

# **Worship Wars**

## **Endtime Issues No. 48**

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### **Dear Members of the Endtime Issues Newsletter:**

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).

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 worship in the wrong DAY, Sunday, and in the wrong WAY, through the intercessory Mary and the saints, one wonders if rock music also will play a prophetic role in promoting the end-time false worship!

It is significant to note that since the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) the Catholic Church has played a leading role in the charismatic renewal movement that is bringing together Christians of all faith. It is a known fact that music with a rock beat plays an important role in the religious experience of this new ecumenical charismatic movement.

In 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," Michael S. Hamilton notes that "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."

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. The outcome is that the church becomes a place where people can experience a physical stimulation similar to that provided by disco places or night clubs. Ultimately worship becomes an exercise to experience personal gratification rather than divine glorification.

## ARE ADVENTISTS JOINING THE “SECTARIANISM OF WORSHIP STYLE”?

The email messages I have received during the past two weeks have made me forcefully aware of the fact that an increasing number of Adventist churches are joining the new “sectarianism of worship style.” They accept uncritically the worship style of charismatic denominations, rather than developing a worship service that reflects the unique Adventist message and prophetic mission.

This trend should cause us to ponder: Is it possible that some Adventist churches today are being infiltrated by some forms of the false worship of Babylon that they have been called to warn the world against? The battle over worship which is intensifying in our Adventist church suggests the possibility that while we are trying to warn the world about the false creature-centered worship promoted by spiritual Babylon, we may allow some forms of this false worship in some of our churches. The sampling of messages I am about to share with you, will serve to make this point.

The new worship style with beat music, clapping, drama, swinging, and in some cases even dancing, is causing serious conflicts and divisions in some of our Adventist churches. The intensity of this conflict is reflected in the passionate way in which some are attacking the new symposium ***The Christian and Rock Music: A Study of Biblical Principles of Music***. As you will read shortly, some have gone as far as warning church members and friends against buying or reading this book. Right here at Andrews I have been advised not to display this music book at my booth during a convention that will bring together several hundred pastors and lay-leaders from different parts of the world.

The purpose of this newsletter is not to pour fuel on the raging fire of controversy over church music and worship styles, but to help both sides to look at these issues calmly from a biblical perspective. In my view much of the conflict stems from a misunderstanding of the biblical teachings on music and worship. Those who advocate a new worship style with beat music, clapping, drama, and even dancing, sincerely believe that the Bible sanctions such style of worship. On the other hand, those who object to this new style of worship, find that the Bible does not allow the use of entertainment type of music or programs in God’s House.

The question then is: What does the Bible really teach regarding church music and worship style? This controversial question is examined at great length, especially in chapters 6 and 7 of the new symposium ***The Christian and Rock Music: A Study of Biblical Principles of Music***. Since not all our subscribers have yet received a copy of the book, or perhaps have not had the time to read it fully, I will attempt in this newsletter to allude to some of the highlights of the research pertaining to some of the comments received during these past few days.

This means that our regular series of studies on marriage, divorce, and remarriage will resume with the next newsletter. I decided to interrupt the series for this time, because of the urgent need to address some of the issues raised by the comments received. Before proceeding with the discussion of the issues at hand, let me make a few announcements.

## UPCOMING SEMINARS & EXHIBITS

As a service to our subscribers, I am listing the date and the location of my upcoming BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES EXHIBITS and weekend SEMINARS on the Sabbath, Second Advent, and Christian Lifestyle. Each seminar consists of three presentations: Friday evening at 7:30 p. m., Sabbath morning at 11:00 a. m., and Sabbath afternoon at 5:00 p. m. Feel free to contact me at (616) 471-2915 for a special seminar in your area.

### **June 23-24: Seminar At The Cicero SDA Church**

**Address:** 24445 State Road 19, Cicero, Indiana 46034  
For information call: Pastor Ron Kelly at (317) 984-4376  
or (317) 984-4860

### **June 28 To July 9: Exhibit At The GC Session**

**Address:** Metro Toronto Convention Center, Canada  
**Exhibit Booth:** To find our both look for a 12' long banner saying: **Biblical Perspectives Presents . . .** The banner has my picture and that of the 15 books I have authored. At the GC Session all my books, cassettes, and videos will be made available at a substantially discounted price. I will be on hand to autograph your copies.

### **July 14-15: Seminar At The Altamonte Springs SDA Church In Orlando, Florida**

**Address:** 455 Maitland Avenue, Altamonte Springs, Florida 32701  
For information call: Pastor Ron Bentzinger at (407) 767-7522  
Or (407) 889-2713

### **July 23 To August 1: Bible Conference In Bermuda**

**Address:** 41 King Street, Hamilton HM 19, Bermuda  
For information call: President Carlyle C. Simmons  
at (441) 292-4110 or (441) 238-0792

### **August 2-5: Exhibit At The Adventist-Laymen's Services & Industries Convention**

**Address:** Amway Grand Plaza Hotel in Grand Rapids, Michigan.  
**Exhibit Booth:** To find our both look for a 12' long banner saying: **Biblical Perspectives Presents . . .** The banner has my picture and that of the 15 books I have authored. At the convention all my books, cassettes, and videos will be made available at a substantially discounted price. I will be on hand to autograph your copies.

### **August 18-19: Seminar At The Height SDA Church In Albuquerque, New Mexico**

**Address:** 4920 Wyoming N E, Albuquerque, NM 87191  
For information call: Pastor Wayne Gayton at (505) 298-5811  
Or (505) 271-5850

### **August 25-26: Seminar At The Hinsdale Fil-Am SDA Church**

**Address:** 9 East 59th Street, Hinsdale, Illinois 60521  
For information call: Pastor Daniel Botabara (630) 515-0939  
Or (630) 655-8786

## **SPECIAL OFFER ON *THE CHRISTIAN AND ROCK MUSIC***

Several of you have emailed me messages inquiring how long will the special offer last on the new book *The Christian and Rock Music*. To make it possible for many people to benefit from this timely study, we decided to extend indefinitely the following special offer:

**1 copy US\$20.00, postage paid.  
2 copies US\$30.00, postage paid.  
26 copies (one complete case) US\$170.00, postage paid. (Only \$6.50 a copy)**

Thank you for informing your church members that your church can order a case **containing 26 copies of this timely book for only \$170.00, that is, only US\$6.50 per copy (instead of the regular price of \$20.00), mailing expenses included, even for overseas shipments.**

This past week we received numerous orders from overseas, especially Australia. Shipping a case of 26 books overseas costs about US\$30.00, which is three times the charge for a US destination. But we are prepared to pay the extra cost in order to make it easier for our fellow believers to obtain a copy of this timely book. This means that even if you live in overseas countries like Australia, Europe, Singapore, Philippines or South Africa, you can order a case of 26 copies for the same price, namely US\$170.00, mailing expenses included to your destination. Thank you for sharing this information with your church.

To order copies of *The Christian and Rock Music* for yourself or your church, feel free to call us at (616) 471-2915 or email us your request with your credit card information at <sbacchiocchi@qtm.net>. We guarantee to process your order on the same day we receive it.

May I express our heartfelt appreciation to all of you who have been promoting this timely new book. As a result of your efforts the first printing is almost sold out and a large reprint will be delivered in few days.

## **LEFT OVER SYLLABI**

In the last newsletter I informed you that Andrews University Bookstore had about 35 sets of syllabi left over from my two classes of DOCTRINES OF THE ADVENTIST CHURCH and HISTORY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH. Several of you have requested them and now only 10 sets are left. Feel free to contact me if you are interested to use these syllabi for teaching or for personal Bible study. We will be glad to mail them to you at a special clearance price.

## **WORSHIP WARS**

**Samuele Bacchiocchi, Ph. D., Prof. of Theology, Andrews University**

To set the stage for our discussion of the conflict over church music and worship styles, let me share a few reports received these past two weeks. Reading these first hand reports will help us to appreciate more fully the extent and depth of the conflict facing an increasing number of our Adventist churches today.

### **THE INFLUENCE OF ROCK IN ADVENTIST CHURCHES**

From New Haven, CT, Pastor Charles E. Creech <cecreech@snet.net> writes: "Your book ***The Christian and Rock Music*** is one of the most comprehensive studies on the subject that I have ever seen. My church is in New Haven, CT and my congregation is split because I have refused to allow drums to come into the worship service. I have taken this stand because I have seen the way some members respond when beat music is brought into the church. They automatically sway and dance. Our worship would change fundamentally if drums were allowed to come in. Secular music has made such inroads into the church that two thirds of my members are fully involved in it and they have 'their minds made up and do not want to be confused by the facts'!

"On May 6 I preached a sermon using some of the material presented in your book and 'hip hop' members went out of the door. However, two thirds of the congregation remained and were edified. We are in a real battle over church music. Mrs. White has warned us in Selected Messages, Book 2, that the type of behavior that was manifested at the Muncie Indiana campmeeting on September 13-23, 1900, will return in the churches again just before the close of probation. What I terribly regret is that our church has no specific guidelines about what kind of music that should be allowed in our churches during the divine service. Too much is left up to opinion and the pastor's or congregation's feelings and tastes."

Personally I wish to commend Pastor Creech for taking a stand on an unpopular issue. I also share his regret for the failure of our church to give directives to our church at large on appropriate church music. Some pastors argue that they would rather have their members "sway and dance" in the church than walk out of the church. Letting church members have their own beat music, even if it is detrimental to their spiritual life, is like letting undisciplined children have their own way. In both instances, the end result is immature and irresponsible behavior.

A caring pastor cannot ignore the spiritual problems of his members, but will help them to understand and accept the moral principles that God has revealed. I have reasons to believe that eventually more and more church members will come to appreciate Pastor's Creech efforts to lead them to worship God in the beauty of Holiness.

### **THE INFLUENCE OF ROCK IN ADVENTIST SCHOOLS**

The influence of rock music is felt especially in Adventist schools. Many of our readers have shared with me their concern over what is happening in their local Adventist schools. For example, Sister Vasti de Melo <demeva@adventrm.com> was invited to play the organ at the 12th grade graduation conducted in an Adventist church of the Washington, DC area. She writes: "I got there a little ahead of time hoping to get a little time on the organ before the actual program started. To my utter amazement and shocked disbelief as I entered the church building I heard some really heavy rhythm rap type 'music' (if it could even be called that) coming from the general direction of the sanctuary. When my 22 year-old daughter and I got to the sanctuary doors, we found three young 13 year-old young ladies on the platform with microphones in hand, two of whom were dressed in extremely short and tight dresses singing (?) somebody's new version of 'Pomp and Circumstance.' One of the young ladies in question was dancing in such a sexually seductive way, something that I have only seen used on TV to advertise some movie that had some nightclub dancer doing these types of moves."

When Sister de Melo informed the program leaders that she found that number “extremely offensive,” the majority responded saying: “They’re only behaving like normal 13 year-olds, you shouldn’t be so offended.” Does this response reflect responsible leadership? Sister de Melo did not think so. She says: “My response was that if that was what would be taking place there that evening I would have no part in the service and they would have to find another organist because I would leave. And if they decided to do it anyway, after the program started I would get up with my daughter and leave in the middle of the program.”

She continues saying “Thankfully, our vice-principal, who agreed with me wholeheartedly managed to get the piece off the planned activities for the evening. However, the whole episode left my daughter, who attended this particular school for 11 out of the 12 years of her elementary and high school education, and I so shaken that we are seriously looking at where we stand on the issue.”

## THE INFLUENCE OF ROCK OVERSEAS

I can sympathize with Sister de Melo, because on several occasions I have also been deeply offended by the disco type of music that was played before my sermon or lecture at Adventist gathering in North America and overseas. The problem is not relegated to the United States. Adventist rock bands are becoming a regular feature at youth rallies and church services in many Western countries. In chapter 11 of *The Christian and Rock Music*, Günter Preuss, who is currently serving as Music Director of the Baden-Wuerttemberg Conference of SDA, in Germany, discusses the enormous problems Adventist rock bands are causing to our church in Germany.

A theology student at Avondale College in Australia emailed me a frank message, entitled “I Am Confused.” I will not mention his name, because I did not have time to receive his permission to post his name. He writes: “I am a Theology student at Avondale College. Briefly, my background is that I was a wild teenager living in the heart of Adventism here in the town of Cooranbong [where Avondale College is located]. I am a musician and I gave up the influence of heavy metal and grunge when I gave my heart to Jesus.”

He goes saying: “I understand the power of music well and the subtle nature of the devil when it comes to music. What I am really confused about is the ‘Christian music’ I have grown accustomed to. As you well know Australia has become one of the world leaders in congregational worship style music, most of which comes from the Pentecostal church.”

He expresses two concerns. First, he would like to know where to draw the line between contemporary music which is “acceptable and that which is not.” Second he is concerned that SDA youth are influenced in an amazing way, without knowing it, by the church music “practiced by the Pentecostal Church.” He closes with this statement: “Music is turning worship into a show and we are being swallowed here at Avondale College. Thank you for your time and may God bless and shine through you as you do His work.”

I can relate to the comments of this young man because I experienced first hand what he describes during a lecture tour in Australia in 1999. At a campmeeting youth tent I witnessed one night for the first time a band of hippie looking young people, blasting high decibels, heavy beat rock music, with pulsating disco lights, smoke effects, and all the trimmings typical a night club. Nobody could tell what they were singing about because the excessive volume drown out the words. Truly, it was a shocking experience for me. I felt that I had landed in a night club and not a place of worship.

Few weeks later I had similar experiences in North America. This convinced me the adoption of rock types of music is no longer an isolated problem, but a worldwide trend that is gaining momentum in Adventist churches, like in the rest of the Christian world.

## **ROCK MUSIC AT SOUTHERN ADVENTIST UNIVERSITY**

It would seem that even conservative institutions like Southern Adventist University, viewed by some as the last safe haven for Adventist young people, are facing the problem of rock music. Let me share with you a short testimony from Jonathan Lovitt [jflovitt@hotmail.com](mailto:jflovitt@hotmail.com), a 23 year old student attending Southern Adventist University. He gave me permission to quote his letter.

Lovitt writes: "I come from a background of attending night clubs on a regular basis before committing my life to the Lord. I did not expect to encounter techno music at Southern University, but I did." He continues relating a recent incident.

"At the end of the semester we had a party called "Strawberry Feast". . . . As I drew closer to the gym where the party was held, I could clearly hear a heavy beat emanating from the building. As I was almost at the door two of my peers who were a couple of steps behind me, said to one another, 'Ah, it surely is good to hear music like this coming from an Adventist institution.' I found that comment very worrisome. But I said to myself, 'I'll go in and see what is going on.'

"The first thing I saw as I entered the building, was dim and hazy smoke that was being blown around by fans. Bright multi-colored lights were flashing, not to mention the music which was louder and more intrusive now. People were standing on chairs pulsing to the beat. I left shortly afterwards because I found the atmosphere oppressive. The following day I spoke to one of my friends who attended the party. To my surprise she said that she thought the program was very spiritual. I was amazed and only said, 'Oh, yeah?'

"The chapters of your book which I have read, have been an eye-opening experience for me. I have come to realize that rock music does not foster a Christ-like character. The main reason for this letter is to simply let you know that what happened at Andrews is not an isolated incident. All of our schools seem to be influenced by rock. May God continue to bless our church and its leaders with clear vision and the strength to follow the Word and the Way to God's glory.

God Bless,  
Jonathan Lovitt"

The preceding sampling of testimonies suffice to alert us to the magnitude of the problem rock music is causing in an increasing number of Adventist churches and institutions. I sincerely wish that our forthcoming General Conference Session would address this issue, and formulate some basic guidelines for appropriate music for church worship and social entertainment. I doubt that this will happen. The issue is so explosive and divisive, that our leaders and delegates most likely will not touch it. Unfortunately the issue cannot be resolved by placing it under the rug.

## **THE IMPLICATION OF THE MUSIC CONTROVERSY**

An email message I just received few moments ago says that all of this controversy over music is blown out of proportion, because musical choices are largely personal and influenced culture. I tend to disagree, because I have found that in every culture a distinction exists between what is considered sacred music for worship and secular music for entertainment.

I spent over five years serving as Bible teacher in Ethiopia and I have traveled through many African countries. It has been for me a memorable experience on countless occasions to witness our African believers singing with gusto at their religious gathering. I can testify that I have never heard our believers singing the voodoo-beat type of music so common in their pagan culture. According to our Western taste, their singing is monotonous because it revolves around on a small range of notes, but it is surely different from the music played in their pagan culture.

There is more about the controversy over religious rock than meets the eye, because through the hymns we sing and the instruments we play during the church service, we express what we believe about God, His nature and His revelation for our present life and ultimate destiny.

Music defines the nature of the worship experience by revealing the manner and object of our worship. When music is oriented toward pleasuring self, then worship reflects our culture's elevation of people over God. The hedonistic bent of our culture can be seen in the increasing popularity of various forms of rock music used for church worship, because they provide easy self-gratification.

Many Christians complain that the traditional hymns of the church are dead, because they do not appeal to them anymore. One Pastor, whom I will quote in a moment, calls traditional hymns "traditional tragedy." By contrast, contemporary religious rock music gives them a "kick,"—a pleasurable sensation. Those who clamor for church music that offers them personal gratification, ignore that they are seeking for a self-centered physical stimulation, rather than a God-centered spiritual celebration of His creative and redemptive activities.

### **THE PUSH FOR CONTEMPORARY BEAT MUSIC**

While some are distressed over the adoption of religious rock, others are pushing for it with all their might. They believe that contemporary pop religious music is the prophetic fulfillment of the biblical "new song," because pop songs have "new" lyrics and tunes. A study of the "new song" in the Bible reveals otherwise. 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.

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). Here the "new song" is not associated with simpler lyrics or more rhythmic music, but with a unique experience of divine deliverance that inspires David to sing with a new sense of gratitude the hymns of praises.

Some pastors seem determined to introduce in their church rock band instruments and music, even if it means dividing the congregation. I have in front of me a letter accompanied by a dozen of documents sent to me this week by a sister who is agonizing over the new worship style and beat music her pastor is pushing. The documents attached include a petition signed by approximately half of the church members who oppose the new type of worship, and sent to the Conference President; the response of the Conference President who urges the members to "find a common ground that both can live with it"; letters to the pastor and to Doug Batchelor; a letter appealing to me for help.

Unfortunately the appeals of these fellow believers have been in vain. Our sister writes: "Our pastor continues to push the charismatic, Pentecostal type of worship service with its band and loud music. Our church is split right down the middle and those who oppose it are labeled troublemakers and fulfilling endtime prophecy because they cannot comply with this worship style or support the pastor's stance on this matter. . . ."

"I want to thank you for your stance and research on this matter. It is good to know that someone is speaking out about this issue that can draw attention to those that are in authority and hopefully get them to listen. Keep up the good work. Sincerely, . . ."

Sometimes I wish that I was in a position to help my fellow believers who turn to me for guidance and assistance. But I am only a biblical scholar and not a church administrator. I have no right to intervene in the affairs of local churches. All that I can do is



to share my research and pray that God may give our pastors and church members the wisdom and courage to follow the principles He has revealed in His word.

## **AN ATTEMPT TO DEFAME MY CHARACTER AND RESEARCH**

The most notable attempt to defame my character and my latest book on music, is by Pastor Thomas M. Hughes ([cnb00870@wvnet.edu](mailto:cnb00870@wvnet.edu)), who is currently serving as pastor in West Virginia. I have known Tom for many years. In fact he has invited me twice to present my Sabbath seminar at his churches. Tom is a good man, though his circular letter against me may suggest otherwise. He is passionately involved in introducing his congregation to a new worship style with clapping and rhythmic songs which he leads with his guitar. His negative criticism must be understood in this context. He has promised to read the book which I mailed it to him priority. I would not be surprised if he will email me an apology after reading the book. I say this because I know Tom to be sincere. I will quote the main excerpts from his circular notice and personal letter, both of which were emailed to fellow workers, church members, and friends.

### **THESE ARE EXCERPTS FROM THE CIRCULAR LETTER:**

"To my fellow workers, and others in the church who are on my mailing list.

Recently, Elder Bacchiocchi has published another of his controversial, divisive books on another subject that is causing much harm in our churches. It is my purpose to appeal to you to not reward him by helping spread his divisive materials. We will not purchase his book, nor encourage his 'War of division.' As one who takes the best and most uniting views from each side, and one who believes in uniting our people and not dividing them, I appeal to conservatives and celebrationists alike to stop the war of attrition, and to find a middle ground where we can find common ground. . . .

"I have known Sam for 25 years, and am deeply troubled by the direction he has taken in recent years. I have gone directly to him, as well as Andrews University, but to no avail. It is my hope that you will not encourage this type of sensationalism to make money, by fostering extreme views to cater to the right wing extremists in our church. The ditch on the right is just as bad as the ditch on the left. Your [sic] going nowhere, no mater [sic] which one you fall into. Like God told Joshua, 'Don't go to far to the left or the right.' but stay on the kings highway. . . .

May God give you wisdom as you worship him in "Spirit and in truth".  
Elder Tom Hughes" [cnb00870@wvnet.edu](mailto:cnb00870@wvnet.edu)

### **THIS IS THE PERSONAL LETTER THAT WAS ATTACHED TO CIRCULAR LETTER**

"Sam,

1 Cor. 5:18 "Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation."

At a time when the enemy of souls delights in seeing men like you to dump gasoline on the fires of contention in the church, and relishes in the division you are causing, some of us are trying to be ministers of reconciliation. Do you have any sensitivity to the harm and division you cause ? Your unbridled avarice, and pride in the sales you are making is astonishing. You condemn the youth music, and condone the traditional tragedy, and ignore the middle ground where the truth lies. Please forgive my blunt language, but you are not a man who takes hints.

You make comments like tambourines and other percussion instruments were never used in worship. You gross lack of knowledge in the scriptures is appalling considering your education.

Psalm 68: 24,25 "They have seen your procession, O God, the procession of my God, my King, into the sanctuary. The singers went before, the players on instruments followed after; Among them were the maidens playing timbrels."

1 Chron. 25: 6 All these were under the direction of their father for the music in the house of the Lord, with cymbals, stringed instruments, and harps, for the service of the house of God.

Maidens playing timbrels went into the Sanctuary, in the procession. I have sent you many other scriptures on this subject. do you even read your email? After four trips to Israel, I am astonished that your lack even the simplest understanding of Jewish music, or the way it was used in worship. Futile though it is, again I say, be a minister of reconciliation, and not a minister of division and harshness. Reconcile the two groups, by taking a moderate course. . .

“May God open the eyes of those who will not see, and the ears of those who will not hear. I reject both extremes, and choose instead to be a minister of reconciliation, leading worshipers of all ages, to come together in love, and to worship Jesus.

Elder Tom Hughes”

The document continues with a two page list of “Bible Texts on the Subjects of Worshiping God With Applause and Uplifted Hands”

## **BACCHIOCCHI REPLIES**

Both the circular and the personal letter, which were emailed together, attempt to defame my moral integrity and to discredit my research. I will respond only briefly to the attacks on my character, focusing instead on Tom’s contention that clapping and percussion instruments were used in the sanctuary.

**Divisive Ministry?** The accusation that I delight to “dump gasoline on the fires of contention in the church,” motivated by “unbridled avarice, and pride in the sales” of books, is openly contradicted by the fruits of my ministry. Throughout my ministry of the written and spoken word. I have endeavored to be a builder, and not a bulldozer, constructive and not destructive. The result has been that thousands of people in many parts of the world have accepted our message and made a commitment to Christ.

To be entrusted with “the ministry of reconciliation” does not mean that we ought to compromise principles for the sake of unity. Our mandate as spiritual leaders is to help our people to understand and experience more fully the principles revealed in God’s Word. Truth has never been popular. It brought Christ to the Cross. We can expect even today a certain amount of opposition when truth is proclaimed.

Your claim to be a minister of reconciliation, seems to be contradicted by the division you have caused in your own church. Last year when you invited me to your church, your first elder who came to pick me up at the airport, shared with me during the two hours ride how deeply offended many of your members are by the casual style of worship you have introduced. In fact, your first elder told me that several members, including some of his relatives, are no longer coming to church. These facts raise serious questions about the nature of your “ministry of reconciliation.”

**Unbridled Avarice and Pride?** The contention that my ministry is motivated by “unbridled avarice and pride,” is discredited by some plain facts. When my latest book ***The Christian and Rock Music: A Study of Biblical Principles of Music*** came off the press, I gave away about 1000 copies free, as a gift to conference leaders, faculty members of Andrews University, SDA Seminary professors, and ministerial students. Even Tom received a free copy which I mailed to him priority mail. Furthermore I am offering this timely, sizeable book (384 pages) by the case of 26 copies for only \$170.00, postage paid. This translates to \$6.50 per copy, instead of the regular price of \$20.00. Were I victim of “unbridled avarice” I would not distribute this book at such a low price, especially since I invested over \$50,000.00 in this project. Indeed, this was the most

expensive of the 15 books I have published, because I had to pay for the services of six distinguished professional musicians from five different countries.

**Is the New Music Book “Causing Much Harm in our Churches”?** The allegation that *Christian and Rock Music* is a divisive book “causing much harm in our churches,” is discredited by several facts. The Review & Herald asked its Book Committee and someone at the GC to review the book, before purchasing 2000 copies. If our leading publishing house has taken the initiative and responsibility to promote and distribute this book, then it can hardly be harmful and divisive.

The book has been endorsed also by Humberto M. Rasi, the Director of the GC Education Department. He wrote:

**“Samuele:**

Thank you for sending us a copy of the book *The Christian and Rock Music*. I have begun reading it and find it interesting and insightful. You have assembled a qualified group of authors, some of whom I know personally. I share the concerns that led you to publish this book. Congratulations!

Let me suggest how we plan to call this book to the attention of *College and University Dialogue* readers and give it international exposure around the world..” The letter continues outlining the plan for promoting the book worldwide and asks me to submit a brief excerpt from the book on “Dance in the Bible.”

**Warning not to Buy the Book?** The warning not to buy *The Christian and Rock Music* reminds me of the past Catholic policy of placing Protestant books on the INDEX (a list of forbidden books, movies, etc.) and of warning its members not to read or view such material. Such policy never worked and has been abandoned by the Catholic church. There is no need to introduce it now in our Adventist church. The best strategy is to teach people how to think and to examine for themselves the teachings of the Word of God.

**Is Bacchiocchi Grossly Ignorant?** Tom alleges that I am grossly ignorant of Scripture because I state in the music book that “tambourines and other percussion instruments were never used in worship. Your gross lack of knowledge in the scriptures is appalling considering your education.”

Tom is correct. I am ignorant in many areas. But I do hate ignorance and I have a deep desire to learn. This is why for the past 20 years I have been on half-teaching and half-salary, in order to have more time to investigate biblical truths. To find out what the Bible teaches regarding music I spent several months reading an average of 15 hours a day all the biblical data and scholarly studies of the subject.

It is an undisputed fact that tambourines and other percussion instruments were never used in the Temple, synagogue, and early church. This question has been examined by a number of scholars quoted in the book. The two texts cited by Tom (Ps 68:24, 25; 1 Chron 25:6), do not support his contention that “Maidens playing timbrels went into the Sanctuary.” The fact is that women were not allowed in the inner Court of the Temple. They could access only what was known as “The Women’s Court,” an area eastern of the Temple Court, and separated by a wall.

A careful reading of Psalm 68:24-25 in its context, indicates that the psalm celebrates the Lord’s victorious leadership Israel and His procession from the time of the Exodus to the day of the Psalmist. Since the Sanctuary is the place where God’s vindication of His people is revealed, the Lord is figuratively portrayed as leading a procession to His sanctuary. In fact this is the rendering of the NIV: “Your procession has come to view, O God, the procession of my God into the sanctuary.” The maidens participate in this figurative procession celebrating God’s victory over Israel’s enemies. This has nothing with playing tambourines in the actual Temple services.

The second text quoted by Tom is 1 Chron 25:6: “All these were under the direction of their father for the music in the house of the Lord, with cymbals, stringed instruments, and harps, for the service of the house of God.” Presumably Tom assumes that the use of cymbals indicates 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 John Kleinig explains in his dissertation *The Lord's Song: The Basis, Function, and Significance of Choral Music in Chronicles*, “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’ in 1 Chronicles 16:42.”

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.”

In a similar vein, in his book *Rhythm and Tempo*, 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.” The term “Selah,” which occurs in some psalms to mark the end of a stanza, may indicate the place where the cymbals were struck.

**Clapping Hands in the Sanctuary.** To support his contention that the Bible supports worshipping God with applause (clapping hands) in His sanctuary, Tom cites without any comment the following texts: 1 Kings 8:22,38, 54; 2 Kings 11:11-12; 2 Chron 6:12, 13, 29; Nehemiah 8:6-10; Psalm 282; 47:1,2, 5-7; 63:1-4; 66:1-2; 88:9; 98:1, 4, 6, 9; 119:48; 138:1; 141:2; 143:6; Is 55:12; Lamentations 2:19; 3:41; 1 Timothy 2:8; Hebrews 13:15.

We do not need to be detained by this contention, because none of these texts cited refer to worshipping God with applause in His sanctuary. Several of the text speak of “lifting up the hands” toward heaven. Presumably Tom thinks that this means clapping. But it does not. Lifting up hands was the respectful posture for prayer. We fold our hands and they lifted up their hands. This has nothing to do with hand clapping during the worship service.

In my view hand clapping during the worship service, not only lacks biblical sanction, but also gives the impression of being in a place of entertainment where performers are applauded. To applaud a speaker or singer in church, can cause people to forget that they are in church to worship God, and not to praise a performer.

**A Final Clarification.** Tom and other assume that the contributors to *The Christian and Rock Music*, are a bunch of radical who condemn all forms of Contemporary Music, and defend the exclusive use of the traditional hymns, or what Tom calls “the traditional tragedy.” This assumption is wrong. The aim of the 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 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.

**Conclusion.** 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, NIV). 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, as Ellen White puts it, “one pulse of harmony and gladness beats throughout the vast creation.”

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