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ADAPTATION OF THE RELIGIOUS DANCE
AND SIMILAR PHYSICAL MOVEMENTS
IN THE INDIGENOUS CHURCH

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Practical Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Sacred Theology

by

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Short Title:

ADAPTATION OF THE RELIGIOUS DANCE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION Short Title:	1
II. DANCE AND RELATED PHYSICAL WORSHIP MOVEMENTS IN THE BIBLE	7
ADAPTATION OF THE RELIGIOUS DANCE	7
Types and Purposes of Biblical Dances	17
The New Testament References	33
Other Biblical Phrases Suggesting Body- involvement in Worship	39
III. DANCE IN NON-CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS	42
Fertility Dances	44
Initiation Dances	48
Funeral Dances	50
War and Victory Dances	52
Jurnal and Mythological Dances	54
Processionals	56
Addictionary Dances	60
Ecstatic Dances	61
IV. DANCE IN THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH FROM THE BIBLE UNTIL THE FIFTEEN CENTURIES	67
V. DANCE IN THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH FROM THE FIFTEEN TO THE NINETEENTH CENTURY	80
Dance in the Romance Countries of Europe	80
The Processions of the Flagellants	82
Dances in Germany and Great Britain	94
Dances among African Slaves in America and American Indians	100
The Shakers	105
VI. ATTEMPTS AT ADAPTATION IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY	112
Attempts in North America	112
Attempts in Europe	124
Attempts in Latin America	126
Attempts in Africa	131
Attempts in the Far East	141
Attempts in New Guinea	149

VII. FOUR PRINCIPLES IN THE ADAPTATION OF THE DANCE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter		Page
I.	INTRODUCTION	1
II.	DANCE AND RELATED PHYSICAL WORSHIP MOVEMENTS IN THE BIBLE	7
	Twelve Hebrew Words in the Old Testament	7
	Types and Purposes of Hebrew Dances	17
	The New Testament References	33
	Other Biblical Phrases Suggesting Body- involvement in Worship	35
III.	DANCE IN NON-CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS	42
	Fertility Dances	44
	Initiation Dances	48
	Funeral Dances	50
	War and Victory Dances	52
	Astral and Mythological Dances	54
	Processionals	59
	Exhibitionary Dances	60
	Ecstatic Dances	61
IV.	DANCES IN THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH FROM THE SECOND UNTIL THE TENTH CENTURIES	67
V.	DANCE IN THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH FROM THE TENTH TO THE NINETEENTH CENTURY	80
	Dance in the Romance Countries of Europe	80
	The Processions of the Flagellants	92
	Dances in Germany and Great Britain	94
	Dances among African Slaves in America and American Indians	100
	The Shakers	105
VI.	ATTEMPTS AT ADAPTATION IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY	112
	Attempts in North America	112
	Attempts in Europe	124
	Attempts in Latin America	128
	Attempts in Africa	131
	Attempts in the Far East	141
	Attempts in New Guinea	149

Chapter	Page
VII. FOUR PRINCIPLES IN THE ADAPTATION OF THE DANCE	155
Form and Function: A Necessary Dis- tinction	155
Body and Soul: A God-Created Unity . .	170
Man and Creation: A Doxological Harmony	177
Church Militant and Church Triumphant: A Beatific Anticipation	182
VIII. SUMMARY AND CONCLUDING REMARKS	187
APPENDIX I. Questionnaire Sent to 450 Missionaries: Methodology and Selected Replies	195
APPENDIX II. American Attempts at Dance Interpre- tations of Bach's "Jesu, Joy of Man's De- siring" and Malotte's "Lord's Prayer" . . .	261
APPENDIX III. Description of Togo "Dance Cantata" Entitled "Isaac and Rebekka" as Reported, in German, by Missionary Erich Vierig, Lome, Togo	264
APPENDIX IV. Program Notes from the Japanese Prot- estant Centennial: "Dance of Mary Magdalene"	267
BIBLIOGRAPHY	271

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

One of several forms of worship which the average African may have experienced during his entire life may have been dancing. He may therefore be surprised and confused if a missionary suddenly tells him that his manner of worship is sinful and that the manner of worship endorsed by Christ is one that subjects the body to the discipline of inactivity--sitting on a pew while singing or listening to a twenty-minute sermon.

This is just one example of a cultural problem that raises a painful question for the Western Christian: "Why is it that, while the Church, particularly in her worship, has done so much to use God's gifts of music, art, and drama, it has almost completely ignored or condemned the one art that combines these three--the dance?" Can the dance be a vehicle to glorify God, not merely in recreation, but also in worship? It is to this problem that this study addresses itself. It intends to examine the reverent and irreverent use of the dance in the history of the Church, and to propose possible new avenues of approach.

It is obvious that the first problem is our definition of the controversial word "dance." We are not concerned here with what is called the "modern social dance";

indeed, "the modern social dance of pairs of men and women is peculiar to civilization."¹ Nor, secondly, are we concerned with innocent, joyous, secular dances, such as folk and square dances. We are concerned with the "religious dance," or the "sacred dance," however incongruous such a term may strike the Protestant ear. This pinpoints further our need for a definition.

These are some of the definitions that have been given for the word "dance": "muscular music,"² "thought embodied,"³ and "poetry of motion."⁴ It is evident that these definitions do not help us since they include words which beg for further definition: music, thought, poetry.

¹W. D. Hamblly, Tribal Dancing and Social Development (London: H. F. and G. Witberg, 1926), p. 16. "Between present day dancing and that of primitive races, Oriental peoples, and classical antiquity, there is little in common. In primitive society the dance has an importance entirely lost in modern times," p. 106. Weman says, "The African dance is either a solo or a group dance, or a combination of the two. A dance for two people in the European sense does not exist. Groups of women dance opposite groups of men, without the two coming into contact with each other. This gives the African dance its character of dignity and solemnity which is seldom encountered in Europe." Henry Weman, Music and the Church in Africa, translated by Eric J. Sharpe (Uppsala: Ab Lundequistska Bokhandeln, 1960), p. 74.

²A. E. Crawley, Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, edited by James Hastings (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), X, 361.

³Keita Fodeba, "The True Meaning of African Dances," The UNESCO Courier, X (January, 1959), 23. The weakness of this definition is that a motionless "Yoga" pose could also be called a dance.

⁴Crawley, loc. cit.

Precisely this points up the all-inclusiveness of the dance. Sachs tried to be more specific in his definitions, and invariably he found that he was limiting rather than defining the dance. Thus, he says, "rhythmic motion" excludes all non-rhythmic movements, such as running, rowing, turning a handle, or working a treadle; "playful motion" excludes all religious dances; and "purposeless motion" excludes all magic dances.⁵

For our purposes, then, we will abide by the definition "poetry of motion." Admittedly this definition is quite inclusive: it allows for mere moving of arms (as among the Egyptians and the Balinese),⁶ whirling of the entire body (as among Jews, Greeks, Dervishes), solemn walking in processions (as in most religions), or even moving of the entire body while the legs are still (as among some savages).⁷ In this last type we will also include such liturgical gestures as bowing, kneeling, genuflecting, folding hands, and making the sign of the cross.⁸

⁵Curt Sachs, World History of the Dance, translated by Bessie Schönberg (New York: W. Norton and Co., 1937), p. 5.

⁶W. O. E. Oesterley, The Sacred Dance. A Study in Comparative Folklore (London: Cambridge University Press, 1923), p. 5.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ultimately, any movement around the altar prescribed in any of our detailed liturgies can be considered a vestige of the dance.

It is in this all-inclusive sense of "poetry of motion" that we can understand Sachs' lofty praise for the art of the dance:

The dance is the mother of the arts. Music and poetry exist in time, painting and architecture in space.⁹ But the dance lives at once in time and space.

Moreover, anthropologists, sociologists, and historians of religions are unanimous in calling the dance the "primary religious art."¹⁰

However, after all this has been said about the dance, there is one definite limitation to this study. We are not contending here that there is anything inferior about the quiet meditation of the one who imitates Christ's example by going up into a mountain to pray in solitude, or by "shutting the closet door behind him" to pray to his heavenly Father. We are merely suggesting that God made it possible for His chosen creature, man, to worship the

⁹Sachs, op. cit., p. 3. He goes on to say, "The creator and the thing created, the artist and the work, are still one and the same thing. . . . The dance breaks down distinctions of body and soul, of abandoned expression of the emotions and controlled behavior, of social life and the expression of individuality of play, religion, battle, drama--all the distinctions that a more advanced civilization has established."

¹⁰Joachim Wach, Sociology of Religion (Eighth impression; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), pp. 43-44. "It is not a sin proscribed by the priest or at best merely accepted by him, but rather a sacred act and a priestly office; not a pastime to be tolerated only, but a very serious activity in the entire tribe." Sachs, op. cit., p. 4.

Creator in many wonderfully different ways. Therefore, to label any one of these ways as intrinsically evil is, in fact, preaching ourselves and our aesthetic preferences, not Him Who bought us.

It is also the intent of this writer to consider the problem of the religious dance from a somewhat different perspective than the major works written on this subject. In The Sacred Dance W. Cesterley presents a thorough study of the Biblical dances in the light of Israel's surrounding cultures.¹¹ Lewis Spence in Myth and Ritual in Dance, Game, and Rhyme establishes the religious origin of athletic games and their relation to dances.¹² Furthermore, in The Art of the Rhythmic Choir Margaret Palmer Fisk does not touch on primitive or non-Western dance forms.¹³ Of primary concern to Louis E. Backmann in Religious Dances in the Christian Church and in Popular Medicine are the dance epidemics from the thirteenth century on.¹⁴ This

¹¹Cesterley, op. cit., passim.

¹²Lewis Spence, Myth and Ritual in Dance, Game, and Rhyme (London: Watts and Co., 1947).

¹³Margaret Palmer Fisk, The Art of the Rhythmic Choir. Worship Through Symbolic Movement (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1950).

¹⁴E. Louis Backmann, Religious Dances in the Christian Church and in Popular Medicine, translated by E. Clasen (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1952).

thesis does not intend to be a synthesis of these books;¹⁵ rather, (a) it goes beyond these writers in suggesting at least four guiding principles that should be kept in mind; and (b) it attempts to be more intercultural and contemporary by incorporating replies from some 450 missionaries to a questionnaire. The methodology and further results of this questionnaire are given in Appendix I.

Admittedly the "religious dance" is terra fere incognita for Protestantism, and no less so for Lutheranism. Yet neither prohibition nor avoidance will solve the problem; rather, for the Christian, armed with the Gospel, it should not be so much a problem as a thrilling adventure. It is the discovery of the ever-different and endlessly varied ways in which God causes His praises to burst forth from His redeemed. The wise Western Christian will even consider the possibility that precisely here he may have something to learn from his brother in one of the "younger churches." This could even be an element that will be a key to revitalizing our increasingly formalized and rigid worship.

¹⁵In fact, there are two books which were not examined and which may contain further answers to this problem: G. Van der Leeuw, Wegen en Grenzen (Amsterdam: H. J. Paris, 1948), and Renee Foatelli, Les Danses Religieuses Dans le Christianisme (Paris: Spes, 1939).

CHAPTER II

DANCE AND RELATED PHYSICAL WORSHIP IN THE BIBLE

It is our purpose in this chapter to examine the words which deal rather directly with dances, and then to examine other words which imply that body movements can be a noble aid to worship. Our aim is to establish the fact that dancing, as presented in the Bible, can be done to God's glory or to His displeasure.

Twelve Hebrew Words in the Old Testament

The meanings which some commentators will assign some of the words which will be examined here may be greatly disputed. We prefer to withhold our conclusions until the evidence can be examined as cumulative rather than piecemeal. These are some of the words which have been thought to contain aspects of the Hebrew dance.

1. זָרָז . It expresses the "whirl" of the dance, such as the dance of the daughters of Shiloh in Judges 21:21,23. It is the same word used for the "writhing" or "twisting" of a woman in travail (Isaiah 26:17; 45:10), or of a person in great pain (Isaiah 13:8; 23:5; Jeremiah 51:29).¹ It appears that, when used in connection with the

¹Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament, edited by Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs;

body, contortions of the body are thought of which suggest something of a rather wild character.²

Another word from this root is דָּנָה , which occurs three times in the Psalms and at least twice elsewhere. Tsevat spends three pages in one footnote of his thesis attempting to find the more correct meaning. His conclusion is that originally it meant "dance," later it came to mean a place of dancing, and finally it meant the instrument used at that dance.³ This type of word change will be seen later again when דָּרְחָה shifts meanings from dance to the music at that dance, to the instrument used for that music. Still another variation of this form is the feminine, דָּנָה , which means dancing as a result

translated by Edward Robinson (third edition; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), pp. 296-297. Hereafter this work will be referred to as BDB.

²W. O. E. Oesterley, The Sacred Dance. A Study in Comparative Folklore (London: Cambridge University Press, 1923), p. 45. Hereafter this book will be referred to as SD.

Briggs also translates Psalm 96:9, "Whirl before Him all the earth," and interprets it as a summons to take part in the sacred pilgrim dance in the temple alluded to in Psalm 87:7, Judges 21:21-23, and 1 Samuel 18:6. He criticizes other translations which render it "Stand in awe of him," although he admits that they have the support of most of the ancient manuscripts. Charles August Briggs and Emilie Grace Briggs, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Psalms. International Critical Commentary (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1907), XV, 304, 312.

³Matitiah Tsevat, "A Study of the Language of the Biblical Psalms," Journal of Biblical Literature--Monograph Series IX (Philadelphia, Pa.: Society of Biblical Literature, 1955), pp. 107-109, footnote 234.

of joy. It is so used in Judges 11:34 and in 1 Samuel 18:6, 21:12, and 29:5. It is used specifically referring to a situation of worship in Judges 21:21.

2. לָּלַךְ . This word is used in the intensive stem (pilpel). It means "to whirl about," or "rotate." Although this word is used only once in the Old Testament, when David danced before Jahwe (2 Samuel 6:14-16), there is evidence in the Targum to support such a strong translation.⁴

3. לָּקַץ . This word is also used in the intensive stem in 1 Chronicles 15:29 and in 2 Samuel 6:14-16. In fact, five different words are used in those sections to describe David's unique dance before Jahwe. In the gal form it has a strong meaning, "to skip about," and is so used in Psalm 114:4,6 of mountains skipping like calves.⁵

4. לָּלַץ . This word is also one of those occurring in the intensive stem, and as such it describes David's dance. Although the word is used only one other time in the Old Testament (Genesis 49:24), its translation as

⁴In the Targum of Isaiah 66:20 the feminine plural noun derived from this root seems best translated as "dances." SD, pp. 45-46. In this section (2 Samuel 6:14-16) we have another word which does not occur elsewhere in the Old Testament in the sense of "dancing":

⁵BDB, p. 955. "In the Midrash Bemidbar Rabba to XX: 11 it is said, 'When a man plans a sin, Satan dances before him,' SD, p. 46.

Other references are Isaiah 13:21, Job 21:11, Joel 2:5, Ecclesiastes 3:4, and 1 Chronicles 15:29.

"leaping" is confirmed by the cognate Arabic verb which means "to be excited," and the Syriac which means "to leap."⁶

5. $\lambda \lambda \tau$. This word appears to have two meanings. The primary meaning is "to leap" like a hart (Isaiah 35:6), and in this sense can be considered a parallel to the aforementioned $\tau \rho \lambda$ of a skipping calf.⁷ In the Song of Solomon (2:8) it seems to refer to some joyful form of movement,

The voice of my beloved!
Behold, he comes,
leaping upon the mountains,
bounding over the hills.
My beloved is like a gazelle,
or a young stag.

Oesterley believes that this strict meaning cannot be applied to other usages where it rather seems to suggest a ritual step of a leaping character.⁸

6. $\lambda \lambda \eta$. Though the more frequent meaning is

⁶BDB, p. 808 and SD, p. 46.

⁷BDB, p. 194.

⁸So 1 Samuel 5:5, "No one ever treads on the threshold of Dagon's house in Ashdod." Here the Septuagint explains it by the addition of the words "leaping over they leap over." Similar is the usage in Zephaniah 1:9, where punishment is pronounced on all those who leap over the threshold. The Persian custom also forbade stepping on the threshold, so that one had to leap over it. This custom was due to the belief that evil spirits crouched down on the threshold, and the leaping over prevented coming into contact with them. Since this implied the recognition of an alien cult, it was prohibited in Zephaniah. SD, p. 46.

possibility that Saul's ancestral home, called $\gamma \zeta \chi$ in 2 Samuel 21:14, was an ancient sanctuary where a special kind of limping dance was performed.¹²

9. $\rho \pi \psi$. It is used of David dancing and "making merry" in 1 Chronicles 15:29. Elsewhere it is used as a parallel to one of the most frequent words in the Old Testament for dancing, $\zeta \chi \pi$. This may justify Oesterley's translation of 1 Samuel 18:7, "And the dancing women answered one another and said."¹³

10. $\pi \varnothing \varnothing$. This is another word which finds commentators in disagreement. The main passage quoted is Exodus 12:13,23, where it apparently means "to spare"; "Behold, when I see the blood I will pass over you, and then there shall be no plague upon you." Oesterley does not go so far as to translate this word "dance," but he attempts to give some evidence that the Passover feast ($\pi \varnothing \varnothing$) was derived from a word which included a ritual "limping dance," even as the $\lambda \pi$ festival derived its meaning from the above mentioned $\lambda \chi \pi$ dance.¹⁴

¹²SD, p. 51.

¹³Ibid., p. 45. Oesterley adds that the equivalent to this root is the root $\rho \pi \chi$, also used in the intensive; so in Exodus 32:6 and in Judges 16:25, "The people sat down to eat and to drink and rose up to dance."

¹⁴There is no certain occurrence of the name before Deuteronomy, since in Exodus 34:25 it may be a gloss. The corresponding word in 1 Kings 18:26, Oesterley believes, denotes some kind of religious performance, apparently a dance, SD, p. 50. He adds, "A nocturnal ceremony at the

11. רָדַד . This word is also a hapaxlegomenon, and its lone usage is in a controversial reading, Job 41:14. Where the Revised Standard Version translates it "Round about his teeth is terror," Driver construes it as "before him danceth dismay."¹⁵ We will leave this problem unresolved.

12. לִמְנוּחָה . This is the common word for processions. The best description of these processions is usually found in the details of the context. An example of such usage is Psalm 68:24,25:

Thy solemn processions are seen, O God,
The processions of my God, my King, into the sanctuary--
The singers in front, the minstrels last,
Between them maidens playing timbrels.

These dances will be treated later under "processionals."

Some commentators and lexicographers list still more words which have a different primary meaning, or which are found in cognate languages but not in the Old Testament.¹⁶

consecration of a feast is already alluded to in Isaiah 30:29, where Isaiah probably alludes to the received derivation of פָּסַח in 31:5. But the Deuteronomic passover was a new thing in the days of Josiah (2 Kings 23:21f.). . . . So that the opinion is worth hazarding as to whether פָּסַח the Passover, did not originally get its name from the particular form of the limping dance peculiar to it, just as the ordinary feast got its name from the sacred dance, the לִמְנוּחָה , which was characteristic of it." SD, pp. 50-51.

¹⁵BDB, p. 189.

¹⁶So לִמְנוּחָה and לִמְנוּחָה , BDB, pp. 274 and 862, respectively. The linguistic tendency to use the pars pro toto can be observed especially in primitive people, where a musical instrument used at a particular feast would become

However, we will limit ourselves to this list. Though many meanings may seriously be disputed in at least four of those words, the more striking fact is that in more than six of them the meaning is not disputed at all. Another objection that has been raised is that repeatedly the context makes it unmistakably clear that the dance was distasteful to Jahwe. Though this is true in some cases, the opposite is equally true, for there are clear cases where the dance is most joyous and God-pleasing (2 Samuel 6:14-16 and Exodus 15:10). This is precisely the point of this study, not to defend the dance as always innocent, but to show that it can be used for either good or evil.

At this stage we are ready to draw at least five tentative conclusions.

1. Several of the verbs listed are usually found in the intensive stem. The one exception, זָּנַח , is intensive

the name of the feast itself. Percussion instruments (timbrels, hand drums, castanet-like rattles, cymbals), wind instruments (flutes and pipes) and string instruments (the lyre and the harp) suggest a rather detailed form of music, which in Job 21:11,12 seems to have been common accompaniment for the dance.

Basing his conclusions on anthropological studies, Oesterley believes that music is rarely divorced from dancing in the early stages of culture. This explains why to a Western ear it sounds like nothing more than rhythmic noise, monotonous and unattractive. The reason is obvious: it is heard without its origin and inspiration, the dance. Oesterley's final conclusion is that the Israelites probably had three types of accompaniments to their dance: instruments, singing, and rhythmic clapping of hands and even thighs. SD, pp. 7, 52, 53.

in its root meaning.¹⁷

2. Unusually striking is the fact that the Mosaic Law contains no prohibition of the dance. While any little detail that would tempt these Israelites to assimilate too much of their surrounding cultures is explicitly forbidden, nothing is said about one of the characteristics which we know to have been popular among their neighbors, the dance.¹⁸

3. The fact that so many different words are used to describe types of dances seems to indicate that it was such a common thing that it would have seemed awkward for the Israelites to express "dance" with any single "common-denominator" word such as our English "dance." Rather, the moment a dance was mentioned, it had to be identified further by its specific type--and that usually happened to be not only a descriptive word, but also a verb in the piel.

4. Although we are eager to assert the uniqueness of the Israelites when comparing them to their surrounding cultures, we cannot overlook the overwhelming evidence against such an argument in the case of the dance. Oesterley, for example, lists three different sources for

¹⁷Ibid., p. 44.

¹⁸"Mosaism never commanded it as a constituent part of the cultus, nor did it forbid it, but left it undisturbed as a habit of the people, hallowed by religious occasions and bearings. It was so used both before and after the exile." Franz Delitzsch, "Dancing and Pentateuch Criticism in Correlation," The Expositor, Series III, IV (1886), 81-95.

evidence of dances among both Jews and their neighbors: inscriptions, drawings on vessels, and ancient literature.¹⁹

5. Finally, the evidence of inter-testamental and of later Jewish dances cannot be ignored. If anything, it argues strongly in favor of the view that the Hebrews had dances in Bible times. History shows that dances tend to die out rather than to arise. One sociologist says, "The history of the dance is the history of its decline in every direction except that of art."²⁰ If this argument were carried through consistently, it would mean, in effect, that the Hebrews of Bible times danced more vigorously than the Jews in the Middle Ages. With this in mind, we do not hesitate to examine some of the later Jewish dances. Some of these dances will be included in this next section.

¹⁹SD, pp. 10, 11. Within ancient literature, we note, for example, Lucian's repeated praeteritio: "I pass over the fact that you cannot find a single ancient mystery in which there is not dancing . . . and to prove this I will not mention the secret acts of worship, on account of the uninitiated. But this much all men know, that most people say of those who reveal the mysteries that they "dance them out." SD, p. 64, quoting Andrew Lang, Myth, Ritual, and Religion, I (1901), 272.

²⁰John Martin, "Dance," Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, edited by Edwin Seligman (New York: MacMillan, 1937), III, 705. "The very history of the dance shows that innovation like that is not likely in a later age," SD, p. 9. Delitzsch also bases his entire argument that post-exilic Israel was not a sect on the presupposition that the dance was entirely accepted even in Mosaic times; the next step in his logic is to assert that dancing is not necessarily a characteristic of a sect. Delitzsch, op. cit., pp. 81-82.

Types and Purposes of Hebrew Dances

The Hebrews danced for at least four possible reasons. The first purpose was honorific. Among neighboring cultures this took at least two forms. One is imitation of the deity, which is thought to flatter the higher power. The other is a modified form of self-sacrifice, "taking it out on oneself" by dancing to the point of exhaustion. Later this self-sacrifice continued, though in a more sedentary form: the self-castigation of monks and the self-flagellation of those afflicted by epidemics in Europe. But the Jews chose to use imitative dances rather than mortifying ones, if, indeed, they used any at all.

A second purpose of the Hebrew dance was exhibitionary, "to show off." In terms of Israel's surrounding cultures it meant "showing off" to the higher power. Hebrews probably thought more about showing off to let Jahwe the Creator see what wonderfully athletic and aesthetic bodies He had created.²¹ It should not strike us too strange. How else can we explain our "dressing up" every Sunday morning with our very best clothes? Is it not in order to be found in His sanctuary as a creature of beauty and of purity?

²¹SD, pp. 22-23. The Old Testament exceeds the New Testament in words of admiration for the wonderful body God has created. This is especially true in the book of Psalms.

A third purpose of the Hebrew dance may have been utilitarian. However, this is perhaps the purpose which least characterizes the Hebrew dances and most of the dances of the surrounding cultures. Implicit in this utilitarian purpose is the idea of imitative magic. Thus jumping high would make the corn grow, stamping on the ground would compel the rain to come down, etc. The crudest manifestation of this belief in imitative magic was among those who included sexual intercourse in their dance feasts in order to "compel" fecundity on the crops and animals by a process of "parallel magic."²²

A fourth purpose of the Hebrew dance may be defined as the expression of spontaneity. This simply means that the Hebrews, like all primitive people, were less self-conscious, sophisticated, and inhibited; when they were happy, there was no reason in the world to keep it a secret. They simply went out and "danced out" their joy. The impulse behind their bodily leap was no different from the mysterious power that makes cheerleaders and entire crowds jump during an exciting ball game. Who are we to say that such spontaneous joy expressed by the Hebrews toward their Jahwe-Creator was not pleasing in His eyes?

²²SD, p. 20. Evidence of the seriousness with which people believed in imitative magic are the many tribes who admit that they do not enjoy their dances, but who go through them anyway because of "necessity." These will be treated later in Chapter III.

Aware of these four basic purposes of the Hebrew dance, we are ready to examine five of the basic types: ecstatic dances, harvest and thanksgiving dances, processionals, victory dances, and dances for special occasions (marriage, funeral, circumcision).

1. The first type is the ecstatic dance, at times also called the "hypnotic dance" or the "dance of auto-intoxication." For commentators it still presents somewhat of a puzzle. Since none of the twelve words listed before occurs in any of the sections quoted as describing ecstatic dances, the conclusions are based upon mere implications. One of the major passages is 1 Samuel 19:20-24, where Saul and a band of prophets "came down prophesying." The climax of this strange prophesying activity was that "he, too,²³ stripped off his clothes, and he, too, prophesied before Samuel and lay naked all that day and all that night" (verse 24). To add to the strangeness, the writer also says, in the same verse, "Hence it is said, 'Is Saul also among the prophets?'"

Though there seem to be some similarities with the Phoenician limping dance, which had objectionable features,²⁴

²³Implying that the prophets had already done that.

²⁴It is interesting to note Oesterley's description of the "ecstatic limping dance" of the Baal prophets, referred to in 1 Kings 18:26. It was used only for special circumstances, as a last resort. Dancers had to look lame, to deceive the deity. This explains the question in 1 Kings 18:21, "How long will ye limp on two legs?" Actually, it

no disapproval seems to be cast on Saul's dance. Moreover, we note the following: (a) This activity seems to have been considered part of "prophesying"; (b) Several prophets performed it; and (c) It was a "contagious" dance.

An examination of the ecstatic dance in parallel cultures helps us to understand such an action somewhat. It seems that the main object was to induce a semi- or unconscious state during which time the deity was believed to take up his abode in the body of the worshiper. The next logical step was that the deity would use that worshiper as his mouthpiece.²⁵

Wherein, if anywhere, lay the difference between the ecstatic dance of the Hebrews and that of their surrounding cultures? The puzzle is not as difficult as it seems. The Hebrews shared with others the belief that the sacred dance was the means whereby the divine spirit came upon them. But God revealed to them that this means was not necessary for achieving the purpose for which it was used elsewhere:

is a pun; for it could not mean limping on both legs at the same time. Such a frog leap would certainly not suggest lameness. The dance began soberly, but then increased into an orgiastic frenzy described in Hosea 7:14, "And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lances, till blood gushed out upon them." (Oesterley arrives at this translation after one emendation.) SD, pp. 111-112. Oesterley also links this "limping dance" with the limping of Jacob in Genesis 32; however, for reasons given before, we cannot prefer that interpretation. SD, p. 113.

²⁵Ibid., pp. 110, 25, 114.

It had served a useful purpose. But, having served its purpose it was dropped. The prophets came to the realization that there were more spiritual means by which spiritual union with the deity could be brought about; then the sacred dance found no further place among them. They shed the husk, but retained the kernel. It was the same principle upon which St. Paul acted in later days in regard to the Law.²⁶

When, centuries later, far more cultured Greeks were still raving in honor of Dionysos, the Hebrew prophets had long since learned that it is God Himself who puts this Spirit upon men (Isaiah 42:1) and it is not affected by any will or act of man (Isaiah 40:13). From this viewpoint, any assimilation of the content of dances of imitative magic is blasphemy.

Finally, we would do well not to speak too condescendingly about the ecstatic dance as though it were far beneath our dignity. We have some of this "ecstatic hypnotism" or "auto-intoxication" ourselves. Missionary Stanley S. Koning is quick to defend the "hypnotic effect" of one of his dances among the Zunis when he writes,

The visually induced aspect of hypnosis mentioned is probably not too much different from that included in a church service where the audience stares at a preaching figure, often elevated to an eye-fatiguing level; the incidence of complete somnification observable in many churches suggests a high degree of effectiveness there, too.²⁷

2. Another type of Hebrew dances are the harvest and thanksgiving dances. The motivation for these dances in

²⁶ Ibid., p. 32.

²⁷ Letter No. 17 in Index Ib.

Israel's surrounding cultures could either be thanksgiving or imitative magic.²⁸ Imitative magic "worked" either by imitation of the deity or by imitation of the object upon which growth was to be effected. In the first case, the worshiper tried to "become one" with the deity by imitation, personation, or identification (actual eating of part of their god).²⁹ In the second case, the worshiper believes that the dance itself is a means of procuring food ex opere operato; it brings out what it imitates. It is a subconscious setting in motion of the "machinery" which brought about the thing imitated every time an act of imitative magic was performed.³⁰

One case where we cannot be sure as to just what type of harvest dance was performed is the "dance of the maidens

²⁸ Frazer describes it in this way: "Things act on each other through a secret sympathy, the impulse being transmitted from one to the other by means of what we may conceive as a kind of invisible "ether," not unlike that which is postulated in modern science for a precisely similar purpose, namely to explain how things can physically affect each other through a space which appears to be empty." Sir James George Frazer, The Golden Bough. A Study in Magic and Religion, abridged (New York: McMillan Co., 1960), I, 54. Examples will be given in the next chapter.

²⁹ Thus men disguised themselves as horses, cats, pigs, or hares; they imitated Demeter, Persephone, Artemis (in bear skins). SD., pp. 103, 104, 23, 24, 84.

³⁰ Ibid., pp. 4, 27, 103, 104. So Adriadne's dance, which was to help the sun run its course; the leaping dance of the Salii priests in Italy, which was to make the corn grow tall; the circular dance of the Wends, who even drove their cattle around the tree to bring fertility to them.

of Shiloh" mentioned in Judges 21:19,27. It is probable that originally this "Feast of Booths" was a Canaanite feast, but to what degree the Israelites joined in the sexual freedom accompanying this feast is a subject of controversy. Pederson and Oesterley see in it a parallel to the Roman custom of carrying off some women during their dance.³¹

On first impression it would seem impossible that any good use could come out of this type of dance. Yet, once again, the history of Israel is a brilliant example of Jahwe-centered adaptation of native forms. Good examples are the three feasts of Mazzoth, Shabuoth, and Sukkoth. Since it was the Israelites who were nomads at first, it is likely that they adopted at least some of the dance-forms from the Canaanites and changed them to Jahwe's glory.³² The striking thing about the adaptation genius of the Hebrews is that they managed to shift the emphasis from an imitative-pragmatic to a theocentric-doxological motive. We will give three examples of such adaptation: the processional to the temple, the Bet Hashoeba, and the Xylophoria.

Pedersen describes one of these processionals from

³¹Johannes Pedersen, Israel, Its Life and Culture (London: Oxford University Press, 1953), III and IV, 421, 745; SD., p. 142.

³²SD., p. 140.

Midrash sources. After a long time of waiting, the procession descends from a height beyond and amid the strains of music crosses the valley to the city. The youths run through the streets of all sides with the joyful cry "Chalilayya!" (flutes), and "Maythayya debikkurayya!" (bringers of first-fruits). From every house of the locality people swarm forth. At the head of the procession walks a splendid ox, his horn overlaid with gold and a wreath of olive branches upon his head. Then come the flute players, then asses with baskets. Some men are playing, some are adorned with gold and silver, full of fresh figs and clusters of grapes, others with baskets full of young doves and turtles. Mothers wave their little ones upon their hands as though for a dance, maidens skip in dance stepping to the front to make circles which dissolve again without delaying the procession. Choirs of men sing national melodies such as "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem! They shall prosper that love Thee!" Many follow the procession to the vicinity of Jerusalem, where it halts and sends forward messengers into the city to announce its arrival. In the meantime, the first-fruits are ornately arranged. Finally, the procession is welcomed, "Brethren, men of Michmash, welcome!" When they enter the court of the temple they are met with a Levitical chant of Psalms.³³

³³Pedersen, op. cit., pp. 82-84, passim.

Another harvest dance was the Bet Hashoeba. There was a Jewish saying, "He who has not seen the joy of this dance has not seen any joy in his life." It was performed at the Feast of Tabernacles. Since it was the festival of the close of the harvest, it was understandably the merriest of them all. As a result, it was also enlivened by the inventive popular genius far beyond what was prescribed by the letter of the Pentateuch law. Among these "embellishments" was the illumination of the temple itself with a torchlight dance. These torches were hurled into the air and caught again (much like our baton twirlers) while festal hymns were sung.

On the fifteen steps leading down from the court of men to the court of women stood the Levites, with their lyres, harps, cymbals, and many other instruments, rendering hymn after hymn. Priests awaited the cock-crowing to announce then, by three-fold trumpet signal, the break of day, with which the libation of the water of Siloah was made to succeed this nocturnal carnival. "With joy shall ye draw waters out of the wells of salvation." Jesus probably alluded to this in John 7:37-39.³⁴

A third type of harvest dance was the Xylophoria. It was actually the "harvest of the forests" climaxed on the last day of tree-felling. Josephus describes how, on the fifteenth of Ab, old and young, rich and poor, carried logs on shoulders, oxen, and carriages to the precincts of the temple in a joyful processional. Certainly it proved a

³⁴Ibid., pp. 89-91.

good inducement to work.³⁵ It is precisely what was done among the Mandingoes of Sierra Leone when they combined dancing with rowing,³⁶ among Jews when they treaded out the winepress to the rhythm of a song, and among today's New Guinea Christians who build entire churches to the rhythm of church hymns set to native tunes.³⁷

Thus, the Jews have given us some of the best examples of adaptation to native dance forms. They accomplished this even with dances that seemed most difficult to assimilate, those of imitative magic. They succeeded, not by prohibiting them, but by changing their center to God, by shifting their motivations from "profit" to "praise."

3. A third major type of Hebrew dances is the group of processionals. Less time is necessary here to convince anyone of the popularity of this dance among the Israelites and among their surrounding cultures. In the latter group Oesterley lists the following: the Semite processionals during which they carried their gods around a fire; the Hittite running-step dance with their tip-tilted shoes;

³⁵SD., pp. 143-144. Pedersen, op. cit., pp. 86-87. Those large deserted areas today are living proof of the tremendous effectiveness of this "dance" as a stimulus to work.

³⁶W. D. Hambly, Tribal Dancing and Social Development (London: H. F. and G. Witherby, 1926), pp. 135-136.

³⁷Letter No. 31 in Appendix Ib. Missionary Wagner included some pictures which are in the writer's possession.

the Babylonian Marduk processional; the Egyptian castanet processional in honor of Hathor, Apis, and Isis; the Arabians' perambulation of camels before their slaughter; the aforementioned Baal limping dance processional; and the Greek processions around the altars of Apollo, Dionysos, Artemis, and Zeus.³⁸

We will only mention a few examples of processional in the Old Testament. The first obvious case is the seven-fold encircling of Jericho. Psalm 48:12 probably refers to a larger procession, "Encompass ye Zion, and go round about her." David's dance before Jahweh was a processional, though it will be considered in more detail under "dances for special occasions." Jeremiah, who saw Judah sink in ruins and Jerusalem dissolve in flames, consoles his people inasmuch as God says by him (Jeremiah 31:4),

Again I will build thee,
and thou shalt be built, O virgin Israel;
Thou shalt again be adorned with tablets
and shalt go forth in the dances of them that make
merry.

The processional seems to have been such a common form of worship that incidental references seem so sufficient

³⁸SD., pp. 90, 59, 56, 60, 95, 87, and 63, respectively. The one case where arguments are raised against the popularity of processional is the obvious decrease of processional around the deities of the Romans. Yet even here the argument is not valid. For indeed it was the Romans for whom the living Caesar became a substitute for the dead statue; certainly these Romans paraded even more before their Caesar-gods.

for the Psalmist that he finds no need for added explanation. They are taken for granted. One example is Psalm 26:6, "I will wash my hands in innocency, and I will go around the altar, Jahwe." Such processionalals are helpful to an understanding of Psalms like the "Advent Psalm" (Psalm 24) and the Psalms of the Great Hallel.³⁹ An examination of the words sung at these processionalals reveals their thorough theocentricity. Perhaps the climactic processional for the Jews was the one begun when the children of Israel were led from Egypt through the Red Sea into Canaan by the mighty hand of God. Even in the New Testament we find two climactic "processionalals": Christ's entry into Jerusalem, and the via dolorosa.

4. A fourth type of dance used by the Hebrews were the war and victory dances. When we examine Israel's surrounding cultures we see that this dance was used for several purposes: to express joy, to honor the warriors, to stimulate them to a fighting pitch, or even to honor the helping deity.⁴⁰ Among some tribes the women danced while the men were fighting elsewhere, the intended effect being imitative magic again, to assure victory.

³⁹At the Feast of Tabernacles the priests went around the altar singing Psalm 118:25 on each of the seven days during which the feast lasted. On the seventh day, they went around the altar seven times. SD., p. 94.

⁴⁰Ibid., pp. 28, 40, and 159.

How could Israel adopt such heathen dances? Quite simply, again, by changing the function of the dance: by honoring God. A clear example is Miriam's dance in Exodus 15:21-22, where all credit of victory is given to God,

Sing to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously,
The horse and rider He hath thrown into the sea!

5. The final major group of Hebrew dances includes those for special occasions such as David's dance before Jahwe, the re-enactment of the Passover deliverance, the dance at the feast of Atonement, and dances for marriages, funerals, or circumcisions.

An example of a dance which seems strange in its abandonment, yet remains theocentric, is the dance of David before Jahwe in 2 Samuel 6:5f. He is not only joyful ($\rho\eta\psi$), but he rotates ($\tau\tau\tau$) with all his might (verse 14), jumps ($\delta\delta\delta$), and whirls around ($\lambda\pi$). In the parallel passage in 1 Chronicles 15:29 it is described as "skipping" ($\tau\rho\tau$), the same word used in Isaiah 13:21 of the "hopping satyrs," in Joel 2:5 of the "galloping horses," and in Nahum 3:2 of the "jolting chariots." The self-abandonment of this dance can be imagined in the light of Michal's jibe that the king had shamelessly uncovered himself.

The most dramatic dance for the Hebrews was the re-enactment of the Passover deliverance. Pedersen gives a detailed account of this dance with the pursuing of Pharaoh,

and the climactic end with the women's dancing, singing, and playing.⁴¹ Delitzsch also describes a dance used on the day of the Feast of the Atonement. The first dance was performed while the goat of Azazel was being banished into the wilderness, and the second one came later on that same day, when the young people danced in vineyards. All the maidens, even the rich ones, had to wear a simple white dress, lest they offend the poor. The evening was climaxed with a "chain dance."⁴² It is striking that a victory dance should be used in conjunction with the most sacred sacrificial act, the commemoration of the Exodus and the Day of Atonement. Certainly it justifies the desire of some of today's Christians in less sophisticated "younger churches" to burst out in dances of praise to God immediately after the climax of their Sunday service: the participation in Holy Communion.⁴³

One probable allusion to a wedding dance is in Song of Songs 6:13-7:1. Here the words "Turn, turn!" may be considered words of encouragement from those who want to see the bridal whirling:

⁴¹Pedersen, op. cit., pp. 410-411. It should be noted, however, that Pedersen is among those who call the Passover event a "legend."

⁴²Delitzsch, op. cit., pp. 87-88.

⁴³Letter No. 37 in Appendix I (Missionary Gordon F. Larson). Several other letters include the same.

Turn, Turn, O Shulammitte,
Turn, turn, that we may look upon you!

Then the bridegroom asks,

Why should you look upon the Shulammitte
As upon a dance of Mahanaim?

and the onlookers answer, as he expects them to, with a song of praise of her beauty, "How beautiful are thy feet in sandals!"

A comparison with the Arab and Syrian "sword dance" suggests some parallels.⁴⁴ One of the purposes of this sword dance was to help the bride combat the vague dangers which were supposed to menace those entering marriage. Another purpose was to insure a fruitful marriage. A third purpose was to protect the bride from all unlawful approach of other suitors. A final purpose was to evade evil by a change of identity; the couple is then treated and dressed like a royal pair.⁴⁵ It is hard to imagine that the Hebrew wedding dance was danced for the reasons just listed. But, if it was similar in form to the wedding dances of surrounding cultures, then it was another good example of filling old forms with a content acceptable to God. This did not mean simply "moderation," for we know of wedding feasts that lasted seven days (Judges 14:12,17). Later, there are clear references to marriage

⁴⁴SD., pp. 177-178.

⁴⁵Ibid., pp. 28, 41, 177-179, 181.

processionals in 1 Maccabees 9:37ff. and in second century Jewish documents.⁴⁶ The remnants of these marriage processionals have certainly survived to our day.

Our only evidence for the Hebrew funeral dance is extra-Biblical. Among the cultures surrounding Israel they were performed for at least six reasons: (a) to drive away the ghost of the departed; (b) to prevent a ghost from roaming; (c) to scare away evil spirits; (d) to "revive" the dead by impersonation; (e) to honor him; and (f) to persuade the departed ghost not to molest the living.⁴⁷ Yet the silence of the Old Testament on this type of dance is conspicuous.

Our only evidence comes from the Talmudic burial rites of about 500 A.D., rites taken over by the Sephardic Jews of Spain and Portugal. They march in procession seven times around the dead, and then read seven short prayers. Each prayer ends with "May he wander in the land of the living; may his soul repose in the peace of everlasting life."⁴⁸ Sir Edward Burnett Tylor refers to a slightly different funeral dance. Instead of simply accepting the etymological origin of the danse macabre, he traces it

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 182.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 29.

⁴⁸E. Louis Backmann, Religious Dances in the Christian Church and in Popular Medicine, translated by E. Clasen (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1952), p. 11.

back to the chorea Machaebaeorum, the dance of the Mac-
cabees. He lists remnants of this dance in Europe even
during the fifteenth century. It was a pious pantomime of
death performed in churches. It derived its name from the
fact that the reading for that day was taken from 2 Mac-
cabees. This lection relates how the people betook them-
selves to prayer and besought the Lord that the sins of
those who had been slain among them might be wholly blotted
out.⁴⁹

The custom of dancing at the rite of circumcision has
even less evidence than the funeral dance among the
Hebrews. The only cases found are from surrounding cul-
tures and from later Judaism.⁵⁰ This does not change the
fact that the cumulative evidence of the Old Testament
overwhelmingly suggests the possibility of a God-pleasing
use of the dance, especially in thanksgiving while worship-
ing.

The New Testament References

The conspicuously few references to the dance in the
New Testament cannot be minimized. On the other hand, the
equally conspicuous matter-of-factness with which Christ

⁴⁹ Sir Edward Burnett Tylor, Origins of Culture (New
York: Harper and Brothers, 1958), I, 397-398.

⁵⁰ SD., pp. 28, 40, 144.

alludes to it cannot be ignored either. Christ sees no need to forbid it categorically or to qualify his reference apologetically. In fact, he compares himself to a dance-game advocate while John the Baptist is the funeral-game advocate. He visualizes two groups of children: one group wishes to play with the other group and proposes the game of "weddings"; when this offer is petulantly refused, the game of "funerals" is proposed, but with no better results (Matthew 11:11-18),

How can I describe this generation: They are like the children in the marketplace, shouting at each other, "We piped to you, and you would not dance!" "We wept and wailed, and you would not mourn!"

The judgment also seems to be on those who parade their idol of middle-of-the-road austerity, who prefer to remain frozen while outwardly sporting the virtues of sobriety, and who tuck their lukewarmness under the socially accepted rug of moderation. Then they take the next tragic step: they expect everyone else to conform to this "law of mediocrity." This should be a painful stab for those Protestant churches which have known of only one form of worship, and that had to be "austere" and "dignified." To justify their demands they quote the great apostle, "Let everything be done in decency and order." Finally, this standard of austerity was imposed upon mission areas as though "restraint" were the essence of the spirit of Christianity. The most extreme form of this heresy came with those Pietists who considered all laughing sinful.

There is another possible reference to the dance in the New Testament, and again it comes from our Lord Himself. After the prodigal son returned to the open arms of his father, the elder son heard, with offended surprise, *συμφωνίας καὶ χορῶν*, which Luther translates "Gesaenge und Reigen." The Greek literature after the New Testament times most frequently uses *χαρρία* in the sense of "dance," specifically a round dance with song.⁵¹ However, it would be inconsistent with our methods of Bible study to limit ourselves only to a concordance study of the word "dance."

Other Biblical Phrases Suggesting Body-involvement in Worship

"O come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker." This verse from Psalm 95 is usually sung by the entire congregation during the order of Matins. Should an African Christian hear a Western Christian singing those words while he sees how he stubbornly refuses to "kneel" and to "bow down," he would be understandably perplexed. It is true, to use words in a symbolical sense is not a sin. Yet this could also become the first subtle step toward detachment from the worship situation. We can hardly imagine even the most sophisticated Old Testament Hebrews singing this Psalm without the

⁵¹Backmann, op. cit., p. 13.

accompanying genuflections. The same applies also to Psalm 14:2, "Let my prayers be set forth before thee as incense, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice."

If our definition of the dance is "poetry of motion" we are justified in taking note of those Bible phrases which suggest body involvement of the creature as it worships the Creator.

One of these words frequently used is to bow. So in Philippians 2:8,10,

Christ became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross . . . that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth.

All mankind is included. The Old Testament is more specific, including also the heathen. So in Psalm 22:29,

Yea, to him shall all the proud of the earth bow down;
Before him shall bow all who go down into the dust.

The same is said of queens in Isaiah 49:23. The Psalmist is even stronger in Psalm 72:9,

May his foes bow down before him
And his enemies lick the dust.⁵²

As a gesture of reverence "bowing" is used by Abraham

⁵²It is interesting to note that one of the independent churches in West Africa, after it was left alone for some fifty years, has come up with a litany which includes a strikingly parallel expression. It is a refrain which occurs again and again, "We use our mouths as a broom before Thee." H. W. Turner, "The Litany of an Independent African Church," Practical Anthropology, VII (November-December, 1960), 256-262.

(Genesis 18:2; 23:7,12), Jacob (Genesis 33:3; 47:31), Joseph (Genesis 48:12), Samson (Judges 16:30), David (1 Samuel 24:8), to mention only a few.⁵³ Finally, it is also a gesture anthropomorphically ascribed to God in His condescension, "Bow thy heavens, O Lord, and come down!" (Psalm 144:5).

A second word which suggests body-involvement in worship is kneel. Those who paid mock homage to Christ before Pilate knelt before him (Mark 15:19). In the aforementioned Psalm 95:6 the entire congregation of worshipers joins in the exhortation, "Let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker." Christ knelt as He prayed in His most trying hour (Luke 22:41), as did Stephen (Acts 7:60), Peter (Acts 9:40), and Paul (Acts 20:26). It must have been a dramatic sight to behold the entire congregation of Tyre kneeling on the sandy beach as they prayed for the departing Paul who was before them now perhaps for the last time (Acts 21:5). Such dramatic experiences may have been in Paul's mind when he prayed, "For this cause I bow my knees to the Father," in Ephesians 3:14.

A third word suggesting body-involvement is to fall. Here is an excellent example of adaptation. Falling down to idols was most certainly the primary sin of idolatry;

⁵³See also Psalm 86:1; 31:2; Isaiah 46:2; 51:23; 60:14; and 65:12.

so it is used of Israel's bowing down to other gods (Isaiah 46:6; Daniel 3:5,10,15), and of Christ, when Satan tempted him, "These things will I give thee if thou wilt fall down" (Matthew 4:9). Yet this did not mean that "falling down" itself was sinful; for the Lord wants His own to do that (Psalm 72:11),

May all kings fall down before him,
All nations serve him.

It is such a noble gesture that it is used to describe the twenty-four elders who fall down before the throne of the slain Lamb (Revelation 4:10).

A fourth gesture-word is to incline. Men are to incline their ears (Psalm 78:1; Proverbs 5:13), and their hearts (Psalm 119:36; Joshua 24:23). It is one of the favorite expressions of Jeremiah (Jeremiah 7:24,26; 11:8; 17:23; 34:14). Finally, it is also used anthropomorphically of God, who is pictured as inclining His ear as He bows down to hear man's faint plea (Psalm 40:1; 116:2).

The word lift up likewise occurs repeatedly. The floods lift up their waves (Psalm 93:3) and the gates lift up their heads to welcome the King of Glory (Psalm 24:7,9). The Psalmist lifts up his hands in prayer (Psalm 28:2; 63:4; 134:2; 141:2). Nor are the New Testament writers too sophisticated to suggest lifting up hands while praying. St. Paul, the champion of indigenization, has some liturgical advice for young Timothy (1 Timothy 2:8),

I desire therefore that in every place men should pray, lifting up holy hands without fear or quarreling.

Nor was it beneath the dignity of the writer of the letter to the Hebrews to plead, after the majestic chapter on faith (Hebrews 12:12),

Therefore, lift your drooping hands
And strengthen your weak knees.

Less artistic, but even more body-involving, are the words march and run. Jahwe is pictured as heading the great procession of the Exodus in Psalm 68:7,

O God, when thou didst go forth before thy people,
when thou didst march through the wilderness. . . .

The word "run" is particularly filled with Gospel connotations: the believer is seen, not as one who grudgingly follows the Lord, but one who is drawn after Him with a pull that makes him run. So Isaiah 55:5, "Nations that knew you not shall run to you." It is as though the Church, the bride, were running to meet her bridegroom; "Draw me, and I will run," Song of Songs 1:4. Even God's otherwise stern Law becomes appealing: "I will run in the way of Thy commandments," Psalm 119:32. Isaiah includes young men in this picture (Isaiah 40:31),

They shall mount up with wings like eagles,
They shall run, and not be weary,
They shall walk, and not faint.

Again, this running response is not beneath the dignity of the New Testament believers. The joy of the women at the grave made "walking" back to the city impossible; they ran

(Matthew 28:8). Even Peter and John, who were grown up, forgot all about their ages and ran like children (John 20:2).

Finally, there are the words variously translated as leap, skip, and spring. We are not referring now to the above-mentioned cases of the skipping of young calves (Psalm 29:6), of mountains, rams, and lambs (Psalm 114:4, 6), and of the "beloved" leaping and bounding over the mountains like a gazelle or a young stag (Sons of Songs 2:8). These almost self-evidently suggest dance movements. We are now thinking of hyperbolic expressions of joy like "By my God I can leap over a wall" (Psalm 18:29; 2 Samuel 22:30). Isaiah also expresses such joy (Isaiah 36:6),

Then shall the lame man leap like a hart
And the tongue of the dumb shall sing for joy.

Christ Himself, when He spoke to His inner circle in the Sermon on the Mount, did not advise a constrained, sedentary joy. He said (Luke 6:23),

Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy,
For behold, your reward is great in heaven;
For so their fathers did to the prophets.

The most striking example of unrestrained and uninhibited joy is the reaction of the cripple whom Peter and John healed (Acts 3:8). Twice within the same sentence St. Luke uses the word "leap," creating an apparent effect of redundancy; however, the second time it is used to underline the fact that he was doing this leaping in the temple:

And at once his feet and ankles grew strong; he sprang up, stood on his feet, and started to walk. He entered the temple with them, leaping and praising God as he went.

A quick overview of this chapter reveals that not much has been said about the evil dances mentioned in the Bible. Yet the variety of twelve words used in the Old Testament, the evidence of post-Biblical Judaism, the absence of this prohibition in the Mosaic Law, the two incidental references of our Lord Himself, and the extensive use of body-involving actions in worship--these reasons at least justify our right to investigate the possibility of the theocentric and doxological use of the dance. However, before proceeding any further with specifically Christian dance forms, we will briefly examine the major types and purposes of dances among non-Christian religions.

CHAPTER III

DANCE IN NON-CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS

The various purposes of religious dances have already been mentioned. In this chapter we are more concerned in dance types. Basic to any study of these types is not only the understanding that we are discussing religious dances, but the fact that most dances have a religious origin. So R. R. Marrett states that "primitive religion was something to be danced out."¹ The Westerner will be slow to believe that, since it appears that dances are either entertaining or social. But such statements are based on false impressions.

Some dances among savages are so funny that they would provoke a smile on the face of sphynx, were it capable of doing such a thing; but while, at times, we cannot resist a laugh, we shall do well to remember that it was far from being a laughing matter to the savage. To do him justice, we must get to the back of his mind, to enter into his feelings. . . .²

So also the Dakotahs; they did not dance for days just because they loved it. They felt they had to force themselves to do it.³ Also the Thyads, who raved in honor of

¹Lewis Spence, Myth and Ritual in Dance, Game, and Rhyme (London: Watts and Co., 1947), p. 7.

²W. O. E. Oesterley, The Sacred Dance. A Study in Comparative Folklore (London: Cambridge University Press, 1923), p. 21.

³Ibid., p. 20.

Dionysos, raved until they dropped unconscious. Other tribes considered their dances too sacred to be exhibited to a casual traveler; as a result, some of the American Indians performed dances as foreign to them as to the traveler who requested the performance. The Indian got his money and the traveler went home to write books denying the existence of deeply religious dances.⁴ Nor is the reverence of religious dances limited to primitive people. The Japanese, for example, considered their dances so sacred that in 1629 the royal order forbade women from appearing on the public stages to dance.⁵ The Yemenites also objected to the performance of their dances in public, since up to recent times they were confined to the homes or synagogues.⁶ The dances described in this chapter, therefore, should not be interpreted as entertaining in any way. More important than that, however, is the warning not to interpret them merely as filling a functional role. The reasons for these dances cannot always be explained away by assigning them some form of utilitarian, pragmatic role.

⁴Curt Sachs, World History of the Dance, translated by Bessie Schoenberg (New York: W. Norton and Co., 1937), pp. 11f.

⁵Takarazuka Dance Theatre (New York: Gins Attractions, Inc., 1960), pp. 22-23.

⁶These were descendants of Jews who fled to Arabia in the first century B.C. In their United States tour they performed leaping dances while Hebrew texts were chanted. "Dancers of Israel," Time, LXXIV (January 20, 1958), 63-64.

The dances are much more often a profound expression of archetypal symbols implanted in what Mircea Eliade calls the "trans-conscious" of the mind.⁷ At other times they can be interpreted as man's falling in step with the throb of the rest of creation in a form of panorchesis.

Fertility Dances

There are as many notions about fertility as there are fertility dances. Hindu women dance a ring around a tree that is rich in fruits to insure a parallel effect of fertility on their own bodies. The Kol women danced in a circle around the healthy men, contracting and expanding their circle.⁸ The Kayans of Sarawak "help" the birth by dancing with a bundle of cloths in the form of an infant, while the Bagesu and Dangos of Uganda have special dances on the occasion of the birth of twins.⁹ Many of these tribes had "proof" that their dances worked, for the women who did not dance often had more difficulty in giving birth.¹⁰ Closely linked to these fertility dances are the

⁷Mircea Eliade, Images and Symbols. Studies in Religious Symbolism, translated by Philip Mairet (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1961).

⁸W. D. Hamblly, Tribal Dancing and Social Development (London: H. F. and G. Witherby, 1926), p. 75.

⁹Ibid., pp. 65, 22-23.

¹⁰"In primitive women the muscles of the abdominal, pelvic, and gluteal regions are much more highly developed than they are in the civilized women. Dancing improves the general health . . . making parturition easy." Ibid., p. 277.

courtship dances. The immorality of many of these cannot be denied; some display seductive nudity, others even play with phallic symbols.¹¹ It is impossible to speak of adaptation to even the most innocent of these fertility dances. Both the erotic and the magic need supplanting of a spontaneous response of thanksgiving to God, the Giver of chaste wives, faithful husbands, and the fruits of the womb. It seems that the Old Testament weddings came closer to that type of a spirit.

At the same time, it is evident that some of the primitive immoral dances are not performed for erotic motives, as appears at first, but rather for imitative-magic motives. At times the eroticism is far beyond the enjoyment of both male and female, but the dance goes on against their immediate wishes to insure a good crop. Some natives of West Brazil¹² as well as the Bagesu of

¹¹ Egyptian women of Osiris carried phallic symbols of the gods. See A. E. Crawley in Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), p. 356. Some tribes in New Guinea teach their children at the age of four the skills of phallic gymnastic display. See Margaret Mead, Growing up in New Guinea (New York: New American Library of World Literature, 1953), pp. 34, 95. Most of the dances in the West Indies include imitations of the sex act. See Earl Leaf, Isles of Rhythm (New York: A. S. Barnes Co., 1948), pp. 140-164. Even in Japan the elements of the Amaterasu dance have their greatest appeal in nakedness, Sachs, op. cit., p. 90. The list of tribes having such dances is quite extensive; Hambly, op. cit., pp. 26, 106-114; Crawley, op. cit., p. 359; Sachs, op. cit., pp. 36, 92.

¹² Crawley, op. cit., p. 360.

Uganda¹³ include the act of procreation in their dance to stimulate the growth of plants. The exchange of wives among the Eskimos was believed to increase the number of seals.¹⁴ Even in Japan some Kagura dances were intended to awaken the erotic feelings of the gods which, in turn, would cause rich crops.¹⁵ Sometimes the results of an unusually fruitful marriage were extended to the vegetation; thus Buganda parents who had twins encouraged them to dance over the gardens of their neighbors to induce fertility.¹⁶

Most of the Pueblo Indian dances were intended to affect plants or animals in such a way; they had deer, buffalo, parrot, turtle, eagle, and corn dances.¹⁷ Such dances are closely related to the mimetic and totemic dances. At some of these the dancers imitated kangaroos, frogs, and opossums (Australia), monkeys and jaguars (Guiana), tigers (Macusi Indians), walruses and seals (Chuckchees), turtles (Andamanese), tree-creepers (Maidu of

¹³Spence, op. cit., p. 114.

¹⁴Hambly, op. cit., p. 220.

¹⁵Spence, op. cit., pp. 119-120.

¹⁶Sir James George Frazer, The Golden Bough. A Study in Magic and Religion (New York: McMillan Co., 1960), p. 136.

¹⁷Erna Fergusson, Dancing Gods. Indian Ceremonials of New Mexico and Arizona (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1931), pp. 3-65.

California), butterflies (Samoa), and bears (Carrier Indians).¹⁸ Some of these tribes also insist that they were taught by these totemic ancestors. The Bushmen combine such dances with the respective animals' sounds, often obviously confusing these animals.¹⁹

Fertility and growth was also induced on crops by the supposedly magic effect of leaping dances. This was done originally by the Greeks, and within the last three centuries among the British, Basques, Bavarians, Morlaks, Scots, Mexicans, the Bengali of Hindustan, the Naga of Indo-China, and the Wayamwezi, Wasiba, Yoruba, and Angoni of Africa.²⁰ Traits of these dances can be seen in the three great Roman harvest festival dances: the Ambarvalia, the Luprecalia, and the procession of the Salii priests.²¹ It is obvious, again, that while the aspect of imitative magic was hardly acceptable to Jahwe, the Hebrews found a way of thanking God for the harvest rather than thinking they could cause

¹⁸Oesterley, op. cit., p. 18; Sachs, op. cit., pp. 9-11, 79f.; Hambly, op. cit., p. 218.

¹⁹Hambly, op. cit., p. 221. The Chuckee of Northeast Siberia reproduced guttural sounds of ravens, pp. 28f.

²⁰Frazer, op. cit., p. 32; Hambly, op. cit., pp. 207-208; Sachs, op. cit., p. 26. The Kayans of Borneo, for example, added to their leaps the dancing of rows of girls waving their arms--an imitation of healthy stalks swaying in the wind. Oesterley, op. cit., pp. 151f.

²¹Oesterley, op. cit., p. 149. Hambly has an impressive list of tribes which have dances to increase harvests. Hambly, op. cit., pp. 220-230.

it to grow.

However, it should be noted that these functional interpretations do not do justice to the complex nature of man. There may be a different purpose for fertility dances than any sort of enjoyment, or a way of inducing the growth of rich crops. The element of fertility is often only an outward expression of an underlying structure in mankind which views this action as a cosmic "falling in step" with the universal principles of hierogamy, the marriage of heaven and earth, on which the joy of everyone depends.²²

Initiation Dances

We will not go into the weird and fascinating rituals of initiation ceremonies. We are interested in the reasons behind some of their accompanying dances. These reasons may be four or more: testing, educating, welcoming, and exorcising. Akikuyu boys dance all night before the morning circumcision, apparently so that they have to face the ordeal when thoroughly tired; and

Yao boys, during the preparatory isolation, undergo exhausting dances as a severe test of physical stamina. To fail is the worst possible thing that could happen. Should that happen, grass is sprinkled over him and when all spectators have departed, the lad creeps away from the spot which is liberally splashed with the blood of a fowl. No doubt this ceremonial is intended to deceive the evil spirits who would be led to believe that the faulty dancer had died and that no

²²Eliade, op. cit., pp. 172, 182.

vindictive measures would be taken by the demon, who had been offended on account of the imperfect dancing on such an important occasion.²³

The reason for this dance is obviously the testing of the initiate. But sometimes the purpose is the direct opposite: to teach. It is not a test to see how ready the initiate is, but it is a learning opportunity to prepare him for life in the society. The Yuís of Australia use this occasion to teach the initiate the laws against lying and stealing. Such were the purposes of initiation dances among the Kamilaroo of Australia, the Bantus of Africa, the Eulusinian and Cabyríe mysteries of Greece, and the mithraistic mysteries of Rome.²⁴ In some cases the instructions involve also the learning of professional skills. Such are the dances among the Malay and Polynesian boatmen and among the Southern Negroes who were to work in vineyard vats.²⁵

The aspect of welcoming the initiate accompanies most of these dances. Among the Nkimba, the initiate is welcomed into the "society of the living" after going through a mock death. Their life truly evidences this; for children do not have the privilege of dancing which is reserved

²³Hambly, op. cit., p. 24. In the Hopi snake dance the dancer receives the live rattle snake in his mouth and trails it over his knees--another type of test. Ruth Benedict, Patterns of Culture (New York: New American Library, 1959), p. 91.

²⁴Hambly, op. cit., pp. 30-40.

²⁵Ibid.

for the adults.²⁶ Finally, the reason for the initiation dances may be exorcism. This may also have been the idea behind the circumcision dances. Also among the Indians of the Paraguayan Chaco a young girl who is to be protected from devils is placed in the center of a ring of women who dance around her.²⁷

A purpose often hiding behind these merely functional explanations is the re-enactment of the death and rebirth of the initiate. The symbol of death and rebirth is one found among almost all religions and it is often the most logical explanation for the many ordeals which initiates are required to undergo.²⁸

Funeral Dances

At least six possible purposes of the funeral dance have been listed in the previous chapter. The movements accompanying many of these funerals often reflect their purposes. Sometimes the dead man's outstanding accomplishments were re-enacted for the benefit of the survivors. The Australian Arunta stamp the spirit into the grave. In the

²⁶ Ibid.; Spence, op. cit., p. 113.

²⁷ Boys in grotesque ornaments represent the demons. Spence, op. cit., p. 31; Oesterley, op. cit., p. 40.

²⁸ Mircea Eliade, Birth and Rebirth. The Religious Meanings of Initiation in Human Culture, translated by Willard Trask (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1958).

Roman processions at the funeral of a nobleman the dead man and his ancestors were persons resembling them in stature and wearing wax portrait masks.²⁹ Even Homer and other Greek poets describe the custom of celebrating funeral games while hundreds would run, leap, or wrestle beside the funeral pyre. The intended effect was to revive the deceased by the imitative magic of a high leap.³⁰ A more somber dance was performed by the peasants of upper Egypt. Women daubed their faces, bosoms, and dresses with mud and danced with a slow rising and depressing of the body. This they did for one hour or more, two or three times a day, for three days.³¹ It appears from these examples that the funeral dances were not intended as a defense mechanism of self-deception, a forgetting of the sad event covered up with a facade of joy. Among the Skokas of Tibet, for example, the primary concern was not the disposal of the body, but much more so the removal of sins of the deceased. Those sins were removed as they were placed on a goat whose sacrifice was the occasion for a dance. Almost identical festivities are found among the Veddas of Ceylon and the

²⁹John Martin, "Dance," Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, edited by Edwin Seligman (New York: McMillan Co., 1937), III, 704.

³⁰Spence, op. cit., pp. 15, 97.

³¹Hambly, op. cit., p. 32.

Badegas of South India.³² Certainly there are parallels in the Biblical goat of Azazel that was driven into the wilderness.

Much more realism appears in the Navajo funeral ceremony. Instead of wild funeral whirls there is an effort at stoic acceptance which sees beauty in death. The closing prayer reads,

In beauty it is finished,
In beauty it is finished,
In beauty it is finished,
In beauty it is finished.³³

The very term "funeral dance" appears as one of the most incongruous, yet strangely, most universal religious dances.³⁴ As such, it also appears as one of the most difficult dances for Christianity to adopt. It is of such importance that it will be treated separately in Chapter X.

War and Victory Dances

The major purposes of war and victory dances are:

- (a) to crystallize group solidarity; (b) to excite the warriors to the point of forgetting the danger of death;
- (c) to either frighten or pacify the vengeful spirits; and
- (d) to win by imitative magic.³⁵

³²Ibid., pp. 32, 266, 268.

³³Fergusson, op. cit., p. 199.

³⁴Sachs, op. cit., pp. 62-112.

³⁵Martin, op. cit., pp. 703f.

The war dance, more than any other, crystallizes group solidarity.³⁶ At times it is meant to train the warriors to inflict torture without flinching. Oesterley relates how the Dakotahs

performed a dance at which they devoured the livers of dogs raw and warm in order thereby to acquire the sagacity and bravery of the dog. The animals were thrown to them alive, killed, and cut open, and their livers were extracted. Each dancer swallowed it as he danced.³⁷

Other head-hunting tribes trained their children in the art of war by letting them strike blows at the newly captured heads.³⁸

A third purpose of the war dance was to fight or to appease the angered spirits. Thus the tribes of Timor (Indian Archipelago) were not allowed to enter their home village after a victorious war until they had spent two months in purification by dancing and entreating forgiveness for the slain.³⁹ At times this appeasement was

³⁶"With regard to the social importance of the war dance it may be justly said that no other is so essential for strengthening communal bonds and arousing the right mental attitude for aggression and defense." Hambly, op. cit., p. 80.

³⁷Oesterley, op. cit., p. 165.

³⁸Hambly, op. cit., p. 82.

³⁹The victorious warriors addressed the slain heads explaining their dilemma--the unfortunate necessity of having to cut off their heads. Oesterley, op. cit., p. 167.

achieved by actual exorcism;⁴⁰ the dancers wore masks which were meant to scare away the evil spirits forever.⁴¹

Little adaptation to these forms seems possible for Christianity. The only aspect that has been taken over is that of war processions, marching armies which call forth strength and unity. Ultimately, this is what Christians also imagine when they sing "Onward Christian Soldiers, Marching as to War."

Astral and Mythological Dances

Many astral dances are intended to describe or to aid cosmic processes. The most frequent astral dance is that which "helps" the sun run its daily course.⁴² At times light was thought to be the child of the marriage relationship between the sun and the moon; and so fertility dances here on earth would, by imitative magic, produce this necessary offspring.⁴³ The Greek and Roman labyrinth dances,

⁴⁰Hambly, op. cit., p. 30. This is seen even in the "higher religions." When an Indian of Mexico wears a mask he is supposedly converted into a new being, namely the being which he represents. Norma Schwendener, Legends and Dances of Old Mexico (New York: A. S. Barnes Co., 1934), p. vii.

⁴¹Hambly, op. cit., pp. 90-96. Oesterley, op. cit., p. 170.

⁴²The "crane dance" and Ariadne's dance in Greece; and the sun dances among American Indians. Oesterley, op. cit., pp. 82, 83; Crawley, op. cit., p. 361; Hambly, op. cit., p. 210.

⁴³Sachs, op. cit., pp. 124-171.

which viewed the stars as an army dancing through the heavens, has had striking parallels among Peruvians, Australian aborigenes, and the Blackfeet Indians.⁴⁴ When Moroccans combined their dances with ball games, the movement of the ball was thought to move clouds which, in turn, would produce rain.⁴⁵

Again, these merely pragmatic explanations do not do justice to the complex processes of reasoning going on in the mind of man. For example, Mircea Eliade has shown quite conclusively that circular dances around a centre, be it a tree, a column, a mountain, or an altar, are expressions of a deeper symbolism that makes the chosen object the centre of the world or of the cosmos. The dance becomes a symbol for the imago mundi. This is even true among Hindus, where circular dances appear to be a re-enactment of the Hindu circular view of time--the cycle of creation, destruction, and new creation, all rotating around the goal and centre--non-existence.⁴⁶

Closely related to these astral dances are those which

⁴⁴Oesterley, op. cit., pp. 69, 79. On page 79 Oesterley writes: "It represents a dance of seven young men who are identified with the Pleiades. For the Indians say that the seven stars of the constellation were seven brothers who guarded by night the field of the sacred seed and danced around it to keep themselves awake during the long hours of darkness."

⁴⁵Crawley, op. cit., p. 361.

⁴⁶Eliade, Images and Symbols, pp. 27-91.

attempt to explain cosmological causes and processes in mythological persons. The classic example of this type are the Oriental dances. Turning about in divine rhythm, Siva creates the world, while for the Chinese cosmic harmony is caused by the dance of planets and gods swinging through the universe.⁴⁷

Siva, the Creator-Destroyer, once stood on a demon and with one of his four arms began to shake a little hand drum. To this beat he moved his body and with this movement the world took shape; he danced on and on until creation was completed.⁴⁸

Another interpretation of the dance of Siva is that when a man succeeds in mastering his own ego, the Lord Siva dances within him. The five different activities of Siva are represented by this dance: Sristi (overlooking creation, evolution), Sthiti (preservation, support), Samhara (destruction, evolution), Tirobhava (veiling, embodiment, illusion, rest), and Anugraha (release, salvation). All of these activities are represented in abstract dance movements.⁴⁹ An example of these Hindu dances is

⁴⁷Sachs, op. cit., p. 6. Faubion Bowers, The Dance in India (New York: Columbia University Press, 1953), p. 1

⁴⁸"Dancing for the Gods," Time, LXXIV (January 27, 1958), 52.

⁴⁹Ananda Coomarasawamy, The Dance of Siva. Fourteen Indian Essays (London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent, and Co., 1924), p. 59. On page 62 the author says: "The Supreme Intelligence dances in our soul . . . for the purpose of removing our sins. By these means our Father scatters the darkness of illusion (maya), burns the thread of causality (karma), stamps down evil (mala, anawa,"

the Siva Pradosha Stotra, danced by the gods in the Himalayas and accompanied by a divine chorus.

Placing the Mother of the Three Worlds upon a golden throne, studded with precious gems, Sulapani dances on the heights of Kailasa, and all the gods gather round him.

Sarasvati plays on the vina, Indra on the flute, Brahma holds the time-marking cymbals, Lakshmi begins a song, Vishnu plays on a drum, and all the gods stand round about: Gandharvas, Yakshas, Patagas, Urugas, Siddhas, Sadhyas, Vidyadharas, Amaras, Apsarases, and all the beings dwelling in the Three Worlds assemble there to witness the celestial dance and to hear the music of the divine choir at the hour of twilight.⁵⁰

Thus, almost every cosmic wonder is interpreted by Hindus in the form of the dance. Veda, the "Dawn," was dressed as a dancing girl.⁵¹

The origin of light is also explained through a Japanese dance. Angered during a quarrel between the Sun Goddess Amaterasu and her brother, she withdraws to a cave and so she throws the whole world into total darkness. Hoping to entice her out and to bring back daylight again, the other gods persuade a voluptuous goddess to stage a dance outside the cave. The resultant laughter and applause arouse the curiosity of the Sun Goddess, who emerges to see what the fun is all about, thereby bringing light

avidya), showers grace, and lovingly plunges the soul in the ocean of Bliss (ananda). They never see rebirths, who behold this mystic dance."

⁵⁰ Ibid., pp. 56-67.

⁵¹ Hambly, op. cit., pp. 64-65.

back to earth.⁵²

Similar to this cosmic-mythological view of the gods was the idea behind the athletic games among the Romans. These games were taken as a representation of the life of the gods above. More than that, by imitative magic, the happiness of the athletic performer and of the crowd was thought to cause a parallel happiness among the gods. This accounts in part for the fact that 135 days in the Roman calendar were devoted to games. These games were performed with a religious strictness. Indeed, if they were interrupted in any way, they had to be repeated, lest the wrath of the gods be incurred.⁵³

Another aspect of the cosmic dances is the law of "parallel magic." Long lists of such magic dances could be given. We will merely mention the example of those which were to bring about rain. The tireless pounding of feet among the Zuni and Pueblos was to compel the rain to come down.⁵⁴ The Omaha and the Watache Indians spirted

⁵²Takarazuka Dance Program, p. 8. This dance is called Twato Kagura.

⁵³Spence, op. cit., pp. 11, 12. On page 11 he writes: "In some cases, the sums lavished upon them make the outlays of a leading modern football club appear almost beggarly." Some of these games were the Plebs, Jupiter, Ceres, Apollo, and Flora games.

⁵⁴Benedict, op. cit., pp. 90-91. Hambly, op. cit., p. 236.

water into the air to invite the clouds to imitate this.⁵⁵ Arabians held a feast at the source of a well to induce it to flow again.⁵⁶ Mexican Indian girls were made to cry so that the cosmic law of parallel magic would cause heaven to cry rain.⁵⁷

We will see in the next chapter how the Christian Church did adopt some of these cosmic dances only after leaving out the element of magic.

Processionals

The main purposes of processionals are: (a) the establishment of respect for authority; and (b) the parading of strength.⁵⁸ Circular processionals may be to protect, dominate, destroy, or hollow the encircled object.⁵⁹ The list of tribes and nations which use processionals is too long to be given. Processionals were performed among the Hebrews for Jahwe, among the Greeks for the gods, among the Romans for the Caesars, among the Arabians around the kaaba, and among the Medieval flagellants to expel plagues. They are no less popular today, be they Japanese snake

⁵⁵Frazer, op. cit., pp. 73-74.

⁵⁶Oesterley, op. cit., p. 90.

⁵⁷Spence, op. cit., p. 9.

⁵⁸Martin, op. cit., p. 702.

⁵⁹Crawley, op. cit., p. 356.

dance demonstrations, our New Year's parades, or marches at the end of wars, presidential inaugurations, or return of heroes. Nor have processions disappeared from our churches. In the United States these are usually majestic and reverent, while in some of our younger Christian churches they consist in entire congregations singing and parading through every village house before the Sunday service, as will be seen in Chapter VI.

Exhibitionary Dances

Almost all the dances mentioned until now had no spectators. They involved everyone. The appearance of the exhibitionary dance seems to be a later innovation in the history of the dance, a direct result of specialization. In very ancient times temple dancers were often linked with prostitution. The later Japanese geishas and Indian bayaderes were more chaste and aesthetic.⁶⁰ Many of these dances became exhibitionary without losing their religious connotations. In Japan the main dances were the Kabuki, Gagaku, Kagura, and Bugaku dances.⁶¹ The Hindu dance of Siva has been mentioned. Elsewhere, exhibitionary dances are actually acrobatic displays, such as the hammock dance

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 362.

⁶¹ Rikukei Umemoto and Yutaka Ishizawa, Classical Dances of Japan (Tokyo: Sanseido Co., 1936), pp. 9-12.

in Sierra Leone.⁶²

From the viewpoint of the Christian Church these dances pose a very crucial question: "Should we limit ourselves to dances which involve all, or should we allow the worshipers to become mere spectators?"

Ecstatic Dances

Ecstatic dances are often performed after fasting, ceremonials, and seclusion have made the performer so weak and sensitive that hysteria, followed by trance, can be self-induced.⁶³ The dances may be accompanied by strong epileptic convulsions,⁶⁴ frothing and foaming at the mouth,⁶⁵ handling of red-hot coals,⁶⁶ falling rigid and exhausted on the ground,⁶⁷ or falling into a long

⁶²Hambly, op. cit., pp. 138-139.

⁶³Ibid., p. 30.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 240. It is also found among the Shamans of California (Benedict, op. cit., p. 90) and among the Fiji priests (Tylor, op. cit., II, 220).

⁶⁵Similarly found among New Mexico tribes (Benedict, op. cit., p. 90) and among Sandwich Island priests (Tylor, op. cit., p. 220).

⁶⁶The Kwakiutl handled coals with hands and mouth (Benedict, op. cit., p. 158); firewalking was frequent in the West Indies (Leaf, op. cit., p. 110).

⁶⁷The Coras of New Mexico have a whirling dance, at the climax of which the worshiper destroys the altar to bits, tramples it into the sand, and falls exhausted upon the destroyed altar. At any other moment this would have been considered a sacrilegious act. In this case alone it

trance.⁶⁸ The aim is to discover the will of the spirits.⁶⁹ In some cases the dancers become identified with the spirits; the Khlisti dancer "becomes Christ" and the Veddas are possessed by Yaku.⁷⁰ This self-hypnotism is often induced by the drum. In many cases it develops into a stretta, the gradual increase of speed reaching a pulsating climax.⁷¹

Some of these ecstatic dances will be examined briefly. Apuleius has a detailed description of one of the Syrian dances in The Golden Ass. The worshipers howled, spun around, flung their hair into the air, and bit and slashed themselves.⁷² Another ecstatic dance was popular in Hassidism.

In Hassidism the dance reached the highest level of religious enthusiasm, even to the point of complete self-oblivion. Hands as well as feet were caught up in the passion of the dance. This was no local pastime, no mere "poetry in motion," no auto-intoxication. This was religious ecstasy that lifted the participants out of their surroundings into the highest heavens.⁷³

is not only acceptable, but the highest form of worship. Benedict, op. cit., p. 91.

⁶⁸"Dancing for the Gods," Time, LXXIV (January 27, 1958), 56-57.

⁶⁹Hambly, op. cit., p. 29.

⁷⁰Sachs, op. cit., pp. 50f.

⁷¹Ibid., pp. 25f.; Hambly, op. cit., p. 30.

⁷²Oesterley, op. cit., p. 118.

⁷³H. Rabinowicz, "Music and Dance in Hassidism," Judaism, XXXV (Summer, 1959), 252.

The whirling dervishes offer an ideal example of a higher development of an ecstatic dance. In some ways they were so organized that they can be considered astral dances. Sachs describes one of these. While seventeen monks are squatting, one of them reads a section from the Koran for fifteen minutes. Then, at the start of some music, thirteen of them start moving counterclockwise. At a certain spot each dancer turns to the man behind him and both make low bows to each other. When the rhythm changes they throw off their cloaks. Ten stand there in white cowls, one in black, one in greenish blue, and one in gray. All of them walk up and kiss the abbot. Then ten soar forth, spread their arms out horizontally like wings of an airplane, and begin to whirl in a manner that the many cowls worn one over another form a large bell around them. Four dervishes make up a small circle, six a larger one, and as they whirl about constantly, the eldest, in the black cowl, moves slowly and continuously between the two circles. This is repeated in counter-clockwise fashion. These old men with outstretched arms spin at top speed for a full half hour, an unbelievable feat in Sachs' view. In dizziness the dervish loses himself from the body, and so, released from the body, he "controls" his dizziness.⁷⁴

⁷⁴Doctors verify to the "Yoga" state of these dervishes, Sachs, op. cit., pp. 41-43. Sachs adds that such dances are also found among the self-emasculated Skoptzi. See also Oesterley, op. cit., pp. 118f.

The Siberian Shamans danced tethered by four ropes strung to the four directions so that they would not run into each other. Yet their aim was not to induce hypnosis, but to fight it off. The final winner was the one who did not succumb to the hypnotic suggestions.⁷⁵

The frequent occurrence of dances in which the people somehow join hands also has a deeper underlying symbolism. Mircea Eliade sees in this "symbolism of knots" an urge to express "the God who binds." The dancer may achieve this unity by so joining the deity, or by joining the deity by joining himself to others in his group.⁷⁶

The Voodoo dances in the West Indies were no less ecstatic. These descendants of African captives seemed to be uniquely gifted for the invention of bizarre ceremonials. During their fire dances each member received a quivering piece of flesh from a sliced goat; during their moon dance they tested the extremes of centrifugal force in circular dances; and during their snake dances they danced around an uncovered basket filled with snakes.⁷⁷ The Obeah dance among the inhabitants of the West Indies is characterized by a low, mumbling chant which goes on for days; some fall

⁷⁵Benedict, op. cit., p. 90.

⁷⁶Eliade, Images and Symbols, pp. 92-124.

⁷⁷Mary A. Owen, "Voodoo," Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1958), XII, 640-641.

into a coma, and after days without food they wake up to relate their visions by "speaking in tongues."⁷⁸ The hypnotic power of some of these drum-dances should not be underrated.

The conga drum was once outlawed by Cuba for its fearful power over human masses. . . . In the presidential campaign of 1924 the conga song was credited with the defeat of president Menocal for re-election. The song simply ridiculed him out of office.⁷⁹

The best contemporary example of a more refined ecstatic dance is the Japanese Odori kyo or Tenri-kyo, the "dancing religion." From its start it was forbidden by the government and on several occasions the entire community was imprisoned. However, prohibitions could not stop its momentum and it soon was beyond the reach of the police.⁸⁰ Especially since its official registration as a religion in 1947 it has grown under the leadership of Sayo Kitamura.⁸¹

Is there any possibility or even desirability of adaptation to any of these ecstatic dances? Perhaps not. Judging from the replies to the questionnaire, there have been no such attempts within Protestant "younger churches." Yet the important question is not so much "Is it desirable

⁷⁸Leaf, op. cit., p. 59.

⁷⁹Ibid., pp. 66, 44.

⁸⁰Letter No. 40 in Appendix I.

⁸¹Letter No. 13 in Appendix I.

or possible?" but rather, "What does this teach us?" It seems that an examination of these ecstatic dances should make a Western Christian realize that hypnotic dances are not much different in ultimate aim from Yoga trances, which, in turn, have parallels in the sermon-listening trance which so frequently characterizes Western worship.⁸²

One aspect of hypnotic dances may even be desirable over our Western counterpart. While the general effect at the end of a Western service is, if not tiring, certainly not climactic, there is something advantageous about the stretta hypnotic effect. It is the development of speed in the course of the dance which gets quicker and quicker, building up to a climactic finish.

The eight major types of dances considered in this chapter do have vestiges within the Christian Church. We will begin by examining some of these Christian dances in the first millenium of the Christian era.

⁸²Letter No. 17 in Appendix I.

CHAPTER IV

DANCES IN THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH FROM THE SECOND UNTIL THE TENTH CENTURIES

Two major forces appear to have encouraged the use of the Christian dance in the first few centuries: Gnosticism and Jewish sects. Most influential in this latter group were the Therapeutae. These Jews who were converted to Christianity withdrew into the wilderness oases to dance ring dances and to sing psalms and hymns.¹ The fact that both of these groups were heretical branches does not argue against the dance. The striking thing is rather that, while the orthodox fathers attacked heretics on matters of doctrine, they said nothing about any evil existing in these early Christian worship dances. It is only later, when an obvious secularization sets in, that pronouncements against such religious dances are heard. Even then, these fathers are painstakingly careful in explaining that their objections lay in the abuse or the degeneration of such dances.

The earliest known reference to religious dances is in the Shepherd of Hermas, where God's forces and spirits

¹E. Louis Backmann, Religious Dances in the Christian Church and in Popular Medicine, translated by E. Clasen (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1952), p. 11. Hereafter we will refer to Backmann's book as ELB.

are pictured as dancing in God's paradise.² The Didache mentions a dance called "The Cosmic Mystery of the Church," which dealt with the mystery of creation and involved a rhythmic interpretation of the movements of the sun, moon, star, and planets.³ From the writings of Justin Martyr, Backmann deduces that a kind of boys' choir appeared from 150 A.D. on. This choir played music, sang, and danced during the divine service.⁴ However, the evidence for this view seems weak. On the other hand, there is no doubt about the reference to a dance in the Gnostic Acts of St. John. It was to have been performed by our Lord Jesus with His disciples after the Holy Supper,⁵ and consisted in statements of Christ to which His disciples responded antiphonally, "Amen."

Now before He was taken by the lawless Jews, he gathered all of us together and said,

"Before I am delivered up unto them let us sing an hymn to the Father, and so go forth to that which lieth before us."

He bade us therefore make, as it were, a ring, holding one another's hands, and himself standing in the midst, he said,

"Answer Amen unto me."

²Ibid., p. 37.

³Margaret Palmer Fisk, The Art of the Rhythmic Choir, Worship Through Symbolic Movement (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1950), p. 100, quoting Didache, XI, 2.

⁴ELB, p. 37.

⁵"Pageant in Honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary on the Sunday Nearest to the Feast of the Annunciation. St. Mark's in the Bouwerie, New York City, 1920-24," p. 7. (Printed program.)

He began to sing a hymn and sang,

"Glory be to the Father."

And we going about in a ring, answered, "Amen."

"Glory be to Thee, Word: Glory be to Thee, Grace."

"Amen."

"I would be saved, and I would save."

"Amen."

"Grace danceth. I would pipe; dance ye all."

"Amen."

"I would mourn: lament ye all."

"Amen."

"The number Eight singeth praise with us."

"Amen."

"The number Twelve danceth on high."

"Amen."

"The whole on high hath part on our dancing."

"Amen."

"Whoso danceth not, knoweth not what cometh to pass."

"I would be united and I would unite."

"Amen."

"A door am I to thee that knockest at me."

"Amen."

"Now answer thou unto my dancing. Behold thyself in me who speak, and seeing what I do, keep silence about my mysteries. Thou that dancest perceive what I do, for there is this passion of the manhood, which I am about to suffer. For thou couldst not at all have understood what thou sufferest, if I had not been sent unto thee as the Word of the Father.

Thou that sawest what I suffer sawest me as suffering, and seeing it thou didst not abide, but were wholly moved. Who am I, thou shalt know when I depart. Lear thou to suffer. I would keep tune with holy souls. Do thou understand the whole, and, having understood it, say:

Glory be to the Father."

"Amen."

Thus having danced with us the Lord went forth.⁶

In the latter part of the second century church dances appear to have become a part of the divine service. Backmann substantiates this with several sources. One of the

⁶Fisk, *op. cit.*, pp. 98-100. Similar Gnostic dances are recorded in the writings of the Manichaeans, the Priscillans, and the Acts of St. Thomas, *ELB*, pp. 14-16.

rubrics at the end of prayers was to "move the feet," which he interprets as a technical form for dancing, "a brief tramping or stamping dance intended to show the desire, through prayer, to lift the body above the earth."⁷ Several fathers declared that the blessed angels dance a perpetual dance. St. Clement of Alexandria added that it was part of the inauguration festivals of church mysteries.⁸ The Christian Gnostics also had a "labyrinthine dance" which interpreted the Naassene Hymn in which the human soul is described as "wandering in the labyrinth of ills." The Savior descends bringing Gnosis, which frees the soul and leads her out of the labyrinth.⁹

Origen mentions a hymn with the line "The stars dance in heaven for the salvation of the universe," while the neo-Platonist Plotinus visualizes Christians dancing around Christ, their center:

If, then, a soul is conscious of itself, it knows that its natural motion is in a circle. . . . As a chorus may sing out of tune when turned to face the play or audience, and then it turns to the choros leader, sings well, and truly dances around him; so we forever keep our eyes on Him; but when we do, then

⁷ELB., p. 38.

⁸Ibid., pp. 328-329, 2, 18, 19, 22, 72.

⁹Fisk, op. cit., p. 100. In the hymn "My Faith Looks Up To Thee," Mrs. Fisk visualizes in a similar way the soul as being in a maze or labyrinth:

When life's dark maze I tread
And griefs around me spread,
Be Thou my guide.

do we win to perfectness and peace and are no longer out of tune, but truly dance around him the dance divine.¹⁰

Both Athanasius and Arius mention pantomime dances commemorating the Crucifixion in a liturgy called the Thalia.¹¹ Gregory of Thaumaturgus thought of the dance as a natural and spontaneous way for Adam and for John the Baptist to express their religious joy. On one occasion he says, "Today Adam is renewed and dances with the angels soaring into heaven," and again, "Dance with me, Jordan River, and leap with me, and set thy waves in rhythm, for thy Maker has come to thee in body."¹²

Later, when the persecutions ceased under Constantine, magnificent churches were erected over the graves of martyrs. These attracted pilgrimages in great numbers.¹³ The most noble way of honoring a martyr seemed to be through a dance. One of the fathers writes of the martyr Polyeuctus,

By what thanksgiving shall we acknowledge the love he had for God? If you wish, let us celebrate in his honor the accustomed dances.¹⁴

Frequently the bishops themselves led the faithful in

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 100-101.

¹¹Ibid., p. 103.

¹²Ibid., p. 101, quoting from Homilies I and II, De Christi Baptismo.

¹³ELB., p. 40.

¹⁴Fisk, op. cit., p. 104.

sacred dances both in the churches and before the tombs of martyrs.¹⁵ Eusebius adds that some of these were watch-night services, while Lucius describes the crowds that streamed from early morning until late at night to the graves of Hippolitus and Felix.¹⁶ Theodosius mentions the sacred festival of the Chorostasia, which was an imitation of angelic dancing.

Backmann lists some fifteen hymns which represented angelic dances and which were used at funerals.¹⁷ In general, we can summarize the purposes of these dances at the graves of martyrs as these four: (a) to comfort the dead; (b) to rejoice in their resurrection; (c) to participate

¹⁵A. E. Crawley, "Dance," Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, edited by James Hastings (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), X, 361.

¹⁶ELB., pp. 38, 39. Margaret Fisk quotes Eusebius as saying that this watch-night dance was much like a religious dance described by Philo. Philo's supposed words are these: "There are one man and ten women dancers, and a leader is chosen from each. Then they chant hymns composed in God's honor in many metres and melodies, sometimes one choros beating the measure with their hands for the antiphonal chanting of the other, now dancing to the measure, at times dancing in procession, at times set dances and then circle dances going right and left. This festal dance commemorated the triumphant dance of the Israelites after their miraculous passage through the Red Sea. When the men and the women together form one choros, they sing hymns of joyful thanks to God the Savior. Then Moses the prophet leads the men, and Miriam, the prophetess, leads the women." Fisk, op. cit., pp. 101-102. Even if Eusebius' quotation of Philo is incorrect, we at least know that they danced in such a way at Eusebius' time.

¹⁷ELB., pp. 44-50.

in the dance of the angels; and (d) to protect themselves or departed from evil spirits.¹⁸

But with the secularization of Christianity came the slow degeneration of the dances. Gregory, Bishop of Constantinople, reproached Emperor Julian, successor of Constantine:

If you are fond of dancing, if your inclination leads you to these festivals, dance as much as you like. But why revive before our eyes the dissolute dances of Herodias and the pagans? Rather, perform the dances of king David before the ark: dance to the honor of God. Such exercises of peace and piety are worthy of an emperor and of a Christian.¹⁹

Epiphanius was also disturbed by the drinking and revelry that accompanied some of these once reverent dances. But instead of flatly forbidding them, he seriously tried to make them acceptable once again.²⁰

Yet these secular trends did not appear everywhere simultaneously. Basil, Bishop of Caesarea, refers to "the angelic dance around God" and calls those happy who can imitate such dancing.²¹ St. Ambrose describes how the person to be baptized must approach the font dancing,²²

¹⁸Ibid., p. 330.

¹⁹Fisk, op. cit., p. 103, quoting from Gaston Vuillier, The History of Dancing (London: Heinemann, 1898).

²⁰ELB., pp. 24, 329.

²¹Fisk, op. cit., p. 103.

²²ELB., pp. 2, 21, 25-30, 37. F. M. Verrall represents the Roman Catholic viewpoint of these dances as he

while St. Chrysostom predicts that some day all believers will perform ring dances with the angels in paradise.²³

The latter writes of the Christian church in Antioch,

celebrating the New Year's festival in a spiritual way by spending a large part of the time dancing with Paul. They had danced spiritual dances in decent order, had shared in the cup overflowing with spiritual discipline, and made themselves pipes and harps for the Spirit to play on.²⁴

From several of St. Chrysostom's writings Margaret Palmer Fisk quotes these observations on the Chorostasia:

He sees in those in heaven and upon earth one general assembly, one single service of thanksgiving, one simple transport of rejoicing, one joyous dance. . . . Dance to the glory of God is his advice. He refers them to pictures which show David surrounded with his choroi of prophets who in manifold modes and figures . . . sing, play instruments, and dance to the glory of God. . . . He also warns them not to use unseemly motions, but decent gestures. . . . Aware of pagan dancing, he urged to keep their dances sacred, reminding them that God had not given them feet for such pagan dancing, but that they might "dance with the angels."²⁵

St. Gregory of Nyssa also joins those who approve of David's dance.²⁶ Theodoret thought of St. Paul as one who danced because he had seen the beauties of Paradise and the dances

fully endorses them as a thing of beauty. F. M. Verrall, "Survivals of Devotional Dancing," Catholic World, CXXX (December 29, 1929), 339-341.

²³Fisk, op. cit., p. 98, quoting from St. Chrysostom's Homm. in Lazar.

²⁴Ibid., p. 98.

²⁵Ibid., pp. 102-104.

²⁶Ibid., p. 102.

of the holy ones.²⁷ St. Ambrose, advising his followers to dance like David, writes,

The dancing desired of the Lord is the Dance of David before the Ark. Dancing should not be the companion of delight, but of grace.²⁸

To St. Gregory of Nazianzus churchyard dances signified a triumph of grace within the heart of the Christian.²⁹

Theodoret depicts the dance of the men in the fiery furnace:

They summon to dance both heaven and the waters above the heavens, and the powers that circle round the divine throne. The flames of the burning fiery furnace were turned miraculously into dew, "so that those blessed children dance the dance in their midst, and sing the hymn."³⁰

The objections to the dance voiced by St. Augustine lay not so much in the evil of the dance itself, but in the excesses of his age. Backmann says that he could not bring himself to forbid it. He even said that "if a blessed martyr reveals himself to those who venerate him, he does so dancing."³¹ The degeneration set in when the dances at the Festival of Fools invited mere buffoonery and when the

²⁷Ibid., p. 98, quoting from Ep. ad Cor., XII.

²⁸Ibid., p. 103. Also Gregory of Nazianzen described the dance of David before the ark as "that swift course of revolution manifold ordained by God." Ibid.

²⁹ELB., pp. 42, 30-32, 328-329.

³⁰Fisk, op. cit., p. 105.

³¹ELB., pp. 329, 33-34, 15, 43, 154; Fisk, op. cit., p. 104.

festival of saints' days became the occasions for no more than entertainment dances.³² It is understandable why the Third Council of Toledo in 589 forbade dancing in the churches during the vigils of saints' days. Yet later, the Seventh Council of Toledo suggested that St. Isidore, archbishop of Seville, "present a ritual rich in sacred choreography." This ritual became a part of the Holy Mass known as Mozarabe,³³ and exists to our day. It will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter. This action of St. Isidore touched off a series of revivals of old dances, such as the cosmic dances revived by Honorius.³⁴ It also paved the way for the return of the Medieval angels' dance. Backmann lists five different functions of these dances: (a) to describe the typical bliss in paradise; (b) to exorcise the king of the underworld for the benefit of the dead; (c) to await the resurrection; (d) to aid in trampling vices underfoot; and (e) to imitate the welcome given saints as they enter Paradise.³⁵

At the same time, the Coptic Church in Abyssinia had been developing a rite all its own. Worship dances were held twice a year: for the Maskal festival, from September

³²ELB., pp. 329-330; Fisk, op. cit., p. 107.

³³Fisk, op. cit., p. 107.

³⁴ELB., p. 38.

³⁵Ibid., p. 329.

21-27, in connection with the recovery of the cross by Empress Helena, and for the Temkat festival, from January 18-20, for the blessing of the water. The priests started the dance, and the people joined in the swaying movement. At a given moment there was a sudden stop, and all listened to a Bible reading. An advancing and retreating movement was resumed after the reading, becoming faster and faster until reaching a climax. This dance was performed even in 1906.³⁶

Generally speaking, however, prohibitions became more frequent. In addition to the aforementioned prohibition of the Council of Toledo in 589, the Council of Orleans in 533 opposed dances on feast days. The Council of Braga in 572 imposed the penalty of penitence for three months and the Council of Chalon-sur-Saone in 650 penalty of excommunication. The Council of Antissiodrum or Auxerre in 590 forbade the dances in churches. In 858 Cautier, Bishop of Orleans, condemned the rustic songs of women dancers in the Presbytery on festival days. More prohibitions came from the Council of Constantinople in 692, from Pope Zacharias in the eighth century, and from Pope Eugenius II in the ninth century. The prohibitions were reinforced in the latter Middle Ages with decrees of the Councils of Bourges in 1226,

³⁶Ibid., pp. 93-95, 334.

Romen in 1231, and Avignon in 1209.³⁷

Yet it was at this time, in spite of the many prohibitions, that the Mass developed with its definite prescribed symbolic movements to the accompaniment of Gregorian chants.³⁸

In an ancient liturgy of a church in Paris, used at about 900 A.D., a rubric reads, "Here the canon shall dance at the first Psalm."³⁹

The history of the Christian dance in the first millenium is the history of its enthusiastic beginnings, its secularization, its degeneration, and its consequent enslavement in nothing more than the slow, pensive movements of the Mass. However noble these movements are, they do not represent a picture of the full dynamic use to which the body can be put in worship. Non-Western Christian churches today offer an opportunity to re-live, in a sense, the history of the first millenium. At the same time, the mistakes of those who allowed the dance to degenerate should sound the most serious warnings to our age not to deal with this problem carelessly. Moreover, our age offers a unique opportunity to see whether we can learn from history and trust the full power of the Gospel or whether we must fall

³⁷"Religious Dances in the Christian Church," Sacristy, X (February, 1871), 63-67; Fisk, op. cit., pp. 107-108.

³⁸Fisk, op. cit., p. 106.

³⁹Ibid., p. 108.

back on the crutches of prohibitions. The pleas of indigenous younger churches, bolstered by the powerful nationalism of our age, could perhaps correct those who have fallen prey to the sedentary worship forms of several centuries in our Western Church, and restore a much-needed variety of ways in which Christians can give glory to God.

was to be a long and discouraging one. It was difficult to recover from the powerful views of the Church's prohibitions. Yet it is interesting to see how the dance not only survived this test, but gained recognition to the most revered moments of worship, the High Mass. This is not to deny that some of the efforts were stumbling into and out of the deep secularism into which the dance had fallen.

Dance in the Romance Countries of Europe

The Medieval Christians did not view the dance as the exclusive property of secular society. St. Bernard (1099) danced at Carnival in holy joy. The Cistercians and Franciscans were often "danced and prayed for the salvation of the universe." Huns of Villaseaux celebrated the Feast of the Holy Innocents and of Mary Magdalene with appropriate dances.¹ Dancing to Psalms was also a church practice and

¹Margaret Palmer Fisk, *The Art of the Middle Ages*, *Dancing Through Symbolic Movement* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1950), pp. 110, 124. Friar David of Brieux found time to write a treatise on dancing even during the

CHAPTER V

DANCE IN THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH FROM THE TENTH TO THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

The struggle for the survival of the religious dance was to be a long and discouraging one. It was difficult to recover from the powerful blows of the Church's prohibitions. Yet it is interesting to see how the dance not only survived this test, but gained recognition to the most reverent moment of worship, the High Mass. This is not to deny that some of the efforts were stumbling into and out of the deep secularism into which the dance had fallen.

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¹Margaret Palmer Fisk, The Art of the Rhythmic Choir. Worship through Symbolic Movement (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1950), pp. 110, 122. Friar Marti of Dicanti found time to write a treatise on dancing even during the

was encouraged particularly by Catherine de Medici. From the choice of Psalms it appears that these interpretations were of a reverent nature. One of the favorite Psalms was De Profundis (Psalm 130).² Hymns were also interpreted with such bodily accompaniment. Backmann quotes an impressive list of such hymns: Veni, Sancte Spiritus, Victimae Paschali Laudes, Magnificat, Mos Florentis Venustatis, Gregis Pastor Tityrus, Al Regio Banquete, Quiem Me Diera, Resonet in Laudibus, Adam Hatte Sieben Soehne, In Heaven there is a Dance, the Burial Waltz, and the Rakoczi March.³ Many of the churches built at this time had a special area, called a choir, designed for such dances. Some of these can still be seen today in the churches of St. Clement and Pancras in Rome. These choirs are apart from and higher than the altar.⁴ The Church's endorsement of this art can

Inquisition, p. 110. Two other Carmelites in the seventeenth century were known to dance: Bienheureuse Marie de l'Incarnation and Second Sister Anne de Jesus, who danced before le Saint Sacrement at Carmel in Dijon, p. 122.

²Ibid., p. 123.

³E. Louis Backmann, Religious Dances in the Christian Church and in Popular Medicine, translated by E. Clasen (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1952), pp. 334-335. Hereafter Backmann's work will be referred to as ELB. The first three hymns mentioned have no rhythm, the next five do, and the last four had a secular origin, pp. 335ff.

⁴Fisk, op. cit., p. 128. One of these is described by the Jesuit priest of Paris, Menestries, in 1682: "The divine office was made up of psalms, hymns, and canticles, for the praises of God were recited, sung, and danced. . . . The place where these religious acts were performed was called the choir, just as with the choir of the Greeks."

also be seen in secular paintings such as Donatello's Dance of the Angels and Botticelli's nativity scene with angels dancing a ring dance above the sun as they sing In Dulci Jubilo.⁵

At the same time, it is true that in other areas the once religious dance became associated with taxes and tenures rather than with the liturgy. F. M. Verrall describes how

a thirteenth century bishop of Liege remitted a tax on condition that the clergy, magistrates, and merchants of Vertiers, headed by their processional cross and banners, should dance in the nave of St. Lambert's Cathedral on Whit Tuesday.⁶

We will examine the following religious dances: the Mozarabe, Els Cosiers, La Dama, San Juan Pelos, Le Hersica sels Cavallesco, the Cross of Verviers, the Bergerette, the Pelota, the Corpus Christi, the Defense of Paradise, the oratorio La Rappresentazione dell' Anima e del Corpo, the Dance of the Child Jesus, the Sorrows of the Three Marys, the Tripettes, and some of the dances on special occasions.

The Mozarabe, as mentioned in the previous chapter, was initiated by St. Isidore at the recommendation of the

⁵Ibid., p. 125.

⁶F. M. Verrall, "Survivals of Devotional Dancing," Catholic World, CXXX (December 29, 1929), 300-301. The custom died in 1794 when revolutionary soldiers burned the building.

Third Council of Toledo. Later it was called Los Seises, after the six choristers who performed it. Although later the number was expanded to ten, the original name was kept. Wearing plumed hats, they danced for half an hour to the clinking of castanets. They wore blue and white for the Blessed Virgin and red and white for the Corpus Christi. The dance consisted in a grave, measured minuet in front of the high altar, at the end of which the organ pealed out, the bells rang, and the veil was drawn before the Host. In the fifteenth century Pope Eugenius II ordered it to be discontinued. However, some ingenious men managed to bring Los Seises to Rome, where they performed the dance before the Pope. After seeing it, he permitted it to continue. Even today the dance is given at Seville three times a year: on Shrove Tuesday, on the Feast of the Corpus Christi, and on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception.⁷

This dance is also performed with some variations at three other places. In each case it is known by a different name. In the mountains of Catalonia it is known as the "Dance of the Potters," Els Cosiers, and is danced on July 29, the Feast of St. Roch, and on August 15, the Feast of the Assumption. On the island of Majorca it is

⁷"Religious Dances in the Christian Church," Sacristy, X (February, 1871), 67f.; Fisk, op. cit., p. 107.

known as La Dama, since it included a boy dressed as a lady in the center. This version included leaps and athletic spins, and ended with a presto spin. The third version was named San Juan de Pelos, or "St. John in the Dust." It was performed on August 28, the day of St. Augustine. The dancers, wearing silver paper halos and carrying a wooden cross, danced down the aisle and then genuflected at the altar. They wore flesh-colored tights and tunics with long sleeves, a crimson shirt, and a scarlet cape. The dance consisted in an occasional stamp growing wilder and faster, gesticulating with arms, kneeling, leaping ahead two or three times, stopping abruptly, and raising the cross aloft.⁸

The dance of the little horses (Le Hersica sels Cavallesco) was performed outside the church by six boys inside paper mache horses with head, mane, and tail. At times they trotted around the Dama in syncopated step, ever so often stopping to give a back kick like naughty donkeys are apt to do, while the Dama nonchalantly flicked her two handkerchiefs.⁹ It is a good example of the total secularization of a once religious dance.

The Cross of Verviers was enacted on Tuesday in

⁸Lilla Viles Wyman, "Religious Dances in the Christian Church," Dancing Times, XV (1932), 446-449.

⁹Ibid., pp. 449f.

Whitsuntide. A procession, led with fife, drums, and a big cross, left Verviers before sunrise. Its members included a representative of the government and of the clergy. When they reached the suburb of Liege, the gates were opened and the people danced through the streets to the Cathedral. The one carrying the cross led the way to the high altar.¹⁰

The Bergeretta was an Easter dance. The canons held hands in a ring. Behind them was a second ring composed of choir boys, each paired with a canon, while the chief dignitary was in the center. When the circle broke up, the oldest and the youngest led the way in a serpentine or labyrinthine dance.¹¹

The Pelota dance was performed by priests at Easter in the cathedrals of Auxerre, Reims, Rouen, Sens, and Narbonne. The main aspect of this dance was the throwing of a ball or pelota.

When the pelota had been received by the canon or dean, the priests began to intone in antiphon the sequence appropriate to the Easter Festival: "Praise to the Paschal Victim." Then, supporting the ball with his left hand, he began to dance in time with the rhythmical sounds of the chanted sequence, while the rest, holding hands, executed a choral dance around the labyrinth. Meanwhile the pilota was handed or

¹⁰"Religious Dances in the Christian Church," Sacristy, X (February, 1871), 65.

¹¹Fisk, op. cit., p. 125; ELB., pp. 73-76, 330.

thrown alternately by the dean and the dancers.¹²

There is in this dance an apparent parallel to the astral dances mentioned in Chapter III and the cosmic dances of the early church fathers.

The Corpus Christi festival was often supplemented with a dramatization without dialogue, including only pantomime and dancing. One of these dramatizations pictured the Jews dancing around the golden calf and later King Herod persecuted by the devils who were after his soul. At the end of the performance Death came with a scythe.¹³

The Defense of Paradise was a similar dance-drama. It was performed in 1572 under the auspices of Catherine de Medici. It depicted the clash between the Roman Catholic king of France, Charles IX, and his brothers, who were attempting to defend heaven, and the Protestant king of Navarre and his friends, who were guarding hell. The victory of Charles IX was planned in advance, of course. Yet, after a long ballet, victors and vanquished joined each other in paradise.¹⁴

The oratorio La Rappresentazione dell' Anima e de

¹²Fisk, op. cit., p. 125. Also ELB., pp. 66-73, and F. M. Verrall, "Survivals of Devotional Dancing," Catholic World, CXXX (December 29, 1929), 300.

¹³Fisk, op. cit., pp. 119-120.

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 123-124. Ten days later came the massacre of St. Bartholomew's day. It seems that not even art could heal the breach.

Corpo by Emilio del Cavallieri, performed around 1600 in Rome, featured the personalization of abstract ideas. The main characters were Time, Life, the World, Pleasure, Intellect, Soul, and Body. In a similar mystery or miracle play, the follies, the devil, and Salome danced. The follies, which represented the vices, tried to attract people in the audience; the devil, as the leading dancer, with his troupe of assisting devils, enjoyed scaring them; and the acrobatic dancing of Salome entertained them.¹⁵

Children took part in the Dance of the Child Jesus, a dance performed even in our century. This dance was particularly for those children who were retarded in learning to walk. After High Mass the mothers formed a group around the altar of the Christchild, and one began to sing while both mothers and children joined,

Dance on the right foot,
Dance on the left foot,
My Good Jesus,
Dance on both feet.¹⁶

However simple, it would seem that these dances involved these children in a greater degree of worship than any of their majestic services. A similar dance for children was held in the twelfth century on the very appropriate Innocents' Day on December 28. This dancing was done during

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 125, 110.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 131.

the divine service and at the celebration of the Mass.¹⁷

The Sorrows of the Three Marys was a play performed by white and red-robed clergy, holy sisters, or choir boys.

It was part of the Mass in the twelfth century Planctus.

These were some of the rubrics:

Magdalen: O brothers! (Turns to the people with arms held out)

Where is my hope? (Beats her breast).

Where is my consolation (Here raises her hands)

Where is my whole salvation? (Inclines her head, and casts herself at Christ's feet)

O Master Mine!

(Virgin) O sorrow!

(Here points to Christ with open hands)

Deep sorrow! Why, why indeed?

(Here points to Christ with open hands)

Dear Son, hangest Thou thus, Thou who art Life!

(Here beats her breast)

And has forever been?¹⁸

The Tripettes was the patronal feast dance of St.

Marcel, celebrated since 1350. As recent a program as 1930

lists the following events:

Friday, compline and dance of the Tripettes in the church, followed by a farandole at the close. Saturday, High Mass, procession and dance of the Tripettes around the statue of St. Marcel. Sunday, Mass, dance of the Tripettes, followed by a procession in the town with the bull on a flowered cart.¹⁹

¹⁷ELB., p. 64.

¹⁸Fisk, op. cit., p. 109.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 116. Held in Provence, this dance is an example of merging pagan and Christian elements. Originally, when the people of Barjols brought the body of St. Marcel to their church, they met a group of their fellow townsmen taking part in a traditional festival of sacrificing a bull. Today it has both bull-roasting and dancing.

Religious dances were also performed by priests on special occasions. There was the curious custom in France for priests to dance with women on the festival of their celebrating their first Mass. On the Feast of Fools vicars danced in the porches of French cathedrals. Special dances were performed at the canonization of Ignatius Loyola in 1609 and of Cardinal Charles Borronnee in 1610. The Moral Ballet was composed in 1634 to commemorate the birthday of Cardinal Savoy. In 1687 Jesuits entertained the Archbishop of Aix with a ballet. Even cardinals have been known to dance.²⁰

Whatever the judgment on these dances, we must agree with Backmann that the Spanish religious dances do not have the crassly magic concern which we find in other countries. Rather, they seem to have preserved more of a primary aesthetic concern, even if not primarily theocentric.²¹

The list of dances approved and used by churches could be extended.²² When dances were prohibited, this was done

²⁰Ibid., pp. 127-128. Also "Religious Dances in the Christian Church," Sacristy, X (February, 1871), 65-68. The Cardinals referred to were those of Narbonne and St. Sauveur in 1501 at Milan before Luis XII, and the cardinal at Mantua in 1562, at the festivities given by Philip II at Trent.

²¹ELB., p. 330.

²²Thus the Tripudia during the days after the Nativity; the dance of the deacons on St. Stephen's day; the dance of the priests on St. John's day; the dance of the sub-deacons on the days of the Circumcision or Epiphany. Fisk, op. cit., p. 111. Also the dances at the induction of priests and

for one of three reasons: aesthetic degeneration, excessive role of women, and the inclusion of magic. To these three reasons Backmann adds that

the reason for the failure of Roman Catholic prohibitions up to the eighteenth century was that the Bible, the evangelists, and the fathers of the Church were in favor of it.²³

Of course, once the dance was thrown out of the churches, it was left in the laps of the non-Christians who, however well-intended, were ill equipped to restore it to sacred usage. It became a vicious circle, evil breeding evil. An example of such degenerating use of the religious dance was the Dance of the Seven Deadly Sins. Parallels of this dilemma of the dance will be seen in the attempts at religious dances in the United States in the following chapter.

Not to be omitted from this study are the many processionsals used in the Roman Church. Crawley lists three types:

- (a) Processiones generales: the whole body of the clergy takes part.
- (b) Processiones ordinariae: yearly festivals such as the Feast of the Ascension, Palm Sunday, litaniae majores and minores, Feast of Corpus Christi, etc.

nuns, in 1385, of the first Mass of priests in 1518; of the eagles, in Barcelona, performed as late as 1931; the dance of the Dwarfs, the Ribbon dance, and the Candle dance; the dance of Easter in Provence, when children wore shoes for the first time, etc. ELB., pp. 91f., 95, 98, 100-112.

²³Ibid., p. 331. A study of the prohibitions is included in G. Van der Leeuw, Wegen en Grenzen (Amsterdam: H. J. Paris, 1948), pp. 63-66.

- (c) Processiones extraordinariae: for example, to pray for rain, fine weather, in time of storm, famine, plagues, war, dedication, translation of relics, welcoming an honored royal person, etc.²⁴

Special processions to the stations of the Cross symbolized stations on the route to Calvary. It should be noted, however, that these processions were not entirely free of the magic element. One example is the special processional held in Sicily in 1893 to obtain rain.²⁵

We have previously hinted at the dance elements within the Mass itself. This is not merely an observation of non-Roman Catholics, for Roman Catholics are indeed willing to acknowledge the dance elements within the Mass.²⁶ Margaret Palmer Fisk quotes three Roman Catholic sources to verify

²⁴A. E. Crawley, "Dance," Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), X, 357. Two such processions are described in an attempt to show their similarity to the dance. "They walk, two and two, in decent costume and reverent mien; clergy and laity, men and women, are to walk separately. The cross is carried at the head of the procession, and banners embroidered with sacred figures follow. Violet is the color prescribed for processions, except on the Feast of Corpus Christi." Again,

"The mid-summer procession of Notre Dame of Bon Secours started with a huge fire at dawn. The people were dressed in dark or black, but wore big white caps; as a result, they looked like a procession of white-capped white-winged cherubs of various ages, floating in mid-air. Ancient canticles were sung." Ibid., pp. 357f.

²⁵Sir James George Frazer, The Golden Bough. A Study in Magic and Religion (New York: McMillan, 1960), p. 86.

²⁶Fisk, op. cit., p. 133.

this.²⁷ Hugh Benson says that "the Mass is no less than a sacred dance"; to Father Malacky "the Holy Mass is a beautiful dance upon the altar, to Gregorian music"; and Jacques Maritain believes that "there is nothing more beautiful than a High Mass, a dance before the Ark in slow motion."

The Processions of the Flagellants

During the eleventh century people from northern Italy formed processions for magico-religious purposes. People of all classes and of all ages joined these processions which were headed by priests carrying crosses and banners. They walked through the streets in double file, reciting prayers and drawing blood from their bodies by whipping themselves and each other with leather thongs. Such self-punishing for the purpose of healing had been attempted earlier in history. It was tried among Egyptians, Spartans, and later Dervishes and Arab Fakirs.²⁸ But never before had it been used to such an extent.

In Belgium and Brittany patients afflicted with disease danced in the parish church the night through on St.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸W. D. Hambly, Tribal Dancing and Social Development (London: H. F. and G. Witherby, 1926), pp. 209-210. In Sparta, children were flogged before the altar of Artemis; the Dervishes cut themselves with knives, ate live coals and glass, handled red-hot iron, and swallowed snakes.

Bartholomew's eve.²⁹ The plague of the Black Death from 1347 to 1373 set off the biggest of these processions. This procession, in turn, set the pattern for the ones to follow. They moved in masses to the churches dedicated to saints, especially St. Vitus, who later became the patron saint of those with nervous diseases. Another dance epidemic broke out in 1374. Children from Hamelin danced to Gallows' Hill. The epidemic soon spread to include the cities of Aachen, Cologne, Trier, and Flanders, and the countries of Hungary, Poland, Austria, Germany, France, and the Netherlands. On the way the children were sorely afflicted with ergot poisoning; then the consequent cramps, epileptic fits, and mental confusion set in. Backmann carefully points out that dancing was not primarily seen as magic; rather, it was a way of working out the cramps. Since this method often helped, it is understandable why it was consequently interpreted as magic.³⁰

The many dance epidemics were quite similar. Some of these were the epidemics at Koelbigk in 1021, the children's dance between Erfurt and Arnstadt, in 1237, the epidemic in Wales in the thirteenth century, in Zuerich in the fifteenth, in Strassburg in the sixteenth centuries, in

²⁹Verrall, op. cit., pp. 340-341.

³⁰ELB., pp. 330-333; Fisk, op. cit., p. 113.

Brussels in 1518, and in Moelenbeck in 1564.³¹ Even London was no exception.³² These choreomaniacs, as they were called, jumped as high as they could, crying "Sol Sol!" to indicate how healthy they wanted to become.

It is Backmann's firm conviction that later historians have incorrectly applied the label of "heretics" to the choreomaniacs. Rather, they were regarded as neither religious nor anti-religious, but just "sick" and so possessed by devils. Backmann arrives at his conclusions after showing how choreomaniacs, unlike other contemporary heretics, were accepted within the fold of the Church. When dances such as the Erfurt epidemic of 1237 and the Aix-la-Chapelle epidemic of 1374 were forbidden, this was a decree of practice rather than a point of doctrine.³³ There is, of course, little value in adaptation of dances which include such self-punishment.

Dances in Germany and Great Britain

One of the best known European processions is the

³¹ELB., pp. 264-267, 236-244, 177-179, 331-333.

³²Hambly, op. cit., p. 209.

³³Lewis Spence, Myth and Ritual in Dance, Game, and Rhyme (London: Watts and Co., 1947), p. 142. Backmann suggests that the problem lay in the two-fold use of the word "secta"; at times it was used neutrally, such as the times when it was referring to these choreomaniacs. At other times it was used in the sense of "heresy." ELB., p. 333.

caravan of jumping saints, the Springende Heiligen." These long processions in honor of St. Willibrord leave Echter-nach, Luxemburg, on Tuesday of Whitsun week. Countless pilgrims, many suffering from nervous diseases, line up in ranks of four abreast, old, young, and middle aged in separate groups. They dance right through the town, always keeping the traditional steps--three forward and two back. All this is done to the tune of Adam Hatte Sieben Soehne, led by three hundred singers. All hold sticks or kerchiefs which they wave rhythmically to help keep the group together and in step. Likewise they climb the sixty-two steps to the cathedral--three up and two down. After encircling the shrine of St. Willibrord and depositing their offerings there, they go back down the aisle again, out into the churchyard, and finally separate at the foot of the Calvary after five hours of incessant dancing. The processions regularly attracted twenty thousand people, and as late as 1869 had eight thousand.³⁴ A similar procession was started by seven neighboring parishes in Treves and Luxemburg. The people assemble in one spot, remain motionless for seven minutes, take thirty steps forward, stop again for seven minutes, and so on, reaching their destination much earlier than a different dancing procession.³⁵

³⁴Verrall, op. cit., pp. 340-341; Fisk, op. cit., p. 112; "Religious Dances in the Christian Church," Sacristy, X (February, 1871), 65.

³⁵"Religious Dances in the Christian Church," Sacristy.

A totally different processional dance is the one performed by the sect of the Chorizantes in Germany. Thousands of both sexes danced through streets and in and out of churches until they were exhausted. These people were disinterested in spectators, since they were so absorbed in their fantastic visions. For example, they might imagine that they were wading in a stream of blood, and in interpretative action they would leap wildly in the air as if to get out of the blood.³⁶

The religious dances in England were more ritualistic. Until the sixteenth century tenants of the Prebend of Donington and the people of Whitshire village danced about the lectern in York Minster on Thursday of Whitsun week.³⁷ Since these led to riots later they were forbidden. Also in Queen Elizabeth's time, between All Hallow's Eve and the Purification of Mary, people flocked to churches and cemeteries on Sundays and holidays. These dances included pipes, drums, dances, and mumming during the divine

X (February, 1871), 66. One of the men who was eighty years old had taken part in these processions for forty years. He did this because he felt indebted to St. Willibrord for some favor.

³⁶Fisk, op. cit., pp. 116-117. This was performed for the first time during the festival of St. John the Baptist at midsummer in Aachen in 1374, and after that was brought to Cologne, Metz, and other parts of Germany. The patron saint at Strassburg was considered St. Vitus, the martyr under Diocletian.

³⁷Verrall, op. cit., pp. 340f.; Fisk, op. cit., p. 124.

services.³⁸ The inhabitants of Wishford and Baltford danced annually at the Salisbury Cathedral.³⁹ Also the Franciscans in England let the people dance to Christian themes on village greens before the parish churches. Joining hands, they made circles around the priests.⁴⁰ This is reminiscent of the Hymn of Jesus in the Acts of St. John.

However, there was a strong tendency in Great Britain to be syncretistic in the adaptation to these dances. Pope Gregory wrote in a letter to Melitus that he should preserve and purge all temples and retain such pagan customs as might gradually be transformed into Christian usages.⁴¹ Later, many of these customs still included the former pagan beliefs, even though a crucifix was carried and songs like the Hymn of St. John were sung.⁴² This was also the case with the processions of giants carried in effigy,⁴³ and originally with many of the adopted pagan games. Most

³⁸"Religious Dances in the Christian Church," Sacristy, X (February, 1871), 65.

³⁹Ibid. Up to the last century the people of Helston and Cornwall performed the flurry dance, ending at the church.

⁴⁰Fisk, op. cit., p. 122.

⁴¹Spence, op. cit., pp. 25-26.

⁴²Frazer, op. cit., p. 728.

⁴³Ibid., pp. 758-760. Such were the Druids at Douay, and the people of Dunkirk, Brabant, Flanders, Antwerp, Chester, Coventry, and Burford.

of these have lost their religious connotations by now. They included the Halloween processions of hob-goblins, games like ring-a-ring-o'-roses, hunting the squirrel, cock-fighting, hunting the lamb, the witches' broom riding, and the Maypole and Sword dances.⁴⁴ However innocent these games or dances may appear today, it can be seen readily why there would be some difficulty in the early stages of depaganization of these games. This was especially true if the ministers who were voicing such protests happened to be Puritans. A statement of one of them illustrates this:

There is a great Lord present among them, as superintendent and Lord over their pastimes and sportes, namely Sathan, prince of hel. But the chiefest jewel they bring from thence is their May-Pole (this stinking ydol, rather) which is covered all over with floures and hearbs.⁴⁵

Many of the dances mentioned above had their counterparts in Sweden, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, and Roumania.⁴⁶

It was not long before the religious dance fell into disrepute. It soon became associated with witch dances, such as the one danced on the occasion of Jane Bordeau's burning in 1626.⁴⁷ Tylor also describes scenes brought on

⁴⁴Spence, op. cit., pp. 44-46, 64, 71, 138-150. Some of the giants' processions of Barbaric origin were adapted to Biblical themes like David and Goliath, Mog and Magog, and Hercules and Samson. Ibid., p. 64.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 24.

⁴⁶Frazer, op. cit., pp. 141-146, 720, 706-709, 718.

⁴⁷Fisk, op. cit., p. 128.

by fanatical preachers at revivals in England and Ireland, and adds some comments of his own:

A young woman is described as lying extended at full length; her eyes closed, her hands clasped and elevated, and her body curved in a spasm so violent that it appeared to rest arch-like upon her heels and the back portion of her head. In that position she lay without speech or motion for several minutes. Suddenly she uttered a terrific scream, and turned handfuls of hair from her uncovered head, exclaiming, "Oh that fearful pit!" Three strong men were hardly able to restrain her. Ultimately she fell back exhausted and senseless. Such descriptions carry us back far into the history of the human mind, showing man still in ignorant sincerity producing the very fits and swoons to which for untold ages savage tribes have given religious import.⁴⁸

But even as in the worship of the Roman Catholic Church body involvement was not destined to die out, so we find in Great Britain at least two movements besides the Anglican Church which attempted to retain the more noble aspects of the religious dance. One of these was the Order of the Odd Fellows and the Grange, which started in 1717. The members together formed designs of crosses, circles, or more complicated representations of the sun, moon, or Pleiades. The function of these rubrics is explained by Margaret Palmer Fisk:

The members find a psychological value in taking part in the marches and formations, for it provides them with a bond of common action. Each one feels that he has a special place to fill. For many members the secret order has a stronger hold than a church which usually asks its attendants merely to sit and listen.⁴⁹

⁴⁸Tylor, op. cit., II, 507.

⁴⁹Fisk, op. cit., p. 126.

A second attempt was seen in the unlimited joy expressed in some of the carols. A Cornwall carol of 1750 went back to the Medieval minstrels and troubadors as it told them the story of Christ's life in the first person in ballad form:

Tomorrow shall be my dancing day
I would my true love did so chance
To see the legend of my play
To call my true love to my dance.

When I was born of a virgin pure
Of her I took fleshly substance;
Then was I knit to a man's nature
To call my true love to my dance.

Then up to heaven I did ascend
Where now I dwell in sure substance
On the right hand of God, that man
May come unto the general dance.

Chorus:
Sing, oh, my love, oh, my love, my love, my love,
This have I done for my true love.⁵⁰

Though this carol originated in the Church, it was later ostracized, especially under the power of Puritanism. This was also in direct contrast to the freedom with which Luther resorted to the term "dance" in his own Christmas carols, as will be seen later.

Dances among African Slaves in America and American Indians

The history of missions among American Indians seems to be the history of the Church's swinging between two

⁵⁰Ibid., pp. 130-131.

extremes: complete prohibition and total assimilation to the point of syncretism. Spence describes how the Quichua and Aymara Indians living around Lake Titicaca were worshipping Christ and Mary with dances in which the sun is used as the symbol of Christ and the moon as the symbol of Mary.⁵¹ Erna Fergusson asserts that Pueblos held their native dances on Christmas eve, on the Twelfth Night, on Easter, and on special days. The priests even allowed them to perform these inside their churches.⁵²

After the masses, the priest disappears, for he follows the Roman Catholic tradition of being unaware of whatever heathen rites may follow.⁵³

The other extreme to which Christian missionaries went was to cut off the converts so much from their former society that they were misfits for life.

Protestant and Roman Catholic mission schools among the Pueblos did not prepare him to go back to his people; with American clothes, short hair, and worst of all, no dance knowledge, he returns a misfit for life; if an adjustment is made, it can never be complete. The scar remains for life.⁵⁴

That, however, is not the end of the damage. The stubbornness of insistence of forms makes Christianity the logical

⁵¹Spence, op. cit., p. 140.

⁵²Erna Fergusson, Dancing Gods. Indian Ceremonials of New Mexico and Arizona (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1931), p. 50.

⁵³Ibid., p. 64.

⁵⁴Ibid., pp. 25-26.

subject of mockery. At one dance-drama among the Pueblos

one of them stood solemnly intoning from a mail-order-house catalogue, held upside down, while the others knelt in the dust before him. Then he closed his book and began to thunder his wrath, waving his arms and vociferating in tones that any European audience would have recognized as American. The angrier he got, the more sleepy grew his audience, until they finally fell over, overcome with sleep.⁵⁵

The humor is much more self-evident to them; for it was not merely the humor of exaggerated preaching or of sleeping listeners, but the ridiculous idea that God should be pleased to be worshiped by frozen bodies.⁵⁶

Among Zunis the attitude toward missionaries and Christians is one of complete indifference. "Zuni rites go on serenely, . . . too haughty to pay the white man the doubtful compliment of exclusion."⁵⁷ Erna Fergusson summarizes the Christian missions as little more than speedy, cheap, mass baptisms, taxation for the benefit of the Church, and prohibitions of customs. Such "conversions" ultimately accounted for events like the massacre of priests in San Juan.⁵⁸

The Mexican religious dances are more properly dramas which include dances. One of these was the annual performance of the war of the Moors against the Christians,

⁵⁵Ibid., pp. 51-52.

⁵⁶Loc. cit.

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 67.

⁵⁸Ibid., pp. 16-22.

given each Pentecost at Ixtapalapa. Pilgrims came from all surrounding towns in dancing caravans. The drama itself included a sword dance in which "the feet seemed hardly to touch the ground." When it got too late and too dark, the horsemen added to the color by carrying torches in their hands. The Moors always lost, of course.⁵⁹

Other such dramatic events were acted and danced out. In The Conquest of Mexico Cortes unsuccessfully tried to convert Montesuma through the converted Indian Dona Marina. The prophetic warnings and the dream scenes were always danced. Before Cortes had ended his confession he had given a rather complete statement of the Christian doctrines of Creation and the Trinity.⁶⁰ Two other historic events interpreted through the dance were the Flume Dance, in which Mexicans fought the French for their faith, and the Twelve Peers, based on the conquest of Charlemagne.⁶¹

Movement in worship also seemed instinctive to African

⁵⁹Frances Gillmor, The Dance Dramas of Mexican Villages. University of Arizona Humanities Bulletin No. 5, XIV, No. 2 (Tucson, Arizona: University of Arizona, 1943), pp. 5-13. The awareness of history is well fused with the present. A devil kisses all people, including some in the crowd. Once a fight started downhill from the church. The people watching the fight of the Moors and the Christians deserted it for the real thing. The Moorish king leaned out from his pavilion to see what was going on, then went with the Christian ambassador to stop the fight, and then came back. Ibid., pp. 12-13.

⁶⁰Ibid., pp. 18-24.

⁶¹Ibid., pp. 17, 25-28.

slaves. Among the slaves of the West Indies this urge was so strong and the effect of the Church was so weak that it all resulted in a syncretistic hodge-podge. The North American Negroes, on the other hand, succeeded much more in retaining at least some of the content of Christianity.

Mrs. Palmer Fisk says that among the Negroes

the prayer of one man becomes a chant, the chant becomes a shout, and the shout becomes a movement. The spiritual, accompanied by hand clapping, becomes a shout, and the monotonous repetition of single phrases induces ecstatic trances in those who participate.⁶²

As a result, a rhythmic portrayal of hymns is frequently found among them. The responses of "Amen" and "Alleluia" are repeatedly accompanied by a swaying back and forth.

Negroes were particularly active at their funerals.

A common feature in New Orleans was the tradition of

having their jazz bands play slow and sorrowful music on the way to a funeral and during a ceremony, then accelerating the tempo during the march from the cemetery as something of an ode of joy for the heaven-bound soul of the departed one.⁶³

In 1879 the congregation of a Negro church in Arkansas danced for three nights around the grave of their dead pastor.⁶⁴

⁶²Fisk, op. cit., p. 141.

⁶³Charles Menees, "Dixieland Jazz Program at Church Service," St. Louis Post-Dispatch, February 8, 1961, Section F, p. 4.

⁶⁴Fisk, op. cit., p. 142.

The Shakers

The Shaker movement started in England in 1747, and was linked with the Huguenot and Albigenseian heresies of the thirteenth century. The entire congregation, in rows, walked the floor while singing and swiftly passing and re-passing each other like clouds agitated by a mighty wind. The term "Shaker" came from the rapid up and down movement of the hands with the action mostly in the wrists. When they shook their hands with the palms turned down toward the floor, this symbolic motion meant that they were "shaking out all that is carnal." When the palms were turned upwards as if to receive a spiritual blessing, the quick up and down shaking movement expressed the petition, "Come, Life eternal!" Aside from this, they had bowing, bending, and a great deal of turning.

I'll turn, turn, turn away from all evil,
Come, come, come unto the Gospel!⁶⁵

At times there were two rows, one of men and one of women, shuffling toward and away from each other, three paces each way, with a double step or "tip-tap" at the turn.

Their theme could be summarized in the verse:

With every gift I will unite
And join in sweet devotion--

⁶⁵Ibid., pp. 138-139; Edward D. Andrews, The Gift to be Simple. Songs, Dances, and Rituals of the American Shakers (New York: J. J. Augustin, 1940), p. 143.

To worship God is my delight,
With hands and feet in motion.⁶⁶

Negatively stated, their motto was mortification of pride in the self; this was achieved, they thought, by mortification of the body, by "stamping down sin," as illustrated in one of their verses:

O how I long to be released,
From every feeling of the beast
No more to feel one poison dart,
Of his vile stuff about my heart,
But while I'm laboring with my might,
This hateful beast will heave in sight,
And every living step I tread
I'll try to place it on its head.⁶⁷

At other times the worshipers raced around the room with a sweeping motion of hands and arms, intended to represent the art of sweeping the devil out of the room. For this they also had a verse:

Bow down low, bow down low,
Wash, wash, scour, and scrub,
Scour and scrub from this floor
The stains of sin.

I will sweep, I will sweep,
I will sweep my Zion clean,⁶⁸
Clean, clean, clean, clean.

In their simplicity of faith they knew of no ethnic stumbling blocks. They welcomed Indians and Negroes alike and even wrote some hymns in pidgin English for their

⁶⁶Fisk, op. cit., p. 139.

⁶⁷Andrews, op. cit., pp. 144-145.

⁶⁸Ibid., pp. 29, 156.

benefit. One of these is the following:

Now see how spry we dance,
How nimble we can labor,
We will bow and we will turn,⁶⁹
And that will mux old nature.

Even funerals could not stop these Shakers from dancing.

For such occasions they had a special somber "farewell" dance.⁷⁰

As time passed, however, individualism and spontaneity had to yield to more unified forms.⁷¹ For such unified patterns the Shakers reached into the Bible, utilizing, for example, the symbolism of Ezequiel's wheel in the middle of a wheel (Ezequiel 1:16). Some of the patterns which they had developed by 1847 were: the winding march, lively line, lively ring, square check, double square, moving square, cross and diamond, finished cross, square and compass, and even the continuous ring in a letter "C."⁷² Nor were they limited to these; the Shakers had just as many other types of marches: the sermon march, the comforting march, the pleasant march, the City of Peace march, the purity march, the going march, the sweet march to heaven, and the little

⁶⁹Fisk, op. cit., p. 140.

⁷⁰Anna White, Shakerism (Columbus, Ohio: Fred J. Heer, 1904), pp. 33-35.

⁷¹Andrews, op. cit., pp. 142-147.

⁷²Fisk, op. cit., p. 139; Andrews, op. cit., pp. 153-154.

children's march.⁷³

Thus, Shakerism consisted in much more than mere "shaking." Doris Humphrey described this ritual:

The Shaker ritual met all the definitions for great dance drama: lofty purpose, dramatic, rhythmic, communicative, and truly communal, engaging every man, woman, and child in the colony.⁷⁴

Marguerite Melchior confirms that impression:

The words, the music, the gesturing and the dancing all united form a kind of precision ensemble that would have done credit to a trained ballet corps. Military men watched admiringly the difficult march figures which believers executed so competently; attentive listeners tried in vain to analyze the slightly irregular tempo of the singing; sympathetic spectators were touched and even carried away in spite of themselves, by the earnestness and sincerity of the whole performance, bizarre though it often was by all orthodox church standards. The unexplainable element in the Shaker rhythm was probably akin to modern "swing." It had to be felt, not understood; it reached out to the emotions rather than the intellect; it stimulated the nerves while only confusing thought centers. . . . The meeting house floor, which was sometimes wet all over with tears, was all the stage they required.⁷⁵

Another visitor is reported as saying:

Their movements in the dance, whether natural or studied, are all graceful and appropriate. As I gazed upon the congregation of four to five-hundred worshippers marching and counter-marching in perfect time, I felt that . . . the involuntary exclamation of even the hypercritical would be, "How beautiful!"⁷⁶

⁷³ Andrews, op. cit., p. 154.

⁷⁴ White, op. cit., p. 25.

⁷⁵ Marguerite Fellows Melcher, The Shaker Adventure (Princeton: University Press, 1941), pp. 222-223.

⁷⁶ Fisk, op. cit., p. 140.

However, this judgment of visitors was not unanimous. Horace Greeley, George Combe, and others likened the Shaker postures to those of hopping kangaroos, penguins in procession, and dancing dogs. The agreed popular opinion was that this was a somewhat grotesque form of worship.⁷⁷

Shakerism has all but disappeared. Yet to say that this disappearance proves the inadvisability of dance forms for worship is to miss the point. There are at least three reasons for this disappearance. One is the simple fact that Shakerism grew both cold and formal, a vicious circle which led to its downfall.⁷⁸ Another self-evident reason is the fact that there was no marrying allowed among Shaker believers. A third reason was that spectators started coming in such great numbers that they far outnumbered the worshipers themselves, making concentrated worship all but impossible.⁷⁹ This also invited the next step: jeering from the sidelines. The same problem seems to be the one confronting the Christian church in Taiwan today, says Missionary Covell; the curiosity of soldiers quickly put an end to these unsophisticated dances.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ Andrews, op. cit., p. 156.

⁷⁸ Melcher, op. cit., pp. 225-226.

⁷⁹ Loc. cit.

⁸⁰ Letter No. 28 in Appendix I (Missionary Ralph Covell).

The dominant feature of this Shaker dance was not its aesthetic or choreographic beauty per se, but rather the simplicity and integrity of manhood which it represented.

Anna White summarizes this well:

Few experiences are more thrilling to a visitor than sitting as an onlooker in the religious exercises of these people, in their plain, yet exquisitely appropriate dress, watching the harmonious movement of the march, which signifies onward travel of the soul to spiritual freedom and full redemption. . . . Many, untouched by art's highest efforts, are deeply affected in witnessing the worship of these pure, true-hearted men and women who aim "to be what they appear to be, and to appear to be what they really are."⁸¹

After all that has been said in this chapter, it must be admitted that the dance is rarely used in the Western Church for worship. The Puritan and the Pietistic influences have been very strong within Protestantism. Moreover, many of the times when it was used within a religious setting, it had a tendency to become an end in itself rather than a means to glorify God. However, these nine centuries at least give us some glimpses of the truth of this principle: the dance can be used to worship God, not only the devil. In this respect some of the aforementioned dances seem to recover the principles to which the early church fathers held regarding the religious dance. The

⁸¹White, op. cit., p. 332 (italics ours). Missionary Joel H. Mayer of Andhra Pradesh, India, seems to be referring to just such Christian integrity and simplicity when he talks about his "third alternative." See Letter No. 20 in Appendix I.

following chapter will give even more examples of the re-discovery of this principle.

ATTEMPTS AT ADAPTATION IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

The strong nationalism among some of the less civilized countries has often also shown itself in unique ways of dancing in worship among converted Christians in these countries. Many of these reactions to the Gospel were so spontaneous that they caught the missionaries by complete surprise. Before these will be given, however, we will review interesting attempts at adaptation within our own country and Europe.

Attempts in North America

One of the earliest and most controversial attempts at religious dances in this century was seen at St. Mark's in the Bowery, in the heart of New York City. This performance was given annually from 1820-1824 on the Sunday nearest to the Feast of the Assumption. The program of 1824 contains the following notes by the Rev. William H. Manning.

Once the curtain was drawn concealing that strange blending of lighted candles and incense burners upon the altar, there appeared from among the folds of the American white robed figures which seemed to float rather than to walk upon the scene. The lighting was so arranged as to give a sense of impersonality to the representation--the whole almost as in a dream. That followed did not resemble in the least a dance, but the performance of the Roman Catholic mass raised to an ideal perfection. . . . The movements of the

CHAPTER VI

ATTEMPTS AT ADAPTATION IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

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Attempts in North America

One of the earliest and most controversial attempts at religious dances in this century was seen at St. Mark's in the Bowlerie, in the heart of New York City. This performance was given annually from 1920-1924 on the Sunday nearest to the Feast of the Assumption. The program of 1924 contains the following notes by the Rt. Rev. William H. Manning.

Once the curtain was drawn concealing that strange blending of lighted candles and incense braziers upon the altar, there appeared from among the folds of the draperies white robed figures which seemed to float rather than to walk upon the scene. The lighting was so arranged as to give a sense of impersonality to the representation--one saw almost as in a dream. What followed did not resemble in the least a dance, but the performance of the Roman Catholic mass raised to an ideal perfection. . . . The movements of the

participants only faintly suggested the flesh beneath the long white silken flowing robes--that same suggestion which one receives from Fra Angelico angels moving in the fields of God. . . . A return to the ages of faith had been accomplished.¹

The same program also contained some notes on the reviews of the newspapers. They seemed to evaluate the performance as one with a "restrained, almost tender reverence."

The leaders in the American attempts at religious dances were Ruth St. Denis and her husband Ted Shawn. The latter had been studying for the ministry in the Methodist church when a severe illness interrupted his plans. After he recovered from it he decided to dedicate himself to this unexplored religious art in acceptable American forms. In 1914 he opened the Denishawn School. In 1917, while in San Francisco, he attempted to give an entire service in choreographic form. This service included dance interpretations of the opening prayer, the doxology, the Gloria, an anthem, the Twenty-third Psalm as the Scripture reading, the sermon, the hymn Beulah Land, and the benediction. One obvious handicap was that the audience was watching rather than participating. Of the thirty American cities visited,

¹Notes of Rt. Rev. William H. Manning in the "Program of Pageant in Honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary on the Sunday Nearest to the Feast of the Annunciation, Saint Mark's in the-Bouwerie, 1920-24," p. 23. The program included such numbers as Gabriel Rossetti's Ave, Henry Adam's Prayer to the Virgin of Chartres, Gounod's Ave Maria, J. Barnby's Magnificat, and Kremser's Hymn to the Madonna. The special accompaniment consisted in organ, harp, and violin.

only two responded negatively.² In 1930 Ted Shawn started another school, Jacob's Pillow, near Lee, Massachusetts. From this school came religious interpretations of songs like "Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen," "Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring," "Miriam, Sister of Moses," "Job," "The Dream of Jacob," and selections from the Passion According to Saint Matthew.³

Another pioneer in this area was Glenn Clark, leader of the Camps Farthest Out. These camps are scattered over several islands, including the Islands of Shoals. Part of the program in this "retreat" are daily one-hour classes on religious dances for adults. One report reads:

A minister's wife who had intended to skip the class, joined the group out on the lawn and observed how the leader explained the symbolic interpretation of the hymn "There's a Wideness in God's Mercy." "The music started, and I followed the movements," she said. "Then a miracle started to happen to me. The cold hard shell of me which years of sermons, conferences, prayers, poems, and all other phases of ordinary worship had left untouched, crumbled into dust. I looked at the vast blue sea as I stretched my arms to the side;

There's a wideness in God's mercy,
Like the wideness of the sea!
I sang softly and prayerfully as I began to realize
the vast infinity of God's love.⁴

²Margaret Palmer Fisk, The Art of the Rhythmic Choir. Worship Through Symbolic Movement (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1950), pp. 154-155.

³Loc. cit.; "Jacob's Pillow," Newsweek, August 19, 1946, p. 85.

⁴Fisk, op. cit., p. 8.

A new movement called the rhythmic choir started simultaneously in several parts of the United States. It was much like the abovementioned performance at Saint Mark's in the Bouwerie. The two leaders were two minister's wives, Evelyn Handy Broadbent and Margaret Palmer Fisk. Their numbers included primarily re-interpretations of old hymns. Thus, among the processionals they had Haendel's "Holy Art Thou," Adolphe Adam's "O Holy Night," Gounod's "Sanctus," Mosell's "Worship the Lord," and Cesar Frank's "Psalm 150." Among the slower numbers they performed the Gregorian "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross," Mason's "My Faith Looks up to Thee," Schubert's "Ave Maria," Malotte's "Lord's Prayer," Bach's "Now Let Every Tongue Adore Thee" and "Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring," Bizet's "Agnus Dei," and the Appalachian carol "I Wander as I Wander." More variations were included in Bortniansky's "Cherubim Song," the carol "Angels We Have Heard on High," the Russian "Easter Alleluia," Mozart's "Gloria in Excelsis Deo" and his "Alleluia," and Praetorius' "We will be Merry--Alleluia." Finally, much more freedom was employed in the music for dance-dramas. Such were Dubois' "Seven Last Words," Cesar Frank's "Ruth," Holst's "The Planets," Copland's "In the Beginning," Bernstein's "Jeremiah Symphony," Roberta Bitgood's "Job," and "All Creatures of Our God and King." Among the more informal ones were "I want Jesus to Walk with me," "Nobody knows the Trouble I've seen," and the

Shaker song "The Gift to be Simple."⁵ Later additions were sections from Haendel's "Messiah," Teschner's "All Glory, Laud, and Honor," and Bach's "Christ Lay in Death's Dark Prison." The latter, for example, depicted the vivid struggle between life and death within the sinner, as it is represented in the fourth verse.

These interpretations became regular affairs at those churches which were daring enough to experiment with them. At the South Shore Community Church in Chicago they were enacted from 1934 on for Vesper services and for pageants. Annual performances of Haydn's "The Heavens Are Telling" were given at the Church of Christ at Dartmouth, New Hampshire, and of Bach's "Now Let Every Tongue Adore Thee" in Dorchester, Massachusetts. A sample program was the one given for three thousand Congregationalist young people in Bushnell Hall in Hartford, Connecticut. The service opened with a prayer interpreting Bizet's "Agnus Dei." When the curtain was lifted, eleven girls were kneeling in prayer. In 1947 the "Church of the Divine Dance" was started in Hollywood and in Phoenix, Arizona. Their services regularly included dance dramatizations.⁶

⁵Ibid., pp. 43-44, 62, 185. Mrs. Evelyn Handy Broadbent wrote her Master's thesis at Chicago University in 1943 on "The Use of the Dance in Religious Education."

⁶Ibid., pp. 20, 180-181. North American Youth Conference in 1948 and the International Congregationalist Council in 1949.

Several schools and colleges started offering courses to encourage this religious art. Some of these were in Northfield, Massachusetts; Durham, New Hampshire; and Star Island, New Hampshire. Even the Roman Catholics have started courses for the symbolic interpretation of chants at the School of the Apostolate for Catholic Young Women.⁷

However brave these attempts, these dances have some inherent weaknesses. One is that, unlike the African religious dance, the congregation becomes a group of spectators. On the other hand, this means that such dances could be put to excellent use through television or movies where the worshiper can hardly be more than a spectator.⁸ Another limitation is that the movements seem so restrained when compared to the spontaneous and unpredictably active dances of the younger non-Western churches. Finally, the attempts may be faulted for "putting new wine into old wineskins" by using old favorite hymns instead of making a

⁷Ibid., pp. 34, 174, 169-170. Dance interpretation of "Ruth" was regularly performed at Sweet Briar College, Virginia, of Negro spirituals at North Texas State College, of Christmas at Temple, on "The Creation" at Mt. Holyoke College, etc. Pp. 169-170, 142.

⁸The Schauffler Division of Christian Education of Oberlin School of Theology, Oberlin, Ohio, has several movies of such rhythmic choirs: Eli, Eli, the Twenty-second Psalm with several girls and three men; The Lord's Prayer, a solo by Margaret Palmer Fisk; My Faith Looks Up to Thee, done by two girls; and Dona Nobis Pacem, done by twelve girls. The five numbers have been woven into a worship service in which the congregation participates.

totally new work. However, this can work both ways: it may help the eager observer to appreciate the dance more immediately, since he is acquainted with at least part of the work; on the other hand, the observer may be so buried in his love for that particular hymn that any other interpretation of it would automatically appear irreverent.

Statistically, however, all these attempts seem insignificant. They are hardly known. This meant that, particularly because of the evil connotations of the word "dance," the dance as an art was left to people who were often not associated outwardly with churches. It is only natural to expect then that, whatever religious dances were performed by such people, expressed less of a Biblical-religious content than deeply religious "church people" would probably expect. This is not to deny the integrity of many of these dancers in their "ultimate concern."

Some of these secular dance interpretations of religious themes were Erika Thimey's "Invocation," "Pieta," "Who Art Thou, O Spirit of Man?," and "Ludes Anti-Christo." This last work included four movements on "The Beginning," "The Temptation and the Fall," "Intervention of Time," and "Prayer and Absolution." Martha Graham likewise performed "The Vision of the Apocalypse," "Hymn to the Virgin," "Hosanna," "Crucifixion," and "El Penitente." The Ballet Russe performed "Job," "The Creation," "David," "The Wise and the Foolish Virgins" (to the music of Johann Sebastian

Bach), "The Legend of Joseph," and "The Prodigal Son."⁹

An example of this secularism is the pantheism in Joseph McGregor's Panorchesis, where man's goal is the ecstatic union with the panorchesis of nature.¹⁰

The tragedy about all these attempts is that some of the composers have an excellent view of the principle involved. They view the dance as a means and not as an end. Ruth St. Denis says, for example,

In order to understand the fullest realization through the dance, we must understand that the arts--not just dancing, but all of them--are never a religion in themselves, never objects of worship, but are the symbol and language of communicating spiritual truths.¹¹

So also Margaret Palmer Fisk is critical of attempts to interpret religion in the purely aesthetic ballet form. She does this also when she criticizes Yvonne Chouteau's performance of "Prayer": "Because it was given almost entirely on her toes, there was an artificial atmosphere

⁹Ibid., pp. 146-153. Repeatedly the sinner falls at the foot of the cross.

¹⁰Lewis Spence, Myth and Ritual in Dance, Game, and Rhyme (London: Watts and Company, 1947), pp. 127-129.

¹¹Ruth St. Denis, "Religious Aspects of the Dance," The Dance Has Many Faces, edited by Walter Sorell (New York: World Publication Co., 1951), p. 14. She goes on to say, "I wish to make it clear that I consider the great popular churches of today, with their allowed-for rumba dance halls, their ping-pong and bingo games, their social discussion groups . . . as glaring examples of the Church being invaded by the world instead of conquering it."

atmosphere which counteracted the religious effect."

Herein lies one of the peculiar blessings in disguise. Modern ballet, which is characterized by toeless dancing, differs radically from the ballet of the last few centuries in that it is uniquely suited for the Christian view of the arts as means. Concerned modern ballet dancers and choreographers are fighting the decay of the religious dance to its worst form, as suggested in the ballet "Original Sin";

The man, dressed in a skintight, flesh-colored costume, experimentally maneuvers the woman, similarly sheathed, into various positions, rump to rump, shoulder to shoulder, until at last she twined her body around his left leg and sinuously slid up to a standing embrace.¹²

Many more such examples could be listed. Moreover, the number of them is increasing. How unlike the noble and chaste concepts of angelic dances as we have seen them among the early Church fathers! Such debasing of religious themes is vigorously opposed by the leading modern ballet dancers and choreographers. Like the literature of our day, these people are obsessed not with skill in performance, but with deep introspection. Even as in the case of literature, the pangs of existentialism lead them to compose works which reflect the soul's anxiety. They are trapped in a vicious circle of "concern for ultimate concern."

These dancers, orphaned from the Church, are seeking

¹²Fisk, op. cit., p. 151.

new parents, new directions, new content to fill their old forms. Ostracized from Christianity, they resort to a blatant syncretism like Ruth St. Denis' Hindu temple dance danced for Christians.¹³ Or else they decide to wallow in the mire of despair.¹⁴ Others resort to a self-deceptive "new humanism," a sardonic laughter in the face of misfortune. Such is Humphrey Weidman's "The Happy Hypocrite."¹⁵ Finally, some find a home in a church; and this church the one that has usually been the strongest supporter of religious dances: Unitarianism.¹⁶ Many choreographers are

¹³Ibid., pp. 152-153. Walter Terry, dance critic of the New York Herald Tribune, made the same mistake when he reviewed St. Denis' dance. He said, "Hindu dance could express with equal fervor and verity the tenets reflected in such hymns as "Holy, Holy, Holy," "Silent Night," "Eli, Eli," and "The Creation." Ibid., p. 153.

¹⁴An example is Kurt Jooss' ballet The Green Table, in which death dances on the battlefield, sowing destruction; it intended to show the futility of peace conferences.

¹⁵Fisk, op. cit., p. 159.

¹⁶One of the leaders is Rev. Von Ogden Vogt, minister and professor of Ecclesiastical Arts at the University of Chicago. He started by inviting Erika Thimey to present the traditional Christmas pageant as a dance drama. Though he meant it to be only a performance for spectators, the students at the Meadville Unitarian Theological School wanted to take part as worshipers. They took full advantage of the long aisles, steps, chancel, altar place, and side chapels for the unfolding of the choreography. The music most frequently used was Bach's. After this attempt such dramas were repeated for pageants and Vesper services. Dance Observer, VI (October, 1941), 105. The support of Unitarianism in a case like this one should not be surprising, for man's "unity with the panorchesis of nature" is quite in keeping with Unitarian teaching.

not happy with the aimlessness and fearful emptiness which characterizes the well-intentioned forms of modern ballet. They fear that this groping in the meaninglessness of life may either bring its downfall or that it may encourage more works in the nature of "Original Sin." Modern dance is betraying a need for a willing sponsor, a worthy content to fill it. Could this content possibly be the Christian message of hope, forgiveness, and uninhibited joy?

Another area of North America which offers a challenge to the idea of Christian dances is the area of Zuni and Navajo Indians. The past failures of Christianity in these areas make adaptation doubly difficult now. Mere retaining of old forms with new contents only invites the mockery of Christianity.¹⁷ Missionary Cornelius Hinpua and Mrs. Turner Blount therefore felt that it was wise to retreat one more step without resorting to mere prohibitions. Missionary Hinpua feels that folk dances can at least be used, initially, as a process for learning the social sciences.¹⁸ Mrs. Turner Blount has put Scripture to music using one of the elements of the Navajo dance, rhythm, as a "first step."¹⁹ Missionary Stanley E. Koning, who works among the

¹⁷Letter No. 17 in Appendix I, Missionary Stanley E. Koning.

¹⁸Letter No. 33 in Appendix I, Missionary Cornelius Hinpua.

¹⁹Letter No. 18 in Appendix I, Mrs. Turner Blount.

Zunis, has made the wise decision of waiting with prohibitions and resolving to immerse himself in the Zuni dances so as to absorb them and be able to understand them.²⁰

While the dancing encouraged by Mormons²¹ and Methodists²² cannot be considered worship, our clear-cut distinction between "worship" and "play" cannot always be imposed upon others. Among people who tend to be quite informal in their worship this is particularly significant. But even if we cannot talk about worship dances among Mormons and Methodists, we can do so among two totally different groups: the "Holy Rollers" and the deaf. Among the first it approaches the ecstatic dance. Among the second it is more of a language which bears, at least in principle, a striking resemblance to the Hindu and Balinese

²⁰Letter No. 17 in Appendix I, Missionary Stanley E. Koning.

²¹"Dancingest Denomination," Time, LXXV (June 22, 1959), 47. Joseph Smith, the founder, believed that dancing had a tendency to "envigorate the spirit." His followers have taken him quite seriously. For example, in June, 1959, eight thousand young Mormons came to the stadium of the University of Utah. In blue shirts and white blouses, Spanish costumes, tangerine and black jumpers or pastel formals, they romped and whirled through a two-night program of dances. They encourage dances especially between couples "lest the devil find other work for them." Each of the 1,400 Mormon chapels holds a dance every Saturday night.

²²Fisk, op. cit., p. 31. Mrs. Fisk notes that Methodists encourage dances especially among their young folks, though they are extremely careful not to call them "dances," but rather "singing games."

dances. Yet we have these dances of the deaf performed right in our churches, even for the words of the institution and consecration of the Sacrament! In the sense that these dances of the deaf are limited to hands and arms we can consider them a "melody," the "harmony" of which is still missing: the other parts of the body.

Attempts in Europe

Some of the European dances mentioned in the last chapter have survived to this day. The dance of the Springende Heiligen was performed in Echternach up to the first World War. In Barjols, Provence, dances are still performed within the naves of the churches.²³ The Roman Catholic Church has had special programs involving youth in religious dance-mimes. Thus, two hundred Roman Catholic youth participated in a symbolic interpretation of Rorate and Adeste in Berlin and London in 1933.²⁴ The Orthodox Church also has symbolic movement of priests during the "Cherubim Song." In the Greek Orthodox Church the wedding party slowly circles the altar three times to the dance of

²³F. M. Verrall, "Survivals of Devotional Dancing," Catholic World, CXXX (December 29, 1929), 340; Fisk, op. cit., p. 135; Louis E. Backmann, Religious Dances in the Christian Church and in Popular Medicine, translated by E. Clasen (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1952), pp. 335-336.

²⁴Fisk, op. cit., p. 143.

Isaiah.²⁵

It cannot be said that Protestantism has been exclusively hostile toward religious dances. Some interesting attempts at introducing highly aesthetic forms in the service have been seen at the Sigtuna School of Sweden. One of the choreographers is Birgitta Hellerstedt Thorin. Her dramatizations consist in movements such as bowing, kneeling, turning, looking up or down, folding arms or hands, pointing, opening palms, turning palms upward, and hiding the face in the hands. To these are added special symbols for Christ, pregnancy, birth, etc. Her performances require from three to four people. Among the numbers listed in one of her books are these: the "Nunc Dimittis," "Christ's Birth," "The Annunciation," "Peter's Denial," "The Resurrection," "Mary Magdalene Meets the Risen One," "The Great Heavenly Feast," "Christ Teaching His Disciples near the Mount of Olives," and "The Unforgiving Servant." In the choreographic diagrams of each of these there is one striking feature: the centrality of the Cross. Everything else is proportionate to it.²⁶

Olov Hartman has these instructions at the end of his drama, "The Burning Furnace":

²⁵Ibid., p. 135.

²⁶Birgitta Hellerstedt Thorin, Bibel-Pantomimer (Lunds: Litografiska Tryckeriet, 1960).

During the following song of praise the players may, in conformity with strict liturgical and artistic demands, dance outside the altar-rails, or a group among them move solemnly dancing, hand in hand, while the organ intones the final hymn in suitable rhythm.²⁷

But he admits that this has still not gone beyond the theoretical stage:

As far as I know, this direction has not been realized in any performance of the play. The difficulty of training the actors not only in the dramatical and the liturgical action, but also in the dimension of dance, has not been overcome.²⁸

A recent attempt at religious ballet was seen in Italy. It was the ballet Laudes Evangelii, an hour-long spectacle based on the life and passion of Christ. It consists of seven scenes: the annunciation, the birth, the flight to Egypt, the Garden of Gethsemane, the via dolorosa, the resurrection, and the ascension. Each of these scenes is six to twelve minutes long. The fifty ballet dancers perform on a special stage with an altar before an open window with stained glass. It was performed nine evenings, from September 20 to 29, 1952, before three thousand people each time.

Leonide Massine had tried such religious ballets earlier. It was the first project of his life in 1914, but it was interrupted by the war. His first choreographic work was a "Christ-Passion" based on the Russian Orthodox

²⁷Letter No. 30 in Appendix I, Olov Hartman.

²⁸Ibid.

text in collaboration with Igor Stravinsky. Again, this work was never presented because of the war.²⁹

Finally, Basilissa Huertgen reports of different ways in which reverent worship dances have been tried in convents. "Im Kloster is ja gar nichts profan, wie die Regel des heiligen Moenchsvaters Benediktus lehrt, ist im 'Hause Gottes alles geweiht.'"³⁰ She suggests experimentation in the "para-liturgy." By this term she means an alternate interpretation of the ordinary parts of a service: the antiphons, introits, graduals, and even occasionally an entire Psalm for the Bible reading. She shows how the language of the Old Testament is peculiarly adaptable for such interpretations, and she does so by going beyond our word studies (Chapter II) to entire pictures; such are the concepts of God's wings in Psalm 96, the hiding and fleeing of man before the eyes of God in Psalm 139, the approach of the enemy and his defeat in prayer in Psalm 26, and the oppression as by a swarm of bees in Psalm 118. The gestures used are much like those of Birgitta Thorin. The effect can hardly be judged by an outsider. It must be seen.

²⁹"*Laudes Evangelii*," Ballet Today, XXV (November, 1952), 18.

³⁰Basilissa Huertgen, "Sakraler Tanz--Neue Versuche," Zeitschrift fuer die Missionswissenschaft und Religionswissenschaft, XXXI (1957), 194-195.

Dem Leser einen konkreten Eindruck von diesen Reigen zu vermitteln, ist mit Worten allein kaum möglich. Text, Melodie, und Gestus bilden eine vollkommene Einheit, die mit Ohr und Auge zugleich aufgenommen werden muss.³¹

Attempts in Latin America

More should be said about the failure of Latin American Christianity in this area of adaptation. In our last chapter we touched on just some of the failures in the last century. The syncretism among some of these people is appalling. Catherine Varhang reports that the only people who use the religious dance in the Antilles are the descendants of Negro slaves, who do it syncretistically.³²

Earl Leaf describes an obviously syncretistic ruling in Cuba:

When the chains were hacked off, the Spaniards gave the slaves one holiday per year, a day coinciding with the great feast of Epiphany, which could be celebrated by reviving their tribal ceremonies and ancestral customs. From early dawn that day the dull beat of the huge wooden drums summoned the Negroes to join their respective cabildos.³³

Their syncretism was evident in the manner in which these "Christians" celebrated Christmas eve. They propitiated the loas of the Petro pantheon so that they could start the

³¹Ibid., p. 197.

³²Letter No. 51 in Appendix I, Catherine Varhang.

³³Earl Leaf, Isles of Rhythm (New York: World Publications, 1956), p. 42.

year without misfortune hovering over them. It is a cleansing ceremony preceded by Christian hymns and Roman Catholic prayers. A similar type of syncretism is seen in their use of images. No Haitian artist has ever depicted the Voodoo saints in visual form. The believers, longing for some visual forms for their principal and lesser gods, have used highly colored lithographs of Christian saints who have virtues and histories corresponding to Voodoo loas. Thus Papa Legba, keeper of the Gate, is represented by St. Peter. The altar of Grande Erzilie, goddess of love, displayed the picture of the Virgin Mary.³⁴ Such syncretism is also seen at the rural festival of Saint Benedict in Brazil.³⁵

The prospect in all Latin American countries, however, is not entirely negative. We will give four examples of more careful adaptation: the Mexican Easter dramas, some of the Voodoo services, the Chilean Pentecostal services, and the dance-dramas among the Amazonic Kuripako tribes.

Easter festival dramas in Mexican villages have not died out yet.³⁶ We have seen in the last chapter how these

³⁴Ibid., pp. 102, 104, 131, 179-180.

³⁵B. Lessa, "Dancing for St. Benedict, Festival of Rural Brazil," Americas, VIII (July, 1956), 11-16.

³⁶Eugene A. Nida, Customs and Cultures. Anthropology for Christian Missions (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1954), p. 193.

were not syncretistic, but were relevant re-interpretations of past events for the present situation.

Voodoo Christians, if we may use such a term, are unrestrained in their worship participation. The hymns are not sung, but they are shouted with feeling and woven into polyrhythmic drum beats which soon cause the nerves and muscles of black bodies to vibrate. Only religious or spiritual ecstasy could keep these people going in this manner for what seem to be endless hours.³⁷ A similar type of congregational participation is seen in the Pentecostal churches in Chile. Eugene Nida relates how at the end of an animated interpretation of the Zaccheus story by the minister hundreds come to kneel in response to his invitation.³⁸

Finally, Dr. Nida also gives a dramatic account of a religious dance-drama among the Kuripako Indians in the Amazonian borders of Colombia.

A group of Indians cluster around a medicine man with all his paraphernalia--rattles, wands, sticks, and drums. He is chanting over a small fire, while the people look on in amazement and wonder. There a man comes out of the forest; in his hands he carries a little book from which he reads the story of Jesus. He goes slowly round and round the little huddle of pagan worshipers, until finally some begin to listen; then one after another they rise, leave the medicine man, and begin to follow the reader of this wonderful book. After a dozen or more have joined the reader,

³⁷Leaf, op. cit., p. 106.

³⁸Nida, Customs and Cultures, p. 194.

they all break out into singing; quickly more and more leave the medicine man until finally he is left alone. At last he also joins the circle which he closes; then they encircle the smoldering fire into which they have thrown all their heathen paraphernalia.³⁹

Nothing has been said, of course, about the many great processional dances which are so popular in the Latin American countries. Many involve the carrying of statues from one place to another. The best known are the Corpus Christi processions with the ambulatory dances, bowing, swinging censers in cadence, and throwing flowers into the air.⁴⁰

Attempts in Africa

The religious dances are most frequently found among the 2,100 sects with 761,000 adherents.⁴¹ One of the best known is Isaiah Shembe's sect of Zulu Nazarites. Often they move in processions by the thousands, swaying to the rhythm of the dance and singing some stately melody. There is a mighty wave of movement, slow, deliberate, and dignified. The young girls wore nothing above the waist.⁴²

³⁹Eugene A. Nida, Message and Mission (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1960), p. 176.

⁴⁰Backmann, op. cit., p. 334; Fisk, op. cit., p. 119.

⁴¹Henry Weman, African Music and the Church in Africa, translated by Eric J. Sharpe (Uppsala: Ab Lundequististiska Bokhandeln, 1960), p. 101.

⁴²Bengt G. M. Sundkler, Bantu Prophets in South Africa (London: Lutterworth Press, n.d.), p. 197.

One of their songs reads (translated),

We dance before thee
our King,
By the strength
of Thy kingdom.

May our feet
be made strong,
Let us dance before Thee,
Eternal.⁴³

Particularly lively are their wedding dances. With bodies bent forward and shields, umbrellas, and swords swinging, the crowd dances, two steps to the right and two steps to the left, then forward and backward. The dancer's muscles are tensed by those who stamp powerfully on the ground to the rhythm of the dance. The Christians who have been cut off from all forms of dancing because of the evil connotations of the word are looked upon with pity and ridicule at their staid weddings.⁴⁴ Some missionaries are beginning to adopt at least the processional elements into the church wedding.⁴⁵ Certainly Western Christianity has not discarded that yet.

Missionary Ellerton also reports that dancing is used as a teaching device by high school teachers in South Africa. Especially the rhythm is helpful for rote memory work.⁴⁶

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Weman, op. cit., pp. 85-95.

⁴⁵Letter No. 16 in Appendix I, Missionary G. F. Ellerton, South Africa.

⁴⁶Ibid.

Other types used by our Christian churches are the Migodo and the Ihubo dances. The latter is sung and danced just prior to the departure of a child from home to get married, or else it is danced at funerals.⁴⁷

Sundkler describes a service among the Christian Zion Sabaoth Apostolic Church in Zululand. Included are singing, drums, and swaying. Some who "receive the Spirit" throw themselves on the floor and speak in tongues. The congregation participates in many prayers and responses. When they come to the petitions, they shout them as loud as possible, as though storming God's throne. The members wear bright, colored uniforms, while the heavy atmosphere is charged with sweat, urine, and cowdung. Yet to them, this is "the time of the Spirit." After the Lord's Prayer a cross is passed around. The sermon text is chosen on the spot, while the preacher's remarks always depend on the response of the congregation. At times they would even interrupt him with a hymn or a drum.⁴⁸

A good example of new Christian dances is the "Fall of Man" as performed by three players at the Buloba College in Uganda.

Adam and Eve, dressed like peasants in bark cloth, were seen cultivating in the shade of a great tree. Adam became weary, and throwing himself down, slept,

⁴⁷Weman, op. cit., pp. 70, 83, 84.

⁴⁸Sundkler, op. cit., pp. 183-187.

while Eve continued digging with slow, tired movements. Then, far away, one small drum began to throb menacing and horribly insistent; and to the rhythm of it a girl, swathed in a scarlet cloth, with a long, green train dragging behind her over the dry grass, danced out the temptation. It was an extraordinary dance of undulation and slithering movement, with her two hands keeping up a ceaseless flickering at the level of her eyes. And opposite her Eve also danced her reluctant, frightened, slow surrender to fascination and desire. Louder and louder grew the throbbing of the drum, more intense the serpent's hatred, until Eve, who was already fondling the fruit of the tree, suddenly tugged it from the branch and sank her teeth into it. At that instant the drum was silenced, and the snake slid quickly away into the surrounding darkness.⁴⁹

A similar interpretation is given to the story of the Annunciation in a Presbyterian Church in Batouri, Cameroun.

The woman who was dancing the part of Mary came forward from the congregation, dancing in a graceful but hesitant manner. Just then the angel danced in from the outside with a most excited rhythm. As the two danced on the platform the angel communicated the message verbally and Mary responded, following the Bible account. Finally, the angel danced off again with the same excited, ecstatic dance. While the angel was communicating the divine announcement, Mary's entire rhythmic movements were slowly but steadily adopted to those of the angel until, when Mary finally danced back into the congregation, she was dancing in the same excited manner that characterized the dance of the angel who had brought the thrilling message from heaven.⁵⁰

American missionaries in the Cameroun say that people break out in dancing at a church service and that the announcement of forgiveness in Christ may send them away dancing

⁴⁹Nida, Customs and Cultures, pp. 196-197.

⁵⁰Nida, Message and Mission, pp. 175-176.

and singing.⁵¹

Some sixty to seventy musical contests are given annually in Cape Province. These are usually out of doors, at night. Weman noticed how, as soon as some choir broke with convention and produced a native song with its accompanying movement and dance, interest among all groups quickened.

That choir had made immediate contact with the public, and everyone listened eagerly. The scene took on life and movement, and the public responded. This must also be seen, danced by lithe figures on the warm sand of the school playground, to be appreciated in all its interplay of color line.⁵²

In Angola Christian dances are used for welcoming missionaries or dignitaries, for thanksgiving after the offering during services, and for Christmas dramas. The latter is merely an adaptation of their former birthday dances; the only difference is that in this case the dance is around the Christ-child instead of one of their own. These attempts have succeeded in spite of the fact that in other ways the dance offers some extremely serious problems.⁵³

Several attempts have been successful in Togo. The motion picture "The Cross in Togoland" shows the story of

⁵¹T. H. P. Sailer, Christian and Adult Education in Rural Asia and Africa (New York: Friendship Press, 1943), p. 135.

⁵²Weman, op. cit., pp. 121-122.

⁵³Letter No. 47 in Index I, Missionary Charles Harvey.

David performed in a dance-drama.⁵⁴ Missionary Paul Wiegraebe relates how the story of the Prodigal Son is acted out. The first dance is one of bad women, and the final one is a noble dance of joy, prayer, and thanksgiving at the son's return.⁵⁵ Most descriptive of all is the dance-drama "Isaac and Rebecca." Dancing is used at every possible opportunity. It is used when Elieser went away; it is used when Abraham's maids and servants express the joy in the household with the words, "We rejoice, since we dwell in the house of Abraham, our father." Suddenly, the height of the excitement in this dance, everything stops; Abraham is weak, close to his death, and decides to call his son. Later, all three pray on bended knee for Jahwe's blessing on the trip. The trip through the various countries is vividly presented by the various different types of dances which characterized many of these tribes. Finally, when they reach Mesopotamia, the maidens dance as they are getting water, but disappear instantly when the men come. When the maidens finally come back, Rebekka was among them. She was recognizable because she wore a dress in the color and style of Togo girls, green, yellow, and red. Later, on the day of the bridal payment, all sang "O Lord God, we all Praise Thee." The return trip is

⁵⁴Fisk, op. cit., p. 145.

⁵⁵Letter No. 29 in Appendix I, Missionary Paul Wiegraebe.

brightened by the solo thanksgiving dances of Rebecca, a striking contrast to the previous group dances. One of the incidental encounters on the return trip was a dancing procession of singing pilgrims. The climax comes when she meets Isaac and the wedding feast is about to start. It is a sort of "grand finale." Rebecca's dance consisted in continued bows to which quickly appearing and disappearing choirs responded antiphonally. The refrains became progressively shorter and quicker, "God, we thank Thee, God we thank Thee!" until only the word "Mawu" ("God") remained. Instead of dragging, the dance rose in excitement until it reached a climax--and stopped just as suddenly.⁵⁶

In Nigeria, what little of the dance is used in our churches is limited to processionals.⁵⁷ At times lyrics are danced.⁵⁸ One man even thinks that the dance can be used not only for the closed society of worshipers, but also for evangelism. This is one purpose which Missionary Stanley E. Koning among the Zunis thought the dance could not serve.⁵⁹ The Tanganyika Christians have not only a nativity dance around the manger, but also a death dance

⁵⁶The detailed description is in German in Appendix III.

⁵⁷Letter No. 50 in Appendix I, Missionary H. M. Jacobsen.

⁵⁸CMS Outlook (May, 1958), p. 13.

⁵⁹Letters No. 22 and 17 in Appendix I, Missionaries Charles Koning and Stanley E. Koning, respectively.

with a joyous theme that includes songs and clapping of hands.⁶⁰ In Kenya the dance was so inseparable from their worship that when the churches prohibited dances, Christians appeared as though they were doing the same thing which the Mau-Mau movement was doing.⁶¹ In French West Africa Methodists swing and sway on their holidays, parading through their towns like David before the ark. They do this even as accompaniment of such staid hymn tunes as "Hanover." However, one missionary believes that no fetish music dare be used for religious worship.⁶²

In other parts of Africa the Christian dances are more ancient. The Maskal and Temkat festivals of the Coptic church in Abyssinia have already been mentioned.⁶³ Also the Meletians of Lycopolis, Egypt, had the custom of dancing while singing their hymns, clapping their hands and striking numerous bells.⁶⁴

In general, a favorite way of telling stories in Africa is through antiphonal action. For example, a class may be divided between two groups: singers who do not mime and

⁶⁰Letter No. 16 in Appendix I, Missionary C. F. Ellerton.

⁶¹Thomas Ohm, Stammesreligion im Suedlichen Tanganyika-Territorium (Koeln: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1953), p. 30.

⁶²Letter No. 46 in Appendix I, Missionary G. C. Timyan.

⁶³Backmann, op. cit., pp. 334, 93-95.

⁶⁴Fisk, op. cit., p. 101.

mimers who do not sing.⁶⁵ Another feature is unique: the requirement of "taking off one's shoes" before a service for a dance has echoes in Moses' own life; "The place whereon thou standest is holy ground."⁶⁶ The longing to choose the heights of mountains as meeting places for a spiritual uplift is not foreign to the many Biblical references to mountains as "holy places."⁶⁷ However, one of the most distinctive features of African dances is the involvement of everyone present. It is uncommon for the African to dance for someone; he would much rather dance with someone. Herein lies an opportunity made to order for the Church, for the ideal service is one in which the worshiper is not a mere "spectator."

The examples given in which the audience is merely watching belong more properly in the area of drama. They are not dances by the best African standards. Two more examples will be given. The seminarians in Sudan, Africa, have organized dances to celebrate the festivals of the church year.⁶⁸ Another group in Africa enacted the coming of the white man, his difficulties with language, trials and tribulations with travel, especially in his old motor

⁶⁵Weman, op. cit., p. 125.

⁶⁶Sundkler, op. cit., pp. 192-193.

⁶⁷Ibid., pp. 198-200.

⁶⁸Fisk, op. cit., p. 144.

car, and lastly the message of the Gospel and the transformation in the lives of people.⁶⁹

Two examples of involvement will also be given. One is the expression "We use our mouths as a broom before Thee," repeated several times during the litany of an independent church in West Africa. This church was left alone for fifty years and came up with this native expression equal to our bowing. Only in their case it was carried out, some actually brushing the ground, others content in doing it just a few inches away.⁷⁰ Another example is the battle between David and Goliath at the Holy Cross Mission in Pondoland. It is the climax of a long series of war dances. Such was the enthusiasm on one occasion that when the shout went up from the hillside that Goliath had fallen, the audience left their seats and rushed off to see the victory. They returned carrying David shoulder-high, singing and dancing and rejoicing.⁷¹

However much missionaries may try, they cannot throw out the African dance without wounding an entire culture. Keita Fodeba describes the function of the dance from the

⁶⁹Nida, Customs and Cultures, pp. 195-196.

⁷⁰H. W. Turner, "A Litany in an Independent African Church," Practical Anthropology, VII (November-December, 1960), 261f.

⁷¹John V. Taylor, "The Development of African Drama for Education and Evangelism," International Review of Missions, XXXIX (1950), 299-301.

viewpoint of a non-Christian:

We know that, with all its moral and social context, dance has been the link which enabled African societies to maintain their cohesiveness.⁷²

This does not mean that the old cohesive factor of the dance must be discarded and that the new cohesive factor called "Christianity" must be substituted. Rather, how much stronger the force of Christianity could be if it were combined in dance forms!

At first, they are shy of performing. . . . But once they are under way, they are transformed; broad grins appear on every face, eyes begin to sparkle, arms and legs begin to move, bodies sway gently and freely, and hands start to clap the free rhythms. Now they can be themselves.⁷³

Attempts in the Far East

Missionary Anders B. Hanson writes, "All I can say is that the dance has no small place in Chinese life as I have seen it." He goes on to say that Christian tribespeople in the mountains of Taiwan definitely use it. Some attempts have been made especially in the Sediq idiom.⁷⁴ It is interesting to note that Missionary R. Covell of Taiwan reports that dances are not performed during worship, yet

⁷²Weman, op. cit., p. 1212.

⁷³Letter No. 44 in Appendix I, Missionary Anders B. Hanson.

⁷⁴Letter No. 24 in Appendix I, Missionary John Whitehorn.

they are reserved for special occasions such as Christmas, Easter, Thanksgiving, and ordinations. This suggests the question: Is it because the dance is considered "inferior" or because it is so unusually noble that it is reserved for such special occasions? From the remainder of his letter it would seem that it is the former reason. He gives two reasons that have contributed to the suppression of the dance during worship. One is the fact that in the last decade dancers have begun to wear a more brief attire, which to the Taiwanese suggests a closer link to immorality. A second reason is the curiosity of soldiers who come to services for no other reason than to watch what they consider very amusing--a dance.⁷⁵ It is the same type of pressure that asphyxiated the Shaker dance. The reaction in this area of China and Taiwan seems to be somewhat confused, partly because of the rapid pace of Westernization. Perhaps it is only a matter of time before the only answer can be an emphatic negative. While there is still time, however, Missionary H. Brunger is probably correct in summarizing the problem; he sees "great possibilities" in the religious dance.⁷⁶

Japan offers even more possibilities. This is the

⁷⁵Letter No. 28 in Appendix I, Missionary Ralph Covell.

⁷⁶Letter No. 27 in Appendix I, Missionary Harry Brunger.

case in spite of the fact that Japan is generally more Westernized than China or Taiwan. The letters from that country are unanimous in according the highest praise to a dance interpretation of the story of Mary Magdalene. This was performed at the Japanese Protestant Centennial in 1959. If the charge of "irreverence" were to be hurled at the idea of a dance for such an important occasion, the best answer would be an examination of the words that accompanied that dance interpretation. These words are no less than hymns like "A Mighty Fortress is our God," "My God, My God, Why hast Thou Forsaken Me?," "Come unto Me Lord Jesus," "Lord Jesus, Thou hast died for Me," "Christ, Who being in the Form of God" (Philippians 2:6-11), "When I survey the Wondrous Cross," and "Ye Sons and Daughters of Our King." It is the story of Mary Magdalene, who was once "possessed by seven devils." Her first dance pictured this desperate state. Later it becomes the calm dance of the one who has found confidence in Christ. The program describes the scene at the foot of the cross in this way:

The presupposed, though invisible background is the place of execution. The hill of Golgotha is in the outskirts of Jerusalem. In the middle is the cross on which Jesus is hanging. At the foot of the cross lies the robe taken from the Lord. While Mary comes close to the foot of the cross and is standing there in grief, Roman soldiers quarrel over the dividing of the robe. Mary inwardly rebels at the mockery of the soldiers, but on hearing again the word from Christ on the cross, she is profoundly moved and kneels. On hearing again the word from the Lord, Mary reaches out her hands to touch the Lord's feet.

And the last scene is described in the same program:

The scene is the rock cave where Jesus had been buried. Early in the morning Mary of Magdala comes to the tomb to express her grief. She is astonished to see the empty tomb. Mary weeps with deepest feeling. As the voice of the Resurrected Christ is heard, Mary addresses her Lord. Mary dances with excess of joy. The tomb fades away and she is surrounded by angels.⁷⁷

It is also interesting to know that the high praise given this performance by missionaries in Japan apparently is not based on lower aesthetic standards. They themselves seem to be aware of the fine line that separates the sacred from the profane.

There was an attempt made by a secular dance club to perform a dance on a Christian theme, in the style of ballet, at one of the mass meetings of the World Convention on Christian Education held in Tokyo in the summer of 1958. The general consensus was that it was a pretty dismal effort.⁷⁸

Yet it is encouraging to hear the same missionary say, "Perhaps there is no dance form so chaste and adaptable to a religious theme as the Japanese one."⁷⁹

In India there is a similar love for the dance. Any parable, any event such as the Exodus must be danced out. Short pieces of wood are hit against each other to underscore the rhythm. The long summer nights are ideal for such dance-dramas. A Bible story is told and actually "exegized" in the details of the scenery. If the minister

⁷⁷Appendix IV.

⁷⁸Letter No. 42 in Appendix I, Missionary Ian McLeod.

⁷⁹Ibid.

would instead merely read that same story, the unbelievers would be untouched and the believers would soon forget it.⁸⁰

Lesslie Newbigin gives a detailed account of one of those dance nights.

Late at night there is a fine display of dancing and singing with the new book of the Christian kummis. These attractive folk-dance tunes are so easily learned and remembered that they are an obvious vehicle for teaching. We now have a book of about forty songs set to them. They include Old and New Testament stories, the lives of our Lord, St. Paul, and Peter (this being set to a popular fisherman's shanty), the story of creation, the ten commandments, and many others. Even the dullest villagers pick them up quickly, and many of the congregations have learned to sing and dance them beautifully. Some of the words are, of course, not suitable for dancing at all, and sometimes there are errors of taste in their manner. But it is worth having a few occasional crudities for the sake of printing the Gospel story indelibly on the minds of people which will never learn in any other way.⁸¹

Rev. Emerson White describes one of these kummi folk dances in more detail.

The singers, some dozen or more, stand in a circle, in a room or out of doors. Each girl faces the back of the girl next to her in the circle, all facing in the same circular direction. One of the groups starts the song, in which all immediately join. Each girl takes a step forward, facing slightly inward into the circle, swaying the body downward somewhat, and clapping the hands together on the same inward side, all in unison. In this way the rhythm of the song is kept by the

⁸⁰Arno Lehmann, Die Kunst der Jungen Kirchen (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1955), p. 23.

⁸¹Ibid., in footnote; quoting from Lesslie Newbigin's A South India Diary (London: n.p., 1951), p. 63. A good Indian may take issue with Dr. Newbigin's opinion that "some words are, of course, not suitable for dancing at all." Westerners may easily underrate the ability of the Indian to convey, if not say, almost anything through his "dance sign language."

taking of the step and clapping of the hands at the same time. Upon the next beat of the time, the foot will be withdrawn into the line again, the girls will stand straight, then bend down, take a step forward and clap the hands on the outward side of the circle. And so on, back and forth, the girls moving all the time slowly in the same circular direction. The songs may be rural or religious.⁸²

He goes on to say that they also have kummis for boys, which are a much more exhausting physical workout. The kummi is a particularly effective means for teaching illiterate adults the truths of Christianity in preparation for Baptism. It was not an accident that the guru, who used the same didactic device, was more influential on Hindu children than their own mothers.

Missionary Gordon Carder relates how singing processionals are so popular that they are a tradition at special occasions such as Baptism and dedication of a church. In the latter case they walk around the church three times.⁸³ One of these processionals is used among Baptists.

On Christmas eve, New Year's eve, and Easter, groups sing all night as they go from home to home or village to village with their musical instruments and sing antiphonally their praises to their Heavenly Father. At times one group sings while the other dances.⁸⁴

⁸²Emmons E. White, Appreciating India's Music. An Introduction to the Music of India with Suggestions for its Use in the Churches of India (Mysore City, India: Wesley Press, 1957), pp. 57-58.

⁸³Letter No. 32 in Appendix I, Missionary Gordon Carder.

⁸⁴Letter No. 19 in Appendix I, American Baptist Foreign Missionary Society.

Their going from home to home seems to make it hard for the "Sunday morning golfer" to escape.

A different type of dance also used among the Baptists is the sankirtan. It combines with surprising success the three elements of involvement, antiphonal variety, and a climactic ending.

There is a kind of dancing and singing by Hindus that has been adopted by Christians. It is called sankirtan. A group, large or small, starts out with a few musical instruments which they can carry; a leader sings the first verse as a solo while all slowly circle around. They all join in that verse. It becomes antiphonal singing, as the leader sings one line and the others repeat it, perhaps several times, then all together in a sort of chorus. They increase in force and volume, also speed, both with the singing and the dancing, until all are in a frenzy of enthusiasm and fervor. After a slowing down another verse is begun and again all work up to a high pitch of ecstasy. I have known older people to come from this in tears as they expressed their deep spiritual glow from the celebration. This is more often done out of doors, often like a procession seremading the houses.⁸⁵

The "frenzy and enthusiasm" reached at the end of each verse is something which ought to fill Western Christians with a degree of sanctified envy; too often our "Amens," especially after the closing benediction, and more embarrassingly, after Holy Communion, are expressions of relief rather than an ecstatic climax. Here is one instance in which Western Christians may have something to learn in the beauty of worship from these "younger churches."

A unique manner of participating in the Lord's Supper

⁸⁵Ibid.

is described by Vicedom. Communicants kneel in a big circle around the altar of a church in Jeypur, India. There they receive the absolution. Then, one by one, as they receive the bread and wine, they remain there and join hands with the one who has just received the Supper, until the long row is finished up to the last one.⁸⁶ It is a dramatic re-enactment of the idea of "becoming one body with Christ" in more senses than one.

Since tradition has it that St. Thomas went to India, he is the favorite subject of many dance-dramas. In Malabar, his advent, labor, and martyrdom constitute a living tradition, and the rich folklore, songs, and dances of Malabar Christians describe in vivid detail the work of the Apostle to South India.⁸⁷

It may be debatable whether Hindu ballet interpreters of Rayupal should have danced the Lord's Prayer and the Ave Maria in Europe; but to hear that Indians interpret their Christian faith in dance dramas at home should fill us with joy rather than skepticism. The only area in which the Church should proceed with caution is the area where the dance is beneath the sophisticated taste of the Hindu. Several writers seem to think that the dance has lost its

⁸⁶Georg F. Vicedom, Das Abendmahl in den Jungen Kirchen (Muenchen: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1960), pp. 30-31.

⁸⁷Lehmann, op. cit., p. 241, quoting P. Thomas, Christians and Christianity in Pakistan (London: n.p., 1954), p. 18.

once divine ranking. If sophistication does set in, the Church has to be tactful and sensitive without, however, yielding to the superficiality that can easily hide behind sophistication. Sophistication can become a defense mechanism against too personal an involvement with God. Yet the mature Christian, though he follows St. Paul's advice (paraphrased: "To the sophisticated I become as one who is sophisticated"), still knows deep in his heart that he is a child of God, one who grasps the foolishness of the Gospel, one whose character rings with manly simplicity, one who knows that "it is God who made us, not we ourselves."

Attempts in New Guinea

One of the most common dances in New Guinea is the "welcoming dance." It may be questioned whether or not this can be considered a religious dance. Yet the distinction between "honoring the missionary" and "honoring the God who sent the missionary" is unlikely to be so clear in the mind of the native. Nor are we justified in imposing such a distinction on the native's mind. Whatever the case, the welcoming dances which Missionaries Hans Wagner and John F. Sievers encountered were God-pleasing, chaste, noble, and gratifying surprises,⁸⁸ even if they were not "worship."

⁸⁸Letters No. 15 and 31 in Appendix I, Missionaries John F. Sievers and Hans Wagner.

Less disputable is the religious nature of what we may label "processional" or "invocational" dances. In Missionary John D. Ellenberger's church new tunes, not old ones, are used for such occasions.⁸⁹ Missionary George Larson reports of a more detailed preparation for worship.

They gathered for church service by coming in groups according to clan alliance. They gathered on a knoll perhaps one thousand feet or so from their church yard. The men who gathered first on the knoll would shout out a melodious wol wol wol or the like, as the rest gathered with them from behind. Their bodies would sway back and forth and their knee would bend to the music. Their spears and bows and arrows were in hand. Then with a cue from their leader, they charged down the hillside, and finally, maneuvering themselves into a single file as they climbed up over the fence, they entered into the church yard running round and round counterclockwise, barking out short and piercing cries until the whole of the group had joined them. Then they would lead off with a shouting war-dance-like song. Others from other clan alliances would then join them, and this would be repeated until at about twelve noon all the groups had arrived. They would then dance back and forth and finally climax their singing by circling in masses and shouting and singing. Sometimes as many as twelve hundred men and five hundred women would take part.⁹⁰

On one occasion there appeared to be a "working dance," one that combined rhythm with a job. Missionary H. Wagner's church in New Guinea seems to have done that. As the members were building their own church they carried bricks and

⁸⁹Letter No. 36 in Appendix I, Missionary John D. Ellenberger.

⁹⁰Letter No. 37 in Appendix I, Missionary George F. Larson.

sticks to the rhythm of the drums.⁹¹ This suggests the parallel of Sierra Leone boatmen who combined dancing with rowing,⁹² or the Israelites who trod the winepress as they sang songs and beat out the rhythm with their feet.

Several missionaries report dancing for services on the occasions of Baptism,⁹³ confirmation,⁹⁴ after offerings,⁹⁵ dedications,⁹⁶ and Holy Communion.⁹⁷ The most interesting of these is the latter. Poerksen reports several churches who have a dance festival after the Lord's Supper. When one girl was asked, "How does that fit on such an occasion?" she answered, "Sollten wir uns nicht freuen, wo uns alle Suenden vergeben sind?" The same congregation had the custom of going in processions after they had received the Sacrament, singing to the shut-ins until they had also

⁹¹Letter No. 31 in Appendix I, Missionary Hans Wagner; he also sent this writer some pictures of the occasion.

⁹²W. D. Hambly, Tribal Dancing and Social Development (London: H. F. and G. Witherby, 1926), pp. 135-136.

⁹³Letters No. 14 and 36 in Appendix I, Missionaries Frederick Scherle and John D. Ellenberger.

⁹⁴Das Wort in der Welt (Hamburg: Deutscher Missionsrat, 1960), p. 60.

⁹⁵Letter No. 36 in Appendix I, Missionary John D. Ellenberger.

⁹⁶Letters No. 14 and 31 in Appendix I, Missionaries Fred Scherle and Hans Wagner.

⁹⁷Letters No. 36 and 37 in Appendix I, Missionaries John D. Ellenberger and Gordon F. Larson. Also Vicedom, op. cit., p. 31.

received the Sacrament. To this Vicedom adds, "Hier wussten auch die Kranken; wir sind Glieder in der Gemeinde der Feiernden. Das ist Abendmahlswirklichkeit!"⁹⁸

This spontaneous reaction of joy at receiving the Lord's body is so indigenous that it comes out in the most shocking expressions. A group of members exclaimed, "Oh Lord, you were to us as the fat of the pigs, when we, to-day, rejoiced in your body and blood!" Vicedom interprets this by saying that in the intensity of their joy even all of nature becomes sanctified to them.⁹⁹ Missionary John Ellenberger was told that dancing is the "only fit conclusion for so important a ceremony as the Lord's Supper."¹⁰⁰ The people of Missionary Larson's congregation noticed something which even surprised them.

Interestingly enough, it only occurred to the people after they had done this for some time that this dance was the same or very similar to the dance they used to climax their initiation ceremony--a perfect example of an indigenous adaptation of a former dance pattern and yet freed from the former connotation of identity with the ancestor!¹⁰¹

Natives of New Guinea also perform mimetic dances.¹⁰²

⁹⁸Vicedom, op. cit., p. 31.

⁹⁹Ibid.

¹⁰⁰Letter No. 36 in Appendix I, Missionary John D. Ellenberger.

¹⁰¹Letter No. 37 in Appendix I, Missionary Gordon F. Larson.

¹⁰²Letter No. 31 in Appendix I, Missionary Hans Wagner.

At times this is a mimesis of a historic event. Missionary Fred Scherle describes one of these. It is the re-enactment of the history of Lutheran missions. Ships pull into harbor, drop anchor, the passengers disembark, the cargo is discharged, and later the missionaries leave again. No words are used. It could not be distinguished from any of their other native dances.¹⁰³

While in our country the dance seems to be associated more with femininity, in New Guinea it is a strictly masculine art. "Der Tanz ist Maennersache."¹⁰⁴ While there is an increasing tendency in our culture to think also of religion as being a noble asset for a woman, it is encouraging to note that it is not beneath the dignity of a group of grown-up New Guinea natives to think that they can even use their masculine bodies in the highest expression of worship. This does not mean that the popularity of dancing among men should be a convenient gimmick to attract men; rather, it means that Christians should take the doctrine of the creation of man seriously, and worship their Creator and Redeemer in nothing but the best forms they know.

Attempts at adaptation did not come easily. One of the missionary conferences within New Guinea decided, after

¹⁰³Letter No. 14 in Appendix I, Missionary Fred Scherle.

¹⁰⁴Christian Keyser, Papua-Tanz (Neuendettelsau: Freimund Verlag, 1960), p. 3.

much debate, to discontinue attempts to adapt the dance.

They did this largely upon the advice of one of the natives.

Unser Herz ist verdorben. Gerade beim Tanz wacht alle Schelchtigkeit wieder in uns auf. Wir sind noch zu nahe am Heidentum. Ist dieses spaeter einmal ganz und fuer laengere Zeit aus unserer Mitte verschwunden, dann wird es vielleicht moeglich sein, den Tanz in Harmlosigkeit durchzufuehren.¹⁰⁵

It should be heartening to hear such a confession. Yet he does not seem to be expressing an opinion in which too many natives join. The examples of good adaptation given outnumber such skeptic opinions. Even concerning the Papuan dance Missionary Wagner says,

It was my experience as a congregational missionary of a huge circuit (25,000 people) that the Papuan dance can be used as a means of "glorifying God."¹⁰⁶

The many examples of adaptation given from North America, Europe, Latin America, Africa, the Far East, and New Guinea, have been presented in a somewhat scattered sequence. In the next chapter we shall attempt to bring them together under four basic principles which the Christian should keep in mind if he wants to use this art to the glory of God.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., p. 8.

¹⁰⁶Letter No. 31 in Appendix I, Missionary Hans Wagner.

CHAPTER VII

PRINCIPLES IN ADAPTATION OF THE DANCE

Form and Function: A Necessary Distinction

Basic to the approach of any controversial problem such as the religious dance is a clear distinction between form and content, or between form and function. As the water is the "content" which takes the "form" of the glass into which it is poured, so the content of the Gospel can take any number of shapes and forms. These can be the forms of architecture, sculpture, painting, poetry, drama, rhetoric, music, and the dance. It would be a dull Gospel if it came to us shapeless. In fact, it cannot. Conversely, there are no limits to the many facets in which the beauty of the Gospel can be brought out; this can be helped through the endless color and variety of the many arts in any number of combinations.

In certain areas, such as music, the Church has brought forth a phenomenal variety. Such capitalizing on music was certainly profitable. Other arts, such as drama, have been used to a lesser degree. Still another art, sculpture, has been used hardly at all among Reformed churches ever since the iconoclastic uprisings of Carlstadt. Finally, there is one art that has not only been ignored, but generally

condemned: the dance.¹

This raises the question: Did this attitude toward the dance come about because the dance does not deserve an equal rank among the other arts? Is it perhaps an inferior art? Curt Sachs believes that it is not only equal to the other arts, but by far the noblest of them; for while architecture, sculpture, and painting live in space, and music and poetry live in time, the dance lives at once in space and time.² Nida considers it the most emotionally stirring of all the arts, since it combines masks, costumes, legends, songs, music, and motion.³ Among the Zunis the same word is used for both "song" and "dance."⁴ Bach, who did not even have the religious dance in mind, thought very highly of the dance:

Die Schlaege auf der Trommel, der Takt und die Kadenz in Taenzen und sonst dergleichen Bewegungen nach Masz und Regel haben ihre Annehmlichkeit von der Ordnung,

¹Paul Tillich, The Religious Situation (New York: Meridian Books, 1932), p. 92. "To be sure, a less hospitable soil for such a development than the soil of the Christian, specifically of the Protestant West, can scarcely be imagined."

²Curt Sachs, World History of the Dance, translated by Bessie Schoenberg (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1937), p. 3.

³Eugene Nida, Customs and Cultures. Anthropology for Christian Missions (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1954), p. 193.

⁴Letter No. 17 in Appendix I, Missionary Stanley E. Koning.

denn alle Ordnung kommt dem Gemuete zustatten.⁵

Another writer says:

The human frame, when passive, is beautiful. When in motion, even more beautiful. When performed by more than one, enchantment is increased. . . . A single well-proportioned figure is a goodly sight; several well-proportioned figures in shifting groups, now in clusters, now swinging loose in wreaths, now falling into circles, while an individual performer focuses attention on himself, is very beautiful. It is like the change in a concert from a chorus to a solo; the effect is exquisite. Aesthetically, then, the dance is, or may be, one of the most perfectly beautiful creations of man. . . . It is a figure of the world of men in which each has a part to perform, and yet in which each has freedom. If the performer uses his freedom in excess, and violates a law of the whole community, the dancers in the social body are thrown into disorder and the beauty and the unity of the performance is lost. . . . It is not surprising that dance was originally linked with worship. For what is worship, but the oblation to God of the best things that man can give? If human sacrifice prevailed, it was because human life was the most precious.⁶

If the dance is a respectable art, why has it been so ignored or condemned? This problem of distinguishing between form and content is admittedly uncomfortable for the Christian who goes from one culture to another. Yet it has this advantage: it forces him to preach the kernel, not the shell. It forces him to strip the Gospel from the cultural trimmings which men have attached to it. It forces him to preach it for what it is: the dynamic result of

⁵Walter Blankenburg, "Bach und die Aufklaerung," Bach Gedenkschrift, edited by Karl Matthei (Zurich: Atlantis Verlag, 1950), p. 30.

⁶"Religious Dances in the Christian Church," Sacristy, X (February 8, 1861), 65-64.

God's redemption of helpless and fallen mankind through the incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension of His own Son. This message is enough to turn the world upside down, to enliven the hopeless, to transform the arts, even the dance, to His eternal glory. It has no need for our little commandments attached to it.

The Christian who mistakenly sees in the Gospel justification for other supposedly important purposes, such as imposing one Christian culture upon another, or imposing his own tastes upon another, is perverting the Gospel. He may be preaching prohibitions in the name of Christ and so may actually be "preaching for doctrine things which are forms, customs, arts." He is in danger of preaching "another Gospel," and Saint Paul has no kind words for him (Galatians 1:8-10). Such a Christian is forced to re-examine the Gospel which he is preaching.

However, herein lies a challenge. The painful process of applying the distinction between form and content to the Gospel as we have known it makes us re-discover the Gospel in its more profound dimensions. As Tillich says,

This distinction throws the Christian into a new encounter with reality in its deeper levels. It also raises the unanswered question of how the lost unity could be regained between cult and dance on the hard and unreceptive soil of Protestantism.⁷

⁷Paul Tillich, "Symposium on the Meaning of the Dance," Dance Magazine, XI (June, 1957), 20.

It is a tragedy that so many unquestionably sincere and dedicated missionaries have difficulty in understanding this distinction between form and content. These are people who have gone to extreme sacrifices to bring Christ to others, yet unknowingly may be giving natives the very impression which they do not intend to give. This is the impression that Christianity is a new set of commandments (those which happen to coincide with the missionary's culture) rather than the rich Gospel of forgiveness which it really is. Some of the first eleven letters in Appendix I are such examples. One says:

Your questions give me reason to doubt whether or not you really know the meaning of redemption yourself.
 . . . I want you prayerfully to reconsider your call into the mission field.⁸

Another one adds, "The dance question does not even enter into our thinking." A third one, from India, sees no use for the dance; but he grants that it may be conveniently useful for the missionary to understand the native dance. It would help him "understand the Hindus better," and, with this knowledge, "impress" the hearer into a conversion.⁹ A final example is the girl who gave up her dancing career to become a missionary in India, and who felt very guilty

⁸Letter No. 9 in Appendix I; ironically enough, it comes from a missionary in Angola, a country which in view of past revolts can hardly boast that it has understood and encouraged native culture.

⁹Letters No. 8 and 9 in Appendix I.

every time she danced a solo dance in front of her converts.¹⁰

The fervor with which such people preach their "Gospel" perhaps explains the bitterness of those who see this distinction between form and content. One missionary writes:

We are not only blind, but determined to stay blind.
 . . . We somehow feel that the fact that we received Christianity first and have had two thousand years to distort it to suit our particular tastes gives us the right to claim that only our own approach is valid.
 . . . The history of missions can be summed up in this phrase: "Second things first". . . . I am bitter--bitter as only one can be who has given his life to serve God and found himself a part of an organization dedicated to the heresy that identifies God's ways with those of the white man, bitter as only one can be who has counselled for hours with black men whose minds are permanently scarred by contact with well-meaning but blind missionaries.¹¹

Some of those who categorically oppose the dance confirm their opinion with the "fact" that this is also the choice of the natives. Such an assertion deserves further investigation; for it is possible for a missionary to condition and shape native consciences before the latter make such an "indigenous decision." The natives are then really only mouthing what their missionaries want them to say.¹² Several missionaries have reported this process of "conscience-

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Letter No. 54 in Appendix I, Missionary Charles Kraft.

¹² Letter No. 22 in Appendix I, Missionary Charles Kraft.

shaping." One says, "It was the native leaders who took the step of prohibition, not the missionaries. But the attitude of the missionaries was probably known to be strongly negative."¹³ Missionary Charles Kraft is keenly aware of the steps behind such a process of "conscience-shaping."

We found the prevalent attitude among missionaries in Nigeria (our section) to be: if in doubt about anything, such as dancing, first condemn it seriously or question it, then teach against it, then let the native Christians make their own choice. . . . It is interesting to note that the strictness decreases as the distance between the native congregation and the nearest mission station increases.¹⁴

Yet this is not the complete story. The account of several natives seems to indicate that this problem of guilt associated with the dance was deeper than a mere "conscience conditioned by the missionary." One says:

When the drum begins to beat out our old rhythm, every slumbering evil instinct in me is awakened. I recall all the old sexual experiments I had in the past, and if those drums were permitted to continue to beat, this man whom you respect as a Christian would soon become a disgrace to God and man.¹⁵

Another native, whose missionary describes him as quite intelligent, says:

We have no good dances. Some are less objectionable than others, but one dance leads to another. Step by

¹³Letters No. 14 and 15 in Appendix I, Missionaries John Sievers and Fred Scherle.

¹⁴Letter No. 22 in Appendix I, Missionary Charles Kraft.

¹⁵Letter No. 14 in Appendix I, Missionary Fred Scherle.

step we sink lower and lower into the filthy past from which we have emerged. Don't force us back to that again!¹⁶

A third one repeats:

Unser Herz ist verdorben. Gerade beim Tanz wacht alle Schlechtigkeit wieder in uns auf. Wir sind noch zu nahe am Heidentum. Ist dieses spaeter einmal ganz und fuer laengere Zeit aus unserer Mitte verschwunden, dann wird es vielleicht moeglich sein, den Tanz in Harmlosigkeit durchzufuehren.¹⁷

Several of these men, however, are wise enough to see the principle behind attempts to salvage and use the dance. Some are humble enough to hope that their grandchildren will no longer be chained to these evil connotations when they hear the drum. This was also the hope of an old Zuni Christian.¹⁸

The dance, then, faces the same problem which any of the other arts face in their quest for Christian baptism. In the first generation there is usually a strong conflict of associations and connotations with the pagan past. To deny the existence of these strong associations or to shrug them off as a mere product of misguided consciences is, in fact, to deny the psychology of human nature. We do not deny the alcoholic the right to decide for himself not to associate even with a moderate drinker, because he is taking

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Christian Keysser, Papua-Tanz (Neuendettelsau: Freimund Verlag, 1960), p. 8.

¹⁸Letter No. 17 in Appendix I, Missionary Stanley E. Koning. See also letter No. 14.

his weakness very seriously and does not want to flirt with it. Saint Paul had similar advice for those who were offended when eating food offered to idols. This problem is so real that it almost forces us to become suspicious of the many missionaries who in their letters give the impression that adaptation came quite naturally within the first generation. To be admired are those natives who, like those just quoted, are serious about wanting to remain Christians. Even more to be admired are those natives who, in spite of such feelings, still see the principle involved and who voice their hopes that their grandchildren can do better than they did.

As might be expected, the second generation has less trouble with this adaptation. The third one usually offers the greatest challenge. In other arts this change seems to have come earlier. Perhaps the reason is the one given by Missionary K. Stange of Indonesia, "Just because the dance is so basically religious in its origins it is also Christianized with difficulty."¹⁹

Are there any intermediate steps then, that lead to a gradual adoption of the dance? Or does it suddenly bloom forth in the third generation, like a flower overnight? Several things should be noted. A primary rule is that it

¹⁹Letter No. 45 in Appendix I, Missionary Karl H. Stange.

must come from the natives themselves; the missionary dare hardly "push it." A missionary to New Guinea admits that he may have done that and as a result he may have invited the raucous laughing that accompanied some of these natives' private rehearsals of their liturgy. He was introspective and wise enough not to lay the blame automatically on the natives or even on the dance as an art, but on himself for perhaps "pushing it too much."²⁰

A second useful rule is that only certain elements of the dance may be used as one of several steps in transition. Thus, Mrs. Turner Blount has put Scripture to music using the rhythm of the Navajo dance.²¹ A third useful rule is that no old tunes should be used. Missionary Timyan of French West Africa writes that, while he has seen successful adaptation in some types of dances, this was never the dance in those dances which retained their fetish music. The dance had to be a new, original creation.²² The Christianized Damal, Hamun, and Atowa tribes of New Guinea also have found processions successful only if they composed new tunes for them.²³ It is true, Johann Sebastian Bach

²⁰Letter No. 23 in Appendix I, Missionary Alfred Wach.

²¹Letter No. 18 in Appendix I, Missionary Turner Blount.

²²Letter No. 46 in Appendix I, Missionary G. C. Timyan.

²³Letter No. 36 in Appendix I, Missionary John D. Ellenberger.

used popular tunes to new Christian lyrics; in that way "Innsbruck, ich muss dich lassen," became "O Welt, ich muss dich lassen." But such a step is more possible with secular songs. Precisely because so many of the native dances are religious, such a simple transformation is more difficult.

In spite of this, it is surprising what radical changes the Christian message has brought to certain types of dances. The words of one of the New Guinea war dances were "We have strung their intestines all over the place." Yet these war dances have somehow been Christianized.²⁴

The aforementioned is concerned with the problem of connotation of dances. A second problem is that of exaggeration. A missionary to the Congo writes:

Experience has taught us that beyond a certain point the reaction on the part of the audience is always an explosion of hilarious laughter and total confusion which destroys the purpose of the pageant and makes it impossible to convey to the audience its message and content.²⁵

This also seems to be a danger in India:

Dancing is so exciting for the dancers as well as for the congregation that a good sermon would not reach them and the Biblical purpose of the presentation of the Word of God would not be achieved.²⁶

²⁴Letter No. 37 in Appendix I, Missionary Gordon F. Larson.

²⁵Letter No. 25 in Appendix I, Missionary James Bertsche.

²⁶Letter No. 49 in Appendix I, Missionary R. Tauscher.

It is no less a problem in New Guinea.

They, for some reason or another, must go to extremes or break with it completely. This is regrettable, since many of their dances are works of art and precision.²⁷

Missionary Viering warns about a similar danger in Togo, Africa:

Die Frage ist viel mehr, ob nicht der wilde Tanz und die unendige Freude am Darstellen die Ueberhand ueber den Inhalt der biblischen Geschichte gewinnen. Aber wahrscheinlich ist das voellig abstrakt und europaeisch gedacht.²⁸

Perhaps this last sentence is the key to the problem. "Es ist europaeisch gedacht." The very idea that the Christian joy must be subdued, controlled, and restrained is a cultural invention, perhaps even an evil, which Western Christians have no right to impose upon others. Actually, the objection is as old as history. The introduction of melody as a substitute for harmony was once considered worldly. The suggestion that rhythm should be used in chants was even more offensive. The same objections arose when harmony and later syncopation were introduced into religious music. Some sincere Christians were horrified. To impose limits on the physical expression of joy in other people (limits which happen to coincide with our tastes) may perhaps be as ridiculous as it would have been for a

²⁷Letter No. 14 in Appendix I, Missionary Fred Scherle.

²⁸Letter No. 25 in Appendix I, Missionary Erich Viering.

Medieval Christian to forbid Bach from using eighth or sixteenth notes. It is as though the Church would endorse painting, provided it remained in black and white, not in colors. It is here where Western churches may need the help of the non-Western churches in restoring an image of Christianity which consists mainly in joy rather than in asceticism or continuous restraint. On the other hand, this does not mean that there is no such thing as "exaggeration." Saint Paul himself discouraged excessive enthusiasm when "speaking in tongues." It does mean that Western Christians should be careful not to make their definitions of what constitutes "excess" binding on non-Westerners.

A third problem is that of creating an impression of antiquarianism. One encyclopedia says, "The history of the dance is the history of its decline in every direction except that of art."²⁹ If that is the case, attempts at the rediscovery of the use of the dance could be viewed as efforts to revitalize corpses, playing with skeletons. It would mean fighting a battle long after the enemy has vacated the battlefield. There is a half-truth in this objection. In certain countries the use of old tunes and old dances to new lyrics could be very foolish. In parts of

²⁹John Martin, "Dance," Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, edited by Edwin Seligman (New York: McMillan Co., 1937), III, 705.

India or Japan, where people at times do not want to be associated with their history, such a strategy would be tragic. On the other hand, the assertion that the body is not needed to express joy in our age, and that "dance" in that sense is dying, is not true. The teenagers' clamoring for social dances, the marching at parades, Western or Communist, and the jumping of cheerleaders and crowds at ball games, these all seem to endorse the view that the body is still being used as a means to express joy. These secular activities have no exclusive property rights on the use of the body. It belongs to God, too.

A fourth objection is that the dance is not as intelligible as words are. Yet the Hindu and Balinese dances, for example, have symbols much like ours in the sign language. Many Africans would also resent the suggestion that the dance is a much more "hazy" means of communication.³⁰ Dance speaks not only to the mind, but also to the emotions. The account is told of an African lawyer who was losing his case. It is said that he suddenly stopped speaking and began dancing. The result was that he won.³¹ However true this account, the dance need not be presented apart from

³⁰Keita Fodeba, "The True Meaning of African Dances," The Unesco Courier, X (January, 1959), 19, 23.

³¹Jean Erdman, "The Dance as Non-Verbal Poetic Image," The Dance Has Many Faces, edited by Walter Sorell (New York: World Publication Co., 1951), p. 258.

words. Christians talk about the great use to which music has been put; yet by that they often mean chorales, hymns, passions, oratorios, and chants, all of which include words. Yet no one is heard suggesting that because a humming choir or a playing instrument cannot by itself communicate the Gospel in detail, that therefore music should not be used. The dance can similarly be put to use, perhaps, as an accompaniment to words.

A further reply to the objection that the dance lacks communicative accuracy is the fact that the modern dance is much more adaptable to religious purposes than the classic ballet. Tillich says,

The modern dance . . . has developed away from its individualistic, esthetizing beginnings in a direction which leads toward what we may possibly identify as the ritual dance. . . . Their group dances indicate the defeat of individualism; the figures of the dance seek to give inner content and organization to space, the expressive gestures try to reveal metaphysical meanings. All of this is still in its beginnings.³²

The problem of teaching the natives the distinction between form and content is not as profound as it appears. It is as simple as telling them, "You can sing for the devil or for God; you can dance to your spirits or to God." Even the missionary need not worry about knowing all the details and about manipulating every step in the process of adaptation. One of them suggests that, regrettably,

³²Tillich, The Religious Situation, pp. 92-93.

almost no missionaries have the time to study the problem. It may be questioned whether it is so utterly necessary to study this problem, especially if the new commandments which the missionary brings with him are the ones that create the problem. His only problem is to preach the Gospel faithfully, and to let them put every facet of their lives, including their dances, to the test of that Gospel. A Roman Catholic Cardinal in the Far East had a simple method. He gave a New Testament to a Chinese painter and asked him to paint the stories "as he saw them." Some of the first attempts were questionably syncretistic. After four years the painter became a Christian, and his paintings took on a full Christian message in a completely Chinese idiom. This Cardinal not only knew the distinction between form and content, but he had the patience to wait for the results of the Gospel. This rather simple approach seems to be the Biblical method; it fills the Christian missionary with hope instead of despair when dealing with a problem like the religious dance.³³

Body and Soul: A God-created
Unity

Ruth St. Denis opens her essay on "The Religious Manifestations in the Dance" with the following remark:

³³Daniel Fleming, Each With His Own Brush (New York: Friendship Press, 1939), p. 12.

I yield to no one in my admiration for the character of Saint Paul, but I have ever profoundly disagreed with his attitude of spirit against the life of the senses. His doctrines, spread over the Western world, have led to such a contempt for the body and its functions that we have a divided and disintegrating consciousness regarding our total personalities.³⁴

The painful truth is that Christians have often mistakenly followed such interpretation. However, it is not the truth that such was the apostle's view. Bruce lists five reasons to support the view that in chapters seven and eight of his letter to the Romans Saint Paul does not refer to the material part of the body, when he uses the word $\sigma\alpha\rho\omega$.

- a. It is un-Hebrew, and Paul's culture is Rabbinic rather than Hellenistic.
- b. The Body is capable of sanctification as well as the spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:23, 1 Corinthians 6:19,20; 2 Corinthians 7:1).
- c. The body as well as the soul will be raised from the dead, although changed (1 Corinthians 15:44-50).
- d. Christian salvation is in the present life, and not only after the death of the body. Finally,
- e. Christ himself had flesh (Romans 1:3; 9:5).³⁵

In his detailed study on $\sigma\alpha\rho\omega$ in Romans 7 and 8 Gifford also criticizes the views of Holstein, R. Schmidt, and Pfeiderer for their Hellenistic interpretation of Paul. He concludes:

There is not, as we believe, a single passage which contains the doctrine that the flesh is the source of

³⁴Ruth St. Denis, "Religious Manifestations in the Dance," The Dance Has Many Faces, edited by Walter Sorell (New York: World Publishing Company, 1951), p. 13.

³⁵E. H. Gifford, The Epistle of Saint Paul to the Romans (London: Murray, 1886), pp. 48f.

sin and essentially sinful--a doctrine which dishonors not only man's nature, but the Father who created us and the Son who for our redemption was made flesh and dwelt among us.³⁶

So also in Galatians when Saint Paul says that "the flesh lusteth against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh," he is not referring to the conflict, familiar to Greek ethics, between man's reason and his passions. This should be obvious from the fact that, of the "works of the flesh" that follow in Galatians 5:17, eleven out of seventeen have nothing at all to do with the sins of sensuality.

The translation of $\sigma\alpha\rho\kappa$ in Romans 7 and 8 as "flesh" is therefore misleading. A close examination of these passages will bear this out. As an example we will take Romans 7:25, "So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin." Here the form of the sentence distinguishes the "flesh" from the "sin" which gives law to it, as clearly as it distinguishes the "mind" from God, whose law it serves. Sin, in fact, appears not as an essential property of the flesh, but as a power which has brought it into bondage. To be "in the flesh," therefore, is to be subject to the powers that control it. Sin is not associated with the body any more than with the spirit. Man sins through an act of will--and will, if anything, is incorporeal. It is this consideration

³⁶Ibid., p. 52.

which moved the translators of the New English Bible to avoid altogether the use of the terms "flesh" or "fleshly" in chapters 7 and 8 of Romans. On one occasion the adjective "unspiritual" is used, and elsewhere it is the term "lower nature," each including the evil tendencies in both body and spirit of man.³⁷ We have not even begun to consider the many times when $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$ is used in a good sense. One example is 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit? Glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's."

It was the Greek and later the Gnostic deprecation of all that was material that led to the misinterpretation of the body as evil.

We are hardly aware of the hold of this mythology on the Western mind, leading even the interpreters of Scripture to fashion the contents of the Bible according to the forms and moulds of Plato and his followers.³⁸

Nor was this a discovery of twentieth century scholars.

Justyn Martyr had said long before:

If the Savior proclaimed salvation to the soul alone, what new thing, beyond what we have heard from Pythagoras and Plato and all their band, did he bring us?³⁹

There is a persistent tendency in translators and

³⁷The New English Bible. New Testament (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961), pp. 264-266.

³⁸Conrad Bergendoff, "Body and Spirit in Christian Thought," Lutheran Quarterly, VI (August, 1954), 193.

³⁹Ibid., p. 196.

commentators to ignore this peculiarly Biblical antithesis of flesh and spirit and confound it with the Greek antithesis between material and immaterial. The body has never been given the place in Greek thought which it has in the Biblical writings. Plato set a fashion which the Church was never able to overcome. In Christian thought Platonic and Neoplatonic ideas have reigned almost supreme, but the apparent victory of this philosophy does not change the fact that the Bible has a very different picture of man. Luther grasped the Pauline distinction in spite of the ascetics before him and the Pietists after him. To him the expression unus totus homo was misleading; he preferred the terms duo toti homines--the totus homo carnalis and the totus homo spiritualis, both in one.⁴⁰

It is no mere suspicion that the hostility of Protestantism has its roots in Gnostic misinterpretations of Saint Paul and in the Pietistic movement. An examination of the writings of Pietists bears this out. Even Lutherans in this country, though they may vehemently deny it, have been under Pietistic influence. The writer of an article in the Concordia Theological Monthly in 1933 admitted his indebtedness to Spener's Theologische Bedenken. One of the expressions used was, "Die Tanzhoehlen der Augenlust und

⁴⁰ Erdmann Schott, Fleisch und Geist nach Luthers Lehre, unter besonderer Berueksichtigung des Begriffs Totus Homo (Leipzig: A. Deichertsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1928), pp. 3, 69-72.

der Fleischeslust ekeln."⁴¹ C. M. Zorn's Vom Tanzen has similar comments.⁴² Missing in those treatises is the Biblical method of suggesting substitutes, the active re-consecration of vessels of evil to be vessels of God. The main suggestion in Zorn's book is "to give a strong witness against the dance." Nothing is said about the possibility of using, much less encouraging, the dance in its God-pleasing aspects. However impassioned and well-intended the pleas of Dr. C. F. W. Walther in his Tanz und Theaterbesuch, they still betray some of these Pietistic leanings. The fact that these men did not have the religious dance in mind does not change the issue; one has only to imagine their reaction at the suggestion that a religious dance should be performed in the nave or the altar of a church.

Two missionaries specifically mention the Pietistic influence on some of their fellow laborers.⁴³ Such men represent a considerable group of well-meaning preachers who proclaim "Jesus saves! Jesus saves," and go right on to deny God's article of creation. Tillich has this in mind when he says:

⁴¹"Minutes of the Pastoral Conference of Wisconsin, 1862," Concordia Theological Monthly, IV (August, 1933), 281.

⁴²C. M. Zorn, Vom Tanzen. Dem Christenvolke zu Nutz und Frommen Geschrieben (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, n.d.), pp. 7-8.

⁴³Letters No. 24 and 31 in Appendix I, Missionaries H. Wagner and John Whitehorn.

The criticism of the dances as being evil in themselves has cut the primordial tie between religion and the dance, and is rooted in the same depreciation of the body with its expressive and creative powers.⁴⁴

Ultimately, those who object to the idea of adaptation to dances find themselves in the embarrassing company of those who are against any form of adaptation--"Mass, infant baptism, Easter, Christmas, and the celebrating of the Sabbath on a pagan Sunday."⁴⁵

It is also perhaps more than coincidental that the many attempts at adaptation to religious dances come at the same time that Christians seem to be rediscovering the Biblical unity of body and soul. This is not the observation of a Christian, but of a Jew. He warns his fellow Jews that Christianity is re-discovering the Old Testamental unity of body and soul while Judaism is beginning to fall prey to the false Platonic categories. He adds:

It will not do to hide our heads in the sand instead of facing this problem. Anyone who has kept in touch with recent Christian writing finds a surprising number of Jewish converts to Christianity; and finds, even more widespread, a surprising amount of Christian influence in Jewish writing. The latter is found among loyal Jews.⁴⁶

It is inevitable that a re-discovery of the Biblical unity of body and soul will bring with it a better

⁴⁴Tillich, "Symposium on the Meaning of the Dance," p. 20.

⁴⁵Letter No. 10 in Appendix I.

⁴⁶Monford Harris, "The Bifurcated Life. A Jewish Critique of Christian Thinking," Judaism, VIII (Spring, 1959), 99-111.

understanding of possibilities of the dance within worship. The Rector of Saint Mark's in the Bouwerie summarized this in his program notes:

Any restraint imposed upon a normal life of man's two-fold organism may bring about anti-spiritual inversions and perversions to the injury of both soul and body alike. The dance has rightly been called the mother of all the arts. . . . The difficulty is to take the dance seriously. It has been hopelessly degraded for over four hundred years. The dance is the most inevitable form of expression: it is the human body speaking. . . . The body cannot be denied. An intelligent religion will idealize it. To attempt to ignore it brings disaster. What the world needs is not a fanatic faith that will suppress and condemn any normal functioning of the body, for this ends in all sorts of abnormalities. It needs a faith that will control the body, put it in its proper place, and make it minister to the Spirit. . . . Surely those who conceive of the human being as potentially divine should find some way to make that body, in the beauty of its line and the rhythm of its motion, become a handmaiden to the Spirit and not a temptress.⁴⁷

Man and Nature: A Doxological Harmony

The unity of body and soul is only one of the principles that explains man's urge to dance. If we stopped there, man would stand alone, incomplete, apart from creation. We still have not seen man in the context of the world that surrounds him, in the center of all the creatures that praise God. Man is pictured in the Bible not as merely praising God by himself, but he joins the symphony of

⁴⁷"Program of Pageant in Honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary on the Sunday Nearest to the Feast of the Annunciation, Saint Mark's in-the-Bouwerie, 1920-24," p. 15.

creation in majestic praises. This has something to say to the problem of adaptation of mimetic dances; man does not merely mimic nature, nor does he merely interpret it animistically as "alive," but he sees in it accompanying instruments as he sings God's praises.

Man's unity with nature is a favorite theme of the Old Testament. God did not merely give man's body a נֶפֶשׁ , but man became a living נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה , a word also used for animals. It underscores man's creatureliness, even as Job underscores it in the last four chapters of his book. The term כָּל בָּשָׂר , "all flesh," used so often in the Septuagint, also accentuates this creatureliness. It is the solemn diapason theme of the Old Testament that man and all creation are under God. The uniqueness of man lies only in the context of God's covenant; men, not animals, received the promises of the Suffering Servant. Balaam's ass becomes a vehicle of prophecy, but even he is speaking to Balaam.

The creatureliness of man and his likeness to the rest of creation is not only seen in Biblical writings. The universe and man both throb with rhythm. Man has the rhythm of breathing and of pulse; of hunger and eating; of sleeping and waking; the world around him throbs with rhythm--ocean waves, songs of birds, undulating movements of squirrels and dolphins, summer and winter, seed and harvest. Dancing rhythm has been observed in animals as well as men. The grallatores on Cape York in Australia, dance

a quadrille which is said to exceed in rhythm and grace the one danced by men. Also chimpanzees perform a round dance whose rhythm embraces the entire body, even the lower jaw.⁴⁸ Movements suggesting dances are seen in the argus pheasant, the waltzing ostrich, the bowing and scraping penguin, the fishes and the birds.⁴⁹ Horses are known to be susceptible to rhythm. The cobra swings in time to the snake charmer.⁵⁰ "Every child realizes that a swarm of gnats gives the illusion of an entire ballet."⁵¹

It is this awareness of oneness with the rhythm of nature that characterizes the dance of Siva. It has also inspired men like Joseph Gregor to write his Panorchesis. He describes the rhythm of the heavenly macrocosm. The movements of both animate and inanimate creation are not merely given a functional explanation, but they are seen as a rhythmically breathing macrocosm. Thus, for example, the dancing flight of the birds is seen in only a small degree as the search for food, but mainly in the ecstatic union

⁴⁸ Joseph Gregor, "Panorchesis," The Dance Has Many Faces, edited by Walter Sorell (New York: World Publishing Co., 1951), p. 131.

⁴⁹ A. E. Crawley, "Dance," Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, edited by James Hastings (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), X, 359.

⁵⁰ W. D. Hambly, Tribal Dancing and Social Development (London: H. F. and G. Witherby, 1926), p. 40.

⁵¹ Gregor, op. cit., p. 129.

with the panorchesis of nature.⁵² We can see in all this a parallel to the archetypal symbolism underlying many of the astral, cosmic, circular, processional, and mimetic dances.

This unity with nature is seen in Ruth St. Denis' words; she takes it so seriously that her remarks border on pantheism:

I lift my arms in an unconscious gesture of oneness toward the round silvery glory of the moon. . . . I listen to the worship of a faint breeze. . . . I begin to move. It is my first dance urge to relate myself to the cosmic rhythm. With a motion of complete joy, as a free being in a world of infinite depth and beauty, I surrender myself to the unseen pulsation of the universe. . . . The first lyric questions of life and love are rising in my spirit, and for a brief moment I experience a glorious fusion of my three-fold self--physical, emotional, and spiritual. At this moment of ecstasy there was no separation. I was an exultant unity.⁵³

Keita Fodeba gives an African viewpoint of this unity with creation:

When a body has the lightness and the flexibility of a liana, who could prevent it from dancing? When the economic stage is essentially agricultural, involving few needs and material worries, why not move like a bird or a snake, open like a flower, and so be in communion with nature and its mysterious power?⁵⁴

All these accents are not accents which should be absent from the life of the Christian. He has all of them, and more. He has all of them because, as we have seen, the

⁵²Ibid., pp. 127-129.

⁵³St. Denis, op. cit., p. 13.

⁵⁴Fodeba, op. cit., p. 21.

Old Testament pictures him as "one" with nature. He has more, because, as the chosen one in the imago dei, he joins nature in praises to God.

Some of the Old Testament passages are striking. The heavens smile, the earth laughs, the fields wave, the trees move, the mountains skip, and the waves clap their hands.

Psalm 96:11-13: Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad, let the sea roar, and the fullness thereof; let the fields be joyful and all that is therein; then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord.

Psalm 97:6: The heavens declare His righteousness, and all the people see his glory.

Psalm 98:8,9: Let the sea roar and the fulness thereof; the world and they that dwell therein. Let the floods clap their hands, let the hills be joyful together before the Lord; for he cometh to judge the earth.

Many more such passages could be given. Particularly descriptive of creation's praise to God is the Song of the Three Children. All nature responds to the refrain "Praise ye the Lord": waters above the firmament, sun, moon, and stars, showers and dew, winds, fire and heat, summer and winter, frost and cold, ice and snow, night and days, lightnings and clouds, mountains and hills, green things upon the earth, seas and floods, whales and fowls, fields and cattle, and finally man.

One of our hymns echoes a similar involvement of nature in the praises of God:

Oh, all ye pow'rs that He implanted,
Arise, and silence keep no more;
Put forth the strength that he hath granted,

Your noblest work is to adore.
O soul and body, be ye meet
With heartfelt praise your Lord to greet!

Ye forest leaves, so green and tender,
That dance for joy in summer air;
Ye meadow grasses, bright and slender
Ye flow'rs, so wondrous sweet and fair,
Ye live to show His praise alone;
With me now make His glory known!

All creatures that have breath and motion,
That throng the earth, the sea, the sky,
Now join me in my heart's devotion,
Help me to raise His praises high.
My utmost pow'rs can ne'er aright
Declare the wonders of His might!

St. Paul also describes creation as awaiting with re-deemed mankind the ultimate redemption, while the writer of the Apocalypse does not see man alone, but man in the surroundings of a new heaven and a new earth. Our Lord Himself saw the praise of creation as so theocentric, that even if the disciples were forced to stop preaching the good news, nature could not contain her praises in silence (Luke 19: 40): "I tell you that if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out!"

Church Militant and Church Triumphant: A Beatific Anticipation

If there is one area in which adaptation seems theoretically impossible it is in the area of funeral dances. How can anyone dance when his closest friend has just died? Even Christians, for all their hope in life hereafter, still weep. Our Lord Himself wept at Lazarus' grave. Psychiatrists today are unanimous in suggesting that mourners

should begin their "mourning work" without delay, without hiding behind a facade of supposed bravery or make-believe joy. To refuse this "work of mourning" can lead to serious personality disorders.

We can hardly, therefore, suggest a type of danse macabre for a funeral service, even if the Shakers, Southern Negroes, and some of the non-Western churches have tried it. This, however, we can do: we can see how the Christian's image of life hereafter can set a pattern for the activities in the present life. The Christian has unusual reasons for joy as he thinks about the saints in heaven. The amazing thing is that even Shakers, who did not believe in the resurrection of the body,⁵⁵ should still come up with a moderate dance at their funerals. How much more the Christians, who have reason for joy!

We have seen how the Early Church fathers viewed heaven as a place where prophets, apostles, martyrs, and angels could not contain their praises; they were simply swept away in a perpetual dance to God. This was also the view of Hassidism.⁵⁶ Even the Romans pictured heaven as a place of athletic contests and games among the gods; the more the people therefore rejoiced at these games, the

⁵⁵Anna White, Shakerism (Columbus, Ohio: Fred J. Heer, 1904), p. 334.

⁵⁶H. Rabinowicz, "Music and Dance in Hassidism," Judaism, XX (Summer, 1959), 252.

happier were the gods. The life on earth was an imitation of life in heaven.⁵⁷

This parallelism perhaps points to the reasons for two strange developments in Western Christianity: the somewhat dull picture of heaven, and the consequent distrust of any dancing activity here on earth. Our abortive attempts at explaining heaven to children have usually centered around two words: "song" and "rest." No child gets too excited about the thought of singing forever. Even more negative is the reaction to the word "rest." Yet that is one of the most frequently used words in describing heaven. If children are asked to associate heaven with that hour of the day which they least like, when mother puts them to bed, it is a small wonder that heaven seems dull and Saint Paul incomprehensible when he says, "I would rather depart and be with Christ, which is far better."

The event of a death or a funeral, then, can be made meaningful even for children. Some of the funeral songs written in Medieval and later times illustrate this.

Tis for Rosalie they sing,
Alleluia.
She is done with sorrowing--
So we dance and we sing so,
Benedicamus Domino.⁵⁸
Alleluia, Alleluia!

⁵⁷ Lewis Spence, Myth and Ritual in Dance, Game, and Rhyme (London: Watts and Co., 1947), p. 12.

⁵⁸ Margaret Palmer Fisk, The Art of the Rhythmic Choir. Worship Through Symbolic Movement (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1950), p. 132.

Another carol was sung for a young girl's funeral:

Up in heaven they dance today,
Alleluia,
The young maidens dance and play,
They sing as they dancing go,
Benedicamus Domino,⁵⁹
Alleluia, Alleluia!

A nuns' song of 1440 reads:

Wir wollen miteinander all
Auf den Himmel fahren;
Ja, dort ist der Freuden viel,
Da tanzen wir mit Engelein,
Zu schoenem Saitenspiel.⁶⁰

Naturally, such reminders of a dancing heaven should not be limited to funeral occasions. If the Biblical picture of life hereafter is a big wedding feast, Luther's words concerning the wedding dances could well apply: "Man mag sich wohl auf eine Hochzeit schmuecken, tanzen, und froehlich sein."⁶¹ Nor does Luther think that dancing is innocent only when done by children. His advice to adults is, "Die jungen Kinder tanzen ohne Suende; so thue auch, und werde wie ein Kind."⁶² In one of his hymns for children he describes what sort of dance he means:

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰G. Van der Leeuw, Wegen en Grenzen (Amsterdam: H. J. Paris, 1948), p. 93.

⁶¹Martin Luther, Saemmtliche Schriften (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1910), VII, 1030. See also XI, 467.

⁶²Ibid., XI, 468f.

A little child for you this morn
 Has from a chosen maid been born,
 A little child, so tender, sweet,
 That you should skip upon your feet.

Now I can play the whole day long,
 I'll dance and sing for you a song,
 A soft and soothing lullaby,
 So sweet that you will never cry.⁶³

The child-like ring of these words should not be entirely beneath the dignity of adults. For it is God who sparks our lives even while we are still in the Church militant. An African Christian describes this fight within the Christian while still on earth:

We feel joy because we have flaming fire within us, and it comes out through our mouths. Sometimes it is so strong that we are bound to dance. This fire, which has been in us since our creation, can be lighted in different ways. Sometimes it is lighted by the devil. When Satan is in charge of lighting, the fire comes out with sinful words and sinful deeds. When the fire is lighted by God, it comes out with praises to him for what he has done. Therefore the flaming quality depends on the one who lighted the fire. I think Satan is trying his very best to win our praises.

As Christians, it is our duty to prevent Satan from lighting that fire. In order to prevent him, we ought to light the fire by the power of God. If we do not do it, Satan will light it, because the fire needs flaming. We must plead for God's power in lighting the fire.⁶⁴

⁶³The Martin Luther Christmas Book, translated and arranged by Roland H. Bainton (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1948), p. 76.

⁶⁴Henry Weman, African Music and the Church in Africa, translated by Eric C. Sharpe (Uppsala: Ab Lundequistska Bokhandeln, 1960), p. 201.

CHAPTER VIII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

We have repeatedly given our reasons for choosing the definition of the dance as "poetry of motion." With this in mind we have examined the religious dance in Biblical, early Christian, Medieval, Modern, and contemporary times.

The verdict of the Old Testament is that the dance can be used for irreverent as well as for doxological purposes. Most of the words meaning "dance" occur again and again in the intensive stem. Moreover, the absence of prohibitions of the dance in the Mosaic Law is striking. A third point to remember is that the dance seemed such a common term that it was never expressed by a "common-denominator" word, but could only be expressed in one of about a dozen different types of dance-words. This implies its common usage. Finally, the existence of dances in later Judaism cannot be ignored, especially since it is a sociological phenomenon that dances tend to die out rather than to arise. Yet apart from that the Old Testament is sufficiently clear in many of its dances: the ecstatic dance, the harvest and thanksgiving dances, the processions, the victory dances, and the dances for special occasions (Passover, Atonement, marriages, festivals, and circumcisions).

Nor is the New Testament silent on this subject. Christ

compares Himself to a wedding-dance-game advocate and John the Baptist to a funeral-game advocate in one of his parables. The word used on the occasion of the return of the prodigal son also implies what was probably a joyous dance. Ultimately, however, we cannot rely on a mere concordance study of the word "dance." The body involvement in worship is implicit in many of the frequently used words in the Bible and in our liturgies: bow, kneel, fall, incline, lift up, march, run, leap, skip, and spring.

Chapter III dealt with the major types of dances in non-Christian religions: fertility, initiation, funeral, war and victory, astral and mythological, processional, exhibitionary, and ecstatic dances. The main point made was, however, that a merely functional explanation which anthropologists are quick to give does not quite suffice, even as a mere functional explanation of religion does not completely explain man's search for God; dances are rather frequent expressions of a trans-consciousness, of man's subconscious efforts to fall in step with the panorchesis of creation.

After this brief parenthesis of "dance in non-Christian religions" we returned to the Christian dance in the first millenium after Christ. It is striking to see how often the early Church fathers referred to the dance of saints and angels in heaven and why they consequently often led the dances around the graves of martyrs. Even after

degeneration set in to invite the consequent church prohibitions, the Mass was developed in its rich and active form. At the same time the Coptic Church of Abyssinia developed a liturgy with similar body involvement.

In the second millenium after Christ new attempts restored dance forms to a manner more acceptable to the Church. Dance interpretations were written for Psalms, canticles, and songs. Some of the other dances were the Los Seises, the Bergerette, the Pelota, the Tripettes, the Sorrows of the Three Marys, and the Rappresentazione dell' Anima e de Corpo. Other dances had quite different motives; such were the dances of the flagellants and of the choreomaniacs who found out that dances "worked out" their epileptic cramps. Of a somewhat different nature were the dances of the Springende Heiligen of Echternach. While these attempts were seen in Europe, England saw something similar in the rise of the detailed Masonic rites, featuring continuous body-involvement. In spite of the disapproval of Puritans and of Evangelicals, a wholesome attitude toward dancing was reflected in some carols, such as the Christmas carol "Tomorrow shall be my dancing day." Outside of Europe, the attempts among African slaves and American Indians were generally failures because of the crass synergism which they encouraged. Perhaps the only noteworthy attempt was seen among the Shakers, who combined simplicity with beauty and order.

The twentieth century shows a marked increase in attempts at the use of the religious dance. Even in the United States such programs were presented at St. Mark's in the Bowery in New York City. Ruth St. Denis and Ted Shawn did much through their camp of Jacob's Pillow, as others did through the Camps Farthest Out. The leaders in the art of the rhythmic choir were Evelyn Broadbent and Margaret Palmer Fisk. Their choirs specialized in giving dance interpretations of songs or instrumental numbers known already. A similar pattern was followed in Europe by Birgitta Thorin of Sigtuna. In Italy, the subject of Christ's crucifixion was even interpreted in a ballet form, Massini's Laudes Evangelii. Still other attempts were seen in monastery and convent settings. According to Basilissa Huertgen they were interpretations of the introits, gradu-als, and collects, elements which she called the "paraliturgy."

But the most interesting attempts have been seen in the Christian churches in Africa, the Far East, and New Guinea. In Africa, one of the most striking examples is Isaiah Shembe's sect of Zulu Nazarites. Other examples are the interpretations of the "Fall of Man" by the students of Buloba College, Uganda, the contests at Cape Province, and the cantata Isaac and Rebecca as presented in the Togo. In the Far East the most striking example is the Japanese performance of Mary Magdalene on the occasion of the Protestant

Centennial. The Indian love for dance interpretations of Bible stories is well attested by Arno Lehmann, Lesslie Newbigin, and Emmons White. Other dances baptized into Christianity by the Christians of India are the kummis, the sankirtans, and the processions which serenade the village homes on Sunday morning, making sure, on the way, that everyone is going to church. However, the country with the biggest variety of religious dances is New Guinea. Their "invocational dances" before the Sunday morning services consist in transformed war dances which retain some of their howls. Other dances are seen on the occasions of baptisms, confirmations, dedications, after offerings, and especially after Holy Communion. One entire church was built to the rhythm of the drums.

In the seventh chapter we have listed four basic principles which should guide both missionaries and natives in their attempts to use the dance for the purposes of Christian worship. The first one of these principles is the distinction between form and function. The second is the awareness that Gnostic and Pietistic errors have tended to deprive the body of its God-given right to worship together with the soul of which it is the temple. The third is the awareness that when man thus praises God he is not alone or even a member of a group of praising Christians, but that he is actually joining the entire creation in a panorchesis of praise. Those who see this panorchesis through the mere

eyes of natural revelation have thus, understandably, come close to a belief in pantheism. The final principle is that if we picture the Church Triumphant as joining the rejoicing of dancing angels rather than just "resting" or "singing," then our imitation here on earth of these whom we shall follow may take on the forms of more physical expressions of devotion, joy, and doxology; and our pictures of heaven may make more sense to children, deaf people, and primitives.

In the quest for baptism into the Christian Church the religious dance faces a formidable array of problems. It must fight the suspicion and mistrust that has come from its historic failures. It must overcome the strong pagan connotations that characterize this essentially religious art. Though intrinsically a vehicle of enthusiasm, it is expected to conform to a definition of reverence that almost defies spontaneity. It must unmask the subtle Gnosticism that parades in the name of Christianity. It must wrestle with consecrated and sincere Puritan and Pietistic ascetics. It must grapple with a total complex of cultural conditioning that identifies itself with Christianity. Most difficult of all, within the Christian himself it also must fight that tendency to worship God only with the intellect, lest the involvement with God be too uncomfortable, personal, and complete.

To be sure, the examples of enthusiastically doxological

dances are few in history. But they are outstanding and clear enough to give the Christian a rather detailed vision of a terra fere incognita. This vision is strengthened simultaneously by a rediscovery of the Biblical unity of body and soul, by an awareness of the many-faceted dynamism of the Word, and by the nationalism evident even in under-developed countries.

At least two questions have been raised in this study. They suggest subjects for further inquiry. The first is, "What steps can be taken to promote the religious dance?" The answer, at this stage, is incomplete. We could envision experiments with rhythmic choirs, with more body-involving liturgies, or even with a religious ballet. However, it is our tentative suggestion that far better results will be reaped from experiments among closed monastic groups, among some non-Western Christian churches, among our own energy-loaded children, and among our own deaf. Why should the deaf, for example, be punished further because they cannot hear?

A second question that has been left unanswered is, "When should the Christian then worship his Creator in silent meditation? This most noble form of worship, recommended by and exemplified in our Lord Himself dare never be minimized. Indeed, it would be a monotonous Christian Church if it could worship God in only one way--movement. Our lack of reference to this devotional skill of quiet

meditation was never intended to reflect disapproval.

If the Western Church examines herself in all honesty, she will want to admit that her forms of worship have room for improvement and variety. But her discomfort at the outburst of religious dances among non-Western Christians need not frighten her. Armed with the Gospel, she not only welcomes such an adventure; she seeks it.

The following method was employed.

Seventy-five missionary sending agencies were chosen from the annual Directory of Missionary Sending Agencies published by the Missionary Research Library of New York. These agencies were chosen on the basis of (1) the number of missionaries, and (2) the type of countries represented. Thus, for example, missionary sending agencies which sent not less than six missionaries were omitted, again, agencies which sent men primarily to primitive or Indian areas (Africa, New Guinea, India, American Indians) received more letters per total membership than those agencies which sent missionaries to countries like Argentina, Chile, Brazil, Australia, etc., where the religious dance plays less of a role. It is obvious that both of the above choices were subjective in nature.

Letters were sent to the executive secretaries (or their equivalents) of each of these seventy-five missionary sending agencies, asking them for a given number of missionaries who could be interested as well as qualified in

APPENDIX I

QUESTIONNAIRE SENT TO 450 MISSIONARIES:

METHODOLOGY AND SELECTED REPLIES

The letter at the end of this appendix (I) was sent to 450 missionaries of seventy-five missionary sending agencies. The following method was employed.

A. Seventy-five missionary sending agencies were chosen from the Annual Directory of Missionary Sending Agencies published by the Missionary Research Library of New York. These agencies were chosen on the basis of (1) the number of missionaries, and (2) the type of countries represented. Thus, for example, missionary sending agencies which sent out less than six missionaries were omitted. Again, agencies which sent men primarily to primitive or Indian areas (Africa, New Guinea, India, American Indians) received more letters per total membership than those agencies which sent missionaries to countries like Argentina, Chile, Arabia, Australia, etc., where the religious dance plays less of a role. It is obvious that both of the above choices were subjective in nature.

Letters were sent to the executive secretaries (or their equivalents) of each of these seventy-five missionary sending agencies, asking them for a given number of missionaries who would be interested as well as qualified in

answering such a questionnaire. This "given number" was, again, a subjective choice based on (a) the total number of missionaries of that sending agency, and (b) the geographic area represented. All seventy-five agencies replied, giving the requested number of names. It should be noted, however, that no Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Christians were reached through this questionnaire.

B. The second step was that letters were sent to these 450 missionaries. Of these, 230 replied. Some of them admitted lack of sufficient qualification to answer with authority and recommended the names of other, better qualified men.

C. The third step was that letters were sent to these men, too.

D. Some of the missionaries replied several times.

The latter part of this appendix contains sections from some of these replies. Only fifty-four out of the 230 replies were chosen. All 230 of them were not quoted for the simple reason that they would become somewhat repetitious. An effort has therefore been made to choose those replies which were most representative of all the viewpoints expressed. Of the fifty-four replies chosen, forty-one of them are what we would call "positive," and eleven of them are "negative." This, however, is not a fair indication of the actual percentage. The figures are, if anything, reversed. It is difficult to make any type of chart in

evaluating the results of this questionnaire. The four questions on it were so interrelated and many of the replies included so many arguments on both sides, that any classification is all but impossible. Generally, it can be said that about two-thirds of the replies were negative, while one-third were positive. However, the object of the questionnaire was not to count which side had the most votes, but it was to examine the reasons behind those votes. It should also be added that the 150 "negative" replies not quoted in this appendix are by no means as dogmatic, explicit, and polemic, as the eleven negative letters quoted here. In fact, this reveals further the "reasons behind those votes;" for these 150 who were negatively minded toward the religious dance seemed to show a type of apathy or even a clear-cut, self-evident certainty that four simple "no's" constituted their entire reply. On the other hand, many of the letters listed as "favorable" toward the religious dance were by no means dogmatic, but repeatedly left the controversy hanging after listing the advantages and the dangers.

The first eleven letters quoted here are "negative." The senders' names have been withheld lest the bias of this thesis place these missionaries in too negative a light. Letters No. 12 and 13 are not from missionaries, but from a United States Representative of Far Eastern Cultural Affairs and from the representative of the Odori kyo (Japanese

"dancing religion") in the United States, respectively. The remaining answers are "positive." An effort was made originally at listing these according to "degrees of conviction" or even according to geographic areas. However, quite deliberately no particular sequence was followed, to make the appendix more varied and readable. Underlined words were also underlined in the original letters.

When some of these letters enumerate their replies from one to four, often adding even unfinished sentences, the four questions on the questionnaire are to be presupposed. Likewise, occasional references are made to types of dances indicated by numbers; such abbreviations refer to the second page of the questionnaire, which lists fifteen types of dances. All of the letters are in the possession of the writer of this thesis.

The following is a list of missionary sending agencies represented. The numbers on the right indicate the number of missionaries from that particular agency which received the questionnaire. When letters are quoted within the body of the thesis as well as in the appendix, the denominations to which these missionaries belong have been omitted deliberately to avoid the unscholarly temptation of pigeon-holing replies. Yet it need hardly be added that, in spite of this, some missionaries reveal their denominational affiliation with unmistakable clarity.

A. Non-denominational Missionary Sending Agencies

Bolivian Indian Mission (10)
 Ceylon and India General Mission and Pakistan Fellowship (5)
 China Inland Mission - Overseas Missionary Fellowship (10)
 Chinese Foreign Missionary Union (3)
 Evangelical Mission of South America (4)
 North Africa Mission (3)
 South Africa General Mission (10)
 South Seas Evangelical Mission (2)
 Sudan Interior Mission (10)
 Sudan United Mission (5)

B. Inter-denominational Missionary Sending Agencies

Africa Inland Mission (5)
 Berean Mission, Inc. (5)
 Central American Mission (5)
 Central Japan Pioneer Mission (2)
 Christ for Indonesia Fellowship, Inc. (1)
 Evangelical Alliance Mission (10)
 Gospel Furthering Fellowship, Inc. (2)
 International Child Evangelism Fellowship (10)
 International Missions, Inc. (5)
 Japan Evangelistic Band (3)
 Livingstone Pioneer Mission (4)
 Mahon Mission (2)
 Mexican Indian Mission (5)
 New Tribes Mission (10)
 Oriental Missionary Society (10)
 Regions Beyond Missionary Union (2)
 South American Indian Mission (10)
 United World Mission (3)
 World Gospel Mission (5)
 (Y.M.C.A. - 5)
 (Y.W.C.A. - 5)

C. Denominational Missionary Sending Agencies

American Advent Mission Society (2)
 General Conference of Seventh-Day Adventists (15)
 Missionary Society of the Anglican Church of Canada (5)
 National Council of the Protestant Episcopal Church (10)
 American Baptist Foreign Mission Society (6)
 Baptist Women's Missionary Society (3)
 Baptist Mid-Missions (8)
 Christian Missions, Inc. (3)
 Baptist Board of Foreign Missions (3)
 Southern Baptist Convention (10)
 Brethren in Christ Foreign Mission Board (3)

General Brotherhood Board, Foreign Mission Commission (4)
 Christian and Missionary Alliance, Foreign Missions Dept. (10)
 Church of God (3)
 Church of God Missions Board (12)
 American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions, Congregational (10)
 United Christian Missionary Society (Disciples) (4)
 Evangelical Board of Foreign Missions (4)
 Evangelical Mission Covenant Church of America (4)
 Evangelical and Reformed Board of International Missions (5)
 Evangelical United Brethren (4)
 Central Yearly Meeting of Friends (1)
 American Friends Board of Missions (4)
 Friends Foreign Missionary Society, Ohio (2)
 Friends of Africa Gospel Mission (1)
 Jehovah's Witnesses (5)
 American Lutheran Church (5)
 American Evangelical Lutheran Church (5)
 Church of the Lutheran Brethren of America (3)
 Evangelical Lutheran Church (10)
 Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod (10)
 Lutheran Church--Wisconsin Synod (5)
 United Evangelical Lutheran Church (4)
 United Lutheran Church of America (10)
 Congo Inland Mission, Mennonite (3)
 Mennonite Brethren Church of North America (4)
 Mennonite Church of North America (5)
 African Methodist Episcopal Church (4)
 The Methodist Church (20)
 Nazarene Dept. of Foreign Missions (5)
 General Council of the Assemblies of God (15)
 Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. (15)
 Christian Reformed Church (4)
 United Church of Canada (5)

Following is a copy of the letter sent to these missionaries.

Concordia Seminary
 801 De Mun Ave.
 St. Louis, Mo.
 (The Lutheran Church--Mo. Synod)
 December 15, 1960

I am a student at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Mo., and plan to go into foreign missions after graduate study in the areas of missions. I am writing to you as part of my research for my Master's thesis. The thesis is entitled: "The Possible Role of the Religious Dance in the

Indigenous Church."

Stated briefly, the question is, "Do we throw out the native dance completely, as a 'baby with diapers,' because it is associated with some immoral practices? Or can we perhaps, after 'cleaning it up,' use the dance as a vehicle, a means, through which facets even of the Christian message of Redemption can be communicated to primitive (or other) peoples?" Stated differently, the question is, "Why is it that, while the Church has done so much to use God's gifts of music, art, and drama, it has almost completely ignored or evaded the one art that combines these three aspects of music, art, and drama--the dance?"

I would therefore like to ask you these questions, hoping that this will not delay your missionary task:

1. Have you found objectionable dances in your area, and if so, wherein does the objection lie?
2. What did you do with that problem? (Forbid dancing, allow it on the side, encourage it, etc.)
3. Have you been able (perhaps after a "clean-up") to assimilate any elements of the local dance? (Rhythm, processional, liturgy, musical drama; see next page).
4. Even if you haven't been able to achieve the above (question three), do you envision possibilities in this area?

I would like to remind you that I am more concerned with the use of the dance as musical drama than with the usual question "Is it right or wrong to dance?" In case I have still not made this clear, I have listed on the next page some of the types of dances which I have in mind. Quite frankly, my concern with this art is that of using native, indigenous expressions to glorify God, and that only.

Your experience in this area, positive or negative, will be appreciated. If you know of any other sources or men to whom I could go, I would likewise appreciate it. May I thank you in advance for any efforts, and may the Lord of the Church bless you richly as you bring Him to your people.

Manfred Berndt

Facets of what anthropologists call "the sacred dance":

1. War dance (before or after)
2. Thanksgiving dances (harvest, birth, victory)
3. Exorcism dances (to drive out evil spirits, sickness)
4. Invocational dance (to compel the deity to listen)

5. Initiation dances (to secret societies, puberty, orders)
6. Mimetic dances (imitating animals, ghosts, trees, scenery)
7. Nature dances (describing nature phenomena, earthquakes, tempests, thunder, the seasons)
8. Dances of cosmic processes (creation; life hereafter; life among ghosts in the underworld; good vs. evil)
9. Courtship dances (to succeed in love)
10. Religious ecstasy dances ("auto-intoxication")
11. Fertility dances and rites (such as circumambulation)
12. The danse macabre (death dances, funeral "celebrations")
13. The dance of life (birth process; regeneration of life; "re-incarnation" themes)
14. Native ritual, ceremony, and liturgy
15. Processionals (straight, circular)
16. Antiphonal dances

(These are just some)

Address: Manfred Berndt
Box 57, Concordia Seminary
801 De Mun Ave.
St. Louis, Mo., U. S. A.

Enclosed is an addressed envelope. I had intentions of paying your postage fee, but since it is not possible for me to buy your stamps, I hope this does not inconvenience you too much. MB

* * * * *

Letter No. 1: Bolivia, South America

February 4, 1961

. . . The dance here is so connected with immorality, heathenism, and at the same time connected with the religious feasts of the Roman Catholic Church, that it is just one of the "old Things" of II Cor. 5:17 that pass away as "all things become new" in Christ Jesus. When one finds Jesus Christ as Saviour, the desires are new and they do not want anything more of the dance. I do not believe it could ever be used--or cleaned up in any way for use to the glory of God.

If you could be in one of our Indian Bible conferences and see a couple of hundred of Indian Christians worshipping God, their lives transformed by the power of Christ, while out in the street the drunken crowds are dancing by to the horrible music, you would understand how useless it would be to try to incorporate any part of it into the "new life in Christ Jesus." Better let it go with the "old things" that pass away.

(Name)

Letter No. 2: Mexico

February 28, 1961

. . . Personally, as a Bible-believing Christian, I find nothing which would warrant the dance, as such, a place in the Gospel of Christ. With this brief statement I find it much easier to answer your questions.

2. It is no "problem," in fact it does not even enter into our thinking. We find that with salvation (in the Biblical sense) almost automatically, comes a "putting off" of many previous habits and customs--such as native "Fiestas" smoking, drinking, gambling, etc. There is no "forbidding"--it becomes a natural desire to leave off the "unprofitable" things.

3. No. The "clean-up" comes from inside.

4. No.

In relation to the above, I readily understand your thought to elevate the dance to the status of "musical drama." Frankly, I find little sympathy or encouragement for this in the deep, historic channel of Christian (Bible centered) faith and practice.

(Name)

* * * * *

Letter No. 3: South Africa

February 24, 1961

. . . 1. Most of the dances are objectionable on grounds of indecency.

2. Personally I did nothing about dancing, but the Native Church for the above reasons forbade all forms of dancing.

3. Attempts to "clean-up" dances have proved futile in the past.

4. My experience in Africa leads me to the conclusion that such "art" has no place in worship or Christian life, and that in no sense can it be considered as "native, indigenous expressions to glorify God."

I am interested that you plan to go into foreign missions after graduate work, but am somewhat appalled at your choice of a thesis for your Master's degree, "The Possible Role of the Religious Dance in the Indigenous Church." I can only hope that if and when you reach the Mission

Field you will be able to contribute something more profitable for the Indigenous Church than the re-introduction of something that has been banned by African spiritual leaders. On the other hand I must admit that among the thousands of so-called "Christians sects" which have arisen in Africa, the dance has a prominent place, as does polygamy, beer-drinking and promiscuous sexual excesses. For that reason there is a clear-cut division between the practices of genuine Christian Churches and the "Sects" which have simply added a few "Christian" ornaments to sheer paganism.

My letter may appear unsympathetic and prejudiced, but I am genuinely concerned about the future of the Indigenous Church in Africa which needs to be delivered from relapse into paganism on the one hand and from emphasis on false values on the other.

Africa needs the Gospel, and the Church which grows out of Gospel preaching needs Bible teaching more than anything else. . . .

"If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. Old things have passed away. All things have become new." The dance definitely belongs to the past life and has no place in the new life.

(Name)

* * * * *

Letter No. 4: Djakarta, Indonesia

January 27, 1961

. . . "For the wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord," Romans 6:23.

.

1. Do we throw out the native dance completely? Yes. Why? In Scripture we find Jesus singing, writing, praying, healing, helping, preaching, but never do we find him dancing. He is our Lord and if he did not dance why should we?

Nowhere in the New Testament church can you find them dancing. The Bible is our church's rule book so we just go by that and the dance is left out.

2. One might ask why is the dance left out? It is a part of the world. "Love not the world neither the things that are in the world." If we become Christians, Scripture says, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new

creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new," II Corinthians 5:17. We no longer need the dance to satisfy that emotional part of us. Jesus satisfies us.

Personally, I wanted to go to Hollywood and be a dancer as my life work so in school I learned all I could and practiced at home but when I was saved--when I believed Jesus died for my sins, that he was buried, that he rose again, and that He is now in Heaven watching my every move--life became alive to me. There were so many other things that satisfied me and brought glory to the Lord that I forsook my dancing. In teacher training once the girls wanted me to dance for them. So I did after I had become a Christian; but immediately I knew I had failed the Lord, for I had been trying to win them to the Lord and after I had danced for them it was very difficult to talk to them about the Lord. They were not interested in my Lord.

3. Do you find objectionable dances in your area? Yes. The place and the men who go, the manner which it is done and almost anything you want to say about it.

4. What do you do with the problem? Present Christ and get them busy doing the Lord's work and they will not be satisfied with any part of the dance.

5. Is there any hope as far as you are concerned for the dance? No. If you knew the evil mind and the practice behind some of love dances and social dances here you would have to stand on II Corinthians 6:17,18 with us and have no part in them.

(Name)

* * * * *

Letter No. 5: Liberia

January 16, 1961

. . . I may say we do not have much trouble with that sort of thing among our Christians; we have not had to "forbid" it as you say, because most of our stronger Christians do not seem to practice it very much. . . .

.

Personally I cannot see any worthwhile benefit in trying to simulate any part of any dance in Christian circles. We have so many fine things to teach the people from the Word of God that, it seems to me, would take most of our time. Just what purpose could be served in preaching the

gospel through any part of a dance I cannot see. Perhaps I am old fashioned or do not see your point, but that's my viewpoint now.

(Name)

* * * * *

Letter No. 6: Tanganyika

January 23, 1961

. . . I have been in East Africa for over 30 years and have worked with both Bantu and Nilotic tribes.

Let me say positively that we do not encourage any kind of dance among our converts as all their dances, whether in connection with death--Nilotic--or circumcision--Bantu--are all part of their former heathen life; and I feel that we have a much more positive approach to the spread of the Gospel of Jesus, which is our job, than to take time to attempt some "cleaning up," as you put it, of their dances.

It is true that King David of Bible history danced before the Lord, but I would say here that Israel was surrounded by the heathen Canaanites who used the dance in their "high places" and worshipped the Sun god amid their obscene rites. Israel finally apostasied from the worship of Jehovah as they leaned towards the heathen ways.

Before Israel went across Jordan many thousands were slain because of their joining heathen dancing and rites. Safety for our Christians, we believe, is to steer clear of these things that might recall or remind them or entice them from the ways of Christianity. . . .

(Name)

* * * * *

Letter No. 7: India

February 7, 1961

. . . . 2. We do not have to do anything with the dance problem. When a person gives his heart to Christ he just leaves the Hindu idea of the dance, for he is ashamed of it and its relationship. He has good reasons for his attitude.

3. I do not see any prospect to clean up the Hindu or Moslem dance. As you look at it you can see the power of evil manifested in a way that is not seen in the dance in other lands. This thing is certainly not only questionable but definitely evil. One look would answer your question and further inquiry would certainly strengthen your judgment. This is my answer to question four also.

.

The dance had a small part in the worship of some people in the Old Testament. But in the New Testament it is not mentioned. The great spiritual advance immediately after Pentecost, in the time of Martin Luther, John Wesley, Moody, and even now with Billy Graham, seems to have no need or place for the dance. As a Lutheran, you know the place that this had in early Lutheranism.

(Name)

* * * * *

Letter No. 8: India

January 25, 1961

. We use the Drama to tell the Christmas story, and the flannelgraph is a real help in teaching.

Do I envision possibilities of the use of the dance in this area? My answer would be no. I can see one possibility in the fact that a study of the Indian Dance would no doubt give a person a very good background and insight into Hinduism. This could always be used in personal witnessing, especially with the Hindu. If you have a good knowledge of their religion, customs, dances, etc., it automatically stirs a real interest with them to listen to you.

(Name)

* * * * *

Letter No. 9: Angola,
Portuguese W. Africa

February 10, 1961

. In answer to your questions I would like to say I believe it is impossible to present the facts of the Christian message of Redemption by means of the heathen dance, by cleaning it up. If you are going to the mission field for the purpose of teaching music, art, drama, and the dance, and not to win souls to Jesus Christ, I want to ask you to prayerfully reconsider your call to the mission field. We are living in a day and age when we need men who are filled with the Holy Spirit and burning zeal to win men and women to Christ.

Permit me to cite an example of what happened in an area near our work, which is work by a mission of a liberal persuasion. Some of their workers felt that there was nothing wrong with the dance. Now these students, as you can imagine, were considered the cream of the crop, men to whom the future church would be looking for leadership. It wasn't long before they were dancing in the villages as the

missionary had taught them, and it wasn't long after that that they were dancing naked with a blanket wrapped around them. I am sure I don't have to tell you what happened to the testimony of that mission so far as the Christian message of Redemption is concerned.

When you say you are "concerned with the use of the dance as musical drama . . . using native heathen dances to glorify God and that only," I feel that you have forgotten the Scriptural teaching as to how we are to glorify God, and I believe you're obligated to face the question, "Is it right or wrong?"

Sorry to be blunt, but I have seen the damage that these socially minded, liberal missions have done to hinder the cause of Christ, and to spoil all the work their predecessors have done. Are you really born again? If so, preach Christ and Him crucified. That is what man needs, not the heathen dance cleaned up. John Wesley said, "If I had 300 men who feared nothing but God, hated nothing but sin, and were determined to know nothing among men but Jesus Christ, and Him crucified, I would set the world on fire."

(Name)

* * * * *

Letter No. 10: North Borneo

February 13, 1961

. There are, . . . certain "segregated" dances practiced in this area consisting mainly of posturing, balancing, etc. resembling gymnasium exercises more than anything else. To such we find little objection so long as carried on moderately under christian circumstances.

Frankly, however, we find little occasion for using any such means for conveying the "christian message," and object most strongly to the introduction of any pagan practices into the church with or without "cleaning-up" either in addition to or as a substitute for biblical practices, doctrines, or commandments. Far too much of that has gone on already as is evidenced by the mass, infant baptism, purgatory, sprinkling, veneration of relics, images, saints, Easter, Christmas, the substitution of a pagan "sabbath" for the Lord's day, and many other unscriptural doctrines and practices carried on by various groups.

We find the simple, unadorned gospel still to be the "power of God unto salvation," . . .

I believe that every person drawn by Christ (whether

he recognizes it or not), down deep in his heart, feels the same way and will really be satisfied only by a complete break with the very unsatisfactory past and a completely new life in Christ with new pleasures, aspirations, and responsibilities untainted by paganism, superstition, or carnal desires, "which war against the spirit." At least, that is the theory on which we operate and for which we find considerable support in Scripture.

(Name)

* * * * *

Letter No. 11: Bolivia,
South America

March 7, 1961

. . . The Guarani Indians with whom I am associated have but one dance and that has little connection if any to their religion. It is associated only with their drinking feasts at which time they usually choose the one whom they want for their wife or husband. There is nothing but vile-ness and filth connected with it, and when a person accepts by faith the Lord Jesus Christ as his personal Savior from sin, there is no need to preach to him that he should not participate in the dance or drinking feast. He knows these things are sin and so just leaves them. These things remain as tremendous temptations to them. I see no possibility whereby it might be "cleaned up" to make it an aid in their spiritual life. First of all, I do not know how you could go about cleaning it up. As for a dance, it appears to us to be the least offensive of any dances we have ever seen. It consists of the group forming a huge circle and with hands on the shoulders of the one ahead, going around the circle. At first it appears that they are doing little more than walking, but actually it is a tricky rhythmic step. However, the question is not what I see in the dance, but what they see in it. It fascinates and holds them and leads them into the very vilest of sin. Since it is such a temptation, it would serve only to lead them back into their old way of life from which they earnestly desire to be free. It would have precisely the same effect as if a person encouraged a member of Alcoholics Anonymous to just have a "little" drink just to be sociable. You know what the end result would be.

Perhaps you may think I am very narrow in my outlook. I am simply facing facts. You may say, "but you have never tried this." That is so, and I do not intend to. I want to take away every possible stumbling block I can. Such ideas are not new. I would refer you to the way that the Roman Catholic Church has attempted for centuries to assimilate

various groups by making compromises, that is, combining the heathen festivals with their own "holy days." I would suggest you read Hyslop's "Two Babylons." They have failed to Christianize the heathen by these practices. A case in point is the devil dance in the highlands of Bolivia during the week preceding Lent. The devils are dressed in elaborate costumes, each one with a representation of the sun god on his chest, the sun being the deity worshipped by the Incas. While the dancing lasts from Saturday afternoon until Wednesday (Ash Wednesday), on Sunday morning each dancing group enters the cathedral and they present themselves to the Virgin Mary with the words, "Here we are you little devil children." In no way can this be considered Christian. It is simply heathenism under a different name. We are not concerned with the cloak, for clothes do not make the man. Man needs a heart change and incorporating things from his old life will not give him a new life.

.....

... we must not be fooled into changing the message. There can be no substitute for the new birth in Christ through the Holy Spirit nor for the blood of Christ which cleanses us from all sin. If you have entered into that personal relationship with Christ through placing your confidence in what He accomplished on Calvary's cross when He died in your place, you know what I mean. There is no substitute for the message. Let us be sure that our methods have His approval whether or not they have the approval of men; for He alone can bless through the instrumentality of that which we surrender first to Him. And it is He who saves, not the method.

(Name)

* * * * *

Letter No. 12: Bombay, India

April 13, 1961

... You have chosen a most interesting topic. ...

In interpreting my comments, you should remember that my attitudes are basically Christian in that I believe in the eventual mutual understanding of mankind through mutual understanding of emotional responses and needs and so forth--i.e., through "love" (which is at once too simple and too complicated a term for me to attempt to discuss or define). But, further, I believe that many of the Christian missionaries have done such a terrible job of crushing natural folk lore impulses in their often blind and bigotted drive to blot out every speck of anything which they themselves

do not understand, it might well have been better had they left the happy Heathens alone, and happy.

My job is to build up folk dancing, or as we call it in India to avoid using the term "dance," rhythmic activities. I do this, or have done this, building up in 23 countries of Asia plus a lot of others. I use material of many different nations, material which is as foreign to those who learn from me as it is to myself. This is not only a profession with me, it is in a way a Mission also.

Now in answer to your numbered questions:

1. I find no dance, which emanates as an expression of the folklore culture of the people, "objectionable" whatsoever.

2. If I did find such a "problem," and mind you I still do not admit I would ever find such, I should in any event not forbid anything but rather suggest alternate courses of action which would be more profitable, enjoyable, etc. Where does anyone, Missionary or otherwise, get off to forbid recreation?

3. Many indigenous dances can easily be adapted to use in many areas, even areas well outside the area of origin. Based on sound recreation principles, this has been accomplished with resounding success in a great many areas of the world. (It has been my great privilege to have some part in this work.)

4. See answer to question 3.

If your concern is to investigate the use of dancing to "glorify God" then you should first know whether your "god" enjoys activities which add meaning to the lives of the peoples. If so your conclusion should inevitably be towards the positive in regard to dancing and religious scruples.

Rickey Holden,
American Specialist for Far
Eastern Cultural Affairs

* * * * *

Letter No. 13: Japan

January 16, 1961

(The following letter was not written by a missionary, but by a "counter-missionary," a representative of the Japanese odori kyo movement in Chicago, Illinois.)

. . . Our religion "The Tensho Kotai Jingu Kyo" widely known as the "Dancing Religion" was founded in 1945 by the "Self-ordained redeemer" Sayo Kitamura.

She was born in Hizumi, a quiet mountain village in Yamaguchi Prefecture, mainland of Japan. Amid cheerful, uneventful surroundings, the fourth daughter of Chozo Ekimoto lived a spirited existence. Called Sayo as a child, she enjoyed climbing trees and fighting with her playmates if she caught them in a falsehood. Since her father opposed the higher education of the female, she attended a private institute for three years, instead of the usual high school.

In November 1920, according to custom, through arrangements made by Sayo's brother-in-law, Seinoshin Kitamura, a resident of Tabuse, finally took a bride. His mother, the widow Take, had already rejected five aspirants and the sixth faced conditions said to be most unendurable. The widow Take had a system. Each "aspirant" or bride would be hired into the family as a daughter-in-law just before the autumn harvest. The girl was promptly divorced when the season was over, without paying for her services. She was urged by sympathetic friends and her mother-in-law to return home. Sayo persisted however, and continued to work from early morning until dark in the field in hard labor.

Sayo stayed on . . . giving birth to a son called "Yoshito" in 1922. Her mother-in-law, refusing to pay for the midwife's services compelled Sayo to make all the arrangements herself, without any help or assistance, even to the cutting of the umbilical cord. The husband, very timid, remained in the background . . . not much help to Sayo.

The mother-in-law passed away, at the age of ninety. Sayo cared for her tenderly until her demise. It was the example she set in her village that impressed her followers. Since She worked like a man, She began to dress like one. The people of Tabuse took pride in the robust figure of a lady carrying a bag of rice weighing 133 lbs. When she rode a bicycle, wearing a mompei (trouser), they talked and said it was typical of her . . . always doing something different. Since she was a pioneer in modern farming, and the first person in her district to use motor power for the threshing of rice, the simple farmers regarded her with awe. She served in the social and community organizations . . . and her village came to know her well . . . as a woman of spirit, wit, and character.

The burning of her barn by an arsonist, followed by periods of prayer and fasting, marked the beginning of Her religious exercises in 1942, had continued through 1943, and

into 1944. She began to receive inspiration from God. On the 4th of May of that year a most mysterious phenomenon occurred in Her body. For on that day a spirit entered and resided in Her body, and began to communicate with Her, prompting Her to work for world peace and the salvation of mankind.

On July 22, 1945, she invited friends and neighbors to Her home and delivered sermons to them for the first time. Since then, She has continued to give sermons to them every day to those who came to Her home. The followers increased in numbers day by day and they began to call Her "Ogamisama" (The Great God).

In 1947, this religion was registered formally with the Government as required by law. She gave it the name "Tensho Kotai Jingu Kyo" which means the teaching of the absolute God of the universe. This religion became widely known throughout Japan as the "Dancing Religion" because the followers of this religion do extemporaneous ecstasy dance. Ogamisama teaches Her people to dance the natural dance of religion, the true expression for happy feeling toward God.

Although our religion may be called the "Dancing Religion" the main object of this religion is to establish world peace.

In 1952, Ogamisama made Her first evangelic tour to the Hawaiian Islands. Early in 1954, once again She left Japan for the United States and continued on with Her evangelic tour. While in the United States, She gave sermons at various universities, such as: Harvard University, Columbia University, University of Illinois, and the University of California.

.....

Walter Okawa

* * * * *

Letter No. 14: New Guinea

February 10, 1961

... The title of your Master's Thesis fascinates me. I feel that your study can make a major contribution to the cause of World Missions. ...

The "dance" problem was an ugly one for me to deal with immediately after World War II. During the long lapse of missionary activities during the war, the various dances had been revived. It had become an obsession with a good 50% of the area I was to serve. The people would dance all night

and sleep all day. Gardens were being neglected and malnutrition was in evidence among the children.

I personally am not opposed to dancing--that is, in moderation and good taste. This unfortunately is difficult for a primitive society to do. They, for some reason or another, must go to extremes or break with it completely. This, to my way of thinking, is regrettable. Many of the dances I have witnessed were a work of art and precision. Upon questioning some older men concerning the moral of the dance, I could find nothing objectionable in it. I firmly believe that I was given a true evaluation. Nevertheless, when I proposed to these same men that such dances should be encouraged rather than have them lost to their culture, I met opposition from our Christian people. It was like poking around in a hornet's nest. It finally resulted in a large conference to discuss "native dancing." Later, even papers were prepared by the native leaders to be discussed at church conferences.

In short, their findings went something like this:
 1) "The white man dances for entertainment and pleasure,--we must dance with a purpose." 2) "White man can do things in moderation--we can not." 3) "White man's dances are not tied in with their religion--ours all are in some way or another. The time may come when those ties to the past will have been severed, but not for many generations to come." One man, a very intelligent native, went so far as to make this statement: "We have no good dances." "Some are less objectionable than others, but one dance leads to another. Step by step we sink lower and lower into the filthy past from which we have emerged. Don't force us back to that again." Another respectable man made this confession to me in private. The gist of it went something like this--"When the drum begins to beat out our old rhythms, every slumbering evil instinct in me is awakened. I recall all my old sexual experiences I had in the past, and if those drums were permitted to continue to beat, this man whom you respect as a Christian would soon become a disgrace to God and man."

In view of the native's own evaluation of it, I have tried to leave the matter in their hands. I feel that in such matters, the indigenous peoples themselves will have to make the decision.

It is my secret hope that something of the dance can be salvaged to enrich their drab existence. Already I have noted new dances developing that no one seems to object to. One dance that stands out in my mind at present enacts the history of Lutheran Mission ships pulling into harbor, dropping anchor, passengers disembark, cargo is discharged, patients being loaded, anchor raised and it sails again.

Really very cleverly done--without words, one could not distinguish it from any other native dance. Perhaps in time, the objections weighing so heavily in the balance now will be overcome. At least I hope so.

In the Finschhafen area of our mission, dances are part and parcel of church dedications etc. My people from the Salamana area object strenuously to this practice, but to the Finschhafen people, joy can be expressed most effectively through a dance.

F. S. Scherle

* * * * *

Letter No. 15: New Guinea

January 24, 1961

. . . I appreciate the task you are undertaking. Too many of our older, former missionaries did, as you say, "throw out the baby" as well as the wash water. There seems to me to be no valid reason why the dance cannot be used by people other than the O.T. Jews to worship and glorify God.

.

The Madang district of the church in N.G. forbade dancing. It was the native leaders who took the step, not the missionaries, but the attitude of the missionaries was probably known to be strongly negative at that time.

Since the Australian government encouraged dancing for special occasions, it has continued and the church has rather reluctantly set a short time each year (a week or so) in which dancing could be done.

. . . In other sections of the Ev. Lutheran Church of N.G. the welcoming dance is used for important guests or occasions.

John F. Sievert

* * * * *

Letter No. 16: South Africa

January 1, 1961

. . . My mission area is urban and the people I serve are such a detribalized mixture. . . .

1. My Tanganyikan informants say that Christians in this area abstain from heathen dances--This prohibition is within the domain of the indigenous Church--They feel that

the Christian interpretation of the place of death, birth, fertility, marriage, puberty, etc. would make participation impossible. . . .

2. My Zulu Christian informants no longer have the problem of participation. Their problem is similar to the problem in the States--the group is much detribalized and the question is whether or not to "give." The mission and native leaders frown on it somewhat--the young people almost all give in, however. The situation in Basutoland would be roughly similar among the Paris Mission Church groups, although a dance for wedding processional to and from church is used--also old dances with a joy theme.

3. My Tanganyikan informants have three Christian dances:

- a) Nativity dance--performed in a circle with song.
- b) Death dance--joy theme--with songs and clapping of hands.
- c) Christmas Feti dance--young people dance in procession from village to village--request food at various stopping places--sing songs celebrating Christmas Festival.
- d) My Sesnthe informants use the above mentioned wedding processional dance, also after weddings, at the customary feast. However, the phonograph and modern Kivela and jive are replacing older and more collective forms and these are somewhat frowned upon by Church leaders.
- e) I've observed a choir director execute a modified simple dance as he directs. A Nyasa custom.
- f) Rhythm is employed by a young S. School teacher in his teaching methods to heighten the impact of a story and dramatize it. The teacher and pupils almost spontaneously lapse into this when the material presented calls for such handling--a kind of Greek chorus and leader arrangement simply done, but effective. Much native rote teaching makes use of this method. I've observed it in Zululand and Basutoland.

4. I'd like to see more done in the area--but unfortunately in S.A. detribalization precludes much being done. However in time (perhaps) Christians themselves will introduce some dance forms. They must come from the people themselves.

C. F. Ellerton

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Letter No. 17: Zunis, New Mexico

January 17, 1961

. . . Traditionally, and I might say currently, the attitude of our Holland-descended missionaries of the Christian Reformed denomination has been that the Zuni dances (as well as those of the Navajos, among whom we have about 20 missionaries) are of the Devil and are the most complete symbol of paganism to be found in the culture. Even before coming here myself, I had heard of persons occupying the house in which I now live being driven nearly out of their minds by the all-night throbbing of drums and chanting. Mission personnel who found themselves on the road where a dance was in progress just looked straight ahead as they rushed by and ignored the whole proceeding.

Coming to Zuni as the mission school principal, I took the stand immediately that we have to start where the Zunis are, not where we wish they were. The first fall I got as close to every aspect of the great annual Shalako celebration as I possibly could. I went into the Shalako houses and stood watching the dancers by the hour. I tried to feel and understand as well as I might what the Zunis were feeling and understanding, summoning to my mind impressions I had received from the extensive anthropological literature about them.

Curiously, at this point our native evangelist dropped in to discuss a school problem as I was writing this. He just left, after discussing the problem raised by your questionnaire, which he looked over. He . . . has been connected with our mission nearly 25 years; loves and respects his own people, is greatly respected by them (secretary of the tribe, chairman of educational committee, officer of stockmen's association, etc.), and brings the Gospel to them (only a few come but always a few) every Sunday evening in the chapel.

In Zuni we use the term "song" and the term "dance" interchangeably when used in the sense you suggest by "the sacred dance." Secular native songs or dances are practically non-existent. He told me that about 1931 a young white man (raised in Zuni, his father having been the first "Dutch" missionary to Zuni) by the name of . . . was serving as interpreter for the Dutch missionary. . . . He went to the Zuni governor of that time, Lalio, and asked him to work out some Christian songs in the Zuni motif, which he did. I don't know whether these were incorporated into the Christian worship services, but they were taught to the school children in the Mission school. He said they were written out and shown to him, but that they were so Zuni with just the words "Jesus" and "salvation" and so on put

in here and there that he couldn't do anything with them. He said the Zuni people didn't like that and they turned them around and used them to make fun of the Christians. When children from our school would be going home from school, the others would sing some parts of those songs to make them ashamed. So the whole experiment died out quite soon.

Then we talked about what might happen if somebody really genuinely found himself responding to a Christian experience in a Zuni music pattern. He said he thought that probably would happen some time when more children became Christian and some of them would want to express themselves that way. He said he couldn't do it himself because he never had the urge to sing about things that way, but he knew there were others who did and they would have to make the songs. They have come out of the heart.

I asked him to help me understand the appeal or fascination or whatever it was that kept Zuni people standing or sitting by the hour watching something that never seemed to be getting anywhere. (Pueblo dancing is a highly formal, non-ecstatic kind of dancing.) He said when he was young the older men told him to just sit and keep watching and thinking and pretty soon the gods would come and take you away maybe to Ko-hlualawe (Village of the Gods where the haba, the departed ones, live). They told me to just sit still and watch, he said, and if my thoughts were right, I would go. But, he said, "I guess I was too foolish for that; after a half hour I'd get tired of sitting there and go away!"

I suspect that some form of hypnosis figures strongly in the spectator's experience in the Pueblo dancing. I've learned and sung with drums a Zuni song and have felt something of the desire to go on and on and on with it, tho' that's no different from any song when one first learns it. The visually induced aspect of hypnosis mentioned is probably not too much different from that induced in a church service where the audience stares at a preaching figure, often elevated to an eye-fatiguing level; the incidence of complete somnification observable in many churches suggests a high degree of effectiveness there, too.

I hope you can sort your answers out of this ramble. Before I quit, a comment on your declaration, "my concern with this art is that of using native, indigenous expressions to glorify God. . . ." Although our experience in Zuni is no doubt somewhat different from what one might expect to find in a culture not so deeply in the shadow of American culture, yet I believe that you had better not

count too much upon your own engineering to accomplish the results you may desire in somebody else's culture. If you succeed, you certainly could not call the results "indigenous." I think that if we faithfully mediate Christ to those He makes our neighbors by showing them the kind of love He showed to us, then His Spirit will lead them into all truth, including the development of liturgical forms and religious expressions of the peculiar complexion for which He bred and cultured them. The Zunis don't use their dances to proselytize; I doubt we can bend them to that use. Although all the didacticism of our Western forbears wants to rise to the attempt, I doubt we can make more than auxiliary use of the dance or any of its aspects. There must be some use we can make of it. . . .

Stanley E. Koning

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Letter No. 18: Navajo Indians

February 16, 1961

. . . I did spend fifteen years with the Navajo people and was on the team that finished the translation of the Navajo New Testament in 1956. . . .

Your question is a legitimate one, that is, "Why use music and art and drama and completely ignore the dance?" However, I see very little in the Navajo dance that we could use in anywise either directly or indirectly in worship or Christian experience. Basically, there is nothing offensive in the Navajo Squaw dance; the dance is merely a shuffle to the beating of a drum. There is no bodily contact, with the exception of the female dancer's hand on the back of the male dancer's belt. The dance is primarily a curing ceremony, but of course it is worshipping the animistic gods that they respect. The tragedy of the dance is the immorality that goes on away from the dance circle. I feel there would be very little interest in this ceremony if the sex attraction were eliminated. I cannot conceive of the Navajo being interested in the dance if you take the worship to the spirits and the immorality out of the dance. Tribal leaders have from time to time given talks before and during the dance, at the invitation of the dancers, warning of the undesirable by-products of the ceremony. However, I have never found a missionary or native tribal leader yet who felt that these talks did any good.

My wife has put Scripture to music using the rhythm of the dance and the system of the Navajo language. This the people like; it is an adaptation of their native culture and music system, and is tied in, of course, with the songs that

they sing at the ceremonies.

I feel much harm has been done by blatant condemnation by certain missionaries of the dance, with no effort to understand or appreciate the religion and culture of the people they are endeavoring to reach for the Lord.

Turner Blount

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Letter No. 19: American Baptist
Foreign Mission Society, Congo

1961

. . . There is one kind of dancing and singing used by them (Hindus) that has been adopted by Christians. It is called "Sankirtan." A group, large or small, starts out with a few musical instruments which they can carry and a leader sings the first verse as a solo while all slowly circle around. Then all join in that verse. It becomes antiphonal singing, as the leader sings one line and the others repeat it, perhaps several times, then all together in a sort of chorus. They increase in force and volume, also speed, both with the singing and dancing, until all are in a frenzy of enthusiasm and fervor. After a slowing down another verse is begun and again all work up to a high pitch of ecstasy. I have known older people to come from this in tears as they expressed their deep spiritual glow from the celebration. This is more often done out of doors, often like a procession serenading the houses.

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Among the Santals antiphonal singing had been used and it too, often accompanied their folk dances. On Christmas eve, New Year's eve, and Easter, groups sing all night as they go from home to home or village to village with their musical instruments and sing antiphonally their praises to their Heavenly Father.

While dancing is not a part of the regular worship service often when they would gather after the regular worship service, especially at festivals, one group would sing while another danced. The men and women do not dance together, so it would be the men singing while the women danced or the women singing while the men danced.

Many of the pastors sit while they deliver their message, as did the leaders of old.

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No kinds of dances remotely approach the church work. The leaders have known only the immoral dances of the past, and see the new European as of the same calibre, and so are violently opposed to all such things.

A few hymns are growing up among the people, but usually they want to forget the old music, too, for it was so deeply connected with the old sinful dancing. Thus for the most part, the hymn tunes used are those brought from America and Europe. . . .

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Letter No. 20: Andhra Pradesh

January 20, 1961

With reference to your questionnaire on the religious dance, the following. . . .

1. Simple village folk also occasionally do group dances, usually women. They may sing a hymn while dancing in a circle and setting the rhythm with a sort of castanet held in the hand. This is a rare thing. Very few people have seen it. I think that one might be able to introduce such dancing into the more unsophisticated village congregations without much effort. While singing a Christian hymn (Indian melody) the congregation could dance.

2. India is a country with a highly evolved culture, advanced beyond the stage of primitive group dances. Sophistication is rapidly penetrating the villages. Among town people and town congregations I have not noted an urge to express religious feeling through the dance. Indeed, the ideal form of worship for the Hindu, if I understand it correctly, is the opposite of dancing. I would say that religious dancing affirms the body as part of the personality which is worshipping God. The Hindu ideal is to negate and be free of the body in worship. The body is conceived as an evidence of the temporal delusion of individuality which prevents one from realizing his essential unity and identity with the Over-soul. Dancing might be an obstacle to worship in pure Hinduism, in which bodily inactivity is the road to worship. It is difficult to generalize because Hinduism encompasses so much and so much that seems conflicting. I don't think that the bulk of our adult Christians would take very well to group dancing as a form of worship, largely for the same reasons our American members would object, although the Indian Christians would not think of dancing as a somewhat morally loose activity. In India, of course, mixed social dancing would be frowned upon by many, but dancing itself is acceptable. In many a program, young girls will do a dance, often in imitation of the

dances performed by Indian movie actresses on the screen. Nobody has disapproved in my hearing.

3. Last of all I will venture my own opinion about religious dance. I know you are more interested in information than in opinion, but here it is for what it is worth.

I see the dance as being a form of expression belonging to a primordial stage of human development. I don't mean that it is something later outgrown, but something lost. Primitive people and children, unsophisticated, break spontaneously into dance or enter into it deliberately, as an organized game. I believe that such dancing indicates a wholesome state of individual and social integration, a state which lacks any great degree of self-consciousness, a state in which the perception of reality and the consciousness are on a profound rather than a purely rational level. Such dancing indicates a stage before the sub-conscious life of the individual or group has been rigidly suppressed. Religious dance at such a level would be very appropriate and meaningful.

As both the individual and the group develop, in this fallen race and marred creation, the sub-conscious life is increasingly repressed and disciplined in order to conform to a more or less artificial system. The profound level of life is sub-merged or given a stilted outlet. Man loses his wholeness, his naturalness, and becomes self-conscious. Man loses the capacity to perceive and experience reality as a whole. Life and personality become fragmented. True dancing belongs to a time when men are still close to the angel with the flaming sword outside of Eden. We in the West built our life on the conceit that man is purely rational. David dancing before the Lord is ludicrous or embarrassing to us.

But a third stage is conceivable. In this stage man would be reintegrated (or redeemed, if you will). He would become in Christ a whole personality once again. He would be not simply a rational being, but a whole human being. In this state the repressed sub-conscious life would be granted expression by the conscious life through sublimation into the new Christ-life. Man would be freed of self-consciousness, all the elements in him would make one whole integrated person. This new being in Christ would be able, among other things, to freely, beautifully and meaningfully worship God with one personality which compromises instinct, emotion, reason, body. Dancing would again be a natural act, an act of worship, a social act, an act of individual self-expression.

Joel H. Mayer

Letter No. 21: North Nigeria,
West Africa

February 22, 1961

. . . 'I have discussed the matter with a group of Evangelists who are here for Bible School, and the general answers are as follows.

1. There are objectionable dances in this tribe (the Sura, and other adjoining tribes). Some lead to immorality, some modern ones include cursing and reviling.

2. The Christian Church here has forbidden the harmful types, but encouraged harmless ones among Christians only. In most cases the dances themselves are harmless enough, but the fact that beer is drunk before, during and after the dance turns it into a snare. Also, when heathen and Christians dance together there is often a tendency for the Christians to compromise and to go the way the heathen do.

It has been the custom for many years for Christians to continue with the old dances but without any beer drinking. Of late, words have been introduced to the rhythmic dancing which have Christian significance, praise to God, warning to backsliders and unbelievers, and so on. Most people feel that this is good, and has had good effect in leading some to repentance. Many young people have been attracted to the Christian faith because of the Christians' dance which is "different." It is common to see great crowds of heathen watching when the Christians do their dance.

Chrishine H. Cheal

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Letter No. 22: Nigeria

February 11, 1961

. . . let me say a few words about some of the statements in paragraph two of your letter. I'm pretty sure that your statements are innocent enough, yet they imply an attitude toward missionary work that I hope you'll be careful to keep out of your thesis. The statements are "Do we throw out . . ." and "Or can we perhaps. . . ." The objectionable part of these statements is in the word we. The thing that I'm sure you'll not want to imply is that it is we missionaries who are to do the deciding as to what can and what cannot remain in the culture of the Christian church of a mission land. Yet, sadly enough, this seems to be a very prevalent attitude among uninformed missionaries and has led the peoples of many mission lands to feel that "becoming a Christian" is synonymous with "becoming Westernized" or obeying the missionaries regardless of one's own convictions

or such like. . . .

We found the prevalent attitude among the missionaries in Nigeria (our section, at least) to be: If in doubt about a thing (such as dancing), first condemn it or seriously question it, then teach against it, then let the native Christians make their own choice. This, I contend, is not a proper attitude: it puts the missionary in the position of a judge, gives him and the nationals the impression that the missionary's culture and way of worshipping God is superior to anything that is in or could develop from the indigenous culture; it gives the national the impression that he has to conform to the missionary's standards in order to be acceptable to God (the missionary himself may actually feel this way consciously or unconsciously), and leads to many other impressions that put the Gospel of God in a bad light.

The result of this kind of attitude is that all forms of dancing are condemned by the indigenized (it is far from indigenous) church in imitation of the attitude of the missionaries which they have learned to consider more important than any convictions of their own or anything that they find in the Bible. . . . It is interesting, however, that the strictness with which this ban is observed by sincere Christians decreases as the distance between the native congregation and the nearest mission station increases. Even near the mission stations, however, it is common knowledge (to all but most of the missionaries) that the majority of the Christians regularly attend the tribal dances in spite of the church restriction.

We went into an area where there had never been a mission station before. Quite a number of the people of the tribe we lived among had heard and accepted the Gospel in nearby language areas and carried it to their own people. They had no hymns in their own language, and so proceeded to produce their own using both native words and music. When we came to live among them, we encouraged the continued use and production of these hymns and did all we could to keep from condemning their culture or any element within it and to give the impression that it is their culture, not ours, that God wants to use to reach them. With the confidence that they would not be condemned by me, therefore, the Christians, led by the village evangelists, began to develop monthly Christian fellowship dances employing their Christian hymns and many (though not all) of their own dance forms. The Christian leaders deliberately set themselves to exclude objectionable features from these dances and they were generally begun by a word of explanation concerning the reason for the dances, and begun and ended with prayer. The

"church" with some rather strong pressure from missionaries behind the scenes condemned and forbade these dances.

Now to your questions:

1. Without a doubt there are objectionable features present in many of the dance forms in our area and some dances that are completely unsuited to Christian worship and/or fellowship. But I am not the judge. Nor is it my place to prejudice the case by reacting negatively to their dances no matter how much I may be against dancing in the U.S.A. The function of dancing in their society as well as its form is vastly different than the functioning of dancing in our society. **THE FORM:** Men and women do not dance in each other's arms. The arrangement of the dance is circular with the men in their own circle and the women in their own-- either around the outside of the men's circle or in a place apart from the men. The dances consist predominantly of feet and leg movements although the hips sometimes assume a major role. All is done in rhythm to the beat of the drum and, in most of the dances, everyone does approximately the same thing. **THE FUNCTION:** Dances function as virtually the only form of organized recreation in Higi (the name of our tribe) society. They provide opportunity for the congregating socially of all but the very oldest inhabitants of a village or of several villages. They likewise provide a socially approved time and place for public observation and courting of possible marriage partners. (The courting is not at all like ours, however.) In addition, they provide a means of livelihood for the drummers.

Since I tried not to object to the dances myself, I'm not fully aware of all that was considered objectionable by the Christian leaders of our area. I have the impression, however, that there was a certain threshold of sexiness below which they considered it undesirable for dances used in Christian fellowship gatherings to go.

2. I suppose that by now it is obvious what my attitude toward the dancing is and that I tried as much as possible to keep it from being me who did anything about it.

3. These dances that I have mentioned above have been adapted for purposes of fellowship rather than for worship. The same music was used in the "banjo," one-stringed "violin," a kind of "flute," etc.--although often the drum was found to be too loud when used inside a building. The singing (in the dances as in church) is done antiphonally and is frequently accompanied by hand-clapping in rhythm. No real place for dance as part of worship has developed as yet although it has been effectively used as a "call to worship"

while the people gather for meetings--especially evening meetings.

4. The possibilities are tremendous.

We discovered that dancing to the Christian songs was a good form of evangelism. It was used both formally (by native evangelists) and informally (by Christians and non-Christians) to spread the message of Christ to villages with no previous contact with the Gospel.

Charles Kraft

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Letter No. 23: Madag, New Guinea

February 20, 1961

I haven't made a study of dancing amongst the people here, but I have tried to initiate the use of huge slit drums to accompany singing and liturgy and I can tell you something about that.

In olden times the drums were used to send messages from one village to another concerning a death or the coming of someone. Each man had a certain rhythm, and his "name" together with other simple messages were beat on the drums so that other villages could hear them. They were also used for certain aspects of dancing, though the small hand drum was the main drum for dancing. The deep tones of the big drum, and the many small drums with their varying pitches and the lack of split second timing was liked because it "shivered their timbers" much as the roll of snare drums for us. I thought that these big drums or hollowed hard-wood logs might be used in place of bells for the church service and to accompany liturgy and songs during the service.

I discussed it with older missionaries, and they suggested I go ahead, warning that for many New Guineans a drum brings back memories of the adulterous dance, etc. Thinking that I was working with young (18-20) students I decided to go ahead. Three groups of boys, from different congregations, found logs, and carved them in the bush. A circular building consisting of 7 posts and a conical roof of grass was erected. The Seven Last Words on the Cross were carved, one on each post. Then the logs were pulled to the camps (and a fight nearly started because one group said they had pulled their drums faster than the other, implying that they were stronger). We had a dedication during which the drums were pulled to the vicinity of the drum house according to the heathen fashion, with dancing, mock warfare, and magic. Then, as the "heathen" were seated

around the drums some "evangelists" came and told them about the Triune God, after which the heathen were "converted" and decided to use the drums for God's glory. They pulled them into the shelter, and with prayer and song, dedicated them to God's glory. We have used them for Saturday evening and Sunday morning "ringing," besides using them to accompany songs during our annual Christmas pageant which was held at night and outside. I often had the feeling that they were doing it to please me, holding certain other connotations in their thinking while they heard the drums. I remember one time after a practice for the pageant I went to the main road to go to our plantation, and as I came out of the driveway I heard the native tune used for the liturgy we had been singing, sung in a very, very raucous, suggestive manner. Yes, we had a teacher who, I believe, had caught the vision of the possibilities, and was a man "in whom there is no guile." He helped the boys on Saturday evenings, singing the songs as they beat the drums (the songs being hymns set to native melodies). But even then some of the boys who beat the drums did so without the reverence I would like to have seen. I have sometimes asked elders their opinions, and I don't remember any enthusiasm--they always gave me a noncommittal answer. The drums are used on some of our stations in place of the bell for work, and also in some of the villages and stations, but there has been no wholesale acceptance of the idea. In 1952 some village on Karkar Island began using the big drums for hymn singing, but that has died out.

At our conference this year the use of heathen festivals with a Christian adaptation was discussed. One of the men had had a service at the cemetery (a service such as that on the coast would have been interpreted as an invocation of the spirits of the dead for help in obtaining cargo by magic) with his congregation, and then some of these questions were discussed. One teacher said he had asked his students what they thought of when they heard a drum, and they replied that they could think of only one thing--and that in an area where your ideas have been tried since the first days of mission work--that their cultural gifts be used for God's glory.

Yes, the idea of cleaning up the dance, etc. is sound and good, but it is something we can't do for them--they must do it by and for themselves. We can only preach and teach the Word for them, and they have to work out the expression in liturgy, dance, music, etc. by themselves. We can give them a carefully reasoned approach to a Christian interpretation but if the old associations still persist in their minds, they will not be able to use it for Christian expression.

Here are some short answers to your questions:

1. I have never watched many dances, but the teachers and elders tell us that they always lead to immorality. Young people are trying European style dancing and the morning finds them with dirt all over their clothes.

2. I have not forbidden dancing, but have tried to show that though some dancing may be expressive, fornication and adultery is always wrong, and they should judge the dance according to that.

3. As stated above, we cannot "clean up" their thinking concerning dancing, etc. That is the work of the Holy Spirit through the Word.

4. Since this cleaning-up has been accomplished in our culture, I sincerely hope that it can be done in theirs, for they have much to contribute. It seems that with some hymns this has been accomplished, though some congregations still like the European hymns. In our new hymnal of 314 hymns, 92 of them are European melodies with alternate native tunes. This makes for a rich hymnody, and I for one know that those hymns will take their place next to O Sacred Head, and others of similar origin, in heaven.

Alfred N. Walch

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Letter No. 24: Taiwan

February 16, 1961

. . . In general it seems that the old tribal dancing traditions have already been undermined. The government authorities have at times held courses for girls from different tribal areas and have encouraged them all to adopt a standard mixture of dances--some tribal, mostly Amis, and some Chinese, and perhaps with some Japanese elements thrown in.

So this is the kind of stuff which is dished up by tribal girls in 'programmes' in the churches at Christmas, Easter and other special occasions, in a sort of variety show at the end of the service. Usually the dances are made up by the girls themselves and danced to hymn tunes. I have only seen girls taking part in these dances.

I have heard that in the early days of the Christian movement among the tribes dance and drama was used spontaneously as an expression of thanksgiving to God, but unfortunately this hopeful start was sat on by the Puritanical

and ununderstanding Taiwanese advisers to the churches.

It is possible that in some tribes in which the dance tradition is still strong there may in time develop Christian dancing; especially if there were anyone from outside to encourage it. Even without outside encouragement there has in the field of music been some composition of Church music in the true Sediq idiom. But in many tribes I think there is little or no prospect of the art being revived and put to work in the Church. Already I find that most young Taiwanese know of no dance except the four-step shuffle around in a circle.

John Whitehorn

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Letter No. 25: Togo

March 21, 1961

. . . 1. Die Evangelische Kirche in Togo, in der ich arbeite, bestimmt seit fast vierzig Jahre ihre Geschichte selbst. Die Missionare haben mehr oder weniger beratende Funktionen. Wieweit also Tänze übernommen werden oder nicht, steht nicht in der Hand des Missionars.

2. Grundsätzlich lässt es sich sagen, dass die erste Generation der Christen den alten Formen viel kritischer gegenübersteht, als die Zweite, die den heidnischen Inhalt nicht mehr kennt.

3. In meinem Dorfe gibt es kaum noch Heiden. So sind auch die heidnischen Tänze verschwunden. Nur vor Beginn der Regenszeit zelebriert man noch Ernte- und Fruchtbarheitstänze. Die Christen aber tanzen nicht mit, sondern schauen höchstens zu. Die Tänze haben keinen Fetischnahmen mehr, den sie anrufen. Die Form ist noch da, der Inhalt weitgehend vergessen.

4. Die christliche Gemeinde hat dafür verschiedene Tänze. In sogenannten Kantaten werden biblische Stücke aufgeführt; dabei wird viel getanzt. Die sind allesamt besonders mit Musik umbelegt worden. Beliebt ist bei Urdiendoren und Frauenkreisen der Tanzschritt, wenn man umwegs ist. Vielleicht ist das aus denen Eurem in Punkt 14. aufgeführten "Processionals" hervorgegangen.

5. Soweit ich bisher beobachtet habe, geht es hier in der Kirche auch nicht denn die Frage: Recht und Unrecht des Tanzes, sondern höchstens um den Unterschied der alten heidnischen und neuen christlichen Tänze.

6. Ich habe letztlich für die Norddeutsche Mission eine Kantate geschrieben. . . .

Missionar E. Viering

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Letter No. 26: Urundi

February, 1961

. . . We could probably use more of the local material if someone would study it more thoroughly. We are so short of personnel and time to give it the needed attention.

Paul Thornburg

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Letter No. 27: Kowloon,
Hong Kong

December, 1960

. . . 1. No objectionable dances--on whole creative and expressive of wholesome feeling.

2. Encourage it and provide wholesome atmosphere for it.

3. The dance in Asia is often an expression of religious feeling, and so can be constructively redirected in proper uses of the Church.

4. Great and important possibilities are surely inherent in our situation.

Rev. Harry Brunger

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Letter No. 28: Taiwan, China

February 5, 1961

. . . Specifically such information as I am able to give is for tribespeople occupying the central mountain range near the Seding city of Puli and about Hualien on the East coast.

Before becoming Christians these tribespeople had at least the two types of thanksgiving dances mentioned in your letter--harvest and victory. They were originally head hunters, and after successfully completing a foray against the enemy they would return and have a type of festival, including the dance, which might go on for two or three days. At the time of a marriage feast it was customary to have

dancing as well, although I do not think this dance could be classified as either "courtship" or "fertility."

After becoming Christians these dances continued to be utilized on at least two occasions.

1. Times of social fellowship unrelated to church activities such as on special holidays and the like.

2. In connection with special Christian festive occasions as Christmas, Easter, "Thanksgiving" (actually the old harvest time), etc. These dances might be held too after an ordination service or on some other equally serious occasion. When held at these times the dances are usually used in the afternoon and not as an integral part of worship service which is usually held in the morning. I have never heard of these dances being used as part of the worship service.

When the dances are used on these afternoons they may include some dancing by the older generation in which case they are much like the old "victory" dances. Along with the dancing there is singing. The words are very difficult for the younger generation to understand. They may be old-time memorized cultic expressions which have lost meaning both for the participants and spectators.

If the younger folk do the dancing--as is usual--then they preserve only the rhythm of the older dancing and use both Christian music and Christian words to accompany it. These are not a special adaptation. Rather they just use a regular Christian hymn.

Gradually, however, the churches are making less and less use of these dances. They have not been officially forbidden by anyone. Inasmuch as the church itself has never desired to use them in the worship service proper, there has never been any felt need to take any action upon them. Over the period of several years the church, too, has felt that there is not too much value in the dance used even in the slight way that it has been used. Some of this increasing objection probably stems from two related developments. One is that with the increasingly great influence of the movies there has been the tendency on the part of the girls in the dancing to use rather brief attire (not brief by Western standards!). Then also there may be soldiers in or around many of the villages and the first mentioned development has led them to come to see the dancing. These soldiers are Chinese and not mountain people. Also they are not Christians. Thus they may come and fill up a church to see the dancing which originally was held in connection with

a morning worship service. This has caused many thoughtful mountain pastors to have some second thoughts about the use of the dance.

Ralph Covell

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Letter No. 29: Lemgo, Togo

February 8, 1961

. . . In allen Gemeinden haben sich "Kantate-Vereine" gebildet, welche das religiöse Drama pflegen. Dabei spielen Tänze eine grosse Rolle. Früher würden die europäischen Missionare so etwas auf kirchlichem Boden als heidnisch abgelehnt haben. Heute sehen sie solche Dinge zum minderten mit gemischten Gefühlen an. Sie wissen nicht recht, was noch daraus werden wird. Die Afrikanische Christen dagegen finden es gern in der Ordnung, etwa die Geschichte vom verlorenen Sohn, Skt. Lukas 15, durch einen wilden Tanz schlechter Weiber, einen heiligen Tanz der über die Rückkehr des Sohnes erfreuten Festgenossen, Choräle, Gebete, u.s.w., darzustellen. Jedenfalls wird sich beim religiösen Drama, nicht im Gottesdienst der Tanz wohl durchsetzen.

P. Wiegräbe

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Letter No. 30: Sigtuna, Sweden

January 30, 1961

. . . in the Swedish movement of Drama and Liturgy there are some patterns of movements which may interest you. The best example are the instructions for "Bible Pantomimes," which have been composed by one of our actresses, Mrs. Birgitta Hellerstedt-Thorin.

In number 10, 1960, of the German publication "Zeitwende, die neue Furche" (Verlag Sonntagsblatt G.n.b.H., Hamburg 13, Mittelweg 111) the third act of my liturgical drama "The burning furnace" has been published. There is a drawing and two photos where you can get an idea of the relation between dramatic positions and liturgical symbols of the play. There you also can find the only hint of what is generally called dance, which is to be found in my dramatical production, namely the instruction near the end of the play that "during the following song of praise the players may, in conformity with strict liturgical and artistic demands, dance outside the altar-rails, or a group among them move solemnly dancing, hand in hand, while the organ intones the finale hymn in suitable rhythm." As far as I know this direction has not been realized in any performance

of the play. The difficulty of training the actors not only in the dramatical and the liturgical action, but also in the dimension of dance has not been overcome.

Olov Hartman

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Letter No. 41: New Guinea

March 4, 1961

. . . The opinions of the missionaries about this problem are very much divided, and indeed, the problem is a real one. I am in favor of retaining some religious dances for the sake of the Church, and using them to "glorify God, and that only."

Even now in our Lutheran Mission New Guinea the issue of such dancing is often a matter of discussion, and not all missionaries are thinking like most of us Lutherans think, namely, that it should be possible to use some religious dances, especially the "Mimetic dances," the "Nature dances" and some others, which are according to origin not necessarily "bad," but can be used as a means of the indigenous people to "praise God."

If one considers that the drum is the only musical instrument that our New Guineans have, it is not right nor wise to deprive them of the drum and the dancing, thus killing part of their culture and depriving them of indigenous means of expression.

The problem is not to be solved by forbidding the Christians the drum and the dancing connected with it. This was done in the Madang field by the then mostly pietistic missionaries (Rhenisch Missionaries). In consequence, after a long period of silence and no dancing and drum-beating, one day the desire and lust for dancing broke forth with elementary vehemence which even the pious missionaries could not stop. Therefore, it is no solution of the problem at all, if the Mission, or the White Missionaries, are lording it over the people and "forbid drums and dances."

A better solution is, if the congregation itself thinks fit to stop the dancing for a while, or forbid certain immoral dances, or impose restrictions on dancing; for it is a fact, that, the dancing once begun, they can hardly stop it. And they also like to make very long preparations for a certain dance or congregational feast or occasion, thus indulging in a kind of "heathen dancing" again. Of such a congregational decision you will read in the pamphlet of Dr. Christian Keysser, which is included: Papua Tanz.

Therefore, you stated the question involved quite accurately: "Do we throw out the native dance completely, as a 'baby with diapers,' because it is associated with some immoral practices? Or can we perhaps, after cleaning it up, use the dance as a vehicle, a means, through which facets even of the Christian message of Redemption can be communicated to primitive (or other) people?"

I think we can agree, that "music, art and drama" are God's gifts. They are part of our culture. Should we not use our "culture" to praise and glorify God?--We are doing it with music, art and drama. Why has the Church neglected the "dance" and left it entirely to the "world"? Is it the fear of sex which is connected with the dance, that we draw back on this issue and thus leave it to the "world"?

With primitive people, like our Papuans, but also the Africans and most of the Asiatics, the dance is part of their culture, and "combines these three aspects of music, art and drama." Therefore, it would be a fatal mistake, a serious impoverishment of their culture, if we as Europeans decide for them to do away with their drums, dances and dramatizations. We would be guilty of making life for them more dull and meaningless than it was before. We have to bring them the greatest news there is in the world, the Gospel of the Redemption, and this is joyous news, "good news," which calls for all the powers given to them by their creator to be of good courage, be joyous and to give "thanks to God" in a way which means something to them.

It was my experience as a congregational missionary of a huge circuit (25,000 people belonged to it), that the Papuan Dance can be used as a means of "glorifying God." There were occasions when a Papuan Dance or dramatization helped to enrich the congregation, to create joy and thankfulness for the gift of the Gospel.

Dances were used when the messengers of the Gospel, the missionaries, arrived in a village for their proper reception. Usually big congregational or church-gatherings were preceded by a day of dramatizations and dances. They used to receive the delegates for church gatherings with a dance, proceeding with prayer at the "reception-gate." This is mainly done to honor the guests and make them feel "welcomed."

Sometimes drums and a short dance are used when they have built themselves a new church (with their own money and own means) and then dedicate this church. There is a special ceremony by the Kate-congregations: "The fixing of the cross on the new church" which is always a very joyous

occasion whereby they use drums, sing Christian hymns, and the whole village and congregations take part. Nobody stays home at such an occasion, and they are all in it, singing hymns about the cross and thus glorifying God. I never saw such healthy enthusiasm as on these occasions of carrying the cross through the village and then nail it on top of the tower of the newly erected church.

In short, it is my belief and conviction, that we as missionaries and theologians should earnestly try to preserve for the Indigenous Church the means and ways of their cultures, and use and purify them in the worship of the true God. If we just do away with it, because we think it is altogether "bad," or because we do not understand their culture, we might well rob them of the means to "glorify God" in their way.

Of course, there is always the danger that old concepts of their heathen dancing get the overhand, and developments in the use of the drum and native dancing for worshipping the true God and enriching the congregational life have to be watched and always judged by the Word of God by the congregation for the congregation.

Hans Wagner

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Letter No. 32: Andhra, India

February 17, 1961

1) Dances here are objectionable to some but not to others. Objection if any is the subjective reaction of an individual because of his particular views or cultural background, or perhaps even guilt feelings. Personally, if the dance is entertaining and therefore of recreational or cultural value to the spectators it has worth. A value judgment of the dance in terms of "objectionable" or otherwise has no worth as a criterion of thought about the dance.

2) The Christians here are not children. The church here is free to hold its own opinion. It is not the right of the missionary either to forbid or allow any type of dance. He can share his Christian insight with others of the church. His value judgment should only be that of an individual of a particular opinion and cultural heritage. The narrow "fundamentalist" who thinks that the church is true to the faith if it conforms to his particular prejudices does the church in India a great disservice. The majority of Christians in this area as I see it would repudiate the classical dances of India that relate the actions and exploits of the Hindu gods. But they use the

dance in their own dramas and narrative story-telling.

Christians vary in opinion and practice in India as they do in the church in the United States or Canada. A particular dance as used by the Christians in drama or narrative cannot be pigeonholed into the various categories listed on page 2. I expect that some churches of this area will make greater use of the dance as a mode of expression for Christian ideas while others will repudiate all forms of the dance in the Christian context.

3) Not we, but the Church in India certainly assimilates parts of "dance" forms, e.g.--when a church building is dedicated the people walk in procession round the church building three times, singing a hymn all the while. In some places they also proceed across the fields to a baptismal service thus. But no dance steps are included in this. In church music use is made of cymbals, tambourines, and bells--but this accompanies the singing, not with a dance. I have, however, seen young girls dance in a church welcome meeting as well as in school on Parents' Day in connection with action songs. There are some forms, certain hand exercises e.g., in the Indian dance which seem to be related to Hinduism and therefore are not liked by Christians, but on the other hand there are others which are easily taken over without objection as they have only a graceful significance and not a religious one.

W. Gordon Carder

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Letter No. 33: Zuni and Navajo
Tribes

February 22, 1961

. . . Your study can become a valuable contribution.
. . . I have been with the Zuni and Navajo tribes as teacher and pastor, and previously worked with many tribes as a government investigator. I can only speak from 35 years of observation among Indians.

Where Apache and Zunis attempted to use native drum beat to accentuate rhythm of hymns set to native (folklore) melodies, invariably the Christians soon discarded the drum. "It makes us think too much of what we want to leave" we heard. All my Indian churches wanted to break clean.

We find the Indian sense of tempo and rhythm valuable in band and orchestra work, and in marching, processions, etc. But in this case it is no longer strictly native.

Here in Utah, among Mormons, the dance is church practice. Between the opening and closing prayer, anything goes. Young people are "contained," since no dance hall could offer more. Here, among these saints, divorces, delinquency, and polygamy also flourish. The dance has not cooled off the flesh.

The folk dance appeals to Indians in government schools. At Intermountain it is utilized as a learning process to the social sciences. This is excellent. But left to themselves, students prefer to jitterbug and do the simple modern steps, which require little brain, ad nauseam.

Tolerant at heart, we found it best to break clean, and find better things to do.

Cormbirs Kimpus

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Letter No. 34: Brazil

January 23, 1961

. . . So far as I am aware, no missionary society operating in interior Brazil attempts to assimilate the local dance. Among the animistic tribes in Matto Grosso for example, none feels that there would be any possibility along that line. Christianity is prescribed by protestant missionaries as an "either or" issue. Assimilation would be frowned on, as the R.C. church has already employed that method, to the detriment of Christianity. Carnival, originally a dance of Christian significance, has become the maximum expression of uninhibited animal instincts. So far as I am aware, the vast majority of Evangelical Churches in Brazil either forbid or discourage dancing, on that ground. The three characteristics in Carnival that are most objected to are sexual promiscuity, drunkenness, and violence.

Darwin G. Pape

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Letter No. 35: Nyanga

April 6, 1961

. . . In July of last year, our Mission along with many others was forced to evacuate all its personnel. November 20 ten of us men were able to re-occupy our field and we have since been struggling with problems of maintaining a minimal program with 10 per cent of our former missionary staff.

You touch on a very real problem in your thesis. I came to the field the first time in 1949 and found an

established policy and attitude on the part of the Mission and the missionary as regards the native dance, the attitude of regarding all dance as the greatest sin, and of discouraging Congolese Christians from participating in any of them . . . this policy is typical of Protestant Missions in general. There are several reasons for this:

1. The generally negative conditioning of missionaries against the social dance. I rather suspicion that just the word "dance" stirred negative reactions on the part of many missionaries through the years with the resultant out-of-hand condemnation with no further investigation into the matter.

2. The Protestant thrust and message has traditionally been one of "a new birth," "a new man," "new creatures in Christ Jesus" which encourages a total separation, a radical break with the primitive life out of which they come.

3. Admitting that there may be some dances, harmless in themselves, it is soon discovered that they are so inextricably interwoven into the fabric of African life that it seems nearly impossible to be selective and say--we will accept certain ones, others we will reject. There is always the real danger of compromising one's witness and influence by sharing in some aspects of pagan village life. While the Congolese Christian might differentiate between types of dances, the ordinary villager considers them all part and parcel of a total way of life.

4. There is a very genuine doubt on the part of the Congolese Church leaders as well as missionaries as to the possibility of their being able to utilize and channel certain types of the dance in such a manner as to make it a different, worthy and genuine Christian witness to the surrounding population . . . and a meaningful expression of worship and praise for those taking part. The tendency would rather be for the pagan population to interpret this as an approval of their way of life.

5. There are definitely dances which are unanimously condemned by our Congolese Christians which lead to riotous conduct and promiscuity.

However, having recognized these problems it must also be admitted that the dance is a vital part of the life and culture of the Congolese. By way of the dance, they give expression to a tremendous range of emotion, desire and experience. They throw themselves into their dances with a total abandon and a total absence of inhibition or self-consciousness. Some of the posturing, movement and expression strikes us as utterly ridiculous and absurd, but it is

not so for them. There is something dynamic, moving, and powerful here in the life of the African to which we have traditionally opposed ourselves.

I personally feel that this problem has deserved much more careful study than it has had to date. It will take a great deal of wisdom and caution. We have used pageants, plays and skits at various times--excellent means of reaching the African mind--but we always have to watch that the participants do not "overdo" their parts. Experience has taught us that beyond a certain point, the reaction on the part of the audience is always an explosion of hilarious laughter and total confusion which destroys the purpose of the pageant and makes it impossible to convey to the audience its message and content.

The Congo revolt with its resultant wholesale evacuation of missionaries has thoroughly shaken up the former patterns of missionary life and practice. We find ourselves now before the unique opportunity of evaluating our past program and principles and attitudes and of making changes as they may seem to be indicated.

James Bertsche

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Letter No. 36: Netherlands,
New Guinea

March 2, 1961

. . . First, I represent the work of the Christian & Missionary Alliance amongst the "Uhundunis" of the Central Highlands of Netherlands New Guinea (they call themselves by dialect names: Damal, Hamun, Atowa). They are technologically quite primitive, and have been subjected to a minimum of pressure from Western technology (as the government has not yet "controlled" the area). They have within their folklore legends which contribute to the anticipation of a new system from outside the bounds of their society, which will bring them eternal existence. This expectation has been associated with the Gospel and is in part responsible for a large movement of these peoples (including several neighboring tribes) into the fold of our Savior. The Gospel has undermined many of their art forms because of their association with spirit placation or with war (the new believers have become real pacifists--the opposite of a former climax in their society--and developed on their own without much encouragement from us in that some of their enemy neighbors are neither believers or pacifists!), and we are trying to employ every means by which to re-orient these forms and preserve them in the new society.

To answer your questions:

1. They have several types of dances, none of which are objectionable socially or morally, and none of the dance forms are themselves associated with spirit appeasement. Certain tunes are associated with objectionable ceremonies, but these have been dropped by the believers of their own accord, leaving the remainder to be employed by Christians without objection.

2. We have no problem. The objectionable tunes were dropped without pressure from the missionary.

3. The following elements have been adapted and used in the Christian service:

a) Dancing in groups to and before church service. The dancing "core" is always only men, women never dancing alone, and participating only in a contributory role. The men always dance in clan or clan-alliance groups to any important function. The major change in this phase is that many of the tunes are now native hymn tunes to which they dance preceding the service.

b) A circular processional dance immediately following the presentation of the offering. In Uhunduni bride price payments, this processional always follows the presentation of a shell of their highest value--this being the climax of the payment. This is also done in Replacement Payments for war dead. This feature has been carried over almost without modification.

c) This same circular processional is employed in the conclusion of the ceremonial services of their new faith--after Baptism and Communion services. Their most important spirit appeasement ceremonies were concluded with this processional dance and it has been carried over as the only fit conclusion for so important a ceremony, say, as the Lord's Supper.

d) The native hymn forms are patterned after the songs of the courtship "Sing-sing." This Sing-sing has been banned by the leaders of the Uhunduni church because of immoral practices, but the tunes and song forms are used for worship hymns. This is not "dance," but closely associated in that these same tunes are danced to in (a).

4. Yes, we do envision a wider usage of the dance, trying to preserve a war payment form which has fallen into disuse. We have thought to incorporate this form in their Easter or Christmas feasts, but have met opposition on it from the Church leaders who feel it is difficult to disassociate this form from its war-payment setting and meaning.

John D. Ellenberger

Letter No. 37: Netherlands,
New Guinea

May 8, 1961

(Note: We have allowed an excursus into the native forms of dancing to make his later comments more understandable. The portion directly relevant to the church is the last half of the letter.)

. . . Dancing has become one of the most dominant traits of the Western Dani worship service, and certainly has been borrowed from the local culture with good effect in the church.

In answer to question 1, you will be happy to note that we have found no objectionable dancing types of singing--rather I should say the church has found no objectionable types of dancing--but they have objected to two types of singing: (1) courtship singing, and (2) exorcism singing. The courtship singing took place usually during the full moon in a men's house arbitrarily selected in a given area. Marriageable men (or those already married and seeking another wife) of the opposite moiety sat on one side of the fire, marriageable girls of the opposite moiety on the opposite side of the fire. Others in the village or nearby villages joined in with singing, but still kept more or less this seating arrangement. Each song was about 2 or 3 minutes in length, was characterized by a lead part and a refrain, much was sung with non-sense syllables, especially the refrain, and when there was meaning to the words it was about nature and love. Some of the songs were quite suggestive and would be classed as "loaded" singing, but most were quite acceptable from our point of view. During the singing, the men passed charm gifts to the girls of the opposite moiety. A man would first give a number of different things to different girls, but as the evening drew on he would become more seductive in his giving as the girl would her receiving. The gifts ranged from non-valuable items such as leaves, special stones, cowrie shells, tin cans, pieces of paper, etc. on up to valuable shells or even shell necklaces of considerable value. The man would hold the gift in his hand, wave it back and forth and up and down as if to give it to the girl and then in a teasing fashion refuse to give it to her. All of this movement was to the rhythm of the music. The girl in turn would wave her hands up and down and act as if she were to take the gift, always following the hand of the man. Finally, as the singing came to a close she would receive the gift, if she liked the man, or refuse it if she didn't. Distinterested members would leave as the hour grew late and usually the girls were escorted to their homes. If the appropriate gift had been given to the girl, this meant the young man could meet her the next day in her garden and enjoy sexual relations with her. It has

been reported that at such "singing feasts" occasionally the evening ends up in what we might call a petting party. We, the missionaries, did not condemn these courtship "sings"; rather, we condemned fornication. The native church equated fornication with courtship singing, and thus it has almost disappeared from the valley.

As for the second type of singing which was condemned by the church, that is the singing which was supposed to dispell the activity of sorcery (women's sorcery in particular), this was continued for a while but has gradually decreased as the Christians gained more confidence in the power of prayer. Men gathered in a group, usually about 20, and they sang from a hill top in the direction from where the sorcery (or kukutuwo) was believed to come. The singing was quite different from the courtship singing, for example, in that it was all in unison or two parts, less syncopated, and I recall it to have sounded "minor" to my ears. We do not have any of this singing recorded.

The three types of dancing--which have been danced at our church services are: (1) war dancing, (2) initiation dancing, and (3) festivity dancing. There are at least two types of war dancing which is the core of our pre-church service dancing: (a) the victory dances and (b) the war-settlement (je-wam) dances. The victory dance took place as warriors came back from battle and celebrated the death of their enemies, but this dance--or at least the climax of it--is danced on other occasions as well. The victory dance is characterized by loud screeching by first one or two of the lead singers who turn in the middle of the yard while the group screeches in unison following each of the lead singer's cries. The group moves counter-clockwise as they shout and screech in this manner and the shouting can be heard perhaps over a mile away. If the victory dance is sung after a real battle, then it is preceded by group singing and dancing. This dance is characterized by the group, usually all men--running back and forth with the weapons (bows, arrows, spears and daggers) plus magical charms in hand. The lead singers and dancers shout out a lead part which describes the battle. Such statements as "We have strung their intestines all over the place," etc. are sung. The group responds with a nonsense syllable patterning singing and shouting. If this is not a victory dance as such, such singing doesn't precede the victory dance where the group shouts and screams as they circle counter-clockwise.

At the war settlements, the dancing took place both preceding and during the placement of pigs and cowrie shell strings. The receiving clansmen were the most colorfully decorated with feathers, long nets (colorful), red paint on the faces, etc. and they did most of the dancing. Those

who had relatives who had been killed in battle--usually two for a given war settlement--received the shell strings and pigs; those who had called the battle some 1, 2 or even 3 years before, gave these things. There would usually be 60 large pigs placed at such a ceremony and from 10 to 15 long shell strings. As the pigs were carried in, men and women from the receiving clan ran back and forth singing these dancing songs. Some of the women would dance silently back and forth on the side-lines. After the payment was made, the je-wam usually culminated in the victory dance. Two days later the receiving party sponsored a feast at which members from the two clans ate together.

The initiation dances took place at the time when the young men of the clan were initiated into the clan. They were usually from 10 to 17 or so years of age at the time of the initiation. I have never observed the initiation ceremony in person since it usually took place valley-wide only once every two years and I was on furlough when the last major initiation took place. There was much singing about like the singing at the war settlements. The initiation took place over a two day period. The boys were threatened with bows and arrows. They were washed ceremonial with water. The sacred ancestral stones were rubbed on their bodies. The initiation ceremony ended up with victorious shouting much like the victory dance.

The third type of dancing which has characterized our pre-church service, has been the festivity dancing. Festivity dancing usually takes place over a period of two or three nights preceding a large feast, usually a taro feast, but sometimes sugar cane or potato feasts. Groups sing and dance back and forth with torches much like at the war settlements, but the singing is to nature and about trips and other activities. The most common dancing, however, is the two-step dance. Men and women two-step first in one direction, then back up; they also two-step from the periphery to the center, and the singing is somewhat different from the other. It seems confined to a more rhythmical beat to conform to the two-step and has a harmony which is different than the parallel fifths and falsetto high 7ths so common in the war dancing.

Now, from the beginning, dancing of the same pattern as the je-wam, initiation singing and pre-feast singing, has characterized our special gatherings when the Gospel message was brought to the people. This became the natural type of singing and dancing to precede the big event of the week, the Sunday service. From almost the beginning, the whole valley gathered for services on Sunday, one service at Kunga, the Uhunduni station, and one at Etomaka, the Western Dani station. As high as 2500 to 3000 have attended the

Western Dani service over a relatively long period of time, e.g., until the church was split up by the local people according to clan alliance areas. Perhaps more than any other way, the Western Dani expresses his social unity by singing. The groups usually gathered for church service by coming in groups according to clan alliance. The group of men--women gathered later--would usually make their Sunday morning appearance by first gathering on a knole perhaps 1000 feet or so from their church yard. The men who gathered first on the knole would shout out a melodious wol wol wol or the like as the rest gathered with them from behind. Their bodies would sway back and forth and their knees bend to the music. Their spears and bows and arrows were in hand. Then, with the cue from their leader, they charged down the hillside and finally, maneuvering themselves into a single file as they climbed up over the fence, they entered into the churchyard running around and around in a counter-clockwise circle, barking out short and piercing cries until the whole of the group had joined them. Then they would lead off with a shouting war-dance-like song. Others from other clan alliances would then join them and this would be repeated until at about 12:00 noon the whole of the groups had arrived. They would then dance back and forth and finally climax their singing by circling in masses and shouting and singing, sometimes as many as 1200 men and perhaps 500 women.

The services still have this same kind of singing and dancing as a prelude to the services. We have discouraged the singers from singing to us and questioned songs that had words about sex play or fighting. It is interesting, however, that when this has been pointed out to the people, their response has been, "Oh yes, it does say that, doesn't it?" For the most part, any suggestive singing has been weeded out by the Christians themselves. Much of the singing is non-sense syllable singing and many songs and dances are to the Creator, about Christ's death and resurrection, and about preaching the Gospel to distant areas.

The two-step is still sung on Sunday morning at services, but this singing is far less prominent than the war-type dancing. Usually on those mornings when the singing starts relatively early, the two-step starts up about 11:00. In the two-step dances the wording has been adapted to a Christian message. It may drop out of the service. Most of the two-step dancing is preceding feasts, feasts which, however, are held in the name of the Church.

After the Communion service, each month, a victory dance is sung. It is a dance which used to be the climax of the initiation ceremony. When the young men are initiated into the clan, at the close of this two-day ceremony, the male members of the sub-clan would all gather inside

the men's house. Then, after eating the ceremonial pork, they would all run through an archway made by two of the elders. These two older men would hold their hands up over the doorway, one on the one side and one on the other, with their hands meeting at the top of the doorway. As each male member went through the door, these two older men rubbed their backs with the sacred ancestral stones. The group ran in a single file circle until the whole had assembled and then shouted out a kind of victory dance as was described above. It might be called the climax of the initiation dance. After the communion service each month, the men all run through the church door in the same manner as they used to after the initiation of the young men, except the two elders do not make an archway with their hands. The climax in the communion service is this same kind of victory dance. Interestingly enough, it only occurred to the people after they had done this for some time that this dance was the same as or very similar to the dance they used to climax their initiation ceremony,--a perfect example of an indigenous adaptation of a former dance pattern and yet freed from the former connotation of identity with the ancestors!

In all sincerity I feel that if our social and cultural differences have any significance in the world to come--and surely they will--the Western Dani dancing will be one of the most significant mediums for the Western Dani to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ throughout the endless ages of heaven! They certainly are glorifying the Lord with their dancing now.

A final comment. Among the Moni people, a distinct tribe by language and custom, the most important dancing and singing takes place not at war and initiation dancing as among the Western Dani, but rather at a dance house where they sing to nature and dance up and down on a spring-pole dance floor. These dance houses are built periodically by different clans in the area. Dancing at the dance house continues for about 4 months up until the climactic event, the killing of pigs and festivity. The difficulty has been that the missionary first, and later the church, has condemned the ugai "dance house" and thus almost none of this ugai dancing has carried over into the church services. The reason for the condemnation of the ugai has been because sexual couples pair off and extra-marital sexual relations are reportedly quite common, especially as the dancing draws near to the time of the big feast. It is true also that the Moni church has not prospered. Now to imply that it has not prospered because the singing did not carry over is not true; but it is significant that in the area where the churches have been the weakest there is the least carry-over from pre-Christian to post-Christian singing and dancing.

After the group has danced and sung for about 2 hours, then as they sit down they sing Gospel songs with lead part and refrain patterned much like the former courtship singing. When this was first suggested, it was very strange to the local people, and some wanted still to snap their fingers and wave their hands as they had done around the fire. Now, this kind of lead and response singing is fully assimilated into the open-door services. More of the Gospel message is sung with these songs than with the pre-service dancing.

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We rejoice in what the Lord is doing in this area of Central Netherlands New Guinea. In the Iiaga valley alone there are about 300 baptized Western Danis, 600 or so baptized Uhundunis. Taking into consideration the whole of the Western Dani, Moni, Uhunduni, Dani, Ndauwa, and Lem-Wano tribes in this area where this movement has rise, there must be 60,000 tribesmen that have broken from their magical past in one way or another.

Gordon F. Larson.

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Letter No. 38: Chhatarpur,
M.P. India

February 27, 1961

. . . Now, from the point of view of the Church, it is quite true that missionaries have, traditionally, including the present writer, felt that shamanism (your No. 3--Exorcism dance), which almost always involves intoxication of some sort, is out as far as Christian discipline goes. In fact it is one of the signs of a real break with spirit worship for the villager to forsake such. That type is quite common among the lower and sub-castes in Central India, especially in the event of sickness, such as small-pox.

We have only one village Church in our area, and these have been converted from the leather workers. They would be familiar with the exorcism dance (above), some courtship dances which take place at the time of wedding parties, and a certain Fertility dance or rite in the Hindu marriage ceremony. It appears to me, that since upper caste Hindus have little association with such, that the lower caste converts are willing, from several points of view to forego them.

A far more pertinent question is one that cannot be answered by me, and that is the place of the artistic dances Mimetic or Nature or Dances of Cosmic processes (viz. 6, 7, 8) in the Christian Church. Some of these are an integral part of Indian art.

There is no dance as such in the Church in our area. The Christians, and there are only about 300 here, have good rapport with their Hindu neighbors, participating occasionally in some of their national, not Hindu per se, festivals. Much of the Church in the cities of North India is quite Western oriented, and thus the dance as known only in rural circles is not even seen among the Hindus, nor Christians.

Thus, in our area, none of the dance has been assimilated, since no possibility of clean-up appeared in the ones (dances) extant in the villages of this area.

Robert Hess

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Letter No. 39: Africa

N.d., 1961

. . . The existence of the indigenous church does not depend on the preservation of the "sacred dance" of the ancestors. But it may be that the national Church, well established in the evangelical Christian faith, freed from direct legislation of the mission, will wish to incorporate some of the "music, art and drama" in their worship or recreation.

Having had some graduate work in anthropology myself, I appreciate your problem and your interest in it. Were it not for the tremendous pressures of work on the mission field, I'm sure some of us would have had your problem solved long ago. (??!!)

Inentus D. Nelson

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Letter No. 40: Japan

January 14, 1961

1. No, I did not find any objectionable dances. All those I saw or heard of were the folk type that as far as I know have little or no religious significance.

In Japan there are very few of the religions that make a dance an integral part of the ritual, as far as I know--Tenri kyoo (the religion of Divine Wisdom) is one example. This religion, which has now become one of the main Japanese religions, incorporated a dance into its ritual. From the very start it was forbidden by the government and several times the entire community were imprisoned. It finally omitted the dance and after many years became a "respectable"

religion. Since the end of the war it has grown tremendously, partly because of political acumen in founding its own city with complete facilities right up to a top notch university. Now that it is pretty much out of the reach of the police it has taken up the dance again but in a more refined manner.

2. It was no problem.

3 and 4. The Japanese themselves would be the first to object to any use of the dance or anything reminiscent of it in the Church service. I have had people even object to my use of the black robe as being too much like the Buddhist priest. One girl refused to come back to Church because of the robe and candles on the altar. So I would see no possible constructive use we could make of the dance in Japan.

.....
 You are probably aware that one of the reasons--so many now say--that Catholicism spread so rapidly in Japan in the early days was that it was so much like Buddhism in outward forms that the Japanese thought that it was a new form of Buddhism. This, I think, shows in a better way than any other the extent to which the Japanese are attracted the Christian liturgy and processions etc. as we have them in our Lutheran heritage.

Harold Aasland

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Letter No. 41: China

N.d., 1961

..... I do not feel that these Chinese dances are "religiously important" to the heathen man on the street. Nor are they suitable to Christian worship. The Dragon-exorcism procession hardly would express the Victorious Christ over Satan. And while the opera-forms could have a Christian "book" written for them, the dance is only incidental to the performance.

Incidentally, social ball-room dancing is not common in Taiwan and in fact is prohibited by law in public halls.

Marlin Wogstad

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Letter No. 42: Japan

January 12, 1961

..... The best known traditional dance form is to be seen in the Noh Play, which usually takes as its theme an

old legend in which the supernatural in the form of ghosts and evil and good spirits looms rather large. The form is very restrained and stylized, and as far as I know has no erotic implications, which I think can be said of Japanese dancing in general. I do not know of any erotic forms.

There are also popular forms of dance which I think are entirely of a mimetic form.

It will interest you to know that at the celebration of the Japan Protestant Centenary by the National Christian Council of Japan, in November 1959, one of the most impressive features, which drew unanimous praise, was a dance performed in the Japanese style, by a Christian dancer and her troupe of Christian dancers, depicting in a solo number one act of the story of Mary Magdalene, written by the dancer, and in a group number the hymn "When peace like a river." The whole thing was most exquisitely done, and impressed me, for one, with the fact that perhaps there is no dance form so chaste and adaptable to a religious theme as the Japanese one.

The background of the occasion I have just mentioned is interesting. The principal dancer, whose name I have forgotten, was critically ill at one time, and, overhearing a conversation in which her doctor told her family that she had no chance of recovery, she prayed and dedicated her gifts as a professional dancer to the work of God. Recovering, she carried out her pledge, and has formed a guild of sacred dance.

As far as my personal view is concerned, I am convinced by what I saw performed at the Centenary that there is a style of Japanese dance that is peculiarly adaptable to Christian themes.

It might interest you to know that there was an attempt made by a secular dance club to perform a dance on a Christian theme, in the style of ballet, at one of the mass meetings of the World Convention on Christian Education held in Tokyo in the summer of 1958. The general consensus of opinion was that it was a pretty dismal effort.

Ian MacLeod

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Letter No. 43: New Guinea

January 20, 1961

. . . I'll just go right down the list of your four questions.

1. Our field of service is in the Asmat tribe of the southern part of Netherlands New Guinea. The dance form in this tribe is basically the same, with variations among individuals. That is to say, the physical motions gone through are the same for the various feasts and celebrations where the dance is performed. It is performed in relationship to the death of important individuals also.

We are not 100% sure of the significance of the dance in the minds of the people, but we have rather concluded that it is connected with an expression of strong emotions of gladness or sadness. There also seems to be a sexual attitude connected with it. The basic form of the dance is similar to the motion gone through when the people are "playing" at committing an act of sodomy. Also, as the dance is performed the hands are dangled loosely in the area of the genitals, and on some occasions (at night) the people have been noticed to grasp their genitals during the dance.

Our impression of the above is that the dance is objectionable. We are not saying this categorically, however. We admit that we do not fully understand the dance, and there may be some areas of its practice that could be used to the glory of God.

2. There are only a few believers in the tribe so far. None of them practice the dance in their Christian meetings. We have not commented to them on the dance affirmatively or negatively. We do not feel that it is the place of the mission to forbid or allow things. As the people learn the Word of God they alone are qualified to decide what cultural practices are not glorifying to the Lord.

3. Work in the Asmat tribe is still rather young. Some of these problems therefore, have not been fully faced by the new believers. So far nothing of the dance has been taken over into their Christian services. If they felt that any of them should be, they would not likely experience any opposition from the missionary.

4. As intimated above, we still consider that there is a possibility of the dance, or some area of it, being practiced for the glory of God. However, for the reasons stated in #1 above, it would seem to us that the chances of this are rather slight.

Calvin Roesler

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January 21, 1961

that the nature of my work is

Letter No. 44: Taiwan

February 1, 1961

. . . All I can say is that the dance has no small place in Chinese life as I have seen it. (Western influence has introduced the social dances from our part of the world--but I realize that this problem is not the concern of your inquiry.) Your paper is further limited to the "Religious Dance"--although I am not clear whether you mean by this the religious dances of Chinese life and culture, or such dances as might be incorporated into the life and practice of the Indigenous Church regardless of their origin, or possibly both.

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 . . . That there might be something objectionable could possibly be deduced from the fact that as a rule the Chinese Christians do not frequent the theatres or attend the religious festivals in the temples. Being part of the conservative segment of the Christian Church, dancing (especially social dancing) is generally frowned upon among Christians. This attitude, plus the fact that Christianity is a rather sharp break with much in their former way of living, doubtless colors their thinking about most of what is done for entertainment by the non-Christians in society. Certainly it can be said that in the churches in Taiwan little if any encouragement is given to the Christians to engage in dancing.

There is here in Taiwan a situation to which I would call your attention and which possibly yields some significant material for your consideration. I refer to the "Tribes People." These mountain people--the aborigines of this island, generally regarded as coming from Malay stock--now number about 150,000 and compose about 7 tribal units with several smaller divisions in terms of language, customs, etc. The Christian Church is working among them and has found ready and wide acceptance of the Gospel. Efforts are being pressed to get the Bible--in part--into their own language, which means first reducing their spoken dialect into written symbols etc. These rather primitive people express a great deal of their religion and mode of life through dances. This addiction to dancing does in various ways carry over into their Christian practices. Or, in other words, dancing has become in some way a medium of expressing their new faith even as it was in their former way of life.

Anders B. Hanson

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Letter No. 45: Indonesia

January 31, 1961

. . . you will appreciate that the nature of my work is primarily urban. . . .

I have from time to time raised some of the same questions you do. The usual answer is that because of the integral nature of most Indonesian cultures, the recasting of cultural forms with abhorrent connotations is all but impossible because the music and highly stylized dance forms, etc. are so intimately, if not inextricably related to the original culture norms that such accommodation is all but impossible. I have been interested to note that this argument loses much of its apparent force in relation to the animistic or dynamistic sources. Whereas the highly stylized (and thus, presumably, intensely "meaning-full" dances deriving from Hinduistic, Buddhistic sources are viewed as unassimilable by Christians; many of the regional folk-dances, not having such a cultural-religious base, are danced as is . . . with no attempt to "Christianize" them . . . sheerly for pleasure. One explanation of this may be the fact that in these latter areas conversion was largely a communal matter).

I wonder, therefore, if this fact is not the most pertinent one after all. When we have a communal identification with Christian values, the entire cultural matrix can be accepted by the Christian without endangering either his new-found religious orientation or his continuity with his family-clan line. This is to say, perhaps, that just because the dance is so basically religious in its origins it is also Christianized with difficulty.

Karl H. Stange

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Letter No. 46: French West Africa

February 1, 1961

. . . As a former Concordia student, I am happy to help the cause by answering your four questions:

1. Objectionable dances: "danse macabre" for funeral rites establishing rapport with evil spirits who may well demand sacrifice of the deceased slaves who are then burned with the corpse after ritual murder. Hence the objection.

"Exorcism dances"--in summoning help of stronger spirits to exercise weaker ones, the appeasement of those demons leads to objectionable practices of blood sacrifice, orgies of feasting, drinking and sex.

2. Procedure: Forbid "Fetish Dancing." African thinks only in black or white, "rightness" or "wrongness."

3. Assimilation: "Folk Dancing," as opposed to "Fetish

dancing," has been assimilated in games adopted by Christian youth; drama may be interspersed by folk dancing with rhythmic African hymnody accompanying "dances." A musical drama incorporating such a dance would not be objectionable to our African church leaders. However, no fetish music must be used with Religious words!

4. Possibilities: With the above mentioned controls, opportunities are unlimited to assimilate, provided discerning missionaries will cooperate closely with church leaders.

It should be said that the Methodists on the Coast swing and sway on their holidays, parading through their town like David before the Ark, even to the accompaniment of such staid hymn-tunes as "Housthon" and "Hanover."

Rev. G. C. Timyan

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Letter No. 47: - Angola, Africa

March 11, 1961

. . . Your topic of study is most interesting and may prove very valuable.

At this mission we are all young missionaries (I have been here only 2 years), hence my observations may not be of too great value.

1. We do have objectionable dances, and as I understand them they are objectionable because they are associated with drunkenness.

2. The local church here controls matters of discipline and this objectionable dance is forbidden.

3. We have not done anything personally in respect to the dances. It is evident however that certain dances are quite acceptable to the church. They dance when they are very, very happy and wish to express their gratitude either to other people or to God.

At a happy "thanks-offering" I have seen the members chant and sway as they brought in their offerings.

I have noted that the people dance most freely and spontaneously in our most isolated spots. Where they are more "civilized" they begin to get self-conscious about dancing.

We are usually welcomed to a village by a dancing group.

At Christmastime the Christians dance in the same way on Christmas eve as they would when they dance to celebrate a village birth.

Deaths of non-Christians are always accompanied by a death dance. Christians do not take part as they say the dance signifies hopelessness.

Charles Harvey

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Letter No. 48: Colombo, Ceylon

February 9, 1961

. . . 2. Among the Roman Catholics: The Roman Catholic group has made the most extensive use of dancing, especially in celebration of certain festivals, St. Anthony's festival and those like it. This folk dancing is accompanied by very lively music of Portuguese origin called the Baila. This is looked down upon by the Buddhists and Protestants because it represents a foreign, and to them vulgar influence. The dancing is not connected with immediate religious significance as is those of the Buddhists.

As in other countries, the Roman Catholics also have a great number of religious processions.

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4. Protestant attitude: The Protestants have tended to shy away from the dance and the procession, against what they feel is an externalism. They do not find objections to the dance on the ground of sexual immorality, since almost none of the dances seems to have this content. But their objection is primarily to the false religious content of the dances and processions.

John Van Ens

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Letter No. 49: Koraput, Orissa,
India

July 2, 1961

. . . Your questionnaire was sent to me. I shall try to give you some information:

1. No/Yes, see below.

2. We did not forbid, not allow, nor encourage it. We just let the people grow in faith and wisdom through the good Gospel and then decide whether or not they could make use of the dances. In most cases people soon felt that exorcism devices, invitation dances, Religious ecstasy dances,

and death and funeral celebrations could no longer play a role in their new life.

3. Not yet. As regards this question we feel that the Christians themselves should decide whether that will be possible or not. The first generation and also the second generation are rather reluctant to make use of their former religion and to that belongs the dance. The following generation is more ready to do so. They no longer feel the power of the former religion, for they have been brought up in a Christian home; a Christian community has been their home, and Christian hotels and schools have made their strong impression. Now they look at dances and religious ceremonies in a different way, and appreciate rhythm, the melodies, and the dress dancers wear.

4. We as missionaries can do very little in this respect, and our Indian brethren will have to decide these questions. There are many who feel it would and should be possible. Yet there is little to say as customs vary from place to place. I once went to a place where the Christians dance on their way to the divine service and I just could not make myself to enjoy it. We must know more about the experiences the dancing Christians have before we could say something to the whole problem. If I personally should say a little from my long experience with Hindus and Christians I would state with all carefulness and sympathy that the dancing is so exciting for the dancers as well as for the congregation that a good sermon would not reach them and the Biblical purpose of the presentation of the Word of God cannot be achieved. I think most of my co-workers would agree to that. Hence, to close this letter, it needs time and distance before something can be achieved. Nothing can be done a priori.

R. Tauscher

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Letter No. 50: Nigeria,
W. Africa

May 9, 1961

. . . 1. Some objection lies in regard to dancing but only in connection with spirit worshipping, I believe. In our boarding schools and in our villages the youth will do their "folk" dancing on moonlight nights, for example. But I have never seen dancing in our mission area in connection with a religious service. If it will come some day I don't know. I have seen in Ibadan a procession of people coming to attend an afternoon rally Christian meeting, and they were dancing and singing as they came. So it could come, as the white man has less influence and the indigenous

church becomes more independent.

The objection, as far as I can guess, is because it is in connection with spirit worship and also can be morally "unclean"--but these latter reasons are my own idea. We have not done anything to encourage or utilize or allow it--but you find it socially for entertainment in the villages.

H. M. Jacobsen

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Letter No. 51: Brazil

March 3, 1961

. . . 1. Yes. With the exception of the classic or modern ballet, other dances are related to things that are contrary to the Christian life. There are always four elements in these dances: superstition, immoral suggestions, witchcraft, and influence of alcohol. There are also some folklore dances in connection with religious dates, such as the Day of the Kings, and St. John's Day, but they also have the same defects.

2. Generally, the Protestant Christians give up dancing upon their conversion, because they find it difficult to continue dancing and maintaining their Christian testimony (for the above reasons). Generally, the church finds it better to prohibit it.

3. For the time being, I see no possibility.

4. For the time being, I see no possibility.

There are the following types of dances in Brazil:

1. Indian dances
2. Dances used in the African-Brazilian religious cults
3. Folklore dances, such as the samba and the maracatu
4. The ballet, promoted through the ballet schools

The use of the dance by religious groups.

1. It is not used in any form by the Catholic church.
2. It is not used in any form by the Protestant Church.
3. It is not used in any form by the spiritualistic groups.
4. It is used by the Indians, and by the descendants of Negro slaves who still cling to the old African religions.

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15. Processionals. These are used by the Catholic church, when images and banners are paraded on the streets

on the occasion of some special saint's day. All participants walk sedately, sometimes singing a religious song. It is so closely associated with the practices of the Roman Catholic Church here, that I strongly doubt it would ever be used in any form by the Protestant Churches. Besides, we have no images or banners in our worship!

Catherine Varhang

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Letter No. 52: Angola

January 1, 1961

. . . Our seven Mission stations encompass all Ovimbundo, and there are, of course, differences; but by and large our Church area is the only one that has not forbidden dances. By this I mean the Elende church area. Now your questions.

1. There are objectionable dances, and the main objection is that they encourage free sexual expression among the entire village group with its subsequent intrigue and jealousies, short-circuited aspirations, etc. for young people. The use of dance with a liberal application of brew to invoke mass hysteria is always inconvenient and costly in terms of public order.

2. I didn't do anything with the problem. I am not a moral police man. The church is concerned and is trying the method of demonstrating dancing of a recreational value without alcohol. The church uses and encourages, or at least condones, dances that have not the express purpose of inciting flagrant promiscuity and a laying aside of the conscious direction of behavior.

E.G. A pastor confronted with a wedding party dancing to a gramophone succeeded in having them use local native instruments. This meant that the intimate contact of couples was submerged in a recreational dance of all age groups. To him it was a great help, for the intimacy of activity by couples is not understood by a people who have little heterosexual recreation.

3. We use dances interpretatively in telling the Gospel story. E.g. The people danced around the manger at Christmas in a very moving and wholly natural thanksgiving.

4. Don't expect too much of my explanation here. It is not a natural course of events at all services of praise. It does have possibilities and with older Christian villages the abuses are not apt to be very serious.

J. Murray MacInnes

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Letter No. 53: New Guinea

April 15, 1961

. . . It is my conviction: We do not solve the problem of dancing with the natives by forbidding it, or staying away from it. We must try to christianize the only instrument which primitive people have. Drums and dances are deeply rooted in their souls and their culture. In taking a negative stand towards it, because there are misuses, sometimes even evils, connected with it, we pour the child away with the bath. We must try to save the child, that is, free genuine songs, rhythms and melodies from their heathen environment, and take the drum and its music and rhythm as a vessel to pour Christian substance into it, thus using drums, rhythms, melodies as an instrument to praise God.

Drums and dances belong to the culture of these primitive people. If we take it away from them, we make them so much poorer. For the drum speaks to the hearts and souls of these people, not our organ, trumpet, or our European melodies and songs. Mostly, they do not understand them, it's foreign to them. . . .

I still believe, it must be possible to fill their old melodies with Christian hymns, and use their drums for the glory of God. But they themselves must find the way, we only should lead them to this way, and not smash everything because it is foreign to us and because there was sin and misuse connected with it in heathen times.

H. Wagner

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Letter No. 54: Nigeria

March 25, 1961

. . . The number of negative replies to your questionnaire is indeed disturbing. Such news only serves to confirm the conviction that what anthropologists, laymen, people of missionized countries and others are saying in criticism of missionaries is all too true. We are often not only blind but determined to stay blinded by our own prejudices--and at any cost! The attitude you see being expressed on the dance issue is characteristic of the attitude of Western missionaries on any issue that conflicts with our pet customs. We somehow feel that the fact that we received christianity first and have had 2,000 years to distort it to suit our particular tastes gives us the right to claim that only our own approach is valid.

. . . We are still unable to fully believe, much less adequately put across to others, how absolutely fouled up

God's work is there! Reliable estimates have it that well over 90% of the missionaries working in Africa never adequately learn the language of the people among whom they work! Many never even try or give up before they get very far. A higher percentage than that have no real appreciation of the culture of the people--not even the common decency to respect the customs of the people out of politeness! Instead, on the basis of inadequate (if any) knowledge of those to whom God has called us, we set ourselves to the task primarily of changing their customs--forgetting in the process that we are called to do only one thing: witness to the love and saving grace of God. And the history of missions in Africa can be summed up in the phrase "second things first."

. . . The Nigerians in our area tell young missionaries to make their choice, "You can either serve the mission or the people--not both." And this is the choice you'll probably have to make. Don't stick your neck out for dancing just because you happen to have enough imagination and common sense to realize that God is interested in reaching people in terms of what they understand best--even if it happens to be something on which people in this country frown. But if you find (as we did) that the missionary prohibition of such things as dancing, polygamy, and various other customs is giving the people the heretical viewpoint that God accepts only those who obey the white man's rules and customs, fight it with all your might and point your people to the Bible under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and their own common sense as an authority far higher than the white man. And never forget that Jesus spoke of God as judging us according to the judgment we mete out to others. We seem to forget that we are still sinners through and through and ourselves as much (or more) in need of God's mercy as those to whom we go. Who am I who have never been able to adequately solve the sin problem in my own life to pronounce judgment on peoples whose life and customs I neither fully know nor understand?

The replies to your questionnaire are but symptomatic of the much deeper problem of the distorted impression we as missionaries are giving wherever we go because we think that Christianity is ours to do as we please with--to pick and choose for emphasis only that with which we agree and to which we can conform with a minimum of discomfort. Then, in lands where people listen to us not for what we have to say but because our skins are the same color as those who conquered them, we bend our every effort to press Africans into our mold and think that thereby we are making Christians out of them!!

I'm bitter--bitter as only one can be who has given

his life to serve God and found himself a part of an organization dedicated to the heresy that identifies God's ways with those of white men. Bitter as only one can be who has counselled for hours with black men whose minds are permanently scarred by contact with well-meaning but blind missionaries whose only idea is that these people must be wrested from their past at any cost because God can only endorse white man's ways. . . . Yet the black man has no voice even in "his" "indigenous" church--as long as the white man is around, he pulls the strings.

. . . There may be many things in their lives which we could never accept permanently for ourselves. But when God sought to reach us, He came down to our level, adapted Himself to our understanding and still said "Come . . . all" without listing a whole lot of prerequisites to our being acceptable to Him. And in lieu of any other method of reaching man I give myself as best I can to incarnating myself in the life of the people to whom I go--without condemning, looking down, regarding my ways as more acceptable to God, treating them as deviants or as those who should have known better than to live the way they do. But recognizing honestly that they are but following the customs of their fathers even as I am but following the customs of my fathers. I can no more take credit for the good in my ways than I can blame them for any bad in their ways. One thing only counts for me and for them: that is that I respond properly, as best I know how to, to the mercy of the God who stands equally in condemnation of my culture and of his, yet is willing and anxious to enter and use both his and mine for the sake of reaching him and me.

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Chin up--knees down.

Charles Kraft

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APPENDIX II

AMERICAN ATTEMPTS AT DANCE INTERPRETATIONS OF BACH'S "JESU JOY OF MAN'S DESIRING" AND MALOTTE'S "LORD'S PRAYER"¹

"JESU, JOY OF MAN'S DESIRING" by Bach

Choreography by Marian Van Tuyl and
Orchesis of the University of Chicago
Simplified by Margaret Fisk

Half of the rhythmic choir (ten or twelve participate) are the worshipers, who move only to the vocal parts; the other half, the circling group, moves only to the instrumental music between the vocal parts, weaving a pattern in a light running movement with hands joined.

There are eight vocal units in this Bach chorale and the worshipers move in these eight units as follows:

1. Walk in from a side entrance, attention of the worship center.
2. Come to the chancel steps and kneel on the last note with heads bowed.
3. Reach up gradually toward a focal point, such as a cross, heads back, arms outstretched, and then bow head as arms come down.
4. Rise and cross to the other side of the chancel, with eyes on the focal point.
5. Move forward diagonally toward back center with upstage arm raised, then lowered on last note.
6. Lift both arms high, heads back, progress to center back, reach up, then lower arms. (Kneel if worship center is not above the group).
7. Turn and walk diagonally toward the original entrance for exit. Heads up and eyes on farther focus, weight forward.
8. Exit with same pattern.

The circling group (or runners) acts as a balance in

¹Taken from Margaret Palmer Fisk's The Art of the Rhythmic Choir (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1950), pp. 191-193.

pattern to the "worshippers" group. The leader of the circling group is the key person always directing the chain of girls in the designs. Hands are joined except during 5 and 6. They move with a smooth running step.

There are eight instrumental interludes in which the runners form designs. The runners move with vocal units only in (5) and (6), as described above.

- A. Runners enter before (1), weave in front of the chancel, end center facing chancel steps. As worshippers enter on (1), runners raise arms slowly and lower them slowly.
- B. Runners form circle back to back a little to the side away from worshippers (2).
- C. Runners weave about in a longer run, end in circle facing in. As worshippers raise their arms in (3), circle group raise their arms.
- D. Runners make short run to opposite side ending in semi-circle.
- E. Following worshippers (4) design, runners weave a long run, end in compact group balancing the worshippers group.
- F. Runners identify their movements with those of worshippers who are opposite them; move in design of (5) and (6) on the opposite side of the chancel, but gradually merge with worshippers at center back.
- G. Runners join hands and form a semicircle, away from worshippers.
- H. Runners form circle back to back.
- I. Runners weave about in a long run and exeunt.

"THE LORD'S PRAYER" by Malotte, with choreography
by Evelyn Broadbent

This illustrates simple choral symbolic movement. The group stays in a wide semi-circle behind the solo interpreter, in center.

Before Introduction girls enter and kneel together in a semi-circle, with center girl a few steps in front.

INTRODUCTION	All fold hands in prayer and bow heads.
OUR FATHER	Eyes are raised upward.
WHICH ART IN HEAVEN	Center girl raises arms straight upward, separating them on the word "heaven."
HALLOWED BE THY NAME	Center girl brings hands before her face, leaning backward until

THY KINGDOM COME

THY WILL BE DONE

ON EARTH

AS IT IS IN HEAVEN

GIVE US THIS DAY OUR
DAILY BREAD

AND FORGIVE US OUR
DEBTS AS WE FORGIVE
OUR DEBTORS

AND LEAD US NOT INTO
TEMPTATION

BUT DELIVER US FROM
EVIL

FOR THINE

IS THE KINGDOM, AND
THE POWER AND THE
GLORY, FOREVER

AMEN

she sits on her heels. Then she bends forward in a low bow with her arms extended forward.

Center girl rises to a straight kneeling position--arms are open wide with the desire to clasp humanity close.

On the word "will" lift left knee so that by end of phrase center girl will be standing.

Center girl--eyes upward, arms downward.

Girls in back, having dropped arms on "earth," rise to a standing position, eyes upward. Center girl circles arms upward and down. Cup hands in raised position as if to receive. Center girl only, takes three steps forward.

Cross arms on breast--look upward. Uncross arms to the side--look downward. Center girl takes two steps backward.

Girls in back take one step to the right, arms to the left as if pushing away. Center girl does the same, only crossing legs in four steps to the right.

Arms move from left position to a strong reaching upward to the right.

Arms stretched wide open, then back to original places.

Arms circle down and cross in front upward.

Arms gradually lower until four counts after the music has completely stopped. Head is bowed.

APPENDIX III

DESCRIPTION OF TOGO "DANCE CANTATA" ENTITLED

"ISAAC AND REBEKKA" AS REPORTED, IN GERMAN,

BY MISSIONARY ERICH VIERIG, LOME, TOGO

Zum ersten Weihnachtstag abends hatte uns der Leiter einer der 5 Kirchenchöre an der Hauptkirche in Lome zu einer Kantate eingeladen. Ich hatte mir darunter einen Liederabend vorgestellt und war daher höchst überrascht über das, was sich dann wirklich abends im katholischen Foyer, der grössten Halle von Lome, abspielte. Der Kirchenchor stellte die Geschichte von Isaak und Rebekka in Bild und Ton dar. Die erste Szene war ein Fest im Hause Abrahams. Der Vorhang ging auf, und unseren Augen bot sich ein farbenprächtiges Bild. Sorgfältig femalte Kulissen mit Palmen, Rundhütten und Sand, davor der Kirchenchor, die Mädchen singend und tanzend nach dem Tam-Tam und einem Metallschlagzeug im Hintergrund, in der Mitte ein Mann in einem roten Gewand mit einer Papierkrone und einem grotesken Bart: Abraham. Alles wogte und wiegte hin und her und die Mädchen sangen dazu: "Wir freuen uns, im Hause unseres Vaters Abraham zu sein." Man wurde sehr schnell von dem heissen Rhythmus gepackt, bis die Musik plötzlich jäh abbrach, Abraham schwach wurde, seinen Sohn Isaak rief und ihm mitteilte, er sei nun alt und schwach und habe Sorgen um seine Nachkommenschaft, da Isaak bis jetzt noch keine Frau habe. Isaak, ein junger Mann im blauen Gewand und weissen Turban, erklärte sich gleich bereit, eine von den Mädchen des Landes zu nehmen. Abraham beschwor ihn aber, ein Mädchen aus seinem eigenen Geschlecht und aus seiner Verwandtschaft zu nehmen. Im nächsten Bild traten Abraham, Isaak und Elieser mit seinem Gefolge auf. In ausgezeichneten Solo-Partien verpflichtete Abraham Elieser, in das Land Mesopotamien zu ziehen, um für Isaak die richtige Frau zu finden. Zwischendurch wurde immer wieder ein Choral gesungen. Abraham, Elieser und das Gefolge sanken auf die Knie, um Gott um ein glückliches Gelingen zu bitten. Dann wurde in einigen Bildern die Reise Eliesers geschildert, der mit zwei Knechten unterwegs war, plumpen Burschen, die das Publikum durch derbe Spässe belustigten, bis man schliesslich im Lande Mesopotamien angekommen war. Nun begann wider ein wilder Tanz. Die Mädchen aus Mesopotamien waren auf der Suche nach Wasser. Wir sahen nur noch ein Gewoge von Farben. Schliesslich traf Elieser mit seinen Knechten ein und versuchte, etwas zu trinken zu bekommen. Die Mädchen verschwanden

fluchtartig, und die Männer legten sich schlafen. Dann kamen vereinzelt Wasserholerinnen. Jedesmal, wenn ein Mädchen zum Brunnen kam, weckte der eine Knecht Elieser sehr unsaft auf und machte ihn darauf aufmerksam, Zwei Mädchen weigerten sich, Wasser zu geben, weil sie keine Zeit hätten. Bis dann endlich die richtige, Rebekka, auf den Plan trat. Sie war gleich dadurch erkenntlich, dass sie ein Kleid in den togolesischen Landesfarben trug, einen grün-gelben Rock und eine rote Bluse mit einem weissen Stern auf der Brust. Sie gab den Männern zu trinken und erklärte ihren Gespielinnen singend, sie müsse in ein fremdes Land ziehen und könne nicht mehr zu Hause bleiben. Die Gespielinnen versuchten, sie von ihrem Vorhaben abzuhalten. All das wurde getanzt in immer wilderen Rhythmen und nach einem Potpurri verschiedener Melodien gesungen. Am eigentümlichsten wurden wir berührt, als das Brautgeschenk im Hause Labans übergeben wurde. Alle begannen wieder zu singen und zu tanzen "Ach Herr Gott, wir loben dich" nach der Melodie "Horch, was kommt von draussen rein." Es war nicht das erste deutsche Volkslied, das verwandt wurde. Viele deutsche und englische Melodien hatte der Kirchenchorleiter, der alles selbst komponiert und zusammengestellt hatte, benutzt, aber er hat eigentlich trotz allem afrikanische Musik im Jahre 1960 daraus gemacht. Noch erstaunter waren wir, als dann mit einem Male die Weise des Pilgerchors aus dem Tannhäuser erklang und zwar als Solo-Arie der Rebekka, die Gott dafür dankte, dass er ihr seinen Weg gezeigt habe. Immer wieder die gleichen Kontraste: Wildes rhythmisches Tanzen, dann plötzlich eine völlig getragene Solopartie oder ein mit erhobenen Armen als Choral gesungenes Gebet. Das Publikum ging immer stärker mit. Von Zeit zu Zeit lief eine Frau auf die Bühne, um einem der singenden und tanzenden Chormädchen ein Geldstück in die Hand zu drücken. Vor allem musste sich ein kleines Mädchen von höchstens 8 Jahren später einen Korb umhängen, um all das Geld fassen zu können. Die Mädchen im Chor waren alle mit viel Schmuck versehen und weiss geschminkt. Eine gute Szene war dann noch, wie Isaak und Rebekka sich zum ersten Male sahen. Auch hier wieder die eigenartige Mischung von ernster Berichterstattung der biblischen Geschichte und Freude an der dramatischen, oft burlesken Darstellung. So pries Isaak Gott, dass er ihm endlich Rebekka geschickt habe; und aus dem Lobpreis heraus entwickelte sich das Frage- und Antwortspiel: "Liebst du mich?"--"Ich liebe dich!" Das Tanzen erreichte seinen Höhepunkt, als die Hochzeit im Hause Abrahams gefeiert wird. Nachdem Rebekka in unglaublicher Gewandtheit eine Zeit lang in der Kniebeuge getanzt hatte, machte es der ganze Chor nach, und in immer neuen Tanzbewegungen formierten sich neue Gruppen. Der Text wurde immer knapper. "Gott, wir danken Dir, Gott, wir danken Dir!" Zum Schluss hörte man nur noch das Wort

"Mawu" (Gott) heraus. Schliesslich endete das Ganze auf dem Höhepunkt ziemlich abrupt. Pastor Ataklo hatte uns alles ins Deutsche übersetzt, so dass wir ausgezeichnet folgen konnten. Ich stellte mir anschliessend die Frage "Ist das nun eigene afrikanische Gestaltung oder Entartung?" Dass verschiedene ausländische Melodien jeder Freis-
lage verwertet wurden, ist dabei nicht einmal der Haupt-
punkt, der einen zu solcher Frage veranlasst; denn der
Komponist hat sie so souverän verändert oder in afrikan-
ische Tänze umgeformt, dass diese ganze Musik ein Ausdruck
dessen ist, was heute in Afrika da ist. Die Frauen, die
man auf der Strasse sieht, tragen auch wie früher ihre
Schüsseln auf dem Kopf, aber der Inhalt, den sie verkaufen,
besteht heute vielfach aus Rasielklingen, Zigaretten und in
diesen Tagen besonders oft aus Feuerwerkskörpern oder
Streichhölzern. Die Frage ist vielmehr, ob nicht der wilde
Tanz und die unbändige Freude am Darstellen die Überhand
über den Inhalt der biblischen Geschichte gewinnen. Aber
wahrscheinlich ist das völlig abstrakt und europäisch ge-
dacht. Pastor Ataklo jedenfalls fand es ausgezeichnet,
und--das muss ich ehrlich gestehen--ich im Grunde auch.
Ich habe so mitgeschwungen und zum Teil auch mitgesungen,
dass während der Vorstellung sogar einmal der Sessel unter
mir zusammenbrach.

1. "Mawu" (Gott) heraus, 8. Sept.

Music by Arubangaleky

Words by Ugo Sakada

2. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

19th & 20th Century Traditional

Arranged by Kasso Guyana

From the 2nd Psalm

Solo (Tenor)

Accompaniment (Violin)

III. (Before Scene III of "Mary Magdalene")

1. "Come unto Lord Jesus"

Music by J. Martin

Words by Kasso Guyana

Solo (Soprano)

2. "Rest from God above"

19th Century Traditional

Words by Shin-ichi Kitagaki

Arranged by Ugo Sakada

Solo (Soprano)

IV. (During time between Scenes III and IV of "Mary Magdalene")

APPENDIX IV

PROGRAM NOTES FROM THE JAPANESE PROTESTANT

CENTENNIAL: "DANCE OF MARY MAGDALENE"

- I. 1. Prelude
2. "Methinks I Hear the Full Celestial Choir"
Music by William Crotch
Words by Kooichi Matsuda
Solo (Bass)
3. "A Mighty Fortress is our God"
Music by Martin Luther
Words by Martin Luther
Accompaniment Brass Band
- II. (Curtain time between Scene I and II) of "Mary Magdalene"
1. "Incline Thine Ear, O Lord"
Music by Arukangelsky
Words by Ugo Nakada
2. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"
From a Hebrew Traditional
Arranged by Masao Okuyama
From the 22nd Psalm
Solo (Tenor)
Accompaniment (Violin)
- III. (Before Scene III of "Mary Magdalene")
1. "Come unto Lord Jesus"
Music by R. Martin
Words by Masao Okuyama
Solo (Soprano)
2. "Sent from God Above"
Okinawa Traditional
Words by Shin-ichi Niigaki
Arranged by Ugo Nakada
Solo (Soprano)
- IV. (Curtain time between Scenes III and IV of "Mary Magdalene")

1. "Lord Jesus, Thou hast died for me"
Music by Takeji Uno
Words by Masao Okuyama
 2. "Christ, who, being in the form of God"
Music by Masao Okuyama
Philippians 2:6-11
Solo (Bass)
- V. (Curtain time between Scenes IV and V of "Mary Magdalene")
1. "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross"
Gregorian Melody
Japanese Hymnal 142
 2. "Ye Sons and Daughters"
15th century French hymn
Arranged by George Lynn
Words by Masao Okuyama
 3. "Victory"
Palestrina--W. Monk
Japanese Hymnal 146
Accompaniment Brass Band

The Yokohama Christian Choir
Directed by Masao Okuyama

Explanation of "Mary Magdalene"

Scene I

The scene is the official residence of the Roman governor of Galilee in the town of Magdala on the shores of the lake of Galilee. Mary of Magdala is a dancer of such personal reputation that she is said to be possessed by seven devils. In the midst of a dissolute drinking party she so dances that she seems to symbolize the renant power of evil.

Scene II

As the next step in her life, Mary of Magdala moves on to the capital city of Jerusalem. In Jerusalem the scholars of the party of the Pharisees, out of enmity to the Galileean prophet Jesus and thinking to trap Him with

an insoluble problem, lay hold of Mary as the perfect foil for their plan and bring her before Jesus. There they say "Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned; but what sayest thou?" Jesus answered, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." With that all the men, convicted by their conscience, went out one by one, and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before Him. Jesus does not condemn the woman but sends her away with the warning of love. Mary weeps with gratitude.

Scene III

Mary of Magdala, moved to the depths of her being by the loving forgiveness of Christ, returns to Galilee. There in the presence of Christ she deeply repents her past life and self and is filled with thanks. This is the opportunity for Jesus to drive the seven devils from her, after which she receives the Word, "Thy sins are forgiven thee." The scene is the house of Simon in Bethany.

Mary comes to the feet of the Lord bearing the alabaster box of precious ointment and pours it on His feet. Judas of Iscariot rebukes this deed, but the Lord receives it as a most fitting offering for Himself as He is about to die on the cross. Judas leaves and Mary falls at Jesus' feet. At this time a vision appears of the coming suffering of the cross.

Scene IV

The presupposed though invisible background is the place of execution, the hill of Golgatha in the outskirts of Jerusalem. In the middle is the cross, the robe is taken from the Lord. While Mary comes close to the foot of the cross and is standing there in grief, Roman soldiers quarrel over the dividing of the robe. Mary inwardly rebels at the mockery of the soldiers, but on hearing a word from Christ on the cross, she is profoundly moved and kneels. On hearing again the word from the Lord, Mary reaches out her hands to try to touch the Lord's feet.

Scene V

The scene is the rock cave where Jesus had been buried. Early in the morning Mary of Magdala comes to the tomb to express her grief. She is astonished to see the empty tomb.

Mary weeps with deepest feeling. As the voice of the resurrected Christ is heard, Mary addresses her Lord. Mary dances with excess of joy. The tomb fades away and she is surrounded by angels.

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