

WORSHIP
OUTSIDE
THE MUSIC
BOX

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*Theology of Music & Worship
and Multi-Ethnic Ministry*

Stephen Michael Newby



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Published by Redemption Press, PO Box 427, Enumclaw, WA 98022 Toll Free (844) 2REDEEM (273-3336)

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ISBN 13: 978-1-63232-095-7 (Print)

978-1-63232-108-4 (ePub)

978-1-63232-121-3 (Mobi)

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 2015933747

DEDICATION

Dedicated to my wife and son
Stephanie and Silas

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CHAPTER 1

OVERTURE: HOW DO YOU WORSHIP OUTSIDE THE MUSIC BOX?

The first century church was ethnically diverse. Many Jews and Gentiles decided to work together for the advancement of God's kingdom. They worshipped Jesus Christ in a way that blended their cultural preferences so as to become united. In the twenty-first century, as more multiethnic congregations begin to emerge, more friction will ensue in the arena of worship styles, musical genres, and preferred liturgical design. God's people are to gather together to glorify our God. Our personal preferences working in us such as how we might worship God should not be our primary concern. As Christians who worship the triune God, we might consider learning how

to gather to worship God in such a way that we actually get along with each other by learning how to momentarily set aside our personal preferences to worship. In doing so, we acquire a greater appreciation for each other's way of worshipping God as we continue to learn about each person's differences, gifts, and what the other person values, likes, and dislikes.

This process of discovering more about what the other person enjoys is a way of looking inside of someone else's life. Each person has a litany of values and biases that defines and qualifies their personal preferences. Appreciating how the other person worships Jesus Christ is a way we look into their style of worship. All Christians have a style of worship that contains a "music box" filled with music of their particular choosing. This music box holds within it a host of robust articulations, presenting and preserving particular musical genres of expressions. Our love, adoration, and worship for God are casted through these expressions. As an important means of pursuing and worshipping God, we are to worship God in community. As a means of worship expression, our worshipping-God communities bring a vast array of music boxes for consideration to use as means

of worshipping. Here is the rub: unless there are highly intentional theological, biblical, and spiritual efforts to enjoin these multiple styles, many different musical or worship styles or patterns do not necessarily work well together. Without intentionally working with our worship preferences from the inside of our hearts to the outside of our comfort zones, we might fail to worship as an ingathered reconciled people of God. In order to have great success with multiethnic worship, it is necessary to work strategically outside our music boxes so as to pursue multiethnic worship genres that glorify God.

This book will examine and discuss various theological, philosophical, and artistic constructs based upon the praxis of the interdependence and leading of God's Spirit towards the advancement of multiethnic worship genres in the context of our worship gatherings.

God does not confine the Holy Spirit to a particular style of worship. As humans, by our very nature we are physically confined to reside in these bodies. We are limited with our mortality. Although our humanity limits us physically, God gives us, through the power of the Holy Spirit, power to live in holiness without limits to glorify God. Through

God's holiness there are no limits to what God can do through humanity for God's glory. God's blueprint for humanity is that we live in holiness and wholeness, glorifying Jesus Christ. Should we be living outside of this world's purview? We are charged to live in the world, yet not to be of it. Our true selves are held in these bodies. What we see on the outside is not really the whole of who we are. God calls us to be holy so we should see holiness activities in the world. We should not practice any form of unrighteous prejudice. Our moral compass charges, changes, and challenges our spiritual beings towards holiness as unto the Lord Jesus Christ. God changes us to be more like Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit changes us. We do not change ourselves. We do not have the capacity to change ourselves. It is through worship that God challenges us to change. We pursue God through worship. Worshipping the triune God changes us. We pursue other forms of Christian worship to humble ourselves unto God. God's creation is vastly filled with the verities, vicissitudes, and reminders of God's grace and provision toward us. Might we have this same grace toward all humanity? We worship God in our comfort zones and from out of them as well. We worship God with

other cultures. Every time zone is filled with God's people worshipping God at particular times, same times, different times, and with a varied degree of distinctions and dignities. Although, there are times when our worship can become idolatry. More than likely, those are the times we ought to humble ourselves and not get so caught up into how our worship might be sophisticated, on point, doctrinally sound, multiethnic, or homogenously engaging. Although we aim to be these things, we should be living outside of this world's agenda.

The world has its way of doing things. God has a way of doing things too. The world's agenda has this music box that is filled with all the ideologies of the world. God gives to humanity opportunities to choose what to put in those music boxes. Because God is the grand, wise Creator, God wants us to be creative. We are created in God's image, reflecting the image of God. We are creative beings because God creates. Yet, there are times when our creative nature becomes stagnant, sequestered, spoiled, and soiled in silos. Silos are enclosed containments. That same creative nature funds how we express our worship to God. Our worship articulations must continue to grow and flourish. We should embrace different, creative ways and notions

of constant studying and stewarding biblical, theological, and spiritual formation. Within this process of studying, we grow. When we grow, we come out of our comfort zones; we actually come outside of our music boxes.