

"Christian Rock" Music In The SDA Church

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Dear Members of the Endtime Issues Newsletter:

The last newsletter (No. 29) generated more responses than any previous one posted so far. Approximately 500 subscribers emailed me notes expressing support for the stand I took against the kind of rock music played at the Stuart Point campmeeting (Australia) in the youth and your adults tents. It has been a moving experience to briefly acknowledge each message received. It is evident that rock music is an emotive issue that concerns many people in many parts of the world.

My brief report on SDANET on the rock music problem I met in Australia, has caused an ongoing heated discussion. It almost seems that hell broke loose. Several people accused me of being intolerant, insensitive to different cultures, and offensive. The truth of the matter is that I always try to be tolerant, especially when it comes to music, because during the course of the year I speak to an average of 45 rallies in different parts of the world where congregations differ ethnically, culturally, and in worship style.

In my itinerant ministry I have never expressed public disapproval for the contemporary music played before my presentations, though sometimes I find the music too jazzy and loud for a worship service. But what I saw and heard on the evening of my arrival (Monday, October 4) at the Stuart Point camp, first in the 18+ tent and then in the CONNECTION tent, represents the worst type of jazzy, rock music I have ever experienced at any Adventist gathering. This is why I decided right then and there that I would not allow such a music to be played next morning at the CONNECTION tent before my presentation.

The question is: Does a speaker have the right to choose the music that is appropriate for his presentation? I believe so. In many ways the music prepares the mind for the message to be delivered. Wherever I conduct my seminars, two questions are asked: (1) Do you have a choice for a Scripture reading? (2) Do you have a choice for a special music to go along with your presentation? Usually I give to the pastor the theme of my sermon so that he can choose appropriate music ahead of time.

For example, few days ago on Sabbath October 23, I spoke to a capacity crowd in Chicago at the North Shore SDA church, which is the second largest church in the city. The senior pastor, Dr. John Rupp, asked me specifically about the theme of my morning sermon so that the choirs could prepare appropriate music. The three special musical numbers (all given by young people) were in tune with my sermon "Living the Advent Hope." The last number "Lift up the Trumpets" was accompanied by six trumpeters, who added realism and power to the choir. As I looked at the congregation of about 700 people (mostly young adults) representing about 40 countries, enjoying and singing with great gusto good sacred music, I said to myself: "Thank God for congregations like this that do not have to resort to night club rock music to attract the youth."

Should I allow rock music to be played before my presentations just to be condescending to our fellow believers in different parts of the world? My conscience tells me NO! Why? My silence and presence would be interpreted as an endorsement of rock music, which for me is diabolic, whether played in America or in any other part of the world. People could go home and say: "You know what? They played jazzy, rocky music before Dr. Bacchiocchi's presentation and he did not say anything about it. Apparently he approves that kind of music." By taking a stand, everybody clearly understands that I do not endorse such music. If our well-known speakers would take a stand against rock

music played in some Adventist meetings, the church at large would soon reconsider seriously the place of rock music in Adventist church worship.

A LOOK AT SOME NEGATIVE COMMENTS

Among the hundreds of positive messages, there were half-a-dozen of negative ones from our subscribers. Some of these negative comments were from our leaders who had planned the campmeeting music for the youth and young adults. They criticize especially my alleged lack of sensitivity to the different Australian culture. They maintain that I should be more tolerant toward the music played by people of a different culture. This cultural argument does not convince me because music transcends cultural barriers. Rock music is bewitching, degrading, and demonic whether played in Australia or in any other country.

The messages and articles received from our Australian fellow believers indicate that many of them reject the so-called "Christian rock" music as inappropriate for church services. Some parents emailed me messages saying that they had to pull out their teenagers from the youth tent, because they found the music there unacceptable. It is sad when parents cannot trust even the campmeeting programs prepared for their kids.

Several pastors and youth leaders "down under" have shared with me their concern about the rock music played at youth programs. For example, Pastor Lloyd Grolimund, the Youth Director of the North New Zealand Conference sent me a fine article on "Christian Rock Music in the Seventh-day Adventist Church." I was so impressed by the quality of the article that I decided to edit and rework its content in order to make it suitable for this newsletter. The article was prepared for the local youth leaders of the conferences, but its principles have general application everywhere. I would urge everyone to read thoughtfully this timely study.

In his accompanying note, Pastor Grolimund writes: "I have been battling [rock music] with the other youth directors in the South Pacific Division for years. I am not surprised with your problems down here. However, rest assured that there are many thousands of young people who have not bowed their knee to Baal. You will meet many of them at Bible Camp here in North New Zealand next year."

I am looking forward to share my ministry next year with our youth at the North New Zealand Bible Camp. I believe in our youth. For the past 30 years I have been teaching our young people at the college level. Experience has taught me that many of them look up to someone who helps them to understand in a Christian caring way God's expectations for their lives.

EXCELLENT MUSIC IN THE ADULT TENTS

For the sake of fairness and accuracy, I must say that in the adult tents of both South Queensland and North New South Wales campmeetings, the music was of the finest quality. One of the special feature was the London Adventist Chorale that ignited the people at both campmeetings. At the South Queensland Campmeeting we were honored by the presence of Manuel Escorsio, a virtuoso tenor from South Africa, who sounds almost like Pavarotti. He sung with passion and expression some of the finest sacred music every night before my presentations, captivating everybody. It was an unforgettable experience to listen to Escorsio.

At the Stuart Points campmeeting, Lyell Heise, the Worship Director of the Trans-Tasman Union Conference, did a magnificent job in directing a 40 players orchestra as well as in planning for all the vocal items. He is a very gifted, and accomplished musician who made a tremendous contribution to the musical program of the camp. On Sabbath morning a lovely lady with a most cultivated soprano voice, really touched my heart with her message in music. Later I discovered that she is a real Italian who speaks fluently our mother tongue (that may explain her marvelous singing! Please laugh!). I mentioned the

above to dispel the misunderstanding that rock music was played every where at the Stuart Point camp.

"CHRISTIAN ROCK" MUSIC IN AUSTRALIA

The truth of the matter is problem of rock music in Australia is found especially among our youth and young adults. Other foreign visitors have noticed this problem and expressed their concern. Let me share few paragraphs from a letter I just received from Ralph Neal, Ph. D., retired Professor of Theology from Union College, in Lincoln, Nebraska. Recently he was invited together with his wife Beatrice-who also has a Ph. D. in Biblical studies-to teach at an extension school at Avondale for the graduate students. Neil emailed to me this perceptive letter which I am posting with his permission. I decided to cite this letter to counteract the allegation that I am the only foreign speaker to be distressed by the rock music played in youth programs. Note what Neil wrote:

"Someone has forwarded to me your recent travel notes, in which you told of your encounter with the rock music at the Stuart Point camp meeting in North New South Wales. I heartily agree with your reaction to it.

"We did not get to that camp meeting, but the music at Avondale college was too much rock for us. Especially a youth rally put on by the North New South Wales Conference youth director for a teen-age audience in the college church. He had artificial smoke, lights turned down low, and rock music. Anyone over 16 was invited to attend a different service. The following week one of our students, who actually helped to organize that rally, told us that he thought they were using 'Mickey Mouse' methods to hold the youth, and it didn't work. They saw through it.

"Since you are writing a book a year now, how about doing some research and write a powerful book on rock music? I am amazed that none of our Adventist musicians have dared to touch it. Personally, I am becoming alarmed by the inroads it is making into our churches. I think it is (1) Pentecostal, and (2) demonic. But I don't have the time or interest enough to track down the evidence.

"One difficulty with the problem is that the leaders like it; they are the ones bringing it in, even though in many cases the youth they are trying to reach don't care for it. On the other hand, many do like it-and they will not listen to reasoned arguments against it. How can you throw reason against something that turns them on, that gives them a high? . . .

"What should church leaders do about this devilish music? Should we try to stem the tide? Should we pray for revival? Or should we give up the struggle, and simply send missionaries into it to seek what conversions we can? Surely the Spirit of the Lord can give us guidance!"

I concur with Neil that as a church we need to seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit in addressing one of the most divisive issue of our time, namely, the use of "Christian rock" in Adventist church services. The problem extends beyond the Australian boundaries into the rest of the world. Some fellow believers are sending me videos of rock music played at Adventist youth gathering in America and Europe. I look forward to view these videos to see if the problem is more widespread than I thought.

The presence of rock music in the Adventist church is a grave issue because it affects our understanding and experience of the worship of God. Should the music played at religious programs bring God down to us so that we can have fun with Him, or elevate us to God so that we can catch glimpses of His holiness and majesty? Should church worship provide a form of entertainment similar to that experienced in night clubs?

WORSHIP AND THE THREE ANGELS MESSAGE

The nature of true worship versus false worship is at the root of the Great Controversy. The first chapters of the Bible tells us how two brother, Cain and Abel, approached God with two different worship style, reflective of two different attitudes toward God. Much of OT history is the account of God's people departing from the true worship of God into the worship of foreign gods. On a similar vein the Christian church gradually adopted pagan days and forms of worship which have survived until our time. In the last book of the Bible God appeals to the remnant through the imagery of three flying angels "to worship him who made heaven and earth" (Rev 14:7) and to reject the false worship promoted by spiritual Babylon (Rev 14:8-11).

Historically our Adventist church has seen the final conflict over worship being played out in terms of Sundaykeeping versus Sabbathkeeping. There is no doubt in my mind that the two days stand for two different type of worship. As I have shown in my research Sundaykeeping began and has largely remained as an hour of worship, followed by secular activities. Sabbathkeeping, on the other hand, stands for the consecration of 24 hours to God. We could say that Sundaykeeping represents a partial response to God, while Sabbathkeeping signifies our total response to God.

May I propose for your consideration that the endtime controversy over worship extends *beyond the day in which we worship into the manner in which we worship*. It is possible to worship God on the right day but for the wrong reasons. We can worship God to entertain ourselves with rock music, drama, skits, and funny talks, or we can worship God to praise His goodness and mercy with sacred music and the study of His Word. The first form of worship brings God down to us so that we can have fun with Him, while the second elevates us to God so that we can become like Him.

The endtime call to "come out from her my people" (Rev 18:4) is a call to abandon among other things the music of Babylon--the music that is designed to please self rather than to praise God. Could it be that one of the endtime strategies used by the Evil One to undermine the worship experience of Adventists today by leading them to accept the music of Babylon? Those who accept such music ultimately will find themselves worshipping God on the right day but for the wrong reasons. As far as Satan is concerned, it does not make much difference on which day people worship, as long as their worship is self-centered rather than God-centered.

A vital function of the Sabbath is to constantly remind us to be a God-centered people in a self-centered society. By observing a Holy Day we are constantly reminded of our calling to be a Holy People. In other words, the Sabbath has a defining function of our faith. It helps us define the difference between the sacred and the secular in various realms of life, including music, which is a vital ingredient of our worship experience.

The article you are about to read by Pastor Lloyd Grolimund has been edited and reworked for this newsletter. Some material has been left out and few new paragraphs have been added. I take responsibility for all the changes that have been made. I have chosen this article over several others sent me, because it is well-structured and helps people to see some of the problems posed by the "Christian Rock" music that is finding its way in our SDA church.

Unfortunately the article does not include an important aspect of recent research on the impact of rock music upon the human body. In a future newsletter I plan to offer a brief synthesis of this important scientific research which provides objective criteria for evaluating the detrimental effects of rock music. The merit of this research is that it moves the discussion from the subjective criteria of culture and personal preferences, to the objective results of laboratory studies. The problem is that I need to find time to read and digest a considerable amount of literature before I can share a synthesis in a newsletter format.

A CLARIFICATION ABOUT THE WAHROONGA SDA CHURCH

Some of the information provided in the previous newsletter about the Wahroonga SDA Church in Sydney was not accurate. I was told by some local pastors that the conflict over worship style resulted in the formation of three separate congregations, one of which was Pentecostal oriented. Apparently some of this information is not accurate. Pastor John Kingston, senior pastor the Fox Valley SDA Community Church has asked me to clarify that only two churches were formed out of this conflict, the Wahroonga, which was disbanded and reorganized, and Fox Valley. However, Fox Valley SDA Community Church consists of three different congregations that meet at different times in two different places.

One of these congregation is seen by some outsiders as Pentecostal oriented. Pastor Kingston rejects this characterization as inaccurate. He writes: "The style of worship there is very Gospel orientated but includes Scripture singing as well as special items. Despite gossip to the contrary, the Bible is always opened and preached in this service (just last week I preached on the Sanctuary and how it points us to Christ's heavenly ministry). Occasionally you might see a skit being performed but that doesn't happen very often. Sorry to disappoint the critics who feed you the false information but we don't dance, or wave our arms, neither do we speak in tongues or get slain in the spirit. In short, this service is a very typical Australian Adventist service."

Since I have not been able to attend this church, I am not in a position to say who is right, Pastor Kingston or his critics. At this point in time I prefer to accept Pastor's Kingston's information which sounds credible to me. Next time I am in Sydney I will visit this congregation in order to be able to witness if the music and service there is similar to the one I witness at the CONNECTION tent. If it is, then the "Pentecostal" characterization would apply, since the use "Christian rock" music plays an important role in Pentecostal church services.

The only thing I can say with certainty about the Wahroonga situation, is that on Wednesday evening, September 29, only about 100 people attended my popular lecture "The Sabbath Under Crossfire: A look at Recent Developments"-a lecture which has drawn capacity crowds everywhere in Australia and other parts of the world. I saw the lecture advertised in the church bulletin of the Fox Valley SDA Community Church that I picked up at the reception counter of the South Pacific Division Office. The conspicuous absence of members from other congregations that meet across the street from the Wahroonga SDA Church, suggests to me that there is little cooperation and interaction among these congregations. Let us pray for healing and unity among our fellow believers in the Wahroonga community. After all we are all members of the family of God that shares the same faith and hope. We should be able to worship together in this world, if we look forward to worship together for all eternity! y in the world to come.

"CHRISTIAN ROCK" MUSIC IN THE SDA CHURCH
Lloyd Grolimund, Youth Director, North New Zealand Conference
With substantial editorial changes by Samuele Bacchiocchi

There is probably no more emotive issue in the Adventist church today than music. Its ability to raise temperatures and increase blood pressure is unquestionable, and these tensions are not necessarily split along the lines of age, gender or race. The issue runs so deep that some churches have split over this issue and cease worshipping together. Although the protagonists in this argument claim that their differences are over worship expectations, when the curtain is drawn aside it is invariably over music. Specifically, the issue is: to rock or not to rock!

In the last decade and a half a new wave of music, generically known as "Christian Rock", has arrived at the front door of the SDA church. The music is up beat, brazen, loud and bold, and it does not hesitate to announce its presence to the church. The impact of this music has been profound and perhaps long lasting. While some consider Christian rock to be the scourge of the church and yet another sign of the end, others praise God that at last a medium has been found that communicates the message of Jesus to a modern generation.

A Definition of Rock Music. Perhaps the problem begins when we try to define what "Christian Rock" is. This is probably as difficult as coming up with a suitable definition of rock music itself. "No one has satisfactorily defined rock music."¹ Rock music is a loose term that covers a host of different music styles. This includes heavy metal, acid, techno, reggae, punk, rap, jungle, soft and hard rock, and this is only a small example of what society considers rock music to be.

Nevertheless a definition must be attempted to give the reader some indication of the music that is under discussion. In this article what is termed "Christian Rock" music will have some and usually all the following characteristics.

1. Repetition - Music that features repetition of chord patterns, words, beat, rhythm, and is written using a narrow range of notes.
2. Driving Beat - Music driven by a heavy repetitive beat.
3. Decibels - Music that is dominated by the element of volume.
4. Impact - The impact of this music is primarily from its sound and rhythm and not its words.²

Each of the above characteristics is present in most secular rock music. What distinguishes "Christian rock" from secular rock is not the music but rather the words. The other elements must be present or the music of both genres simply would not be rock music.

The proponents of "Christian rock" cite its frequent use and acceptance by the church as evidence of its suitability. However rock "music is not good because it is being performed in a 'religious' context, any more than rock music is bad because it is being performed in a 'secular' context. Rock music must be judged not by its context but by its content. Beautiful flowers can be found in a dusty desert and poisonous plants in a lovely garden."³ Therefore, to rightly resolve the issue of "Christian rock" in the Adventist church, we must judge it for what it is rather than from where it is being played, that is, a church or a night club.

A LOOK AT SECULAR ROCK

The Roots of Secular Rock. To arrive at a balanced conclusion on this subject it is necessary to understand the roots of "Christian Rock." It is generally recognized that rock music traces its early development back to the West African slave culture of the 15th century. From Africa it was transported to the West Indies on slave ships. Primitive slave instruments were replaced by trumpets, pianos and drums. Together with the Western influences of Ballad, Quadrilles, Spanish Dance, and American Country Music, Rock developed into its own new form of music. After World War II came Bill Haley with "Rock Around the Clock" followed by Elvis Presley with "Love Me Tender."⁴ Rock jumped the Atlantic and came back to America in the form of the Beatles. The Revolution had begun.

Today rock music is everywhere. Its sound can be heard on radio, television, in shopping malls and bars, at football matches, movies, clubs, and of course in the church. None of this makes rock music good or bad. Remember, we must judge rock music by its impact on the life of its composers, performers and listeners.

The Impact of Rock Music. "There can be no denying that from megastar Jimi Hendrix (who claimed to have slept with a 1000 women) upwards, many of its leading performers have made adultery, fornication, lesbianism, homosexuality, or some other form of sexual perversion a way of life."⁵ Elton John, who sang at Princess Diana's funeral once said, "There is nothing wrong with going to bed with somebody of your own sex. I think people should be very free with sex."⁶

Rock performers are not the only musicians known for their questionable behavior. "Tchaikovsky was no paragon of virtue, Chopin had the reputation of a womanizer, Mahler was hardly blameless and Mozart's haunts were not exactly havens of sanctity.

As for Wagner, he has been described as grossly immoral, selfish, adulterous, arrogant, wildly hedonistic, violently racist and... a thief to boot!"⁷ These examples illustrate how we need to be careful in condemning music solely because of the lifestyles and behavior of its creators and performers.

The Satanic influences of the occult have certainly been present in rock music from its earliest development. From AC/DC to Michael Jackson and on to bands such as the Rolling Stones, Oasis, Prodigy, Nirvana, and Marilyn Manson the overtones of the occult are evident for any to see. Album covers, lyrics and music boldly declare the association of many rock musicians with the dark underworld.

Together with the occult, drugs have played a pivotal role in the lives of rock musicians and in the development of their music. A leading rock group manager states: "No matter what anyone tells you, drugs will always be a part of the rock scene."⁸ The tragic list of those who have died as a result of drug use in the rock industry is overwhelming--- Jimi Hendrix, Jim Morrison, Keith Moon and Sid Viscous, Kurt Cobain of Nirvana, to name just a few. It is more than relevant to correlate the massive upswing in drug use by young people with the emergence of rock music as a cultural phenomenon.

Violence is also prominently in the lives and music of many rock musicians. Growing increasingly popular are the gangster rappers who come from off the streets of some of America's larger cities. Their songs advocate murder, rape and violence. One only has to pick up an album from the rap singer Snoop Dog to see that what these musicians proclaim is shocking violence of a graphic nature almost unheard of until the advent of their form of music. Coolio, 2 Puc and Will Smith are a few examples of the growing emergence of this form of violent music.

Allan Lanier admits that rock music brings out violent emotions. "There's a lot of violence, a lot of aggression in the music."⁹ Perhaps this factor has something to do with the unusually high number of rock musicians who have been killed recently in brutal drive by shootings. 2 Puc, a rap singer and self confessed murderer was shot dead in 1996 as he drove through his home suburb. He died in a hail of bullets--a scenario that he had sung about many times.

Violence often accompanies rock concerts. The violent behavior inspired by rock concerts often turns its participants into bulldozers, capable of destroying millions of dollars worth of property in few moments like tornadoes. These destructive events have received national coverage in the public media. If by their fruits we shall know them, then the destruction and desolation caused by many rock concerts speak for themselves.

IS THERE A PLACE FOR "CHRISTIAN ROCK" IN THE SDA CHURCH?

The issue we are addressing is not personalities but whether or not the so-called "Christian rock" has a place in Adventist worship. The reason for placing "Christian rock" in quotes, is the conviction that the term "Christian" should not be used for something that has been scientifically proved to cause mental, physical, and moral disorders.

We live in the very last days of earth's history when the pressure of cultural conformity is intensifying. The issue we are addressing has eternal consequences for our youth and for us as leaders. Our North New Zealand Conference Youth Department wants to ensure that everything, including our music, glorifies Christ and draws young people to the beauty and the wonder of serving Jesus.

What you are about to read reflects the commitment our Youth Department has made to uphold the standard of Christian music. We will not attempt to impose our standard upon you as a local youth leader in charge of your local church youth group. In the end only you and your local youth group can decide what will happen in your church youth programs. However, we will endeavor to maintain this standard in all North New Zealand Conference Youth programs.

"The story is told of a man who, during an election campaign, had a bumper sticker on his car which read, 'my mind is made up--don't confuse me with the facts'."¹⁰ The subject of Christian Rock is wide ranging and complicated, yet many don't hesitate to give their opinion based on how they feel and think, rather than looking openly, seriously and honestly at the facts to weigh the subject.

Before anyone can deliberate on the merits or demerits of the so-called "Christian rock" in the Adventist church, one must have a vibrant personal daily walk with Jesus Christ. (daily Bible Study and Prayer). It is only within the context of a healthy Christian experience that a mature judgment can be expressed on Christian rock in the church.

Let us review the basic facts about Rock Music:

1. "Christian rock" has its roots in secular rock.
2. Secular rock has the following qualities:
 - Rooted in the West African slave culture.
 - Influenced and advanced by various Western factors.
 - Most of its performers and composers live debauched lifestyles that are evident in much of their music.
 - Is deeply immersed in the occult.
 - Is rooted in and encourages drug use.
 - Promotes and encourages violence.

It is difficult for "Christian Rock" to divorce itself from its roots. You cannot just baptize rock music and make it Christian. The predominant difference between Christian rock music and secular rock music is the lyrics. The different use of lyrics hardly gives "Christian rock" the right to claim validity in the church of God.

Let us take a closer look at some of the characteristics of the so-called "Christian rock" music.

1) "Christian Rock" Imitates Secular Rock:

Scripture summons us not to "love the world or the things of the world". (1 John 2:15), but "Christian rock" imitates its secular counterpart. "Christian Rock artists imitate the clothing, gestures, movements and voices of secular rock performers; their whole style is set by the world."¹¹

Petra, one of the pioneers in the "Christian rock" scene, is a good example of this point. Except for the words of their songs, the style and approach of Petra is the same as that of any secular rock band. The same clothes. The same hair. The same wild eyes. The same driving, heavy beat. The same syncopation. The same rhythm. The same extreme noise levels. The same gravel voices. The same gyrating, pelvis thrusting angry stage manners. The same dancing, moshing fans. It is all the same. The same music from the same source. In his article "Where the Lyrics Fall Short," Lee Roy Homes, a well known pastor and evangelist explicitly states: "The religious pop music industry parallels in every major aspect that of secular pop-music, even having its own personality cult, its top ten listing, and its mass marketing."¹²

By imitating so closely secular rock, the so-called "Christian rock" encourages young people to accept the world-view of secular rock, with its violence and sexual perversion. Ultimately this leads our youth to lose their Christian sense of identity.

2) Christian Rock Distorts and Blurs the Message of the Gospel

"God gave us the gospel in words, and nothing should distort, blur or push away the clear word that God is endeavoring to share with us."¹³ "Faith comes through hearing and what is heard comes through the Word of God" (Rom 10:17). Most

"Christian rock" songs, however, drown out the words so that the message is incomprehensible.

In an article about Christian rock singer Sheila Walshe, David Hotton writes: "Sheila relates easily with the audience, speaks helpfully about her faith... However communication ended when she sang... the band was too loud for us to catch the words."¹⁴ As another Christian writer puts it, "If the volume or dissonance of the music are such that the words can not be heard clearly, then the whole performance is an exercise in absurdity."¹⁵

3) "Christian Rock" is not Neutral, Because it Can Control the Mind

Defenders of Christian Rock claim that the "music is essentially neutral and is only colored by the words."¹⁶ However, this argument has major flaws. In his book the *PSYCHOLOGY OF MUSIC*, Dr Max Schoen notes that, "music is the most powerful stimulus known among the perceptive senses. The medical, psychiatric and other evidence for the non-neutrality of music is so overwhelming that it frankly amazes me that anyone should seriously say otherwise."¹⁷ Music in shopping centers, airplanes, at concerts, and in the church is chosen to do something. That it does do something is proof that music is not neutral.

Jimi Hendrix, one of the great icons of rock, recognizes the power and non-neutrality of rock music. He states that "atmospheres are going to come through the rock music, because the music is a spiritual thing on its own."¹⁸ He goes on further by saying, "you can hypnotize people with rock music and when you get them at their weakest point then you can preach into their subconscious what you want to say."¹⁹

Jimi Hendrix does not see rock music as being neutral. In fact he believes just the opposite. The music is so charged that it allows him to preach his message into the subconscious of his hearers. It is the rock music-not the words, that gets the hearers of Jimi Hendrix into such a state that they would do anything for their guitar playing, rock-singing messiah. (According to Jimi Hendrix himself, up to 1000 women can testify to the truth of what he claims). If rock music of any kind was neutral, then it would be impossible for Hendrix to do what he did.

Christian rock like its secular cousin is not neutral. It has an enormous capacity to control people's mind. Some Pentecostal preachers are well-aware of it and use rock music to the full to manipulate the mind and the emotion of their congregations.

4) The Difference Between Secular and "Christian Rock" is Nominal

Supporters of Christian rock often state that the difference between Christian and secular rock is vast and recognizable. The truth is that the difference between the two types of music is hardly distinguishable. Both forms of music use the same rhythm, beat, and syncopation. Chuck Girard, a Christian rock musician, concedes that "if you take the lyrics away and changed them to a secular message, it would be difficult to tell the music apart."²⁰

Steve Turner reported in the music magazine *BUZZ* that "the difference between a rock concert and many Jesus rallies (youth rallies) is negligible."²¹ Professor Verna Wright states that when Christian and secular rock music was played at a club in Belgium, the hearers could not tell the difference.²²

The words of Richard Taylor sum up the fatal flaw in the argument that religious rock is somehow different. "We cannot change the basic effect of certain types of rhythm and beat simply by attaching to them a few religious or semi-religious words. The beat will get through to the blood of the listeners. Words are timid things. Decibels and beat are bold things, which can easily bury the words under an avalanche of sound."²³

This confirms the conclusion of Dr William Shafer who says, "rock is communication without words, regardless of what ideology is inserted into the words."²⁴ Professor Frank Garlock agrees with these findings. "The words only let you know what the music already says... The music is its own message and it can completely change the message of the words."²⁵ "Christian Rock," as its secular counterpart, influences the listeners more through its "music" than through its "words".

These compelling facts should cause Adventist youth leaders to be concerned about the use of so-called "Christian rock" in the church. While it is true that most of the words of such music are somewhat God-centered, the fact remains that the music, which clearly has the major impact on its listeners, is and remains rock music. It is the same "music" that Marilyn Manson, 2 PUC and Snoop Dog use. It is the same music that Elton John, Coolio, and Nirvanah play and sing. It is the same music that causes violence. It is the same music that has its roots in the occult. It is the same music that generates rebellion. The so-called "Christian rock," like its close secular cousin, is harsh, cold, hard, loud, and anti-Christ. Jesus is gentle and quite, speaking to us in soft godly tones. Jesus gentle manner is a long way from where we are headed in much of our so-called "Christian rock" music today.

Pierre and Gisela Winandy, respectively Theology and Music professors who have served in seven Seventh-day Adventist Colleges on four continents, state: "We noticed in Africa that converts from paganism were actually frightened by gospel rock. It reminded them of the demonic music to which they had formally been accustomed. With deep concern they described as naïve the use of such music in Christian congregations. Using such music to support the name of Jesus they considered blasphemous."²⁶

God fearing tribal Africans, are calling late 20th century, technologically advanced, well-educated, western Christians, naïve. And they are right, because they understand the demonic source and the root of the music we are often using in our worship. The so-called "Christian rock" is a hybrid of the real thing-secular rock. It is just another wedge being used by Satan to get into the church and weaken, and in many cases destroy, young people. It is time that we as the youth leaders and as a church wake up to this deception. Let us never forget that the three angels message of Revelation 14 call us to the true worship of God and warns us against the deception of false worship. Could it be that Satan is succeeding today in promoting false worship, not only through the wrong day of worship, but also through the wrong music in worship?

Our belief in the certainty and imminence of Christ's and our commitment to prepare our young people for the soon-coming Savior, should cause us to question the use of the so-called "Christian rock" in our worship. Ours is an enormous and sobering responsibility to care and lead young people to the feet of Jesus. We cannot effectively fulfill this responsibility while using the evil tools of Satan.

THE FRUITS OF THE "CHRISTIAN ROCK" MUSIC

Perhaps the best way to evaluate the so-called Christian Rock is by its fruits (Matt 7:16-20). What are some of the fruits of Christian Rock?

1) "Christian Rock" Blurs the Distinction between Christian and Worldly Values

When we use rock music in our church programs we are offering young people the same music that they find in the world. It is almost impossible for them to distinguish between the world's music and that of the church, when the only difference is the words-words that in most cases cannot be heard. This may explain why after attending a recent series of church meetings in 1998, a young lady passionately told to me. "You tell me not to go to clubs and yet I don't drink, I don't smoke, I don't do drugs. You are always saying that I should not go out dancing and yet you played the same music in tonight's program as I heard in a club the other Saturday night"! Let me assure you that it certainly was not the same music as she heard in the downtown Auckland club, and yet the fact remains that she was unable to distinguish the difference.

In the last decade and a half there has been a massive exodus in Western countries of young people from the Seventh-day Adventist Church. It would be too simplistic to blame this departure from the Faith solely on the advent of Christian rock music. There are other factors that have contributed to this exodus -not least the spiritual walk of young people themselves. Nevertheless we cannot ignore the fact that "Christian rock" has predominantly been the genre of music used during this period by many youth leaders to attract the youth to church programs. Such music may have contributed to blur the distinction between the Christian and worldly view of life in the mind of our youth who already live in a confused environment.

2) "Christian Rock" Causes the Loss of Christian Identity

By blurring the distinction between the Christian and the worldly view of life, "Christian rock" ultimately causes our young people to lose their Christian identity. Identity comes from being able to clearly distinguish one's beliefs and practices from others. This becomes difficult if not impossible when young people who are exposed to the same genre of music in the church and in the world. When one loses the sense of religious identity, one loses the reason to belong to a church. This may explain why so many young people fail to understand the significance of Adventism in the closing years of the twentieth century.

Music plays an important part in our worship culture. Bible clearly portrays this as being good and healthy (see Psalms). However, when a large section of our worship consists of rock music, we are treading on very dangerous ground. Our worship becomes a fertile ground for Satan to work in because we are using his tools-not God's.

Adventist young people are finding it increasingly difficult to see the distinction between their church and what other Christian and non-Christian churches have to offer. The danger of this is that they will go to whoever offers the "best rock music" rather than to the church that offers the truth. I personally have friends who have left Adventism for Pentecostal churches using as the basis for their decision the supposed better worship style of the Charismatic church-a worship style that is largely rooted in "Christian rock" music, a music that creates unholy excitement. The truth becomes secondary in their search for a better experience-an experience generated by "Christian rock" music.

3) "Christian Rock" Distorts the Biblical View of God.

We live in a world that has a distorted view of God and Christian Rock has played a major role in distorting the real character and nature of God. "Christian rock" artists and song writers have "redefined the Lord Jesus Christ as a 'politically-correct,' 'tolerant,' 'lovey-dovey,' non-judgmental, 'partying,' 'hip-hop,' 'rapping-rocker' that appeals to the world."²⁶

Albums like, dc Talk's "Jesus Freak", Messiah Prophet Band's, "Master of the Metal", et al, have all encouraged this distortion of God. Carmen, one of Christian Rock's most popular artists, describes the Lord in one of his songs as a "street hippie," crucified in a street-gang fight who is then thrown in a dumpster."²⁷

There are many examples of "Christian rock" distorting and often blatantly changing the truth about God and the Bible. These Christian rock portray a God who is foreign to Biblical revelation. To do this so openly within the context of Christianity is blasphemy.

4) "Christian Rock" Misrepresents the Work of the Holy Spirit.

The work of the Holy Spirit is an important and vital ministry of God to His church. "Christian Rock" claims to be of the Holy Spirit. However the facts belie this notion. The Holy Spirit only comes and ministers in the worship setting of order and discipline and not of confusion and excitement.

At the turn of the century Ellen White warned the Adventist church regarding the use of inappropriate music in worship at the end of time. Surprisingly the context of the warning was a campmeeting held in Muncie, Indiana on September 1900. After receiving the report from S. N. Haskell about the kind of music played and sung at the Muncie campmeeting, Ellen White wrote:

"The things you have described as taking place in Indiana, the Lord has shown me would take place before the close of probation. Every uncouth thing will be demonstrated. There will be shouting, with drums, music, and dancing. The senses of rational beings will become so confused that they can not be trusted to make rational decisions. And this is called the moving of the Holy Spirit."²⁸

"Those things which have been in the past will be in the future. Satan will make music a snare *by the way in which it is conducted*. God calls upon his people, who have the light before them in the Word and in the Testimonies, to read and consider, and to take heed. Clear and definite instruction has been given in order that all may understand. But the itching desire to originate something new results in strange doctrines, and largely destroys the influence of those who would be a power for good."³⁰

The Muncie Experience Today. The physical manifestations that Mrs. White condemned in the aftermath of the Muncie camp meeting are once again very much a part of the contemporary religious scene. Popular Protestant churches today are using noisy, exciting music in their services. The music is so central to their services as to exclude almost everything else. The repetition, beat, and highly amplified sound of the music controls the minds and the emotion of the people, that often we see even on TV "worshippers" lying on the floor, rolling, jerking, and shouting.

By contrast, Ellen White tells us, "The Lord desires to have in his service order and discipline, not excitement and confusion. Satan is rallying his forces. We need to be thoughtful and still, and to contemplate the truths of revelation. Excitement is not favorable to growth in grace, to true purity and sanctification of the Spirit. When believers speak the truth as it is in Jesus, they reveal a holy, sensible calm, not a storm of confusion."³¹

It is significant to note that Ellen White foresaw that the excitement caused by inappropriate music at the Muncie campmeeting, would be repeated before the end of probation. It is not unreasonable to see the fulfillment of this prediction today in some Adventist worship services. If Ellen White is not describing "Christian Rock" in the church at the end of time, then it would be very interesting to know what she is describing. I know of no other apostasy in the church that even remotely fits this description.

"A Bedlam of Noise." Ellen White clearly states that "The Holy Spirit never reveals itself in such methods, in such a bedlam of noise. This is an invention of Satan to cover up his ingenious methods for making of none effect the pure, sincere, elevating, ennobling, sanctifying truth for this time. Better never have the worship of God blended with music than to use musical instruments to do the work which last January was represented to me would be brought into our campmeetings. The truth for this time needs nothing of this kind in its work of converting souls. A bedlam of noise shocks the senses and perverts that which if conducted aright might be a blessing. The powers of satanic agencies blend with the din and noise, to have a carnival, and this is termed the Holy Spirit's workings. No encouragement should be given to this kind of worship."³¹

Note that Ellen White attributes the origin of this noisy music to "satanic agencies." It is a sobering thought that Satan, the fallen choirmaster of heaven, is the author of the bedlam of noise that characterizes rock music today. The recognition of this fact should warn our youth and its leaders against the dangers of "Christian rock."

In a vision Ellen White saw how the wrong music can drive away the angels from young people gatherings. She wrote: "The young are assembled; there is the sound of vocal and instrumental music. Christians are gathered there, but what is that you hear? It

is a song, a frivolous ditty, fit for the dance hall. Behold the pure angels gather their light closer around them, and darkness envelops those in that dwelling. The angels are moving from the scene. Sadness is upon their countenance. Behold, they are weeping. This I saw a number of times all through the ranks of Sabbath keepers."³²

This statement embodies an important principle. Music played in dance halls is not fit for the worship of God. There is a clear distinction between sacred and secular music. But we have found that this distinction is largely blurred when "Christian rock" is played in church, because such music shares the same repetitive beat, rhythm, and volume of secular rock.

CONCLUSION

An Australian experience of Louis Torres, a former bass player in Bill Haley and His Comets, provides a fitting conclusion to this study. Torres writes: "Not long ago I was invited to speak about music to groups of Seventh-day Adventist young people in Australia. After my meetings I heard many a sad confession from young people who had been weaned away from the church (rather than held inside of it) through the use of contemporary music at worship times. One youth, who was trying to get back into the church, told me-evidently speaking for other youth as well -'My fall from the church began when they started to play gospel rock in church. The gospel rock provided a natural bridge to secular rock, and soon I lost all relish for singing hymns. I lost all love for the church and was out of it before I knew it. I trace my troubles all to music.'"³³

Throughout the centuries the challenge of Christianity has been to confront the world with the truths of the Gospels, rather than to conform to the world's trends and practices. Unfortunately, much of the history of church is a story of ideological and existential conformity to societal trends. Thus, what is happening today with the adoption of "Christian rock" by many churches, is nothing unusual. It only reflects the historical failure of many Christians to live in a secular society without partaking of its values and customs.

Like in the past, today God calls His people not to conform to the world, but to transform the world by His saving grace (Rom 12:2). God summons His people, saying, "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues" (Rev 18:2-4). May God help us to respond to His endtime call to separate ourselves from the perverted beliefs and practices of spiritual Babylon, which include the bewitching, degrading rhythms of the rock music of Babylon.

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33. Louis Torres, "Christian Rock," *Adventist Affirm* (Spring 1998), p. 19.

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