

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

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

**Chapter 1
AN OVERVIEW OF
THE MUSIC DEBATE**

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

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

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

A few weeks later I had some similar experiences in Adventist churches in North America. When I shared these experiences with the 7,000-plus subscribers to my “Endtime Issues Newsletter,” I received hundreds of email messages from different parts of the world. They all expressed the same concern about rock bands playing inappropriate music in their churches, schools, or youth rallies. Incidentally, to receive the free biweekly newsletter, simply email me your request at: <sbacchiocchi@qtm.net>

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

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

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

During the past ten years I have preached in many Adventist churches where small groups lead out in the “Praise Service,” using

hymns and contemporary songs, which are usually projected on a screen. Some of the songs are trivial and shallow in both tunes and words, but the same is true of some hymns. I can bear a few trivial choruses that repeat the same word ad nauseam, as long as they are not the only repertoire of the church service.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Part 1
DEFINING THE TERMS

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

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

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

To illustrate my broader definition of “rock music,” let me share an experience. I was invited to speak at a church where a rock band of four young men led out in the singing. Something surprising happened when they led out in the singing of “Amazing Grace.” It was not long before the whole congregation was in a swinging mood. Some even stepped out of the

pews and started dancing on the aisles. It was evident that the way the band was playing the hymn with the typical rock beat had caused the people to forget the words of the hymn, which are not an invitation to dance but to reflect on the amazing grace of God “that saved a wretch like me.”

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

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

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

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

“Christian” rock is becoming more and more the only music to be found in Christian bookstores. A humorous experience by my former music professor Bjorn Keyn illustrates this point. In an essay Keyn prepared for this symposium, (but which I was unable to use because of duplication with the content of other chapters) he wrote: “Some years ago

I visited one of the largest Christian bookstores in California hoping to find a special recording of Handel's oratorio, 'The Messiah.' This store was well-known for its large stock of religious records. When I asked for the record, the lady behind the counter answered me politely but somewhat condescendingly that they didn't carry 'that kind of music,' because, as she said, 'We carry only Christian music here' (sic!). As I examined the enormous supply of recordings I found only rhythmically based music (beat music), like rock, gospel, blues, jazz, country, and related forms. This is what today is called 'Contemporary Christian Music' or 'Christian Rock.'"⁴

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

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

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

muscles, and hormone productions. This fact has been established by numerous scientific studies reported in both Chapters 5 and 9.

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

Summing up, the distinction between secular rock music and much of CCM is in most cases relative, because the music is the same, only the words are different. And the words do not neutralize the harmful effects of rock music. For this reason, the phrase “rock music” is used in this book in its broader meaning, inclusive of all versions of rock, whether secular or religious. Sometimes the phrase “pop music” is used with the same inclusive meaning. When the term “Christian” is used to qualify rock, usually it is placed between quotations marks, simply because in our view to speak of “Christian rock” is an oxymoron, that is, a contradiction of terms.

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

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

It is significant that the seven contributors (including this writer) represent six different nationalities. Prof. Calvin M. Johansson is an American, Musician Brian Neumann is South African, Dr. Eurydice V.

Osterman is Afro-American, Musician Güenter Preuss is German, Dr. Wolfgang H. M. Stefani is Australian, Lecturer Tore Sognefest is Norwegian, and I, the writer, am an Italian. Our different cultural and national backgrounds bring to this symposium a broader perspective.

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

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

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

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

As one would expect with seven contributors, the style of the book is not uniform. You will soon discover that some chapters are easier to read than others. To facilitate the reading, I took the liberty as editor to divide each chapter into major parts and to subdivide the text under appropriate headings. This gives some consistency to the layout of the book. Unless otherwise specified, all Bible texts are quoted from the Revised Standard Version, copyright 1946 and 1952.

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

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

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

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

Part 2

AN OVERVIEW OF THE ISSUES

Out of consideration toward those who appreciate an overview of the major controversial issues examined in this symposium, I briefly list

the eight major issues, together with a summary of the response provided by each contributor in their respective chapters. Hopefully, this overview will wet the appetite for reading the rest of the book.

(1) The Morality of Music

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

Similar statements could be multiplied as they abound in evangelical literature.¹¹ A couple of samples from Adventist literature suffice to show that this view is becoming popular in Adventist circles. In an article “Contemporary Music Is *Christian Music*,” which appeared in *Ministry* (September 1996), Michael Tomlinson states: “I believe music itself is without moral qualities, either for good or evil. The question has more to do with what the music is employed to say or to do than with the music per se”¹² He goes so far as to say: “Do some church leaders denounce Christian ‘rock’ because they do not understand it or perhaps because they are blinded by the generational prejudice or personal preference?”¹³ Tomlinson’s view is clear. Music is morally neutral. Those church leaders who denounce “Christian” rock are either ignorant about it or prejudiced against it. Is this true? We shall soon find out.

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

The Response. The major response to the alleged moral neutrality of music is found in Chapter 13, “Music and Morality,” authored by Wolfgang H. M. Stefani, an Australian musician, scholar, pastor, who has

earned graduate degrees in music, and a Ph. D. in Religious Education at Andrews University in 1993. His dissertation was on “The Concept of God and Sacred Music Style.” He taught music for nine years at the undergraduate and graduate level, including at the Andrews University SDA Theological Seminary.

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

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

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

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

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

The third argument is based on the scientific research of the past several decades which has shown that music “dictates feelings.” “For example, incorporating music on a film soundtrack takes for granted that

music impacts all people similarly. Indeed, if this were not the case a music soundtrack would be pointless.”¹⁷ “A body of research now exists that demonstrates that music does communicate meaningfully in a way that can and ought to be evaluated for appropriateness, and even rightness or wrongness in a given context.”¹⁸

The fourth argument is philosophical and yet very practically stated: “What rules the heart, forms the art.”¹⁹ Stefani shows with compelling logic that musical styles are not neutral, but value-laden. “They are veritable embodiment of beliefs.”²⁰ In his dissertation he traces with compelling clarity the correlation between the evolution in the understanding of God and the development of new musical styles during the course of Christian history..

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(2) Rock Music Is Not Immoral

Closely related to the alleged moral neutrality of music is the popular assumption that the various types of rock music are just another musical genre that people may like or dislike, depending on their musical preferences or culture. Thus, nothing is immoral with rock music per se. It is only its improper use that is morally wrong. By changing its lyrics, Christians can legitimately use rock music to worship God and proclaim the Gospel.

This view, popular among many evangelical churches, is gaining credence in the Adventist church as well. For example, Steve Case, a veteran Adventist youth pastor and president of Piece of the Pie Ministries for youth, often answers questions about "Christian rock" in *Insight*, the official Adventist magazine for teenagers. To the question: "Is there really any such thing as 'Christian rock'? Would God listen to it or approve it?" Case replies: "I used to answer this question by saying that Christian rock

is the devil's attempt to sneak into the church. . . . Now I answer questions on 'Christian rock' by asking, What is your bias about 'Christian rock'? Do you already think it's OK or not OK?"²¹

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

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

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

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

It would appear to me that part of the problem of the increasing number of Adventist youth becoming addicted to various forms of rock music is the lack of strong leadership in the home, church, and school. A

contributing factor is a lack of understanding of the intrinsic nature of rock music. Unfortunately, most people fail to realize that there is more to rock music that meets the eye or ear. I must confess that I myself was ignorant on this matter until I became involved in this research. Truly I can say that this research has been an eye-opening experience for me and I can only hope that the results of our labors will benefit many people.

The many months of painstaking investigation into the philosophical, ethical, social, and religious aspects of rock have convinced me that this music is a revolutionary “religious” countercultural and anti-Christian movement which uses its rhythm, melodies, and lyrics to promote, among other things, a pantheistic/hedonistic worldview, sexual perversion, civil disobedience, violence, satanism, occultism, homosexuality, masochism, and an open rejection of the Christian faith and values.

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

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

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

In Chapter 5 on “The Rock Rhythm and a Christian Response,” I discovered that rock music differs from all other forms of music because of its driving, loud, relentless beat. Scientific studies have shown that the rock beat can alter the mind and cause several physical reactions, including

sexual arousal. The latter are discussed more fully in Chapter 8 on “The Effects of Rock Music,” authored by Tore Sognefest, A Norwegian musician and author of the book *The Power of Music*.

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

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

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

(3) Rock Music and Evangelism

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

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

“Since the 1950s, denominational divisions have steadily become less important in American church life. We have the baby-boom generation to thank for much of this. But at bottom we are all still sectarians; we still prefer to congregate with the like-minded. Our new

sectarianism is a sectarianism of worship style. The new sectarian creeds are the dogmas of music.”²⁷

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Preuss commends the search for effective ways to reach secular-minded people with the Gospel, but questions the legitimacy of using rock music, partly because he has witnessed the impact of rock music on Adventist youth in Germany. He wrote: “Rock music in evangelism works

on imagination, on thought associations, as any music. It misrepresents the claims of the Gospel by encouraging worldly values. It makes people believe that they are all right, when in reality they desperately need a radical change in their lives—a conversion experience.”³³

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

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

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

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

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

(4) Rock Music and Black Heritage

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

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

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

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

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

(5) Rock Music and the Bible

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

In his book *The Contemporary Christian Music Debate*, Steve Miller writes: “The most striking observation of biblical worship is its wealth of variety and few restrictions on form.”³⁹ He continues listing the variety of instruments, volumes and sounds, worshippers, manner, locations, occasions, times of the day, postures, and moods mentioned in the Bible. He concludes his survey saying: “Several implications concerning the present controversy can be noted. First, our creative Lord has allowed His creatures to exercise great creativity in worship. And God’s Word does not even restrict us to the array of forms listed in the Bible.”⁴⁰ Surprisingly, Miller is unaware that the Bible is very restrictive of the music and instruments to be used for divine worship.

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

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

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

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

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

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

A second important point ignored by those who believe that the Bible authorizes them to play any instrument and music in church is the biblical distinction between secular music produced for entertainment and sacred music performed in God's House. As shown in Chapters 6 and 7, the music and instruments used to praise the Lord outside the Temple during festival celebrations were different from the music played inside the Temple. Instruments like timbrels, flutes, pipes, and dulcimers could not be used in the Temple because of their association with secular entertainment. The same principle was respected also in the synagogue and early church, where no instruments of any kind were allowed.

Had the instruments and the music associated with social (religious) entertainment been used in God's House, the Israelites would have been tempted to turn their place of worship into a place of entertainment, as sometimes happens in some churches today. To prevent this thing from happening, instruments and music associated with entertainment were

excluded from the Temple, synagogue, and early church. It is the ignorance of these facts that leads people to believe that the Bible sanctions the use of rock music for worship and evangelism. The lesson of Scripture and history is evident. Music, like rock, which is associated with secular entertainment is out of place in God's House in which we gather to worship and not to be entertained.

(6) The Role of Luther

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

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

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

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

First, of the thirty-seven chorales composed by Luther, only *one* tune came directly from a secular folk song. Fifteen were composed by Luther himself, thirteen came from Latin hymns or service music, two had originally been religious pilgrims' songs, four were derived from German

religious folk songs, and two are of unknown origin.⁴⁶ What most people ignore is that even the one tune borrowed from a folk song, which “appeared in Luther’s hymnal of 1535, was later replaced by another melody in the 1539 song book. Historians believe that Luther discarded it because people associated it with its previous secular text.”⁴⁷

Second, Luther changed the melodic and rhythmic structure of the tunes he borrowed from secular sources in order to eliminate any possible worldly influence. In his scholarly book, *Martin Luther, His Music, His Message*, Robert Harrell explains: “The most effective way of [negating] worldly influence would be to ‘de-rhythm’ the music. By avoiding dance tunes and ‘de-rhythming’ other songs, Luther achieved a chorale with a marked rhythm, but without the devices that would remind the people of the secular world. So successful was the work done by Luther and other Lutheran musicians that scholars were often unable to detect the secular origins of chorales. The other way in which Luther sought to remove secular associations from the mind of the congregation was through the use of Scripture and scriptural allusions in the texts. By filling his chorales with the written Word, Luther sought to direct the thoughts of his people toward the Living Word.”⁴⁸

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

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

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

(7) Church Music and Adventist Theology

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

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

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

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

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

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

(8) Rock Music and the Endtime Deception

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

In their thought-provoking book, *Music in the Balance*, Frank Garlock and Kurt Woetzel acknowledge that “A large segment of the Christian community has enthusiastically embraced this music of the world, the associated antics, and the philosophy. All three have been implanted into the life of the church. Not only have many Christians accepted the music as suitable for praise and worship, but an atmosphere pervades the contemporary Christian concerts not unlike the early concerts

of the Elvis era. Believers have made idols of their own rock and roll singers and continue to worship at their feet with devotion and their pocket books.”⁵⁵

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

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

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

ENDNOTES

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2. David W. Gould, *Contemporary Christian Music Under the Spotlight* (Oak Harbor, WA, 1998), p. 16.
3. Günter Press (note 1), p. 305.
4. Bjorn Keyn, "A Look at Contemporary Christian Music," private essay prepared for this symposium, p. 1. Regretfully I was unable to use this excellent essay because much of the same material is covered in other chapters.
5. "Making the Switch!" *Insight* (January 13, 1996), p. 13.
6. Roger Record "Contemporary Christian Music: Is It Better than Secular Music?" *Insight* (January 13, 1996), p. 8.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 11.
8. See, Jeff Trubey, "Making Waves," *Adventist Review* (July 17, 1997), p. 8 - 13.
9. Günter Press (note 1), p. 306.
10. "Christian Rocker's Creed," *CCM Magazine* (November 1988), p. 12.
11. For a listing of about 20 statements from evangelical leaders who believe in the neutrality of music, see David W. Gould (note 2), pp. 19-21.
12. Michael Tomlinson, "Contemporary Christian Music is *Christian* Music," *Ministry* (September 1966), p. 26.
13. *Ibid.*
14. Harold Byron Hannum, *Christian Search for Beauty* (Nashville, TN, 1975), p. 51.
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17. *Ibid.*, p. 352.
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22. Steve Case, "What About Christian Rock?" *Insight* (March 20, 1999), p. 7.
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 27. Ibid.
 28. John A. Solomon, "Worship and Praise: One Model for Change in the Worship Hour," *Ministry* (February 2000), p. 16.
 29. Ibid., p. 17.
 30. Ibid.
 31. Jeff Trubey, "Making Waves," *Adventist Review* (July 17, 1997), p. 9.
 32. Calvin M. Johansson, "Pop Music and the Gospel," Chapter 10 of this symposium, p. 296.
 33. Günter Preuss, "Christian Rock and Evangelism," Chapter 11 of this symposium, p. 316.
 34. Ibid.
 35. Ibid., P. 317.
 36. Eurydice V. Osterman, "Rock Music and Culture," Chapter 12 of this symposium, p. 326.
 37. Ibid., P. 327.
 38. Ibid.
 39. Steve Miller, *The Contemporary Christian Music Debate. Worldly Compromise or Agent of Renewal* (Wheaton, IL, 1993), p. 78.
 40. Ibid., pp. 78-81.
 41. Anita J. Strawn de Ojeda, "Sing the Song of Gladness," *Ministry* (September 1996), p. 5.
 42. Ibid., p. 6.
 43. Ibid.
 44. Steve Miller (note 39), p. 113.
 45. Michael Tomlison (note 12), p. 27.
 46. The data is compiled from different sources and is quoted in Robert Harrell, *Martin Luther, His Music, His Message* (Greenville, SC, 1980), p. 18.

47. Ulrich S. Leupold, "Learning from Luther? Some Observation on Luther's Hymns," *Journal of Church Music* 8 (1966), p. 5.
48. Robert Harrell (note 43), p. 21.
49. *Ibid.*, pp.21-22.
50. Luther's foreword to Johann Walter's collection as quoted by Friedrich Blume, *Protestant Church Music: A History* (New York, 1974), p. 78.
51. Norval Peace, *And Worship Him* (Nashville, 1967), p. 8.
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