

CHAPTER NO.IIIDANCE IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH

We have already noted the importance given to dance and its significance in the Sacred Scriptures of the Christians. And evaluated its role in understanding and comprehending the Almighty. Here, in this chapter we will trace the historical development, growth and decline of Sacred Dance in the life of the Church, especially in its liturgy and worship. We will find out and explore the factors that led to the origin of the movements like Hassidicism, Shakers etc. and their impact and contribution to the life of the Church.

Commenting on the changing relationship of dance and Christian religion, Nancy Brooks Schmitz writes, "Western Civilization's relationship with Sacred Dance has changed with the evolving theology of Christianity and its interpretation of Biblical sources. The first five centuries of Christianity firmly established ritual Church dance as

a way of expressing joy, a way of salvation, and a way of praise. The most common acceptable form of Sacred Dance was in imitation of the angels although other forms did exist. Early Christian dance served as a living experience of the mysteries of the faith and of the joy involved in its revelations. However, the period in the Church history between the sixth and fifteenth century was marked by ambivalent attitudes towards Sacred Dance and dance in general. This ambivalence survived in the religious traditions of modern times. It is only in the twentieth century that dance has once again begun to find an acceptable and welcome entry into religious worship".⁽¹⁾

DANCE IN THE EARLY CHURCH:

The Greco-Roman world, before it embraced Christianity, was rooted in religious rituals among which dance was one of the main forms of expression and experience. In the first century Christianity emerged in its simple form as a religion. However, it had strong inclinations towards

the worship pattern of the Jews who had dance in their religious life. Hence, these factors influenced the early Church to include dance in their religious celebrations and worship.

Christian tradition, rooted firmly in the Scriptures, adapted the use of Sacred Dance as heritage belonging to the holy people of God. In the second century, children's chorus played musical instruments, sang, and danced as a part of the services and the people danced at the end of prayer as well as in connection with Baptism.⁽²⁾ Historian Tertullian (2nd century) tells us that Christian congregations danced to the singing of hymns. Clement of Alexandria (+ around 215 A.D.) speaks of the dancing which accompanied prayer and explains its meaning: "Prayer is a dialogue with God. Even if we speak silently while murmuring or without opening our lips, we have prayed internally. God always listens to all internal conversation. That is why we raise our head and hands towards the heavens and move our feet

to the last movement of prayer, accompanying the movement of our thought towards the intelligible essence. We endeavour, through that, to detach ourselves from our bodies with words, we raise our winged soul to heavens".⁽³⁾

In the Eastern Orthodox Church, group dance (Xopos) was very much encouraged. A prominent theologian of the Eastern Orthodox Church Gregory Nazianzus (329-388 A.D) who was the Bishop of Constantinople advised that performing triumphant ring dances was the proper way to celebrate Easter. Another doctor of the Eastern Church, Basil the great (344-407 A.D.) urged his people to perform the ring dance (Xopos). John Chrysostom (345-407) Bishop of Constantinople, blessed the performance of the ring dances (Xopos).

In the West, group dance (Chorea) continued to command respect and was understood in a most symbolic way.

St. Ambrose (340-397) Bishop of Milan and his student St. Augustine praised bodily dance and encouraged the people

to understand the dance of Psalms in a symbolic way.⁽⁴⁾

Eusebius of Caesarea (+339 A.D.) writes how dance was performed by the Christians to honour God. "All was filled with light and it is with smiling faces, sparkling eyes that they regarded one another, scarcely lowering their eyes, with dancing choruses, hymns in the cities and country, they honoured God, the sovereign king".⁽⁵⁾

Many feasts were accompanied with religious dances. The feast of the martyrs was celebrated with dances as Gregory of Nazianzen (+390 A.D.) writes, " We assemble, we hasten together. This is truly a solemn celebration, pleasing to Christ. We honour or we shall truly honour the martyrs; we truly dance some triumphant dances ".⁽⁶⁾ Gregory himself later calls martyrs as " dancers of the Holy Spirit"⁽⁷⁾ The treatise on virginity which is attributed to St. Athanasius calls virgins " dancers of Christ".⁽⁸⁾

Curt Sachs⁽⁹⁾ in his book 'World History of Dance' quotes a gnostic hymn of the 2nd century to show that dance

was a part and parcel of the rituals of the early Church. Sachs tells us in this connection that there is an apocryphal saying of Jesus, "whosoever dances not, knows not the way of life." He then gives an interesting quotation "whosoever knoweth the power of dance, knoweth the power of God". St. Basil asked St. Gregory (4th century), "what could be more blessed than to imitate on earth the rhythm of the angels?" In the 7th century, St. Isidore at the suggestion of the council of Toledo, composed sacred ritual dance for performing in the Cathedral. All these above references are compelling proof that dance in those vital first centuries of the Christian religion was used as the chief expression of ritual and worship.⁽¹⁰⁾

CHURCH AND DANCE IN THE MIDDLE AGES:

Dance which was a part and parcel of the religious life of the early Christian was looked down upon in the middle ages. This attitude prevailed almost till the 15th century. Many factors led to the decline of dance in the

Church. During this period dance took new directions and developments. However, it continued to exist in the Church in an ambivalent form even during the above period.

DECLINE OF SACRED DANCE IN THE CHURCH:

The course of the history of theatre and dance from the 5th century onwards was shaped and coloured by the philosophy, laws and rituals of the church. Although many historians tend to recognize only the restrictive influence of the Church on dance, a closer look at these secondary sources themselves, with support from primary sources, reveal that the Church actually enacted a context for new flowerings of social, theatre and religious dance.⁽¹¹⁾ The sanctions of the Church, attitude of the clergy, new spiritual outlook etc. were responsible for the decline and new developments in the Sacred Dance of the Church, both in its understanding and practice.

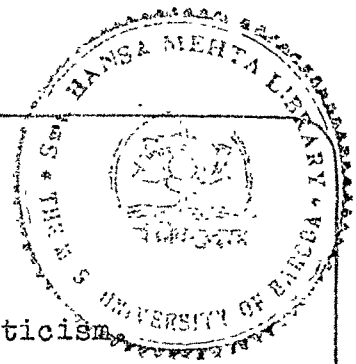
PHILOSOPHICAL INFLUENCE:

The influence of the Greek thought, especially the

principle of duality; body and soul; good and evil championed by Aristotle and Plato which became part of the scholastic philosophy minimised the use of the body and senses and glorified the spirit or the soul. This led to the emphasis on the abstract realities and suppression of all that was pleasurable and connected to the body. As a result of this new attitude and understanding, Sacred Dance lost its place and honour in the Church.

Old Testament aspersions on the dance, e.g. the legend of the Golden Calf and Isaih 's condemnation of women mincing and tinkling their feet (Isaih 3:5) were echoed negatively in the New Testament stories as Salome's supposedly lewd dancing before Herod. St. Paul a converted Jew gave a severe doctrine of the sins of the flesh, attempted to root out such sects as the Gnostics, who had an apocryphal text in which Christ leads his disciples in dance. (12)

In the fifth century dance and theatre in Rome had



degenerated to a spectacle of brutality and eroticism.

Early Christians having suffered under these Roman excesses condemned the Roman way of life. Because dance was an integral part of Roman life, dance as a spectacular entertainment was condemned by the Church Fathers.⁽¹³⁾

Besides, the over-stress on asceticism that crept into the Church during this period discouraged the use and practice of Sacred Dance in the Church.

CHURCH AUTHORITIES CONDEMN DANCE:

Many of the medieval theologians and church authorities condemned dancing as immoral. With the fall of Roman empire in 470 A.D., the political vacuum was filled in by the Church. Now, besides the spiritual leadership, the Church became a teacher and law giver, hence regulated all forms of activities of the people. This included legislation on dance. Doug Adams says that " the Catholic objection to popular participation in dance reveals a political dimension of dancing. The superior position

which clergy in the Catholic Church maintained over their laity had required that dancing together be suppressed as too equalizing and revolutionary.⁽¹⁴⁾ The prohibition was also intended to keep the Christians from the close contact of other social classes and non-Christians. The Church authorities considered dance as the work of the devil. They decried the fact that dancing took place on pilgrimage, in cemeteries, churches, taverns, castles and town squares.⁽¹⁵⁾ Prohibition of Sacred Dance was intensified from 5th century onwards. "While the Church hierarchy issued edicts against dance, the priests and monks were reluctant to enforce them. In most cases they continued to ignore the edicts." ⁽¹⁶⁾

The existing peculiar situation in the middle ages gave rise to two different Sacred Dance traditions in the Church. i) Sacred Dance tradition performed by the clergy as part of the service. ii) Sacred Dance tradition performed by the faithful during Church ceremonies or festivals.

SACRED DANCES OF THE CLERGY:

The movements of the Sacred Dances performed by the clergy were ritualized. In most cases the dances were performed in conjunction with saints days, Christmas or Easter. These dances either followed a processional form or round dance form. The movements were symbolic of the theology of the Church. The congregation were merely spectators of a ritual act. During this particular period the Mass developed.⁽¹⁷⁾

THE HOLY MASS:

Mass actually was a disciplined Sacred Dance. Although the Mass is a worship-centred rather than entertainment-centred ritual, it contains the seeds of dramatic elements, e.g. the singing of the Mass, the elevation and consecration of the host, procession of the clergy to the Altar, antiphoral chanting resembling dialogue, the 'plot' or story of Sacred history, the often colourful costumes of the clergy, and Church's architecture which created a stage/audience separation.⁽¹⁸⁾ Mass is also

described as a dance in slow motion. (19)

In the 4th century, Arius, an Alexandrian priest, proposed an overtly dramatic interpretation of the liturgy which included hymns, pantomime and dance. Though his work was condemned and suppressed by the Church authorities, gradually Holy Mass developed around this form of liturgy. The Easter week liturgical celebration was the first portion of Sacred history to receive theatrical form as early as the 7th century. The actual locations of Jerusalem were used for the dramatic presentation of the passion, death and resurrection of Christ. (20)

In 539 A.D. the third council of Toledo issued a warning forbidding dance in the Churches during the vigil of saints' days. In the next century the council forbade the Festival of Fools with its music and dancing. However, in the same century the council suggested that Archbishop Isidore present a ritual rich in Sacred Choreography.

This ritual became part of the Mass known as Mozarabe.

It was used in the seven churches in Toledo and in the

Cathedral of Seville. The dance involved became known as

Los Seises. Its practice continued into the present

century despite all opposing edicts. In fact in the 15th

century Pope Eugenius II ordered this dance to cease.

However, the choristers or choir boys were brought to

Rome where they performed before the Pope who remarked,

' I see nothing in these childrens' dance which is

offensive to God. Let them continue to dance before the

high Altar'. (21)

In the 11th and 12th century Sacred Dances were

performed by different groups of clergy. In Paris choir

boys danced on Innocents' day, the sub-deacons on Epiphany,

the deacons on St.Stephen's day and priests on St.John's

day. (22) With the dawn of the 13th century complete

prohibition of Sacred Dance was ordered by the Church

authorities with numerous editions. The council of Narbonne

attacked Sacred Dance in the Church in the severest terms:

" Since to the dishonour of the Christian name, and in contempt of Holy things, there are performed ring-dances, as well as other improprieties, the council desires to root them out entirely, so that henceforth nobody will dare to dance in a holy temple or a church-yard during service".(23)

The clergy eventually stopped expressive dances during the services and in the Churches but the remnants of the

Sacred Dance can be found in its suppressed form in the Holy Mass even to this day.

ii) SACRED DANCE OF THE FAITHFUL:

This second tradition of Sacred Dance was mostly performed in the processional form and at times in the ring dances. These dances took place not only in the Churches but also in the Church-yards and in the surrounding countryside. They were performed during pilgrimage, processions, weddings, festivals, funerals and other fitting occasions. These dances were often vigorous and spontaneous.

As already cited earlier, from the 6th century onwards the Church tried to discourage, regulate and prohibit these dances. However, the Church did not succeed in controlling these dances as much as it regulated the Sacred Dances performed by the clergy. By the dawn of the 12th century there were extensive miracle plays mostly based on the lives of the Saints. " These displayed a romantic, even sensationalist, slant and were performed in the vernacular outside the church building itself, in an area established as a theatre in the round. More and more, in the reading of these plays, directions for movements and emotional expression were included in the texts. English craft guilds, with Church support, presented the famous Corpus Christi cycle of plays from 1378 to the 16th century. Also called Mystery plays, these plays were performed two months after Easter and involved pageantry, Bible stories and legends and miracles. Actors were paid, minstrels were employed and elements of farce and comedy were included. The increasing independence of drama from

Church liturgy and control was becoming clearly evident. In the late 14th century morality play developed, a theatrical genre wholly outside of the Church itself. These plays told the story of a single Christian in allegorical terms, based on the conflict between good and evil. The devilish figures once again contributed humour, slapstick and satire with the Church itself often the butt of their mimicry".⁽²⁴⁾ The process of Sacred Dance becoming a social and entertainer were apparent in these gradual developments.

With the starting of the Reformation in 1517, the Sacred Dance receded further from the Church and its liturgy. The leaders of the Reformation were highly critical of the Sacred Dances in the Church. At this juncture the Church authorities were firmly emphatic regarding cessation of all dances. Therefore, "dance barred from the Church, and the Church-yard , began to manifest itself either as a theatrical entertainment or as a folk art. It was only

in isolated areas that dance remained a part of the religious worship of the people. Thus it was that the dances of "Los Seises" in the Cathedral of Seville or the Processional dance around the Altar at Echternach, Luxemburg which existed into the present century as remnants of medieval Christianity". (25) Dance which was a religious expression of faith became a source of light entertainment for the people. In the villages dance became a means of socialization and unification in the form of folk-art. The increased industrialization and urbanization took the people further away from the spontaneous expression of one's faith. The religious celebrations deteriorated to a mere ritualized form which was anti-festive and joyless in spirit.

As a result, dance became a means of entertainment for the urban people and it travelled from the Church and Church-yard to the dancing-halls and ball-rooms. In the background of this state of the society a movement called Shakers was started in the Church.

SHAKERS:

It is common name given to the group which styled itself as " United Society of Believers in Christ's second appearing". These Christians used dance as a vehicle for greater spirituality. This group of the Christian community was started in New York in 1776 under the leadership of Ann Lee. " By 1823 the songs, music and dances used in Shakers worship were inseparable forms of expressing praise joy, need or union with God.... All the movements of the dance, the shaking, falling, rolling and whirling were a means to loosen the bodily ties, the sins, and the faults to cause a purification and simplification of the spirit".⁽²⁶⁾

By 1800 set movements were introduced by Father Joseph Meacham which he claimed to have learned from a vision he had where the Angels danced before God. Mother Lucy Wright enlarged the scope of this movements. Dance and music manuals were written down. Hand gestures were fixed for

certain songs. Initially they had simple choreography where they moved forward and backward in steps. This was followed by choreographic patterns like ring-dances and four-square-forms. Later more complex movement patterns like square and compass, walking the narrow path etc. were introduced. They also laid more stress on the emotional aspect in their dances.

After the civil war the Shaker community slowly lost its inner vitality of spirit. Without the spirit their worship became mechanical and the community gradually ceased to exist. Though the vitality of the Shakers lasted little over a century, their child-like mysticism brought new life to the religion both in practice and expression. Their liturgy was spontaneous, creative and emotional in worship which was aptly expressed in song and ecstatic dance.

HASIDISM:

By the 17th century Judaism, the parent religion of

Christianity and Islam also had lost the use of dance in their worship and prayer. It was only in the beginning of 18th century a revivalist religious movement in Judaism led by Israel Ball Shem Tov, called Hasidism stressed the use of dance and singing in their prayer and worship. This movement which was started in Poland spread throughout Eastern Europe, was in opposition to a very scholarly Judaism which preceeded it.⁽²⁷⁾ " Hasidism shifted the emphasis from study to prayer, from head and thought to heart and emotion. As such it developed a technology and a psychology of devotion unparalleled elsewhere in Judaism. Central to this methodology was the use of movement in prayer".⁽²⁸⁾ " The worship dances were led by the Rabbi of the congregation by way of gesture and voice modulation. The circle dancing or "Mechol", which symbolized the circular relationship between man and God, did not always necessarily move counter-clockwise and there was no limit to its participants. When the circle became too crowded another circle would form on the inside; when there was no room

for a massive circle dance, the movements would switch to a "rikud", jumping up and down in the same place symbolic of ladder climbing, until the whole room would pulsate joyously". (29) This movement was very active in the 18th and 19th centuries and brought about important changes in the religious life and attitude of the Jews.

SACRED DANCE IN THE 20TH CENTURY:

Analysing and explaining the state of Sacred Dance and its place in society at the beginning of the 20th century, Nancy Brooks Schmitz writes, " Sacred Dance was nothing more than a relic of the past and a hesitant awaiting of the future. To most people dance was inconceivable as an expression of the holy. Elements of dance appeared in the Church preserved only as relics of the past. These elements were rituals devoid of real meaning. In fact, life itself, so fractionalized between the spirit, the mind and the body, was devoid of real meaning. With this disintegration of the personality,

man had lost an important key to happiness- his humanity. The dualism of medieval Catholicism and the Reformation Churches had given impetus and energy to the development of a higher, more refined culture at the expense of the individual personality. Modern man, a hollow shell, his body, mind and spirit were no longer connected, he was dehumanized and isolated not only from others, but also from himself. Thus man of the 20th century strongly yearned for unity of life, for harmony. It was this search for unity which helped him rediscover the true essence of the dance as an expression of the spirit". (30)

With this background dance as religious expression failed to get its impetus and birth from any religious group. Contrary to the past, this time Sacred Dance received the impetus and rebirth as a way of escape from the existing theatre and classical ballet of the West.

Isadora Duncan was the one who actively brought religion into her classical ballet dance and demonstrated

that dance could be a 'holy pursuit of the highest beauty' and a means to develop higher spirituality. She considered dance as the highest expression of religion".⁽³¹⁾ In the second and third decades of the 20th century Ruth St.Denis and Ted Shawn gave a fresh release of life to religious dance not only by bringing it on the concert stage but also into the churches. Already in 1917 Ted Shawn presented entire Church services in choreographic patterns. In 1947 a dance school, " Church of the Divine Dance" in Hollywood was founded for imparting training in Sacred Dance and for the promotion of it in the society. This new development also paved the way for the modern dance in which the dancers hold that dance is not only the expression of the religious life of man but total being of his. Doris Humphrey, Charles Weidman, Martha Graham, Jose Limon etc. are a few of the many who have developed the above trend under the banner of "Modern Dance".

MORMONISM:

The Mormon Church which was founded by Joseph Smith

in 1839 is formally called the "Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints". Dance was so prominent in this group of Christians that a 'Time' magazine reporter in 1959 called them the "dancingest denomination".(32)

They aim at the increasing of spiritual heritage in dance, art, music , literature, dramatics etc. and experience and share the same with others. Brigham Young, the successor to Joseph Smith wrote, "If thou art merry, praise the Lord with singing, music, dancing and with a prayer of praise and thanksgiving".

There are many active groups from this denomination like " Mutual Improvement Association (MIA) who started the dance festival in 1928 which is continued to the present, the Young Women's Mutual Improvement Association (YWMIA), the Brigham Young Academy of Dance, Provo Utah started in 1890 which became a University in 1913. Besides many performing groups like BYU International Folk Dancers started in 1956 by Mary Bee Jensen,

"Ballroom Dance Team" in 1960, "The Theatre Ballet" in 1968, "Dancers Company" in 1976 under Dee Winterton and Pat Debenham have all originated from the "Brigham Young University".

Sacred Dance of the Mormonism is related to the total man and not just on one aspect or area of his life, i.e. social, psychological, religious etc. However, the stress is being laid on the religious life of man. At present this denomination of Christianity is still active in the United States of America.

SACRED DANCE IN THE CONTEMPORARY CHURCH:

As already cited earlier, Sacred Dance began to be accepted in the Christian circles from the beginning of the 20th century. The Protestant Church authorities indirectly accepted the use of dance in their worship and prayer by the very fact that it was tolerated, at times encouraged and even participated in by them. As early as

1925 these Churches began experiencing the return of dance to their worship.⁽³³⁾ The Catholic Church too with the Vatican II (1965) has thrown open its doors for Sacred Dance. Commenting along this line, the Pastoral Instruction on the Means of Social Communication points out that the "artistic expression both for its own excellence and for what it does for man should be highly appreciated. Of itself, beauty ennobles the mind that contemplates it. The work of the artist can also penetrate and illumine the deepest recesses of human spirit. It can make spiritual reality immediately by expressing it in a way that the senses can comprehend. And as a result of this expression, man comes to know himself better. This is not only a cultural benefit, but a moral and religious one as well".⁽³⁴⁾

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of America in 1978 had the following paragraph in one of the documents:

"processions and interpretations through bodily movements (dance) can become meaningful parts of the liturgical celebration if done by truly competent persons in the

manner that benefits the total liturgical action".⁽³⁵⁾

With the direct or indirect approval and encouragement of the Church authorities and clergy, a new impetus and active involvement by the people in the worship, the need to express freely the religious experience of the faithful has led to the increasing use of dance in the Western, Australian, African, Asian and other Churches of the present day world.

SACRED DANCE AND BIBLICALLY INSPIRED DANCE IN AUSTRALIA

Sacred Dance in Australia could be seen under two main sections.

- i) Sacred Dance of the Natives (Aborigines)
- ii) Sacred Dance based on the Western theatre.

SACRED DANCE OF THE NATIVES:

In Australia the original inhabitants namely the Aborigines and tribal had their own dances. But most Europeans regarded the Sacred rituals of the Aborigines as degenerate. It is not surprising that when missions

were set up to 'civilise' the natives by teaching them Christianity and European ways, many missionaries did all they could to break down Aboriginal culture. It was only in the 1920's when Elkin, an Anglican clergyman and anthropologist conducted research on the Aborigine culture, that a little interest in their music and dances was shown. (36)

In 1947 when Ted Shawn visited Australia and danced Biblical themes, he showed much interest in the ritual dances of the Aborigines. Since the late 1940's several companies in their productions have choreographed the Aboriginal myths, themes and movements. This helped to make the Aborigine culture more popular. Now, for the last two decades dance has been widely used in their worship and liturgy. However, initially there was a high degree of conservatism amongst the Aborigines who took on the European style of worship service introduced many generations ago as being the norm and therefore nearly

as hard to change as their own ritual. (37)

In 1972 Aborigines from all over Australia at a fact-finding meeting at Darwin, Northern Territory, felt that there is no sense of identity at Mass and wanted one that was more like tribal communication which depended more on dance and symbol than on words. (38) As a result of this, in 1973 at the Eucharistic Congress held in Melbourne, 130 Aborigines took part in an aboriginal liturgy that attempted to celebrate the Mass in the cultural tradition of the Northern Aborigines. A crowd of 22,000 clapped in time to the Djanba dance by the Murrumbidgee people from Northern Territory and Western Australia. The Bathurst Islanders danced and mimed the Last Supper. (39) Since the Eucharistic Congress (1973), dance has continued to be an important part of their worship especially in the tribal Mass. At Port Keats, Daly River and other places training courses are being conducted on Sacred Dance by the Church. Rev. Terry Djiniyini has successfully adopted "Bukutup", a cleansing

ceremony dance for Baptism and "Djangkawu" during the ordination ceremony.

SACRED DANCE BASED ON THE WESTERN THEATRE:

As in the West, initially Biblical themes were used in the classical Ballet in the form of modern dance. It is only for the past two or three decades that dance has been used in the Churches of Australia during Mass and other prayer sessions.

In 1914 Maude Allan, a Canadian, danced "Vision of Salome" in Australia which did not get a favourable response. In 1938 Sonia Revid danced on the same theme "Salome" which was not looked upon as controversial. Madame Getrud Bodenwieser who arrived in Australia from Vienna in 1939 choreographed in 1940 the story of "Cain and Abel", a biblical dance drama where the jealousy of Cain climaxes in the killing of his brother Abel. Her pupils have continued her style of dance under the name of 'Bodenwiser Dance Centre' . Shona Mactavish is another

dancer who worked for the promotion of Sacred Dance in Australia. She choreographed in 1966 " Encounter", a story of man's struggle to find God. Besides, there are many other companies who choreographed and presented different Christian themes in their production in the last decades. The Kirsova Ballet established in Sydney by Helen Kirsova presented FAUST in 1940. The Victorian Ballet Guild produced 'Selfish Giant' , based on Oscar Wilde's story of the Child Jesus in 1947 and Eve of St. Agnes, story by Keats, both choreographed by Laurel Martyn. In 1967 Maxwell Collis choreographed THERE IS A SPIRIT :

The National Theatre Ballet produced CRUCIFIX choreographed by Walter Gore in 1952. The Ballet Theatre Le Francais produced in the same year "THE DEATH CELL" on the Sacrament of Penance, directed by Robert Pomie. Australian Ballet Company presented Melbourne Cup in 1962 directed by Rex Reid. The New Dance Theatre presented

"There is a Mountain" on the story of Exodus in 1968,
 choreographed by Ruth Gallene. Australian Contemporary
Dance Company presented 6 Negro spirituals in 1967
 choreographed by Ronnie Arnold. The Australian Dance
Theatre of South Australia started by Elizabeth Dalmar
 and now directed by Jonathan Taylor, produced Doris
 Humphrey's SHAKERS based on the American sect that danced
 to shake off the sin from their bodies. Their present
 repertoire includes Black Angels by the English choreographer
 Bruce, which looks at the fallen angels and the Trauma of
 hell. In 1973 the South Australian Ballet danced Missa
Criola the folk Mass from South Africa. This was
 choreographed by Francis Slatter. In 1978 the West
Australian Ballet Company presented Cage of God on the
 story of Genesis, choreographed by Jack Carter. Graham
 Jones formed his own company Kinetic Energy in Sydney
 and staged his production, Cantate in 1975. At the Sydney
Dance Festival in 1979, the Australian Ballet presented
The Visitation choreographed by Rex Reid.⁽⁴⁰⁾

SACRED DANCE IN THE CHURCHES:

For the last two decades there has been a beginning and increased use of dance in the liturgy. Since the Vat.II (1965) many Catholic parishes do have dances during the Mass. Initially much emphasis was not laid on the techniques and training as it was a bodily expression of prayer. However, for the last decade or so, many worship and training programmes have been on the increase. The Anglican Church has introduced dance in their Mass successfully since 1978. The Methodist Church too has brought dance into their liturgy. In Melbourne, the Burwood Dance Group formed in 1975 regularly participates in the worship dances.

CHRISTIAN DANCE FELLOWSHIP OF AUSTRALIA:

Fifteen people attending the International Society for Education through the Arts (INSEA) in 1978 at Adelaide formed this academy under the initiative of Mary Jones. At present they have more than 400 active members who

come from all parts of Australia. The aim of the organization is to stimulate interest in using movements to celebrate our life and worship together in the Christian community, to increase people's understanding of the theology and history of Dance, to reach those outside the Church with the message of the Gospel presented through dance, drama and mime and to encourage and train individuals and groups in the ministry of dance.

This description of the development of Sacred Dance in Australia underlines the fact that Dance is fast becoming an important and integral part of the worship and liturgy of the Christians of Australia.

SACRED DANCE IN THE AFRICAN CHURCH:

Though the Western religiosity is characterised by the dichotomy of soul and body of the past, the African religious culture is totally innocent of this mode to development. Hence the African Church is naturally more inclined towards the bodily expressions of their religion

especially in the form of dance. However, initially dance did not find its place in the liturgy of these people.

Needless to say that the people, the Europeans who brought Christianity to Africa were the product of the European culture which had come to a saturation point with regard to dance in their religious life because of the developments and reasons already cited earlier. So the African Christian felt frustrated because he had to tear himself away from his own world of culture and be a spectator during the liturgy rather than a pastime part. Commenting, explaining and answering the dilemma of the African Church, the late Cardinal Danielou said, " I simply do not know how the black people could praise God without dancing because dancing is so deeply embedded in their whole being that it forms an integral part of their civilization. In them we rediscover the liturgical meaning of the Sacred Dance.... They need an incarnation of Christianity which is different and which is in

accordance with their instincts and their whole being".⁽⁴¹⁾

This prophetic statement was realised in the guidelines laid down in the documents of Vat.II for the liturgical reforms, where active participation of all the people is stressed.⁽⁴²⁾

In the last two decades there has been a remarkable increase in the use of Sacred Dance in the life of the African Christians. Analysing the African spirituality and its relation to dance, Joseph G.Healey writes, " for the African, religion and life are one. A deep religious sense permeates all the life. The hospitality, the spontaneous petition, the informal sharing and the traditional dancing were all part of the same spiritual experience. The dances were traditional ethnic group dances first performed many years ago by Africans who had never heard of Christ. Performed by Bukiro Christian Community, these dances became a sign of their Christian spirituality, a celebration of their Christian life.

What made the dancing a specifically Christian spiritual experience was not the What (the dances) Who (local Christians) consciously celebrating their joy and unity.... The Christian community prays through drumming, dancing, swaying, clapping and ululation (a traditional way of trilling with the tongue in the mouth)". (43)

In the recent years in Zambia and other countries religious dances have been performed during the church services.⁽⁴⁴⁾ Enumerating the use of dance in Church services in Zaire, Marlene Scholz writes, " Liturgical dance, as practised in Zaire, for example, is distinct from any other. It is characterised by controlled rhythmic movements of the whole body. It is a community dance, never a solo performance. The whole congregation dances at the entrance, offertory and the recessional procession. During the singing, they sway while staying in their places. Some songs are danced by the choir only. Other parts of the Mass, like the Gloria, are danced by

the celebrant and the ministers in the sanctuary. The liturgy of the Poor Clares in Lilongwe, Malawi, is a splendid example of "praising the Lord in your body". The sisters alternate with a choir in dancing various parts of the Mass, they also use movements and gestures for the Kyrie, the Sanctus and Agnus Dei." (45) For the Africans a religious celebration without dance is like a body without life. Sacred Dance in the Church has made the liturgy and religious celebrations more meaningful to the Africans, at present and more dance is found in the African Church celebrations.

CHRISTIANITY IN THAI ART-FORMS:

Like many other Churches, the Thai Church too has been successfully adopting the local art-form to understand, comprehend and share the Gospel experience of Jesus Christ. However, such attempts have come to be accepted and known only in the recent past. In the 1970s Chiang Mai began to experiment the use of Thai folk

musical drama "Ligay", to communicate the Gospel in a manner easily understood and accepted in Thai culture, under the leadership of Rev. Allan Eubank and his wife Joan, at the theological seminary 'Payab'. "Ligay" is an ancient traditional form of Thai Folk art. It embodies music, dance and drama. During the early years, the attempts expanded to include adapting Thai dance forms to praise and proclamation; the use of Northern Thai musical instruments with singers to tell Christian stories in traditional style; and the production of two nationally televised special programmes- one at Christmas and another at Easter.

In 1981 The Christian Communication Institute(CCI) began as an offshoot of a project by the seminary faculty of Payab College, Chiang Mai in North Thailand. By the beginning of 1983 they had already completed five productions on: The Story of a good man who died instead of a bad man- a parable of Christ's dying for man's sins.

The annunciation story told by Angel Gabriel, Lazarus and Rich Man, The Prodigal daughter (in the Gospel it is Prodigal Son), The story of Easter and Story of Joseph. This group has toured U.S.A., Japan and other countries and has numerous performances in the churches of Thailand itself. Rev.Allan Eubank and Joan are still the directors of the group.(46)

SACRED DANCE IN AMERICA:

In the 18th century the American people took a great interest in the artistic forms of dance. The "Shakers" movement viewed dance as a form of worship and practised dance in their religious life. During the end of the 19th century dance was generally neglected. In the 20th century, again great interest in dance was shown by the people. "The Church of Jesus of latter days Saints" (the Mormon Church) laid stress on the bodily forms of worship especially on the Sacred Dance. At present there are numerous liturgical dancers and dance-groups.

Dance in Church has been undergoing a renewal in the last two decades and has gained numerous exponents. Sacred Dance Guild, 124 Fenway, Rockville Centre, New York, 11570, U.S.A. and the Sharing Company, P.O.Box 2224, Austin, Texas 78767, U.S.A publish and distribute books on Sacred Dance and in this way propagate this form of worship.

Liturgical dance proceeds in U.S.A. on both professional and non-professional levels. In the large cities such as New York (the dance capital of the world) and San Francisco there are several notable professional companies functioning independently and give regular worship dances. The Pacific School of Religion in San Francisco offers a doctoral degree study in the subject with some of the country's finest dancers. Yale University Divinity School, 409, Prospect Street, New Haven, Connecticut, 06510 U.S.A has been initiated as an adjunct to the Divinity's Schools Religion and Art programme in 1980; for professional

ministerial training leading to a Master of Divinity degree (in conjunction with a defined core of theological subjects that combine studies with music, drama and visual arts). Religion and Arts programmes are burgeoning in Seminaries across the country, now defining new orientations from those established by Yale and the Pacific School, (Yale's strength in particular lying in historical studies of the visual arts, R S R's lying in performing arts.)⁽⁴⁷⁾

Another dance institution the Sacred Dance Group was formed in 1969 in Boulder, Colorado has at present members from the United States, Canada and England. It is sponsored by Trinity Lutheran Church in Boulder. The group has toured extensively in the U.S., Canada, Australia and in Europe- Belgium, Holland, Germany, Switzerland, France and Poland. In 1975 part of the group went to England and have established a centre in Dorset, ministering throughout the U.K. The work of the Sacred group consists in presenting the word of God in a visual manner through movements,

conducting workshops for the children, adults, families and married couples to experience the freedom of worshipping the Lord in body, soul and spirit. They also conduct seminars and teach and train people in Sacred Dance.

The dance in the history of the Church has undergone many phases. At times it has been looked upon as source of spiritual enrichment and other times as the work of the devil. However, at present there is a wide acceptance and existence of dance in the worship and religious life of the Church.

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