rhythm, but without the devices that would remind the people of the secular world. So successful was the work done by Luther and other Lutheran musicians that

scholars were often unable to detect the secular origins of chorales. The other way in which Luther sought to remove secular associations from the mind of the congregation was through the use of Scripture and scriptural allusions in the texts. By filling his chorales with the written Word, Luther sought to direct the ! ! thoughts of his people toward the Living Word."⁴⁸

Harrell concludes his well-documented study, saying: "A study of Luther's chorales reveals two important facts about Luther's use of secular elements in his sacred music: (1) Although there was much popular music available to him, from drinking songs to dance tunes to religious folk songs and carols, Luther chose only those tunes which best lend themselves to sacred themes and avoided the vulgar, 'rollicking drinking songs' and dance tunes. (2) No material which Luther used for a chorale remained unchanged, except for the one case noted previously. Rather, 'he carefully tested the melodies he considered, and when necessary molded them into suitability. . . . Alteration were freely made."⁴⁹

Third, Luther arranged music for young people of his time in a way to lead them *away* from the attraction of worldly music. This cannot be said of "Christian" rock music today which retains the melody and rhythm of secular rock. Luther explained why he changed the musical arrangements of his songs: "These songs were arranged in four parts for no other reason than that I wanted to attract the youth (who should and must be trained in music and other fine arts) away from love songs and carnal pieces and to give them something wholesome to learn instead, so that they can enter with pleasure into what is good, as befitting to youth."⁵⁰

In the light of these facts, anyone who uses Luther's statement "Why should the Devil have all the good tunes?" to defend the use of rock music in the church, ought to know that the argument is clearly negated by what Luther himself said and did. Luther's use of secular music teaches us not to sanitize rock music which promotes sex, drugs, and violence, but to choose instead the best music of our culture and make it a fitting vehicle to communicate the Word of God. What a marvellous example we have in Martin Luther! And how grossly distorted Luther's example has been by those who wish to legitimize the use of rock for worship and evangelism!

(7) Church Music and Adventist Theology

The ongoing debate over the use of contemporary music in Adventist worship is largely based on subjective tastes or popular trends. But the music and worship style of the Adventist church should reflect its unique message and prophetic mission. Adventists should not accept uncritically the worship style of other denominations. In his book *And Worship Him*, Norval Pease, my former professor of worship at the Andrews University Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, states: "We are Adventists, and we must approach worship as Adventists. A worship service that meets the needs of Methodists, Episcopalians, or Presbyterians may be unsatisfactory for us."⁵¹

The answer to the Adventist worship renewal is not found in the adoption of "Christian" rock, but in a re-examination of how our distinctive Adventist beliefs should impact the various parts of the church service, including music. Such an ambitious undertaking is beyond the scope of this book. What I have attempted to do is to submit in Chapter 6 some preliminary reflections on "An Adventist Theology of Church Music."

The chapter attempts to define how the three distinctive Seventh-day Adventist beliefs of the Sabbath, Christ's ministry in the heavenly sanctuary, and the Second Advent should impact on the choice and the performance of music during the divine service. Briefly stated these are the conclusions.

The Sabbath teaches us to respect the distinction between the *sacred* and the *secular*, not only in time, but also in such areas as church music and worship. To use secular music for the church service on the Sabbath is to treat the Sabbath as a secular day and the church as a secular place.

The study of the music of the Jerusalem Temple, as well as the heavenly sanctuary, reveals that instruments and music associated with entertainment were not allowed in the Temple services, nor are they used in the liturgy of the heavenly sanctuary. The lesson from the sanctuary is that church music must express great reverence and respect for God.

Belief in the certainty and soon-appearance of the Rock of Ages, with the greatest musical band of angels this world has ever seen, can fire up the imagination of musicians today to compose new songs, and inspire Advent believers to joyfully sing about the hope that burns without their hearts.

(8) Rock Music and the Endtime Deception

Seventh-day Adventists believe that we live today in the final countdown to the great controversy between true and false worship, as described in book of Revelation through the imagery of a beast that promotes the false worship of Babylon. This apocalyptic prophecy envisions the antitypical Babylon leading all the nations into the false worship of God (Rev 13:16; 14:8; 18:3).

It is important to remember that the apocalyptic imagery of the false worship promoted by Babylon in Revelation derives from the historical chapter of Daniel 3, which describes an event of prophetic endtime significance. On the Plain of Dura, all the inhabitants of the Babylonian empire were called to worship the golden image of king Nebuchadnezzar. A fiery furnace was prepared for those who refused to do homage to the golden image. Daniel informs us that "every kind of music" (Dan 3:7, 10) was used to cause all classes of people from all the provinces of the empire to corporately worship the golden image (Dan 3:10).

Twice in Daniel 3 there is a long list of the different musical instruments used to produce "every kind of music" (Dan 3:7,10). This eclectic music was played to induce people to worship the golden image. Could it be that, as in ancient Babylon, Satan is using today "every kind of music" to lead the world into the endtime false worship of the "beast and its image" (Rev 14:9)? Could it be that a Satanic stroke of genius will write Gospel songs that will have the marking of every taste of music: folk music, jazz, rock, disco, country-western, rap, calypso? Could it be that many Christians will come to love this kind of Gospel songs because they sound very much like the music of Babylon?

Rock Music and Endtime False Worship. Historically, Adventists have identified Babylon with the power of the papacy that will lead the world into perverted forms of worship. While acknowledging the prophetic role that the papacy has played in leading many people to believe in the intercessory role of Mary and the saints, one wonders if rock music also will play a vital role in promoting the end-time false worship!

This would not be the first time in Scripture that music is connected to false worship. At the foot of Mount Sinai music and dancing were involved in the worship of the golden calf (Ex 32:19). In the plains of Moab, on the borders to the Promised Land, the Israelites were "*beguiled with music and dancing*"⁵² into a terrible apostasy (Num 25:1-2). They were lured through music to participate in heathen worship—something which they may have resisted under other circumstances.

The universal and revolutionary impact of rock music upon humanity at large is recognized by many social analysts. In his book *Rock Music*, sociologist William Schafer acknowledges that rock music has become a worldwide "tool for altering consciousness."⁵³ When Bob Geldorf organized his "Live-Aid" program to raise money for the Ethiopian famine victims, popular rock bands joined in from different parts of the world. Linked via satellite, the program generated such a worldwide interest that sociologists began to explore music as a phenomenon for "the formation of an international youth culture . . . based on common, worldwide tastes and values."⁵⁴

No other music today transcends cultural and national boundaries like rock. From Minneapolis to Moscow and from Stockholm to Johannesburg, the rock beat reigns supreme. The global impact of rock music, its open rejection of the Christian faith, and its promotion of a new religious experience characterized by rhythmic music, sex, drugs, and dance, could well prove to be the most effective medium for leading mankind into the final apocalyptic false worship.

In their thought-provoking book, *Music in the Balance*, Frank Garlock and Kurt Woetzel acknowledge that "A large segment of the Christian community has enthusiastically embraced this music of the world, the associated antics, and the philosophy. All three have been implanted into the life of the church. Not only have many Christians accepted the music as suitable for praise and worship, but an atmosphere pervades the contemporary Christian concerts not unlike the early concerts of the Elvis era. Believers have made idols of their own rock and roll singers and continue to worship at their feet with devotion and their pocket books."⁵⁵

Wolfgang Stefani perceptively asks: "Could it be that by fostering a homogenized global musical style—a style that is increasingly visible in the Christian music culture—the stage is set for a global, religious identity response? A response that will allow people of all nations, all religious backgrounds to say, 'Yes, this is my music, this is who I am: this is my music for being happy and religious and I am part of it; I am right at home now.'"⁵⁶

The summon of the Three Angels Messages to come out of spiritual Babylon by rejecting its false worship could well include also the rejection of the rock music of Babylon. Soon the whole world will be gathered for the final showdown in the antitypical, apocalyptic Plain of Dura and "every kind of music" will be played to lead the inhabitants of the earth to "worship the beast and its image" (Rev 14:9). It is noteworthy that in Revelation the outcome of the showdown involves the silencing of the music of Babylon: "So shall Babylon the great city be thrown with violence, and shall be found no more; and the sound of harpers and minstrels, of flute players and trumpeters, shall be heard no more" (Rev 18:21-22).

Those who reason that there is nothing wrong with the music of Babylon may be conditioning themselves to accept the false worship promoted by Babylon. Satan has his own songs to promote the endtime false worship. Could it be that by adopting the music of Babylon, some will miss the chance to sing the New Song of Moses and of the Lamb? May this question resonate in our consciousness and challenge us to stand for truth like the three Hebrew worthies.

ENDNOTES

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2. David W. Gould, *Contemporary Christian Music Under the Spotlight* (Oak Harbor, WA, 1998), p. 16.

3. Güenter Press (note 1), p. 305.
4. Bjorn Keyn, "A Look at Contemporary Christian Music," private essay prepared for this symposium, p. 1. Regretfully I was unable to use this excellent essay because much of the same material is covered in other chapters.
5. "Making the Switch!" *Insight* (January 13, 1996), p. 13.
6. Roger Record "Contemporary Christian Music: Is It Better than Secular Music?" *Insight* (January 13, 1996), p. 8.
7. Ibid., p. 11.
8. See, Jeff Trubey, "Making Waves," *Adventist Review* (July 17, 1997), p. 8 - 13.
9. Güenter Press (note 1), p. 306.
10. "Christian Rocker's Creed," *CCM Magazine* (November 1988), p. 12.
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14. Harold Byron Hannum, *Christian Search for Beauty* (Nashville, TN, 1975), p. 51.
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21. Steve Case, "Pastor Steve Answers," *Insight* (August 16, 1997), p. 6.
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28. John A. Solomon, "Worship and Praise: One Model for Change in the Worship Hour," *Ministry* (February 2000), p. 16.

29. Ibid., p. 17.

30. Ibid.

31. Jeff Trubey, "Making Waves," *Adventist Review* (July 17, 1997), p. 9.

32. Calvin M. Johansson, "Pop Music and the Gospel," Chapter 10 of this symposium, p. 296.

33. Güenter Preuss, "Christian Rock and Evangelism," Chapter 11 of this symposium, p. 316.

34. Ibid.

35. Ibid., P. 317.

36. Eurydice V. Osterman, "Rock Music and Culture," Chapter 12 of this symposium, p. 326.

37. Ibid., P. 327.

38. Ibid.

39. Steve Miller, *The Contemporary Christian Music Debate. Worldly Compromise or Agent of Renewal* (Wheaton, IL, 1993), p. 78.

40. Ibid., pp. 78-81.

41. Anita J. Strawn de Ojeda, "Sing the Song of Gladness," *Ministry* (September 1996), p. 5.

42. Ibid., p. 6.

43. Ibid.

44. Steve Miller (note 39), p. 113.

45. Michael Tomlison (note 12), p. 27.

46. The data is compiled from different sources and is quoted in Robert Harrell, *Martin Luther, His Music, His Message* (Greenville, SC, 1980), p. 18.

47. Ulrich S. Leupold, "Learning from Luther? Some Observation on Luther's Hymns," *Journal of Church Music* 8 (1966), p. 5.

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49. Ibid., pp.21-22.

50. Luther's foreword to Johann Walter's collection as quoted by Friedrich Blume, *Protestant Church Music: A History* (New York, 1974), p. 78.

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THE CHRISTIAN AND ROCK MUSIC
A STUDY OF BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES OF MUSIC

**This book is authored by seven scholars
and consists of 14 chapters**

Chapter 5
THE ROCK RHYTHM
and
A CHRISTIAN RESPONSE

by

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Rock music is the most popular cultural phenomenon of the second half of the twentieth century, influencing our entire culture. It is the greatest propagator of the moral, social, and aesthetic revolution we are experiencing today. The sound and philosophy of rock music penetrates virtually every area of daily activity. Its insistent, pulsating beat can be heard in homes, offices, places of businesses, and even churches. Rock music has penetrated every aspect of life.

Rock music has become an effective way to communicate a new set of values and to produce a new religious experience to an emerging generation. Before rock music, the family as a whole enjoyed music as a wholesome form of entertainment. The old European music influenced the music of the first half of the twentieth century and was regarded as "good for the kids."

A radical change began in the 1950s with the introduction of rock music, which has created a rift between the older and younger generation. Nothing excites the passions of young people today as does rock music. As Allan Bloom of the University of Chicago points out, "Today, a very large proportion of young people between the ages of ten and twenty live for rock music. . . . When they are in school and with their family, they long to plug themselves back into their music. Nothing surrounding them—school, family, church—has anything to do with their music world."¹

What is it that makes rock music so attractive, an irresistible addiction for many people, in spite of its revolutionary anti-Christian and countercultural nature? Why is it that even Christian churches are adopting more and more Christianized forms of rock music for their worship service and evangelistic outreach? Is there something unique in the structure of rock music and/or in its lyrics that makes this music substantially different from any other form of music? Quentin Schultze notes that "Musicologists have pondered the enigmas of rock's attraction and have generally gone away mystified, for rock hardly fits into the high-culture formalist definition of musical accomplishment."²

Objectives of This Chapter. It would be presumptuous to claim that this chapter resolves the enigma of rock's attraction by identifying all the factors contributing to its unprecedented popularity. Any attempt to be comprehensive in the analysis of such a complex social phenomenon risks the danger of being superficial.

This chapter seeks to understand what accounts for the long-lasting and overwhelming popularity of rock music by continuing the investigation conducted in the last three chapters into the nature of rock music. The underlying assumption of this symposium is that Christians and secular people are attracted to rock music because of what it offers them in terms of excitement, worldview, value system, and religious experience.

So far our investigation has focused on the worldview of rock music, its ideological development, and religious experience. In Chapter 2 we found that rock music reflects a pantheistic conception of God as an immanent impersonal supernatural power which the individual can experience through the hypnotic rhythm of rock music and drugs. The pantheistic conception of God has facilitated the acceptance of rock music among both Christians and secularly minded people, because both groups seek to fulfill the inner urge for a pleasurable experience of the supernatural through the hypnotic effects of rock music.

In Chapter 3 we traced the ideological evolution of rock music by focusing on the values that have emerged during the course of its history. We found that rock music has gone through an easily discernible hardening process from rock 'n' roll to hard rock, acid rock, heavy metal rock, rap rock, thrash rock, etc. New types of rock music are constantly appearing, because rock fans constantly demand something stronger and stronger to meet their craving.

In Chapter 4 we found that the pantheistic worldview promoted by rock music has eventually led to the rejection of the Christian faith and to the acceptance of a new kind of religious experience. The latter involves the use of rock music, sex, drugs, and dance to transcend the limitation of time and space and connect to the supernatural.

This chapter continues and completes the investigation into the nature of rock music by taking a closer look at its defining characteristics, namely, its rhythm. We refer to scientific studies which indicate that the rock beat affects the body in a way that is unlike any other type of music. It alters the mind and causes several physical reactions, including sexual arousal.

This closer look at the nature of rock music provides a basis for discussing the overriding question of this symposium— Can rock music be legitimately transformed into a fitting medium to worship God and proclaim the Gospel's message? This chapter is designed to help in formulating a final answer to this question by offering an understanding of the structure of rock music and its effects.

This chapter is divided into two parts. The first part examines the structure of rock music itself, especially its characteristic rhythm and beat. Special consideration will be given to the effects of rock music on the mind, muscles, and sexual arousal. The second part discusses how the church should respond to rock music by choosing instead music that respects the proper balance among melody, harmony, and rhythm. Such balance reflects and fosters order and balance in our Christian life among the spiritual, mental, and physical components of our beings. The chapter closes by offering some practical suggestions on how to revitalize the singing of traditional hymns and to introduce new hymns to the congregation.

PART 1

THE STRUCTURE OF ROCK MUSIC

The defining characteristic of good music is a balance among three basic elements: melody, harmony, and rhythm. Other elements such as form, dynamics, text, and performance practices could be listed, but for the purpose of our study, we limit our discussion to the three above-mentioned elements. Rock music inverts this order by making rhythm its dominant element, then harmony, and last melody.

Before looking at the role that rhythm plays in rock music and its effect on the human body, it might be helpful for those less versed in music, to explain how melody, harmony, and rhythm are integrated in good music.

The Melody. The melody is the most prominent part of the music. It is the "story line" of a piece of music and consists in the horizontal arrangement of notes which is recognized first when we sing a song like "All to Jesus I Surrender." Those who sing what is called the harmony, such as the alto, tenor or bass parts, are singing a melody that "harmonizes" with the other three parts.

Aaron Copland, who is regarded as the dean of American composers, makes this observation about a good melody: "Why a good melody should have the power to move us has thus far defied all analysis . . . Though we may not be able to define what a good melody is in advance, we certainly can make some generalizations about melodies that we already know to be good."³

According to Copland a good melody has the following general characteristics:

"It must have rise and fall (i.e., pitches going up and down). A melody that remains static (on the same pitch) can through repetition produce a hypnotic effect. . . .

"It must have satisfying proportions (i. e., a beginning, middle, and ending) and give a sense of completeness. The melody tells the story of the piece.

"It must at some point (usually near the end) come to a climax and then a resolution. All good art will have a climax.

"It will be written in such a way to elicit an emotional response by the listener."⁴ Rock music, as we shall see, lacks several of these essential characteristics of good music.

The Harmony. The harmony is produced by the chords which match the key structure in which the melody is written. It is the sound that we hear when the various parts coincide. "As a melody provides the 'profile' for a piece of music, the harmony is its 'personality.'"⁵

"Chords can provide both rest (consonance) and unrest (dissonance) in music. Good music will have a balance of rest and unrest. Harmonic chords can also color our mood as listeners. For example, What if every song were written with the harmonization in a minor key? That would definitely affect our mood. This aspect of music may be difficult for a nonmusician to comprehend. You know it when you hear it, but you may not be sure how to define it."⁶

The Rhythm. The rhythm is what makes the music move. Without rhythm, music becomes one continuous, boring, and uninteresting sound. "Rhythm is the orderly movement of music through time. Just as the heartbeat is the life of the body, rhythm is the life of the music and provides its essential energy. Without rhythm, music is dead.

Melody and harmony must unfold together, and rhythm makes this simultaneous unfolding possible."⁷

Everything in nature, including the human body, has rhythm. There is a rhythm to the heartbeat, respiration, and speech. Scientists have discovered that even the brain functions in rhythm.⁸ Brain waves have frequencies that are influenced by physical and mental states.

The same is true in music where rhythm is organized into regular recurring beats, which make up what is known as "meter." Usually the group of beats come in patterns of two, three, or four. "Repetition of these patterns in music is divided by measures. In any good piece of music, the strongest beat in a pattern (measure) is the downbeat (the first beat in the pattern). If a pattern has four beats, the strongest beat is the first, and the second strongest beat is the third, as pictured in the measure that follows:

/ONE, two, THREE, four/⁹

Rhythm in Rock Music. Rock music reverses the common order of the beat by placing the emphasis on what is known as the offbeat. In the offbeat, the main emphasis falls on beat four and the secondary beat is on beat two as pictured in the measure that follows:

/one, TWO, three, FOUR/

The fundamental problem with rock music is its relentless beat which dominates the music and produces an hypnotic effect. Bob Larson, whose career as a popular rock musician gave him a firsthand experience of the rock scene, points out that "the major issue for consideration from a moral and spiritual standpoint is the extent to which a pulsated or syncopated beat overrides the other musical elements in a song so that the level of communication is primarily sexual and physically arousing."¹⁰

In good music, as Tim Fisher explains, "the correct order is a good melody, supported by balanced harmony, undergirded with a firm and consistent rhythm. Concert music (i. e., a symphony or another instrumental piece of music) will sometimes vary from this order because of a desire to showcase the talents of the composer or the dexterity of the performer. However, our topic here is Christian music as it relates to communicating the spoken word. If you desire to communicate a text with music, the order is clear: melody, harmony, then rhythm."¹¹ It should be clarified that "a firm and consistent rhythm," does not mean an over-accentuated rhythm as found in rock music.

Rock music reverses the order of good music by making the rhythm the most important part of the sound. Larson explains: "Unlike other forms of music which may reveal melodic inventiveness, the focus of rock is usually on the beat. It is a drummer's holiday. . . . Jazz has a rhythmic swing. It flows with an exciting yet ultimately releasing feeling. But rock is built from a hard, straight-up-and-down pounding rhythm that produces frustrated energy. Some rock sounds emphasize alternating beats, while other rock tunes in part or whole hammer every beat home. Though he may add fills (short percussion outburst), it is the drummer's job to keep the force of rock moving with the incessant pulsating and syncopated beat."¹²

Driving Beat. The heavy emphasis on beat is what distinguishes rock from every other type of music. Quentin Schultze notes: "The heart of rock and roll is rhythm and beat—those twin forces give rock its energy and propel its intentional simple harmony and melody. The appeal does not lie in harmony, because most rock and roll music consists of no more than four or five very simple chords in a very clearly defined key. Nor does the

attraction lie in melody, since the rock and roll vocalist does not so much sing as shout and wail."¹³

The first and most important defining and distinguishing characteristic of rock music is its driving, loud, relentless beat. In his book, *The Art of Rock and Roll*, Charles Brown discusses the various types of rock music that have evolved since the days of Elvis Presley. He finds that the common denominator of all the kinds of rock music is its beat: "Perhaps the most important defining quality of rock and roll is the beat, . . . Rock and roll is different from other music primarily because of the beat."¹⁴

It is vitally important to understand that *rock music is different from all other music because of its heavy emphasis on the relentless beat*. This fact is acknowledged by rock musicians. In his book *A Conceptual Approach to Rock Music*, Gene Grier says that "rhythm is the most important and basic element of rock music because of the way in which we relate to it."¹⁵ He instructs readers on how to write a good rock song by following the following four steps:

- "1. Decide on a time signature.
2. Decide on a chord progression
3. Write the melody.
4. Write the lyrics."¹⁶

This statement is abundantly clear. Rock inverts the correct order of the elements of normal music by making rhythm and harmony more important than melody and lyrics.

Bob Larson, who prior to his conversion was a successful rock performer on television shows and entertained capacity audiences in Convention Hall, Atlantic City, explains that the "pulsating beat and fast rhythm will unmistakably identify rock music. . . . Since rock is a hybrid sound of whole traditions of music (jazz, Negro spiritual, country and western, blues), it is hard to assign any one sound as typical. It has become a musical melting pot for many styles, *all centered in the relentless beat*."¹⁷

The defining role of the relentless beat in rock music explains why its impact is *musically* rather than *lyrically*. As sociologist Simon Frith points out in his book *Sound Effects, Youth, Leisure, and the Politics of Rock 'n' Roll*, "A word-based approach is not helpful at getting at the meaning of rock The words, if they are noticed at all, are absorbed after the music has made its mark."¹⁸

In a major study on the *Neurophysiology of Rock*, research scientists Daniel and Bernadette Skubik emphasize with amazing clarity (for scientists!) the *musical* impact of the rock beat. "The conclusion of these studies is twofold. First, lyrics are of minor importance here. Whether the words are evil, innocuous, or based in Holy Scripture, the overall neurophysiological effects generated by rock music remain the same. There is simply no such thing as Christian rock that is substantively different in its impact. Second, short-term implications involve a decrease in receptivity in discursive communication, while long-term implications pose serious questions for rehabilitation of degraded left-hemisphere cognitive skills. In less technical jargon and in specific context, *we should expect that abilities to receive and deliver the gospel, to pray discursively, and to study Scripture are compromised [by rock music]*."¹⁹

This scientific fact "*there is simply no such thing as Christian rock that is substantively different in its impact*" is obviously ignored by those who argue that rock music can be

legitimately adopted for Christian worship by changing its lyrics. The fact is that changing the lyrics does not affect the mental-physical impact of rock on the functioning of the mind, muscles, and hormone production, because the beat is still there.

A driving, gentler beat is also present in soft rock, where the beat is very subtle and less "unfriendly" to the nerves. But, whether soft or hard, ultimately an over-accentuated rhythm has the same effect.

The Effects of the Rock Beat. A wealth of scientific research exists on the various psychological, physiological, and social negative effects of the rock beat on humans and animals. Experts have examined rock music, not as a spiritual or religious experience, but as a social, psychological, and physiological phenomenon. Since Chapter 8 deals specifically with the effects of rock music, only a few studies are cited in this context.

An important reason why rock music affects the body in a way that is unlike any other type of music is the unique character of the rock beat, usually referred to as "offbeat." The offbeat of rock music consists, as noted earlier, of a weak-strong sequence. This offbeat stops at the end of each bar or measure, as if the music stops and then starts again. This causes the listener to subconsciously come to an halt at the end of each bar. This is the opposite of the so-called dactylic or waltz-like beat, which reflects the heartbeat and other rhythms of the body.

Psychiatrist Verle Bell offers a graphic explanation of how rock beat causes addiction: "One of the most powerful releases of the fight-or-flight adrenaline high is music which is discordant in its beats or chords. Good music follows exact mathematical rules, which causes the mind to feel comforted, encouraged, and 'safe.' Musicians have found that when they go against these rules, the listener experiences an addictive high.

"Like unscrupulous 'diet' doctors who addicted their clients to amphetamines to ensure their continued dependence, musicians know that discordant music sells and sells. As in all addiction, victims become tolerant. The same music that once created a pleasant tingle of excitement no longer satisfies. The music must become more jarring, louder, and more discordant. One starts with soft rock, then rock 'n' roll, then on up to heavy metal music."²⁰

Neuroscientists Daniel and Bernadette Skubik provide a concise explanation of how the rock beat affects the muscles, the mind, and the hormone levels. "Rhythm for which drums provide or generate the basic beat, produces measurable responses in the body's muscular system, brainwave patterns and hormone levels. Briefly, (1) muscle coordination and control become synchronized with the basic beat; (2) brainwave activity itself aligns with the rhythm so generated; and (3) various hormones (specifically, opiates and sex hormones) are released as a result of electrophysiological synchronization with the rhythm. These results have been regularly documented by various researchers, and though individual subjects may vary in their response over narrow ranges of controlled input, all normal subjects have reacted as indicated when the rhythm exceeds 3-4 beats per second—roughly speaking a rhythm exceeding the rate of the average heartbeat."²¹

The Effect of the Rock Beat on Muscles. John Diamond is a respected physician who has conducted extensive research on the impact of music on the human body. His book *Your Body Doesn't Lie* contains a wealth of information on this subject. After a study of over 20,000 records, he found that the rock beat affects the body negatively in several ways. For example, he found that the stopped offbeat weakens the body because it goes against the normal rhythm of human physiology, thus affecting the heart and blood pressure. The rock beat sets in motion an automatic fight-and-flight response, which

causes a secretion of the hormone, epinephrine.²² The body reacts to the beat with muscle weakness, anxiety, and aggressive behavior.

Diamond relates the unexpected way in which he came to research the effects of the rock beat. "Several years ago my research on the effect of music took an unexpected turn. Shopping in the record department of a large New York store, I became weak and restless and generally ill at ease. The place was vibrating with rock music. Later I did the obvious thing—I tested the effect of this music. . . . Using hundreds of subjects, I found that listening to rock music frequently causes all the muscles in the body to go weak. The normal pressure required to overpower a strong deltoid muscle in an adult male is about 40 to 45 pounds. When rock music is played, only 10 to 15 pounds is needed."²³

In his book *Tuning the Human Instrument*, Steven Halpern reports several studies on how the rock rhythm affects the mind and the body. One of them is similar to the study of Dr. Diamond. He wrote: "Dr. Sheldon Deal, a nationally known chiropractor and author, and by no means an old fuddy-duddy categorically putting down all of Rock and Roll per se, demonstrated the effect of the standard Rock 'n' Roll beat on muscle strength of the body. Using tests basic to kinesiology [that is, movement dependent on stimulation], he showed that the rhythm arrangement that we hear all the time in pop music has a definite weakening effect on the subject's strength. . . . This effect held true *whether the subject liked the style of music or not*. In other words, how one 'felt' about the music, tastewise, was irrelevant in terms of how the body 'felt' . . . a common denominator cutting through most subjective reactions is that of sexual arousal."²⁴

Other scientific studies have produced similar results. "Researchers at Louisiana State University found that listening to hard-driving rock music increased the heart rates and lowered the quality of workouts in a group of twenty-four young adults. In contrast, easy-listening or softer music lowered heart rates and allowed for longer training sessions."²⁵ Similar experiments are reported in Chapter 8. One of them was conducted by the author of the chapter, Tore Sognefest, a Norwegian music professor and author of the book *The Power of Music*.

In another study on the effects of rock music, "Researchers at Temple University found that university students exposed to recordings by the Beatles, Jimi Hendrix, the Rolling Stones, Led Zeppelin, and other similar bands, breathed faster, showed reduced skin resistance to stimuli, and had an increased heart rate compared to those exposed to random background noise."²⁶

Rock Rhythm and Sexual Response. One of the best known effects of the rock rhythm is sexual arousal. Rock musicians are well aware of this fact and exploit it to their advantage. Gene Simmons of the rock group KISS was asked on *Entertainment Tonight* if parents should be concerned about teens listening to their music. With candid frankness Simmons replied: "They should be concerned because we are into girls—that is what rock is all about—sex with a 100-megaton bomb, the beat."²⁷

Here, without comment, are few other testimonies of rock stars. Mick Jagger said: "You can feel the adrenalin flowing through the body. It's sort of sexual. I entice my audience. What I do is very much the same as a girl's striptease dance."²⁸ Jim Morrison stated: "I feel spiritual up there. Think of us as erotic politicians."²⁹ Richard Oldham, manager of the Rolling Stones, said: "Rock music is sex and you have to hit them [teenagers] in the face with it."³⁰ John Taylor, bassist for Duran Duran, stated: "When the music works, the audience and the performer often feel like they're having an orgasm together."³¹ These comments by rock stars make it abundantly clear that rock is designed to stimulate people sexually.

How does the rock beat stimulate sexual arousal? Daniel and Bernadette Skubik explain the process: "When the beat generates high levels of sensory excitation (that is, when due to the pace of the rhythm and loudness of the music the auditory impact nears maximal reception), the brain is put in a state of stress. This state of stress is measurable in 'driving' brainwave activity. This driving activity occurs in *all* people when highly stimulated; subjective evaluation of the input—such as whether one likes or dislikes the music—is not a factor. To force its activity levels down and to achieve homeostasis, the brain releases the body's natural opioids. These opioids are naturally produced opiates chemically similar to drugs like morphine. They are used to control the body's sensitivity to pain. . . .

Considerable evidence confirms that rock music generates or enhances sexual arousal by way of this same process. That is, to high sensory stimulation the body responds with the release of gonadotrophins as well as opioids. The result is a strong connection forged between a stressed fight-or-flight drive state and the young person's developing sexual drive, which then invariably links arousal to aggression. . . . As rock music has moved farther away from its historical roots and medium (*viz.* folk music), *it both causes and expresses an increasing association of overt aggression linked to sexuality.*"³²

A similar and yet simpler explanation is given by Anne Rosenfeld in her article "Music, The Beautiful Disturber," published in *Psychology Today*. She explains that music arouses "a range of agitated feelings—tense, excited, sometimes sexual—through pronounced and insistent rhythms, . . . artfully used to heighten the sexual tension . . . drumming may produce these powerful effects by actually driving the brain's electrical rhythms."³³

The secretion of hormones, caused by the abnormal stimulus of the rock beat, results in an overstimulation of the sex glands without a normal release. Bob Larson points out that this is "the prelude to the release that will occur in the parked car after the dance, and it is a direct cause of the bodily obscenity that occurs on the dance floor. I speak not only from medical counsel, but also from personal observation when I state that girls who erotically give their bodies to the frenzied gyrations accompanying rock rhythms may be undergoing a sexually climactic condition. . . . We must also realize that unconscious emotion, because of its nature, is influenced by many factors, one of which is vibrations (e. g., the deep bass sound found in rock music). . . .The sex-related emotions generated by the vibrations in the unconscious seek expression in conscious thought and activity. I have observed couples who actually undergo an imaginary sex act in their minds and bodies while dancing. This abnormal, musically induced, simulated orgasm is both psychologically and physiologically destructive. Neurosis is the direct result. It is also sin!"³⁴

Pleasure-oriented Church Music. The capacity of the rock beat to cause a sexual response is a most important factor to be considered by those who wish to transform rock music into a fitting medium to Christian worship and evangelism. Changing the lyrics does not eliminate the effect of the rock beat because its impact is *physical*, bypassing the master brain. Ultimately the question is: *Should church music stimulate people physically or elevate them spiritually?*

The answer to this question is largely dependant upon one's understanding of the nature of God and the worship to be rendered to Him. Those who envision God as a special friend, a kind of a lover, with whom they can have fun, see no problem in worshipping him by means of physically stimulating music. On the other hand, those who perceive God as a majestic, holy, and almighty Being to be approached with awe and reverence will only use the music that elevates them spiritually.

We live in a pleasure-oriented society and many have come to expect a pleasurable, self-satisfying experience from church music. Calvin Johansson, an authority on church music

who has contributed Chapters 10 and 11 to this symposium, correctly observes that "when the main criterion for choosing the music used in worship is pleasure, then the music specifically crafted for that purpose becomes the logical choice. In our culture, that means the music of pop, with its melody, rhythm, and harmony has but one goal, easy self-gratification. Whether it be rock 'n' roll, rock, country, contemporary Christian music, heavy metal, new wave, gospel, country rock, swing, or rap, pop is the preferred music of most people."³⁵

As our culture has become increasingly preoccupied with fulfilling personal pleasurable desires, the church is seeking to supply the religious counterpart by providing Christianized forms of rock music. Johansson rightly warns that "the result of using religious rock in worship is dangerous: The church service becomes a make-believe fantasy-world used to satisfy the less noble traits of the adamic nature."³⁶

Religious rock music, by whatever name, is hedonistic, and hedonistic music can hardly contribute to build a strong spirituality. "No matter how one might try, or what one believes, musical immaturity does not produce holistic Christian maturity."³⁷

The Effects of Rock on the Mind. Rock music affects not only the physical but also the mental processes of the body. Before mentioning a few significant studies on the mental effects of the rock beat, let me share a personal experience. I was invited to speak at a church where a rock band led out in the singing of the beloved hymn "Amazing Grace" with a heavy rock beat. It was not long before the whole congregation was in a swinging, dancing mood. The rock beat had caused the people to forget that the original mood and message of the song invites us not to dance for fun, but to contemplate God's amazing grace: "I once was lost but now I am found, Was blind, but now I see."

The reason the people forgot the mood and message of the song is simply because the rock beat impacted upon their body, bypassing their mental processes. As Christians, we need to be aware of the fact that music is perceived through the portion of the brain that receives stimuli for sensations and feelings, *without being first screened by the brain centers involving reason and intelligence.*

This discovery, which was made over fifty years ago and has been confirmed since then by numerous scientists,³⁸ has contributed to the development of music therapy. "Music, which does not depend upon the master brain to gain entrance into the organism, can still arouse by way of the thalamus—the relay station of all emotions, sensations, and feeling. Once a stimulus has been able to reach the thalamus, the master brain is *automatically invaded.*"³⁹

Two German scientists, G. Harrer and H. Harrer, conducted experiments to determine the effect of music on the body. They found that even when the attention of the listener was purposely drawn away from the music, a strong, emotional response was registered on instruments measuring changes in the pulse and breath rates, as well as in the psychogalvanic (electrical) skin reflexes.⁴⁰

Bob Larson, who studied medicine before becoming a popular rock musician, explains this point with considerable clarity: "The spoken word must pass through the master brain to be interpreted, translated, and screened for moral content. Not so with music—especially with rock music. Such pounding fury can bypass this protective screen and cause a person to make no value judgment whatsoever on what he is hearing."⁴¹

Joseph Crow, a researcher at the University of Seattle, conducted an interesting study of the rock culture and its music. He found that "Rock is a use of music based on mathematical formulae to condition the mind through calculated frequencies (vibrations), and it is used to modify the body chemistry to make the mind susceptible to modification

and indoctrination. Rock music can be (and is) employed for mindbending, reeducation, and re-organization."⁴²

Several scientific studies have established the negative effects of rock music on the mind. In his study of "Behavioral Kinesiology" [that is, movement dependent on stimulation], Diamond found that the weak rock beat causes "switched" thinking in the brain. "Using the principles and techniques of Behavioral Kinesiology, I have also demonstrated that when the weakening beat is played, the phenomenon called *switching* occurs—that is, symmetry between the two cerebral hemispheres is lost, introducing subtle perceptual difficulties and a host of other early manifestations of stress. *The entire body is thrown into a state of alarm.*"⁴³

Diamond continues explaining more fully the effects of rock music on the mind. "The perceptual changes that occur may well manifest themselves in children as decreased performance in school, hyperactivity, and restlessness; in adults, as decreased work output, increased errors, general inefficiency, reduced decision-making capacity on the job, and a nagging feeling that things just are not right—in short, the loss of energy for no apparent reason. *This has been observed clinically hundreds of times.* In my practice I have found that the academic records of many school children improve considerable after they stop listening to rock music while studying."⁴⁴

Similar conclusions have been reached by other scientific studies on the effects of rock music on the mind. Psychologist Jeffery Arnett found that young people who listened to metal rock "reported a higher rate of a wide range of reckless behaviors, including driving behavior, sexual behavior, and drug use. They were also less satisfied with their family relationships. Girls who liked heavy-metal music were more reckless in the areas of shoplifting, vandalism, sexual behavior, drug use, and reported lower self-esteem."⁴⁵

In his book *Rock Music*, William Shafer, a scholar not opposed to rock music, acknowledges that "rock is a tool for altering consciousness. . . . Associated with rock, for instance, is a cult of irrationality, a reverence for the instinctual, the visceral—and a distrust of reason and logic; this form of anti-intellectualism can be highly dangerous, can lead to totalitarian modes of thought and action. Linked with this anti-intellectualism is an interest in the occult: magic, superstition, exotic religious thought, anything contrary to the main current of Western thought."⁴⁶

Rock Music and Patty Hearst's Conversion. One of the most frightening examples of the awesome power of rock music to alter the mind is the conversion of Patty Hearst. In February 1974, Patty Hearst was kidnapped by the Symbionese Liberation Army. Shortly after the kidnapping, Patty was caught on video cameras helping the SLA robbing banks. You wonder how they converted her? William Sargant, one of Britain's foremost experts on brainwashing, examined Patty Hearst.

Sargant's alarming conclusions were reported by *Newsweek*: "She was an unwilling victim of a 'forced conversion' or brainwashing. According to Sargant, a person whose nervous system is under constant pressure can 'inhibit' and 'exhibit paradoxical brain activity—bad becomes good and vice versa.' And that, Sargant argues, is precisely what happened to Patty Hearst. Her nervous system was kept at maximum stress by the *continual playing of loud rock music.*"⁴⁷

The capacity of rock music to alter the thinking process of a person like Patty Hearst, making her "an unwilling victim of a forced conversion," exemplifies the danger of exposing oneself to such music. In his book *Tuning the Human Instrument*, Steven Halpern warns us of this danger with these arresting words: "Rock stars are juggling fissionable material that could blow up at any time."⁴⁸

Rock musicians have long recognized the mind-altering power of their music. Timothy Leary, the Harvard psychologist who ended up serving a Californian jail sentence for possession of marijuana, makes this point in his song "Turn on, Tune in, Drop out," which became an anthem for millions. In his book, *Politics of Ecstasy*, Leary states: "Don't listen to the words, it's the music that has its own message. . . . I've been stoned on the music many times. . . . The music is what will get you going."⁴⁹

In a similar fashion, Mick Jagger said: "We are moving after the minds and so are most of the new groups."⁵⁰ In *Melody Maker* he said: "Communication is the answer to the whole of the world's problems and music is the key to it all because the music opens the door to everybody's mind."⁵¹ Graham Nash similarly stated: "Pop music is *the* mass medium for conditioning the way people think."⁵²

Rock Music Is Felt, not Heard. Rock music has a unique mind-altering power because, as Bob Larson explains with enviable clarity, contrary to other forms of music, "it is written to be felt rather than heard. It is performed to dull the attention of the listener. It is not the melodic inventiveness or the chromatic arrangement of the chords that interests the average teenager. Rock performers try to produce a 'sound' with the dull, steady, heavy, throbbing, mid-deadening beat. And it is this beat that is captivating so many young people, making them easy prey for the lyrics. Other types of music could be found guilty or wrong also, but at present rock music is the most damaging to the young contingent of Americans who are preparing to take the leadership of the country in the years ahead."⁵³

The subordination of the melodic line in rock music to a pulsating, relentless rhythm has an hypnotic effect that causes people to lose touch with reality. Bob Larson states: "The steady pounding can cause the mind to go into a state of daydreaming in which it loses touch with reality. This in turn causes the dancer or the listener to lose touch with the value system related to reality. Any monotonous, lengthy, rhythmic sound induces various stages of trances. It is quite obvious to any qualified, objective observer that teenagers dancing to rock often enter hypnotic trances. When control of the mind is weakened or lost, evil influences can often take possession. Loss of self-control is dangerous and sinful. In a state of hypnosis the mind of the listener can respond to almost any suggestion given it. Such compulsive behavior is indicated by the rising tide of promiscuity and by the increasing rebelliousness of modern youth."⁵⁴

Janis Joplin, a popular rock singer who committed suicide, described the tremendous power of rock music she experienced following her first appearance at the Avalon, a San Francisco ballroom. "I couldn

t believe it, all that rhythm and power. I got stoned just feeling it like it was the best dope in the world. It was so sensual, so vibrant, loud, crazy. I couldn't stay still; I have never danced when I sang, but there I was moving and jumping. I couldn't hear myself, so I sang louder and louder. By the end I was wild."⁵⁵

There is no way to insulate the bodily responses from the pulsating and pounding power of rock music, because it impacts directly on the body, bypassing the mind. Marye Mannes is quoted by the *Washington Post* as saying that rock music is "the new illiteracy, and the young love it. They love it because they would rather feel than think. It is easier. It is easier for those who cater for them. For, to blast the senses—to blow the mind—you don't need training. You don't need knowledge. You don't even need talent. All you need is a boundless ego, a manic temperament, and the loudest amplifying equipment you can get. Then you can do your own thing." She concludes: "If the essence of creative expression is to bring meaning and beauty into life, then the sound and the fury of the new illiteracy is bent on destroying both."⁵⁶

The physical damage to the eardrums caused by the excessive volume rock is discussed at some length in Chapter 8 by Tore Sognefest. Studies on hearing loss indicate that listening to rock, whether through walkman, discotheques, or concerts, has become a widespread hazard. The problem has assumed such alarming proportions that consumer activists and audiologists have proposed that local governments should enforce a 100-decibel level on rock played in clubs.⁵⁷

PART 2

A CHRISTIAN RESPONSE TO ROCK MUSIC

The capacity of rock music to alter the mind and to cause several physical reactions, including sexual arousal, should be of great concerns to Christians. After all, Christianity entails a holistic response to God through the consecration of our mind, body, and soul to Him (1 Cor 6:19; 1 Thess 5:23; Rom 12:2). It is through the mind that we offer to God "a rational service" (Rom 12:1; in Greek *logike*) and make moral, responsible decisions. Scripture summons us to abstain from anything that impairs our mind (1 Pet 1:13; 4:7; Eph 5:18), because through the daily "renewal of the mind," we "put on the new nature, created after the image of God in true righteousness and holiness" (Eph 4:24; cf. Col 3:10; Rom 12:2).

Rock Music Largely Unchallenged. What has been the church's response to the challenge posed by the physical and psychological problems caused by rock music? Negligible. Why? Calvin Johansson explains the reason with unusual insight. "The reason the [rock] music has largely gone unchallenged is the subjective notion that the notes, harmony, and rhythm of such songs contain no worldview, moral ethos, or life outlook. It is felt that music does not reflect a moral, philosophical, or theological position. Hence, the church has naively and simplistically split asunder the medium (music) and the message (text). Some Christians have embraced the music of rock (or a derived version of it) while disavowing the text!"⁵⁸

Is such a split feasible? The answer is NO, for three major reasons. First, as we have seen, rock music makes its impact *musically rather than lyrically*. This means that in whatever version rock music is heard, it alters the mind and stimulates the body through its hypnotic beat. Poison kills no matter how it is administered. By the same token, the rock beat impacts on the mind and body whether the lyrics are sacred or secular.

Second, as Johansson puts it, "Christian rock of whatever category is still rock since its message remains the same, now having moved from bars, dance halls, and clubs to the chancel. We have not only given nihilistic rockers a forum to peddle their wares, but we

do it for them."⁵⁹ If a Christian rock band looks and sounds like the secular counterpart, its music can hardly be an alternative because *the sound is the same*. In reality, the Christian band is promoting secular rock by exposing people to a modified version of it.

Third, the music and lyrics of rock are the product of the same worldview, value system, and pantheistic religious experience. The ethos of rock communicated through the music is supported by the text, and viceversa. "There are no rules, There are no laws," Jim Morrison declares.⁶⁰ "I am an anti-Christ, I am an anarchist," Johnny Rotten affirms.⁶¹ The famous art historian H. R. Rookmaaker notes that rock music has emerged "with a thumping rhythm and shouting voices, each line and each beat full of angry insult to all Western values."⁶² This means that the adoption of rock music in any form represents an endorsement of the social and religious values associated with such music.

An Unholy Alliance. There is today an unholy alliance between Christian and secular rock bands. Not only are Christian performers crossing over to the secular market, but so-called Christian magazines are listing and promoting the names of the Christian groups that look and sound like their secular counterpart.

Group, which calls itself *The Youth Ministry Magazine*, often carries a feature known as "CCM: A Sound Alternative." The list gives the names of the popular, secular rock groups together with the names of the Christian bands that sound alike. The caption reads: "If you like to listen to – then you'll probably enjoy –."

In one issue, *Group* placed at the top of the list a secular rock group classified as *Punk/Thrash Music*. The name itself indicates the kind of music played by that group. Several Christian bands are listed as the "CCM Sound Alikes" to this aberrant group. Note what *Newsweek* had to say about the "Christian" sound-alike band: "They play the kind of music that parents love to hate. It is loud, disgusting, without redeeming social merit. There are *no melodies, no harmonies*, no singing—just a relentless flood of raunchy, rapped-out lyrics, punched home by a steady barrage of blaring guitars and synthesized beats."⁶³

Can this band that sounds and behaves like its secular counterpart, be legitimately considered a "Christian alternative"? The Christian alternative is to confront the world with the purity and power of the Gospel, not to conform to its values and practices.

When the Babylonian captors asked the Israelites to entertain them, saying: "Sing us one of the songs of Zion!" (Ps 137:3), the people responded: "How shall we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land?" (Ps 137:4). Note that the Israelites did not say, "Let us sing them one of our sacred songs in the Babylonian music style so that we might convert them to the Lord!" No, their response was that they could not sing the Lord's song to entertain the ungodly. "The Israelites knew it was wrong to take that which belonged to the Lord and profane it by entertaining the unbelievers. Today, not only is the Lord's song used to entertain the heathen, but the heathen's music is being employed as the Lord's song [to entertain the Christians]."⁶⁴

Knowing Our Enemy. To successfully meet the challenge of secular influences like rock music, it is imperative for the church to know what it is up against. Wise playing in sports always entails knowing the strengths and weaknesses of the competitors.

The Old Testament prophets knew their opposition. They understood how the cultural influence of the surrounding pagan nations had led God's people into apostasy and they boldly called upon the people to repent, because God would not tolerate their disobedience. Similarly, the New Testament abounds with admonitions not to be "conformed to this world" (Rom 12:2; Eph 6:12; 2 Pet 1 and 2). John admonishes us to "love not the world or the things in the world" (1 John 2:15).

To effectively withstand the cultural pressure of our times and retain our Christian identity, we, like the godly people of Bible times, must understand the perverted values and practices of our culture. In the context of this study, we must understand the true nature of rock music—a music that, as we have seen, embodies a spirit of rebellion against God and the moral principles He has revealed for our lives today.

Reasons for Avoiding Rock Music. The fundamental reason for the church to avoid rock music in any version is its power to alter the mind. We have found that rock music itself, apart from its lyrics, can alter the mind through its relentless beat. A disciplined Christian life-style calls for the avoidance of mind-altering music or drugs which impairs the mental judgment, thus favoring irresponsible behavior.

In his book *A Return to Christian Culture*, Richard S. Taylor offers a sensible perspective on the Christian choice of music: "There are music forms, whether secular or sacred, which create moods of pensiveness, of idealism, of awareness of beauty, of aspiration, and of holy joyousness. There are other forms of music which create moods of recklessness and sensual excitement. Surely it does not take much judgment to know which forms are most appropriate for religious functions."⁶⁵

It is unfortunate that good judgment is often lacking on the part of those who promote the adoption of rocky types of music, even for Christian worship. Most likely these people are not aware of the mental and physical impact of rock music. They ignore that Christian lyrics do not neutralize the sensual effect of the rock beat.

When Christian singers use for their songs the methods employed by rock musicians to make the sound sensual, they "do not realize or deliberately ignore the fact that this is no longer ministry, but pure, sensual, flesh-gratifying entertainment."⁶⁶ "When hymns are so rhythmically irresistible that hand-clapping, dancing, or patty-caking is the routing response, we may be having fun, but such songs are ultimately self-defeating. Any music that has an overbearing rhythmic drive which induces excess and unrestrained bodily response pleasures self. It gives 'me' a rollicking good time. But it lacks the discipline necessary for maturation. When attention is riveted to fleshly response, then church music has succumbed to an infantile self-centeredness."⁶⁷

The Problem with "Crossover" Artists. The lack of spiritual maturity promoted by rock music in its various versions, may be partly responsible for those Christian artists who cross over into secular rock. This is an easy step to take by those performers who have already been playing the same rock music, though with different words.

The Christian commitment to Christ leaves no room for Christian artists to cross over into the secular rock scene. It is simply a matter of choosing whom they want to serve. Some mistakenly believe that they can worship the god of rock at the concert and the Rock of Ages at the church. Ralph Novak, a music commentator, offers us a fitting example of this trend. He writes for *People* the following perceptive description of a popular crossover Christian performer: "She has made a smooth transition from a rock-tinged gospel to a gospel-tinged rock. She sounds confident and vibrant. For those who like to dance and pray at the same time, her stuff can't be beat."⁶⁸

Can a Christian engage in erotic dancing and praying at the same time? Such a mixture of good-evil is becoming increasingly common today. We must not forget that this was the strategy used by Satan to cause the Fall of man. Speaking of Adam's Fall, Ellen White writes: "By the mingling of evil with good, his mind had become confused, his mental and spiritual powers benumbed. No longer could he appreciate the good that God had so freely bestowed."⁶⁹

The pressure to accept the good-evil mixture is especially felt today in the field of religious music. Lloyd Leno, who prior to his untimely death served as music professor at Walla Walla University, wrote: "The mass media has so thoroughly conditioned the masses with a diet of dance rhythm-oriented music, that anything but this seems bland and dull. This has resulted in something akin to an obsession among many Seventh-day Adventist gospel music composers and performers to cloth all gospel music with some kind of dance beat. Although some groups are more cautious or 'conservative,' the standard fare of many groups includes thinly disguised hybrid forms of dance styles such as waltz, swing (fox trot), country Western, soft rock, and folk rock. . . . It is quite obvious that these groups are using models whose goals are not compatible with Christian principles."⁷⁰

If Leno was alive today to observe the music scene in some Adventist churches, he would add "Hard rock" to the list. In my itinerant ministry around the world, I have been confronted on several occasions with Adventist rock bands playing the kind of music one would expect to hear in night clubs or discos, but not in a church. Such a music would have been strongly condemned in all Adventist churches thirty years ago, but today some members do not see anything wrong with it. Why? Simply because their moral sensitivity has been dulled by the rock music that is blaring everywhere in our society. It is like a frog placed in water that is gradually heated. Eventually she boils to her death without sensing the danger.

Some Churches Recognize the Problem. While some Christians are compromising by adopting modified versions of rock music, others recognize the problem and break away from it. It is encouraging to read about the increasing number of Christian churches and recording artists who recognize that some Contemporary Christian Music (CCM) misrepresents Christ in its sound and lyrics. In his book, *At the Cross Road*, Charlie Peacock, an award-winning recording artist, producer, and songwriter of CCM, provides a stirring account of some of the churches and artists who have recently severed their connection with the CCM because they can no longer compromise their principles.

In November 1997, the People's Church of Salem, Oregon, announced its plans to terminate the Christian music festival, known as "Jesus Northwest" which has drawn capacity crowds for the past 21 years. The announcement came as a surprise in the form of a letter of repentance written by Rev. Randy Campbell, pastor of the People's Church and the festival director. He wrote: "We humbly repent before the Lord and ask for forgiveness of the body of Christ for inadequately representing Christ in our ministry, message, and methods."⁷¹ The letter acknowledges that much of what is done within the contemporary Christian music industry "(for example, ministry direction, decision-making methods, even the message itself) is often driven by marketing—not the mind of the Lord."⁷²

On October 31, 1997, veteran CCM recording artist Steve Camp declared to be "burdened and broken over the current state of CCM" and released an essay in poster form accompanied by 107 theses entitled "A Call for Reformation in the Contemporary Christian Music Industry." He concludes his essay urging readers to "come away from an industry that has all but abandoned Christ and forge, by God's grace, what it was always meant to be . . . a ministry. Pray on this."⁷³

In the Seventh-day Adventist church we have had several successful rock performers who have abandoned altogether the rock scene after joining the church. Two of them, Louis Torres from the USA and Brian Neumann from South Africa, prior to their conversion, played in popular rock bands that performed nationally and internationally. You can read the gripping conversion story of David Neumann on Chapter 11 of this symposium. You will be greatly inspired to read how the Holy Spirit convicted his heart and led him from the addiction to rock music to the worship of the Rock of Ages.

Another performer is Rick Shorter, who was former director of the Broadway show "Hair." When he became a Seventh-day Adventist, he faced the temptation to compromise. As a professional vocalist and guitarist, he felt that he could use his talents by converting old rock songs into new gospel songs. But he decided against it. Rick stated: "At first I thought I could rehash some old rock and soul songs and make them into gospel music. But now I realize there can be no compromise with the world—its music, its entertainment, or its philosophies."⁷⁴

As he reflected on his former life which included acquaintances with such popular rock stars as Janis Joplin, Jimmy Hendrix, and Jim Morrison, he gave this warning to young people: "There is absolutely nothing to that kind of life. I just wish that I could get the message across to the kids whose heads are into Rock. They see the surface glitter, not the emptiness inside."⁷⁵

A Christian Response to Rock Music. In formulating a Christian response to rock music, it is important to remember what we stated at the outset, namely, that the defining characteristics of good music is the balance between three basic elements: melody, harmony, and rhythm. We have found that rock music reverses this order, by making rhythm its dominant element that overshadows the harmony and melody.

Christians should respond to rock music by choosing instead the good music that respects the proper balance among melody, harmony, and rhythm. The proper balance among these three may well correspond to the proper balance in our life among the spirit, mind, and body.

In their book *Music in the Balance*, Frank Garlock and Kurt Woetzel present a concept that was new to me, but which I find worth considering. They explain graphically that

MELODY responds to the SPIRIT

HARMONY responds to the MIND

RHYTHM responds to the BODY⁷⁶

The part of music to which the Spirit responds is the melody. This is suggested by Ephesians 5:18-19 where Paul admonishes believers to "be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making a melody." The parallelism suggests that "making a melody" is equivalent to singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Singing the melody (the tune) of a religious song, not only in church, but also while driving, working, walking, or even taking a shower, expresses our joy and praise to the Lord who fills us with His Spirit.

The part of music to which our mind responds is the harmony. This is because harmony is the intellectual part of music. Virtually anyone can produce a simple melody, but it takes extensive musical training to write and understand the various chords (parts). A good sounding harmony can be arranged only by a trained musician. The harmony, as suggested by the meaning of the word, harmonizes the melody and rhythm.

The part of music to which the body responds is the rhythm. The word "rhythm" derives from the Greek word *reo*, which means "to flow" or "to pulse" (John 7:38). The rhythm is the pulse of the music which finds an analogical correspondence to the pulse of the heartbeat.

The Pulse of the Heart and the Rhythm of Music. Garlock and Woetzel perceptively suggests that "the analogy between the pulse [of the body] and the rhythm [of the

music] will help any desirous Christian to gain discernment in his choice of music."⁷⁷ To illustrate this concept they provide this helpful chart:

- "Too much (or erratic) pulse Body is sick**
- Too much (or erratic) rhythm ... Music is sick**
- No pulse Body is dead**
- No rhythm Music is dead**
- Pulse under control Body is well**
- Rhythm under control Music is 'well'"⁷⁸**

The analogy between the pulse of our body and the rhythm of music is recognized by medical doctors. John Diamond, a medical doctor quoted earlier, wrote: "Our bodies have a pulse, and so does music. In a healthy state, we are in touch with our 'inner pulse,' which Dr. Manfred Clynes so well describes as 'the key to the empathy we experience with a composer.' . . . The phenomenon of the inner pulse . . . is in effect an internally conducted beat."⁷⁹

Rhythm, as noted earlier, is the physical part of music. As in the human body the pulsation of the heartbeat must be within a normal range for the body to be well, so in music the rhythm must be balanced for the music to be good. The problem with rock music is that the rhythm or beat dominates in order to appeal primarily to the physical and sensual aspect of human nature.

This physical, sensual impact of the rock rhythm is widely recognized by scholars. In his book *Sound Effects, Youth, Leisure, and the Politics of Rock 'n' Roll*, English sociologist Simon Frith emphatically states: "The sexuality of music is usually referred to in terms of its rhythm—it is the beat that commands a direct physical response."⁸⁰ The same view is clearly expressed in David Tame's book, *The Secret Power of Music*: "When pulsation and syncopation are the rhythmic foundation of the music at a dance hall, the movements of the dancers can invariably be seen to become very sensual."⁸¹

Order in the Christian Life. By stimulating the physical, sensual aspect of the body, rock music throws the order of the Christian life out of balance. Tame often refers to what he calls "one timeless axiom . . . as in music, so in life."⁸² As Christians we can reverse the axiom and say: "As in life, so in music." In other words, the order of priorities of the Christian life with the spiritual first, the mental second, and the physical third, should be reflected in the music itself.

"The Christian who is preoccupied with and spends most of his efforts on the physical (the body) is sensual rather than spiritual. The child of God who exerts most of his energies on improving the mind, to the neglect of his spiritual and physical needs, places undue emphasis on intellectual pursuits. The Christian with a Scriptural order and balance in his life emphasizes the spiritual first (Matt 6:33), the intellectual or emotional second (2 Cor 10:5), and the physical last (Rom 13:14)."⁸³

The proper order among the spiritual, mental, and physical aspects of our Christian life should be reflected in Christian music. Garlock and Woetzel develop this correlation very cogently: "Just as the spiritual considerations of life receive priority by the balanced Christian, so the melody (that part of music to which the spirit responds) must dominate music in the Christian's life. Similarly, the harmony (that part of music to which the mind

and emotions respond) needs to have a supportive role in music, just as the mind and emotions play a secondary role in the Christian experience. Last, and most obvious, the rhythm (that part of music to which the body responds) must be under strict control in music, just as the body and its desires need to be disciplined in the Christian's life."⁸⁴

The challenge we all face in our Christian life is to keep our body in the proper relationship to the mind and spirit. Paul refers to this struggle when he said: "But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified" (1 Cor 9:27; NKJV). Like Paul, we need to discipline our body by avoiding those things that feed only our carnal nature. We need to cultivate a taste for the right kind of music that respects the proper balance among the melody, harmony, and rhythm. Such music reinforces the proper order of the Christian life among the spiritual, mental, and physical.

Making Hymns Meaningful. There is plenty of traditional and contemporary hymns that respects the proper balance and reinforces our Christian values. But, some people complain that hymns are dull and boring. Could it be that the problem lies, not with the hymns, but with the new appetite that some have developed for pop music? Could it be that such an appetite has so dulled the musical sensitivity of some people that they are no longer able to appreciate sacred music? A spiritual appetite must be developed before one can enjoy spiritual music, but this does not happen overnight.

The problem, however, is not always a perverted appetite. Sometimes traditional hymns seem dull because the congregational singing is lifeless. The solution to this problem is to be found not in adopting the sound of secular music, but in finding a dynamic and spiritual song leader who can inspire the congregation to sing wholeheartedly. The same hymn that sounds dull when sung in a monotonous way becomes vibrant and inspiring when sung with enthusiasm.

Hymns become meaningful to the congregation when all participants—the song director, the minister, the accompanist, and, of course, the congregation—awaken to the enormous blessing which awaits them as they sing from the heart with great dedication and concentration.⁸⁵

To help in this process, attention can be called to the author of the words of the hymn, or to the composer of its music. Some significant aspects of the hymn's message can be brought out; then one can invite the congregation to sing the hymn with fresh meaning and understanding.

Imaginative changes in the manner of singing can make even familiar songs more interesting. Sometimes the song leader can invite the congregation to sing a cappella. One verse can be sung by women and another by men. In other instances the congregation can accompany the choir, singing group, or soloist. There are endless ways of singing old hymns with new fervor and excitement.

A Ground-swell of Contemporary Hymns. Those who complain that the church hymnal is old, and want to sing new songs, will be pleased to learn that during the past few decades there has been a ground-swell of hymn writing in the United States, Britain, and other countries around the world.⁸⁶ The hymn writers and hymn-tune composers of our times are men and women of talent, commitment, and dedication. They represent different Christian denominations, and their songs fill new hymnals that can enrich the worship experience of all Christians.

Mention should be made of The Hymn Society of the United States and Canada⁸⁷ which was founded in 1922. Since then, the Society has been actively involved in promoting the composition of new hymns which are published in their periodical called *The Hymn*. Their

annual conference is held each summer in different parts of the North America and attracts hymn writers and hymn-tune composers from many countries and of different Christian denominations.

The Hope Publishing Company⁸⁸ deserves special commendation for encouraging hymn writers to submit their new songs for publication. These new collections are published each year and made available to the general public.

To introduce new hymns and to learn to appreciate more fully the older ones, a Hymn Festival can be organized. This can be a time of great inspiration and joyous celebration when the importance of hymns for the life of the church and national events like Thanksgiving can be rediscovered. In 1999 a special Hymn Festival was organized at Andrews University to celebrate the last Thanksgiving of the century. It was truly a service of great beauty and gratitude for God's unspeakable gifts of mercy, love, and joy to His sons and daughters.

CONCLUSION

In his book *The Secret Power of Music*, David Tame concludes his analysis of rock music with words that fittingly express the conclusion of this present study. He wrote: "Rock has unquestionably affected the philosophy and life-style of millions. It is a global phenomenon; a pounding, pounding destructive beat which is heard from America and Western Europe to Africa and Asia. Its effects upon the soul is to make nigh-impossible the true inner silence and peace necessary for the contemplation of eternal verities. Its 'fans' are addicted, though they know it not, to the 'feel good,' egocentricity-enhancing, para-hypnotic effects of its insistent beat."⁸⁹

Tame is not a religious educator, but a musicologist who traces in a scholarly fashion the influence of music on man and society from the time of the ancient civilization to the present. Yet he strongly believes that rock music poses a serious threat to the very survival of our civilization. "I adamantly believe that rock in *all* of its forms is a critical problem which our civilization *must* get to grips with in some genuinely effective way, and without delay, if it wishes long to survive."⁹⁰

In many ways Tame's assessment of rock music perfectly agrees with the conclusions that have emerged during the course of our investigation conducted in the last four chapters into the philosophical, historical, religious, and musical aspects of rock music.

Philosophically, we found in Chapter 2 that rock music rejects the biblical transcendental view of God, promoting instead a pantheistic conception of the supernatural as an impersonal power which the individual can experience through the hypnotic rhythm of rock music, drugs, and sex.

Historically, we noted in Chapter 3 that rock music has gone through an easily discernible hardening process, blatantly promoting, among other things, a pantheistic/hedonistic worldview, an open rejection of the Christian faith and values, sexual perversion, civil disobedience, violence, satanism, occultism, homosexuality, and masochism.

Religiously, we saw in Chapter 4 that rock music has led to the rejection of the Christian faith and to the acceptance of a new kind of religious experience. The latter involves the use of rock music, sex, drugs, and dance to transcend the limitation of time and space and to connect with the supernatural.

Musically, we have shown in this chapter that rock music differs from all other forms of music because of its driving, loud, relentless beat. Scientific studies have shown that the

rock beat can alter the mind and cause several physical reactions, including sexual arousal.

The factual information we have gathered about the nature of rock music during the course of this investigation makes it abundantly clear that such music cannot be legitimately transformed into Christian music by changing its lyrics. In whatever version, rock music is and remains a music that embodies a spirit of rebellion against God and the moral principles he has revealed for our lives.

By stimulating the physical, sensual aspect of the human nature, rock music throws the order of the Christian life out of balance. It makes the gratification of the carnal nature more important than the cultivation of the spiritual aspect of our life.

By consciously striving for a physical impact, "Christian" rock reduces spiritual truths to a physical experience. Listeners are deceived into believing that they had a spiritual encounter with the Lord, when in reality that experience was only physical excitement.

Christians should respond to rock music by choosing instead good music that respects the proper balance among melody, harmony, and rhythm. The proper balance among these three reflects and fosters the order and balance in our Christian life among the spiritual, mental, and physical components of our beings. Good and balanced music can and will contribute to keep our "spirit and soul and body . . . sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess 5:23).

At the threshold of a new century and a new millennium, Christians have an unprecedented opportunity to build upon their rich religious music heritage. At a time when the trend is to replace sacred hymns with secular songs that stimulate people physically rather than elevating them spiritually, it is well to remember that God summons us to worship Him in "the beauty of holiness" (1 Chron 16:20; cf. Psalm 29:2; 96:9).

Holiness in worship avoids repetitious trivia in sound and words. Holiness in worship avoids the degenerate beat and crooning style of pop artists. Holiness in worship demands commitment to the highest reasonable standards of performance. Holiness in worship is truly worshipping the Lord with our utmost in reverence and respect.

Our worship music should reflect the music we expect to sing in the fellowship of the Father and Son in the world to come. Are the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit honored by our music? Does our music reflect the peace, purity, and majesty of our God? Can we imagine singing our church music one day when we stand before the indescribable majesty of the triune God? Paul reminds us that "Our citizenship is in heaven" (Phil 3:20). This means that every aspect of our lives, including our music, should be seen as a preparation for that glorious experience in the New Earth, where "one pulse of harmony and gladness beats throughout the vast creation."⁹²

ENDNOTES

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3. Aaron Copland, *What to Listen for Music* (New York, 1957), p. 40.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 46.

5. Jay Cannon, *Striving for Excellence* (Oakbrook, IL, 1989), p. 5.
6. Tim Fisher, *The Battle for Christian Music* (Greenville, SC, 1992), p. 68.
7. Jay Cannon (note 5), p. 10.
8. See Lawrence Walters, "How Music Produces Its Effects on the Brain and Mind," *Music Therapy* (New York, 1954), p. 38.
9. Tim Fisher (note 6), p. 79.
10. Bob Larson, *The Day Music Died* (Carol Stream, IL, 1972), p. 15.
11. Tim Fisher (note 6), p. 69.
12. Bob Larson (note 10), p. 16.
13. Quentin J. Schultze (note 2), p. 151.
14. Charles T. Brown, *The Art of Rock and Roll* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1983), p. 42.
15. Gene Grier, *A Conceptual Approach to Rock Music* (Valley Forge, PA, 1976), p. 30.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 61.
17. Bob Larson, (note 10), pp. 9,12. Emphasis supplied.
18. Simon Frith, *Sound Effects, Youth, Leisure, and the Politics of Rock 'n' Roll* (New York, 1981), p. 14.
19. Daniel and Bernardette Skubik, *The Neurophysiology of Rock*, published separately as an appendix in John Blanchard, *Pop Goes the Gospel: Rock in the Church* (Durham, England, 1991), p. 191.
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THE CHRISTIAN AND ROCK MUSIC
A STUDY OF BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES OF MUSIC

This book is authored by seven scholars

and consists of 14 chapters

Chapter 7
BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES
OF MUSIC

by

Samuele Bacchiocchi

The story is told of a man who, during an election campaign, had a bumper sticker which read, "My mind is already made up. Please do not confuse me with the facts." This story reminds us of the ongoing debate over the use of "Christian" rock music for worship or evangelism. Many Christians have strong opinions in favor of or against the use of such music.

As Christians we cannot afford to close our minds to the search for biblical truths, because we are called to grow in "grace and knowledge" (2 Pet 3:18). Sometimes we think we know all that the Bible teaches on a certain doctrine, but we begin investigating it, we soon discover how little we know.

This has been my experience. The many months I have spent examining the biblical references to music, singing, and musical instruments, have made me aware of the fact that the Bible has far more to say about music, especially church music, than I had ever imagined. It is a privilege to share this learning experience with all those who are eager to understand more fully the biblical principles of music.

Objectives of This Chapter. The overall objective of this chapter is to distill from the Bible some basic principles regarding appropriate music for the church service and private use. The task is not easy because the Bible is not set up as a doctrinal manual with a section devoted exclusively to music. Instead, the Bible is a source book with over 500 references scattered throughout about music, musicians, singing, and musical instruments. The challenge is not where to find these references, but how to draw from them principles applicable to us today.

No attempt is made to trace the history of music in the Bible, as several scholarly studies already address this subject. Our goal is to look at music in the Bible theologically rather than historically. What we seek to understand is the nature and function of music in the social and religious lives of God's people. More specifically, we want to ascertain what distinction, if any, the Bible makes between sacred and secular music. Was rhythmic music associated with dancing and entertainment ever used in the Temple, the synagogue, or the early church?

This chapter divides into three parts. The first part examines the importance of music in the Bible, especially singing. Three major questions are addressed: (1) When, where, how, and why should we sing? (2) What does it mean to "make a joyful noise unto the Lord"? (3) What is the "New Song" that believers are to sing?

The second part of this chapter focuses on the ministry of music in the Bible. The investigation begins with the music ministry in the Temple and then continues with that of the synagogue and finally the New Testament church. The results of this investigation are significant because they show that, contrary to prevailing assumptions, the Bible makes a clear distinction between sacred and secular music. Percussion

instruments, rhythmic music with a beat, and dancing were never part of the music ministry of the Temple, the synagogue, or the early church.

The third part of this chapter examines what the Bible teaches about dancing. The question we address is whether or not the Bible sanctions dance as a positive component of church worship. This is an important question because supporters of pop music appeal to some biblical references to dance to justify their use of rhythmic dance music in the church. By way of conclusion, a brief summary will be given of the biblical principles that have emerged in the course of this study.

Part 1

THE IMPORTANCE OF SINGING IN THE BIBLE

The importance of music in the Bible is indicated by the fact that God's creative and redemptive activities are accompanied and celebrated by music. At creation we are told that "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy" (Job 38:7). At the incarnation, the heavenly choir sang: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased!" (Luke 2:14). At the final consummation of redemption, the great multitude of the redeemed will sing: "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exalt and give him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to be clothed with the fine linen, bright and pure" (Rev 19:6-8).

The Singing of Creation. The response of the natural world to the majestic glory of God's created works is often expressed in terms of singing. This clearly shows that singing is something which God welcomes and in which He delights. Numerous examples show God's creation being invited to sing praises to God.

"Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad; let the sea resound, and all that is in it; let the fields be jubilant, and everything in them. Then all the trees of the forest will sing for joy; they will sing before the Lord" (Ps 96:11-12; NIV). "Let the rivers clap their hands, let the mountains sing together for joy; let them sing before the Lord" (Ps 98:8; NIV). "Praise the Lord, all his works, everywhere in his dominion" (Ps 103:22; NIV).

We read about the birds singing because God provides them with water (Ps 104:12). The heavens, the lower parts of the earth, the mountains, the forest, and every tree breaks forth into singing unto the Lord (Is 44:23). The wilderness, the cities, and the inhabitants of the rock sing and give glory to God (Is 42:1-12). Even the desert shall blossom and "rejoice with joy and singing" (Is 35:2).

All these metaphorical allusions to the animated and inanimate creation singing and shouting praises to God indicate that music is something that God ordains and desires. If these were the only references in the Bible, they would be sufficient for us to know that music, especially singing, has an important place and purpose in God's universe.

Human Singing. More wonderful than all of nature singing is the invitation extended to human beings to sing. "O Come, let us sing unto the Lord; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!" (Ps 95:1). "Sing praises to the Lord, O you his saints, and give thanks to his holy name" (Ps 30:4). "Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men" (Ps 107:8; KJV). Jesus once said that if people would not praise Him, "the very stones would cry out (Luke 19:40).

The Bible specifically mentions that singing should be directed to God. Its purpose is not personal gratification, but God's glorification. Moses said to the people: "I will sing unto the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously" (Ex 15:1). David declared: "I will extol thee, O Lord, among the nations, and sing praises to thy name" (2 Sam 22:50). Similarly, Paul exhorts the believers to sing and make melody "unto the Lord with all your heart" (Eph 5:19). God and the praising of His people are so wrapped up together that God Himself is identified as "my song": "The Lord is my strength and *my song*" (Ex 15:2).

Music in the Bible is not only *for* God, it is also *from* God. It is God's gift to the human family. In praising God for His deliverance, David says: "He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God" (Ps 40:3). Thus, music can be inspired by God, just as His Holy Word. A telling proof is the fact that the longest book of the Bible is Psalms—the hymn book of God's people in Bible times. This means that sacred music is not only a human artistic expression. We may differ on the style or types of music, but no Christian can legitimately be opposed to music per se, because music is part of God's gracious provision for the human family.

Music Essential to the Total Human Well-being. The first statement that we find in the Bible on any given subject has a foundational value. This seems to be true also in the case of music. Only a few generations from Adam and Eve, the Bible tells us that three sons were born to Lamech and his two wives, Adah and Zillah. Each son is introduced as "the founding father" of a basic profession. "Adah bore Jubal; he was the father of those who dwell in tents and have cattle. His brother's name was Jubal; he was the father of all

those who play the lyre and pipe. Zilla bore Tubal-cain; he was the forger of all instruments of bronze and iron" (Gen 4:21-22).

It is evident that these three brothers were the founding fathers of three different professions. The first was a farmer and the third a toolmaker. Both agriculture and industry are essential to human existence. Sandwiched between the two is the musical profession of the middle brother. The implication seems to be that human beings are called, not only to produce and consume food and goods, but also to enjoy aesthetic beauty, such as music.

The American classical pianist Sam Totman sees in this verse an indication of God's provision for aesthetic human needs, besides the physical and material ones. He writes: "Here, within the compass of but a few verses, God reveals that the provision of man's material needs is not enough; in addition, man must have an outlet for his aesthetic sensitivities. Even from the beginning music was more than a mere pastime which could be viewed as something pleasant but essentially unnecessary. Simply stated, God has created in man a certain aesthetic need which can be best satisfied in music, and in his love and wisdom he has provided for this need."¹

From a biblical perspective, music is not merely something potentially enjoyable. It is a gift provided by God to fully meet human needs. The very existence of music should give us reason to praise God for lovingly providing us with a gift through which we can express our gratitude to Him, while experiencing delight within ourselves.

The Reason for Singing. In the Bible religious music is God-centered, not self-centered. The notion of praising the Lord for entertainment or amusement is foreign to the Bible. No "Jewish" or "Christian" music concerts were performed by bands or singing artists at the Temple, synagogue, or Christian churches. Religious music was not an end to itself, but as a means to praise God by chanting His Word. An amazing recent discovery, discussed later, is that the entire Old Testament was originally intended to be chanted (sung).

Singing in the Bible is not for personal pleasure nor for reaching out to the Gentiles with tunes familiar to them. It is to praise God by chanting His Word—a method known as "cantillation." Pleasure in singing comes not from a rhythmic beat that stimulates people physically, but from the very experience of praising the Lord. "Praise the Lord, for the Lord is good; sing praise to his name, for that is pleasant" (Ps 135:3; NIV). "How good it is to sing praises to our God, how pleasant and fitting to praise him" (Ps 147:1).

Singing unto the Lord is "good" and "pleasant," because it enables believers to express to Him their joy and gratitude for the blessings of creation, deliverance, protection, and salvation. Singing is seen in the Bible as an offering of thanksgiving to the Lord for His goodness and blessings. This concept is expressed especially in Psalm 69:30-31: "I will praise God's name in song and glorify him with thanksgiving. This will please the Lord more than an ox, more than a bull with its horns and hoofs."

The notion that *singing praises to the God is better than sacrifice* reminds us of a similar concept, namely, that obedience is better than sacrifice (1 Sam 15:22). Singing praises to God by chanting His Word is not only a pleasant experience; it is also a means of grace to the believer. Through singing, believers offer to God a worship of praise, enabling them to receive His enabling grace.

The Manner of Singing. To fulfill its intended function, singing must express joy, gladness, and thanksgiving. "Sing to the Lord with thanksgiving" (Ps 147:7). "I will praise thee with the harp for thy faithfulness, O my God; I will sing praises to thee with the lyre, O Holy One of Israel. My lips will shout for joy, when I sing praises to thee" (Ps 71:22-23). Note that singing is accompanied by the harp and lyre (often called psaltery—Ps 144:9; 33:2; 33:3), and not with percussion instruments. The reason, as noted in Chapter 6, is that string instruments blend with the human voice without supplanting it.

In numerous places the Bible indicates that our singing should be emotional with joy and gladness. We are told that the Levites "sang praises with gladness, and they bowed down and worshipped" (2 Chron 29:30). Singing should be done not only with gladness but also with the whole heart. "I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart" (Ps 9:1). If we follow this biblical principle, then our singing of hymns or praise songs in church should be joyful and enthusiastic.

To sing enthusiastically, it is necessary for the grace of God to be applied to the believer's heart (Col 3:16). Without divine love and grace in the heart, singing becomes as a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal (1 Cor 13:1). The person who has experienced the transforming power of God's grace (Eph 4:24) can testify that the Lord has "put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God" (Ps 40:3).

The music of an unconverted, rebellious heart is to God an irritating noise. Because of their disobedience, God said to the children of Israel, "Take away from me the noise of your song" (Am 5:23). This statement is relevant in a day of loud amplification of pop music. What pleases God is not the volume of the music, but the condition of the heart.

"Make a Joyful Noise unto the Lord." The reference to the volume of the music reminds us of the admonition to "make a joyful noise unto the Lord"—a phrase that occurs seven times in the KJV version of the Old Testament (Ps 66:1; 81:1; 95:1-2; 98:4, 6; 100:1). These verses are often used to defend the use of loud rock music in the church.

I have preached in churches where the music of the band was amplified at such high decibels that my eardrums were in pain for several days afterwards. This is the price I sometimes have to pay for preaching the Word of God in those churches that have introduced music bands with high-power amplification systems. Sometimes their huge speakers are placed right on the platform close to the ears of the preacher.

The defense for the use of deafening sound in the church service is that God does not really care about how we sound, as long as we make a joyful noise unto Him. Since rock bands with their electronic equipment produce a powerful, thundering loud noise, it is alleged that God is made very happy by such "joyful noise."

Before examining those Bible texts where the phrases "joyful noise" or "loud noise" appear in some mistaken translations, it is important to remember that in Bible times there was no electronic amplification. What was loud in Bible times, would be very normal today. The volume of music produced by the human voice or musical instruments *without amplification* does not increase in proportion of the number of participants.

Ten trumpets do not make ten times the noise or volume of one trumpet. In his book on the *Psychology of Music*, Carl Seashore devotes an entire chapter to the subject of volume. He writes: "The addition of one or more tones of the same intensity tends to increase the total intensity in the volume, but only to a slight degree. For example, if we have a piano tone of 50 decibels and we add to that another tone of the same intensity, the combined effect will be about 53 decibels. If we add a third tone, the total intensity is likely to be 55 decibels. Thus the addition to the total intensity decreases with the number of units combined; and in every case the increase is small in comparison with the original intensity of one element."²

What this means is that the singers that David appointed "to offer praises to the Lord with the instruments" (1 Chron 23:5) could produce at most a sound volume of about 70 or 80 decibels, because they had no amplification possibilities. The usual choir was rather small, consisting of a minimum of 12 adult male singers, accompanied by few string instruments. The level of volume depended on the distance between the singers and the congregation. By contrast, today a four-man rock group with the right amplification system can output a sound power in the 130-140 decibel level, which can upstage a jumbo jet at takeoff.

The "loud noise" in Bible times was not loud enough to harm people physically. Today the possibility of being hurt by excessive volume is a constant possibility. "Most ear doctors say that we should not listen to anything above the 90 decibels on the sound scale. Many rock music groups, both secular and Christian, play at 120-125 decibel level! (Keep in mind that the SST Concord Supersonic jet hits just over the 130 decibels when leaving Washington's Dulles Airport.) 'Your bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit' (1 Cor 6:19). Certainly that text is applicable to this point. We are to be good stewards of our eardrums, too."³

Does Loud Noise Praise God? Do those Bible texts that speak about making "a joyful noise" or "a loud noise" unto the Lord teach us that God is pleased with the excessive amplification of the human voice or musical instruments during the worship service? Hardly so. This conclusion is largely drawn from a mistranslation of the original Hebrew terms commonly translated as "noise." In his book, *The Rise of Music in the Ancient World*, Curt Sachs answers this question: "How did ancient Jews sing? Did they actually cry at the top of their voices? Some students have tried to make us believe that such was the case, and they particularly refer to several psalms that allegedly bear witness of singing in fortissimo. But I suspect them of drawing from translations rather than from the original."⁴

The phrase "make a joyful noise" is a mistranslation of the Hebrew *ruwa*. The term does not mean to make an indiscriminate loud noise, but to shout for joy. The God of biblical revelation does not delight in loud noise per se, but in joyful melodies. A good example is found in Job 38:7 where the same word *ruwa* is used to describe the sons of God who "shouted for joy" at creation. The singing of the heavenly beings at creation can hardly be characterized as "loud noise," because "noise" presupposes unintelligible sound.

The mistranslation of *ruwa* as "noise" has been caught by the translators of the New International Version (NIV), where the term is consistently translated as "shout for joy" rather than "make a joyful noise." For example, in the KJV Psalm 98:4 reads: "Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all the earth: make a loud noise, and rejoice, and sing praise." Note the more rational translation found in the NIV: "Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth, burst into jubilant song with music" (Ps 98:4). There is a world of difference between "making a loud noise unto the Lord," and "shouting for joy" or "bursting into jubilant song." Singing jubilantly with the full volume of the human voice is not noise making, but an enthusiastic expression of praise.

Another self-evident example of mistranslation is found in Psalm 33:3 which in the KJV reads: "Sing unto him a new song; play skilfully with a loud noise." The latter phrase is contradictory, because music skillfully played can hardly be described as "loud noise." One wonders why the translators of the KJV did not

see the contradiction. The NIV correctly renders the verse: "Sing to him a new song; play skillfully, and shout for joy" (Ps 33:3).

Two Old Testament references indicate that sometimes music can degenerate into noise making. The first reference is found in Amos 5:23 where God rebukes the unfaithful Israelites: "Take away from me the noise of your songs; to the melody of your harps I will not listen." A similar warning is found in Ezekiel's prophecy against Tyre: "And I will cause the noise of thy songs to cease; and the sound of thy harps shall no more be heard" (Ezek 26:13).

In both texts the word "noise" correctly translates the Hebrew *hamown*, which occurs eighty times in the Old Testament and is commonly translated as "noise" or "tumult." The NIV correctly uses the word "noisy": "I will put an end to your noisy songs, and the music of your harps will be heard no more." God views such music as "noise" because it is produced by a rebellious people.

In one instance in the New Testament, the word "noise" is used in conjunction with music produced by professional mourners. We read in Matthew 9:23-24: "And when Jesus came into the ruler's house, and saw the minstrels and the people making a noise, He said to them, 'Give place; for the maid is not dead, but sleepeth.' And they laughed him to scorn." In this case the music and the wailing are correctly characterized as "noise," because they consisted of incoherent sounds.

On this occasion the Greek verb *thorubeo* refers to the musical wailing and noise making by minstrels and the crowd. The fact that Christ characterizes such music as "noise" suggests that the Lord does not approve of loud musical noise in a worship service. "It was a semitic custom to hire professional mourners to wail, and sing and beat percussion instruments and play mournfully over the dead. . . . Although this verse definitively connects noise making with music in the New Testament, it does not implicate that in the New Testament dispensation we should make noise unto God with our religious music."⁵

The review of relevant texts indicates that the Bible does not sanction making a joyful noise unto the Lord, or any kind of noise making for that matter. God's people are invited to break forth in singing with power and joy. God does care about how we sing and play during the worship service. God has always demanded our best, when making an offering to him. As He required the burnt offerings to be "without blemish" (Lev 1:3), so it is reasonable to assume that He expects us to present Him with the very best musical offering. There is no biblical basis for believing that the loud, noise-making music or questionable lyrics are acceptable to God.

The Place and Time of Singing. The Bible instructs us to sing, not only in God's House, but also among unbelievers, in foreign countries, in time of persecution, and among the saints. The writer of Hebrews says: "In the midst of the congregation I will praise thee" (Heb 2:12). The Psalmist admonishes to "Sing to the Lord a new song, his praise in the assembly of the faithful" (Ps 149:1). Paul affirms "I will praise thee among the Gentiles, and sing to thy name" (Rom 15:9). Isaiah exhorts to praise God in the islands (Is 42:11-12). While in jail, Paul and Silas were "praying and singing hymns to God" (Acts 16:25).

The frequent references to praising God among the heathens or Gentiles (2 Sam 22:50; Rom 15:9; Ps 108:3) suggest that singing was seen as an effective way to witness for the Lord to unbelievers. However, there are no indications in the Bible that the Jews or the early Christians borrowed secular tunes and songs to evangelize the Gentiles. On the contrary, we shall see below that the entertainment music and percussion instruments common in the pagan temples and society were conspicuously absent in the worship music of the Temple, synagogue, and early Christian gatherings. Both Jews and early Christians believed that secular music had no place in the house of worship. This point becomes clearer as we proceed with this study.

Singing, in the Bible, is not limited to the worship experience, but extends to the totality of one's existence. Believers who live in peace with God have a constant song in their hearts, though the singing may not always be vocalized. This is why the Psalmist says: "I will praise the Lord all my life; I will sing praise to my God as long as I live" (Ps 146:2; 104:33). In Revelation those who come out of the great tribulation are seen standing before God's throne, singing with a loud voice a new song which says: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb" (Rev 7:10). Singing praises to God is an experience that begins in this life and continues in the world to come.

The "New Song" of the Bible. Nine times the Bible speaks of singing "a new song." Seven times the phrase occurs in the Old Testament (Ps 33:3; 40:3; 96:1; 98:1; 144:9; 149:1; Is 42:10) and twice in the New Testament (Rev 5:9; 14:2). During the preparation of this manuscript, several subscribers to my "Endtime Issues" newsletter have emailed messages, arguing that for them the contemporary pop religious music is the prophetic fulfillment of the biblical "new song," because pop songs have "new" lyrics and tunes. Others believe that Christians are required to sing new songs and, consequently, musicians constantly must compose new hymns for the church.

There certainly is a continuing need for new hymns to enrich the worship experience of the church today. However, a study of the "new song" in the Bible reveals that the phrase "new song" refers not to a new

composition, but to a new experience that makes it possible to praise God with new meaning. Let us look first at a couple of passages from the Old Testament which help us define the meaning of the "new song." The Psalmist says: "He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand. He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God" (Ps 40:2-3, NIV). In this text, the "new song" is defined by the appositional phrase as "a hymn of praise to our God." It is the experience of deliverance from the slimy pit and of restoration upon solid ground that gives David reason to sing old hymns of praise to God with new meaning!

The "new song" in the Bible is not associated with simpler lyrics or more rhythmic music, but with a unique experience of divine deliverance. For example, David says: "I will sing a new song to you, O God; on the ten-stringed lyre I will make music to you, to the One who gives victory to kings, who delivers his servant David from the deadly sword" (Ps 144:9-10). It is the experience of deliverance and victory that inspires David to sing with a new sense of gratitude the hymns of praises.

The same concept is expressed in the two references to the "new song" found in the New Testament (Rev 5:9; 14:2). The twenty-four elders and the four living creatures sing a "new song" before the Throne of God. The song praises the Lamb "for thou wast slain and by thy blood didst ransom men for God" (Rev 5:9).

On a similar note in Revelation 14, the redeemed join the elders and the living creatures in singing "a new song before the throne" (Rev 14:3). We are told that "no one could learn that song" except those "who had been redeemed from the earth" (Rev 14:3). What makes this song new, is not the new words or melody, but the unique experience of the redeemed. They are the only ones who can sing it, not because the words or melody are difficult to learn, but because of their unique experience. They came out of the great tribulation; thus they can express their praise and gratitude to God in a way no one else can do.

The Greek word translated "new" is *kainos*, which means new in quality and not in time. The latter meaning is expressed by the Greek word *neos*. The *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* clearly explains the difference between the two Greek words *neos* and *kainos*. "*Neos* is what is new in time or origin, . . . *kainos* is what is new in nature, different from the usual, impressive, better than the old."6

Only the person who has experienced the transforming power of God's grace can sing the new song. It is noteworthy that Paul's famous exhortation in Colossians 3:16 to "sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" is preceded by his appeal to "put off the old nature with its practices and have put on the new nature, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator" (Col 3:9-10). The "new song" celebrates the victory over the old life and old songs; at the same time, it expresses gratitude for the new life in Christ experienced by believers.

Part 2

THE MINISTRY OF MUSIC IN THE BIBLE

In discussing the importance of music in the Bible, we have focused so far on the role of singing in the personal spiritual experience. Very little has been said of the ministry of music conducted first in the Temple, and then in the synagogue, and finally in the early church. A brief examination of the public ministry of music during Bible times offers significant lessons for church music today.

(1) The Music Ministry in the Temple

Many of those involved in contemporary music ministry appeal to the different styles of music of the Old Testament for "doing their own thing." They believe that music produced by percussion instruments and accompanied by dancing was common in religious services. Consequently, they maintain that some styles of rock music and dancing are appropriate for church services today.

A careful study of the function of music in the Old Testament reveals otherwise. For example, in the Temple musicians belonged to the professional clergy, played only on limited and special occasions, and used only few specific musical instruments. There was no possibility to turn the Temple service into a music festival where any Jewish "rock bands" could play the entertainment music of the time. Music was rigidly controlled in the Temple. What is true of the Temple was later true also of the synagogue and the early church. This survey will help us to understand that in music, as in all areas of life, God does not give us the license to "do our own thing."

The Institution of the Music Ministry. The transition from the unsettled, nomadic life in the desert to a permanent lifestyle in Palestine under the monarchy afforded the opportunity for developing a music ministry that would meet the needs of the worshipping congregation at the Temple. Prior to this time the references to music are primarily in conjunction with women singing and dancing to celebrate special events. Miriam led a group of women in singing and dancing to celebrate the overthrow of the Egyptians (Ex 15:1-21).

Women played and danced for the conquering David (1 Sam 18:6-7). Jephthah's daughter met her father with timbrels and dance upon his return from battle (Judg 11:34).

With the establishment by David of a professional music ministry of Levites, music making was restricted to men. Why women were excluded from serving as musicians in the Temple is an important question that has baffled scholars. We shall comment upon it shortly. Women did continue making music in the social life of the people.

The book of Chronicles describes with considerable detail how David organized the music ministry of the Levites. An insightful analysis of how David accomplished this organization is provided by the doctoral dissertation of John Kleinig, *The Lord's Song: The Basis, Function and Significance of Choral Music in Chronicles*. For the purpose of our study, we limit ourselves to a brief summary of those features that are relevant for the ministry of music today.

According to the first book of Chronicles, David organized the music ministry in three stages. First, he ordered the heads of the Levitical families to appoint an orchestra and a choir to accompany the transportation of the ark to its tent at Jerusalem (1 Chron 15:16-24).

The second stage occurred after the ark had been safely placed in its tent in his palace (2 Chron 8:11). David arranged for the regular performance of choral music at the time of the daily burnt offerings with choirs in two different places (1 Chron 16:4-6, 37-42). One choir performed under the leadership of Asaph before the ark in Jerusalem (1 Chron 16:37), and the other under the leadership of Herman and Jeduthun before the altar in Gibeon (1 Chron 16:39-42).

The third stage in David's organization of the ministry of music occurred at the end of David's reign when the king planned for the more elaborate music service that would be conducted at the temple that Solomon was to build (1 Chron 23:2 to 26:32). David established a pool of 4,000 Levites as potential performers (1 Chron 15:16; 23:5). From this group he formed a professional Levitical choir of 288 members. The Levite musicians accounted for more than ten percent of the 38,000 Levites. "Some kind of examination was probably necessary for the process of selection, since musical ability is not always inherited."⁸

David himself was involved together with his officials in the appointment of twenty-four leaders of the watches, each of whom had twelve musicians for a total of 288 musicians (1 Chron 25:1-7). These in turn were responsible for the rest of the selection of the musicians.

The Ministry of the Musicians. To ensure that there would be no confusion or conflict between the sacrificial ministry of the priests and the music ministry of the Levites, David carefully delineated the position, rank, and scope of the ministry of the musicians (1 Chron 23:25-31). The performance of the ministry of music was subordinate to the priests (1 Chron 23:28).

The nature of the ministry of the musicians is graphically described: "They shall stand every morning, thanking and praising the Lord, and likewise at evening, and whenever burnt offerings are offered to the Lord on Sabbath, new moons and feast days, according to the number required of them, continually before the Lord" (1 Chron 23:30-31).

The context suggests that the musicians stood somewhere in front of the altar, since their music performance coincided with the presentation of the burnt offering. The purpose of their ministry was to thank and praise the Lord. They announced the Lord's presence to His assembled people (1 Chron 16:4), reassuring them of His favorable disposition toward them.

In 1 Chronicles 16:8-34 we find a remarkable hymn of praise that was sung by the Temple choir. "This song consists of portions of Psalms 105, 96, and 106, which were reworked and recombined to produce this remarkable liturgical text. The song itself begins and ends with a call to thanksgiving. A concluding petition and doxology are appended in 1 Chronicles 16:35-36. We thus have in 1 Chronicles 16:8-34 a carefully crafted composition which has been placed there to demonstrate the basic pattern of thanksgiving which David instituted for performance by the singers in Jerusalem."⁹

Successful Music Ministry. The music ministry at the Temple was successful for several reasons which are relevant for our church music today. First, the Levite musicians were mature and musically trained. We read in 1 Chronicles 15:22 that "Kenaniah the head Levite was in charge of the singing; that was his responsibility because he was skillful at it" (NIV). He became director of music because he was an accomplished musician able to instruct others. The concept of musical skill is mentioned several times in the Bible (1 Sam 16:18; 1 Chron 25:7; 2 Chron 34:12; Ps 137:5). Paul also alludes to it when he says: "I will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing with my mind" (1 Cor 14:15, NIV).

The choir consisted of a minimum of twelve adult male singers between the ages of thirty and fifty (1 Chron 23:3-5).¹⁰ Rabbinical sources report that the musical training of a Levitical singer took at least five years of intensive preparation.¹¹ The biblical principle is that music leaders must be mature with an understanding of music, especially today as we live in a highly educated society.

Second, the music ministry at the Temple was successful because its musicians were prepared spiritually. They were set aside and ordained for their ministry like the rest of the priests. Speaking to the leaders of the Levite musicians, David said: "Sanctify yourselves, you and your brethren . . . So the priests and the Levites sanctified themselves" (1 Chron 15:12, 14). The Levite musicians were given a sacred trust to continually minister before the Lord (1 Chron 16:37).

Third, the Levite musicians were full-time workers. 1 Chronicles 9:33 states: "Now these are the singers, the heads of father's houses of Levites, dwelling in the chambers of the temple free from other service, for they were on duty day and night." Apparently the Levites' ministry of music entailed considerable preparation, because we read that "David left Asaph and his brethren there before the ark of the covenant of the Lord to minister continually before the ark as each day required" (1 Chron 16:37). The biblical lesson is that ministers of music must be willing to work diligently in preparing the music needed for the worship service.

Lastly, the Levite musicians were not singing artists invited to entertain the people at the Temple. They were *ministers of music*. "These are the men whom David put in charge of the service of song in the house of the Lord, after the ark rested there. They ministered with song before the tabernacle of the tent of meeting" (1 Chron 6:31-32). Through their musical service the Levites "*ministered*" to the people. In five other instances in the Old Testament, the Levites are said *to minister* to the people through their music (1 Chron 16:4, 37; 2 Chron 8:14; 23:6; 31:2).

The ministry of the Levite musicians is well defined in 1 Chronicles 16:4: "Moreover he appointed certain of the Levites as ministers before the ark of the Lord, to invoke, to thank, and to praise the Lord, the God of Israel." The three verbs used in this text—"invoke," "thank," and "praise"—suggest that the music ministry was a vital part of the worship experience of God's people.

An indication of the importance of the music ministry can be seen in the fact that the Levite musicians were paid out of the same tithes given for the support of the priesthood (Num 18:24-26; Neh 12:44-47; 13:5, 10-12). The biblical principle is that the work of a minister of music should not be "a labor of love," but a ministry supported by the tithe income of the church. It stands to reason that if a lay person volunteers to help in the music program of the church, such service does not need to be remunerated.

Summing up, the music ministry at the Temple was conducted by experienced and mature Levites who were trained musically, prepared spiritually, supported financially, and served pastorally. As Kenneth Osbeck observes: "To minister musically in the Old Testament was a great privilege and a most responsible service. This is still true of a church music-ministry today. In a very real sense we are New Testament Levites. Therefore these principles established by God for the Levitical priesthood should be noted as valid guidelines for music leaders in a New Testament church."¹²

The Levitical Choir and the Sacrificial Ritual. The book of Chronicles presents the musical ministry of the Levites as part of the presentation of the daily offering at the Temple. The ritual consisted of two parts. First came the blood ritual which was designed to atone for the sins of the people through the transference of the blood of the sacrifice to the Holy Place (2 Chron 29:21-24). This service created the ritual purity necessary for God's acceptance of His people and the manifestation of His blessing upon the congregation. During this ritual no songs were sung.

Once the rite of atonement was completed, the burnt offering was presented upon the altar. This ritual signalled God's acceptance of His people and the manifestation of His presence. John Kleinig explains that "As the sacrifices were being burnt upon the altar, the trumpets, which announced the Lord's presence, called for the prostration of the congregation in His presence, and the song of the Lord was sung by the musicians [2 Chron 29:25-30]. Thus, the choral service came after the rite of atonement had been completed. It did not attempt to secure a favorable response from the Lord but presupposed such a response as something already given. The musicians proclaimed the Lord's name during the presentation of the sacrifices, so that he would come to His people and bless them, as He had promised in Exodus 20:24 and demonstrated in 2 Chronicles 7:1-3."¹³

The function of the music during the sacrificial ritual was not to overshadow or replace the sacrifice itself, but to enlist the involvement of the congregation at certain designated moments during the service. In other words, the Israelites did not go to the Temple to hear the Levite bands performing in sacred concert. Instead, they went to the Temple to witness and experience God's atonement for their sins. The music that accompanied the atoning sacrifice invited them to accept and celebrate God's gracious provision of salvation.

At a time when many Christians choose their churches in accordance with the musical style of worship, we need to remember that in the Bible, the music was never an end to itself. In the Temple the music served enhanced the sacrificial service by enlisting the participation of the congregation at certain specific moments. In the synagogue and the early church, music reinforced the teaching and proclamation of the Word of God. To be true to the biblical witness, our church music must support the teaching and preaching of God's Word, and not overshadow it.

The Musical Instruments of the Temple. David instituted not only the times, place, and words for the performance of the Levitical choir, but he also "made" the musical instruments to be used for their ministry (1 Chron 23:5; 2 Chron 7:6). This is why they are called "the instruments of David" (2 Chron 29:26-27).

To the trumpets which the Lord had ordained through Moses, David added the cymbals, lyres, and harp (1 Chron 15:16; 16:5-6). The importance of this combination as divinely ordained is indicated by the fact that this combination of instruments was respected for many centuries until the destruction of the Temple. For example, in 715 B. C., King Hezekiah "stationed the Levites in the house of the Lord with cymbals, harps, and lyres, according to commandment of David and of Gad the king's seer and of Nathan the prophet; for the commandment was from the Lord through his prophets" (2 Chron 29:25).

The trumpets were played by the priests and their number ranged from two in the daily worship (1 Chron 16:6; Num 10:2) to seven or more on special occasions (1 Chron 15:24; Neh 12:33-35; 2 Chron 5:12). "In worship at the Temple the trumpets gave the signal for the prostration of the congregation during the presentation of the burnt offering and the performance of the choral service (2 Chron 29:27-28). . . . While the Levitical musicians faced the altar, the trumpeters stood facing them in front of the altar (2 Chron 5:12; 7:6)."¹⁴ This arrangement highlighted the responsibility of the trumpeters to give the signal for the congregation to prostrate and for the choir to sing.

The cymbals consisted of two metal plates with reflexed rims about 10-15 inches wide. When struck together vertically, they produced a ringing, tinkling sound. Some appeal to the use of cymbals to argue that Temple music had a rhythmic beat like rock music today, and, consequently, the Bible does not forbid percussion instruments and rock music in the church today. Such an argument ignores the fact that, as Kleinig explains, "the cymbals were not used by the precantor to conduct the singing by beating out the rhythm of the song, but rather to announce the beginning of the song or a stanza in the song. Since they were used to introduce the song, they were wielded by the head of choir on ordinary occasions (1 Chron 16:5) or by the three heads of the guilds on extraordinary occasions (1 Chron 15:19). . . . Since the trumpets and the cymbals were played together to announce the beginning of the song, the players of both are called the 'sounders'!¹⁵ in 1 Chronicles 16:42."¹⁵

In his book *Jewish Music in Its Historical Development*, A. Z. Idelsohn notes that in the worship of the Temple only one pair of cymbals were used and that by the leader himself. "The percussive instruments were reduced to one cymbal, which was not employed in the music proper, but merely to mark pauses and intermissions."¹⁶ In a similar vein, Curt Sachs explains, "The music in the Temple included cymbals, and the modern reader might conclude that the presence of percussion instruments indicate rigid beats. But there is little doubt that the cymbals, as elsewhere, marked the end of a line and not the beats inside a verse. . . . A word for rhythm does not seem to exist in the Hebrew language."¹⁷ The term "Selah," which occurs in some psalms to mark the end of a stanza, may indicate the place where the cymbals were struck.

The third group of musical instruments was comprised of two string instruments, the lyres and the harps, which were called "the instruments of song" (2 Chron 5:13) or "the instruments of God's song" (1 Chron 16:42). As indicated by their descriptive name, their function was to accompany the songs of praise and thanksgiving to the Lord (1 Chron 23:5; 2 Chron 5:13). The musicians who played the harps and the lyres would themselves sing the song to their own accompaniment (1 Chron 9:33; 15:16, 19, 27; 2 Chron 5:12-13; 20:21).

In his book *The Music of the Bible in Christian Perspective*, Garen Wolf explains that "String instruments were used extensively to accompany singing since they would not cover up the voice or the 'Word of Jehovah' which was being sung."¹⁸ Great care was taken to ensure that the vocal praise of the Levitical choir would not be overshadowed by the sound of the instruments.

Restriction on Musical Instruments. Some scholars argue that instruments like drums, timbrel (which was a tambourine), flutes, and dulcimers were kept out of the Temple because they were associated with pagan worship and culture, or because they were customarily played by women for entertainment. This could well be the case, but it only goes to show that there was a distinction between the sacred music played inside the Temple and the secular music played outside.

A restriction was placed on the musical instruments and art expression to be used in the House of God. God prohibited a number of instruments which were allowed *outside* the Temple for national festivities and social pleasure. The reason is not that certain percussion instruments were evil per se. The sounds produced by any musical instrument are neutral, like a letter of the alphabet. Rather, the reason is that these instruments were commonly used to produce entertainment music which was inappropriate for worship in God's House. By prohibiting instruments and music styles, like dancing, associated with secular entertainment, the Lord taught His people to distinguish between the sacred music played in the Temple, and the secular, entertainment music used in social life.

The restriction on the use of instruments was meant to be a binding rule for future generations. When King Hezekiah revived Temple worship in 715 B. C., he meticulously followed the instructions given by David. We read that the king "stationed the Levites in the house of the Lord with cymbals, harps, and lyres, according to the commandment of David . . . for the commandment was from the Lord through his prophets" (2 Chron 29:25).

Two and a half centuries later when the Temple was rebuilt under Ezra and Nehemiah, the same restriction was applied again. No percussion instruments were allowed to accompany the Levitical choir or to play as an orchestra at the Temple (Ezra 3:10; Neh 12:27, 36). This confirms that the rule was clear and binding over many centuries. The singing and the instrumental music of the Temple were to differ from that used in the social life of the people.

Lessons from the Temple Music. What lessons can we learn from the music of the Temple? The absence of percussion musical instruments and of dancing bands in the music of the Temple indicates, as noted earlier, that a distinction must be made between the secular music used for social entertainment and the sacred music employed for worship service in God's House.

No "Jewish Rock Bands" were at the Temple to entertain the people with loud rhythmic music, because the Temple was a place of worship and not a social club for entertainment. Percussion instruments like drums, tambourines, timbrels or tabrets, which were commonly used for making entertainment music, were absent in the Temple music. Only the cymbals were used, but in a limited way. They marked the end of a stanza and the cessation of the singing.

The lesson for us today is evident. Church music should differ from secular music, because the church, like the ancient Temple, is God's House in which we gather to worship the Lord and not to be entertained. Percussion instruments which stimulate people physically through a loud and relentless beat are as inappropriate for church music today as they were for the Temple music of ancient Israel.

A second lesson is that the musical instruments used to accompany the choir or the singing of the congregation should not cover up the voice. Like the string instruments used in the Temple, musical instruments used in the church today should support the singing. Musical instruments should serve as a hand-aid to the Word of God which is sung and proclaimed. This means, for example, that organ music should not be so loud as to drown the voice of the congregation.

On numerous occasions I have been in churches equipped with powerful electronic organs that are played so loud that the voice of the congregation cannot be heard. Biblical principle indicates that the function of the organ is to support the singing of the congregation; not to cover it up. This principle applies not only to organ music, but to any other instrument or an orchestra that accompanies a choir or a singing congregation.

Some argue that if we are to follow the example of the Temple, we need to eliminate in the church such instruments as the piano and the organ, because they are not string instruments. Such an argument ignores the distinction between a biblical principle and its cultural application.

The biblical principle is that instrumental music accompanying the singing should aid the vocal response to God and not drown it. In Bible times this was best accomplished by the use of string instruments. Note that trumpets and cymbals were used in the Temple, but not to accompany the Levitical choir. Nothing was wrong with these instruments. They simply were not seen as suitable to accompany the singing, presumably because they do not blend well with the human voice, besides supplanting it.

Another point is that instruments like the organ or the piano were unknown in Bible times. Were we to exclude from our life today all that the Bible does not explicitly mention, we could not eat pizza, apple pie, or ice cream.

The important biblical principle is that music in God's House, both instrumental and vocal, must respect and reflect the sacredness of the place of worship. When instruments are used to accompany the singing, they should support the human voice without supplanting it.

(2) The Music Ministry in the Synagogue

The function of music in the synagogue differed from that of the Temple, primarily because the two institutions had different purposes. The Temple was primarily where sacrifices were offered on behalf of the whole nation and of individual believers. The synagogue, on the other hand, emerged most likely during the Babylonian exile as the place where prayers were offered and scripture was read and taught. While there was only one Temple for the whole nation, according to the Talmud, there were 394 synagogues located in Jerusalem alone in Jesus' time.

The difference in function between the Temple and the synagogue is reflected in the different roles that music played in these two institutions. While the music of the Temple was *predominantly vocal*, with string instruments aiding the singing, the music of the synagogue was *exclusively vocal*, without any instruments. The only exception was the *shofar*—the ram-horn that served as a signal instrument.

In the Temple the ministry of music was in the hands of professional musicians. Their choral music was an accessory to the sacrificial ritual. We might say that the music was "*sacrifice-centered*." The participation of the congregation was limited to affirmative responses as "Amen," or "Hallelujah." By contrast, in the synagogue the service, including the music, was in the hands of lay persons and their music was, as Curt Sachs call it, "logenic,"¹⁹ that is, "*Word-centered*."

Little evidence suggests that musical instruments were ever used in the synagogue service. We know that after the A. D. 70 destruction of the Temple, the only instrument used in the synagogue service was the *shofar*. The reason, as Eric Werner explains, was "partly because of the hostility of the Pharisees to instrumental music, and partly because of the deep mourning for the Temple and the land, and the disappearance of the Levitical functions, including the provision of music for the sanctuary. . . . The exclusion of instruments from Jewish worship remained in force generally for many centuries; only at the loss of political power by the rabbis in the nineteenth century Emancipation, did instrumental music once again appear in the (liberal) synagogue, and the exclusion still remains in force where, as in modern Israel, orthodox rabbis retain some power."²⁰

Blurring of Music and Speech. The distinction between music and public speech was blurred in the synagogue, because the word-centered worship migrated back and forth between speech and song. The musical ambiguity of the synagogue service was caused by the fact that much of the service consisted of prayers and the public reading of the Scriptures, which often took the form of chanting, known as "cantillation."

"The concept that the entire Old Testament was originally intended to be chanted (sung) is a new concept to church musicians and pastors, but it is a long established fact among scholars of Bible music. The reason that it is such a well-kept secret is that we tend to ignore what we do not understand."²¹

"The intonations or cantillations, mentioned as far back as the first century, were cast into a system of modes or formulae, one for each of the books of the Bible intended to be publicly read. . . . Little is known about when the transition from declamatory to musical reading was first evidenced, except that the Psalms were sung in temple worship. Idelsohn and Werner both believe that the chanting of Scripture, in one form or another, went back perhaps as far back as Ezra (fifth century B. C.), and that its eventual complexity and organization was the result of hundreds of years of crystallization."²²

"The Talmud scorns those who read the Scriptures without melody and study the words without singing. Service, based on reading the Holy Books, was musical throughout, alternating between the cantor's chant and the tunes of the congregation. In both forms it was what we call *cantillation*, though not in the stagnant monotone of a Christian lesson, but rather in the noble fluency of Gregorian melodies."²³

One of the surprising discoveries of recent years is that the accents of the Masoretic Hebrew Text are musical notations. This made it possible for Suzanne Haik-Vantoura to decipher the ancient music of the Bible, which was found to consist of a seven-note diatonic scale, strikingly similar to our modern diatonic scale.²⁴

Relevance of Synagogue Music for Today. What lessons can we learn from the ministry of music at the synagogue? Are we required to chant scripture today as the Jews have historically done in the synagogue? No. Nothing in the Bible commands us to sing the Scriptures. This does not exclude the possibility of learning scripture by means of the "Scripture song" and "Psalm-singing." In fact, considerable efforts have been done in recent times to set to music numerous Psalms and Bible passages.

We have seen that the ministry of music at the synagogue was largely a ministry of the Word. The Jews came together to the synagogue in a rather informal setting to pray, read, and sing the Scriptures. For them, music was not an end to itself, but a means of praising the Lord by chanting His Word and thus learning His revealed will.

At a time when much of CCM is deficient in scriptural content and Christian artists often draw the attention of the people to their singing abilities rather than to the teachings of God's Word, it is good to remember that the music of the synagogue, which Jesus Himself sang, was "*Word-centered*"—it was designed to teach and proclaim the great Scriptural truths.

Does our church music help us to hear the Word of God clearly? Remember that "faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ" (Rom 10:17, NIV). Church music should help us hear the Word of God through its sound, the character of the composition, and its lyrics.

Another important lesson is that the music of the Temple and synagogue was distinct from that of the pagan society. While much of the music played in the pagan society was improvised, "the rigid training of the Levites as described by Josephus and rabbinical sources left little room for spontaneous improvisation. . . . In this respect the Temple [and the synagogue] music must have been untypical of Middle Eastern music, in which improvisation is normally indispensable."²⁵

(3) The Music Ministry in the New Testament

To speak about a music ministry in the New Testament may seem completely out of place. The New Testament is silent about any "musical" office in the church. Outside the book of Revelation, in which music is part of a rich eschatological drama, only a dozen passages refer to music.

None of these passages, however, gives us a clear picture of the role that music played in church services during New Testament times. This is not surprising, because New Testament believers did not see their worship gatherings as being much different from those of the synagogue. Both were conducted in an informal setting, with lay people leading out in the prayer, reading, singing, and exhortation. The New Testament references to worship gatherings reflect to a large extent the worship service of the synagogue, as scholarly studies have established.²⁶ The fundamental difference between the two was the messianic proclamation, which was present only in the Christian worship.

Of the twelve references to music in the New Testament, five refer to it metaphorically (Matt 6:2; 11:17; Luke 7:32; 1 Cor 13:1; 14:7-8) and, consequently, are not relevant to our study. The remaining seven shed important light, especially when they are seen within the broader context of the synagogue worship, which was known and practiced by the Christians.

Four references to music are found in the Gospels. Two mention instrumental music and dancing in conjunction with the mourning for the death of a girl (Matt 9:23) and the celebration upon the return of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:25). Two passages are parallel and mention Christ singing a hymn with His disciples at the conclusion of the Last Supper (Matt 26:30; Mark 14:26). Most likely this was the second portion of the Jewish Hallel sung at the completion of the Passover meal. It consisted of Psalms 113 to 118.

One text refers to Paul and Silas singing while in jail (Acts 16:25). We have no way of knowing whether they sang psalms or newly composed Christian hymns. The above examples tell us that music accompanied various activities in the social and religious life of the people, but they do not inform us about the role of music in the church.

Instructions Regarding Music. Few instructions regarding church music are found in the Epistles. James states that if a person is cheerful "Let him sing praise" (James 5:13). The implication is that singing should spring from a cheerful heart. Presumably the singing of praises occurred not only privately at home, but also publicly in the church. Other texts suggest that the singing of hymns of praise was a feature of the church service.

More specific information comes to us from Paul, who provides us with insights into the role of music in the New Testament worship services. In the context of his admonitions regarding ecstatic manifestations at the Corinthian church, Paul calls for a balance in music making by urging that singing be done with the mind as well as the spirit: "I will sing with the spirit and I will sing with the mind also" (1 Cor 14:15). Apparently some sang ecstatically without engaging the mind. Senseless singing is like senseless speech. Both dishonor God. As Paul says: "God is not a God of confusion but of peace" (1 Cor 14:33).

Paul's admonition to sing with the mind, or with understanding, is relevant for us today, when the singing done in some charismatic churches consists of emotional outbursts of ecstatic shouting which no one can understand. Our singing must be with understanding because God expects from His intelligent creatures "a rational worship" (Rom 12:2—*logike*, that is, "logical" in the Greek).

Singing should be for spiritual edification and not for physical stimulation. Paul says: "When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for

edification" (1 Cor 14:26). This text suggests that the church service was rather informal, like that of the synagogue. Each one contributed something to the worship experience.

Some members contributed a hymn to the service. Most likely a hymn was a newly composed song of praise directed to Christ. Bible scholars have identified several Christ-centered hymns in the New Testament. The important point is that the singing, like all parts of the church service, was to edify the congregation. The biblical principle, then, is that church music should contribute to the spiritual edification of the believers.

Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs. The two remaining Pauline texts (Eph 5:19; Col 3:16) are the most informative about music in the New Testament. Paul encourages the Ephesians to "be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart" (Eph 5:18-19). In a similar vein, the apostle admonishes the Colossians: "Let the word of God dwell in you richly, teach and admonish one another in all wisdom, and sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God" (Col 3:16).

Both passages provide the earliest indication of how the apostolic church differentiated between the psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. It is hard to draw hard-and-fast distinctions between these terms. Most scholars agree that the three terms loosely refer to the various forms of musical compositions used in the worship service.

The psalms most likely are those of the Old Testament, though there may have been some Christian additions. The hymns would be newly composed songs of praise directed to Christ. Some evidence for these Christ-centered hymns appears in the New Testament (Eph 5:14; 1 Tim 3:16; Phil 2:6-11; Col 1:15-20; Heb 1:3). The spiritual songs probably refer to spontaneous praise songs which the inspiring Spirit placed on the lips of the enraptured worshipper (1 Cor 14:15).

The phrase "addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" suggests that the singing was interactive. Presumably some of the singing was responsorial, with the congregation responding to the song leader. The singing was to be done with "thankfulness" and "with all your heart." Through their singing, Christians expressed their wholehearted gratitude "to the Lord" for His marvellous provision of salvation.

Christ-Centered Hymns. While in the synagogue the singing was "word-centered," that is, designed to praise God by chanting His Word; in the New Testament church the singing was "Christ-centered," that is, designed to extol Christ's redemptive accomplishments.

A good example of a "Christ-centered" hymn is found in 1 Timothy 3:16, which consists of an introductory sentence ("Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of our religion"), which is followed by six lines:

He was manifested in the flesh,
Vindicated in the Spirit,
Seen by angels,
Preached among the nations,
Believed in the world,
Taken up in glory.

This hymn embodies in a cryptic way the fundamental truths of the Gospel message. As Ralph Martin explains, "By a series of antithetical couplets in which a second line complements the thought of the first line, the Gospel message . . . is set forth. It treats of the two world orders, the divine and human; and shows how Christ has brought together the two spheres by His coming from the glory of the Father's presence into this world ('revealed in the flesh': cf. John 1:14; Rom 8:3) and by His lifting up of humanity back again into the divine realm. Thus heaven and earth are joined, and God and man reconciled."²⁷

The celebration of Christ's redemption is the basic theme of other New Testament hymns (Phil 2:6-8; Col 1:15-20; Heb 1:3), and especially in the book of Revelation. We noted in the previous chapter that the angelic choir around God's Throne sings a new song saying: "Worthy art thou to take the scroll and to open its seals, for thou wast slain and by thy blood didst ransom men for God, from every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and has made them a kingdom of priests to our God" (Rev 5:9). The "Christ-centered" singing done by the church on earth reflects the "Lamb-centered" singing done by the living creatures in heaven.

A Pagan Witness. A most telling evidence of "Christ-centered" singing by the early church is found in the private correspondence between the Roman Governor Pliny and the Emperor Trajan. In a letter written in A.

D. 112, Pliny reported to the emperor that he tortured some young Christian deaconesses in order to find out what possible crimes were committed by Christians in their religious gatherings.

To his surprise, Pliny found that "The sum total of their guilt or error amounted to no more than this. They had met regularly before dawn on a fixed day to chant verses alternately among themselves in honor of Christ as if to a god, and also to bind themselves by oath, not for criminal purpose, but to abstain from theft, robbery and adultery, to commit no breach of trust and not to deny a deposit when called upon to restore it."²⁸

What an inspiring pagan testimony about early Christian worship! Christians became known for singing to "Christ as if to a god," and for binding themselves to follow His example in their lifestyle of purity and honesty. It is evident that the main theme of their songs was Christ. They witnessed for the Lord by singing about Him and living godly lives in His honor.

The witness of the New Testament singing is relevant for us today. Is our singing "Christ-centered" like that of the apostolic church? Does our church music praise the Savior for His past, present, and future redemptive accomplishments? Does it give us a greater appreciation for Christ's creative and redemptive love?

If you are tempted to listen to rock music, ask yourself: Do the beat, rhythm, and lyric of this music help me to appreciate the purity, majesty, and holiness of Christ? Does it magnify His character? Does it have appropriate words, a pure tone, and a lovely melody? Music about Christ should be like Christ, reflecting the purity and loveliness of His character.

No Instrumental Music in the Early Church. None of the New Testament references to music examined above makes any allusion to musical instruments used by New Testament Christians to accompany the singing. Apparently Christians followed the tradition of the synagogue in prohibiting the use of musical instruments in their church services because of their pagan association.

Undoubtedly Paul understood that music could be an effective resource to help the church fulfill the overwhelming tasks of evangelizing the Gentiles. He knew what would work in attracting people. He says: "For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom" (1 Cor 1:22). But he chose not to use Gentile or Jewish idioms to proclaim the Gospel. Why? Because he wanted to reach people, not by giving them what they wanted, but by proclaiming to them what they needed. "But we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to the Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Gentiles, Christ is the power of God" (1 Cor 1:23-24).

The outright condemnation of musical instruments, sometimes even of the harp and the lyre, is present in the writings of numerous early Christian authors. In his dissertation on *Musical Aspects of the New Testament*, William Smith concludes his survey of the critical attitude of church leaders toward the use of musical instruments by listing several reasons, of which the first three are as follows:

"(a) Most important of all, at least ostensibly, seems to be the association of instruments with the worship of heathen cults.

(b) The employment of instruments at secular excesses as the theater and the circus.

(c) The sensuality of instrumental music and its aesthetic effects."²⁹

Contrary to the current philosophy that rock music can be adopted and adapted to reach the secular society, the early Christians distanced themselves not only from secular songs but also from the musical instruments used for secular entertainment and pagan worship. In his book *The Sacred Bridge*, Eric Werner concludes his study of music in the early church: "Up to the third century, the Christian sources reflect almost the same attitude toward Hellenistic music as contemporary Judaism. The very same distrust of instrumental accompaniment in religious ceremonies, the same horror of flute, *tympanon*, [drum], and cymbal, the accessories of the orgiastic mysteries are here in evidence."³⁰ The same point is emphasized by the *The New Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians* in its description of the early church: "The ban on dance in the worship service shows ! ! that rhythm did not have much of a place in the liturgy."³¹

We cannot approve the early Christians' radical rejection of all musical instruments for church services simply because they were used by the pagans in social and religious life. Yet we must commend them for recognizing the danger of bringing into the church the music and instruments which were associated with a pagan lifestyle.

The early church understood the fundamental truth that adopting pagan music, and the instruments used to produce it, could eventually corrupt the Christian message, identity, and witness, besides tempting people to fall back into their pagan lifestyles. Eventually this is what happened. Beginning from the fourth century when Christianity became the religion of the empire, the church tried to reach the pagans by adopting

some of their practices, including their music. The result has been the gradual secularization of Christianity, a process that is still continuing today. The lesson of history is clear. To evangelize people with their secular idioms, ultimately results in the secularization of the church itself.

Part 3

DANCE IN THE BIBLE

There are conflicting opinions concerning dance and its use in the worship service of ancient Israel. Historically the Seventh-day Adventist church has maintained that the Bible does not sanction dancing, especially in the context of the worship service. In recent years, however, the question has been reexamined, especially by Adventist youth leaders who claim to have found biblical support for dancing.

Shall We Dance? A good example of this new trend is the symposium *Shall We Dance? Rediscovering Christ-Centered Standards*. This research was produced by twenty contributors and is based on the findings of the "Valuegenesis Study." This study is the most ambitious project ever undertaken by the Adventist church to determine how well the church transmits its values to the new generation.

The back cover of *Shall We Dance?* indicates that the book is "jointly sponsored by the Department of Education of the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists, the John Hancock Center for Youth Ministry, La Sierra University, and La Sierra University Press." The combined sponsorship by four major SDA institutions suggests that the content of the book reflects the thinking of major Adventist institutions.

For the sake of accuracy, it must be stated that the opening statement of the introduction says: "The book is *not* an official statement of the Seventh-day Adventist Church regarding standards and values. Rather it is an invitation to open discussion regarding lifestyle issues. Hopefully even better biblical principles will become the bedrock for our distinctive lifestyle as we move from the peripheral, but ever-present issues to the weightier matters of living the Christian life."

The clarification that the "book is *not* an official statement of the Seventh-day Adventist Church" is reassuring, because, in my view, some of the conclusions hardly encourage the development of "even better biblical principles." A case in point are the four chapters devoted to dance and written by four different authors. These chapters present a very superficial analysis of the Biblical references to dance. For example, the chapter entitled "Dancing with a User-Friendly Concordance," consists primarily of a listing of twenty-seven Bible references to dancing, without any discussion whatsoever. The author assumes that the texts are self-explanatory and supportive of religious dancing. This is indicated by the fact that he closes the chapter, asking: "How could we dance before the LORD today? What type of dance would it be? Why do people dance nowadays?"³² Surprisingly! ! the author ignores that no dancing ever took place in the religious services of the Temple, synagogue, or early church.

The conclusions derived from an examination of the biblical view of dancing are concisely stated in five principles, the first of which says: "Principle 1: Dance is a component of divine worship. When we study Scripture we find that what it says about dance and dancing is not only *not* condemnatory, but in some cases positively prescriptive: 'Praise him with trumpet sound; praise him with lute and harp! Praise him with timbrel and dance; praise him with strings and pipe'" (Ps 150:3-4).³³

The author continues: "A half hour with a good concordance leaves the lingering impression that there is more to a truly Biblical perspective on dance than has previously met our Adventist eyes. Of some 27 references to dance (dance, danced, dances, dancing) in the Scriptures, only four occur in a clearly negative context, and even these references nowhere describe dancing as the object of God's displeasure."³⁴

This chapter presents this surprising challenge to the Adventist church: "As challenging as it is to our notion of respectability and decorum, it seems evident that Adventists should give new thought and study to the inclusion of dance as part of the worship of God, at least in selected communities and on special occasions."³⁵

Three Major Flaws. After spending not "a half hour" but several days examining the biblical data relevant to dance, I find this conclusion unsubstantiated and its challenge unnecessary. For the sake of clarity, I wish to respond to the position that "dance is a component of divine worship" in the Bible by submitting what in my view are three major flaws of his methodology.

(1) The failure to prove that dancing was indeed a component of divine worship in the Temple, synagogue, and early church.

(2) The failure to recognize that of the twenty-eight references to dance or dancing in the Old Testament, only four refer without dispute to religious dancing, and none of these relate to worship in God's House.

(3) The failure to examine why women, who did most of the dancing, were excluded from the music ministry of the Temple, synagogue, and early church.

No Dance in the Worship Service. If it were true that "dance is a component of divine worship" in the Bible, then why is there no trace of dancing by men or women in the worship services of the Temple, the synagogue, or the early church? Did God's people in Bible times neglect an important "component of divine worship"?

Negligence does not seem to be the reason for the exclusion of dance from the divine service, because we noted that clear instructions were given regarding the ministry of music in the temple. The Levitical choir was to be accompanied only by string instruments (the harp and the lyre). Percussion instruments like drums and tambourines, which were commonly used for making dance music, were clearly prohibited. What was true for the Temple was also true for the synagogue and later for the early church. No dancing or entertainment music was ever allowed in God's House.

Garen Wolf reaches this conclusion after his extensive analysis of "Dance in the Bible" : "First, dancing as part of the Temple worship is nowhere traceable in either the first or the second Temple. Second, of the 107 times these words are used in the Bible [Hebrew words translated as "dance"], only four times could they be considered to refer to religious dance. Third, none of these references to religious dance were in conjunction with the regular established public worship of the Hebrews."³⁶

It is important to note that David, who is regarded by many as the primary example of religious dancing in the Bible, never instructed the Levites regarding when and how to dance in the Temple. Had David believed that dancing should be a component of divine worship, no doubt he would have given instructions regarding it to the Levite musicians he chose to perform at the Temple.

After all, David is the founder of the music ministry at the Temple. We have seen that he gave clear instruction to the 4,000 Levite musicians regarding when to sing and what instruments to use to accompany their choir. His omission of dancing in the divine worship can hardly be an oversight. It rather tells us that David distinguished between the sacred music performed in God's House and the secular music played outside the Temple for entertainment.

An important distinction must be made between religious music played for entertainment in a social setting and the sacred music performed for worship in the Temple. We must not forget that the whole life of the Israelites was religiously oriented. Entertainment was provided, not by concerts or plays at a theater or circus, but by the celebration of religious events or festivals, often through folk dancing by women or men in separate groups.

No romantic or sensually oriented dancing by couples ever occurred in ancient Israel. The greatest annual dance took place, as we shall see, in conjunction with the Feast of Tabernacles, when the priests entertained the people by doing incredible acrobatic dances the whole night. What this means is that those who appeal to the biblical references to dance to justify modern romantic dancing inside or outside the church ignore the vast difference between the two.

Most people who appeal to the Bible to justify modern romantic dancing would not be interested in the least in the folk dancing mentioned in the Bible, where there was no physical contact between men and women. Each group of men, women, and children did its own "show," which in most cases was a kind of march with rhythmic cadence. I have seen "The Dance Around the Ark" by the Coptic priests in Ethiopia, where many Jewish traditions have survived, including Sabbathkeeping. I could not understand why they called it "dance," since it was merely a procession by the priests who marched with a certain rhythmic cadence. To apply the biblical notion of dance to modern dance, is misleading to say the least because there is a world of difference between the two. This point becomes clearer as we survey the references to dance.

The References to Dance. Contrary to prevailing assumptions, only four of the twenty-eight references to dance refer without dispute to religious dancing, but none of these have to do with public worship conducted in the House of God. To avoid burdening the reader with a technical analysis of the extensive use of the six Hebrew words translated "dance," I will submit only a brief allusion to each of them.

The Hebrew word *chagag* is translated once as "dance" in 1 Samuel 30:16 in conjunction with the "drinking and dancing" of the Amalekites. It is evident that this is not a religious dance.

The Hebrew word *chuwł* is translated twice as "dance" in Judges 21:21, 23, with reference to the daughters of Shiloh who went out to dance in the vineyards and were taken as wives by surprise by the men of Benjamin. Again there is no doubt that in this context this word refers to a secular dance done by unsuspecting women.

The Hebrew word *karar* is translated twice as "dance" in 2 Samuel 6:14 and 16 where it states, "And David danced before the Lord with all his might . . . Michal the daughter of Saul looked out of the window, and saw King David leaping and dancing before the Lord." More is said about the significance of David's dance below. In this context it suffices to note that "these verses refer to a religious type of dance outside the context of the Temple worship. The word *karar* is only used in Scripture in these two verses, and is never used in conjunction with Temple worship."³⁷

The Hebrew word *machowal* is translated six times as dance. Psalm 30:11 uses the term poetically: "Thou has turned for me my mourning into dancing." Jeremiah 31:4 speaks of the "virgins of Israel" who "shall go forth in the dance of the merry-makers." The same thought is expressed in verse 13. In both instances the references are to social folk dancing done by women.

"Praise Him with Dance." In two important instances, *machowal* is translated as "dance" (Psalms 149:3 and 150:4). They are most important because in the view of many people they provide the strongest biblical support for dancing as part of church worship. A close look at these texts shows that this popular assumption is based on a superficial reading and inaccurate interpretation of the texts.

Linguistically, the term "dance" in these two verses is disputed. Some scholars believe that *machowal* is derived from *chuwł*, which means "to make an opening"³⁸—a possible allusion to a "pipe" instrument. In fact this is the marginal reading given by the KJV. Psalm 149:3 states: "Let them praise his name in the dance" [or "with a pipe," KJV margin]. Psalm 150:4 reads: "Praise him with the timbrel and dance" [or "pipe," KJV margin].

Contextually, *machowal* appears to be a reference to a musical instrument; in both Psalm 149:3 and 150:4, the term occurs in the context of a list of instruments to be used for praising the Lord. In Psalm 150 the list includes eight instruments: trumpet, psaltery, harp, timbrel, string instruments, organs, cymbals, clashing cymbals (KJV). Since the Psalmist is listing all the possible instruments to be used to praise the Lord, it is reasonable to assume that *machowal* also is a musical instrument, whatever its nature might be.

Another important consideration is the figurative language of these two psalms, which hardly allows for a literally interpretation of dancing in God's House. Psalm 149:5 encourages people to praise the Lord on the "couches." In verse 6, the praising is to be done with "two-edged swords in the hands." In verses 7 and 8, the Lord is to be praised for punishing the heathen with the sword, binding kings in chain, and putting nobles in fetters. It is evident that the language is figurative because it is hard to believe that God would expect people to praise Him by standing or jumping on couches or while swinging a two-edged sword.

The same is true of Psalm 150 which speaks of praising God, in a highly figurative way. The psalmist calls upon God's people to praise the Lord "for his mighty deeds" (v. 2) in every possible place and with every available musical instrument. In other words, the psalm mentions the *place* to praise the Lord, namely, "his sanctuary" and "his mighty firmament"; the *reason* to praise the Lord, namely, "for his mighty deeds . . . according to his exceeding greatness" (v. 2); and the *instruments* to be used to praise the Lord, namely, the eight listed above.

This psalm makes sense only if we take the language to be highly figurative. For example, there is no way in which God's people can praise the Lord "in his mighty firmament," because they live on earth and not in heaven. The purpose of the psalm is not to specify the *location* and the *instruments* to be used to praise for church music. Nor it is intended to give a license to dance for the Lord in church. Rather, its purpose is to invite *everything* that breathes or makes sound to praise the Lord *everywhere*. To interpret the psalm as a license to dance, or to play drums in the church, is to misinterpret the intent of the Psalm and to contradict the very regulation which David himself gave regarding the use of instruments in God's House.

Celebration Dance. The Hebrew word *mechowlah* is translated seven times as "dance." In five of the seven instances the dance is by women who celebrate a military victory (1 Sam 18:6; 21:11; 29:5; Jud 11:34; Ex 15:20). Miriam and the women danced to celebrate the victory over the Egyptian army (Ex 15:20). Jephthah's daughter danced to celebrate her father's victory over the Ammonites (Jud 11:34). Women danced to celebrate David's slaughter of the Philistines (1 Sam 18:6; 21:11; 29:5).

In the remaining two instances, *mechowlah* is used to describe the naked dance of Israelites around the golden calf (Ex 32:19) and the dance of the daughters of Shiloh in the vineyards (Jud 21:21). In none of these instances is dance a part of a worship service. Miriam's dance may be viewed as religious, but so were the dances performed in conjunction with the annual festivals. But these dances were not seen as a component

of a divine service. They were social celebrations of religious events. The same thing occurs today in Catholic countries where people celebrate annual holy days by organizing carnivals.

The Hebrew word *raqad* is translated four times as "dance" (1 Chron 15:29; Job 21:11; Is 13:21; Ecc 3:4). Once it refers to how "children dance" (Job 21:11). Another is to "satyr dancing" (Is 13:21), which may refer to a goat or a figure of speech. A third instance is a poetic reference "to a time to dance" (Ecc 3:4), mentioned in contrast "to a time to mourn." A fourth reference is to the classic example of "King David dancing and making merry" (1 Chron 15:29). In view of the religious significance attached to David's dance, special consideration is given to it shortly.

Dance in the New Testament. Two Greek words are translated as "dance" in the New Testament. The first is *orcheomai*, which is translated four times as "to dance" with reference to the dancing of Herodias' daughter (Matt 14:6; Mark 6:22) and a children's dance (Matt 11:17; Luke 7:32). The word *orcheomai* means to dance in a rank-like or regular motion and is never used to refer to religious dance in the Bible.

The second Greek word translated as "dance" is *choros*. It is used only once in Luke 15:25 with reference to the return of the prodigal son. We are told that when the elder son came close to the house "he heard music and dancing." The translation "dancing" is disputed because the Greek *chorus* occurs only once in this passage and is used in extra-biblical literature with the meaning of "choir" or "group of singers."³⁹ At any rate, this was a family reunion of a secular nature and does not refer to religious dancing.

The conclusion that emerges from the above survey of the twenty-eight references to dance is that dance in the Bible was essentially a social celebration of special events, such as a military victory, a religious festival, or a family reunion. Dance was done mostly by women and children. The dances mentioned in the Bible were either processional, encircling, or ecstatic.

No biblical references indicate that men and women ever danced together romantically as couples. As H. Wolf observes, "While the mode of dancing is not known in detail, it is clear that men and women did not generally dance together, and there is no real evidence that they ever did."⁴⁰ Furthermore, contrary to popular assumptions, dance in the Bible was never done as part of the divine worship in the Temple, synagogue, or early church.

Dancing in Pagan Worship. Most indications of religious dancing in the Bible have to do with the apostasy of God's people. There is the dancing of the Israelites at the foot of Mount Sinai around the golden calf (Ex 32:19). There is an allusion to the dancing of the Israelites at Shittim when "the people began to play harlot with the daughter of Moab" (Num 25:1). The strategy used by the Moabites was to invite Israelite men "to the sacrifice of their gods" (Num 25:2), which normally entailed dancing.

Apparently the strategy was suggested by the apostate prophet, Balaam, to Balak, king of Moab. Ellen White offers this comment: "At Balaam's suggestion, a grand festival in honor of their gods was appointed by the king of Moab, and it was secretly arranged that Balaam should induce the Israelites to attend. . . . *Beguiled with music and dancing*, and allured by the beauty of heathen vestals, they cast off their fealty to Jehovah. As they united in mirth and feasting, indulgence in wine beclouded their senses and broke down the barriers of self-control."⁴¹

There was shouting and dancing on Mount Carmel by the prophets of Baal (1 King 18:26). The worship of Baal and other idols commonly took place on the hill with dancing. Thus, the Lord appeals to Israel through the prophet Jeremiah: "Return, faithless people; I will cure you of backsliding. . . . Surely the idolatrous commotion on the hills and mountains is a deception" (Jer 3:22-23, NIV).

David Dancing Before the Lord. The story of David dancing "before the Lord with all his might" (2 Sam 6:14) while leading the procession that brought the ark back to Jerusalem is viewed by many as the most compelling biblical sanction of religious dancing in context of a divine service. In the chapter "Dancing to the Lord," found in the book *Shall We Dance?*, Timothy Gillespie, Seventh-day Adventist youth leader, writes: "We can dance to the Lord like David, reflecting an outburst of excitement for the glory of God; or we can introspectively turn that excitement inward, reflecting on ourselves and our selfish desires."⁴² The implication of this statement seems to be that if we do not dance unto the Lord like David, we repress our excitement and reveal our self-centeredness. Is this what the story of David's dance teaches us? Let us take a ! close look at it.

To say the least, David's dance before the ark poses serious problems. In the first place, David "girded himself with a lined ephod" (2 Sam 6:14) like a priest and "offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the Lord" (2 Sam 6:17). Note that the ephod was a sleeveless linen waistcoat garment to be worn only by the priests as an emblem of their sacred office (1 Sam 2:28). Why did David choose to exchange his royal robes for those of a priest?

Ellen White suggests that David revealed a spirit of humility by laying aside his royal robes and attiring "himself in a plain linen ephod."⁴³ This is a plausible explanation. The problem is that nowhere does the Bible suggest that the ephod could be legitimately worn by someone who was not a priest. The same holds true when it comes to sacrifices. Only the Levite priests had been set aside to offer sacrifices (Num 1:50). King Saul was severely rebuked by Samuel for offering sacrifices: "You have done foolishly; you have not kept the commandment of the Lord your God" (1 Sam 13:13). By offering sacrifices dressed like a priest, David was assuming a priestly role in addition to his kingly status. Such an action cannot be easily defended biblically.

David's Behavior. More problematic is David's manner of dancing. Ellen White says that David danced "in reverent joy before God."⁴⁴ Undoubtedly this must have been true part of the time. But it would appear that during the dance, David may have become so excited that he lost his loin cloth, because Michal, his wife, rebuked him, saying: "How the king of Israel honored himself today, uncovering himself today before the eyes of his servants' maids, as one of the vulgar fellows shamelessly uncovers himself!" (2 Sam 6:20). David did not dispute such an accusation nor did he apologize for what he did. Instead, he argued that he did it "before the Lord" (1 Sam 6:21), and that he was prepared to act "even more contemptibly" (1 Sam 6:22). Such a response hardly reveals a positive aspect of David's character.

Perhaps the reason David was not troubled by his uncovering during the dance is that this kind of exhibitionism was not uncommon. We are told that Saul also in an ecstatic dance "stripped off his clothes, and he too prophesied before Samuel, and lay naked all that day and all that night" (1 Sam 19:24; cf. 10:5-7, 10-11).

It is a known fact that at the time of the annual festivals, special dances were organized where priests and nobles would perform acrobatic feats to entertain the people. There is no mention, however, of the priests uncovering themselves. The most famous dance was performed on the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles, and it was known as the "Dances of the Water-Drawing Festival."

The Talmud offers a colorful description of this Water-Drawing dance which was performed in what is known as the women's court of the Temple: "Pious men and men of affair danced with torches in their hands, singing songs of joy and of praise, and the Levites made music with lyre and harp and cymbals and trumpets and countless other instruments. During this celebration, Rabbi Simeon ben Gamaliel is said to have juggled eight torches, and then to have turned a somersault."⁴⁵

Dances done by men or by women in Bible times, within the context of a religious event, were a form of social entertainment rather than part of a worship service. They could be compared to the annual carnival celebrations that take place today in many Catholic countries. For example, during the three days before Lent, in countries like Brazil, people organize extravagant carnival celebrations with endless types of colorful and sometimes wild dancing, similar to the Mardi Gras in New Orleans. No Catholic would consider such dances as part of the worship services.

The same is true for the various types of dances mentioned in the Bible. They were social events with religious overtones. Men and women danced, not romantically as couples but separately in processional or encircling dances. In view of the religious orientation of the Jewish society, such folk-type dances are often characterized as religious dances. But there is no indication in the Bible that any form of dance was ever associated with the worship service in God's House. In fact, as noted below, women were excluded from the music ministry of the Temple, apparently because their music was associated with dancing and entertainment.

Women and Music in the Bible. Why were women excluded from the music ministry of the Temple, first, and of the synagogue and early church later? Numerous biblical passages refer to women singing and playing instruments in the social life of ancient Israel (Ex 15:20-21; 1 Sam 18:6-7; Jud 11:34; Ezra 2:64-65; Neh 7:66-67), but no references in the Bible mention women participating in the worship music of God's House.

Curt Sachs notes that "Almost all musical episodes up to the time of the Temple describe choral singing with group dancing and drum beating. . . . And this kind of singing was to a great extent women's music."⁴⁶ Why then were women excluded from the music ministry of the Temple, when they were the main music makers in the Jewish society?

Scholars who have examined this question suggest two major reasons. One reason is musical in nature and the other sociological. From a musical perspective, the style of music produced by women had a rhythmic beat which was better suited for entertainment than for worship in God's House.

Robert Lachmann, an authority on Jewish cantillation, is quoted as saying: "The production of the women's songs is dependent on a small store of typical melodic turns; the various songs reproduce these turns—or some of them—time and again. . . . The women's songs belong to a species, the forms of which are essentially dependent not on the connection with the text, but on processes of movements. Thus we find here,

in place of the rhythm of cantillation and its very intricate line of melody, a periodical up and down movement."⁴⁷

Women's music was largely based on a rhythmic beat produced by tapping with the hand the tabret, toph, or timbrel. These are the only musical instruments mentioned in the Bible as being played by women and they are believed to be the same or very similar. The tabret or timbrel seems to have been a hand drum made up of a wooden frame around which a single skin was stretched. They were somewhat similar to the modern tambourine.

"It is interesting to note," writes Garen Wolf, "that I have not been able to find a single direct reference to women playing the *nebel* [the harp] or the *kinnor* [the lyre]—the instruments played by men in the music worship of the temple. There can be little doubt that their music was mostly of a different species than that of the male Levite musicians who performed in the Temple."⁴⁸

The tabret or timbrel were played largely by women in conjunction with their dancing (Ex 15:20; Jud 11:34; 1 Sam 18:6; 2 Sam 6:5, 14; 1 Chron 13:8; Ps 68:25; Jer 31:4). The timbrel is also mentioned in connection with strong drink (Is 5:11-12; 24:8-9).

Secular Nature of Women's Music. From a sociological perspective, women were not used in the ministry of music of the Temple because of the social stigma attached to their use of timbrel and the entertainment-oriented music. "Women in the Bible were often reported as singing a non-sophisticated kind of music. Usually at its best it was for dancing or funeral mourning, and at its worst to aid in the sensuous appeal of harlots on the street. In his satire about Tyre, Isaiah asks: 'Shall Tyre sing as an harlot?' (Is 23:15; or as rendered KJV margin, 'It shall be unto Tyre as the song of an harlot')."⁴⁹

It is noteworthy that female musicians were extensively used in pagan religious services.⁵⁰ Thus, the reason for their exclusion from the music ministry of the Temple, synagogue, and early Christian churches was not cultural, but theological. It was the theological conviction that the music commonly produced by women was not suitable for the worship service, because of its association with secular and, sometimes, sensual entertainment.

This theological reason is recognized by numerous scholars. In his dissertation on *Musical Aspects of the New Testament*, William Smith wrote: "A reaction to the extensive employment of female musicians in the religious and secular life of pagan nations, was doubtless a very large factor in determining Jewish [and early Christian] opposition to the employment of women in the musical service of the sanctuary."⁵¹

The lesson from Scripture and history is *not* that women should be excluded from the music service of the church today. Praising the Lord with music is not a male prerogative, but the privilege of every child of God. It is unfortunate that the music produced by women in Bible times was mostly for entertainment and, consequently, not suitable for the divine worship.

The lesson that the church needs to learn from Scripture and history is that secular music associated with entertainment is out of place in God's House. Those who are actively involved in pushing for the adoption of pop music in the church need to understand the biblical distinction between secular music used for entertainment and sacred music suitable for the worship of God. This distinction was understood and respected in Bible times, and it must be respected today if the church is to remain a sacred sanctuary for the worship of God rather than becoming a secular place for social entertainment.

CONCLUSION

Several important biblical principles relevant to church music today have emerged during the course of this study. An attempt will be made to summarize them by way of conclusion.

Music has a special place and purpose in God's universe. It is a divine gift to the human family through which human beings can express their gratitude to God while experiencing delight within themselves. Pleasure in singing comes not from a rhythmic beat that stimulates people physically, but from the very experience of praising the Lord. "How good it is to sing praises to our God, how pleasant and fitting to praise him" (Ps 147:1).

Singing is seen in the Bible as an offering of thanksgiving to the Lord for the blessings of creation, deliverance, protection, and salvation. We found this concept expressed especially in Psalm 69:30-31: "I will praise God's name in song and glorify him with thanksgiving. This will please the Lord more than an ox, more than a bull with its horns and hoofs."

God does care about how we sing and play during the worship service. He is not pleased with unintelligible "loud noise," but with orderly, melodious, and intelligible singing. Those Bible texts that speak about making "a joyful noise" or "a loud noise" unto the Lord do not teach us to praise God with excessive

amplification of the human voice or musical instruments during the worship service. Such a notion is derived from a mistranslation of *ruwa* as "loud noise." The correct translation as found in the NIV is "shouting for joy."

Music ministry is to be conducted by people who are trained, dedicated, and spiritually minded. This lesson is taught by the Temple's music ministry, which was performed by experienced and mature Levites who were trained musically, prepared spiritually, supported financially, and served pastorally. This principle established by God for Temple musicians is applicable to ministers of music today.

Music is to be God-centered, not self-centered. The notion of praising the Lord for entertainment or amusement is foreign to the Bible. Percussion instruments which stimulate people physically through a loud and relentless beat are as inappropriate for church music today as they were for the Temple music in ancient Israel.

We found that the music in the Temple was "sacrifice-centered," that is, designed to praise God for the provision of forgiveness and salvation through the sacrificial offerings. In the synagogue, the music was "Word-centered," that is, intended to praise God by chanting His Word. In the early church the music was "Christ-centered," that is, designed to extol Christ's redemptive accomplishments.

The Bible does not support the kind of romantic or sensual dancing which is popular today. Nothing in the Bible indicates that men and women ever danced together romantically as couples. We have found that dance in the Bible was essentially a social celebration of special events, such as a military victory, a religious festival, or a family reunion. Most of the dancing was done by women who were excluded from the music ministry of the Temple, synagogue, and early church because their entertainment music was deemed unsuitable for the worship service.

The biblical principles of music outlined above are especially relevant today, when the church and the home are being invaded by various forms of rock music which blatantly rejects the moral values and religious beliefs espoused by Christianity. At a time when the distinction between sacred and secular music is blurred, and many are promoting modified versions of secular rock music for church use, we need to remember that the Bible calls us to "worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness" (1 Chron 16:20; cf. Ps 29:2; 96:9).

No entertainment type of music was allowed in the Temple, synagogue, and early church. The same should be true in the church today. Those who disagree and want to adopt pop music for their church services are free to have their own music.. But let those who hold to the authority of Scripture keep to music that praises God in a way which is neither sensational nor sensual—a music which reflects the beauty and purity of God's character and celebrates His marvelous creative and redemptive accomplishment for the human family. May the Lord give us the discernment and desire to fill our homes and churches with music that meets His approval, rather than the applause of the world.

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THE CHRISTIAN AND ROCK MUSIC
A STUDY OF BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES OF MUSIC

**This book is authored by seven scholars
and consists of 14 chapters**

Chapter 11
ROCK MUSIC
AND
EVANGELISM

by

Günter Preuss

Günter Preuss is currently serving as a full-time Director of Music for the Baden-Wuerttemberg Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in Germany. From 1985 to 1995 he was Chairman of the Music Department at the Adventist College and Theological Seminary at Collonges-sous-Salève, in France. He will shortly defend his doctoral dissertation on on reformed hymnody between 1700 and 1870 at the Sorbonne University in Paris.

Preuss has written several studies on music in the synagogue, in the early church, and in youth evangelism. He is actively involved in helping young people overcome their addiction to rock music and make good musical choices.

Shakespeare's dictum, "To be or not to be," can be paraphrased today to read "To rock or not to rock." The battle over whether or not rock music should be used for church worship and evangelism is being fought across denominational lines. This is true not only in America but also in many Western countries, including my own country of Germany.

The use of rock music, especially at Adventist youth rallies in Germany, is creating enormous polemics. For example, on June 19, 1999, a youth rally was organized in Nurnberg which was attended by 1,900 people. A rap song was played for the special music before the sermon. While some of the youth were delighted by that music, others sent letters of protest to the conference and union officers, who apologized for what had happened. Unfortunately, this was not an isolated incident as Adventist rock bands have become a regular feature at youth rallies.

Some Adventist CCM artists—rock, pop and gospel singers— passionately defend the use of their music for church worship and evangelistic outreach.¹ Others strongly protest against what they perceive to be the music of Babylon. Contenders on both sides of both sides of the music debate are pondering their strategies in order to win converts to their cause.

The ongoing debate affects me deeply because music has always been the passion of my life. For the past 15 years I have served, first, as Chairman of the Music Department of the Adventist College and Theological Seminary at Collonges-sous-Salève in France (1985-1995), and, then, as Music Director of the SDA Baden-Wuerttemberg Conference in Germany (1995-2000). I am one of the founders of the European "Adventist Music Society" (1999). The recent invasion of loud pop music into our Adventist churches, especially at youth rallies, has caused me to spend countless hours examining rock music from social, moral, physiological, psychological, and biblical perspectives. This essay represents a brief summary of some aspects of my research.

Objective of This Chapter. This chapter addresses this fundamental question: Can rock music, in whatever form, be used to keep youth within the church and to reach out to secular-minded people outside the church?

It would be presumptuous to assume that this chapter provides the definitive answer to such a hotly debated issue. The best I can hope for is to stimulate a constructive dialogue among church musicians, youth leaders, and administrators. In addressing this divisive issue, it is imperative to learn to disagree without becoming disagreeable to one another.

The chapter is divided in two parts. The first part defines the terms and the issues of the current debate over the use of rock music. The second part focuses specifically on the use of rock music to evangelize the secular-minded people, especially the young. Special attention is given to some of the popular arguments used to defend the use of rock music in evangelism.

Part 1

DEFINING THE ISSUES

A meaningful analysis of the current debate over the use of rock music for church worship and evangelism presupposes an understanding of the issues involved and of the meaning of the terms used. Thus we attempt first to define the major terms and concepts around which the debate revolves.

Sacred Music. A good place to start is with the definition of "sacred music." There are those who contend that music per se is neither sacred or secular—it is a neutral thing.² For them, what makes music "sacred" is not its style, but its lyrics. This popular view is flawed both historically, theologically, and scientifically. Historically, it ignores the fact that the music performed at the Temple, synagogue, and early church was different from the music played at social events for entertainment. As shown in Chapter 7, "Biblical Principles of Music," the music and the instruments associated with dancing and entertainment were excluded from the Jewish and Christian places of worship.

Theologically, the notion that music is a neutral thing is negated by the Christian call to sanctification (1 Thess 5:23)—a call that encompasses all the realms of life, including music. Sanctification presupposes a separation from the world in order to be set aside and consecrated to the service of God. Whatever is used for the service of God is sacred, that is, set aside for holy use. This is true not only of music but of speech as well. The profane language used in the street is inappropriate in church. In the same way, rock music used in bars or nightclubs to stimulate people physically cannot be used in the church to elevate people spiritually.

From a biblical perspective, mixing the sacred with the profane is an abomination to the Lord (Prov 15:8; 15:26; Is 1:13; Mal 2:11). To use the rock idiom in the church or in evangelism means "to offer strange fire before the Lord" (Lev 10:1), or, as the New

English version renders it, "unauthorized fire." Paul emphasizes this principle: "Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them" (Eph 5:11).

Scientifically, the notion that music is neutral is discredited by research on the physiological, psychological, and social effects of music. The "neutralists" could be likened to the members of "The Flat Earth Society." They should try their theory on music therapists, psychologists, behavioral scientists, or even on surgeons and dentists who use music as an anesthetic. The power of music to alter the mind and affect the body is a well-established scientific fact.

Sacred music reflects the majesty, harmony, purity, and holiness of God in its melody, harmony, rhythm, text, and performance practices. Its goal is not to entertain or draw attention to the performer's ability, but to glorify God and to inspire believers to conform to the image of God. This is true also of evangelistic music which focuses on God's saving grace and its transforming power in the life of penitent sinners.

Rock Music. Defining rock music is a most difficult task because, during its half-century of existence, it has generated a whole tribe of children and grandchildren. The old "Stones" are still "Rolling," and they have become the literal grandfathers of the newest techno and rap freaks. The old man, called "Rock 'n' Roll," married all kinds of famous women who have given birth to milk-and-coffee babies, such as jazz-rock, classic-rock, latin-rock, polit-rock, and others.

No drug has been left untouched leading to psychedelic, acid rock, and ecstasy-punched rave parties. Techno freaks claim that "their" music is a world of its own, not just another "rock" style. In reality, however, Techno shares the common characteristics of rock music and sets new records in noise, tempo, and ecstatic effects.

The basic musical elements of rock, including "Christian" rock, are volume, repetition, and beat. It is a music designed not to be heard, but to be felt, to be drowned in. "Turn on, dive in and drop out" is the motto and the effect searched for. Its main instruments are amplified electrical guitars, electrical bass, drum set with a dominating one-beat, often accentuated on the second and the fourth beat. Keyboard instruments like piano and synthesizers are often added.

Rock music conveys a physically driven feeling called "groove." This feeling is caused by a slight difference in timing between the main "one-beat" in the drums and the "offbeat" effect of the other instruments or the singers. This "groove feeling" compels people to dance. Some "bang" it out with the whole body.

Rock singing does not use the techniques of classical music based on a relaxed larynx and rich harmonic overtones. Instead, it employs high-pitched strained voicing, using "shout and scat" techniques in order to obtain a top level of emotional touch. The lyrics are secondary to the music. Scientists speak about "signal listening,"³ which means that the mention of a word or a short phrase suffices to evoke the topic and to stir up the listener's emotions. Each one of the hundreds of different youth culture groups have their own "signal" vocabulary.

Most rock music does not seek a balance in composition among the melody, harmony, and rhythm. The music is dominated by a relentless rhythmic beat and general loudness which are designed to penetrate the bodies of the listeners with emotional stimulation, while disconnecting, at least in part, their master brain.⁴ Gotthard Fermor, a German Protestant theologian who is a strong defender of "Christian" rock, acknowledges that all the elements of rock music are designed to generate an agitated trance.⁵

The capacity of rock music to alter the mind and stimulate the body raises an important question: Can the rock idiom, in whatever version, be legitimately used to worship God in the church and to evangelize the unsaved outside the church? The conclusion of this investigation is NO, for the simple reason that the *medium affects the message*. The medium we use to worship God and proclaim the Gospel determines the quality of our evangelistic efforts and the nature of the message to which people are won.

Contemporary Christian Music. To define Contemporary Christian Music (CCM) is not an easy task, because it comes in a variety of species like the famous 57 brands of Heinz soup. Not all CCM is rock music, although the two are often confounded. It is estimated that about ninety percent of CCM comes in a wide variety of rock styles. The multicolored spectrum of this industry reaches out from the "pastel" of folk, youth-choir music, country, chanson, ballad, gospel, to the "brighter tones" of folk rock, country rock, gospel rock, and, finally, the incredible "blinding colors" of Christian hard core, heavy metal and techno.

Between these extremes is the "glitter" of rap, hip-hop, latin, reggae—all "sanctified" through "Christian" lyrics and an ever-increasing audience of believers and unbelievers. Major Christian bookstores have a large section on music that usually is divided into the following categories: *Contemporary*, which includes every type of popular music; *Praise Worship*, which covers a wide range of rock styles; *Rap, Country, Hard, Alternative, Techno-Drive*, the last three of which include harsh rock styles such as punk, metal, ska, retro, industrial, etc.; *Southern Gospel and Black Gospel*, which incorporate a wide variety of heavy beat music.

Musically speaking, most "Christian" rock is no different from secular rock, except for the lyrics. All the various styles of rock from soft rock to hard rock, acid rock, punk rock, metal rock, rap, etc., are available in a "Christian" version. The deception is self evident. Christians addicted to the secular rock beat can satisfy their craving for rock just by listening to a "Christian" version.

Related to CCM, and dependent upon it, is Contemporary Worship Music (CWM). Many of the same artists involved in CCM are also active in CWM, often recording in the same secular corporations. The significant difference is in the lyrics, which are more biblically based. An example is the song "How Majestic Is Your Name" by Michael W. Smith. Mainly it represents a type of soft rock. Two major problems with CWM is that it generally incorporates rock rhythms with a heavy bass line and is very repetitious. Jesus warned against using vain repetitions in worship (Matt 6:7). This type of music is adopted by more and more Adventist young people who are organizing bands and, in some cases, achieving professional status.⁶

Liberals Versus Conservatives. The debate over the use of modified rock music in church worship and evangelism involves two groups. On the one side are the so-called "Liberals," who say: "We must keep our youth in the church"; "We must update"; "We must use new methods to reach the secular mind." The Liberals tend to overemphasize God's love and forgiveness in order to justify the use of questionable methods of evangelism.

On the other side of the debate are the so-called "Conservatives," who say: "Do the youth dictate what we are to do?" "Where is the message of the Bible when we lower our standards?"; "Can we convert the world by bringing worldly music into the church?"

"Liberals" accuse "Conservatives" of being "Puritan body haters." "You cannot bear enjoyment," they say. In some cases, the criticism is valid. Some "conservatives" view the Christian life as gloom and doom. They label as sinful any legitimate expression of

joyful excitement. This is not right because Christians, who have experienced Christ's redeeming grace, have reason to shout for joy.

The real issue behind the whole debate is the method of interpreting the Bible. While the "Conservatives" are sometimes accused of interpreting Paul's warnings against worldliness too narrowly, the "Liberals" can be accused of taking David's dance out of context in order to justify rock evangelism. Each side tends to find rational and biblical reasons for their positions.

Part 2

ROCK MUSIC AND EVANGELISM

To define the role of music in evangelism is problematic for two major reasons, one biblical and the other contemporary. From a biblical perspective, music is never used as a medium for evangelizing the Gentiles. The only Bible text which could be twisted to support a form of music evangelism is Acts 16:25, where we are told that Paul and Silas, while languishing in a jail at Philippi, were "singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them."

We are not told whether the singing was intended as a witness to the prisoners or as an expression of confidence in God's protection. Most likely both motives were present. Whatever the motives were, this text offers little insight into the apostolic use of music for evangelism.

In the rest of the Bible, music is always presented in the context of the worship of God and not of evangelistic outreach to the Gentiles. As shown in Chapter 7, the music in the Temple was "sacrifice-centered," praising God for the provision of salvation through the sacrificial offering. In the synagogue, the music was "Word-centered," praising the Lord by chanting the very words of Scripture.

In the early church, music was "Christ-centered," extolling Christ's redemptive accomplishment. Any evangelistic impact of the worship music was indirect. Gentiles who heard God's people singing in some instances may have been attracted and converted to the worship of the true God. No explicit indications, however, suggest that music was ever used as a means to attract Gentiles to the Christian faith.

Ecumenical Music. From a contemporary perspective, the role of music in evangelism is a problem because ecumenism discourages proselytizing among Christian churches. Today evangelism is defined more in terms of interconfessional communion than of proclamation of the Gospel as understood by different denominations. Christian rock artists, stemming from different churches, espouse virtually the same expression of a minimal Gospel. Doctrinal differences do not really matter and should not be expressed in song. What matters is joining together in praising the Lord. Even the whole "pop life style" is often regarded by theologians as something "authentic" that should be accepted rather than condemned.⁷

Evangelistic music, instead of bringing people from the world to Christ, often brings the world's agenda into the church, thus undermining the identity and mission of the church. Music, in general, and evangelistic rock music, in particular, stand in danger of becoming a sign of the times by participating in the destruction of the very Christian values it wants to communicate.

Evangelistic Music Versus Church Music. Many believe that evangelistic music should be different from church music because its goal is to reach people where they are. This creates a gap between evangelistic and worship music, which, if not properly controlled,

can ultimately result in the establishment of new churches characterized by their new worship styles. The process can be graphically described.

First, there is the conviction that secularized people must be reached by means familiar to them ("pick them up where they are"). By doing this, a gap is created between the music service at the evangelistic crusade and that of the weekly worship service at the church. This leads to the *second* step which involves changing the old-fashioned worship style at the church into a new "modern" style in order to accommodate the secular-minded people who are brought into the church.

The result is step *three*, when societal trends set the agenda for the church which becomes caught in a never-ending race trying to keep up with the latest fad. Today the church chooses "Christian" rock music, tomorrow it will adopt "Christian" drama, and the following day "Christian" lottery or gambling. Incidentally, all of these activities are already taking place within some churches. The end result is that the evangelistic rock music that was intended to reach and change the people of the world ultimately transforms the church itself into the likeness of the world.

But the spiral of change does not stop here. The *fourth* step occurs when pluralism develops within each denomination. Groups sharing the same tastes organize themselves in separate congregations. Then comes the last step when different churches with the same worship styles approach each other to form a new denomination.

New Worship-Style Denominations. Today a number of new denominations have come into existence, not because of the discovery of new biblical truths, but because of new worship styles that better satisfy the expectations of the baby-boomer generation. The market-driven "seeker-churches" and the "body-oriented" charismatic movements constitute new brands of evangelism that claim to be role models for the Christian world to follow.

The issue is no longer dogmatic unity but worship unity.⁸ Music becomes more important than biblical teachings, because the goal is to give people what they want to experience now rather than what they need to know to become citizens of God's eternal Kingdom.

This process helps us understand why the adoption of pop music is becoming a hot issue within the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Many of its members fear that the adoption of a new style of worship, driven by pop music, ultimately will undermine the church's prophetic claim. They are concerned that if the current trend continues, Adventists, who are known as "the people of the Book," eventually will become known as "the people of rock," like many contemporary evangelical churches.

The solution to the dilemma is to be found not in eliminating any distinction between evangelistic and church music, but in keeping the two in close proximity. There is a need for a "decrescendo" of musical styles in each evangelistic meeting, from a more lively type of music to more meditative music, which predisposes people to reflect on the truths of God's Word presented at the meetings.

Two Strategies. The debate over whether "to rock or not to rock" in evangelism largely stems from two opposite strategies. One strategy is "Message-oriented"—the church must preach the message of salvation without looking for results that could be generated by the use of pop music. The second strategy is "Seeker-friendly," believing that it must adopt the idiom of the people to be reached.

The "Seeker-friendly" Christians defend the use of rock music in evangelism because they believe that rock is part of today's culture and thus is needed to penetrate the rock generation. They justify their strategy by referring to Jesus who has sent us into the

world (John 17:18), and to Paul, who said: "To those outside the law I became as one outside the law" (1 Cor. 9:21). Unfortunately, they ignore the second half of the verse: "not being without law toward God but under the law of Christ" (1 Cor. 9:21). "The law of Christ" did not allow Paul to use the popular Greek choral songs or Roman plays to reach the masses.

Had Paul been a "Seeker-friendly" strategist who was determined to reach the masses using their philosophical or musical idioms, then he should have become a popular evangelist, drawing capacity crowds wherever he went. But this was hardly the case. In his letters he tells us that almost everywhere he met opposition, persecution, even stoning sometimes. To survive, he often fled from place to place. The reason is that Paul chose to preach the Gospel, not by couching it in the popular idioms of the Roman culture, but by proclaiming it in clear and compelling words.

With prophetic insight Paul warned that in the last days some will adopt a compromising strategy. "For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own likings" (2 Tim 4:3). The mention of "itching ears" reminds one of the use of pop music today to satisfy the "itching ears" of the rock generation.

On the opposite side, we have today the "Message-oriented" Christians who carefully analyze any innovative method before using it, because for them what counts is the proclamation of the message. "We are to preach, not to look for success," they say. Jesus was also almost alone at the end, yet His apparent defeat became His greatest victory.

A negative attitude toward innovative methods that can enrich church worship and improve the effectiveness of the evangelistic outreach is deplorable. Christ Himself was a keen observer of the culture of His people and borrowed from it valuable object lessons for his teaching. Like Christ, we need to be sensitive to the contemporary culture, including music, and borrow whatever can be legitimately used to reach men and women with the message of salvation.

Music and Culture. The music used in church and in evangelism must be sensitive to culture. This is true not only in Western countries but also in developing countries, where, sometimes, missionaries ignore the native music and expect the people to learn and adopt Anglo hymns. That raises a question: Is the music of our worship services and evangelistic campaigns serving only the prevailing culture or enhancing also the content of the message? Our goal should be to meet both objectives. We need to carefully analyze the culture and borrow those elements that can enhance the preaching of the full message. God's message needs to be heard in a way that is relevant to people, but it must not be distorted by idioms like rock music, that contradict its values.

Evangelistic music needs to be both "Seeker-friendly" *and* "Message-oriented." It needs to be understood by the listener, but it must not distort the message. Evangelistic music can borrow valuable material from everywhere (from the past and from other countries), but it must avoid the music that fails to portray the beauty of Christ's character and the seriousness of the whole plan of salvation. Most rock music fails to give a "sacred shiver."

Evangelistic music must reflect Christ's courage in confronting the culture of His time with the principles of God's Kingdom. Christ did not meet the expectations of His contemporaries, not even those of His disciples. Similarly, Paul summons believers to confront the world with the principles of the Gospel, rather than conforming to its values (Rom 12:1).

The use of rock music in evangelism should be avoided because it reminds young people of their rebellious past. It can serve as a regression tool towards their own childhood, as psychologists explain it.⁹

By using rock in evangelism, Christians contribute to the general increase of physical stimulations and aggressiveness.¹⁰ Happiness is mixed with erotic undertones and joy with aggressiveness.¹¹ We should be messengers of God's real joy and peace.

The use of rock in evangelism is inappropriate, not only because its values are inimical to the Christian faith, but also because it represents a pantheistic and syncretistic form of religion which invites its followers to plug into the supernatural by means of dance, sex, and drugs. Using such a medium in evangelism is like introducing "strange fire" in God's House.

Rock Music Draws the Crowds. A major argument used to defend the use of rock music in evangelism is the fact that it draws huge crowds at pop Gospel concerts. No one disputes this fact. But this is hardly surprising since rock has become an indispensable part of today's youth culture. Many teenagers are so immersed in rock music that a Gospel concert where this music is played provides them with an outlet to enjoy their music without the condemnation of their parents or church.

Pop Gospel concerts do not call enough for spiritual or moral commitment. They mainly offer young people what they want— entertainment. Pop gospel musician John Allen acknowledges the danger of such concerts: "It seems undeniable that most of the audience is there simply to enjoy the music, not to think hard about anything; and there is a real danger of the emergence of a 'Greenbelt Christians,' consisting of semi-converted, shallowly committed teenagers whose Christianity means little more than that the enjoyment of festival-going."¹²

We live today in a pleasure-oriented society, when people have a much greater appetite for what is amusing and pleasing than for what is edifying. Empiric research has shown that adolescents tend to listen less and less carefully even to their own music.¹³ It is becoming increasingly difficult to motivate people to attend meetings where the only attraction is God and the study of His Word. But this must never become an excuse for giving people what they want.

Our biblical mandate is to present to people what they need to hear: God's plan and expectations for their lives. The claim that rock music draws the crowds is irrelevant from a biblical perspective. Our real concern is to be true to principle, not to be popular.

If apostolic Christianity was to be judged by the number of people converted, then it was hardly a successful movement. Why? Because by the end of the first century, all the evangelistic efforts conducted over a period of almost seventy years, had converted only about 0.6 percent of the population of the Roman empire. This amounted to one million Christians in a population of about 181 million.¹⁴ By contrast, in the fourth century when Christianity became a popular movement and pagans entered the church by the thousands, the result was spiritual decline and apostasy of the church. This shows that numbers can be deceptive. Massive conversions sometimes bespeak of spiritual decline and apostasy.

Only Rock Music Reaches Teenagers. We hear people constantly saying: "Teenagers today will not come to church. We can only reach them with rock music." Is this true? Surprisingly, there are many evangelical churches where no rock music is played, and yet they are filled with young people. Could it be that those who are clamoring for rock music are not the *unsaved* after all?

John Blanchard raises these pointed questions: "Is it true that it is the *unsaved* who insist on the music? Or it is nearer the truth to say that it is young *Christians* who enjoy it so much that they insist on it? Is it true that the unconverted friends of Christians adamantly refuse to attend any evangelistic presentation except a musical one? Or is it truer to say that they are almost never asked? Isn't it true that young Christians invite friends to Gospel concerts as a first resort rather than as a last resort?"¹⁵

If the reports are correct that thousands of young people are saved every year through "Christian" rock music, then one wonders where they are? If the claim about mass conversion made by so many rock groups is correct, then we should see a noticeable decrease in violence, drug use, civil disobedience, and premarital sex. Unfortunately, this is not the case. The reality is that this music of entertainment confirms patterns of aggressiveness and violence.

Rock Music Produces Excellent Results. Promoters of "Christian" rock music claim that God is blessing their efforts and thousands of young people are saved. Mylon LeFevre, known as "The Solid Rocker," claims that tens of thousands have signed their decision card at his concerts: "There are 52,000 people who have signed a little cards that says, "Tonight, for the first time, I understand who Jesus is and how He does things, and I want Him to be my Lord."¹⁶

The popular Christian press reports similar accounts of mass "decisions" registered at pop Gospel concerts. We are thankful for every soul who is saved regardless of the method of evangelism. There is no reason to doubt that some of the rock bands are genuinely concerned for the salvation of young people through their music and concerts. But the fact that God uses such means to save people is not of itself an indication that every means that works is biblically valid. I believe that people are saved, not because of Christian rock, but *in spite of* it.

Franky Schaeffer perceptively points out: "The excuse that 'sometimes people are saved' is no excuse at all. People have been saved in concentration camps because God can bring good from evil, but this does not justify the evil."¹⁷ Moses obtained excellent results when he struck the rock at Kadesh-barnea and produced enough water for all the Israelites and their livestock (Num 20:1-20). Yet God punished him for what he did.

Evangelistic methods must be tested, not by their results, but by their faithfulness to biblical principles. When evangelism is not controlled by biblical teaching, then it becomes a performance in manipulative skills, rather than a manifestation of the power of truth. True salvation comes through the proclamation of true doctrine. A corrupted or watered down presentation of the Gospel through a rock concert makes the decisions suspect.

Paul Blanchard reports on a survey of 1,829 young people conducted by his organization in England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland. The young people came from seven major denominations. "The poll indicated that of the 1,829 young people concerned, only thirty-nine, or 2.1%, were converted at a Gospel concert. (Even this tiny figure almost certainly gives an exaggerated picture; the poll did not ask whether the musical presentation was the specific means of conversion)."¹⁸

The reports of mass "decisions" for Christ made at pop Gospel concerts are suspect, not only because of the message but also because of the atmosphere created by the music itself. Powerful music can produce emotional decisions, but a biblical conversion is not the result of an emotional, unthinking response. It involves a genuine repentance wrought by the Holy Spirit through the preaching of the biblical Gospel.

At most pop Gospel concerts, the music is so loud and raucous that the words are hardly heard. How can the Gospel be presented in its convicting power when the words can hardly be heard? This exposes the contradiction of the defenders of "Christian" rock. On the one hand, they claim that the lyrics make the music Christian, yet, on the other hand, the lyrics can hardly be heard. If they were serious about their claim, they would reduce the volume of the instrumental music so that the message of the songs could be heard clearly and distinctly.

The big question is whether rock music really communicates the Gospel without distortion. After all, it is vitally important for the Gospel to be biblically received. The acceptance of the Gospel presupposes the use of the *mind*. "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your *mind*" (Mark 12:30). In view of the fact that in biblical psychology, heart, soul, and mind are used interchangeably to refer to the intellect, the mental response to God is paramount. Rock music, however, is designed to be felt, not to be heard. Its appeal is to the body and not to the mind. How then can a person understand the Gospel through rock when its music bypasses the mind? The rock fan may understand the rock signals (whatever they mean), but he can hardly understand the Gospel.

Practical Suggestions for Youth Rallies. In planning for youth rallies like concerts or music festivals, several considerations should be kept in mind. First of all, the motivation of the event should not be to imitate the popular rock scene. We need to seek healthy alternatives to the music played in discotheques and night clubs. Of course, friends can and should be invited, but they should be informed about the special nature of the event.

In planning for the music program, two considerations should be kept in mind. What thought associations will the music produce and what will be the possible physical impact? Organizers should ensure that the music is played with moderate loudness.¹⁹ A pleasant but sober atmosphere should characterize the meeting. Emphasis should be on a strong spiritual message, and on congregational singing rather than on performing bands. Creative playfulness should be a self-evident fact and reality. Young people need to experiment. We must inspire and challenge the youth, while being open to some unusual results. But youth leaders should never abandon their responsibility of providing loving guidance.

The volume of the instruments accompanying the singing should be very moderate. They should support the singing and not supplant it. Often I have seen that young people do not become enthusiastically involved in singing is because the music is too loud and they cannot hear their voices. The song leader directing the congregational singing should ensure that the musicians follow his directives in keeping the volume under control.

Clapping, tapping, and swinging are out of place in the church, but they could be allowed in a moderate way at outdoor rallies. Great care should be taken, however, to prevent the unruly behavior characteristic of rock concerts, with stamping, whistling, yelling, etc. The instrumentalists, the song leader, and the speakers should work together to ensure that the singing and the preaching reflect the distinctive characteristic of Adventist meetings. Times of joy should alternate with times of meditation, and even quietness.

The program should start with fresh and lively music to arouse interest and establish a good contact with the people. The function of the music is to serve as a servant of the Word. Simple heart-to-heart preaching and short biblical messages should be the main emphasis in any youth evangelistic program. At the end, the music should be calmer and meditative, inviting the youth to renew their commitment to the Lord.

Youth cultures split into more and more different global cells such as bikers, surfers, fun sporters, etc. Each one has its own musical language. This offers an opportunity to create

specific Christian or Evangelical or Adventist musical subculture. Convincing presentations will at least reach the earnest seekers among today's youth.

Musicians, pastors, and teachers should gather young people around them and plan together how to create an authentic Adventist music program suitable for church service and evangelism. They should take the time to choose together appropriate music for the occasion. Classical music presented with enthusiasm and quality can still impress young people. The same goes for carefully performed folk styles.²⁰

CONCLUSION

The search for an effective way to reach secular-minded people with the Gospel has led many church leaders and musicians to adopt various versions of rock music for communicating the Christian message. We commend the motives of these people, but we question the legitimacy of their method for several reasons.

Rock music is not a neutral vehicle for Christian lyrics. The music itself is a powerful language. Rock music in evangelism works on imagination and on thought associations, as any music. But rock music misrepresents the claims of the Gospel by encouraging worldly values. It makes people believe that they are all right, when in reality they desperately need a radical change in their lives—a conversion experience. As a medium which promotes instant gratification, violence, drugs, sex, and pantheistic self-redemption, rock music perverts the message of the Gospel simply because the medium affects the message.

Rock music in evangelism undermines the effort to construct a strong moral foundation in the youth. Instead of promoting self-control, temperance, respect for authority, and purity, it teaches self-indulgence, intemperance, disobedience, pleasure seeking, and immature behavior.

Rock music impairs the discriminatory sense of right and wrong built within our conscience. The constant puffing up of emotions destroys guilt barriers. It wraps people up in a guiltless and shameless self-satisfaction that ultimately makes the recognition of evil impossible. Christ calls for the recognition of our lostness in order that we might receive His gracious provision of salvation. Listeners should capture a glimpse of divine awe in order to sense God's calling to a complete commitment, to a change in life-style, including music habits.

Rock evangelism confirms the "rock religion" which fosters a mixture of half-conscious religious feelings and behaviours that tend towards ecstasy and the occult. It is imperative for Christians to keep a safe distance from such idolatrous practices.

Rock music also has a strong physical impact mainly through its volume and pounding beat. The music needs to be loud in order to be "felt" by the listeners. The pounding beat of rock leads to dancing, stamping, or head banging. The result of this heavy load of sound energy is that the mind switches off and leaves the field to the emotions to take over. Christians should not allow their minds to be impaired by sounds or drugs, because it is through their minds that they honor God by living sanely and soberly.

God's proven method of evangelism is the "foolishness of preaching" (1 Cor 1:21). He has committed to us the message of reconciliation (2 Cor 5:18). Our responsibility is not to contaminate this message with worldly idioms, like rock music. There is no need for the manipulation and stimulation of rock music to save people. Evangelism has been and is greatly aided by Christlike music presented by Christlike performers; but ultimately, it is the proclamation of the Word of God, accompanied by the convicting power of the Holy Spirit, that brings people into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. May our

evangelistic efforts be centered on the Rock of Ages, rather than on the rock music of our age.

ENDNOTES

1. The individual testimonies are impressive. Jeff Trubey, "Making Waves," *Adventist Review* (July 17, 1997), pp. 8 -13.

2. John Blanchard, *Pop Goes the Gospel: Rock in the Church* (Durham, England, 1991), p. 24.

3. See, Dörte Hartwich-Wiechell, *Pop-Music* (Köln, 1974), p. 30. She speaks of the small units that people need in order to be stimulated by pop music.

4. Wolf Müller-Limmroth, "Neurophysiologische und psychomentale Wirkungen der Musik" ("Neurophysiological and Psychomental Effects of Music"), in *Musik und Medizin 2* (1975), p. 14.

5. Gotthard Fermor, "Das religiöse Erbe in der Popmusik—musik—und religionswissenschaftliche Perspektiven" ("The Religious Heritage in Pop Music—Perspectives from Musicology and Religious Sociology"), in: Wolfgang Kabus (ed.), *Populärmusik, Jugendkultur und Kirche (Popular Music, Youth Culture and Church)* (Frankfurt, Germany, 2000), p. 44. (Lecture at the Youth Music Workshop in Friedensau, May 8, 1997).

6. See, Jeff Trubey (note 1).

7. See several contributions to the volume on popular music, youth culture, and church, ed. Wolfgang Kabus, an German Adventist church music professor: *Populärmusik, Jugendkultur und Kirche* (Bern, Switzerland, 2000).

8. Michael S. Hamilton, "The Triumph of the Praise Songs," *Christianity Today* (July 12, 1999), pp. 29-30.

9. Josef Hoffmann (a psychoanalyst), "Popmusik, Pubertät, Narzissmus," *Psyche* 11 (1988), pp. 961-980. He sees rock music, but also narcissism (self-centeredness) and merging with the cosmos, as positive tools in becoming an adult. The high tenor voice and the screaming of the rock singers expresses a "grandiose self," the mixing of father, mother, and babe, and the pounding beat would guide the industrialized world into adulthood.

10. Michael Kneissler, "Unser Gehirn baut sich soeben radikal um!" ("Our brain is rebuilding itself radically"), *P.M.* (a weekly journal) 11 (1993), pp. 14-20, relating the research of over 25 years of the *Münchener Gesellschaft für Rationelle Psychologie* [Society for Efficient Psychology, Munich] under the direction of Henner Ertel.

11. Microphones allow the singer to come directly into the intimate zone of the listener. See on eroticism, Frank Garlock & Kurt Woetzel, *Music in the Balance* (Greenville, SC, 1992), pp. 92-97.

12. John Blanchard (note 2), p. 98.

13. Klaus-Ernst Behne, a German musicologist, has conducted an internationally recognized study of 150 adolescents between the ages of 11 to 17, and found an alarming tendency towards a decline of sensitivity towards music. "The development of

'Musikerleben' ['the perception and experience of music'] in adolescence—How and why young people listen to music," in I. Deliège and J. Sloboda, *Perception and Cognition of Music* (Hove, England, 1997), pp. 143-159. Musical taste is well established already at 11 years of age and does not change considerably. Concentrated and conscious music listening declines rapidly as time goes on.

14. See, David B. Barrett, ed., *World Christian Encyclopedia: A Comparative Study of Churches and Religions in the Modern World A. D. 1900-2000* (Oxford, England, 1982), p. 3.

15. John Blanchard (note 2), p. 145.

16. Cited by John Styll, "Mylong LeFevre: The Solid Rocker," *CCM Magazine* (March 1986), p. 6.

17. F. Schaeffer, *Addicted to Mediocrity* (New York, 1965), p. 22.

18. John Blanchard (note 2), p. 109.

19. My own measurement of the volume at Christian youth rallies indicates that the levels frequently reach beyond 100 decibels. This is higher than the 90 to 95 decibels the German government commission recommends as the upper limit for discoteques. See, *Zeitschrift für Lärmbekämpfung* [Journal Fighting Noise Pollution] 42 (1995), p. 144.

20. Pierre and Gisela Winandy, "Not All Youth Want Rock," *Adventists Affirm* (Spring 1998), pp. 25-29; John Thurber, "Adventist Youth Prevail with Calm, Dignified Music," *Adventists Affirm* (Spring 1999), pp. 41-47.

21. For the past several years I have examined the literature produced both by defenders and attackers of "Christian" rock. Some of the significant publications defending the use of "Christian" rock are: Steve Miller, *The Contemporary Christian Music Debate: Worldly Compromise or Agent of Renewal?* (Wheaton, IL, 1993); Dan Peters, Steve Peters, and Cher Merrill, *What About Christian Rock?* (Minneapolis, MN, 1986); John M. Frame, *Contemporary Worship Music: A Biblical Defense* (Phillipsburg, NJ, 1997); Wolfgang Kabus (Adventist professor of church music, now retired; ed.), *Populärmusik, Jugendkultur und Kirche (Popular music, Youth culture and Church)*, (Frankfurt, Bern, 2000, "Friedensauer Schriftenreihe" - series of publication from the Adventist University at Friedensau/Germany, vol. 2). This is a highly sociological approach to the study of rock music.