

## **ENDTIME ISSUES NEWSLETTER No. 174**

**“Shall We Dance?”**

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### **A THANK YOU NOTE**

The responses to the newsletter no. 172 on "Ellen White and the Future of the Seventh-day Adventist Church," surpassed our fondest expectations. The essay was distilled from the new edition of Prof. Graeme Bradford's book *More than a Prophet* that came out few weeks ago

I would like to express my wholehearted appreciation for taking time to read the **lengthy** essay and to email me so many notes of thanks. Many of you told me that *More than a Prophet* was long overdue and will help to restore confidence in the prophetic ministry of Ellen White by helping people gain a balanced picture of her ministry.

If you or your church have not ordered yet *More than a Prophet*, you are still in time to take advantage of the special offer. See the details below or by clicking at this link: <http://www.biblicalperspectives.com/BradfordOffer/offer.htm> Note that with your order you will receive also one FREE DVD with Prof. Bradford's two hours lecture on Ellen White. Thank you for sharing this timely book and the DVD with your church members.

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## GOOD NEWS ON MY LIVER CANCER RECOVERY

In previous newsletters I gave an extensive report of the providential recovery from my colon cancer surgery and liver cancer treatments. You may wish to see the image of the PET/CAT scan taken on May 30, 2007, which shows that over 95% of the cancer cells have been shut down. To see the impressive color images of the three PET/CAT scans that I took, click on this link: <http://www.biblicalpherspectives.com/colon/>

Considering that three months ago I was given only a few months to live because my liver was infested with a 3 pounds tumor, it is hard for me to believe that the Lord has restored my health so speedily. I feel like a new man with a new lease on life. The only thing that I can say is: **Thank you for your prayers! Thank you God for healing my body and restoring my health! Now I want to dedicate the remaining years of my life fully to Your service.**

### **How to Contact the Center for Cancer Care in Goshen, Indiana**

To express my gratitude to God for leading me to the unique Center for Cancer Care, in Goshen, Indiana that offers clinical trials on different forms of cancer, I decided to post the information on how you can contact the Center. Over 150 Adventists have already contacted the Center. The Assistant to the President is Vladimir Radivojevic, who is a gracious and caring Adventist Christian. Feel free to contact him at this address:

**Vladimir Radivojevic MS, MBA**

**Assistant Vice-President**

**The Center for Cancer Care**

**200 High Park Ave.**

**Goshen, IN 46526**

**Phone: 574.535.2970    Fax: 574.535.2535**

**Email: [vradivoj@goshenhealth.com](mailto:vradivoj@goshenhealth.com)**

**Websites: [www.goshenhealth.com](http://www.goshenhealth.com) or [www.cancermidwest.com](http://www.cancermidwest.com)**

If you or someone you know has cancer, feel free to contact Vladimir. He will talk with you personally, gather your information, and

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place you in contact with an oncologist who can examine your situation. What is unique about this Center for Cancer Care, is that they have a dozen of on-going clinical trials on different forms of cancer. This means that they use different procedures not available in most Cancer Centers. I contacted a dozen of major Cancer Centers, but none of them had a clinical trial program for my liver cancer. In my case the combination of chemotherapy and microspheres worked marvels. Chemo alone would hardly have shut down the activity of 95% of the cancer cells in less than three months.

Feel free to contact Vladimir by email or by phone. You will find him to be most helpful. Incidentally, the Center provides free accommodation in a nicely furnished Guest House with several rooms, each with private bathroom facilities. Vladimir will also arrange for someone to pick you up at the South Bend airport, which is about 30 miles away. You will be impressed by the caring and compassionate service the Cancer Center offers.

### **NEWLY RELEASED DVD OF PROF. JON PAULIEN'S LIVE SEMINAR ON *SIMPLY REVELATION***

Prof. Jon Paulien's DVD album on *SIMPLY REVELATION* was released at the end of May. We have been **airmailing** the DVD album to church leaders, pastors, and lay Adventists in different part of the world. Several pastors have already shown some of the lectures to their congregations. They wrote to me saying that viewing the lectures was an enlightening experience for their members.

Last Sabbath afternoon my wife and I viewed the first two lectures of *Simply Revelation* on our TV. Though I had already heard Prof. Paulien's lectures during the taping session, I was spellbound to hear him again offering so many refreshing insights into the most difficult book of the Bible. For me it is a thrilling experience listening to a scholar like Prof. Paulien who knows what he is talking about.

Prof. Paulien is one of the most respected Adventist scholars. Besides serving as the chairman of the New Testament at Andrews University Theological Seminary, he writes and lectures extensively in many parts of the world. He is rightly regarded as a leading Adventist authority on the book of Revelation which he has taught at the Seminary for the

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past 20 years. His doctoral dissertation as well as several of his books deal specifically with the Book of Revelation.

The constant demand for Prof. Paulien's CD album with his publications and articles, led me to discuss with him the possibility of producing a live video recording of a mini Revelation Seminar, which he chose to call *Simply Revelation*, because its aim is to *simply* present the message of Revelation—not to read into Revelation sensational, but senseless views.

The preparation of this video recording took several months. The *Simply Revelation* seminar consists of **four one-hour live video lectures**, which have just been recorded in the studio of Andrews University. An impressive virtual studio provides the background of the lectures. Each lecture is delivered with about 50 powerpoint slides. I have spent long hours looking for suitable pictures to illustrate the text of each slide in order to enhance the visual effect of each lecture.

In the first video lecture Prof. Paulien discusses the proper *method* to interpret Revelation. In the following three lectures he focuses on the essential *messages* of Revelation and their relevance for today. This mini Revelation seminar will offer you and your congregation fresh insights into the Book of Revelation. Be sure to inform your pastor about the newly released *Simply Revelation*, if he is not aware of it.

You will be pleased to know that we have placed on a separate file all the powerpoint slides and text used for the live video presentations. Each slide has the script of the live lecture. This means that if you are a pastor or a lay members who want to use Prof. Paulien's *Simply Revelation Seminar*, you can pick and choose the powerpoint slides that you like.

The file with the powerpoint slides is placed on Prof. Paulien's CD album containing all his publications and articles. The reason is that there was no memory left on the DVD disks. In spite of my pleas, Prof. Paulien was so full of the subject that he used the full 60 minutes for each of his four lecture, leaving no space for the slides' file.

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This has been a very expensive project, both in time and money. The regular price of the DVD album is \$100.00, but you can order it now until June 30, at the **introductory price of only \$50.00**. The price includes the **airmailing** expenses to any overseas destination.

If you have not ordered before the CD Album with Prof. Paulien's publications, we will be glad to add it to your DVD order for only \$20.00, instead of the regular price of \$60.00. This means that you can order both the DVD album with Prof. Paulien's four live video lectures on Revelation and his CD album with all his publications and powerpoint slides of *Simply Revelation*, for **only \$70.00**, instead of the regular price of \$160.00.

As an additional incentive, I am offering you together with Prof. Paulien's DVD/CD albums, also my own popular DVD album on *The Mark and Number of the Beast*, for an **additional \$10.00, instead of the regular price of \$100.00**. This means that you can order the DVD and CD albums by Prof. Paulien, together with my DVD album on *The Mark and Number of the Beast*, for only \$80.00, instead of the regular price of \$260.00.

This research on *The Mark and Number of the Beast*, was commissioned by Prof. Paulien himself. He asked me to trace historically the origin and use of the Pope's title *Vicarius Filii Dei* and of the number 666. I spent six months conducting this investigation which was professionally taped at the Andrews University Towers Auditorium. I use 200 powerpoint slides to deliver this informative two hours lecture which is warmly received by Adventist church leaders and pastors in many parts of the world. For a detailed description of this DVD album click: -----  
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### **SPECIAL OFFER ON PAULIEN/BACCHIOCCHI'S ALBUMS**

- **ONE DVD Album** of Prof. Paulien's four video lectures on *Simply Revelation* at the introductory price of \$50.00, instead of \$100.00. The price includes the **airmailing** expenses to any overseas destination.

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• **ONE DVD Album of *Simply Revelation* and ONE CD Album with Prof. Paulien’s publications for only \$70.00**, instead of the regular price of \$160.00. The price includes the **airmailing** expenses to any overseas destination.

• **ONE DVD Album of *Simply Revelation*, ONE CD Album with Prof. Paulien’s publications, and ONE DVD with Bacchiocchi’s two hours video lecture on *The Mark and Number of the Beast* for only \$80.00**, instead of the regular price of \$260.00. The price includes the **airmailing** expenses to any overseas destination.

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#### **EDITORIAL NOTE**

Several subscribers have asked me what are my thoughts on social dancing for entertainment and on sacred dancing for worship. Apparently these questions are motivated by some forms of dancing that are creeping in some Adventist communities.

Since I have addressed these questions in our symposium *The Christian and Rock Music: A Study of Biblical Principles of Music*, I decided to post a brief excerpt from the book where I deal with “Dance in the Bible.”

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The book is written in a popular style by seven scholars of six different nationalities. With the exception of myself, the rest of the contributors are trained musicians with academic music degrees, and are passionately involved in enriching the worship experience of their congregations.

*The Christian and Rock Music* has been the most expensive publishing project that I have ever undertaken, since I paid copyright royalties to each contributor. The aim of the book is to clarify how the music, words, and the manner of singing should conform to the Biblical principles of worship music.

The prevailing assumption is that the Bible has little to say about secular and sacred music. Some argue that the choice of music for worship is dictated by culture, not Scripture. To my surprise I found that the Bible has far more to say about music that I had anticipated. During the six months I spent researching this subject, I found that the Bible clearly differentiates between social music used for entertainment and the sacred music worthy of the worship of God. Music and instruments associated with social entertainment were never allowed in the Temple, synagogue, or early church. The same principle should be applicable to church worship today.

At the end of this Bible study you will find the information on how to order *The Christian and Rock Music: A Study of Biblical Principles of Music*. The book has been favorably reviewed by numerous church leaders and has been adopted by Adventist and non-Adventist music teachers. Your personal effort to promote this timely book among your church members is greatly appreciated.

**“SHALL WE DANCE?”**

**Samuele Bacchiocchi, Ph.D.,**

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**Andrews University**

Should Christians today accept dancing as a legitimate form of social entertainment and/or as a component of divine worship? Historically, the answer of conservative evangelical churches has been “No!” The reason has been the belief that the Bible does not sanction the modern type of romantic dancing done by couples, nor does it ever mention

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dancing in the context of the worship service. In recent years, however, the question has been reexamined, especially by some youth leaders who claim to have found biblical support for dancing.

### A New Trend

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 Seventh-day 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 is endorsed by 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 and differ from the historic Adventist position on dancing.

The superficiality of the study is reflected, for example, in the chapter entitled “Dancing with a User-Friendly Concordance,” which consists primarily of a listing of twenty-seven Bible references to dancing, without any discussion of the texts. The author assumes that the texts are

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self-explanatory and supportive of dancing during the worship service. 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?”<sup>1</sup> Surprisingly the author ignores that no dancing was ever allowed in the religious services of the Temple, synagogue, or early church.

### **Is Dance a Component of Divine Worship?**

The symposium *Shall we Dance?* derives five principles from an examination of the biblical view of dancing. The first one is stated as follows: “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).”<sup>2</sup>

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.”<sup>3</sup>

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.”<sup>4</sup> The implication of this interpretation is self-evident. If dancing is a component of divine worship in the Bible, then it must be accepted also as a legitimate form of social entertainment. After all what is done in the church served as a model for the Christian life in general.

### **Four 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

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the position that in the Bible “dance is a component of divine worship” and consequently an accepted form of social entertainment outside the church, by submitting four major lines of evidences which discredit this position.

(1) Scripture and history indicate that dancing was never part of divine worship in the Temple, synagogue, and early church.

(2) Of the twenty-eight references to dance or dancing in the Old Testament, only four refer without dispute to religious dancing (Ps 149:3; 150:4; 2 Sam 6:14-16), but none of these relate to worship in God’s House.

(3) Social dancing in Bible times was done mostly in conjunction with the celebration of religious events, especially the annual festivals. The dance was performed outside the Temple by women, children, or men, as separate groups, and not as male/female couples.

(4) The women, who did most of the dancing, were excluded from the music ministry of the Temple, synagogue, and early church, apparently because their style of music was associated with dancing and entertainment.

### **No Dance in the Worship Service**

In the Bible there is no trace of dancing by men or women in the worship services of the Temple, the synagogue, or the early church. This absence can hardly be attributed to negligence because clear instructions are 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 (2 Chron 5:13; 1 Chron 16:42). Percussion instruments like drums and tambourines, which were commonly used for making dance music, were clearly omitted. What was true for the Temple, later became true for true the synagogue and the early church. No dancing or entertainment music was ever allowed in God’s House.

After his extensive analysis of “Dance in the Bible,” Garen Wolf reaches this conclusion: “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 [Hebrew words translated as “dance”]

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are used in the Bible, 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.”<sup>5</sup>

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 for the ministry of music at the Temple.

After all, David is the founder of the music ministry at the Temple. He gave clear instruction to the 4,000 Levite musicians regarding when to sing and what instruments to use to accompany their choir (1 Chron 23:25-31). 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 social 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 religious 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, children or men, each of them performing as a separate groups.

### **“Praise Him with Dance”**

There are four explicit references in the Bible to “religious” dancing (Ps 149:3; 150:4; 2 Sam 6:14-16). Two of them consists of an invitation to praise the Lord “with dancing” (Ps 149:3;150:4) and two describe David’s dance before the ark ( 2 Sam 6:14-16). For many people these texts provide the strongest biblical support for religious dancing in the church and social dancing outside the church. In view of the importance attached to these texts, we take a closer look at them, by examining first the invitation to praise the Lord “with dancing” (Ps 149:3;150:4), and then the episode of David’s dancing before the ark.

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It is important to note first of all that the invitation to praise the Lord with “dancing” is based on a disputed translation of the Hebrew term *machowl* which is translated as “dancing” in Psalm 149:3 and as “dance” in Psalm 150:4. Some scholars believe that *machowl* is derived from *chowl*, which means “to make an opening” — 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]. Similarly Psalm 150:4 reads: “Praise him with the timbrel and dance” [or “pipe,” KJV margin].

The marginal reading of the KJV is supported by the context of both Psalm 149:3 and 150:4, where the term *machowl* 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 *machowl* 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

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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 regulations which David himself gave regarding the use of instruments in God’s House. The latter will be considered shortly.

### David Dancing Before the Lord

The most important example of religious dancing in the Bible is undoubtedly 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. The example of David 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, a 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.”<sup>6</sup> 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 “was girded 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.”<sup>7</sup>

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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 Sam13:13). 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.

### **A Look at David’s Behavior**

More problematic is David’s manner of dancing. Ellen White says that David danced “in reverent joy before God.”<sup>8</sup> Undoubtedly this must have been true part of the time. But it would appear that during the course of the procession, 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 make himself even “more contemptible” (1 Sam 6:22). Such a response hardly reveals a mature aspect of David’s character.

Perhaps David was not troubled by his uncovering during the dance because that 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.<sup>9</sup> These dances were done outside the Temple, in what was known as the “Women’s Court.” There is no mention, however, of the priests uncovering themselves during the show. David’s act of “uncovering himself” during his ecstatic dance to celebrate the return of the ark to Jerusalem, must be seen as a deplorable incident which is hardly compatible with his call to “worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness” in His sanctuary (1 Chron 16:29; Ps 29:2).

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It is important to make a distinction between the descriptive and prescriptive elements of Bible stories. Not all what worthy Bible characters did is to be imitated. For example, we are told that when “David perceived that the Lord had established him king over Israel, and that he had exalted his kingdom for the sake of his people Israel,” (2 Sam 5:12), he “took more concubines and wives from Jerusalem” (2 Sam 5:13). Are we to follow David’s example by taking more “concubines and wives” when we perceive that the Lord has blessed our endeavors? Obviously not! We simply recognize that even great people like David, sometimes acted foolishly.

### **No Dancing Music or Instruments in the Divine Service**

Any probative value of the story of David dancing during the procession that brought the ark to Jerusalem, must be evaluated in the context of music ministry in the Temple, which David himself established. If David believed that dancing should be a component of divine worship, he would have instructed the Levitical choir on how and when to dance during the Temple service. After all, it was David who instituted the times, place, and words for the performance of the Levitical choir. He also “made” the musical instruments to be used for their ministry (1 Chron 23:5; 2 Chron 7:6), which were called “the instruments of David” (2 Chron 29:26-27).

It is noteworthy that David never instructed the Levites to accompany the Temple’s choir with the percussion instruments associated with dancing such as timbrel, tambourines, or, drums. Instead, he established that the Levitical choir was to be accompanied by the lyres and the harps. These 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.”<sup>10</sup> Great care was taken to ensure

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that the vocal praise of the Levitical choir would not be overshadowed by the sound of the instruments.

Percussion instruments were never allowed in the religious services of the Temple, not because their sound was evil per se, but because such instruments were commonly used to produce entertainment music which was inappropriate for worship in God's House. By prohibiting instruments associated with the dancing type of music, 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). The cymbals were used to mark the transition between stanzas, and not to accompany the singing.

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.

### **Dancing in Pagan Worship**

There are other references to religious dancing in the Bible, which need not detain us, because they have to do with the apostasy of God's people. For example, 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 women was to invite Israelite men "to the sacrifice of their gods" (Num 25:2), which normally entailed dancing.

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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.”<sup>11</sup>

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).

### **Social Dancing**

Another important consideration which discredits the attempt to justify biblically dancing as a component of divine worship and as a form of social entertainment, is the nature of dancing in the Bible. A survey of the twenty-eight references to dance in the Bible, indicate that dance was essentially a social celebration of special events, such as a military victory, a religious festival, or a family reunion. The dances were either processional, encircling, or ecstatic. They were done mostly by women and children.

There are no biblical indications 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.”<sup>12</sup>

The dances mentioned in the Bible were social events with religious overtones, because they often took place within the context of religious events, such as the celebration of annual festivals. They could be compared to the annual carnival celebrations that take place today in many Catholic countries, with colorful dancing. No Catholic would consider such dances as part of the worship services.

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Men and women danced in Bible times, 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.

Those who appeal to the biblical references to dance to justify modern romantic dancing inside or outside the church, ignore the fundamental difference between the two. Few people would be interested today to participate in the folk dance mentioned in the Bible, simply because 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 a rhythmic cadence.

In Ethiopia, where numerous Jewish customs have survived, including Sabbathkeeping, I witnessed "The Dance Around the Ark" by Coptic priests. Frankly, I could not understand why they called it "dance," since it was merely a procession by the priests who marched in a circular fashion around the ark 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. Moreover, 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, we shall now see that women appear to have been excluded from the music ministry of the Temple, synagogue and early church, because their music was associated with dancing and entertainment.

### **Women and Music in the Bible**

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."<sup>13</sup> Why were women excluded first from the music ministry of the Temple, and

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later from that of the synagogue and early church? This is surprising because after all women were the main music makers of 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 [singing of the Scripture], 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."<sup>14</sup>

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 [women] music was mostly of a different species than that of the male Levite musicians who performed in the Temple."<sup>15</sup> The tabret or timbrel was 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).

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## Social 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 entertainment type of 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. KJV; or as rendered in the margin, 'It shall be unto Tyre as the song of an harlot')."<sup>16</sup>

It is noteworthy that female musicians were extensively used in pagan religious services.<sup>17</sup> 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."<sup>18</sup>

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.

## Conclusion

There are no indication in the Bible or history that dance was ever a component of divine worship in the Temple, synagogue, or early church. Furthermore, there is no support in the Bible for the kind of romantic or sensual dancing popular today. Nothing in the Bible indicates that men and women ever danced romantically together as couples. Dancing

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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 God's House, apparently because their entertainment type of music was deemed unsuitable for the worship service.

The lesson that the church today 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.

At a time when the distinction between sacred and secular music is blurred, and many are promoting modified versions of secular dancing music for church use, we need to remember that the Bible calls us to "worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness" (1 Chron 16:29; cf. Ps 29:2; 96:9).

## ENDNOTES

1. Steve Case, "Dancing with a User-Friendly Concordance," in *Shall We Dance? Rediscovering Christ-Centered Standards*, ed. Steve Case (Riverside, CA, 1992), p. 101.

2. Bill Knott, "Shall We Dance?" in *Shall We Dance? Rediscovering Christ-Centered Standards*, ed. Steve Case (Riverside, CA, 1992), p. 69.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid., p. 75.

5. Garen L. Wolf, *Music of the Bible in Christian Perspective* (Salem, OH, 1996), p. 153.

6. Timothy Gillespie, "Dancing to the Lord," in *Shall We Dance? Rediscovering Christ-Centered Standards*, Steve Case, ed. (Riverside, CA, 1992), p. 94.

7. Ellen G. White, *The Story of Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, CA, 1958). p. 707.

8. Ibid.

9. See article on "Dance," *The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia* (New York, 1942), vol. 3., p. 456.
10. Garen L. Wolf (note 5), p. 287.
11. Ellen G. White (note 7), p. 454. Emphasis added.
12. H. M. Wolf, "Dancing," *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, ed. Merrill C. Tenney (Grand Rapids, MI, 1976), vol. 2, p. 12.
13. Curt Sachs, *The Rise of Music in the Ancient World* (New York, 1943), p. 90.
14. Cited by Curt Sachs (note 13), p. 91.
15. Garen L. Wolf (note 5), p. 144.
16. Ibid.
17. For discussion and illustrations from pagan antiquity regarding the employment of female musicians in the social and religious life, see Johannes Quasten, "The Liturgical Singing of Women in Christian Antiquity," *Catholic Historical Review* (1941), pp. 149-151.
18. William Sheppard Smith, *Musical Aspects of the New Testament* (Amsterdam, 1962), p. 17. See also Eric Werner, *The Sacred Bridge* (Hoboken, NJ, 1984), pp. 323-324; A. Z. Idelsohn, *Jewish Music in its Historical Development* (New York, 1967), p. 18; Philo, *De Vita Contemplativa* 7; Babylonian Talmud *Berakot* 24a.

### **SPECIAL OFFER ON THE CHRISTIAN AND ROCK MUSIC: A STUDY ON BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES OF MUSIC**

The Bible study you have just read "Shall We Dance?" is excerpted from the symposium *The Christian and Rock Music: A Study on Biblical Principles of Music* (384 pages). Most likely this short essay has wetted your appetite to read this timely book addressing one of the most divisive issues in Adventist and non-Adventist churches.

In many churches today "praise bands" have replaced the choir, powerpoint slides have replaced the hymn books, synthesizers have replaced organs, and drums and guitars have taken their place in the repertoire of church music instruments.

Some people see these changes as a divine blessing, others as a satanic curse. There is no neutrality on this issue. People are getting hot under the collar as they defend their particular position. Often the arguments generate more heat than light, reflecting personal taste or culture rather than a grasp of the biblical principles of music.

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In *The Christian and Rock Music* (384 pages), seven scholars of six different nationalities take a calm, balanced, and biblical look at the use of popular music for worship and evangelism. With the exception of myself, all the contributors are trained musicians with academic degrees, passionately involved in enriching the worship experience of their congregations through their music.

This book has two major objectives. The first is to help people understand the true nature of rock music and what are some of the problems in transforming it into a medium for Christian worship and evangelism. The second is to define those biblical principles that should guide people in making good musical choices. As a Bible scholar (not a musician) I focused my investigation on the second objective.

The aim of this symposium is not to dismiss all contemporary music as “rock”, because there are contemporary songs with music and words suitable for divine worship. Rather, the aim is to clarify how the music, words, and the manner of singing should conform to the Biblical principle of worship music.

Contrary to prevailing misconceptions, the Bible clearly differentiates between the secular music used for social entertainment and the sacred music worthy of the worship of God. Music and instruments associated with social entertainment were not allowed in the Temple, synagogue, or early church.

*The Christian and Rock Music* is a most timely book for today. It clearly delineates the issues and provide biblical answers to the problems which have caused so many Christians to stumble. For concerned Christians, this book may well be a musical survival kit in our compromising society.

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The newsletter no. 172 on “Ellen White and the Future of the Adventist Church,” was distilled from Prof. Graeme Bradford’s book *More than a Prophet*. The new edition with an additional 20 pages was released few weeks ago and many churches have ordered the book by the case of 30 copies for only \$150.00, that is, \$5.00 per copy. This book is urgently needed to restore confidence in the prophetic ministry of Ellen White by telling the truth about her divine revelations and her human limitations.

The most gratifying responses have come from former Adventist. One lady wrote: “After reading *More than a Prophet*, I am seriously reconsidering returning to the Adventist church.” It is unfortunate that

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many Adventists have left the church, because they felt that they had been deceived about Ellen White. They could not reconcile in their mind that prophets do make mistakes. But Prof. Bradford compellingly shows that the mistakes found in the Bible or in the writings of Ellen White, do not negate the divine inspiration of their messages.

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## **UPCOMING SEMINARS FOR THE MONTHS OF JULY, AUGUST, AND SEPTEMBER**

Gradually I am rescheduling some of the invitations I had to cancel because of the colon cancer surgery and liver treatments. Here is a list of the upcoming weekend seminars for the months of July, August, and September.

### **JUNE 29-30: ENGLAND - CHELMSFORD SDA CHURCH**

Location: 43 Roman Road, Chelmsford, Essex CM2 OHA.

For directions and information call Elder Cliff Hilton at 01376 334 848

### **JULY 6-7: ENGLAND - TOTTENHAM W GREEN SDA CHURCH**

Location: 253-255 West Green Road, Tottenham, London N15 SED

For directions and information call Elder Orville Baxter at 01992 621 599

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**JULY 21: ITALY: CONEGLIANO SDA CHURCH**

Location: Via Vittorio Veneto 24, Conegliano. 30 miles from Venice. This is my wife's home church where I have preached on numerous occasions. The sanctuary accommodates about 100 persons and it is always packed. For directions and information call Pastor Gianfranco Irrera at 0422 460660 or 338 2676792

**JULY 28: ITALY: FLORENCE SDA CHURCH**

Location: Via Del Pergolino 12, Florence, Italy. The church is located on the campus of our Italian Adventist Academy that I attended from 1952 to 1956. It will be for me an emotional homecoming to my alma mater which I have not seen for over 30 years. The church where I will preach on Saturday June 28, was built recently and has an attendance of 400 to 500 members. I look forward to a blessed experience of worship and fellowship. For directions and information, call Pastor Davide Mozzato at 055 4378544

**AUGUST 17-18: WHITE MEMORIAL SDA CHURCH**

Location: 401 North State Street, Los Angeles, CA 90033. This is one of the most beautiful Adventist churches that was ever built. It can seat over 2000 people. When in 1962 Loma Linda University decided to relocate its students and faculty to a consolidated campus in Loma Linda, the membership gradually declined from over 2000 to the current 350.

I have reasons to believe that the new senior Pastor Benjamin Del Pozo, D. Min., will build up the attendance. He is a creative thinker and a good communicator. He speaks with his hands like an Italian. (Please laugh!) He invited me twice at the Temple City SDA Church where he has served for several years, doubling the attendance. For directions and information call Pastor Benjamin Del Pozo at (626) 292-1305 or 323-440-1200.

**AUGUST 31 – SEPT. 1: DAYTONA BEACH SDA CHURCH**

Location: 401 North Williamson Blvd, Daytona Beach, FL 32114. For directions and information call Pastor William Barrett at (386) 258-1073.

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**SEPTEMBER 7-8: FRIENDS OF THE SABBATH CONFERENCE**

Location: The Lecture Hall, Knoxville Convention Center, 701 Henley Street, Knoxville, TN 37920. This Sabbath Conference is organized by English Prof. Bruce Horne, Ph. D., a leader of the Seventh-day Christian Assembly in Knoxville with about 120 members. Several non-SDA sabbatarian churches and groups from neighboring states are participating at this Sabbath Conference.

Adventists living in the Knoxville area are encouraged to attend this Sabbath Conference. I will be the keynote speaker on Friday evening and Saturday. We are planning also for a panel discussion conducted by church leaders of various sabbatarian churches. This will be a unique opportunity to become acquainted with other sabbatarians. For directions and information call Prof. Bruce Horne at (865) 671-4342 or (423) 914-5475.

**SEPTEMBER 15: WORLD'S WOMAN'S CHRISTIAN TEMPERANCE UNION CONFERENCE**

Location: Adam's Mark Hotel, 2544 Executive Drive, Indianapolis, IN 46241. The hotel phone number is: (317) 248-2481. This is the international World's Woman's Christian Temperance Union that brings together WWCTU delegates of different denominations from all over the world.

Ellen White was very active in this organization and was often featured as the keynote speaker. Our Adventist church had an active *Temperance* program in the past. Today we hear little from our pulpit about *Temperance*, partly because alcohol and drugs are seen more as a medical than a moral issue.

I have been invited to deliver the keynote address on Saturday, September 15, 2007 at 10: 30 a. m. Prior to my lecture, there will be a church service from 9:00 to 10:00 a. m. My powerpoint lecture is entitled "The Christian and Alcoholic Beverages." I will be sharing the highlights of my book *Wine in the Bible*, dealing with the biblical imperative of total abstinence. If you live in the Indianapolis area, I would urge you to attend the meetings, especially on Saturday. For directions and more detail information, contact Sarah R. Ward, WWCTU President, at (765) 345-2306

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**SEPTEMBER 21-22: HAWAII SAMOA-TOKELAU CHURCH**

Location: 1128 Banyan Street, Honolulu, Hawaii 96817.

For directions and information call Pastor Michael Asuega at (808) 261-7321 or (808) 206 5892.

**SEPTEMBER 28-29: HONOLULU CENTRAL SDA CHURCH**

Location: 2313 Nuuanu Avenue, Honolulu, Hawaii 96817. This will be the Hawaii Conference Convocation for all the churches in Oahu.

For directions and information, call the Hawaii Conference Office at (808) 595-7591.

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