

ASRS Discussion of *In Tune with God* by Lilianne Doukhan

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Lilianne Doukhan, *In Tune with God*, Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2010. 301 pp, hardback, \$24.99.

Lilianne Doukhan summarizes the goal of her book as the defense of music, her lifelong study and joy. In particular her work focuses on music within the church. She determines to bring light rather than heat to the topic, by using objective criteria to formulate balanced opinions on the topic. The sources of objective data for her reside in the Scriptures, the writings of Ellen White and the lessons of history. She determines to give not only a reasoned discussion of the topic, but also to provide practical lessons for the church.

The book is divided into five parts, ranging from about 50 to 70 pages for each part. These deal with the musical experience, music in the Scriptures and the writings of Ellen White, the church wrestling with music, the contemporary challenge, and music ministry within the church. Two brief appendices are included, one on guidelines for worship leaders, the other a brief sample worship survey.

It is my assessment that Doukhan has amply fulfilled her goal in writing her book. It is a thoughtful read and will prove to be a useful resource to the Adventist church in discussing a contentious topic where more often opinion reigns rather than reasoned discussion of ideas.

I will mention only a few questions here to help forward our discussion of the book to follow. It seems to me that any discussion of music within the church must address the question of the meaning of worship itself. Doukhan comes closest to doing this in her chapters on “The Meaning of Music” (chapter 3) and “Music for God” (chapter 5), and there is lots of interesting theology here, but I would like to hear in a focused way just what Lilianne means by “worship.”

You make intriguing reference to God's Transcendence and Immanence in this regard (not using those terms, necessarily, but referring to God's distance from us, above us as Master and Creator, and God's closeness to us as loving Redeemer, pp. 97-99). How do you bring these concepts together in worship music in a large and small church setting?

My next question revolves around the genre of Rock Music (an excursus on pp. 243-248). You describe the musical style of Rock as consisting of two elements: 1) constant tension in meter and rhythm combined with 2) electronic enhancement and manipulation of instrumental and vocal sounds (p. 244) – you didn't call it this, but I assume that means BIG LOUD MUSIC. However, I think you very helpfully illustrate that Rock Music is really more a cultural phenomenon that involves also playing style, stage deportment, dress style, visual effects, and subject matter linked up with a counterculture agenda of protest against societal norms (pp. 243-244). A little later in the excursus, you indicate that there are other types of Rock Music that do not participate in the excesses of the culture of Rock Music described above and you seem open to their use at least in concerts, though you seem less open to their use in worship services (pp. 246-248). So, now my questions. First, given that these other types of Rock Music partake, at least in some degree, with the musical elements of the culture of Rock Music, but NOT with the cultural aspects, just how useful is it to call them Rock Music within the setting of discussing their use within the church? Is it helpful or distracting to use the term?

Second, a tougher question perhaps, you appear very reticent on p. 248 to accept the use of "softer" elements of Rock Music in worship services, for the clear reasons you present. Nevertheless, you state, "This is the musical idiom of the younger generation, and it would be very difficult, if not impossible, to turn back the clock in terms of instruments and style." (p.

248). Is this giving in to the inevitable? Where do you see this music fitting in the Christian's life? If it does not, how do you propose to help the church face the issue?

A last question based out of p. 289 regarding change. You make an interesting observation, "Interest in secular models generally occurred, in a striking manner, during times of religious revival. At those times the pattern of borrowing became very conspicuous." (p. 289). Are we in one of those times now? If so, what parallels do you see to Luther's borrowing of secular tunes for the church, and how can we help the Gospel spread through this? If not, 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? Or what?

Thanks so much for a carefully written and stimulating book. I look forward to our discussion.