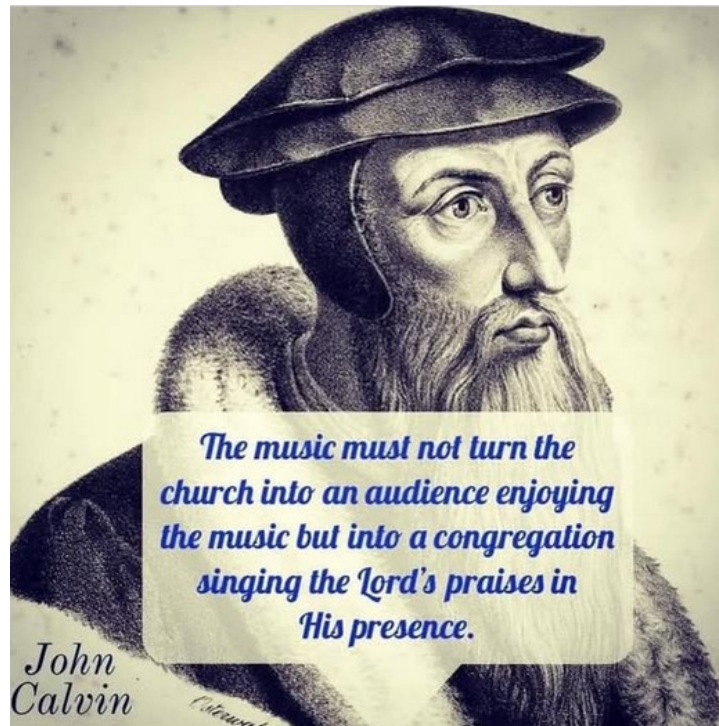


GOD'S WORD

SPIRIT-FILLED WORSHIP

*"The music must not turn the church into an audience enjoying music
but into a congregation worshipping the Lord"*

JOHN CALVIN



Glen C. Robertson

DISREGARDING, FOR A MOMENT, the age-old, "discussion," about just how, "lively," congregational music should be, there is in fact a very serious discussion that should happen in today's Church about the very source of worship. In many Evangelical churches, now, the 'music,' 'worship,' 'praise time,' or whatever the individual church calls it, is becoming less a congregational activity, and more entertainment! Indeed, this tendency has actually been seen repeatedly over the centuries. It's happening again now. This present tendency has in fact in some circles been accelerated, or led, by the enthusiastic and personal praise practised by Spirit-filled groups such as the Pentecostals and Charismatics, and by their recent loss or abandonment of it. These groups, concentrating as they do, on experiential Christianity, and tragically simultaneously often neglecting the black-and-white doctrine of the Bible, additionally pride themselves in how much they're able to defy tradition and liturgy. Consequently, they can be tempted to lean toward an, "anything goes," style of Christianity and church service.

While this digression from personal worship to that performed by ministers or ministerial groups has often been the case throughout history, the current tendency has a new feature, in that this departure from congregational participation in musical worship is often being replaced or even accelerated by the appearance of two things: Pentecostal/Charismatic music – a music that is generally loud and lively, and rock-and-roll music, with often a convergence of the two. Some congregations have sought to replace their traditional worship music with the, “new,” Pentecostal/Charismatic music, either simply because of the draw of its loud and lively character, which they enjoy more, and/or anticipate might draw a youthful crowd, or as a natural digression away from the sincere, to the lazy or insincere – it is easier to just listen, than to participate, to make the liturgy leaders responsible for one’s own Spirituality.

SPIRIT-FILLED WORSHIP

Pentecostal, or Spirit-Filled Worship, began as spontaneous reaction to the ecstatic outpourings of the Holy Spirit, and His interaction with the now Spirit-filled individual, so this worship was usually combined ‘part-and-parcel’ with the exercise of the verbally-expressed Gifts¹ of the Holy Spirit, the, “speaking,” or, “utterance,” Gifts of the Holy Spirit. This additional and new-to-them intimately-personal experience with God Himself in a very real and exciting way led spontaneously and naturally to an active and often loud and expressive form of grateful praise and worship of God, much like that expressed by those newly healed by Him.² It was this spontaneous worship in gratitude and praise to the newly-experienced greater encounter with God that so characterized the response of the Disciples in Acts 2. This was an experience that changed them immediately and so dramatically, that it instantaneously transformed them from the fearful and timid creatures that they were in chapter 1, sequestering themselves fearfully behind a locked door in an upper room, into the irrepressible worshippers and evangelists that they were in chapter 2 and following! It was this same personal and greater experience with the Lord that led to the ‘loud and lively’ worship of the Pentecostals and Charismatics! It was natural and automatic! Loud instruments, like those in Psalm 150,³ therefore, were those that most naturally found their way into Pentecostal worship (and the subsequent Charismatic). These loud instruments, combined with the Holy Spirit Infilling and Gifts, made an irresistible combination to those with that blessed Second Spiritual experience, and also to those people given to the loudly expressive and ecstatic, typically the young.

Footnote

¹ I Corinthians 12:4-10

² 8 And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God.

9 And all the people saw him walking and praising God:

Acts 3:8-9 The BIBLE

³ 3 Praise Him with the sound of the trumpet: praise Him with the psaltery and harp.

4 Praise Him with the timbrel and dance: praise Him with stringed instruments and organs.

5 Praise Him upon the loud cymbals: praise Him upon the high sounding cymbals.

6 Let every thing that hath breath praise the LORD. Praise ye the LORD.

Psalms 150:3-6 The BIBLE

But many churches now, whose congregants haven't received the Holy Spirit Infilling after salvation, mistakenly think that this 'loud and lively' equals, "Spirit-filled," worship, and vice versa. This impression is even more natural to someone observing the worship *currently* found in Pentecostal and Charismatic churches: these two Groups often continue their loud music/'worship' but tragically now, more usually without the experience or the use of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit! Too often the Holy Spirit Infilling and its Gifts haven't even been experienced by today's Pentecostals/Charismatics, so their continued 'loud and lively worship' is often now merely a holdover tradition from their history's typical worship, based and empowered now, therefore, not on the Holy Spirit Infilling, but on tradition! So the observer might easily now see 'loud and lively' worship in those churches, absent the presence of the Holy Spirit Infilling, and naturally therefore conclude that the 'loud and lively' worship of Pentecostal/Charismatic churches is always just that: merely 'loud and lively' worship, something they themselves could therefore easily emulate! But 'loud and lively' does NOT equal Spirit-filled worship; it is merely loud and lively music, music which sometimes may involve worship. This fact can be understood only by those who have themselves received the Holy Spirit Infilling subsequent to salvation, or perhaps by those seeking it. The unbelieving, and those not having been partakers of that experience, can therefore not even understand the concept and experience, nor fully recognize why the genuinely Filled are so expressive in their worship! To them, Spirit-Filled worship is merely what they see and understand from the mechanics and physical actions they see resulting from it. This is very similar to how the unSaved is unable to understand Christianity itself, other than what they see actually practiced by the Christian.

SPIRIT-FILLED worship is possible only when the congregation members have each been filled with the Holy Spirit subsequent to salvation. And even then, possible only when they actually allow the Holy Spirit to move in their midst in worship that is propelled by that Holy Spirit Infilling. (This Infilling, a second experience after salvation, is experienced in Acts 2, and repeatedly promised and spoken of throughout the New Testament,⁴ and experienced by untold millions of God's people since.) Without that supernatural Second Experience, loud and lively worship is merely that: loud and lively. With that Second Experience, Spirit-led worship is imbued with the living Spirit of God Himself!

3 But Thou Art holy, O Thou That inhabitest the praises of Israel.

Psalms 22:3 The BIBLE

ROCK AND ROLL, BABY!

One might also mistake rock-and-roll music for Pentecostal/Charismatic-type Spirit-Filled worship, simply because the two are often loud and lively. This might easily be believed by anyone not familiar with the Holy Spirit origin of Spirit-Filled worship. So a non-Spirit-Filled church might adopt rock-and-roll music as their music genre, feeling that they are following the 'loud and lively' worship of actual Spirit-Filled churches, and that they might therefore expect the same enthusiasm and results. And, tragically, they may be correct: some previously Spirit-Filled churches may have adopted rock-and-roll, either in a fruitless attempt to get the Infilling back, or with the mistaken impression that that's all that, "Spirit-Filled worship," is!

⁴ Luke 11:13; Acts 1:4-9; Acts 2:38-39; 8:15-16; 19:5-6; Ephesians 5:18; Romans 11:29, etc.

However, that rock-and-roll, might alienate some of the congregation. Rock-and-roll tends to be more entertainment than participatory, as participation in that type of music can be very difficult or even unnatural, resulting in the worship time's naturally ending up being a time of mere entertainment. And congregations now often applaud – reinforcing that!

MEDIUM OR MESSAGE?

Consequently, for many of those in modern worship now, those who see 'loud and lively' as a goal in itself, because they either don't understand, or they disregard the actual in-depth Spirituality of Spirit-Filled worship, the medium has become the message. The means of expression has become the entire purpose of the expression! Those Denominations or groups who have hitherto been characterized by a genuine experience of Holy Spirit Infilling, and the genuine, personal worship it engenders, now more easily become blinded to those things when their Denomination or group is losing, or has lost, that Holy Spirit Infilling! Many, "Pentecostal," or "Charismatic," churches have lost that Experience! Because they at least attempt to continue this form of worship as part of their liturgy, if and when they have for the most part lost the Infilling throughout their congregation, they *i)* no longer recognize the loss of that Infilling, or they *ii)* see no particular need to renew, or to even preach the Infilling within their number! *iii)* At this point they may just feel that adopting rock-and-roll into their service will accomplish the same thing! Often, that is because they have actually hired a pastor(s) who hasn't even been Filled; often, 'Pentecostal' church has become only a name (and in fact, many Pentecostal churches have even re-named themselves for the purpose of erasing that descriptor from their name!) 'Loud and Lively,' "worship," has often become the only (apparent) holdover in this regard from the days in which their people actually experienced the Holy Spirit's Infilling!

AN EMPTY SHELL

This loss of the experience of the Holy Spirit Infilling is typically evidenced by their no longer preaching that the Gift of Tongues is the first sign of the Holy Spirit Infilling; when that recognition is no longer recognized, and is removed from their doctrines, one typically finds that their group, for the most part, no longer has even experienced the Infilling. The Infilling is then merely a point of intellectual doctrine, rather than an actual experience.⁵

⁵ **THE DEVELOPMENT OF DOCTRINE**

As also regarding, for instance, the Theology behind the experience of salvation itself, doctrine is most accurately derived from combining actual experience with God, with the study of Scripture. (Only very rarely is one Saved by reading, on his own, the Bible and picking out all God's various instructions given us to that end, such as: Universal and total depravity; Utter inability to earn one's own salvation; Jesus' self-sacrifice; the Necessity of Jesus' sacrifice; Salvation's receipt by simple admission of this to God, and Relying on only the salvation that Jesus alone provides. These points are fully recognized, understood, and collated, as describing the doctrinal necessities for salvation, usually only after one's salvation has been accomplished! In other words, full and correct understanding of God's Spiritual experiences are possible only after we experience them; they cannot be understood by mere academic search ahead of time, or without the experience.) Without experience, one's doctrine must necessarily find its source only in tradition or the Word of God, and it is commonly recognized how easily and typically mistakes can be made when thus limited: Biblical interpretation and teaching is easily slanted or determined by one's own proclivities, and mistakes are typically made; it is only by actual experience with God that our doctrine can be most purely, definitively, and correctly understood and established.

So the attitude becomes, "If nothing else, maybe this kind of worship at least gets people in the door." Or, "It's fun!" But is that in fact the purpose of worship? Should 'loud and lively' worship be merely a lure, and settling for an absence of genuine Spirit-filled worship, and its genuine experience in the Holy Spirit a, "Loss Leader," something more we're prepared to settle for, to take a loss on, and some entertainment to get people in the door, to 'bite' on something else? Or have we, as a Church, and as individual Christians, perhaps lost sight of the necessity of, or not even experienced the Holy Spirit Infilling, an initial experience subsequent to salvation intended for each and every believer,⁶ that takes us even deeper into a Spiritual walk with the Lord, for the rest of our life? It's an experience without which our musical, "worship," becomes little more than an empty shell, or skeleton, and perhaps merely a means to teach doctrine, or to try to bring the singer or hearer a little closer to God by mere rote actions and words. Or maybe our, "worship," has become little more than rock-and-roll, entertainment intended merely to draw people into the church, or to make Christianity a little more palatable to the lively young, or to the skeptical and hesitant? Perhaps?

10 Cursed be he that doeth the work of the LORD deceitfully,

Jeremiah 48:10a The BIBLE

26 For **as the body without the spirit is dead**, so faith without works is dead also.

James 2:26 The BIBLE

23 But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in Spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him.

24 God Is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in truth.

John 4:23-24 The BIBLE

28 Give unto the LORD, ye kindreds of the people, give unto the LORD glory and strength.

29 Give unto the LORD the glory due unto His Name: bring an offering, and come before Him: worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.

I Chronicles 16:28-29 The BIBLE

33 O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!

34 For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been His counsellor? **Romans 11:33-34 The BIBLE**

17 Then I beheld all the work of God, that a man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun: because though a man labour to seek it out, yet he shall not find it; yea further; though a wise man think to know it, yet shall he not be able to find it.

Ecclesiastes 8:17 The BIBLE

And, although spoken merely by Zophar, the Naamathite:

7 Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?

Job 11:7 The BIBLE

⁶ 38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the Name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

39 For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.

Acts 2:38-39 The BIBLE

6 For I Am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.

7 Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from Mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto Me, and I will return unto you, saith the LORD of hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we return?

Malachi 3:6-7 The BIBLE

WHY AND WHAT?

Why is Spirit-Filled Worship so Important?

3 But Thou Art holy, O Thou That inhabitest the praises of Israel.

Psalms 22:3 The BIBLE

- Non- Spirit-Filled worship is so often little more than a singing of words, with little depth or purpose;
- Spirit-Filled worship DIRECTS the believer's attention and devotion to God!
- Spirit-Filled worship PERMITS the believer to fully express his worship to God!
- It SEEKS to make one's worship to be sourced in God, rather than one's own strength/ideas;
- It WELCOMES the presence of God into the congregation and church service;
- It ENCOURAGES all the Gifts of the Holy Spirit to be manifested in the service/in the individual. Because that worship welcomes the Utterance Gifts of the Spirit, the other Gifts of the Spirit, also, are encouraged and developed in both the congregation, and the individual believer. Thus, it is a 'gateway' practice, encouraging and enabling greater Spiritual depth in the worshipper and congregation.

What is Spirit-Filled Worship?

15 What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.

I Corinthians 14:15 The BIBLE

- It EMPLOYS songs that encourage congregational participation;
- It IS UNAFRAID to be partially congregation-led!
- It EMPLOYS songs that sing TO God, rather than just ABOUT Him, encouraging a personal worship, rather than merely congregational!
- It WAITS ON the Holy Spirit to express Himself in the worship, adding spontaneity to the worship, rather than insisting on pre-decided songs, or insisting on a set time-period, after which it must end;
- It WELCOMES and often EMPLOYS Singing In The Spirit spontaneously, or initiated by the leader.

How is Spirit-Filled Worship Accomplished?

3 But Thou Art holy, O Thou That inhabitest the praises of Israel.

Psalms 22:3 The BIBLE

- By working to ensure that 'everyone' in the congregation is filled with the Holy Spirit subsequent to salvation.