Irresistible Grace?

By John Hobbs, PhD.
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The doctrine of Irresistible Grace is the fourth cardinal point in the Calvinistic theology. It is the "I" in the T-U-L-I-P acrostic. Irresistible Grace is also referred to as Special Grace or Efficacious Grace.

How the Calvinists Understand Irresistible Grace

Calvinists deny that Irresistible Grace is God forcing someone to come against his own will. Rather, say the Calvinists, Irresistible Grace makes the individual willing to come. Berkhof defined it thus: "By changing the heart it makes man perfectly willing to accept Jesus Christ unto salvation and to yield obedience to the will of God."

The Canons of Dort state that when God chooses an individual to be saved, He "powerfully illuminates their minds by His Holy Spirit; …. He opens the closed and softens the hardened heart; … He quickens; from being evil, disobedient, and refractory, He renders it good, obedient, and pliable; actuates and strengthens it … this is regeneration … which God works in this marvelous manner are certainly, infallibly, and effectually regenerated, and do actually believe."

John Calvin wrote about "the secret energy of the Spirit" and "the pure prompting of the Spirit." Calvin meant that the Holy Spirit would have to be sent to an individual to call him to salvation and once called he could not refuse. Calvin wrote, "As I have already said, it is certain that the mind of man is not changed for the better except by God's prevenient grace." Prevenient Grace is defined as "Divine grace that is said to

operate on the human will antecedent to its turning to God." In other words man's will is totally subservient to the irresistible call from God.

David Steele and Curtis Thomas state:

> *This special call is not made to all sinners but is issued to the elect only! The Spirit is in no way dependent upon their help or cooperation for success in His work of bringing them to Christ. It is for this reason that Calvinists speak of the Spirit's call and God's grace in saving sinners as being 'efficacious', 'invincible', or 'irresistible'. For the grace which the Holy Spirit extends to the elect cannot be thwarted or refused, it never fails to bring them to true faith in Christ!*

Paul Enns states:

> *In the logic of Calvinism, God, through His Spirit, draws precisely those whom God unconditionally elected from eternity past and Christ died for. Thus the purpose of God is accomplished. He elected certain ones, Christ died for those very ones, and now through the Holy Spirit, God dispenses His irresistible grace to them to make them willing to come. They do not want to resist.*

Billy Graham wrote:

> *Being born again is altogether a work of the Holy Spirit. There is nothing you can do to obtain this new birth …. In other words, there is nothing you can do about it … The new birth is wholly foreign to our will. – No man can ever be saved unless the Holy Spirit in supernatural, penetrating power comes and works upon your heart. You can't come to Christ any time you want to, you can only come when the Spirit of God is drawing and pulling and wooing.*

James Boyce believes that for man it is “impossible for him to be delivered by his own acts, even if he had the will to perform them.” Boyce believes that God did not choose the “elect” because He foresaw that these individuals would be good and pious people; he believes that it was because of God’s unconditional selective choosing of the elect that the elect or chosen ones are led to believe. Boyce takes the position that salvation is not dependent upon “the choice of the elect” but solely upon God’s choice.

Thomas Nettles denies that an individual can contribute to his own salvation. He believes that man’s faith does not come from man’s willingness to receive the word but “only from God’s sovereign bestowal.” He says, “The Holy Spirit moves in such a way as to create willingness in the form of repentance and faith.” He denies that the New Testament commandments of repentance and belief imply that man has it within his own power to repent and have faith.

W. J. Seaton wrote:

> *What is meant by irresistible grace? We know that when the gospel call goes out in a church, or in the open air, or through reading God’s Word, not everyone heeds that call. Not everyone becomes convinced of sin and his need of Christ. This explains the fact that there are two calls. There is not only an outward call; there is also an inward call. The outward call may be described as “words of the preacher”, and this call, when it goes forth, may work a score of different ways in a score of different hearts producing a score of different results. One thing it will not do, however; it will not work a work of salvation in a sinner’s soul. For a work of salvation to be wrought the outward call must be accompanied by the inward call of God’s Holy Spirit, for He it is who ‘convinces of sin, and righteousness, and judgment. And when the Holy Spirit calls a man, or a woman, or a young person by His grace, that call is irresistible: it cannot be frustrated; it is the manifestation of God’s irresistible*

> *grace.*

Loraine Boettner defines Irresistible Grace as:

> *God's free and special grace alone, not from any thing at all foreseen in man, who is altogether passive therein, until, being quickened and renewed by the Holy Spirit, he is thereby enabled to answer this call, and to embrace the grace offered and conveyed by it.*

Man's Responsibility in the Salvation Process

Calvinism assumes that God has predetermined and foreordained certain ones to be saved, and that they cannot come to salvation until the Holy Spirit in a supernatural way works on the hearts of the elect. When the Holy Spirit calls the elect individual, he cannot resist. He has to respond, but he has to wait until the Holy Spirit calls him in some mysterious way. Also, if one is not one of the "elect," it will be impossible for him to be saved. Therefore, it is all the Holy Spirit's working. Man is a totally passive respondent in the salvation process, according to Calvinism, which denies that an individual can contribute to his own salvation.

In 1976, Robert Hudnut wrote the book Church Growth Is Not the Point. Hudnut is Calvinistic to the core. He writes,

> *We have been saved. It is not our doing. – No you don't even have to repent. Paul didn't. He was on his way to jail when it happened. He didn't do anything. – It is then we are driven to the passive action of repentance. You do not repent your way to God.*

Notice that Hudnut says repentance is passive. His theology is

corrupt. Man is told to repent in Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 8:22; and Revelation 2:16. In every verse cited, the Greek verb is in the active not the passive voice. Repentance is something man must do (Greek active voice); it is not what is done to him (Greek passive voice). There is not one case in the Bible of a person being passive while being saved. Even Paul was told what he "must do" (Acts 9:6). In Acts 2:38 repentance is tied to the remission of sins. If a man wants to be saved, then there is something he must do. Man does have a choice to make in his own salvation (Acts 2:40; Deut. 30:11-19; Joshua 24:15; Matt. 23:37; John 5:40). He must be involved. Without man's active role in the conversion process, he is lost.

The responsibility for man having an "honest and good heart" (Luke 8: 15), in order for the seed of the Kingdom to produce, lies with the person, not God. Man is told to "take heed how" he hears (Luke 8:18). The command in Luke 8:18 would be meaningless if man did not have a part in his own salvation. Why should one "take heed how" he hears if his salvation is a product of irresistible grace? Why "take heed" if the Holy Spirit is going to operate on the heart without a man's cooperation?

The Bible teaches man has a part to play in the salvation process. Notice these verses:

> *John 7:17, "If any man willeth to do his will"*
> *John 7:37, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink."*
> *John 12:26, "If any man serve me, let him follow me."*
> *John 12:47, If any man hear my sayings, and keep them not."*
> *Revelation 22:17, "He that is athirst, let him say, Come."*
> *Revelation 22:17, "He that will, let him take the water of life freely."*

The point of all these verses is that an individual must

“will” and “thirst” and “want to” come to the Lord. It is the responsibility of the individual to “will” – it is not God’s responsibility!

God creates “will” in any person with “an honest and good heart” through the preached word of the cross (John 12:32-33; 1 Cor. 1:18, 21; 2:2). The word is to be preached to everyone (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16). To hold God responsible for creating the right “will” in a person arbitrarily and unconditionally makes God a “respecter of persons.” This is something he is not (Acts 10:34-35; Rom. 2:11; Eph. 6:9; Col. 3:25; 1 Pet. 1:17).

Is Faith Totally a Gift From God?

John Calvin wrote:

> *Faith is a singular gift of God, both in that the mind of man is purged so as to be able to taste the truth of God and in that his heart is established therein. – This is why Paul in another place commends faith to the elect (Titus 1:1) that no one may think that he acquires faith by his own effort but that his glory rests with God, freely to illumine whom he previously had chosen. – Faith – the illumination of God – Faith which he (i.e. God) put into our hearts – Our faith which arises not from the acumen of the human intellect but from the illumination of the Spirit alone – Faith flows from regeneration.*

Thomas Nettles wrote:

> *Faith is a gift of God and is bestowed gratuitously by him. – Neither justification nor faith comes from man’s willingness to receive but only from God’s sovereign bestowal. – Belief is still the result of the effectual call and regenerating power of God.*

Millard Erickson wrote: “Faith is God’s gift,” which refutes this Calvinistic mistake.

He wrote:

> *Is this Calvinistic view that faith is totally the gift of God correct? No! Does an individual have to wait for the Holy Spirit to come in some secret way to infuse faith? No! There are several reasons:*
>
> *For God to give certain people faith arbitrarily makes God a respecter of persons. The Bible is emphatic that “God is no respecter of persons” (Acts 10:34-35; Rom. 2:11, 10:12; Eph. 6:9; Col. 3:25; 1 Pet. 1:17). Salvation depends upon man exercising his freedom of will. If salvation depends totally upon the Holy Spirit and a man is lost, that man can blame God. But, that will not happen because the Lord has done his part; man must do his.*
>
> *Faith comes through the hearing of the word of God not through some secret mysterious sending by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 10:17; Luke 8:11-12; John 6:44-45; 20:30-31; Acts 4:4; 8:12; 15:7; 18:8; 20:32; Eph. 1:13). None of these verses indicate faith coming through a supernatural calling. Faith comes as we hear and study the evidence and then we ourselves decide to believe.*
>
> *Faith is our part in the salvation process (1 John 5:4; Rev. 2:10). We have a responsibility to save ourselves (Acts 2:40) and to build our faith Jude 20; Acts 20:32). This is something we must do. Passages like Hebrews 11:6 are meaningless if the Holy Spirit is going to miraculously infuse faith. Jesus said, “Ye must be born anew” John 3:7). The word “must” is in the active voice indicating we have a part to play in our salvation. We are not totally passive in the salvation process. Our active obedient faith is necessary for us to be saved (Heb. 5:9; 2 Thess. 1:8; John 3:36; Rom. 6:17-18; James 2:24-26).*

God purifies the heart by faith (Acts 15:9). Calvinists have the heart purified before faith. Alexander Campbell said, "Why do we preach the gospel to convert men, if, before they believe the gospel, and without the gospel, men are renewed and regenerated by the direct and immediate influence of God's Spirit?" Good question!

Calvinists teach that "spiritual darkness" refers to man's depraved condition and that God has to perform supernatural secret surgery by the Holy Spirit in order to bring men into "spiritual light." But, in Acts 26:16-18, Paul was to preach the gospel to the Gentiles to "open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God." A careful study of the book of Acts reveals that the early Christians depended upon the word of God to change the hearts of sinners and produce faith. Nowhere in the book of Acts do we find someone being converted by a direct operation of the Holy Spirit.

One is never so "spiritually dead" that he cannot hear and understand and believe the word of God in order to have faith (Eph. 5:14; John 5:25; 12:42-43). The rulers of the Jews "believed on" Jesus but would not confess him. Did they believe? Yes! Their problem was a "want to" problem not that they were so spiritually dead they could not understand. Calvinists misunderstand 1 Corinthians 2:14. The "natural man" of 1 Cor. 2:14 is the man who does not care about spiritual things – not the man who cannot understand them. Calvinists say the unsaved man cannot understand spiritual truth. Wrong! The rulers of the Jews, who were unsaved, in John 12:42-43 understood the truth exactly. They just "did not want to" obey the Lord. Wayne Grudem, and Ralph Gore, and Millard Erickson, who are Calvinists, do not even discuss John 12:42-43.

Dr. John Warwick Montgomery, a professor at Trinity Theological Seminary in Newburgh, Indiana – a Calvinistic school – believes that Ephesians 2:8 teaches that faith is a

> *direct gift from God and that man cannot do anything himself to get faith. The apostle Paul said in Ephesians 2:8, "For by grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." After quoting this verse Montgomery said,*
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> *Don't get the idea that you did it. You didn't do it. Faith is the gift of God. The word 'that' in Ephesians 2:8 refers to 'faith' because 'faith' is the closest antecedent to the word ' that.' Once a person is saved, he cannot properly accredit that to anything but the Holy Spirit.*

Faith is, in one sense, a gift of God because God has given us the Word which produces faith. Without the Word, we could not have faith. But, the entire Bible and especially Ephesians 2:8 do not teach that faith is a direct gift of God in which we have no part. The word "that" in Ephesians 2:8 refers to the salvation process. The salvation process is "the gift of God." We are saved "by grace through faith" which is the salvation process. But, this does not mean we have earned our salvation. We cannot boast of our salvation as if we have worked for it and earned it (Eph. 2:9). Jesus said even after we have done all that we are commanded to do we are to say, "We are unprofitable servants we have done that which is our duty to do" (Luke 17:10). James said, "Faith apart from works is dead" James 2:26).

Verses Misused by Calvinists to Support Irresistible Grace

John 6:37: "All that which the Father giveth me shall come unto me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

WJ. Seaton said: "Note that it is those whom the Father has given to Christ -the elect- that shall come to Him; and when

they come to Him they will not be cast out."

Response: (1) All those with a submissive spirit will come to Christ. These are the ones whom the Father gives to Jesus and not one of these will he refuse (cf. John 10:26-29 where the verbs "hear" and "follow" are continuous action). One must come with a willing heart John 5:40; 7:17; Matt. 13:9; Rev. 22:17). (2) There is nothing here or in God's word that teaches that God arbitrarily chooses those who come to Christ. Jesus uses truth and love to persuade men to accept him John 12:32-33, 48; 2 Cor. 5:14-15). Calvinists are reading into the text an arbitrary decree that is not there! (3) The gospel is for all (Mark 16:15-16), but not all men will accept it (2 Thess. 1:7-10). Those who refuse to accept Christ do so because of their own willful rejection (Matt. 13:14-15; 23:37)- not because of some arbitrary decree. Paul Butler says, "Man's rejection by God is caused by man's rejection of God." (4) Jesus said, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear" (Matt. 11:15). Jesus did not say, "The Holy Spirit will supernaturally open your hearts so you can believe." In Matthew 11:15 Jesus was teaching that man has a responsibility to have an "honest and good heart." That is not the work of the Holy Spirit. If a man does not have an "honest and good heart," he cannot and will not come to Jesus. (5) In context John 6:40 explains John 6:37 and 39. It explains who the Father has given unto Jesus: Those who "beholdeth" and "believeth" on the Son! Both of these verbs are present tense verbs indicating continuous action. Those who continue to behold and believe on the Son are the ones whom the Father has given unto Jesus. It is our own individual free-will responsibility to continue to believe. We are not forced or coerced against our will.

John 6:44: "No man can come to me, except the Father that sent me draw him: and I will raise him up in the last day."

John Calvin said: "But nothing is accomplished by preaching him if the Spirit, as our inner teacher, does not show our

minds the way. Only those men, therefore, who have heard and have been taught by the Father come to him. What kind of learning and hearing is this? Surely, where the Spirit by a wonderful and singular power forms our ears to hear and our minds to understand."

W.J. Seaton said: "Here our Lord is simply saying that it is impossible for men to come to Him of themselves; the Father must draw them."

Response: (1) Calvin assumes the drawing is a miraculous operation. We base truth on clear biblical teaching – not assumptions. (2) The next verse explains how God does the drawing and it is not miraculous. It is written that one must be taught (Jer. 31:31-34; Isa. 54:13). One must hear and one must learn! This is not miraculous! God draws men through teaching. "Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). The book of Acts is proof positive that Christianity is a taught religion – not a caught religion in the sense that the Holy Spirit must convert a man separate and apart from the word of God. The means and the method the Father uses to draw men is the preached word (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 4:4; 8:4, 12; 11:26; 15:7; 18:8; 20:20; 1 Cor. 1:18-21; 2:1-4; Col. 2:7; 2 Thess. 2:15; 2 Tim. 2:2; etc.). (3) Why did our Lord invite all men to come to him if he knew that it was impossible for some of them to come (Matt. 11:28)? That does not make sense. (4) Guy N. Woods said: "Some are not drawn, because they do not will to do so; it has been well said. that a magnet draws iron, but not all objects are drawn by magnets, because all are not iron! Similarly, one must be of the right disposition and have the proper response to the drawing power of the Father which he exercises through the gospel." (5) John 12:32-33 also teaches we are drawn to the Lord through Christ's death on the cross. Some appreciate his death, and sadly, some do not.

Acts 16:14: "And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, one that worshipped God,

heard us: whose heart the Lord opened to give heed unto the things which were spoken by Paul."

John Calvin said:

> *Indeed, it does not so stand in man's own impulse, and consequently even the pious and those who fear God still have need of the especial prompting of the Spirit. Lydia, the seller of purple, feared God, yet her heart had to be opened to receive Paul's teaching (Acts 16:14) and to profit by it. This was said not of one woman only but to teach us that the advancement of every man in godliness is the secret work of the Spirit.*

Charles Hodge said:

> *The truth is compared to light, which is absolutely necessary· to vision; but if the eye be closed or blind it must be opened or restored before the light can produce its proper impression." Hodge tries to use the case of Lydia as proof of the direct operation of the Holy Spirit in conversion.*

W. 1. Seaton said:

> *One outstanding illustration of this teaching of irresistible grace, or effectual calling, is certainly the incident that we read in Acts 16. The apostle Paul preaches the gospel to a group of women by the riverside at Philippi; and as he does so, 'a certain woman named Lydia heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things that were spoken of Paul.' Paul, the preacher, spoke to Lydia's ear – the outward call; but the Lord spoke to Lydia's heart – the inward call of irresistible grace.*

Response: (1) Calvin's admission that Lydia "feared" God before God "opened" her heart destroys his teaching of Total

Depravity. (2) It is a complete assumption that God opened her heart by a direct secret operation of the Holy Spirit. The text does not tell us what Calvin believes. Calvin gives us a classic case of eisegesis – i.e. reading into the text what is not there. (3) The word "heart" is used figuratively. Consider: John 12:40; Matthew 9:4; 13:15; Mark 2:6; and Romans 10:10. The word "opened" is evidently used figuratively – i.e. to expand or broaden the mind. Luke 24:45 states, "Then opened he their mind." Jesus "opened" the mind of the apostles by explaining the Scriptures to them not by a direct operation of the Holy Spirit. The word "opened" was simply a way of saying that the person came to an understanding of, and a belief in, the message under consideration. It is analogous to Paul's statement in Ephesians 1:18, "having the eyes of your heart enlightened." (4) Acts 16:14 indicates that the Lord opened her heart through the things which were spoken by Paul. The Spirit's work in conversion is not something done directly upon the heart apart from the preached Word. (5) J.W. McGarvey said, "The assumption, therefore, that her heart was opened by an abstract influence of the Spirit, is entirely gratuitous and illogical, while the real cause is patent upon the face of the narrative in the preaching done by Paul." (6) Dr. Richard Oster said, "It is significant that this opening of the heart came only after she had heard what was said by Paul. Perhaps the method of opening her heart was the preached word (cf. Luke 24:45)." (7) The word "heard" is an imperfect tense verb which means continuous action in the past. Lydia kept on hearing Paul. The hearing occurred before the opening of the heart. Wayne Jackson states, "The implication here is the exact opposite of that demanded by Calvinism. That doctrine alleges that one cannot give honest attention to the Word of God until the Lord first opens the heart, but this passage actually demonstrates otherwise. She kept on listening and thereby her heart (understanding) was opened by God!" (8) The words "give heed" implies that Lydia had a choice in her obedience. Study: Acts 8:6-12; 20:28; Luke 8:18 and Hebrews 2:1-2. (9) There are many passages which demonstrate that God,

as a general rule, works through means and not directly (2 Kings 5:1-14; Matt. 6:11; 2 Cor. 9:10).

Romans 10:16-17: “But they did not all hearken to the glad tidings. For Isaiah with, Lord, who hath believed our report? So belief cometh of hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” John Calvin said, “To whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed. – By this, he means that only when God shines in us by the light of His Spirit is there any profit from the word. Thus the inward calling, which alone is effectual and peculiar to the elect is distinguished from the outward voice of men.”

Calvin believed that the Word of God could only produce faith in a heart of one already illumined by the Spirit of God. In commenting on Romans 10:17, Calvin admits that when Paul makes “hearing the beginning of faith he is describing only the ordinary arrangement and dispensation of the Lord which he commonly uses in calling his people – not, indeed, prescribing for him an unvarying rule so that he may use no other way.”

Response: (1) Calvin assumes his doctrine of total depravity is true. He insists they did not believe because they could not believe. The text does not say what Calvin believed. (2) If one must be regenerated before he can hear, then he is regenerated before he has faith. This contradicts many Bible passages (John 8:24; Acts 11:14; 16:14; Rom. 1:17; 5:1; Gal. 3:11). (3) Personal responsibility is definitely set forth in this verse. If anyone does not believe, it is because he does not “hearken” to the message preached – not because of inherited total depravity. Notice the parallel between “hearken” and “believed” with “glad tidings” – i.e. the gospel and “report.” To have a saving faith is to hearken – i.e. hear and obey. (4) Every case of conversion in the Bible involved a teaching situation. Christianity is a taught religion (John 6:45; Acts 4:4; 8:4; 11:26; 18:8; 20:20; Col. 2:7; 2 Thess. 2:15; 2 Tim. 2:2). There is no example in the Bible where the Holy Spirit supernaturally infused faith into an individual. A saving faith comes when an honest and good heart is taught

truth found in the word of God and then that truth is accepted and appreciated and appropriated.

Conclusion

There is not one passage in the entire Bible which directly or indirectly teaches Calvinism’s doctrine of Irresistible Grace. In fact, it contradicts God’s word. Calvinism would make God a “respecter of persons.” But, the Bible says He is not! It is God’s will for all men to be saved; therefore, salvation is conditioned only on man’s will. God is always willing for all men to be saved. Calvinism is false doctrine. Let us follow the truth in God’s word and reject the false doctrine of Calvinism!

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REVIVE US AGAIN

Leslie G. Thomas
January 3, 1950

One of the greatest needs of our day is a religious revival: not in the sense of a barn-storming, emotion-arousing type of evangelism, but a revival that will affect the whole man, and will result in nothing short of a religious revolution.

Any one who stops to think is aware of the fact that religious people everywhere are rapidly approaching a state of complacency; and unless something is done to stimulate their thinking, there is little reason to hope for much more progress toward perfection. (Cf Heb. 6:1-3).

When people become satisfied with themselves their intellects become dull, and they are content to have some one else do their thinking for them. Such people do not hesitate to accept practically anything that is placed before them, if they have confidence in the one who suggests it to them.

However, if we are to have an effectual revival – one that will lead us closer to God and to a greater and more perfect knowledge of his will – it must be characterized by certain basic principles, some of which we shall consider in this lesson.

The first one is:

A New Sense of Dependence Upon God

No one can read the New Testament without being impressed with the idea that God is the Sovereign Ruler of the universe, and that every good and perfect gift comes from him. · "I charge thee in the sight of God, who giveth life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed the good confession; that thou keep the commandment, without spot, without reproach, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: which in its own times he shall show, who is the blessed and only Potenate, the King of kings, and Lord or lords; who only hath immortality; dwelling in light unapproachable whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honor and power eternal. Amen" (1 Tim. 6:13-16). "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom can be no variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning" (James 1:17).

Time and time again we are taught that our wills must be lost in his; and that if we would be free from those distracting influences which undermine the soul, we must make every effort to seek first his kingdom, and his righteousness. "Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth" (Matt. 6:10b). "But seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things

shall be added unto you” (Matt. 6:33).

But, in the face of these plain statements of truth, how often do we find ourselves depending upon our own ideas and efforts, as if God did not exist, or had not said anything about these matters. “They profess that they know God; but by their works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate” (Tit. 1:16). (Read also Rom. 12:17-21; Psa. 37:1ff; Phil. 4:6,7).

A Re-examination of Our Religious Convictions

If one is not careful his religious thinking is liable to crystallize into a form which, for all practical purposes, will become his creed. And when this happens be will likely find himself using this creed, written or unwritten, rather than the word of God itself, as a standard for measuring any new ideas which may be brought to his attention. “For we are not bold to number or compare ourselves with certain of·them that commend themselves: but they themselves, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves with themselves, are without understanding” (2 Cor. 10:12).

Of course no one should hold any religious ideas which he does not believe to be scriptural; but at the same time he should always be willing to subject that which he believes to be the teaching of the Bible to a rigid examination. In short, like Martin Luther, he should nail the things which he believes to the “church door,” and offer to debate them with all comers. Compare 2 Tim. 2:15; 4:1-5.

Any one who is acquainted with the history of Christianity knows that the greatest progress toward the knowledge of the truth was made during those times when religious debate was the order of the day. Alexander Campbell said, “A week’s debating is worth a year’s preaching”; and M. C. Kurfees

averred that “truth has always flourished in the soil of controversy.”

A Growing Interest in the Welfare Of Others

All Christians are members of the family of God, and, as such, they should be interested in the welfare of each other. “And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and soul; and not one of them said that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common” (Acts 4:32). “Brethren, even if a man be overtaken in any trespass, ye who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; looking to thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ” (Gal. 6:1,2). (Read also 1 Cor. 12-27).

People who are in religious confusion, or in a lost condition, deserve the help of those who are enjoying salvation and the light of eternal truth. “And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation” (Mark 16: 15). “And if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled in them that perish: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not dawn upon them. For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake. Seeing it is God, that said, Light shall shine out of darkness, who shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor. 4:3-6). “And on some have mercy, who are in doubt; and some save, snatching them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh” (Jude 1:22, 23).

Finally, the Lord’s people should manifest a benevolent attitude toward all men. “So then, as we have opportunity, let us work that which is good toward all men, and especially

toward them that are of the household of faith” (Gal. 6:10).

If we will allow the principles which have been set forth in this study to become a motivating force in our lives, there will be no doubt about the nature and the results of the revival which will follow.

Bruceton, Tennessee.

Marriage, Divorce And Remarriage

By H. A. (Buster) Dobbs

The Bible is the foundation of morality and marriage. Marriage is the support and stay of morality. Undermining marriage sabotages Bible teaching and thwarts righteousness. The Christian pattern for marriage is indissoluble unity. Marriage is to be had in honor among all—saint and sinner—and the bed undefiled (Heb. 13:4).

“Yet ye say, Wherefore? Because Jehovah hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously, though she is thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant. And did he not make one, although he had the residue of the Spirit? And wherefore one? He sought a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth. For I hate putting away, saith Jehovah, the God of Israel, and him that covereth his garment with violence, saith Jehovah of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously” (Mal. 2:14-16).

Malachi points out that God is witness between a man and his

wife. He says God made one man for one woman. Though he had a residue of the Spirit from which to make other humans, God did not do so because he sought a godly seed. The prophet then declares that God is against divorce. He hates it! The teaching of this Old Testament prophet is like the teaching of Jesus on the subject of marriage and divorce. He warns against putting away because it undermines the home and destroys morality. It is strange that any teacher of religion would make allowance for what God clearly disallows. The emphatic and indisputable statement of divine revelation is that marriage is permanent and not temporary and fleeting. This point must be featured and we must guard against saying, especially in public pronouncements, anything that would cloud what God made clear.

It is not uncommon for church leaders to make statements that confuse people about what the Bible teaches on the home and its importance. There has been a flurry of classes, lectures, seminars and workshops discussing marriage recently. Much of this creates doubt about the sanctity of the home and is designed to console those who have violated God’s marriage law. Some seem to be hung up on trying to make people feel good about transgression of divine precepts. The result is clutter in an area that should be plain.

In discussing the important matter of the home we must talk about what makes a marriage according to the teaching of God’s word.

What Is Marriage?

Marriage is sacred. It is the appointment of the living God. It is the coming together of two lives in the deepest possible unity. It is the surrender of separate individuality and the mingling of each in a common stream.

The following passages give us just about all the Bible says

on the subject of marriage and divorce:

“And Jehovah God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a help meet for him” (Gen. 2:18). “and the rib, which Jehovah God had taken from the man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And the man said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh” (Gen. 2:22-24).

“Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt not commit adultery: but I say unto you, that every one that looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart” (Matt. 5:27- 28).

“It was said also, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: but I say unto you, that every one that putteth away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, maketh her an adulteress: and whosoever shall marry her when she is put away committeth adultery” (Matt. 5:31-32).

“And there came unto him Pharisees, trying him, and saying, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And he answered and said, Have ye not read, that he who made them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh? So that they are no more two, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. They say unto him, Why then did Moses command to give a bill of divorcement, and to put her away? He saith unto them, Moses for your hardness of heart suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it hath not been so. And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and he that marrieth her when she is put away committeth adultery” (Matt. 19:3- 9).

“And there came unto him Pharisees, and asked him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife? trying him. And he answered and said unto them, What did Moses command you? And they said, Moses suffered to write a bill of divorcement, and to put her away. But Jesus said unto them, For your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment. But from the beginning of the creation, Male and female made he them. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh: so that they are no more two, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. And in the house the disciples asked him again of this matter. And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her: and if she herself shall put away her husband, and marry another, she committeth adultery” (Mark 10:2-12).

“Every one that putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and he that marrieth one that is put away from a husband committeth adultery” (Luke 16:18).

“For the woman that hath a husband is bound by law to the husband while he liveth; but if the husband die, she is discharged from the law of the husband. So then if, while the husband liveth, she be joined to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if the husband die, she is free from the law, so that she is no adulteress, though she be joined to another man” (Rom. 7:2-3).

“But unto the married I give charge, yea not I, but the Lord, That the wife depart not from her husband (but should she depart, let her remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband); and that the husband leave not his wife” (1 Cor. 7:10-11).

“A wife is bound for so long time as her husband liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is free to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord” (1 Cor. 7:39).

The Bible is emphatic in telling us that marriage is a man and woman who have committed themselves to live together as husband and wife and who therefore have been joined together by Jehovah so as to be considered by their creator as a unit—as one. They, of course, continue to have their separate identities. The man has his physical body and the woman has hers. They are two, but the two are one. Each is responsible for his or her conduct and each of them will stand individually before God in the last judgment. The woman is not guilty of the sins her husband may commit, and the man cannot be credited for his wife's good character. They are one in the sense that Jehovah has honored their decision to be united in marriage. He sees and hears their pledge and they are joined together in his mind. Jesus said, "What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." It is God who joins the man and woman together. Man cannot undo what God has done.

The civil law is also a factor in marriage, but it is not the determining factor. For the good of society God commands us to obey civil rulers. God appoints that there shall be governments among men, but he does not define the government or give the nature of the public establishment. It does not matter what it is—republic, monarchy, democracy, dictatorship—we must honor it because society cannot endure in the absence of authority and rule keeping and punishment of evil doers and praise of those who do well (Rom. 13:1-7). The Bible tells the Christian to be a good citizen and pay his taxes.

Some governments exercise their God given right and legislate rules for marriage and the home. Other governments may have scant or no rules to control the home. Tribes in uncivilized countries may have only their tribal customs to govern marriage, and those customs may be vague.

The marriage custom of Jesus' day was not as structured as American civil law governing the home is today. In the first century in Judea there was no marriage license, country clerk,

recording process, or family law center. If a man and woman consented to be married, they merely announced it to family and friends. Usually there was a celebration in the form of a feast and flowers. The groom's men and the bride's attendants sometimes brought the couple together as a sort of unofficial beginning place for the marriage. It was mostly a family and community arrangement. In the case of Boaz and Ruth the ceremony consisted of one man handing his shoe to another man in the presence of witnesses.

Regardless of what the civil rule for marriage is, the critical thing is God joining the man and woman together. Marriage is a four cornered contract. It involves (1) the man and (2) the woman and (3) the Lord God and (4) the social custom or law of the land. Civil law is to be obeyed to the extent it does not contradict divine law. Where there is a conflict in two laws, the lower law is set aside at the point of disagreement. "Whether it is right in the sight of God to hearken unto you rather than unto God, judge ye: for we cannot but speak the things which we saw and heard" (Acts 4:19-20).

No matter what the civil rule is God joins the couple together. In every culture, clime, language and nation God is involved in the marriage. Malachi reminded his brothers that "Jehovah hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth" (Mal. 2:14).

If God does not join the two together when they conform to the rules of their community, then it is no marriage and the children that may be born are illegitimate. Paul makes the argument that if God does not sanction the marriage the children are unclean, but when God does approve the marriages, the children are holy (1 Cor. 7:14).

God is involved in every marriage, joining the man and woman together, or the marriage is unsanctioned and the children are bastards. This consideration should forever settle the question of whether the unsaved person who is not in a

covenant relationship with God is bound by the marriage laws of God. Even in a situation where the people do not recognize the God of the Bible, but follow Hinduism, Islam, tribal religion, or some other unbiblical system, God is involved in the marriage and joins the couple together. If not, their children are unclean. Those who say the marriage law of God is not universal and does not apply to folks who are not in a covenant relationship with God are stuck with the conclusion that children born to such marriages are illegitimate. This disagrees with Paul who says that such children are not unclean but holy. If God joins together all who enter into a marriage– whether or not they are in a covenant relationship with God–then it still follows "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Matt. 19:6).

What Is Divorce?

The Greek word translated "divorced" in our English Bibles is also translated dismiss, let depart, let go, loose, put away, release, send away, set at liberty, and depart. The Hebrew word translated "divorce" in our English Bibles is also translated drive out, put away, be cast out, drive away, expel, and thrust out. Vine says the Greek word means, "to let loose from, to let go free." Thayer says it means, "to dismiss from the house, to repudiate" and, in Mark 10:12 is used of a wife deserting her husband. In the Bible divorce is a departure, a going away, or being driven out, or sent away, a repudiation, or abandonment. It has nothing to do with family law court, or a judge on the bench, or county records, or the official declaration "divorce granted." In our Western civilization we think of divorce as the action of a court of law in pronouncing the end of a marriage under civil usage. The truth is that a divorce happens when the man or the woman forsakes his or her partner with the intention of ending the marriage.

A husband may go away from his wife for a period of time to engage in business and it would not be a divorce in the Bible sense of that word. A wife may go away from her husband to visit her family, and it not be a Bible divorce. If either the husband or the wife intends to abandon the marriage and departs, that is divorce from a Bible viewpoint. This is made plain in Paul's statement, "That the wife depart not from her husband (but should she depart, let her remain unmarried…" (1 Cor. 7:10-11). If the wife departs she is unmarried. The departure is the un-marriage—the divorce.

Our understanding of divorce is when a judge on the bench grants a cancellation of the marriage contract under modern day civil law. This procedure was unknown in New Testament times. In the days of Christ and of Paul there were no county clerks, county courthouses, family courts of law, marriage licenses or certificates, divorce lawyers, or divorce petitions. If a man threw his wife out, or if the wife departed from her husband without intent of returning, that was the divorce.

In our modern world, people may no longer live together as husband and wife because of the abandonment of the marriage bed of either one or the other, and a divorce is requested and awaited. We foolishly ask, Can we stop the divorce. Not from a Bible perspective. The divorce occurred when the husband or wife left without intending to return. It is a divorce when one or the other partner to the marriage contract is repudiated.

Paul says if the wife departs she is to remain unmarried. Her only marriage option is to be reconciled to her husband (1 Cor. 7:10-11). She is unmarried but she has a husband, an unmarried woman with a husband. The reason she has a husband is that while the civil, social, and community aspects of the marriage have ended, the act of God in regarding the pair as a unit is not canceled. In the mind of God they are still husband and wife. They are still one. They may not be living

together. Society may have declared them divorced. Still, the divine tie continues and he is her husband and she is his wife. If a Christian man is married to an unbeliever, it is a marriage. If the unbelieving husband has a wife—she is his wife—he is her husband—"and she is content to dwell with him, let him not leave her" (1 Cor. 7:12). If a Christian woman is married to an unbelieving man, they are nevertheless married. They are husband and wife. His unbelief does not violate the marriage. If he is content to dwell with her, "let her not leave her husband" (1 Cor. 7:13). He is her husband and she is his wife even though he is an unbeliever. The religious condition of either partner does not render the marriage invalid. If it did, the children would be unclean – illegitimate – unholy. Paul says this is not the case and he argues therefore that the marriage is intact.

"Yet if the unbelieving departeth, let him depart: the brother or the sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us in peace" (1 Cor. 7:15). If the unbeliever departs without intending to return—divorces the believer—the Christian is not under bondage. Is the saint, therefore, free to marry another person under the rules for marriage given in the Bible? The text gives no express information on whether Paul allows the Christian partner in such a marriage to marry again. The stringent rule Jesus gave for putting away one's marriage partner and marrying another would make it mandatory for Paul to express plainly and bluntly that abandonment on the part of an unbeliever permits the saint to marry someone else without sinning against God's marriage law. When Jesus gave the rule for marriage, divorce, and remarriage his disciples were shocked and concluded it is better not to marry than to be in an inescapable contract (Matt. 19:3-12). If Paul now gives an exception other than fornication it would seem necessary for him to clearly state it. We must not make Paul contradict Christ. We know the marriage rule is for a wife not to leave her husband and for a husband not to leave his wife. If the weaker vessel in a marriage covenant is under

insupportable duress—abused verbally, physically, mentally and spiritually—she may depart, but may not marry another man. Her only option to living celibate is to be reconciled to her mate (1 Cor. 7:10-11).

We know, therefore, that under circumstances Paul would require a person to live without sexual intercourse. This puts to silence all those "it is better to marry than to burn" arguments designed to set one divine precept against another hallowed principle. If a husband is called away to the service of his country and must be separated from his wife for a long period of time it is required that both the man and the woman abstain from sexual activity. Sickness and disability may make it impossible for one partner to a marriage to perform sexually, but that circumstance does not permit the healthy and able partner to misbehave. We have put such a premium on sex in our society that we discount the possibility and necessity of self-control. It may not be easy but we can be eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake.

Paul says that if two heathens are married and one of them is converted to Christ and the other is not a believer, and the unbeliever decides to quit the marriage, the child of God is not "under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us in peace" (1 Cor. 7:15). The heathen is obviously attempting to put pressure on the believer to forsake the church and the hope of heaven. The unbeliever is trying to enslave the believer and force the saint to abandon the right way. The unbeliever is creating strife, confusion, and disharmony. Paul simply says the child of God does not have to put up with such tactics: God has called us in peace. Let the unbeliever depart (divorce). You can't do anything about it. You are not in bondage to the evil temper of the unbeliever in such a case. Still, the apostle says nothing about the believer's right to marry someone else.

It is interesting to note that the two heathens were married while they were both heathens. God had joined them together

and they were one flesh. They were under the marriage rule of God, which has been in effect since creation (Matt. 19:8). Jesus restored it and it will continue while the earth lasts. One of the two is converted, and the unconverted partner makes a problem for the believer. Paul says, You don't have to put up with that. If the unbeliever leaves, let it happen. You are not under bondage. You have no obligation to attempt to live with someone who does not want to live with you because of your faith.

There may be many reasons for putting away, but only one reason for divorce and remarriage. If a brutal husband endangers the lives of the children and threatens the mental stability of his wife, she may depart (divorce), but she may not marry some other man. She can be reconciled to her husband, but is not to have another husband of a different kind. An unbeliever may make life so miserable for the Christian mate that separation happens, but the believer is not free to marry some other person. That permission is not given and that license is not granted. You do not have to be enslaved to someone who is trying to force you to give up your hope of glory, but your alternative is to be single.

The marriage law of God is very strict. The rule is one man for one woman for life, with fornication as the single exception. We must stridently uphold the sanctity of marriage. We must ardently obey the God-given rules for the home. The future of the church and of the nation depends upon maintaining good, solid family relationship. There may be exceptions, but let us focus on the rule. Our children need to be taught by both example and word the sacredness of the family. Let us cease trying to find excuses for failing to walk by the rule to which we have attained. "Hath Jehovah as great delight in burnt- offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of Jehovah? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."

Musical Instruments in the Temple

By Owen D. Olbricht

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An argument often made for the use of musical instruments in worship is that by worshipping in the temple early Christians showed they had no problem with their being used in worship. A proof text states, “So continuing daily with one accord the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart” (Acts 2:46; NKJV).

Some things that are assumed are not stated in the above passage—that Christians were:
• Assembling in the area of the temple where Jews were worshiping.
• Worshiping where musical instruments were being used.
• Giving approval of musical instruments by assembling in the temple.
• Meeting during the time of day when the Levites were singing with musical instrumentals.

These assumptions have at least four major flaws.

Apostles’ Teaching

First – Instead of engaging in Jewish practices, early Christians continued to observe what Jesus commanded as taught by the apostles (Matt. 28:20; Acts 2:42). The apostles could not have taught Christians in an assembly that included Jewish leaders, for they threatened and flogged the apostles for preaching Jesus in the temple (Acts 4:1-3, 17-18, 21; 5:28,

33, 40).

Neither example nor command to use musical instruments is found in the writings of the apostles. If such are not found, then early Christians were neither using nor approving them, consequently, musical instruments cannot be used based on apostolic authority.

Where They Met

Second – Christians met in Solomon's porch, not in the section of the temple where the Levites sang with musical instruments. Herod's temple complex was not like a large, modern church auditorium where all the worshipers gathered in one place. Josephus described the external dimensions of the temple as follows:

> *According to Josephus (Ant xv.11.3 [400], each side was about 180 m. (600 ft) long (500 cubits, according to the Mish. Middoth ii.1, though here we may suspect the influence of Ezk. 41:20). (The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Vol. Four, Q-Z, fully revised, 1988, p 771).*

The temple complex, which was 600 feet by 600 feet, was larger than four football fields. Its outer walls enclosed four inner sections of the temple: the sanctuary that was in the upper court, which was adjacent to the woman's court. These were inside the outer most court, the large Gentile's court.

In the upper court was the temple sanctuary (30 by 90 feet), which included the holy place (30 by 60 feet) that only the priests and Levites could enter, and the most holy place (30 by 30 feet) that only the high priest could enter once a year. The more than 3,000 Christians (Acts 2:41) could neither have assembled in the sanctuary of the temple where the priests alone could go nor could they have crowded into it.

Between the upper court and the woman's court were the fifteen

steps where the Levites sang with musical instruments during the morning and evening sacrifices.

> *Fifteen steps led up to the Upper Court, which was bounded by a wall, and where was the celebrated Nicanor Gate, covered with Corinthian brass. Here the Levites, who conducted the musical part of the service, were placed (Alfred Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, p. 245.).*

This is confirmed by the Jewish Mishna:

> *And Levites without numbers with harps, lyres, cymbals, and trumpets and other musical instruments were there upon the fifteen steps leading down from the court of the Israelites to the court of the women, corresponding to the fifteen songs of ascents in the Psalms [120- 134]. It was upon these [and not at the side of the altar where they performed at the time of the offering of sacrifices] that the Levites stood with their instruments of music and sang their songs (Everett Ferguson, A Cappela Music in Public Worship of the Church, Abilene Texas, Biblical Research Press, 1972, p. 31; quoted from a translation of The Mishna by Herbert Dandy, London: Oxford University Press, 1933).*

The walled woman's court and the upper court were inside the large Gentiles' court from which Jesus drove the Jews who were buying and selling animals (Matt. 21:12; Mark 11:15; Luke 19:45; John 2:14). Solomon's porch, approximately 600 feet long, where Christians met (Act 5:12) was open to the Gentile court on one side and enclosed by the outer wall on the other side.

By meeting in Solomon's porch, Christians could assemble without seeing or hearing the Jewish services. Walls and more than 300 feet, a football field length, separated the assembled Christians from the animal sacrifices and the fifteen steps where the Levites were singing and playing

instruments. When they entered the temple, they could pass through the outer gates and walk across the Gentile court to Solomon's porch without coming near to the place where Jewish religious ceremonies were being conducted.

The Levites sang with instruments during the morning and evening sacrifices (Exod. 29:38-42; Num. 28:3, 4; 1 Chron. 16:40-42). It is not a foregone conclusion that Christians met during these times, for they had at least eight hours between the morning and evening sacrifices when they could meet.

Christians met in the temple because they needed a large meeting place, like Solomon's porch, and not because they desired to worship where the Jews were worshiping. The burden of proof is on those who claim that by meeting in the temple Christians showed that they were not against musical instruments being used in worship.

Third – If Christians saw nothing wrong with worshiping in the temple where the Levites were singing with instruments, the same would have been true concerning their assembling where animal sacrifices were being used in worship, for the musical renditions were associated with the animal sacrifices. Their attitude toward the one would have been the same as their attitude toward the other.

When David brought the Ark of the Covenant into the tabernacle, he worshiped with singing, instrumental music, dancing, and animal sacrifices (1 Chron. 15:17-29). Solomon did the same, except for dancing, when he brought the ark into the temple (2 Chron. 5:11-14). After this he prayed. "Now when Solomon had finished praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the Lord filled the temple" (2 Chron. 7:1).

The ceremony continued with Solomon and all the people worshiping in the temple by sacrificing hundreds of oxen and sheep to the Lord while the Levites played musical instruments

(2 Chron. 7:5-7). If God showed his approval of musical instruments in worship, thus acceptable for Christian worship, by filling the temple with a cloud (2 Chron. 5:13, 14), as some have argued, then God's lighting the sacrifice and his glory filling the temple when animals were sacrificed (2 Chron. 7:1) showed his approval of them in worship, hence meaning they are all right for Christian worship. If not, why not?

Some would object to this line of argument by contending that the New Testament teaches that Jesus' sacrifice replaced animal sacrifices but nowhere states that musical instruments are no longer to be used. Sin sacrifices were replaced by the death of Jesus (Heb. 5:1-3; 7:27; 9:9-14; 24-28; 10:1-18), but what passage in the New Testament specifically states that worship sacrifices were abolished?

Worship offerings such as thank, freewill, first fruit, and peace offerings were as prevalent as sin sacrifices. Neither Jesus, the book of Acts, nor any other New Testament documents specifically state that worship sacrifices were abolished. If a specific statement must be made before an Old Testament practice is not to be used, then worship sacrifices are still acceptable to God. However, the statement that the "first" was replaced by the "second" (Heb. 10:9) is proof that not only worship with animal sacrifices was abolished, but that the complete Old Testament sacrificial and worship systems were set aside. The only way to bring any practice of the Old Testament into Christian worship is to find that practice taught in the New Testament.

Singers Were Male Levites

Fourth – Male members (not women) of the tribe of Levi (2 Chron. 5:12; 35:14, 15; Neh. 11:22) were the only ones who sang with musical instruments during the animal sacrifices (1 Chron. 15:16-26; 2 Chron. 5:6-14; 29:27-35; 35:13-16). If

temple worship can be used as a pattern, then singing and playing of instrument should be done only by male Levites.

Other Considerations

Some argue that Christians should feel free to practice what they read in the book of Psalms about worshiping with musical instruments. If this is true, then Christians should follow the statements in Psalms concerning the use of animal sacrifices in worship (Pss. 20:1-3; 50:7, 8; 51:18, 19; 66:13-15; 96:8, 9; see also Jer. 17:26; 33:15-18). David wrote that he would "offer in His tent [tabernacle] sacrifices with shouts of joy" (Ps. 27:6; NASB). Christians also should praise God with a "two-edged sword in their hands, to execute vengeance on the nations, and punishment on the peoples; to bind their kings with chains and their nobles with fetters of iron, to execute on them the written judgment" (Ps. 149:6b-9a; NKJV). If musical instrument should be accepted in worship based on Psalms, so also should animal sacrifices and swords for vengeance.

Altars for Sacrifice

Altars for worship sacrifices were used before the Law (Gen. 8:20), during the Law age (Exod. 20:24; 24:4-6; 27:1-6), and were seen in heavenly visions by John while he was on the Island of Patmos (Rev. 6:9; 8:3, 5; 9:13; 11:1; 14:18; 16:7). If Christians can use musical instruments because they were used in worship before the Law commanded in the Old Testament and pictured in the book of Revelation, then they can use sacrifice altars in worship. If anyone should respond that the altar in the book of Revelation is symbolical, then musical instruments should also be considered symbolical.

Synagogues

All historical evidence indicates that Christians worshipped without musical instruments for many centuries after the beginning of the church. Everett Ferguson wrote, “Recent studies put the introduction of instrumental music even later than the dates found in reference books. It was perhaps as late as the tenth century when the organ was played as part of the service” (Ferguson, ibid., 81).

Some explain that the reason for non-use of musical instruments in worship by Christians was that they were influenced by Jewish synagogues where instruments were not used. They gathered in homes (Rom. 16:3-6; 1 Cor. 16:19; Col. 4:15; Philemon 2) instead of Jewish synagogues. Even though they came out of Judaism, they were guided by the apostles instead of Jewish practices and traditions. The question then is:

Were early Christians influenced by temple worship to look favorably on musical instrument or the synagogue to turn against them? The answer is neither. Apostolic teaching, not Jewish customs, was what governed Christian worship.

Conclusion

No conclusive argument can be made that Christians associated with, accepted, or used instrumental music based on their assembling in the temple. Even though Christians gathered there for a short period of time before persecution scattered them (Acts 8:1), they met in Solomon’s porch, a meeting place far removed and isolated from the singing and playing of musical instruments and animal sacrifices. Instead of following Jewish practices, Christians continued in the apostles teaching (Acts 2:42:). Christians should do the same today.