

ENDTIME ISSUES NEWSLETTER No. 212
“MAKE A JOYFUL NOISE UNTO THE LORD”
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EDITORIAL

The format of this newsletter differs from the previous ones in two ways. First, it is considerably shorter. Those who have urged me to shorten my newsletters, this time can take a sign of relief.

Second, I have decided for this time to place all the announcements of services and special offers at the end of the newsletter. I hope that readers will scroll to the end to read about the forthcoming seminars and special offers. If this arrangement proves to be successful, it will become a permanent practice.

Some readers have told me that they enjoy the newsletters, but they annoyed by the ads. They wish that I would email the newsletters without any commercial. I have often wished the same thing when I watch the evening news. I like to hear the news but not the commercial. But the fact remains that if there were no commercials there would be no evening news, because the ads provide the funds to pay for the people gathering, writing, and delivering the news.

Some readers have frankly told me that I should live by the church salary like every body else, and not try to make extra money by researching, writing, publishing, and marketing my books and recordings. These sincere fellow believers ignore three things:

1) I Follow the Example of Paul who Supported His Ministry by Making Tents

First, I took an early retirement in the year 2000 to be able to devote myself more fully to research, writing, and publishing timely publications and recordings for our church. This means that for the past 8 years I have been off-teaching and off-salary. I like to follow the example of Paul who supported his ministry by making tents – a product that was in great demand when hotels like Motel 6 did not exist. He never asked for tithe money to support his ministry. The few times he asked for contributions, it was for the

churches that were in economic distress because of famine or other calamities.

Recently I was invited to speak at a rally of non-SDA sabbatarian congregations in Knoxville, TN. When I was introduced to the pastor of the Seventh-day Christian Congregation of about 100 members in Knoxville, I was surprised to learn that he did not receive any salary from the church, because he was a successful business man. The money collected each week was used for various outreach programs.

2) For 20 Years I Taught Half-time at Half-salary

Second, for 20 years I taught half-time at Andrews University at half-salary. Andrews University was very gracious to allow me to teach half-time from January to June, so that I could devote the last six months of each year to research and writings. This means that I received half-salary and I was not paid by the church to write the 18 volumes that I have authored. I supported my own ministry of research by marketing my publications.

3) Scholarly Research is Expensive to Produce

Thirdly, scholarly biblical research, like all research, is very expensive to produce, and very difficult to finance. Most people rather contribute to a mission project that produces immediate results, than to a research project that does not guarantee any short term visible results. Even this simple newsletter on the meaning of the biblical admonition to “Make a Joyful Noise unto the Lord,” represents for me at least 100 hours of thoughtful research. At \$20.00 per hour, this newsletter costs me about \$2000.00 to produce. At that price, nobody would buy this timely Bible Study, but by offering it free, over 35,000 people can benefit from it. Who pays for it? Those who appreciate my scholarship and are inspired to buy the publications and recordings offered at a special price through the newsletter.

Scarcity of Studies on Fundamental Adventist Beliefs

Scholarly studies dealing with the fundamental beliefs of our Adventist Church are very scarce. Our ABC stores are filled with good devotional and story books, but with a very few solid doctrinal studies. When I wrote my book *Immortality or Resurrection?* I looked in vain for an Adventist in-depth study of the State of the Dead and the deception of conscious life after death. Yet this is a fundamental Adventist belief, just as important as the Sabbath.

The only significant study I could find is the three volumes by Leroy Froom on *The Conditional Faith of our Fathers*. This is a most valuable compilation of documents, but hardly addresses the questions posed today by the widespread belief in conscious life after death.

The same was true when I researched my book *Wine in the Bible*. It came as a total surprise to me to discover that our Adventist Church has never produced a book defending our belief in the biblical imperative of total abstinence. This may explain why the book has proven to be popular not only in our Adventist church, but especially among evangelical churches. At present I receive far more orders for *Wine in the Bible* from evangelical churches than from Adventist Churches. A leader of the Church of Christ ordered 1000 copies.

During the 15 months I spent researching and writing *Popular Beliefs: Are they Biblical?* I constantly look in the library for any Adventist books that compares and contrasts our beliefs with the popular, but unbiblical Catholic and Protestant beliefs. Surprisingly our Adventist Church has never published such a book. The only book that comes close is *Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . .*, But the book is a simple presentation of what we believe. I contributed a chapter to that book. No attempt is made to compare our beliefs with the popular beliefs of Catholic and Protestant churches.

This explains why when *Popular Beliefs* came out on April 25, 2008, we had already received orders for 6500 copies. It is evident that there are many Adventists who are eager to share their faith, and they welcome a book that they can give with confidence to people interested to learn why their beliefs are wrong and the Adventist beliefs are right.

The point of my comments is that Adventist scholars who are willing to invest their time and money to produce valuable studies for our Adventist Church, should not be condemned but commended. After all, if our Adventist Church at this time is not financially able to sponsor scholars engaged in a ministry of Biblical research, let us encourage those scholars who are willing and able to invest their time and money to offer this valuable service to our church. Unfortunately, very few Adventist scholars are able to finance their research and publish it.

“MAKE A JOYFUL NOISE UNTO THE LORD”
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Greetings from London, England, where the weather is miserable (typically British – cold, windy, and rainy), but the reception and response of our fellow-believers is heart-warming.

Last Sabbath we had a marvellous rally at the Wembley North SDA Church. The sanctuary that seats about 300 person, was packed with standing room in the morning, and comfortably full in the afternoon. Contrary to some of our Adventist American churches, where few members attend the afternoon meetings, in England we can expect a full house in the afternoon. The reason is that most of our members come to church to be informed and inspired, no merely to be entertained

Last Sabbath afternoon after the two and half hour program consisting of Cristina Piccardi's Sacred Songs and my 90 minutes lecture on the latest Sabbath/Sunday developments, I was ready to seat down, especially because I felt weakened by the latest chemo infusion of 10 days ago. But when Pastor Michael Anim asked me if I would entertain a few questions. I could hardly say "no" to such a receptive and responsive congregation. And so we went on for another half-an-hour. Surprisingly, very few people left. Most members (largely professional young adults) stayed on until the very end and after the Sabbath were most eager to purchase our publications and recordings.

We look forward to a similar experience this Wednesday evening, September 10, at the Stanborough Park SDA Church and next Sabbath, September 13, at the Ilford SDA church. You are welcomed to join us if you live in London,

The Question of Worship Music

One of the question we often discuss both in the US and in the UK, is "worship music." This past weekend was not an exception. The controversy over the use of loud rock bands, which began in American Adventist Churches, has reached our British Adventist Churches as well, creating considerable divisions in our congregations

For me the problem is not only Biblical, but also medical, because at the moment of writing this newsletter, both of my eardrums are hurting badly. Sitting on the platform next to huge loud-speakers that blast out 120-130 decibel sound, is truly a painful physical experience for me.

At this point, I am debating what to do. Should I excuse myself during the Praise Service when a rock band produces deafening noise? Or should I put in some earplugs during the duration of the Praise Service? I never thought that preaching in some congregations could endanger my health, but this is becoming a stark reality that I need to face.

In discussing the problem privately with pastors and church leaders, I am constantly reminded that the defenders of loud rock bands in the church, appeal to the admonition to “make a joyful noise unto the Lord”—a phrase that occurs with slight variations seven times in the KJV version of the Old Testament (Ps 66:1; 81:1; 95:1-2; 98:4, 6; 100:1). The argument is that the Bible sanctions the “joyful noise” produced by instruments like rock bands, because their intent is to praise the Lord.

The friendly and constructive discussions I have had on the biblical admonition “to make a joyful noise unto the Lord,” has inspired me to take a closer look at these Bible texts. Simply stated, the question we wish to address is: Does a joyful noise praise the Lord? Is the Lord pleased to hear incoherent joyful noises produced by instruments and singing?

We shall attempt to answer these questions, by looking first at the importance of singing in the Bible and second at the manner of singing.

THE IMPORTANCE OF SINGING IN THE BIBLE

The importance of music in the Bible is indicated by the fact that God’s creative and redemptive activities are accompanied and celebrated by music. At creation we are told that “the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy” (Job 38:7). At the incarnation, the heavenly choir sang: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased!” (Luke 2:14).

At the final consummation of redemption, the great multitude of the redeemed will sing: “Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to be clothed with fine linen, bright and pure” (Rev 19:6-8).

The Singing of Creation

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

“Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad; let the sea resound, and all that is in it; let the fields be jubilant, and everything in them. Then all the trees of the forest will sing for joy; they will sing before the Lord” (Ps 96:11-12; NIV). “Let the rivers clap their hands, let the mountains sing together for joy; let them sing before the Lord” (Ps 98:8-9; NIV). “Praise the Lord, all his works everywhere in his dominion” (Ps 103:22; NIV).

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

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

Human Singing

More wonderful than all of nature singing is the invitation extended to human beings to sing. “O Come, let us sing to the Lord; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!” (Ps 95:1). “Sing praises to the Lord, O you his saints, and give thanks to his holy name” (Ps 30:4). “Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children

of men” (Ps 107:8; KJV). Jesus once said that if people would not praise Him, “the very stones would cry out (Luke 19:40).

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

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

Music Essential to the Total Human Well-Being

The first statement that we find in the Bible on any given subject has a foundational value. This seems to be true also in the case of music. Only a few generations from Adam and Eve, the Bible tells us that three sons were born to Lamech and his two wives, Adah and Zillah. Each son is introduced as “the founding father” of a basic profession. “Adah bore Jabal; he was the father of those who dwell in tents and have cattle. His brother’s name was Jubal; he was the father of all those who play the lyre and pipe. Zillah bore Tubal-cain; he was the forger of all instruments of bronze and iron” (Gen 4:20-22).

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

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

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

The Reason for Singing

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

Singing in the Bible is not for personal pleasure nor for reaching out to the

Gentiles with tunes familiar to them. It is to praise God by chanting His Word—a method known as “cantillation.” Pleasure in singing comes not from a rhythmic beat that stimulates people physically, but from the very experience of praising the Lord. “Praise the Lord, for the Lord is good; sing praise to his name, for that is pleasant” (Ps 135:3; NIV). “How good it is to sing praises to our God, how pleasant and fitting to praise him” (Ps 147:1. NIV).

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

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

THE MANNER OF SINGING IN THE BIBLE

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

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

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

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

“Make a Joyful Noise unto the Lord”

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

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

platform close to the ears of the preacher.

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

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

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

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

jumbo jet at takeoff.

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

Does Loud Noise Praise God?

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

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

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

Another self-evident example of mistranslation is found in Psalm 33:3 which in the KJV reads: “Sing unto him a new song; play skilfully with a loud noise.” The latter phrase is contradictory, because music skillfully played can hardly be described as “loud noise.” One wonders why the translators of the KJV did not see the contradiction. The NIV correctly renders the verse: “Sing to him a new song; play skillfully, and shout for joy” (Ps 33:3).

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

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

In one instance in the New Testament, the word “noise” is used in

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

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

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

The Place and Time of Singing

The Bible instructs us to sing, not only in God’s House, but also among unbelievers, in foreign countries, in time of persecution, and among the saints. The writer of Hebrews says: “In the midst of the congregation I will praise thee” (Heb 2:12). The Psalmist admonishes to “Sing to the Lord a new song, his praise in the assembly of the faithful” (Ps 149:1). Paul affirms “I

will praise thee among the Gentiles, and sing to thy name” (Rom 15:9). Isaiah exhorts to praise God in the islands (Is 42:11-12). While in jail, Paul and Silas were “praying and singing hymns to God” (Acts 16:25).

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

Singing, in the Bible, is not limited to the worship experience, but extends to the totality of one’s existence. Believers who live in peace with God have a constant song in their hearts, though the singing may not always be vocalized. This is why the Psalmist says: “I will praise the Lord all my life; I will sing praise to my God as long as I live” (Ps 146:2; 104:33. NIV).

In Revelation those who come out of the great tribulation are seen standing before God’s throne, singing with a loud voice a new song which says: “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb” (Rev 7:10). Singing praises to God is an experience that begins in this life and continues in the world to come.

The “New Song” of the Bible

Nine times the Bible speaks of singing “a new song.” Seven times the phrase occurs in the Old Testament (Ps 33:3; 40:3; 96:1; 98:1; 144:9; 149:1; Is 42:10) and twice in the New Testament (Rev 5:9; 14:3). Some argue that the contemporary pop religious music is the prophetic fulfillment of the biblical “new song,” because pop songs have “new” lyrics and tunes. Others believe

that Christians are required to sing new songs and, consequently, musicians constantly must compose new hymns for the church.

There certainly is a continuing need for new hymns to enrich the worship experience of the church today. However, a study of the “new song” in the Bible reveals that the phrase “new song” refers not to a new composition, but to a new experience that makes it possible to praise God with new meaning. Let us look first at a couple of passages from the Old Testament which help us define the meaning of the “new song.” The Psalmist says: “He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand. He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God” (Ps 40:2-3, NIV). In this text, the “new song” is defined by the appositional phrase as “a hymn of praise to our God.” It is the experience of deliverance from the slimy pit and of restoration upon solid ground that gives David reason to sing old hymns of praise to God with new meaning.

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

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

On a similar note in Revelation 14, the redeemed join the elders and the living creatures in singing “a new song before the throne” (Rev 14:3). We are told that “no one could learn that song” except those “who had been

redeemed from the earth” (Rev 14:3). What makes this song new, is not the new words or melody, but the unique experience of the redeemed. They are the only ones who can sing it, not because the words or melody are difficult to learn, but because of their unique experience. They came out of the great tribulation; thus they can express their praise and gratitude to God in a way no one else can do.

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

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

CONCLUSION

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

Singing is seen in the Bible as an offering of thanksgiving to the Lord for the blessings of creation, deliverance, protection, and salvation. We found this

concept expressed especially in Psalm 69:30-31: "I will praise God's name in song and glorify him with thanksgiving. This will please the Lord more than an ox, more than a bull with its horns and hoofs."

God does care about how we sing and play during the worship service. He is not pleased with unintelligible "loud noise," but with orderly, melodious, and intelligible singing. Those Bible texts that speak about making "a joyful noise" or "a loud noise" unto the Lord do not teach us to praise God with excessive amplification of the human voice or musical instruments during the worship service. Such a notion is derived from a mistranslation of *ruwa* as "loud noise." The correct translation as found in the NIV is "shouting for joy."

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS OF SERVICES AND PRODUCTS

UPCOMING SEMINARS FOR SEPTEMBER

As a service to our subscribers, I am listing the seminars scheduled for the month of September 2008. We wish to extend a warm welcome to those of you who live close to the location of our seminars. Our new seminars with Words and Songs will touch your heart and expand your mind.

SEPTEMBER 5-6: LONDON: WEMBLEY NORTH SDA CHURCH

Location: 217 East Lane North, Wembley, Middlesex HA0 3NG

For directions and information call Pastor Michael Anim at 01923 661 212

SEPTEMBER 10: LONDON: STANBOROUGH PARK SDA CHURCH

Location: 609 St. Albans Road, Garston, Watford, Herts WD25 9JL.

For directions and information call Pastor Ian Sleeman at 01923 606130

SEPTEMBER 12-13: LONDON: CORNERSTONE/FULHAM SDA CHURCHES

Location: 259 Little Road, Fulham, London SW6 7LL

For directions and information call Pastor Clive De Silva at 0208 384 1710

SEPTEMBER 24: ORLANDO: FOREST LAKE SDA CHURCH

Location: 515 Harley Lester Lane, Apopka, Florida 32703

For direction and information call the church office at (407) 869-0680

SEPTEMBER 26-27 : DAYTONA BEACH SDA CHURCH

Location: 401 North Williamson Boulevard, Dayton Beach, FL 32114

For information and directions call Pastor Bill Barrett at (386) 255-5144.

UPDATE ON *POPULAR BELIEFS: ARE THEY BIBLICAL?*

The third printing of *Popular Beliefs: Are they Biblical?* came out last week. We have now resumed the shipment to churches and institutions in the USA and overseas

Popular Beliefs: Are they Biblical? is proving to be by far the most popular and best-selling book I have written. The reason is that the book meets the urgent need for a witnessing publication that Adventists can give with confidence to people inquiring about our faith.

Many Adventists have emailed me messages of appreciation, saying that they have waited for years for a book like Popular Beliefs that shows why the most popular Catholic and Protestant popular beliefs are unbiblical, while the less-popular Adventist beliefs are biblically correct.

Popular Beliefs Adopted by Adventist Colleges and Seminaries

Popular Beliefs is widely used not only for witnessing, but also for teaching

at our colleges and theological seminaries. For example, we received orders from the School of Theology of Friedensau Adventist University in Germany. Last week, Prof. Denis Fortin, Dean of our Andrews University Theological Seminary, requested a supply for the class he teaches on Roman Catholic Theology.

Several professors told me that *Popular Beliefs* is ideal for some of their Bible classes, because it traces the historical origin and theological development of the major Catholic and Protestant heresies popular today.

As a church historian by training and profession, I have spent 15 months tracing historically and examining biblically 10 popular beliefs (heresies) in a calm, objective, and non-confrontational way. The ultimate goal is to lead truth-seekers to appreciate the biblical validity and contemporary relevance of our Adventist beliefs.

Did Your Church Order a Supply of *Popular Beliefs*?

If your church has not yet order a supply of *Popular Beliefs*, we will be glad to process your order at this time, since we have just received the third printing.

Popular Beliefs is an ideal gift for any non-SDA attending evangelistic meetings this Fall. As you know, evangelistic lectures can only touch on the highlights of our message, leaving many questions unanswered in the mind of the visitors. *Popular Beliefs* fill in the gaps by offering compelling answers to frequently asked questions.

To make it possible for many Adventist Churches to use *Popular Beliefs* for evangelistic outreach and for the personal growth, we offer the book at this time for only \$6.60 per copy for a case of 30 copies, instead of the regular price of \$30.00 per copy. This means that for \$200.00, your church can order a case of 30 copies of *Popular Beliefs*. We will pay the mail expenses to US destinations. The details for ordering the book are given at the end of the

newsletter or by clicking at this link:
http://www.biblicalperspectives.com/cart/catalog/index.php?cPath=26_35 or
call us at (269) 471-2915.

Two Copies for the Price of One

At this time I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to all the pastors and lay-members who have actively promoted and distributed Popular Beliefs to their church members. Without your promotional efforts, the book would not have been reprinted three times in three months.

To make it possible for all our pastors and local church leaders to become acquainted with this timely book, we are offering until September 15, 2008, two copies of Popular Beliefs: Are They Biblical? for the price of one. This means that for \$30.00 you can order two copies, one for yourself and to give to your pastor or a local church leader.

After reading Popular Beliefs many pastors have ordered the book by the case of 30 copies for only \$6.60 per copy. Many churches have ordered 100 copies at the special offer of \$5.00 per copy, to give to non-SDA attending the Mark Findley's Satellite program Discoveries 2008 or other evangelistic meeting in the Fall.

But, there are still many pastors and churches that are unaware of the release of this powerful witnessing book Popular Beliefs. This newsletter reaches only about 35,000 readers. Thus I need your help in promoting this timely book.

Thank you for introducing your pastor and local church officers to this timely book. To facilitate your effort, I am offering you two copies for the price of one. The details for ordering the book are given at the end of the newsletter or by clicking at this link:
http://www.biblicalperspectives.com/cart/catalog/index.php?cPath=26_35 or
call us at (269) 471-2915.

SPECIAL OFFER ON *POPULAR BELIEFS: ARE THEY BIBLICAL?*

To facilitate a massive circulation of Popular Beliefs, I have decided to continue to offer the book at the following substantially discounted prices:

2 copies of *Popular Beliefs: Are they Biblical?* for the price of one, namely \$30.00 for two copies. Mailing expenses are included for the USA. Add \$10.00 for AIRMAIL postage to any overseas destination.

10 copies of *Popular Beliefs: Are they Biblical?* at \$10.00 per copy, postage paid, instead of the regular price of \$30.00 (\$100.00 for 10 copies). Mailing expenses are included for the USA. Add \$50.00 for AIRMAIL postage to any overseas destination.

30 copies (one case) of *Popular Beliefs: Are they Biblical?* at \$6.65 per copy (\$200.00 for 30 copies). Mailing expenses are included for the USA. Add \$100.00 for AIRMAIL postage to any overseas destination.

100 copies of *Popular Beliefs: Are they Biblical?* at \$5.00 per copy, postage paid. (\$500.00 for 100 copies). Mailing expenses are included for the USA. Add \$300.00 for AIRMAIL postage to any overseas destination.

NOTE: We can ship by sea-freight up to 1000 copies of Popular Beliefs (up to a cubic meter) to any foreign destinations for only \$500.00. This reduces the cost of mailing to only ¢50 per book. Fee free to contact me for further details.

HOW TO ORDER *POPULAR BELIEFS: ARE THEY BIBLICAL?*

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(2) PHONE: By calling us at (269) 471-2915 to give us your credit card number and postal address.

(3) EMAIL: By emailing your order to <sbacchiocchi@biblicalperspectives.com>. Be sure to provide your postal address, credit card number, and expiration date.

(4) REGULAR MAIL: By mailing a check to BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES, 4990 Appian Way, Berrien Springs, Michigan 49103, USA. We guarantee to process your order as soon as we receive it.

A CALL FOR ADVENTIST DISTRIBUTORS OF MY BOOKS

For a long time I have been praying that the Lord would help me to find Adventists with marketing skills, interested to distribute my books in major English-speaking countries. If you are interested to offer this service in your country, please contact me by email <sbacchiocchi@biblicalperspectives.com> or by phone (269)-4712915.

On my part, I am willing to offer to any distributor my books at 75% discount and ship them by sea-freight which is very economical. For \$500.00 I can ship by sea-freight one cubic meter of books, which is over 1000 books. Feel free to contact me if you are interested to distribute my 20 books and recordings in your country.

AUSTRALIAN DISTRIBUTOR OF MY BOOKS

At this time I am pleased to announce that Ivan Jakovac, an Australian Adventist who operates a Storage Business, has offered to distribute my books and recordings in Australia at a considerable cheaper price than in the USA. The reason is that he will order large quantities that will be shipped by sea-freight, which costs a fraction of the airmail.

This is the name and address of the distributor:

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Albury Storage
107 North Street Albury NSW 2640

Phone 02 6021 8088

Mobile 0406 854 500

email: <ivan@alburystorage.com.au>

web site: <<http://www.alburystorage.com/>>

If you live in Australia, feel free to contact Ivan Jakovac by phone or email. You will save time and money. For example, the cost of airmailing to Australia one copy of *Popular Beliefs: Are They Biblical?* is \$40.00, that is, \$30.00 for the book and \$10.00 for the airmail. You can order the same book from Ivan Jakovac for about half of the price. The reason is that I will ship the books to Ivan by sea-freight, which costs a fraction of the airmail.

The first shipment should reach Ivan Jakovac in about a month. The reason is that we were out of stock during the past two weeks, while waiting for the third printing. So please allow some time for your order to be processed. In the future your orders be processed immediately.

For a description and picture of each book, click at this link:

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SPANISH TRANSLATION OF POPULAR BELIEFS: ARE THEY BIBLICAL?

Hispanic readers of *Biblical Beliefs: Are They Biblical?* have been urging

me to translate and publish the book in Spanish. In fact, some of them have raised the money to pay for the translation, editing, art-work, and lay-out of the book.

The translation is in full progress and will be completed by the beginning of October. The translator is Claudia Blath, is a professional translator of the Asociacion Casa Editora Sudamericana. According to our schedule the Spanish edition *LAS CREENCIAS POPULARES, ¿SON BÍBLICAS?* will be printed and ready for distribution by October 31, 2008. You can see the cover of the Spanish book and read a description by clicking at this link: <http://www.biblicalperspectives.com/spanpop.htm>

To facilitate a massive distribution of *Las Creencias Populares, ¿Son Bíblicas?* we are offering the book at a special pre-publication price. For details click at this link <http://www.biblicalperspectives.com/spanpop.htm> or call us at (269) 471-2915.

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3) PROF. BACCHIOCCHI'S DVD ALBUM containing 10 video powerpoint lectures on the SABBATH/ADVENT SEMINAR. Some of the lectures show the documents Prof. Bacchiocchi found in Vatican libraries on the role of the papacy in changing the Sabbath to Sunday. This album contains the popular powerpoint SABBATH/ADVENT seminars Prof. Bacchiocchi presents in many countries.

4) PROF. BACCHIOCCHI'S DVD ALBUM on CRACKING THE DA VINCI CODE. The album contains a two hours video lecture, professionally taped with a virtual studio as a background. A separate file with 200 powerpoint slides is included. The two video lectures reveal the prophetic significance of Dan Brown's neo-pagan false worship promoted through his book and film. The two hours video lectures will help you appreciate the role that The Da Vinci Code plays in the prophetic endtime battle between true and false worship.

5) PROF. BACCHIOCCHI'S DVD ALBUM on THE MARK AND NUMBER OF THE BEAST. The album contains two hours professionally recorded video lecture and a separate powerpoint file with the 200 slides used for the lecture. The project was commissioned by Prof. Jon Paulien and Prof. Ranko Stefanovich, who are the foremost authorities on the book of Revelation. With the help of 200 beautiful slides the video lecture shows the origin and historical use of 666. You will see stunning pictures of papal tiaras, including disputed one with the pope's title Vicarius Filii Dei.

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History. The live video interview show that that this movie is a strict Catholic film that in a subtle and deceptive way promotes fundamental Catholic heresies.

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9) PROF. JON PAULIEN'S newly released DVD ALBUM video seminar on *Simply Revelation*. The four live video lectures focus 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. Currently, Prof. Paulien is preparaing a new Revelation Seminar at the request of the General Conference

10) PROF. JON PAULIEN'S CD ALBUM with a dozen of his books, and all his articles. You will find in this collection a priceless resource to enrich your understanding and experience of biblical truths. Prof. Paulien examines fundamental biblical beliefs in a profound and yet popular way. He is a recognized expert on the book of Revelation. Several of his books will help you to unlock the secrets of Revelation.

11) PROF. GRAEME BRADFORD'S DVD ALBUM with a two hours video lecture on Ellen White. He shares the highlights of his book More than a Prophet. The album contains also Prof. Bradford's the publications and articles. A searchable data base enables you to access Prof. Graeme Bradford's published and unpublished writings, including his the latest book More than a Prophet.

12) CRISTINA PICCARDI'S CD ALBUM REJOICE IN THE LORD. The album consists of 11 sacred songs recorded with Marcelo Caceres, Professor of piano at Andrews University. The CD Album includes Gospel

songs like How Great Thou Art, He Shall Feed His Flock, Softly and Tenderly, The Holy City, etc. You can play this audio recording in your car CD player, or on any CD or DVD players you have in your home.

13) CRISTINA PICCARDI'S DVD ALBUM SING UNTO THE LORD.

This DVD Album contains 12 sacred familiar songs that were recorded during a live sacred concert presented at Andrews University Pioneer Memorial Church. This is a video recording that you can enjoy in your living room and play in your church.

14) CRISTINA PICCARDI'S DVD ALBUM BY HIS GRACE.

This DVD album consists of 16 sacred songs recorded in Loma Linda with four high-definition cameras. The songs cover the major themes of God's creative and redemptive love. Her marvellous singing will touch your heart and inspire you to devote your life more fully to the Savior.

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BED & BREAKFAST FACILITIES IN LONDON, ENGLAND

If your travel plans call for a stop in London, you will be pleased to learn about a most gracious Adventist couple that offer the best accommodation and breakfast I have ever enjoyed. It has become my home away from home when in London. See details at: <http://www.biblicalperspectives.com/Promotions/BED&BREAKFAST.htm>
Their new home phone numbers are: 020 8429-3140 or 020 8819-5708