

Ernest.Furness@seccsda.org

L. Doukhan Response to Panel review of *In Tune with God*

John Reeve:

Question: Hymns presented as a “new” addition to congregational singing when Stoics already used hymns in earlier times

Response: The characterization of hymns in early Christianity as a “new” genre does not apply to hymns as a newly invented genre *per se*, but rather to the fact that the hymn genre was an addition to the already existing repertoire of psalms and spiritual songs as practiced in the synagogue. In many of its practices, early Christian worship adopted the customs of the synagogue.

Pedrito U. Maynard-Reid: “Wholeness: very little is said about the body in worship”; L.’s timid opposition to clapping in church.”

Response: Even though I mention in the book that in worship the entire human being must be involved, the body, the emotions, and the mind, it is true that I could have dwelled on the topic more extensively, especially in regards to cultural differences in worship. As in everything else in worship, though, a fine balance should be kept in order not to fall into excesses. This fine line must be determined by every worship leader/congregation such as not to create ambiguity in the minds of the worshippers.

Clapping in worship: I believe I made it very clear that there are cultural places where clapping in worship is fully acceptable (see p. 95 where I mention clapping as a means of affirmation and participation in worship). My reservations were rather addressed to the context of a typical Anglo- or European-style church in which the practice of clapping is sometimes questionable (I give a few examples in my book). Even though clapping as a spiritual response finds its way more and more into all kinds of cultural worship contexts, I still believe that it is a good thing for a church to examine the true motivation behind their clapping, within their particular worship context.

Tom Shepherd:

T.S. : explain what you mean by “worship.”

Response: I first want to clarify that to me it is not important what “I” mean by worship; I am looking to the Scriptures to teach me about worship. Second, and this addresses Tom’s remark more directly, I had indeed been playing with the idea of including a chapter on Biblical worship but decided not to do so for the following reasons:

- (a) the treatment of such a topic would either have been too long (to be well-rounded) or too schematic (as a simple introduction/overview);
- (b) I intended my book to primarily deal with matters of *music* in worship;
- (c) I (still) have on my table a collection of articles on worship waiting to be published as a book that is meant to become a Companion book to *In Tune With God*. These are contributions by a variety of AU Seminary professors, and I hope to receive soon the last contributions, and to be able to submit it to a publisher within a year or so.
- (d) I did, however, address the matter in an indirect way: chapter 5 is structured according to

topics which introduce basic worship themes, but in the perspective of a musical application: firstly, through the sources used (mainly the Psalms, the Biblical liturgical texts *per excellence*); secondly, by the model proposed (temple music); and thirdly, by referring to practical advice given by the apostles (primarily Paul), in matters of congregational life.

T.S.: “How do you bring the concepts of transcendence/immanence together in worship music?”
Response: An experienced and professionally trained musician will know how to use the musical vocabulary to express various moods of worship. This is an intrinsic part of advanced traditional musical training in as far as interpretation of any style of music comes with the requirement of stylistic/expressive variances. There are different moods you create in playing Bach, or Chopin, or Bartok. Similar procedures are applied in playing worship music (working with tempo, rhythm, dynamics, tone color, articulation, etc.). In addition, every culture has its plethora of artistic conventions to express reverence, contrition, joy, etc., which are “understood” by a given cultural group.

T.S.: “Within the setting of discussing the use of CCM in church, is it useful to call those styles ‘rock music’ when they do not partake in the cultural aspects of rock music?”
Response: To speak of CCM as part of rock music is a convention in popular language. For individuals used to the contemporary music world, this is common terminology; it is, therefore, useful to communicate about the topic. Furthermore, even though CCM has abandoned the cultural element of rock (deportment, dress, hairstyles, etc.), it still belongs to the category of rock through its particular instrumental configuration (guitars and a rhythm section), and electronic enhancement.

T.S. “You appear reticent on p. 248 to accept the use of ‘softer’ elements of rock music in worship services” but later on the same page seem to condone it. “Is this giving in to the inevitable?”

Response: I rather prefer the term “cautious” to “reticent”. Church musicians who know how to handle and adapt the contemporary style, are very rare. There is a fine line in stylistic matters that should not be crossed. For this reason I will always encourage to give preference to classically trained musicians who are also familiar with the contemporary scene.

As for the question “Is this inevitable?” I would answer that we live in our times and not in times past, and that the musical language (as any cultural language) changes with times. It is important to be able to speak the language of our time if we want to come across. However, as we embrace this language (the culture), it is with the aim to transform. Church musicians throughout history including J.S. Bach) have embraced the “secular” language of the music of their times, but have “transformed” (adapted) it to fit the particular event of worship.

T.S.: “How do I propose to help the church face the issue?”

Response: Chapter 17 was written in that perspective, namely, with the intent to inform and educate the reader about CCM. I also advocate the “blended” service style which has already proven in several churches who adopted praise songs, as a well accepted practice.

T.S. “Possible parallels with Luther’s practice of borrowing secular tunes.”

Response: Today’s borrowing of secular tunes certainly indicates a parallel with Luther’s times, in terms of an increased interest in involving the congregation and having it participate. Luther’s

primary concern was to provide the believers with a repertoire of songs and tunes that would make the message easily accessible to them, in a familiar language. There are, though, differences between Luther's practice and his times: (a) Luther involved theologians and professional musicians in the process of borrowing, with the purpose to safeguard the theological correctness of the texts, and to adapt the borrowed tunes to the prosody of the new texts. This is not a common practice in today's use of contemporary style; (b) today, there is a great difference with Luther's time in terms of the understanding and the rift between the sacred and the secular. In Luther's time, it was understood that the secular/profane could be permeated and transformed by the sacred. Within such a worldview, the practice of borrowing was easier. As various musical practices are accompanied by very strong associations today, borrowing must be done with great discernment and wisdom.

T.S. "What does the use of secular melodies or styles within the church's worship suggest today? A hunger for something missing? A modification of message?"

Response: The use of secular melodies in church is an age-old practice; already the Psalms suggest in some of the tune names indicated in the headings of certain psalms, that they were borrowed from the secular world. It has always been a reality that people wanted to be actively involved in the worship service, or at least have a repertory of songs that speak directly to their heart, in a language that is familiar to them. So, does the use of praise songs indicate that there is something missing? I do believe so, otherwise, there would not be a search for a new language, in terms of text and music. Does it mean a modification of the message? Certainly not, the message is universal and eternal and as such should not be modified. But modification is needed in the way the message is being articulated, communicated.

Ken Parsons:

Unfortunately, there was no time left to address Ken Parson's response. I must say, however, that it was a great pleasure for me to see a colleague from the same profession vibrate to the same wave lengths, and to find in his response such an echo to my understanding of music and the issues attached to this discipline.

Lilianne Doukhan
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