

# THE BAPTIST AND THE METHODISTS JOIN THE PENTECOSTALS IN DANCE

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Dancing was brought into the annual Memphis conference of the United Methodist Church held at Collierville United Methodist Church last fall. Staff writer David Waters for the *Commercial Appeal* covered the event and also gave some historical context for the phenomenon, “For centuries, dance fell out of favor in the church. It was seen as pagan, vulgar, secular, trivial.

“In the frontier revivals of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century and then in the Pentecostal and charismatic movements of the past century, people began to move around in worship again.

“Now, dance is returning to liturgy. Liturgical dance is becoming more and more popular, especially in mainline churches....”

The Baptists have now joined the movement toward incorporating dancing into their services with the approval of former Southern Baptist Convention President and “Pastor” of the 25,000 member Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, Adrian Rogers. His article in the *Commercial Appeal*, January 13, 2002, was titled “Dancing for glory of God, as an expression of art, is appropriate.” Within the article he opined, “If we forbid art, we may eliminate one of the best tools to reach a lost world for Christ’s sake. If we do, we have surrendered art, one of God’s greatest gifts, to the enemy. Art is at its finest when it brings glory to God.”

The Methodists gave the premise for dancing succinctly, “Liturgical dance takes place within worship. It’s not a performance. It’s an act of worship, a form of prayer or praise or thanksgiving through movement.” David Waters’ discussion in the *Commercial Appeal* article began with the statement, “They can’t express all their love, their gratitude, their joy with words.” A representative from the Methodist Church reportedly said, “Words aren’t enough.”

The growing use of dancing in denominational worship is a concern to members of the churches of Christ because of the tendency for some to want to be “like all the nations” (I Sam. 8:5), the application being that some desire to be like all the denominations! The denominations over the years have become more like the Roman Catholic Church in its infatuation with art. Rogers mentioned music,

singing, painting, sculpture, and poetry along with dancing as “tools to reach a lost world for Christ’s sake.” Yet, the Bible still says, “For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you. God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things” (Acts 17:23-25).

Worship that is acceptable and appropriate to God must be authorized by his word, the Bible. The Son of God said, “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). Since God does not authorize a particular practice, for example dancing in worship, then it stands to reason that he does not regulate the practice, and even Rogers admitted in the article under investigation that dancing “can be used to either glorify God or satisfy man’s hedonistic desires.” If dancing is not regulated by God’s word, then what keeps it from being pagan, vulgar, secular, trivial, hedonistic, and sexual in nature? Those advocating unauthorized, unregulated dancing in worship fit the description mentioned by the apostle Peter, “For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage” (II Pet. 2:18-19).