

## **THEOLOGY OF WORSHIP**

Even the most casual review of worship songs in the Bible reveals that they should be theology as doxology. This, in turn, has several necessary implications. First, songs that the church sings must have meaningful, Bible lyrics praising the triune God by name, extolling His character/ attributes/virtues, and magnifying the Cross. The lyrics must make God as holy as possible, man as vile and sinful as possible, and Christ's blood and righteousness as precious and beautiful as possible. The lyrics should be God-centered, not man-centered and focused on our pathetically trivial, minor problems; it should rejoice as it joyfully embraces our God-sent trials and tribulations as meant for our eternal good and God's glory, not bemoan them. The songs should be so theologically/ doctrinally sound that: (a) another religion (Orthodox Jews or Muslims, for instance); (b) cults (Catholics, Jehovah Witnesses, and Mormons); (c) adherents of the prosperity "gospel;" (d) seeker- friendly "churches;" and (e) one lover to another could not sing.

Second, the Scripture-soaked lyrics should dictate the emotional response, not the music. The music and the instruments should compliment rather than drive the congregation's heartset as they sing. The message must be primary, the melody and harmony are secondary, and the rhythm is in the background. If one cannot hear the congregation singing, something is wrong. Third, building upon the first two requirements, there should be minimal repetition in the lyrics. God-centered theology, not chanting to a climatic beat, should drive worship.

In conclusion, these Scriptural considerations exclude much of the rubbish that passes for contemporary Christian music. Thankfully, however, there has been a resurgence of good, Scriptural hymn writing (I, for instance, love the Gettys) so that a congregation has a wide selection of both historic and modern God-honoring songs to choose from. In making these decisions, Scriptural discretion, rather than unbending legalism, should guide our choices.