

PENTECOSTAL PASTOR DANTE GEBEL AND ADVENTIST QUARTET “AMANECER” INVITED TO AN ADVENTIST PASTORAL EVANGELISTIC CONVENTION

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Dante Gebel is a successful Pentecostal pastor who was invited by Southern Union to give a message for Adventist pastors at the Third Evangelist Council (EC3). The meetings took place at Southern University (Nov 5-8). Dante is a rock star from Argentina who became a Pentecostal evangelist and filled two of the large stadiums in Buenos Aires with thousands of people. At the present time, he is the pastor of the Crystal Cathedral in California. An Argentinean quartet sang several times at Dante’s crusades. While this quartet was composed of Seventh-day Adventists, they had at the beginning not been welcomed in Adventist churches and had been singing at Pentecostal venues. However, they were invited along with Dante Gebel to the EC3 event at Southern. They were also invited to perform for the University’s Spanish congregation.

This invitation produced a strong reaction among several pastors, who believe that we should maintain our distinctive pattern of worship and praise, and refrain from mixing them with mundane popular shows and inspirational charismatic music. Of deeper concern is that Gebel was invited by leaders like Roger Hernandez (the Cuban evangelist leader of the Southern Union), who has demonstrated in his ministry a greater affinity toward Pentecostal and Charismatic worship styles, than toward Adventism. Now, more and more pastors who are orbiting in the realm of Roger Hernandez are introducing purple lights and strident songs into their worship services, borrowed from those spectacular and theatrical milieus.

This fact did not go unnoticed in local newspapers which I shared with pastors some years ago. When you talk with people who visited his former churches, several of them depict Roger’s worship style like this testimony I received some years ago:

“If you were to visit one of his [Roger’s] churches . . . you would think that you were in a Pentecostal church rather than an SDA church. Music is loud, the guitars, the panderetas [tambourines], bongos the hallelujahs, touch me Lord, glory to God every 5 seconds, people shouting, this is no exaggeration. When I was invited to preach there I could not believe this type of Pentecostal worship . . . I spoke 15 minutes and left . . . just did not feel God’s presence there . . . we don’t have anything to copy or to envy from the Pentecostals . . . I love this church and it’s ministry, but it is so sad . . . to see SDA churches and ministers turn into Pentecostals . . . Distinctive messages in those churches (Adventist Messages), not a chance . . . I think that it was good that all this controversy started because God knows how many other churches and pastors are disguised as SDA ministers . . . Enough said.”

Look at the following “youtube” video and see who gave the “unction of the Spirit” for the pastoral ministry of Dante Gebel. It was no one else than Benny Hinn, the multimillionaire Pentecostal miracle-worker. Gebel practically deified Hinn when he was later invited to his church. See Hinn’s reception by Dante Gebel at <https://youtu.be/A2--739kyGw>, and Gebel’s reception by Benny Hinn at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GflZyGCdqIE>

So, what is happening in some leadership circles of our church? Is it wise to invite that kind of people for a Seventh-day Adventist Evangelistic Pastoral Council? Even if he was only requested to speak on the “pastoral family”, what is the real purpose of that invitation? Are there no Adventists who are equally qualified to speak on that subject?

Look at the worship style of the Seventh-day Adventist quartet “Amanecer” who accompany Dante Gebel: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5VvMz1vFKKo> They sang in the meeting where Gebel delivered his message! See just one show among many: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7RuPh8O3vTw>

“Amanecer” in New York. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aLm5OWhZ9H0&feature=youtu.be>
“Amanecer” celebrating a new Pentecost for 80 years of Pentecostal presence in Argentina.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oLrhg5NK1XI>

I. Background

In order to help many to understand the nature of the problem, let us summarize some characteristics of these new styles of evangelism and worship which have nothing to do with the principles that we inherited from our forefathers and, more definitely, from the Spirit of Prophecy.

1. It is intended to praise Jesus at the expense of doctrine or prophecy. The promoters of this new pentecostalized evangelist style require that doctrines not be taught in the evangelistic meetings, but only a person, Jesus Christ. Our question is, “How may we inspire real love for a person without knowing what that person stands for and being in harmony with that standard and teaching?” Are we not the remnant who “keep the commandments of God and have the faith of Jesus,” that is, the doctrine of Jesus, what he believed and required us to teach to all the world, baptizing them in His Name? (Matt 28:18-20; Rev 14:12).

In the history of the Adventist people, E. G. White confronted the leaders when they tried to conceal some of our testing truths in their evangelistic crusades and in their publications. In that context she wrote:

“I saw that when the messengers enter a new place, their labor is worse than lost unless they bear a plain, pointed testimony... There was a failure in P. [Parkville]. N. A. [Andrews] was fearful of offending, fearful lest the peculiarities of our faith should appear, and the standard was lowered down to the people. God’s servants must bear a pointed testimony. It will cut the natural heart, and develop character. Brethren J. N. A. and J. N. LO. [Loughborough] moved with a perfect restraint upon them while in P. Such preaching will never do the work that God designs to have accomplished” (*Ellen G. White. The Early Years*, I, 436).

2. Some believe that doctrine or prophecy must come after baptism. But their “lite” style of worship and evangelism seldom brings the people to know prophecies and doctrine. On the contrary, they are more interested in a “today” without direction, which fabricates an “existential” gospel, a peculiar pure sentimentalism, a search for momentary emotional feelings, like the masses which go to great concerts of rock and all range of worldly pop music. This type of worship offering is intended to bring many people to the church, supposing that it will please God. But their offering is like the offering of Cain, with the additional excuse of presumably attracting post-modern people through rock music.

“Only when the Church is composed of pure, unselfish members, can it fulfill God’s purpose. Too much hasty work is done in adding names to the church roll. Serious defects are seen in the characters of some who join the church. Those who admit them say, *We will first get them into the church, and then reform them. But this is a mistake. The very first work to be done is the work of reform. Pray with them, talk with them, but do not allow them to unite with God’s people in church relationship until they give decided evidence that the Spirit of God is working on their hearts*” (RH, May 21, 1901 par. 7).

“The preparation for baptism is a matter that needs to be carefully considered. The new converts to the truth should be faithfully instructed in the plain ‘Thus saith the Lord.’ The Word of the Lord is to be read and explained to them point by point. All who enter upon the new life should understand, *prior to their baptism*, that the Lord requires the undivided affections... The practicing of the truth is essential... *There is need of a thorough conversion to the truth*” (Ev 308).

“The test of discipleship is not brought to bear as closely as it should be upon those who present themselves for baptism... When they give evidence that they fully understand their position, they are to be accepted” (TM 128 (1897)).
“There is need of a more thorough preparation on the part of candidates for baptism. They are in need of more faithful instruction than has usually been given them... None can depend upon their profession of faith as proof that they have a saving connection with Christ. We are not only to say, ‘I believe,’ but to practice the truth” (6 T 91-92 (1900)).

In order to better understand this new evangelist philosophy deployed at the EC3 by Roger Hernandez, I looked on the internet for information about some of the leaders of our church invited to that pastoral council at Southern Union. For the speakers, see:

<http://www.southernunion.com/article/642/ministries/ministerial-evangelism/evangelism-council-ec3/speakers>

Let me say some things about just four of them:

(1) Pr. Allan Machado (Evangelist of the Florida Conference). In a Spanish message given on October 21, he insisted that the essential message of the Adventist faith is based on a “today,” and mocked the Millerite experience which was based on three dates (1843, April 1843, and October 1844). In his view, our church learned the lesson from their failure, and no longer sets dates for the future. See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2QvqbQV1JoU>

What a calamity! He doesn’t bring out the fact that the error of interpretation had nothing to do with the date itself, but with what was expected to happen on that date. In her first vision, E. G. White saw that the powerful outcry related to October 22, 1844, was to light the entire pathway of the remnant to the city of God.

“This light shone all along the path and gave light for their feet so that they might not stumble” (EW 14) “Of all the great religious movements since the days of the apostles, none have been more free from human imperfection and the wiles of Satan than was that of the autumn of 1844. Even now, after the lapse of many years, all who shared in that movement and who have stood firm upon the platform of truth still feel the holy influence of that blessed work and bear witness that it was of God” (GC 401).

“I was pointed back to the years 1843 and 1844. There was a spirit of consecration then that there is not now. What has come over the professed peculiar people of God? I saw the conformity to the world, the unwillingness to suffer for the truth’s sake. I saw a great lack of submission to the will of God” (CET 158). “Nothing is to be allowed to come in that will disturb the foundation of the faith upon which we have been building ever since the message came in 1842, 1843, and 1844. I was in this message, and ever since I have been standing before the world, true to the light that God has given us. We do not propose to take our feet off the platform on which they were placed as day by day we sought the Lord with earnest prayer, seeking for light” (GCB April 6, 1903; Review & Herald, April 14, 1903).

“It was not the proclamation of the second advent that caused fanaticism and division... The preaching of the first angel’s message and of the “midnight cry” tended directly to repress fanaticism and dissension. Those who participated in these solemn movements were in harmony; their hearts were filled with love for one another and for Jesus, whom they expected soon to see. The one faith, the one blessed hope, lifted them above the control of any human influence, and proved a shield against the assaults of Satan” (GC 398).

“Fanaticism disappeared before this proclamation like early frost before the rising sun... The work was free from those extremes which are ever manifested when there is human excitement without the controlling influence of the word and Spirit of God... There was little ecstatic joy, but rather deep searching of heart, confession of sin, and forsaking of the world. A preparation to meet the Lord was the burden of agonizing spirits” (GC 400-1).

News Flash! Our church didn’t learn a lesson concerning prophetic dates. Our pioneers understood the message of Rev 10 which specifies that after 1844, there would be no more prophetic dates till the coming of the Lord. Machado also mocked a good graphic found on the internet, which specified certain events that are to transpire as we approach the end of the world: the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the shaking, the plagues, etc.

Is Machado really an Adventist pastor? Adventism means to look forward, to all what is related to the end of the world and the coming of the Lord, not just a general final event. The White Center prepared a book, *Last Day Events*, inspired by the exhortation of E. G. White who wrote that “great pains should be taken to keep this subject before the people” (*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, 336). We are constantly warned by the Spirit of Prophecy about the need to look toward the future, to what is coming.

“Evangelistic work, opening the Scriptures to others, warning men and women of what is coming upon the world, is to occupy more and still more of the time of God’s servants” (RH Aug. 2, 1906). “We have received the light of the three angels’ messages; and we need now to come decidedly to the front, and take our position on the side of truth” (RH Oct 13, 1904). “The Lord designs that the presentation of this message shall be the highest, greatest work carried on in the world at this time” (6 T 11 (1900)).

Of course we need to look toward the future while still paying attention to our present experience, or the future will be of no avail for us. But it is also true that we cannot concentrate on “today” while

neglecting the mission given us by God concerning “tomorrow”, because this means to grope along, as a body without a head, without direction. A “today” without “tomorrow” is one of the devil’s most successful snares.

(2) **Alejandro Bullon (retired evangelist still active from South America)**. This evangelist introduced a style of evangelism in Latin America called “Revive,” a title borrowed from Pentecostals. Fortunately, his crusades are not characterized by noisy activities. But his messages are well known for being monothematic in content. Before him, Seventh-day Adventists in Latin America were feared by other religious groups for their knowledge of Scripture. Now, his public emphasis on a personal experience with God without doctrine or prophecy causes many to have an “existentialist religion.” How is it so hard to get a balanced message which combines experience with doctrine and prophecy?

Alejandro gathered thousands of people even in stadiums in South America, like the mega-church televangelists in North America. He believes that local pastors and members of the church have to teach doctrine. But many pastors and members of the church follow his example of the “revive” style. Their messages are equivalent to the messages of evangelical mega-church televangelists. The secretariat of the GC has expressed their concern about the number of apostasies from the church even though, fortunately, they are almost always exceeded by baptisms. I don’t think that it has to do with apostasies. The greatest percentage of what is termed apostasy has to do with people who were baptized without truly becoming Seventh-day Adventists.

E. G. White wrote to an evangelist in New York “reproving him in many points, encouraging him on others. It was clear that he was very weak in instructing his converts concerning spiritual gifts, and he had little use of health reform” (*Ellen G. White: The early Elmshaven Years*, V), 134.

Just one anecdote. When I was giving a seminar on the sanctuary and final events in Germany, some Adventist brothers who had moved from Russia to Germany asked me if I knew Alejandro Bullon. “Yes,” I replied. “Is he an Adventist?,” I was asked again. “Yes,” I replied. “Why do you ask?” They told me that Bullon had been invited to preach in Russia, and some brothers from there were asking if he was an Adventist pastor, because he didn’t preach the Adventist message (doctrines, prophecies).

(3) **James Doggette (professor of theology in Oackwood University)**. When you go to the internet, you find more than 640 comments on accusations of domestic violence and moral issues under his name. See <http://www.topix.com/forum/city/huntsville-al/TFLEG0542QMFL5FNP/p32>. It is, however, not our business to comment on those points. One of the comments concerned us more in connection with his ministry.

“SDA churches have allowed the devil to take our worship and turn it into a place where you would think the church is a night club. The music is loud, the people are not praising God. I am not saying the service should be boring, but we should be careful not to get caught up in worldly emotions. We have lost our first love.”

See James Doggette legacy at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6aaPwM-Ub9c>

(4) **Jose Vicente Rojas**. For a number of years he was the Youth leader of the NAD (North American Division). When the Michigan Conference organized GYC (Generation Youth for Christ), Rojas opposed it, and through his influence, the Spanish coordinators of the North American Division forbade it. Why? GYC is a conservative lay movement who meet to study the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy, do missionary work and give Bible studies. It was born at nearly the same time as the arrival of the third Christian millennium, with roots coming from Asia.

I have nothing against Rojas and the Hispanic leaders of the NAD, except for that vote taken against the formation of a healthy youth for Christ. But that vote fortunately could not be implemented for two specific reasons: (a) it was inspired by God and (b) received the support of Mark Finley and Ted Wilson, president of the GC. In my thirteenth year of age I would have joined that movement, because at that time I read, for the first time, the book *Great Controversy* of E. G. White. Young people can and are to be

prepared for serious issues, not just for funny and pleasant meetings. Today, GYC is found in nearly 50 countries, with some resistance in places where self-support ministries are not perceived favorably.

Let me warn you against a growing trend which involves several leaders in the NAD, who promote what several non-Adventist theologians are calling *Entertainment Theology*.

“Those who have a careless, clownish manner, either in the family or in society, dishonor their divine Lord. Even ministers have thus misrepresented Christ, when in the pulpit they have made a display of theatrical actions and eccentric manners. This is not of God. Eccentricities are sometimes looked upon as virtues by men, but they do not aid in representing Christ. Careless attitudes and irreverent expressions may serve to please men of unrefined tastes, anecdotes may amuse, but the minister who seeks to cater to such tastes has a meager appreciation of the dignity, simplicity, goodness, and loveliness of the character of the divine Lord” (ST, October 13, 1890 par. 5).

“Your danger, my dear brother, is in making the grave mistake of supposing that success depends on drawing a large congregation by outward display. To bring anything of a theatrical nature into the preaching of the word of God is to use common fire instead of the sacred fire of God’s kindling” (*Letter* 51, 1902, pp. 5, 6). “The appetite of the people for a theatrical style of preaching may be satisfied, but the effects made have not saving results. Outward display, expensive arrangements, do not give the people the education in gospel missionary work that the Lord desires them to receive. These things work against the truth, hindering instead of advancing it; for the truth is mingled with common, worldly methods. God’s money is not to be expended in this way” (9 MR 387).

At the same time, the North American Division supports *Encounter God* and the *One Project*, a kind of ministry permeated by Eastern and Catholic mysticism. I won’t discuss here the serious concerns raised by their theology of worship. I will simply point out that they mix *New Age* and *Emerging Church* principles. No wonder that their founders, mocked the dates offered by the Millerites (like Machado), and presume to exalt Jesus at the expense of doctrines. (See J. Gabriel Piedra Quirós, *¡Despierta Laodicea! Tu Señor Viene Pronto* (Copicentro, San José, Costa Rica, 2015), chap 11.

3. Truth is mixed with error. This new trend of worship and evangelism in some Adventist milieus is offered in a beautifully decorated package, to conceal the error and make it attractive. But no matter how fascinating is the wrapper, the bread within was baked in the devil’s oven. We don’t need that bread within our church, neither can we afford to be dazzled by its beautiful paper and ribbon.

Roger Hernandez wrote on January 28, 2017, an article entitled, “Worship Truce.” He says there, literally, “for the last 30 years or more, we have been fighting about music styles. It’s time for a truce.” He advocates for percussion instruments such drums in the church, together with traditional hymns. He wrote there: “I could rock out with hands raised with the praise bands and meditate reverently on good ole’ hymns. No, I was not afraid of progress nor reform. I felt I’d finally become a ‘liberal’ in the truer definition of the word” (“I thought I was a Liberal...,” August 26, 2015).

In a local Newspaper, *Deseret News*, Sarah Linn (Associated Press) comments on August 23, 2003 regarding the worship services offered by Roger Hernandez in the Seventh-day Adventist Hillsboro Spanish Church in Oregon. The article’s title was, “Hispanic Flocks are Growing.” There Linn associates the worship and music styles of Roger with Pentecostals and Charismatic sects. “On a Saturday morning, they talk, laugh, sing. They throng the altar, shaking hands and patting backs. And when the Rev. Roger Hernandez roams the pulpit, hand raised to the heavens, cries of ‘Amen’ fill the air.” A young lady of the Adventist church said: “We hug a lot. We have a lot of emotions.” In the article cited above, a sociologist explained this phenomenon in the following way: “There’s always a lot of fermentation and blending of religious styles, especially in migrant communities.”

Some members of that Adventist church in Oregon were polled who responded that the atmosphere is not of a church. Music seems to come from a carnival or from a night club or from a Pentecostal church. This testimony was confirmed to me—as quoted in the introduction of this paper—by others who attended the churches of Hernandez in the Potomac Conference. He threatened at that time, to move to a Regional Conference if he was forbidden that kind of worship. Now, as evangelist of Southern Union in Atlanta, Georgia, he testifies that he learned from experience that the transformation of the Seventh-day Adventist liturgy has to be done gradually, not at once.

Roger claims that he enjoys both liberal and conservative music. I think that he learned to tolerate “traditional hymns,” in the process of integrating his new mundane music. As a matter of fact, he tried to take out the wonderful organ from a church in Oregon (which evidently bothered him) in his attempt to introduce the new kind of liturgy. He failed because of strong opposition from the brethren of that church.

No one denies that a variety of activities are can be a good thing. But, can we deny that true worship can also be mixed with wrong exercises?

"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 working..." (VSS 418).

"Genuine faith and love, and the reverence and fear of God, will have a refining influence on the life. Spurious pretenses, emotional, fitful, religious experiences will also make themselves apparent in the life. Too often, for a time, these pass for genuine religion; but their influence is such that the question is forced upon those who have a knowledge of the fruits of righteousness, What is the chaff to the wheat?" (Jer 23:28) (GH, August 1, 1906, 2).

In the following youtube video, Pr. Ivor Myers, who composed rap, hip hop, rock, and other similar music, tells us what he did after being converted to the Adventist message. At the beginning, he tried to put Christian words to that evil music. However, it was not long before he realized that if he wanted to leave Babylon (Rev 18:4-5), he had to completely abandon that demonic music. He read the story of the demon-possessed woman who followed Paul crying out, "these men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation" (Acts 16:17). Then, he concluded that his attempt to proclaim God through a demon-possessed music is just what the devil wants to confuse people. He enjoys mixing demonic music with Christian words. For this reason, Ivor ended up asking along with the apostle Paul, "what fellowship has light with darkness"? (2 Cor 6:14). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HIpG8R7gkxo>
See also, from the same author, how spiritualism is penetrating the churches through all that pop music, in: <https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/#inbox/15ffedba31fd5365?projector=1>

"The enemy is determined to mix error with truth" (8 T 184). "Error cannot stand alone, and would soon become extinct if it did not fasten itself like a parasite upon the tree of truth. Error draws its life from the truth of God. The traditions of men, like floating germs, attach themselves to the truth of God, and men regard them as a part of the truth" (Ev 589).

"In many of the revivals which have occurred during the last half century, the same influences have been at work, to a greater or less degree, that will be manifest in the more extensive movements of the future. *There is an emotional excitement, a mingling of the true with the false, that is well adapted to mislead.* Yet none need be deceived. In the light of God's word it is not difficult to determine the nature of these movements. Wherever men neglect the testimony of the Bible, turning away from those plain, soul-testing truths which require self-denial and renunciation of the world, there we may be sure that God's blessing is not bestowed" (GC 464).

4. A resource to compensate lack of spiritual power. In the following youtube video you can see Roger Hernandez arguing that a change in liturgy and music is necessary to win apostate sons who are living in the world. So, in his view, in order to win them it is necessary to bring the world into the church, to lower the spiritual reverence and holiness of God in worship services. Drug addicted youth can find their ambience in the church, their accustomed atmosphere in meetings. They don't need to go outside because they can find what they seek within.

This is like a whore complaining that the man she lives with goes out to look for other whores when he already has one at home. As a matter of fact, after worship services, these presumably recovered youth spend most of the day listening to equivalent popular mundane songs. As already seen above, "*the truth for this time needs nothing of this kind in its work of converting souls*" (VSS 418). See in this youtube video (unfortunately in Spanish) the very words of Roger Hernandez to justify the change of liturgy and music sought.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3K7VGRIUPbQ>

This leader of evangelism in the Southern Union advises from own experience, that in order to change the church's liturgy and music, it is necessary to do so gradually, because the members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church are not prepared for a sudden change. So, what is he looking for? Is he intending to lead the church to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Pet 3:18), little by little, "from glory to glory"? (2 Cor 3:18). Or is he rather intending to lower the concept of God in the church, little by little, from degradation to degradation?

This reminds me of a president of one of our colleges in Argentina, who years ago was succeeding in his public relations effort to obtain support from the military regime in Argentina. He accepted the son of a general who had been expelled from other high schools and with whom the father was at a loss for what

to do. “If you can,” said the general, “convert him to your religion.” In order to keep him in the college as long as possible, the discipline of the institution was weakened. The outcome was not only the return of that son to his father near the end of the school year, but also the expulsion of a number of students who might otherwise have remained in good standing with the college.

I have given more than 300 seminars in Hispanic churches in the USA, throughout Latin America, and on other continents as well. In all these places I have met young people rescued from drug addiction who were not attracted to the church through coarse music. I see churches growing everywhere without the need to Pentecostalize them in their worship and praise style. One Friday evening in Buenos Aires before giving a seminar, I saw many young Adventists meeting on the street near a church. They were preparing to walk the streets of the city, seeking young drug addicts to give them a meal, offer them help, pray with them, and encourage them to leave that life. Those Adventist young people do not go there to sing rock, rap, hip hop, pop, reggae, or any equivalent thing. They win souls in that way for the many churches of the city. Thus the supposed need for a degrading change in worship is no more than the figment of some Adventists’ imaginations. There are many other ways to win people to the church.

5. Like in the Middle Ages. Why are so many religious leaders, both outside and within our church, resorting to that kind of demonic music, supposedly intended to attract millennial people to the religion of their fathers? In essence, because *they don’t love the Bible and they lack spiritual power*. They end up agreeing with the world that the reverent services of the church are boring. So, it is necessary to offer an exciting service, emotionally charged. As a consequence, they become unable to distinguish between what is sacred and what is common. Their offering is like the offering of Cain, a human product, not what God requires. Their mission is not much more than *an entertainment enterprise*. They don’t realize that they are following the subtle path of the devil which succeeded during the Roman empire by introducing the same methodology, preparing the way for the imposition of “the man of sin” in the Christian church.

Let us review that story which is being repeated today. As Christians were approaching the Middle Ages, more and more Christian leaders resorted to heathen practices to attract pagans. Masses of pagans entered the Christian church without real conversion. The Bible was set aside and replaced by invented fables. The lack of spiritual power was compensated with pagan hymns that had pleased the people in the former cult, adorned now with Christian words. A hybrid cult was the outcome. See historical documentation in A. R. Treiyrer, *The Seals and the Trumpets. Biblical and Historical Studies* (2005).

“The world, cloaked with a form of righteousness, walked into the church. Now the work of corruption rapidly progressed. Paganism, while appearing to be vanquished, became the conqueror. Her spirit controlled the church. Her doctrines, ceremonies, and superstitions were incorporated into the faith and worship of the professed followers of Christ” (GC 50).

In Paul and Nero we find the representatives of two religions, true “Christianity and paganism; the representatives of two theories of life—the simplicity of self-denying endurance, ready to give up life itself, if need be, for the good of others, and the luxury of all-absorbing selfishness, that counts nothing too valuable to sacrifice for a momentary gratification” (LP 312).

6. Ecumenism is preferred at the expense of Sola Scriptura. Several leaders of our church, especially in Europe, are trying at any cost to appear in line with the ecumenical agenda. They prefer to walk in line with other Christian churches. This has caused some to oppose distribution of the book *Great Controversy*. When distribution by independent ministries cannot be stopped, some have tried to apologize to other churches saying that this is an old book written in a former century with a historical value, but irrelevant for today. In the USA many leaders didn’t care for the call of Ted Wilson, the president of the GC, to massively distribute that book. In South America, followed by other Divisions, they prepared a little edition of the GC removing as much as possible any direct message of warning to fallen churches.

Thus, the trend of many administrators in our church is toward a better understanding with all the churches. I don’t say that we must be wild and incendiaries. But truth is truth, and it must be proclaimed under penalty of dishonoring it and disappointing the entire universe which looks with apprehension at

what is happening on earth. The angels of God look at how those like us who were raised by God to call God's people to leave Babylon and give the last warning message of judgment to the world, deal with that truth. We must make every effort to identify ourselves with the cause of heaven over other earthly dreams.

Women's ordination to the pastoral ministry is not the real issue, neither introduction of rap and pop music. The greatest problem is lack of faith in the Word of God. For many the norm is no longer the Bible and only the Bible. In the new modern approach, the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy which was foretold by the Bible, are useful only when it coincides with what the reader believes. The rest is interpreted as being no longer relevant for today. It has to do with a religion à la carte. So what counts in today's trend is the social or cultural norm, a feeling of confraternity and love for all, without excluding the LTGBQ community which presumes to be the object of our special love and consideration.

Peter and Paul, and even John in the book of Revelation, would today be considered sectarians and outmoded when they wrote, "be saved [flee] from this corrupt generation!" (Acts 2:40); "come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you" (2 Cor 6:17). "Come out of Babylon, my people" (Rev 18:4).

The invitation extended to Dante Gebel reveals that ecumenical trend, an effort by Adventists to feel acknowledged and rubbing elbows with the great Pentecostal televangelists. This friendship with the world is "enmity with God" (James 4:4). I don't say that we have to hate other religious leaders. I agree that we can be friends with neighbors and other pastors, without loving what they do that is in agreement with the spirit of the world.

These famous Pentecostal leaders who are loved in their worship style by some Adventist leaders, are in turn, trying to brush shoulders with all other religions, especially with the papacy. 100 Pentecostal pastors stretched out their hands to the papacy in the Vatican two years ago. Rick Warren is currently joining efforts with pope Francis to offer a pattern of union to be followed by all Christian churches. Joel Osteen greatly admires the plan of the current pope for his view of an "including church." Some of our leaders also share the same ecumenical spirit, trying to hobnob with those spectacular Evangelical charismatic preachers. They copy their sermons and present them to their churches.

"Among many of the ministers of Christ there is a feeling of unrest, a desire to imitate the romantic style of modern revivalists, a desire to do something great, to create a sensation, to be accounted able speakers, and to gain for themselves honor and distinction. If such could encounter perils and receive the honor given to heroes, they would engage in the work with unflagging energy. But to live and labor almost unknown, to toil and sacrifice for Jesus in obscurity, receiving no special praise from men—this requires a soundness of principle and a steadfastness of purpose that but few possess. Were there a greater effort to walk humbly with God, looking away from men and laboring only for Christ's sake, far more would be accomplished" (5 T 132-3).

7. Some try to justify the trend to invite modern spectacular preachers arguing that the method intends to win them to our church. Those who believe this don't know that Dante Gebel was not necessarily invited to be won by our church, but to contribute to moving our church toward a Pentecostal worship style. Actually, some leaders who were involved with his invitation feel more identified with Gebel than with their own Adventist church. They want to copy His "show" style, expecting to prepare the Seventh-day Adventist Church for a post-modern era and free her from a kind of worship they consider boring and out of date. Let us answer at once that if there is a migration, it has to be from Dante Gebel to Adventism, not from Adventism to Dante Gebel.

Some pastors who are in the orbit of Roger Hernández have began to put purple lights in their churches with the same background of "show" as the Pentecostal churches (see Roger Hernández preaching in a church near Southern Union: https://drive.google.com/open?id=1cpeDQzORzmMF3H_iY6iKV56u_xfpAv4) This is the case with the Spanish church of Southern University, where the quartet Amanecer was also invited to give a concert: See also the Spanish Church of the Community near Southern Union: <https://drive.google.com/open?id=11dkmFmN4KGuWzTBSfrjgMef70wzqTjcg>

They don't realize that the sanctuaries of *San La Muerte* [Saint Death] are also immersed in the same purple color. See, for instance:

<http://www.cronica.com.py/2017/02/21/devocion-san-la-muerte-me-dio-la-vida/>
<http://sanlamuerteblog.blogspot.com/2013/>

Dante Gebel was careful not to say anything directly related to his theology of worship in an Adventist setting. He did however make a fleeting appeal to the Seventh-day Adventist pastors to open themselves up to accept new styles of music and worship. This fact indicates that he was following a script that was traced out for him by his hosts at the evangelistic convention at Southern Union. His invitation was a first step in a “little by little” tactic, for something bigger to come later on.

Based on what Roger Hernandez believes (as referred to above), I can offer my own suggestion as to what the gist of that script was in the following words: “We have resistance in our Adventist church to accept a new pattern of worship because there are many traditionalists, and we have to move along carefully, little by little. Now it is not convenient to say this or this, thought we could say perhaps this and this. Anyway, the most important thing is that we invited you, which is a great step to advance the new style of preaching and praising that we want to introduce into our church.”

Now it is time to deal more definitely with the style of worship, to distinguish between what is sacred and what is common in music issues.

II. Music styles

In addition to the Argentinean Pentecostal Pastor Dante Gebel, the ministerial department of Southern Union invited a Seventh-day Adventist quartet (also from Argentina) called “Amanecer” (“Dawn”). That quartet used to accompany Gebel in his evangelistic shows.

At the beginning, Amanecer was conservative, but moved on to other modern styles which was resisted by their church and, therefore, they sang more in non-Adventist churches. I was told that now they are singing more and more in the Adventist churches and two of them are elders of the church. The question is, “who is changing?” Is it the quartet in its style, or the Seventh-day Adventist churches who invite them today? See the web page of some of their interpretations given in the introduction of this paper.

Let me tell you that, as interpreters of that mundane music, that quartet is extraordinary. But, can we conciliate the words of their songs with the nature of their music? Who are they singing to?

1. The songs and music of the temple reflect what we believe. We may express our beliefs with different styles of worship. Both music and language are in constant motion. Therefore we can and must worship God through different means and styles, according to the place where we are. But there are certain parameters, certain limits that we don’t want to overlook. Not everything goes. We have to be careful so as not to be infiltrated by the music of the world.

Do we have to lower our worship services to win souls? What kind of conversion are we looking for? The music, the way we build or prepare the temple where we worship, reflects our view of who God is and what we feel in His presence, if we really feel His presence. Are we singing to please unconverted people or to truly praise the Lord? Are we seeking to display ourselves before those who are considered “great” on the earth, or to reveal the character and holiness of the Great King of the Universe? Where is our worship directed? Is it toward the earth or toward heaven? The songs of the church are intended to praise God, not man; to please the Creator and Redeemer of this creation, not the world.

It is appropriate to use hymns when calling people to accept Jesus as their personal Savior. But those hymns must be in harmony with the spirit of Heaven. The greatest preachers of our church don’t use rock or pop or hip hop to touch the hearts of those who want to accept Jesus. Elijah felt the presence of God not in the earthquake or in the storming fire, but when it came in “a gentle whisper” (1 Kgs 19:12-13).

Since the 16th Century, Protestant churches banished saints and Madonnas, anything that distracted and interposed between God and man. Pentecostal churches are today introducing changes that likewise distract the people from true worship. They are changing the liturgy of Evangelical churches. Some Adventist churches are following the same pattern. When possible, the nave of the temple is darkened, and a light follows the preacher, like in a theater. The scenario is centered on the preacher who becomes

an actor. This disposition of the temple purposes to entertain the audience with what the preacher does. Even if some texts may be mentioned in the meeting, people are not really brought to the Word of God, but to the elegance and ability of the actor to captivate and delight the audience.

“Let there be no oddities or eccentricities of movement on the part of those who speak the Word of truth, for such things will weaken the impression that should be made by the Word. We must be guarded, for Satan is determined, if possible, to intermingle with religious services his evil influence. Let there be no theatrical display, for this will not help to strengthen belief in the Word of God. Rather, it will divert attention to the human instrument” (2 SM 23-24).

2. A worship service for display and pleasure. The same happens with many songs and instruments of music, which are given special relevance with dances and batteries that invite the choir and the church to unite in motion at the hammered rhythm in counterpoint. Praise is usually centered in feelings rather than in God. The people come to the church as they come to a popular show, seeking a moment of pleasure instead of looking to scrutinize their hearts before God, in humility and meekness. The Spirit of Prophecy, that is, the Holy Spirit who inspired the prophets, warns us against this kind of worship in this way:

“Your singing is for display, not to praise God with the spirit and understanding. The state of the heart reveals the quality of the religion of the professor of godliness” (Ev 507). “Singing is just as much the worship of God in a religious meeting as speaking, and any oddity or peculiarity cultivated attracts the attention of the people and destroys the serious, solemn impression which should be the result of sacred music. Anything strange and eccentric in singing detracts from the seriousness and sacredness of religious service” (VSS 422).

“Fanaticism, false excitement, false talking in tongues, and noisy exercises have been considered gifts which God has placed in the church. Some have been deceived here. The fruits of all this have not been good. ‘Ye shall know them by their fruits.’ Fanaticism and noise have been considered special evidences of faith. Some are not satisfied with a meeting unless they have a powerful and happy time. They work for this and get up an excitement of feeling. But the influence of such meetings is not beneficial. When the happy flight of feeling is gone they sink lower than before the meeting because their happiness did not come from the right source” (LDE 159-160).

“The most profitable meetings for spiritual advancement are those which are characterized with solemnity and deep searching of heart, each seeking to know himself and, earnestly and in deep humility, seeking to learn of Christ” (1 T 412 (1864)).

Those who look for popularity don’t realize that the goal of prayer, the goal of our study of the Bible, the goal of our praise to God, is not to bring attention to us, or to generate pleasure, but to seek strength to overcome in the Christian life in the face of perplexities, struggles, and despair. Feelings may occur as an outcome of true worship. But true faith does not depend on feelings to exist. This is the reason why E. G. White warned in the book *Great Controversy*, that:

“Many of the revivals of modern times have presented a marked contrast to those manifestations of divine grace which in earlier days followed the labors of God’s servants. It is true that a widespread interest is kindled, many profess conversion, and there are large accessions to the churches; nevertheless the results are not such as to warrant the belief that there has been a corresponding increase of real spiritual life. The light which flames up for a time soon dies out, leaving the darkness more dense than before.

“Popular revivals are too often carried by appeals to the imagination, by exciting the emotions, by gratifying the love for what is new and startling. Converts thus gained have little desire to listen to Bible truth, little interest in the testimony of prophets and apostles. Unless a religious service has something of a sensational character, it has no attractions for them. A message which appeals to unimpassioned reason awakens no response. The plain warnings of God’s word, relating directly to their eternal interests, are unheeded.

“With every truly converted soul the relation to God and to eternal things will be the great topic of life. But where, in the popular churches of today, is the spirit of consecration to God? *The converts do not renounce their pride and love of the world.* They are no more willing to deny self, to take up the cross, and follow the meek and lowly Jesus, than before their conversion. Religion has become the sport of infidels and skeptics because so many who bear its name are ignorant of its principles. The power of godliness has well-nigh departed from many of the churches. Picnics, church theatricals, church fairs, fine houses, personal display, have banished thoughts of God. Lands and goods and worldly occupations engross the mind, and things of eternal interest receive hardly a passing notice” (GC 463-4).

How E. G. White exhorts us not to unleash the feelings like the manner of a cult! She constantly warns us on how fleeting are emotions, and the need of keeping them under control. Our only safe path is in exalting the Word of God, “the more sure word of prophecy”, which has authority over feelings.

“The inquiry in many hearts is, How shall I find happiness? We are not to make it our object to live for happiness, but we shall surely find it in the path of humble obedience” (ST, 22 de mayo, 1884, 7). “Let no one make his feelings his idol, and bow his soul down to worship and serve his sensations. ‘Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve’” (ST 9 de abril, 1994, 2). “If the preaching is of an emotional character, it will affect the feelings, but not the heart and conscience. Such preaching results in no lasting good, but it often wins the hearts of the people and calls out their affections for the man who pleases them. They forget that God has said: ‘Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils’” (5 T 301).

“She is altogether too much like a flashing meteor, to flash up and go out in darkness... Her feelings is her religion. All the light, all the opportunities she has had to know the truth, handling the most precious banquet, she appropriates nothing to herself, unless it will administer to her self esteem and vanity” (MR926, 53).

“Do not exalt your feelings, and be swayed by them, whether they be good, bad, sad, or joyful. The apostle says, ‘We have also a more sure word of prophecy...’ It is the word of God that is to be your assurance” (ST 3 de Dic., 1894, 2). “With some, religious exercises mean little more than a good time. When their feelings are aroused, they think they are greatly blessed. Some do not think they are blessed unless they are stirred and excited. The intoxication of excitement is the object they are seeking; and if they do not obtain this, they suppose they are all wrong, or that someone else is all wrong. People should not be educated to think that religion of an emotional order, bordering on fanaticism, is the only pure religion. Under the influence of such religion the minister is expected to use all his nervous energy in preaching the gospel... There are those who, unless their decaying emotions are stimulated, think they can be careless and inattentive” (2 SM 21).

“There are two extremes to be avoided: one is the shunning to declare the whole counsel of God, and running into the spirit of revivalists in this age of crying “peace, peace, when there is no peace,” and weaving into the labors an element which moves the feelings but leaves the heart unchanged. A sensational religion is to be dreaded, for it is hard work, when once it has been woven into the experience, to ever make the individuals feel that they must go deeper than mere emotional exercise; that they must practice true godliness” (17 MR 101).

“God would have all move calmly, considerately, choosing our words in harmony with the solid truth for this time, which requires to be presented to the mind as free from that which is emotional as possible, while still bearing the intensity and solemnity that it is proper it should bear. We must guard against creating extremes, guard against encouraging those who would either be in the fire or in the water” (VSS 292).

“Still others go to the opposite extreme, making religious emotions prominent, and on special occasions manifesting intense zeal. Their religion seems to be more of the nature of a stimulus rather than an abiding faith in Christ” (Ev 502). “There are quicksands upon which many are in danger of being swamped. It is always safe to seek for the earnest of the Spirit of God, if we do not mingle with it a force and presumption that is not heaven born. There is need of caution in all our utterances lest some poor souls of ardent temperament shall work themselves up into a zeal not according to knowledge. They will act as though it was their prerogative to use the Holy Spirit instead of letting the Holy Spirit use them, and mold and fashion them after the pattern of the divine. There is danger of running ahead of Christ. We should honor the Holy Spirit by following where it shall lead” (2 SM 59).

“Some have allowed their feelings to control their judgment, in meetings for worship, and have indulged in words and attitudes that have not been in harmony with the solemn worship of God. We have heard men shout and jump, and pound the desk, and use vain repetition, and this they thought was worship to God. But it was not according to the direction or will of God. All that is coarse in attitude or word makes the service of Christ a matter of ridicule, and brings confusion into the house and worship of God” (ST Feb 24, 1890, 5).

“Satan is now working with all his insinuating, deceiving power, to lead men away from the work of the third angel’s message, which is to be proclaimed with mighty power. When the enemy sees that the Lord is blessing His people, and preparing them to discern his delusions, he will work with his masterly power to bring in fanaticism on one hand and cold formalism on the other, that he may gather in a harvest of souls. Now is the time to watch unceasingly. Watch for the first step of advance that Satan may make among us” (ChS 40).

3. Motion of body and gesticulation of face. On one occasion, just before delivering my message, a lady was leading the songs of the congregation. Her little daughter went to the front and grabbed the legs of her mother who was singing. That three-year old girl began to gesticulate with her face and mouth without singing. Her mother was not doing this at that moment, but I realized that she was imitating many other singers she had seen singing before the church. E.G. White saw nothing of this in the angels of God. Let us pay attention to some of her statements.

“Bodily exercise profiteth little. Everything that is connected in any way with religious worship should be dignified, solemn, and impressive. God is not pleased when ministers professing to be Christ’s representatives so

misrepresent Christ as to throw the body into acting attitudes, making undignified and coarse gestures, unrefined, coarse gesticulations. All this amuses, and will excite the curiosity of those who wish to see strange, odd, and exciting things, but these things will not elevate the minds and hearts of those who witness them.

“The very same may be said of singing. You assume undignified attitudes. You put in all the power and volume of the voice you can. You drown the finer strains and notes of voices more musical than your own. This bodily exercise and the harsh, loud voice makes no melody to those who hear on earth and those who listen in heaven. This singing is defective and not acceptable to God as perfect, softened, sweet strains of music. There are no such exhibitions among the angels as I have sometimes seen in our meetings. Such harsh notes and gesticulations are not exhibited among the angel choir. Their singing does not grate upon the ear. It is soft and melodious and comes without this great effort I have witnessed. It is not forced and strained, requiring physical exercise” (VSS 423).

“True religion is not to be found in noise, in contortion of the body, which profiteth little, but it is made manifest in good works, and in the holy temper of the soul. Genuine sanctification will make a man calm and sensible. He will be humble, gentle, kind, forbearing, full of love--this is the fruit of sanctification” (ST Feb 24, 1890, 5).

4. Himnovasion, Nuevo Tiempo (Seventh-day Adventist Channel of the South American Division, etc.) Adriana Perera is one of a group of liberal music leaders fighting to open a window to the music of the world in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. That group has a web page called *Himnovasion*, and are constantly criticizing what they term “traditional” Adventists. They consider themselves “progressive Adventists.”

Adriana was teaching music at *Oakwood University* in Alabama, and she is currently teaching at *Andrews University*. A youtube video on the internet shows the type of music Adriana wants to introduce into the church, requiring an open mind to new forms of worship. See: <https://youtu.be/M3qVBLhAIxM> She even cautions against judging those who speak in tongues as not having the Holy Spirit. Her argument is that if Pentecostals and other evangelical churches can win souls with rap music, hip hop, rock, etc., why could we not do the same? She has been invited to present this kind of message to a wide distribution of Adventist churches for a number of years now. Some who oppose her are condemned even by Israel Leito (president of the Interamerican Division) as being extremists who divide the church.

Adriana likes to showcase a few hymns that were taken from popular songs, and advocates widely for acceptance of a broad range of musical styles in the church, according to different cultures. We can agree with the principle. But in order to know what she and her associates mean, we need to scrutinize what they are really trying to introduce. She even mocks as being boring and tasteless some hymns which for us are really marvelous hymns.

The *South American Division* has a TV channel called *Nuevo Tiempo* or *Novo Tempo*. Under the rationale of reaching non-Adventist people, they are likewise corrupting the music in our church. The purpose of winning souls seems laudable, and some positive results can be obtained. But that end doesn't justify the method. It could, from a positive angle, simply prove how much God wants to save people through a weak and imperfect worship. Sometimes God also answers prayers made to a Catholic saint or virgin, as recognized by those who come to realize that those saints and virgins don't exist. Does that mean that we need to promote the worship of saints because at a certain moment, God took into account the ignorance of some sincere worshippers?

Himnovasion got a counter-reaction on the internet called *NoInvasion*. A spirited and ongoing confrontation runs on the internet between these two antagonistic approaches regarding what kind of music is to be accepted in the church to praise God.

5. When the angels weep. Concerning corrupt and demonic music that sometimes seems to produce conversions, we have to ask if for every soul won in this way, ten are not lost of those who were already in the flock. And even worse, by presuming to win souls in that way, the whole church is corrupted at the point of becoming unable to distinguish between what is sacred and what is profane. In addition, we find in the churches that are led into that kind of cult a lack of interest in the truth that God entrusted to us for this time.

“By the temptations attending these singing exercises, many who were once really converted to the truth have been led to separate themselves from God. They have chosen singing before prayer, attending singing schools in

preference to religious meetings, until the truth no longer exerts its sanctifying power upon their souls. Such singing is an offense to God" (RH July 24, 1883).

Is the outcome of several leaders who started with a celebration music style and ended by dividing the church and even leaving the church to found a new church not enough to warn us concerning that kind of worship? Is the mix of good music and bad music a sign of progressiveness? Are we not adopting a hybrid style of worship that will end with the devastation of our youth, as we were warned by the Spirit of Prophecy? Again, the pattern for such practices is not the Bible, not the Spirit of Prophecy, but culture, "shows" and spectacle in search of pleasant feelings, to have fun.

"Satan is entertained as an honored guest, and takes possession of those who patronize these gatherings. A view of one such company was presented to me, where were assembled those who profess to believe the truth. One was seated at the instrument of music, and such songs were poured forth as made the watching angels weep. There was mirth, there was coarse laughter, there was abundance of enthusiasm, and a kind of inspiration; but the joy was such as Satan only is able to create. This is an enthusiasm and infatuation of which all who love God will be ashamed. It prepares the participants for unholy thought and action. I have reason to think that some who were engaged in that scene heartily repented of the shameful performance" (CT 339).

"Angels are hovering around yonder dwelling. The young are there 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 countenances. Behold, they are weeping. This I saw repeated a number of times all through the ranks of Sabbath keepers, and especially in _____. Music has occupied the hours which should have been devoted to prayer. Music is the idol which many professed Sabbath-keeping Christians worship. Satan has no objection to music, if he can make that a channel through which to gain access to the minds of the youth" (MYP 295).

6. Charismatic music: the strongest tool for an ecumenism of heart. Pope Francis is advocating for starting a union of churches and religions with an ecumenism of heart. Catholic charismatics are organizing ecumenical events based in the creation of what has been called *Emotional Praise and Worship*. Christopher Hudson, a black native American laymen who before his conversion practiced rock music, is making now publicly exposing the real purpose of that kind of worship and music coming from charismatics. Many others are warning the church in similar terms. But I share the testimony of Hudson because he is black, and many Latin-Americans and white "celebrationists" in our church have attempted to justify the new demonic styles of worship by giving the example found in many "regional" churches. Let us keep in mind that many black leaders have not bent the knee to Baal. They believe that the warnings and counsels of the Spirit of Prophecy were given for them also. They do not accept being discriminated against on the pretense that E. G. White wrote only for white people.

A world ecumenical encounter took place on October 24-26, in Kansas, USA, called *Kairos 2017*. See <https://www.kairos2017.com/> Hudson interviewed the Catholic charismatic leader of the USA who told him that ecumenism is possible through music, because it may unite Christians over their different church traditions (cultures or doctrines). This shows, once more, how the devil is succeeding in silencing the conscience, to make believe that we can unite the religious world in a great brotherhood feeling through a music which causes us to lose interest in our distinctive beliefs. See the youtube video at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qBFvfAVLVvE&sns=em>

In this context, would not we sound the alarm for the introduction in our milieu of the same kind of music which is romantic, feeling-centered with an external manifestation of brotherly love, singing presumably to Jesus, but without doctrine, without prophecy, without bringing out the truth? Didn't the Lord warn us that "the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks"? (John 4:23). Didn't the apostle Paul warn us to "preach the word" because the time would come when they would not accept "sound doctrine," and would "turn away their ears from the truth" (2 Tim 4:2-4)?

7. Some think that this is a lost battle. If this was so, we would be lost, failing to grasp what our mission is in the world. But there is a saying that goes, "the one who fights is not yet dead." Therefore

this is not a lost battle. Otherwise there would be no reason to warn us that “Satan will make music a snare by the way in which it is conducted” (2 SM 36, 38 [1900]). Isn’t a battle between a right and a false worship related to the final crisis of humanity? (Rev 14:6-12).

We need to be guarded against the danger of becoming accustomed to the beggarly music of the world. What excites our feelings will eventually render boring and tasteless an otherwise healthy spiritual meal. After imbibing the coarse music coming from outside, many may experience what the people of Israel felt in the wilderness. They had learned to love the pots of Egypt to the point that the meal of heaven was tasteless for them. It is harder for some than it is for others to reeducate their taste toward a renewed and refined experience. But don’t get discouraged. Once learning to appreciate and enjoy the manna of heaven, a deep and healthy spiritual experience, you will come to prefer it to the pots of Egypt that you had enjoyed before. This has been the experience of many who came from those circles of the world, and converted to the Lord.

How did Satan deceive the people of Israel near the entrance of the Promised Land? In the same way he is trying to do it now with the spiritual remnant of the seed of Abraham, at the very doors of the heavenly Canaan. They were invited to attend the festivities of Moab by an apostate prophet, to enjoy their music.

“They ventured upon the forbidden ground, and were entangled in the snare of Satan. Beguiled with music and dancing, and allured by the beauty of heathen vestals, they cast off their fealty to Jehovah” (PP 454).

III. Characteristics of a musical concert which don’t please God

Pagan music was from ancient times characterized by noise, shouting, racket, and dance (Exod 32:17-19). On one occasion, a Pentecostal lady in a store became suddenly hysterical during our conversation, and began to repeat to me, loudly: “we have to yell God, we have to yell God, to yell God.” I thought that this was what she learned in her church. I remembered the experience of Elijah upon Mount Carmel, when he mocked the pagan priest who were dancing and shouting loudly to Baal: “Shout louder! Surely he is a god!,” Elijah told them. “Maybe he is sleeping and must be awakened” (1 Kings 18:27). So, I told the lady that if God is our friend, as He wants to be, we don’t shout at a friend.

Let us meditate on several statements of the Spirit of Prophecy. As you can see, she speaks without mincing words, and is consistent in all her writings. There is no way to dodge what she wrote under the inspiration of God. So, think about this while reading her statements. If you don’t care for what she wrote, there is no remedy for you.

“Your voice has been heard in church so loud, so harsh, accompanied or set off with your gesticulations not the most graceful, that the softer and more silvery strains, more like angel music, could not be heard. *You have sung more to men than to God*” (VSS 425.3). “*Your singing is far from pleasing to the angel choir. Imagine yourself standing in the angel band elevating your shoulders, emphasizing the words, motioning your body and putting in the full volume of your voice. What kind of concert and harmony would there be with such an exhibition before the angels? As your voice had been elevated in loud strains above all the congregation, you have been thoughtful of the admiration you were exciting*” (Ms 5, 1874).

“The things you have described as taking place in Indiana [in 1890], the Lord has shown me would take place just before the close of probation. Every uncouth thing will be demonstrated. There will be shouting, with drums [today batteries], and dancing. The senses of rational beings will become so confused that they cannot be trusted to make right decisions. And this is called the moving of the Holy Spirit” (5 MR 107).

“*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 camp meetings. 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 working...” (Letter 132, 1900).

“Singing should not be allowed to divert the mind from the hours of devotion. If one must be neglected, let it be the singing. It is one of the great temptations of the present age to carry the practice of music to extremes, to make a great deal more of music than of prayer. Many souls have been ruined here. When the Spirit of God is arousing the conscience and convicting of sin, Satan suggests a singing exercise or a singing school, which, being conducted

in a light and trifling manner, results in banishing seriousness, and quenching all desire for the Spirit of God. Thus the door of the heart, which was about to be opened to Jesus, is closed and barricaded with pride and stubbornness, in many cases never again to be opened" (VSS 426.1).

"The Lord showed me that erroneous theories and methods would be brought into our camp meetings, and that the history of the past would be repeated. I felt greatly distressed. I was instructed to say that at these demonstrations demons in the form of men are present, working with all the ingenuity that Satan can employ to make the truth disgusting to sensible people; that the enemy was trying to arrange matters so that the camp meetings, which have been the means of bringing the truth of the third angel's message before multitudes, should lose their force and influence" (2 SM 36).

IV. Genuine joy and happiness in singing

All what have said till here does not mean that our religious services have to be boring. Yesterday, in the church where I am a member, the whole time of the sermon was devoted to sing in commemoration of the day which in the USA is known as Thanksgiving. What precious hymns were chosen to sing!

When the Israelites crossed the Red Sea and God destroyed their enemies, they sang happily for the divinely granted liberation. Mariah, the sister of Moses, began to dance with joy, followed by other women, while singing with timbrels in their hands. This was a unique experience because the liberation experienced was also unique, and will be repeated by the redeemed people of God from all ages, when God will rescue them from this world. This will be the song of Moses and of the Lamb (Rev 15).

David likewise danced before God on a unique occasion, like a child full of joy when God permitted the return of the ark to his capital city (2 Sam 6:14). With the same spirit, there were in ancient Israel, moments of joyfulness before the divine manifestation, which formed part of the very folklore of the nation, a theocratic nation where civil and religious life was united (Ps 150). What a contrast with the pagan music that the "mixed" congregation tried to introduce before Mount Sinai, after the manifestation of the glory of God, which provoked the divine wrath with its consequent destruction! (Exod 32).

The dances of Mary, David, and on special occasions by the people of Israel, had nothing to do with the dances many are trying to introduce into our church today.

"David's dancing in reverent joy before God has been cited by pleasure lovers in justification of the fashionable modern dance, but there is no ground for such an argument. In our day dancing is associated with folly and midnight reveling. Health and morals are sacrificed to pleasure. By the frequenters of the ballroom God is not an object of thought and reverence; prayer or the song of praise would be felt to be out of place in their assemblies. This test should be decisive. Amusements that have a tendency to weaken the love for sacred things and lessen our joy in the service of God are not to be sought by Christians. The music and dancing in joyful praise to God at the removal of the ark had not the faintest resemblance to the dissipation of modern dancing. The one tended to the remembrance of God and exalted His holy name. The other is a device of Satan to cause men to forget God and to dishonor Him" (PP 707).

In the early years of the Adventist movement, even before its organization as a church, there was also a moment when the pioneers, including E. G. White, experienced moments of great emotion and enthusiasm. Those manifestations were similar to what we can see today among Pentecostals and charismatics even by TV. There were some who fell down as dead, "Shouts of victory filled the dwelling," and even some genuine manifestations of the gift of tongues were witnessed (*Letter 30*, 1850). Arthur White comments how God intervened to change that current of emotionalism. He concludes his description of the enthusiasm of that time in the following way:

"Was the emerging church entering upon a period of emotionalism? Was this exciting and seemingly satisfying experience one that was to be encouraged and depended upon? In a vision given to Ellen White on December 24, God sounded a solemn warning, a warning that not only related to these exciting occasions but had a clear bearing on some unusual experiences of the previous two years in talking in unknown tongues" (*Ellen G. White: The Early Years, I - 1827-1862*, 195).

This was the testimony given by E. G. White about those exuberant experiences.

"I saw that the exercises were in great danger of being adulterated, and their former opinion and knowledge in governing in a measure their exercises, therefore implicit confidence could not be placed in these exercises. ... I saw that we should strive at all times to be free from unhealthy and unnecessary excitement. I saw that there was great danger of leaving the Word of God and resting down and trusting in exercises..." (*The Early Years*, 202).

Since that time, solemn calls against the jubilant or joyous "shouting" began to come from the pen and voice of E. G. White, as well as against strident music, drums, and any kind of unhealthy excitation already described in this document. Considering the many deceptions that come with miracles, she also emphasized that God gave to His people preventive laws of health as He did it with the people of ancient Israel before entering the Promised Land. Instead of miracles, it was God's intention to create hospitals wherever the people of God advanced.

How to express joyfulness today in singing

Some years ago, some Pentecostal pastors invited me to join them in organizing some Christian musical concerts. But I refused telling them that we have a different theology of worship, and an incompatible style of expressing our praise to God. I explained my belief that it was appropriate to keep such gatherings separate. I was feeling at that time an increasing concern about how some brothers were introducing Pentecostal recordings into our church. I spoke several times on the matter, appealing to my brothers' conscience, and I began song service to teach them to sing new hymns. How they appreciated those moments!

How may we express our joyfulness in singing? What's the difference between this manifestation of happiness and the way others sing? Here are some suggestions of E. G. White about a clean, healthy and simple joyfulness.

Learning the songs of heaven here (taken from some of her sermons)

"'Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord.' Shall we not be able to persuade the silent lips and voices to sing his praises? The time will come when all will praise him...,saying, 'Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests... Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing...' O let us begin to sing the songs of heaven here, and then we can join the heavenly company above" (*RH*, 6-4-95, 6).

"Do we expect to join the redeemed company in heaven above? Shall we be of that company that shall cry, 'Worthy, worthy is the Lamb that was slain, and who lives again'? Then let me tell you that every one of us must learn the song here. We cannot be in the city of God and our tongues not tuned to sing His praise. We want here to have the love of God in our life and character" (*Ms 16*, 1887). "I want to sing the song of Moses and the Lamb. I want to cry, 'Worthy, worthy is the Lamb.' I must be there, and I want you to be there, so that when your name is called you may answer, 'I am redeemed by the blood of the Lamb'" (*Ms 20*, 1894).

"Heaven, sweet heaven of rest! It is then that we shall cast our glittering crowns at the feet of Jesus and touch our harps and sing the songs, 'Worthy, worthy is the Lamb that died for us.' I see in Him matchless charms. I want all to have a part and share in the eternal weight of glory and to sing songs of rejoicing throughout the endless ages of eternity" (*Ms 46*, 1886).

A subject to manifest enthusiasm

"Here is a theme, poor formalist, which is of sufficient importance to excite you. Eternal interests are here involved. Upon this theme it is sin to be calm and unimpassioned. The scenes of Calvary call for the deepest emotion. Upon this subject you will be excusable if you manifest enthusiasm...The length, the breadth, the height, the depth, of such amazing love we cannot fathom. The contemplation of the matchless depths of a Saviour's love should fill the mind, touch and melt the soul, refine and elevate the affections, and completely transform the whole character. The language of the apostle is: 'I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.' We also may look toward Calvary and exclaim: 'God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world'" (*2 T 212-213*).

"Many are even led to behold Calvary, they are pointed to the crucified Saviour, and yet they are unmoved by the manifestation of Infinite Love. But shall we look with stoical indifference upon all the revealing of his love? Rather, shall not our hearts be melted and subdued in fervent gratitude and love? Shall we not sing the praise of our Creator and Redeemer? God has endowed men with emotional powers, and these are to be exercised and

strengthened, but many seem to be devoid of feeling. They manifest no gratitude, give no praise to God, the giver of all their mercies... All heaven looks with amazement upon this unnatural exhibition of ingratitude toward Him who sends his sunshine and rain on the evil and on the good" (ST Jan 5, 1891, 7).

Even so, let us pay attention to these warnings:

Whatever may be our condition or position in life, it is our privilege to have the faith that works by love and purifies the soul. Faith that produces love to God and love to our neighbor is true faith. This faith will lead to genuine sanctification. It will increase our reverence for sacred things. The name of God will not be used carelessly. It is dishonoring God to speak of him as though he were on a level with finite man. We should speak with reverence the sacred name of Christ.... Let us take this precious name upon our lips with profound reverence. Some have allowed their feelings to control their judgment, in meetings for worship, and have indulged in words and attitudes that have not been in harmony with the solemn worship of God" (ST Feb 24, 1890)..

"Let small companies assemble in the evening, at noon, or in the early morning to study the Bible. Let them have a season of prayer, that they may be strengthened, enlightened, and sanctified by the Holy Spirit. This work Christ wants to have done in the heart of every worker. If you yourselves will open the door to receive it, a great blessing will come to you. Angels of God will be in your assembly. You will feed upon the leaves of the tree of life... Let each tell his experience in simple words. This will bring more comfort and joy to the soul than all the pleasant instruments of music that could be brought into the churches. Christ will come into your hearts. It is by this means only that you can maintain your integrity" (7 T 195).

Need of reverence and solemnity

"Satan will make use of every extravagant expression to the injury, not only of the speaker, but of those who shall catch the same spirit... Calmness and solemnity should be cultivated; the solemn truths we dwell upon will lead us to manifest deep earnestness. How can we do otherwise when weighted with the most sacred message to bear to perishing souls-- weighted by the sense of the nearness of our Saviour's coming... We do not want to have the minds of the people wrought up into an excitement. We should not encourage an expectation to see strange and wonderful things. But teach them to follow Jesus step by step" (2 SM 60).

"Such experiences will come to us from time to time. Let us give no place to strange exercisings, which really take the mind away from the deep movings of the Holy Spirit. God's work is ever characterized by calmness and dignity" (2 SM 42). "We must go to the people with the solid Word of God; and when they receive that Word, the Holy Spirit may come, but it always comes, as I have stated before, in a way that commends itself to the judgment of the people. In our speaking, our singing, and in all our spiritual exercises, we are to reveal that calmness and dignity and godly fear that actuates every true child of God" (2 SM 43).

"When believers speak the truth as it is in Jesus, they reveal a holy, sensible calm, not a storm of confusion! (Ev 612). "The Lord desires to have in His service order and discipline, not excitement and confusion... Excitement is not favorable to growth in grace, to true purity and sanctification of the spirit" (2 SM 35).

CONCLUSION

I wrote this document with the sincere intention of reaching those who are deceived or confused by the Pentecostal or charismatic innovations which some are trying to introduce into our church concerning liturgy and music. While I believe that Dante Gebel and other pastors and laymen may be good people, and sincere in what they are doing, sincerity is not a proof of truth. I believe, simply, that from a Seventh-day Adventist prophetic and ecclesiastical perspective, they are deceived and deceiving others.

Some believe that the boom of "celebrationism" which divided a number of Adventist churches two decades ago, has now passed for our church. I'm not so sure of that. In any case, it is no longer alarming. Many administrations in our church no longer intervene when they see that typical style "show" of the world. They give freedom to Adventist churches to choose their own direction. From a celebrationist perspective, they have learned like Roger Hernandez, to move on "little by little" to avoid confrontations as much as possible.

Conditions were quite different at the beginning of the Adventist movement, and again at the beginning of the 20th century. God intervened through His messenger so our church was not dragged into a charismatic or Pentecostal worship style. The devil tried then to penetrate other churches, and the outcome was the foundation of the Pentecostal church at the beginning of the 20th century. Through that church and the appearance of "Charismatic" influences in the second half of the 20th century, Satan was invited into almost all Christian churches. Thanks to the Spirit of Prophecy it was harder for the devil to

introduce himself in the same manner into the Seventh-day Adventist Church. But due to the lack of faith in the *Testimonies* witnessed in the last decades of the former century, and a neglect of the principles of the gospel such as we received from our pioneers, the devil is finding space to operate within our church.

Those who promote a sensational, spectacular style of worship, whether gradually to avoid awakening suspicion or reaction in the church, or openly, must know that they will not prevail in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. They may confuse many and divide more churches. But they will not be able to change the simple liturgy of the church or her message, because such a foreign style of worship has no part in our prophetic heritage. There will always be voices of warning that God will raise so that those who truly want to prepare themselves for the end, and join the angelical choir, may see the light.

Let us not be deceived. There is nothing new in modern fake Pentecostalism, or Charismaticism, or celebrationism, which border on fanaticism or at the least emphasize feelings. It has all been witnessed in paganism for millennia. On the other hand, true joyfulness is not found seeking joyfulness, but looking for Jesus. True Christian liturgy may vary somewhat in form, but in substance, in worship nature, it will continue being the same. Let us continue preaching faithfully and, with the blessing of God, we will be free from both extremes, fire and water, exuberant emotionalism and cold formalism.

“God calls upon His people to walk with sobriety and holy consistency. They should be very careful not to misrepresent and dishonor the holy doctrines of truth by strange performances, by confusion and tumult... When believers speak the truth as it is in Jesus, they reveal a holy, sensible calm, not a storm of confusion” (2 SM 36). “Let God’s people act so that the world will see that Seventh-day Adventists are an intelligent, thinking people, whose faith is based on a surer foundation than the bedlam of confusion. The people are hungry for the bread of life. Do not offer them a stone” (2 SM 25).

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is not Babylon, but Laodicea. Babylon cannot be healed (Jer 51:9). But Laodicea is called to repentance, and can be healed (Rev 3:18-20). “Shout it aloud,” is God’s command, “do not hold back. Raise your voice like a trumpet. Declare to my people their rebellion and ... their sins” (Isa 58:1). “Again, if the trumpet does not sound a clear call, who will get ready for battle?” (1 Cor 14:8).

“No encouragement should be given to this kind of worship. The same kind of influence came in after the passing of the time in 1844. The same kind of representations were made. Men became excited, and were worked by a power thought to be the power of God” (2 SM 36, 37).

“Let us give no place to strange exercisings, which really take the mind away from the deep movings of the Holy Spirit. God’s work is ever characterized by calmness and dignity. We cannot afford to sanction anything that would bring in confusion and weaken our zeal in regard to the great work that God has given us to do in the world to prepare for the second coming of Christ” (Letter 338, 1908).

“If God abhors one sin above another, of which His people are guilty, it is doing nothing in case of an emergency. Indifference and neutrality in a religious crisis is regarded of God as a grievous crime and equal to the very worst type of hostility against God” (3 T 281).

Concerning the reason for the different attempts to turn our church from the path left to us by our pioneers as an inheritance, let us consider the following statements.

“Divisions will come in the church. Two parties will be developed. The wheat and tares grow up together for the harvest” (2 SM 114 (1896)). “There will be a shaking of the sieve. The chaff must in time be separated from the wheat. Because iniquity abounds, the love of many waxes cold. It is the very time when the genuine will be the strongest” (Letter 46, 1887). “The history of the rebellion of Dathan and Abiram is being repeated, and will be repeated till the close of time. Who will be on the Lord’s side? Who will be deceived, and in their turn become deceivers?” (Letter 15, 1892).

“The Lord is soon to come. There must be a refining, winnowing process in every church, for there are among us wicked men who do not love the truth or honor God” (RH March 19, 1895). “We are in the shaking time, the time when everything that can be shaken will be shaken. The Lord will not excuse those who know the truth if they do not in word and deed obey His commands” (6 T 332 (1900)).

“It is a solemn statement that I make to the church, that not one in twenty whose names are registered upon the church books are prepared to close their earthly history, and would be as verily without God and without hope in the world as the common sinner” (ChS 41 (1893)). “Those who have had opportunities to hear and receive of the truth and who have united with the Seventh-day Adventist church, calling themselves the commandment-keeping

people of God, and yet possess no more vitality and consecration to God than do the nominal churches, will receive the plagues of God just as verily as the churches who oppose the law of God” (19 MR 176 (1898)).

For another compilation of statements of E. de White on music prepared by the White Center, see:
<http://www.whiteestate.org/issues/music.html>