

Drama and the SDA Church:

Appendix 30

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AMAZING FACTS (GRAPHICS LEFT OUT)

An Amazing Fact! Intensity of sound volume is measured in decibels (dB). Zero dB is the softest sound that can be heard. The rustle of leaves has a decibel rating of about 20, but normal conversation is around 40 to 60 dB. A jet flying 500 feet overhead has a decibel rating of about 115 dB. Hearing damage can occur after prolonged exposure to as little as 85 dB, yet rock concerts can average between 120 and 140 dB!

October 1999

Dear Friend,

For some time now I have heard that "still small voice" impressing me to talk to you about a serious issue that is steadily consuming our churches like cancer. I have avoided addressing this swelling problem for fear of being misunderstood, but I can't be silent any longer.

Let me explain. Because of the whirlwind of speaking appointments in preparation for the Millennium of Prophecy seminar in New York beginning on the 15th of this month, I have had many opportunities to visit with hundreds of our friends and supporters around the country and to observe dozens of different worship services. My concern is this: **I am alarmed at the pagan worship styles that are creeping into many of our churches.**

Musical Madness

One of the most powerful elements of worship that has become extremely divisive is music.

From the ancient Roman orgies and primitive tribal war dances, to the insane behavior at modern concerts and sporting events, pagan music with its heavy, syncopated rhythms has been used to excite carnal passions and wild behavior. Many Christian churches have now embraced this same music. And it's not just the loud "Christian rock." I have seen whole congregations that look like they have been mesmerized through the New Age music with shallow, repetitive lyrics sung over and over. If Jesus tells us not to pray in vain repetition, then it is likely He does not want us singing that way either (see Matthew 6:7).

Theatrical Theology

Another element invading modern Christian worship is drama. I have no moral problem with using some visual aids to help people better understand Bible truth. God asked prophets like Ezekiel and Jeremiah to do this (see Jeremiah 32: 14 and Ezekiel 5: 1-4).

But some argue that this justifies the dramatic stage productions with raucous applause that are making their way into our churches.

The problem is that many professed Christians have become so over-stimulated from a steady diet of movies, TV, and videos that a simple, reverent worship service without drama, drums, and dancing deacons seems boring by comparison. Many now come to church to be entertained rather than to give their worship, praise, songs, and offerings.

Remember. King Nebuchadnezzar used the best of Babylonian music to prepare people to worship the image he made. The devil will do the same thing in training Christians to worship the image of the beast!

The Truth for the Youth

Proponents for this dramatic worship style often argue, "We have to do something more modern and contemporary because we are losing our youth!" I must respectfully disagree. I was brought to the truth at age 17 by the simple, yet profound, impact of God's Word. I doubt that you had ever met a more "liberal pagan" than I was back then. If God could get my attention and bring about my conversion without shallow drama, goofy programs, and worldly music, I believe He can still do it for other young people today! Amen? We often underestimate the power of His Spirit and the pure, simple Word to convert hearts. Amazing Facts continues to receive a mountain of mail from young people who find the Lord through the straight preaching of our TV programs and the powerful, uncompromising truths in our Bible Study Guides.

When you support Amazing Facts, you support a ministry that strives daily to present the truth of Jesus in a straightforward, dignified, and respectful manner.

Time and again, rock music demonstrates its ability to bring out the basest of human passions and behaviors. The Woodstock '99 rock concert in July culminated with a rampage of violence, vice, vandalism, and rape.

Changing With the Times

As a metropolitan pastor, I am acutely aware of the subtle forces that are constantly urging, "If we want to reach this secular society, we need to make some modern modifications in our worship services to make them more attractive to the world." This was the same fatal rationalization that was used by misguided Christians just before the Dark Ages. They argued, "If we are to reach the pagans, we need to make it easier for them to transition into the church by making a few 'harmless concessions.' We need to incorporate some of their images, songs, and rituals into our services so they will feel more at home." I recognize that as time rolls on people must make certain practical changes to keep pace with an ever-evolving society. Most churches now have parking lots rather than hitching posts and electricity rather than kerosene lamps. Clothing styles are ever changing, and while Christians should not be the first to embrace every new fad, we should keep pace with the modest versions of contemporary fashions so as to not appear as spectacles frozen in the past. But should our worship of the Almighty be dictated by popular trends? Is conduct for Christian worship to be determined by culture, fads, and personal preferences? or by the Bible? God does have some unchanging

absolutes to guide us in discerning proper worship. "For I am the Lord, I change not" (Malachi 3:6). "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever" (Hebrews 13:8).

Eternal Principles

Some church services I have recently seen resemble an "unholy hootenanny." Yet the Scriptures teach that there should be a peaceful order in our worship. "For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints" (1 Corinthians 14:33). The simple reading and expounding of the Word has inherent power without colored lights and theatrical embellishment. "So they read distinctly from the book, in the Law of God; and they gave the sense, and helped them to understand the reading" (Nehemiah 8:8, NKJV). A reverent, quiet dignity should characterize our worship of the Almighty. "But the LoRD is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him" (Habakkuk 2:20).

The first murder in history was over the issue of how to worship God. Cain and Able had the same altars and claimed to be serving the same God, but the gifts on the altars were different. and God would not accept Cain's worship and offering.

Going to Inquire of Baal-Zebub

Some will argue that many of the churches that practice these contemporary, alternate worship trends are growing like mushrooms. Hundreds of pastors are flocking to these "successful" mega-churches to study and learn how they can inject these pagan growth hormones into their own congregations. They believe this swelling attendance is evidence that these methods must be of God. But is numerical growth the ultimate test to determine if something is biblical? "Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil" (Exodus 23 :2). Remember, the false prophets on mount Carmel outnumbered Elijah 850 to one!

Consider the glaring contrast seen there between Elijah and the prophets of Baal (see 1 Kings 18: 19-40). The pagan prophets danced and jumped and shouted all day, but Elijah humbly knelt down and offered a simple, reverent prayer with no fanfare or pretense. Which prayer did God answer? It was not the Pagan Pandemonium of Baal's prophets, but the calm, meek worship of Elijah that God honored with the fire then the rain! **Likewise, the final conflict in the great controversy between Christ and Satan will revolve around the issue of whom, how, and when we worship.** Revelation warns us that the beast will compel all the world to worship as he dictates... or suffer persecution and death (Revelation 13: 15). Please stand with Amazing Facts in counteracting these errors with the truth of God's Word.

Prophecy is Being Fulfilled

The prophecies of Revelation teach that there will be a union between Protestants, Catholics, and Charismatics that will ultimately merge into a political-religious power, forming the final image to the beast. It's happening now! In their book, Evangelicals and Catholics Together-Toward a Common Mission, Chuck Colson and Richard John Neuhaus admit "More generally, **the spread of the charismatic movement (and then**

of songs, prayers, and worship styles going well beyond officially charismatic circles) has done a great deal to reduce the barriers between Catholics and evangelicals." When these barriers are broken down, watch out!

Overcome Evil With Good!

People who handle cash in banks are trained to spot counterfeit bills by studying the real ones. Amazing Facts teaches the truth so people can spot the devil's spiritual counterfeits. Every facet of our ministry is geared to highlight the authentic so that it will, in turn, expose the fraud. Day in and day out, Amazing Facts teaches those precious truths through our live evangelistic meetings, television and radio programs, and correspondence Bible School. Your support of these various efforts is changing lives, and we have the mass of mail to prove it--every day!

Every week Amazing Facts produces the Sabbath School and church service at Sacramento Central Church, and broadcasts them on 3ABN and other cable stations around the country. We believe that these biblically-based services have a defining influence on God's people around the country and help to limit the flood of worldly worship styles eroding our churches. **The only way to combat the wild trends in worship is by word and example, educating people with the truth!** When you support Amazing Facts, you are funding wholesome, biblical food that nourishes thousands of spiritually-starving people.

Well, I'm out of space and I have much more to say about this issue than I can fit in our monthly letter. That's why my special gift tape for those who respond now is my recent message titled When the Fire Came Down. It deals directly with the subject of our worship and our relationship with God. Feel free to copy it and share it with your friends.

If you share my concern, please let me hear from you so I will know I am not out on this limb alone. And, as the Lord leads, please enclose a gift to keep the various ministries of Amazing Facts in front of the thousands who are growing and coming to the truth each day. I believe there are still thousands of knees that have not bowed to Baal over this issue! And we must warn others before it's too late! We would deeply appreciate your help at this time.

Yours in Christ,

Doug

P.S. As of this writing we have received \$1,800,000 of our needed \$2,500,000 budget for the Millennium of Prophecy seminar. We praise God for His provision and trust that He will stir the hearts of His children to provide the remainder.

AMAZING FACTS

Reaching the World With God's End-Time Message