

“Dance Teams?”¹

Yes that’s right, Christian universities now have “*dance*” teams that even perform at chapel services! Nearly two decades ago I viewed an article from *Cornerstone University’s* official Internet website. The title was: “*Student Organizes Fine Arts for Worship.*” It told of a female student who...

“...has been helping to implement new elements of worship on campus this year (2003). She commented: ‘*Cornerstone wants to recognize that God is the originator of fine arts... and we can use the gifts that He has given us with pure hearts, to present a beautiful incense of worship.*’” The article continues: “Students may have been noticing some exciting changes in recent years with regard to chapel and fine arts. During the praise chapel on Sept. 19, 2003, the worship included a power point presentation (computer graphics), drama, poetry and dance. ‘*Dance is very tainted by the secular world,*’ Baker points out. ‘*It was originally something that God created to bring glory to Himself.*’ ...Baker is following ‘in the footsteps’ of those who have created Cornerstone’s first dance teams last spring and have presented the annual creative arts festival for the past several years, an event that includes many forms of display and performance arts. Baker, a member of the worship dance team last year, is now leading this group, one of five dance groups on campus this year. ‘*Dancing itself is not a sin; it is the impure motives that we harbor that bring dishonor to God,*’ Baker says. ‘*It’s time for Christianity to reclaim dance and use it to bring God complete praise.*’”²

It is not my desire here to engage in a major discussion of dancing. However I would like to make several observations by way of refutation:

1) Miss Baker’s statement that “*dance has been very tainted by the secular world*” is reason enough, biblically speaking, to avoid it (e.g. “*Abstain from all appearance of evil*”- I Thess. 5:22; “*Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him...*”- I Jn. 2:15-17; Rom. 13:14; 14:22-23; I Cor. 8:9; Gal. 5:13; etc). Paul strongly warns believers against doing anything that will possibly cause a Christian to stumble (Rom. 14:13-15, 21).

2) I am also not personally aware of any place in Scripture where it says that God created dance to bring glory to Himself. For those who would like more information on this subject, years ago the Institute in Basic Life Principles produced a brief but helpful study guide on dancing in Scripture. They contended that both *sensual* and *sincere* dancing was performed in Bible times-but that all dancing of either kind resulted either in God’s judgment, or in unintended but costly tragedy and sorrow.³ In addition they maintained that the references in Psalms 149 & 150 which appear to endorse dancing as a form of praise to God, may not even refer to dancing at all, since the word for *dance* that is found there (Heb. “*machol*”) possibly refers to a musical instrument (pictured). Their conclusion: “*There is no scriptural basis for either sincere or sensual dancing.*”⁴

3) Dr. Peter Masters, writing in the Sword & Trowel has an interesting discussion about music and dance in the Church. He points out that part of the problem is due to the fact that **many do not realize that there was a major difference between instruments and behaviour allowed to be used in the Temple (e.g. only four, out of all the instruments listed in Scripture were allowed to be played there), **and those allowed for****

¹ This is a brief excerpt from a lengthy (52pp) paper written in 2003, titled “*The Four Groups in Protestant Christianity Today,*” by Rev. Mike Edwards. (P.O. Box 127, St. Vincent, West Indies) –revised October, 2008. Note: British spelling used throughout.

² Cornerstone University website, “News-Current News” p. 1, 10th October, 2003. Explanatory note: Cornerstone University was formerly known as Grand Rapids Baptist College, and was previously associated with the General Association of Regular Baptist Churches (GARBC), and considered a fundamentalist school. However they voluntarily severed connections with the GARBC several years ago. They have since gone much farther down the road of New Evangelicalism, allowing women to preach in chapel services as well as one of the most well-known “Emerging Church” advocates, etc. For a fuller discussion of Cornerstone see my paper “The Four Groups in Protestant Christianity Today.”

³ “*The Testimony of Scripture Regarding Dancing.*” Institute in Basic Life Principles: Oak Brook, Illinois, 1989.

⁴ Ibid, p. 4

national and civic festivals. In other words, certain instruments and behaviours were allowed in festivities akin to parades and civic celebrations that were never allowed in the house of God!⁵

4) I would also point out that the CU student's statement that "*Dancing is not a sin; it is the impure motives that we harbor that bring dishonor to God*" sounds plausible-but in reality is devoid of any real meaning. **If all that matters are a person's motives, one can justify almost any behaviour.** To illustrate, I'm reminded of an incident that I heard of and which occurred several decades ago in Minnesota. A Lutheran pastor gave communion to a couple. That, in itself, would not be newsworthy. The reason it made the news is that the couple took communion while they were both completely naked. The pastor justified it by saying, "*I felt that they were very devout, very sincere*" (i.e. their motives were pure!). Quite frankly, motives prove very little. You can't see motives. A very well-known Christian pastor & author stated in one of his books: "**Sincerity is the most overrated virtue today!**" A person may sincerely believe he can fly (i.e. his motives are pure). But it still won't change the fact that if he jumps off a building we'll scrape his broken body off the sidewalk down below and take it to the morgue.

5) Finally, I challenge the CU student's statement, "*It's time for Christianity to reclaim dance and use it to bring God complete praise.*" **I don't believe praise to God has been incomplete until now, when dancing has entered the church.** Nor do I believe that God is in need of anything, or that He's been frustrated up in heaven because He's been waiting for us to bring Him "*complete*" praise. I see nothing in Scripture that says God has been cheated out of part of the praise due Him because we haven't been dancing. In fact I'm quite unclear how watching a bunch of people, especially young women, twirl, spin, and prance in front of a congregation, helps the audience to think of God and praise Him better-if at all? In light of the results of some of the dances in Scripture, I would suggest that the very opposite might easily be the case (e.g. Ex. 32:19-28; I Sam. 30:16; Job 21:11-15; Mt. 14:6-ff; II Sam. 6:14 cf. v. 20 & I Chron. 15:29 cf. Job 31:1; etc.).

⁵ "*Worship in the Melting Pot-Brass, Strings & Percussion.*" by Dr. Peter Masters. Sword & Trowel. The Metropolitan Tabernacle: London, England, 1998, No. 4, pp. 5-8. A much more extensive discussion by Masters can be found in a book by the same title ("*Worship in the Melting Pot*", 148pp.), which has subsequently been published by the Metropolitan Tabernacle Bookshop.