

# New Calvinism Examined

*New Calvinism*

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**Bible Text:** Zechariah 4:1-14  
**Preached on:** Thursday, January 13, 2011

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Our Bible reading is Zechariah 4 from verse 1 to verse 10.

1 Now the angel who talked with me came back and wakened me, as a man who is wakened out of his sleep. 2 And he said to me, "What do you see?" So I said, "I am looking, and there is a lampstand of solid gold with a bowl on top of it, and on the stand seven lamps with seven pipes to the seven lamps. 3 Two olive trees are by it, one at the right of the bowl and the other at its left." 4 So I answered and spoke to the angel who talked with me, saying, "What are these, my lord?" 5 Then the angel who talked with me answered and said to me, "Do you not know what these are?" And I said, "No, my lord." 6 So he answered and said to me: "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' Says the LORD of hosts. 7 'Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain! And he shall bring forth the capstone With shouts of "Grace, grace to it!"' 8 Moreover the word of the LORD came to me, saying: 9 "The hands of Zerubbabel Have laid the foundation of this temple; His hands shall also finish it. Then you will know That the LORD of hosts has sent Me to you. 10 For who has despised the day of small things? For these seven rejoice to see The plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel. They are the eyes of the LORD, Which scan to and fro throughout the whole earth."

As we begin this examination of the New Calvinism, I want us for a moment to consider those words of the prophet Zechariah, "'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' Says the LORD." He was addressing Zerubbabel, governor in Jerusalem, and the newly returned exiles settling again in their homeland after their long sojourn in Babylon. The building of the new temple lay ahead of them. This prophecy had great bearing upon how they were to conduct the work in the context they found themselves in. Things were not easy. This prophecy was, in part, a word of encouragement for a people living in a day of small things. It was needed then. It is needed today. They were not to be discouraged by this, neither should we be. The Lord knew then exactly what he was doing. The same omniscient God is the God we serve today. His message was that his purposes would be

accomplished through human instruments but they were to be accomplished in the power of the Holy Spirit.

This new temple looked forward to the fulfillment of the new covenant and the church of Jesus Christ composed of Jews and Gentiles. The lampstand representing the Lord's witnessing people was to be nurtured and sustained by the oil of the Holy Spirit. The two olive trees stood for the ministries of the high priest Joshua, and the governor Zerubbabel, with above them the Lord who provides for his people through his appointed servants. The picture is, in effect, repeated in Revelation 11 under the figure of the two witnesses. There is the church, Christ's habitation, a spiritual people, doing a spiritual work, in a spiritual way.

Any misconceptions entertained by Zerubbabel were corrected in this prophecy. Gifted man though he might have been, gifted people though they might have been, the work would not be accomplished by might and power but by God for the temptation lurking somewhere in Zerubbabel's heart faced by the day of small things and the sheer scale of the task was to reach out for different means than those ordained of God. This was the challenge to the church of Zerubbabel's day. It is the same challenge facing the church in the West today.

This brings us, then, to the matter at hand in the two addresses in what has been called the New Calvinism. In a day of small things especially in the United Kingdom, but also perhaps in the United States, people are wondering whether this movement represents a work of God which a gladness. Certainly there are some good things to report. Preaching is well regarded in the New Calvinism. Justification by faith is central. Reformed doctrine is unashamedly confessed and taught. Yet that said, there are also concerns. These are not some private theory of my own. Dr. Peter Masters has written about them in the *Sword and Trowel*. There are people in the United States whose brows are also furrowed by what they see and hear so I'll broach these matters in the context of the Lord's warning to Zerubbabel, "'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' Says the LORD." Is this work truly established in the power of the Spirit or is there a worryingly large component of human might and power that risks marring it? Does it employ thinking and approaches that are glorifying to God or has it shipped in the world in its methodology and in the shape of the Christian living that it is encouraging?

There are some worrying signs. On the credit side, the New Calvinism is impressive in terms of its personnel, growing numbers, youthfulness, energy, abundance of good writers and good communicators, but as I hope to demonstrate, there is something awry with it. Despite professed love and respect for great men like the Puritans, Jonathan Edwards, and C. H. Spurgeon, it generates too many contradictory outcomes seeking perhaps to get a hearing amongst a greater number. It embraces too much that is questionable and worldly, producing an all-inclusive comprehensive kind of Christianity which especially balks at the call to separation.

Now I make this observation as someone who previously served in a church and movement that we would recognize today as being part of the UK branch of the New

Calvinism. In the end, I was compelled to leave it due to its embrace of every wind of doctrine despite boasting Calvinism as its undergirding theology. In the end, the commitment to Reformed teaching did not amount to much and did not proof the church against error, charismatic excess, sensuality, or a too casual approach to the worship of God and the Christian life. It bred a sense of invincibility thereby rendering people sadly unteachable, unable and unwilling to subject beliefs and practices to a more rigorous biblical overhaul. Those traits remain to this day 16 years on. Through my own sampling of the literature, sermons, discussion panels and blogsites of the American New Calvinism, I think the same flaws are detectable as in the UK situation which I'm more familiar with.

Now there may be some of us who have been impressed by or influenced by some of the leading proponents of the New Calvinism. It can be a very emotive subject. From firsthand experience, I know that people do not always welcome these kinds of analyses on ministries that they would reckon to be sound and helpful, but I trust that you will give me a patient hearing, however much you may feel indebted to one or other of the New Calvinist spokesmen.

So what is the New Calvinism? As usually the object of our scrutiny is not always easy to categorize, generalizations will need to be made. There is a UK angle to cover as well as an American one. Familiar names crop up regularly on both sides of the Atlantic. As is so often the case, the situation in America has arguably been better documented, not least because of a book by Collin Hansen entitled "Young Restless Reformed," published in 2008, which I'll come back to in a moment.

So who are the people that we can call New Calvinists? Let's start in the United States. We'd be thinking of people like Al Mohler, Mark Dever, Tim Keller, CJ Mahaney, Ligon Duncan, Mark Driscoll, as well as elder statesmen like Don Carson, R. C. Sproul, John MacArthur, and arguably the most influential of them all, John Piper. Now of course, the fact that the term New Calvinism has been coined does not suggest that these men have resurrected Calvinism which had all but vanished from the US scene. Reformed teaching has never departed from the shores of America though it may have ebbed and flowed. What the label New Calvinism tries to encapsulate is the fresh hearing the teachings of Calvinism are receiving especially among the young. It's envoys have been successful in bringing the message of God's sovereignty before a new audience; through popular books like Piper's "Desiring God," a new generation has been brought into contact with historic teachings and figures from the past who held to the Five Points of Calvinism.

In this process of giving greater exposure to Calvinism and Calvinistic writers, the place of websites cannot be exaggerated. We might cite as examples the one hosted by Tim Challies and also Justin Taylor's "Between Two Worlds." Vital in the process of disseminating Calvinistic doctrine to a wider public have been the various conferences and meetings like "Together for the Gospel; the Gospel Coalition; Passion; Resolved; the Resurgence and New Attitude," which have arisen in the last five or so years. Collin Hansen's book interacts with a number of these leading figures and he personally attends some of the events just mentioned.

What has brought about the renaissance of interest in Reformed doctrine, especially among the young? Hansen believes it reflects a deep dissatisfaction with a shallow, seeker sensitive, and therapy driven Christianity rampant in the United States. He comments as follows and I quote him at length. "Though it may be dominant among today's American teenagers, Moralistic Therapeutic Deism cannot save. As evangelicals graduate from high school and leave the churches of their youth, many end up at conferences like Passion or New Attitude and begin to be transformed by the transcendent God they behold through Reformed theology. I suspect that Calvinism strikes a chord with these college-age students precisely because Moralistic Therapeutic Deism has infiltrated so many evangelical youth groups."

Refugees from Purpose Driven type churches have found the same help when exposed to the undoubtedly greater depth of biblical understanding and fidelity put forward by these various exponents of Calvinism. Hansen looks at the Together for the Gospel conference and observes the following, and again I quote him at length. "If this Calvinist resurgence endures, future observers might look back and see a critical event in April 2006, the inaugural Together for the Gospel conference. Good friends Dever, Mahaney, Ligon duncan, and Al Mohler invited three of their heroes – Piper, John MacArthur, and R. C. Sproul – to join them in addressing a crowd of about 3,000 pastors in Louisville, Kentucky. The generational dynamics at work made the conference especially significant. The four middle-aged Together for the Gospel hosts watched their heroes, each older than 60, address a crowd mostly in their 20s and 30s. The pyramid of influence illustrated the generational resurgence of Calvinism. Long-serving pastors Piper, Sproul, and MacArthur inspired the generation that includes Dever, Mohler, Mahaney, and Duncan, who have joined them in turning thousands of young evangelicals towards Calvinism."

Well, the roll call of names immediately alerts us to some interesting issues being brought into sharp relief by this movement. For one, there is the charismatic issue, or rather non-issue as far as the New Calvinism is largely concerned. C. J. Mahaney is charismatic in terms of understanding on matters like tongues and prophecy. So too is Mark Driscoll whom I mentioned a moment back. John Piper is open to charismatic phenomenon. Neither is the conduct of worship thought to be a matter worthy of dividing over. Though different people may hold different personal views, contemporary worship is found among the ranks of the New Calvinists and at some of their wider gatherings.

A few eyebrows have been raised at the presence of John MacArthur in this cast of characters. He was the author of *Charismatic Chaos*, a firm critique of charismatic teaching and practice. It is curious that he should now be found working together with people like C. J. Mahaney and John Piper. Collin Hansen obviously felt the presence of John MacArthur required further explanation and so he wrote this in his book, "From," he says, "MacArthur's perspective, desperate times call for desperate measures. They can agree to disagree about tongues and prophecy because other items on which they agree – such as Reformed soteriology, complementary gender roles, and church discipline – demand more urgent attention." We might add that the time seemed desperate when Zerubbabel was in office. We're left wondering whether the day of small things has

panicked a good man like Pastor MacArthur into surrendering a more secure position and forging some unwise liaisons instead. These are issues that we will need to refer back to in the course of this presentation as they have a direct bearing upon the matter at hand.

Secular observers in America have not been slow to acknowledge the potential of the New Calvinism to shape the future. Time Magazine in March, 2009 ranked the New Calvinism at number 3 among its 10 Ideas Changing the World Right Now. The piece written by David van Biema was, it must be said, not particularly complimentary but then Biema, by his own account having reckoned Calvinism to have been relegated to what he calls a "few crotchety Southern churches" had on closer inspection to quickly revise his estimate. Here is the quote from Time Magazine which also includes a further quotation. He says, "Neo-Calvinist ministers and authors don't operate quite on a Rick Warren scale. But, notes Ted Olsen, a managing editor at Christianity Today, 'everyone knows where the energy and the passion are in the Evangelical world' — with the pioneering new-Calvinist John Piper of Minneapolis, Seattle's pugnacious Mark Driscoll and Albert Mohler, head of the Southern Seminary of the huge Southern Baptist Convention." And that's the end of that quotation. And Biema foresees infighting along the way but leaves it as an open question as to whether the influence will grow or not.

So much then for the American scene. New Calvinism in the United Kingdom. Is there something akin to New Calvinism shaping up here? The answer is, in a sense, yes, but there are some differences which it is pertinent to highlight. For example, the United Kingdom lacks the mass migration of refugees from shallow Purpose Driven or Emerging churches which are fueling the United States' renaissance. Neither Purpose Driven seeker sensitive churches or the Emerging church are present in the United Kingdom on anything like the scale of the United States. There is simply not the same potential reservoir of disaffected people to create a resurgence such as we see in America. The dynamics in the United Kingdom are somewhat different and far less visible or attention-grabbing.

What is happening is that groupings of churches with some Calvinistic commitment are coming closer together. This process can be viewed, in part at least, as being independent of developments in the United States. It reflects, firstly, the growing trend among older and more established Calvinists to dispense with cessationism and the conduct of reverent worship, making them more willing in the process to team up with charismatic Calvinists. Secondly, these rapprochements are hastened on by the attitudes held by the new and emerging leaders amongst the hitherto more conservative churches. Younger pastors and workers are more likely to embrace the new worship ethos and to hold no principled opposition against charismatic teaching and practice. So now hitherto more conservative groupings of churches like the FIAC are showing a greater willingness to identify with the ministry of Newfrontiers, a charismatic restorationist group which holds in a qualified sense to the notion of Apostles Today.

People coming from the explicitly charismatic wing of this rapprochement are quite likely to call themselves Reformed charismatics to show their adherence to, for instance, the Five Points of Calvinism as well as the charismatic gifts. The Calvinism of, for

example, Newfrontiers is not of recent origin. While not the doctrinal standard required of all who belong to their churches, it is still the firmly held view of the man who leads Newfrontiers, Terry Virgo, and has been since the 1960s. He cites the ministry of Dr. Lloyd-Jones as having had a big influence on him, as well as his reading of A. W. Pink's book, "The Sovereignty of God." Having myself been in a church in the past with connections to Newfrontiers, the copies on my bookshelf are Berkhof's "Systematic Theology" and J. C. Ryle's "Holiness" over their presence there to a Newfrontiers' reading list for young men looking to be trained up as pastors and preachers. That was back in 1987, 23 years ago.

As such then, the Calvinism of Newfrontiers owes nothing to the New Calvinism in the United States. Perhaps of late, we might be correct in detecting a greater willingness in Newfrontiers to make these Reformed theological attachments more explicit. It's not hard to understand why. Their Reformed credentials are proving winsome and helpful in the coalition building among charismatics and non-charismatics, so it is less a rediscovery of Calvinism here in the United Kingdom that is catching the eye, and more a rapprochement between historically conservative Reformed churches and charismatic churches that have espoused in some form or other Reformed doctrine.

In addition, this process of rapprochement has been further accelerated by Newfrontiers' unwillingness to appoint women elders and preachers, as well as by their objection to Steve Chalke's denial of penal substitution. Neither of these positions has earned them plaudits among their charismatic brethren but it has won them admirers from other non-charismatic churches and non-charismatic parachurch organizations. This is despite the fact that Newfrontiers continues to endorse the second blessing teaching about the baptism of the Holy Spirit, believes in tongues and prophecy today, accords to Terry Virgo and others the status of apostles, and has an appalling track record of giving shelter to movements like the occultic Kansas City Prophets and the Toronto Blessing.

So today, Terry Virgo is an increasingly heard voice at conferences sponsored by groupings which historically were of a more conservative persuasion. For example, New Word Alive has made use of Terry Virgo's services. This last year's Evangelical Ministers Assembly of the Proclamation Trust featured him. UCCF has brought him onboard as an advisor. The FIC has also looked to him for some advice. Newfrontiers' chief songwriter is Stuart Townend whose output can be heard in many places. As commitment to reverent worship has declined in the conservative churches, so the music has been a further stimulus to bridge-building.

What is more, Newfrontiers has been able to bring its growing numerical size and ambitious church planting program to the table. More conservative churches now realize it is a force to be reckoned with, and rather than speaking against it, they find themselves wanting to learn from it. While all of them are by no means Calvinists, Newfrontiers has many young people in its ranks. Historically it was its attractiveness to a younger generation which provided it with its energy and vision. Seated with young people and their young families in the 1970s and 1980s, these have produced a second generation of young people who are now running with the battle. This young and energetic profile is

further boosted by its vigorous outreach to students. So with its younger age composition, it has a lot of energy, money, and boasts some influential people among its ranks. Perhaps unthinkable 20 years ago but quite recently the present rector of All Souls, Langham Place, Hugh Palmer can be found preaching at the Newfrontiers Jubilee Church in Enfield.

But the UK story does overlap with the US story for both the more conservative churches involved in this UK rapprochement and the more charismatic ones both look to the same American figures of inspiration, teaching and guidance. This has only been hastened by the increased prominence the US resurgence has given some of these figures; the energy and passion of the American speakers plus their superior organization and prolific output of books, DVDs and web-based material guarantees that impression on UK churches will be deep and lasting in both charismatic and non-charismatic alike. The fact that these speakers are not going to make an issue about worship or charismatic gifts ensures that they are acceptable to the coalition builders in the United Kingdom and do not introduce a discordant note that could hinder the process of rapprochement and cooperation. So typically a charismatic Newfrontiers pastor and a non-charismatic Reformed pastor will both cite John Piper and his *Desiring God* ministry as having a big influence on their ministries.

Many of the American speakers and pastors are well-received at conferences in the United Kingdom attended by coalition builders. Newfrontiers have long been associated with John Piper. He spoke at their conference in Brighton in 1998, for example. They've also had Mark Driscoll come and address them. Three years ago when Grudem, one of the most influential theologians in dismantling cessationist convictions and lending supposed theological gravitas to continuing prophecy, is also a speaker welcomed amongst Newfrontiers churches as well as at the Proclamation Trust and New Word Alive. Tim Keller was in London earlier in 2010 and spoke at a meeting warmly endorsed by Newfrontiers. C. J. Mahaney has often been across to meetings of Newfrontiers, including their one-time main event the Stonekeigh Bible Week at the agricultural showground in Warren Shire. New Word Alive often has John Piper and Don Carson to address their conference. Likewise, the Proclamation Trust has frequently employed the services of John Piper. This is before one even attempts to gauge the importance of websites like *Desiring God* or those hosted by the Gospel Coalition and Together for the Gospel in shaping the views of pastors and teachers in the UK.

So now it's time to feel the pulse of this movement a little more critically and to develop some of the themes already hinted at so my next heading is this: not by might, not by power, the music and worship phenomenon. One of the key issues, as ever in our assessment, is the worship and music issue, how often this has to be mentioned. We'll begin to open up this subject in this first address but we'll actually need to continue it in our second one for the worship will tell us much about the God people profess to serve. What does the style of worship communicate about how God is to be approached and how he is to be honored? What does it tell us about how we think he is to be experienced and known? It is a question that non-charismatic supporters of the New Calvinism in the

United States and the Reformed charismatic wing in the United Kingdom are reluctant to ask.

Mark Driscoll in considering the differences between what he terms Old Calvinism and New Calvinism, categorizes the worship issue as a secondary issue. He draws an analogy in the American context based upon the distinction between national borders and state borders. The national border, he says, is like a theological boundary where there can be no surrender or compromise, an example might be the deity of Christ. State borders are not life or death issues. He says this and I quote him, "State border includes spiritual gifts, baptism, communion, worship styles, Bible translations, sense of humor and the like. Various states can have their own proverbial borders on these issues, nonetheless, like states, we must be able to live as a loving and unified nation. We cannot turn our state borders into national borders and refuse to live at peace in unity and love with those who live in other proverbial states. Simply, the state borders should not be battle lines where personal and theological wars are fought because bigger things are at stake such as the evangelizing of lost people and the planting of missional churches." That's the end of that quotation.

Time and time again there is an indifference to the music that is played. It is not that no traditional hymns are sung, indeed they are often valued, neither is it that all modern songs are uncritically played, they are not, in fact, some of the New Calvinists have publicly stated their dislike of the self-focused, matey kind of songs, yet there is no great willingness to probe the matter of whether the instruments that are played or the volume and beat of the music affects what people experience and therefore their view of God and their standing before him. Collin Hansen uncovers this diversitive worship style in the course of his perambulations. John Piper sets the scene for us with his comment that Collin Hansen quotes speaking about Mark Driscoll and C. J. Mahaney. Let me quote, "A few years ago Mark Driscoll and C. J. Mahaney had never heard of each other. That surprised me," says John Piper, "because they're a bit alike. They're both kind of crazy in their own way. The worship at Sovereign Grace churches is very bouncy, they jump up and down, and the worship at Driscoll's church is the loudest music I've ever heard in my life, the loudest drummer, at least. And they are holding the same theology, both given to radical church planting and they never even knew the other existed." And that is the end of that quotation.

The result is the good preaching, and there is much within this movement, can be eclipsed and the distorting view of God in spiritual experiences promoted in its place. This unwillingness to reflect on their practice is characteristic of the charismatic movement in general where fleshly phenomena are confused with spiritual phenomena. People may champion C. H. Spurgeon and Jonathan Edwards but then reckon the God whom they preached and adored is to be approached through the medium of loud music and semi-mystical ecstasies and hypnotic states. It is essential experience which is incompatible with the worship of a high and holy God. As a pragmatic way of attracting people to the gospel, it is worldly; in terms of the result in spirituality, it is potentially toxic. It is might and power but not the Spirit. We'll return to this point later.



The same glaring inconsistency surfaces when we consider that some are reluctant even to censure the use of the aggressive and sexualized rhythms of rap music for the propagation of holy truth. Collin Hansen recounts his experience at Joshua Harris' New Attitude Conference and I quote him. "Walking to my seat," he says, "for the opening night of a New Attitude Conference, an unexpected sound boomed over the convention center speakers. Could it be? No, hip-hop here with this crowd? At least the lyrics sounded about right for New Attitude which attracted about 3,000 20-somethings to Louisville. 'Grace, a merited favor toward those who deserve wrath,' Curtis Allen rapped. 'Grace is salvation from predestination. Christ gave his life to change our destination.'"

The comprehensive Christianity of some branches of the New Calvinism goes then so far as to embrace the worldly culture and medium of rap hoping to claim it for the gospel. In so doing, it actually manages to deny the gospel by equating God with the culture that the music is drawn from and by compromising the prospects of vital and authentic spiritual experience through indiscriminately working on the emotions through music. Sola Scriptura was the formal principle of the Reformation, arguably the banner held aloft over some sections of this movement is Sola Musica, by music alone. All of the major American conferences which aim to reach the young use the music in part to convey the message.

Passion was founded in 1996 by Louie Giglio with the aim of seeing young people spiritually awakened, especially college students, and then to have them live for a greater purpose than themselves. Now with the well-known British songwriter Matt Redman and his wife Beth resident with them in Atlanta, Georgia, they have of late tried to encircle the globe with their message and their music. John Piper is a regular speaker at their main American event. Passion lives up to its name. An excerpt of worship leader Chris Tomlin belting out a song with light effects bathing the stage or plunging it into darkness as required set pulses running in, for example, Manila in August, 2008. Comments after the event spoke about the dramatic impact the music had had upon them.

Here is a report by Worship Together website reviewing a cd released by Passion. This is what it said, "The conviction, emotion, and surrender we sensed at Passion 2005 are powerfully captured on the latest cd 'Passion: How Great is our God.' From the pulsing opening anthem from the David Crowder Band, 'There is no one like You,' where over 11,000 voices echo the opening line immediately jolting the listener with a raucous tone of much of Passion '05 to the raw and potent stripped down hymn classic, 'It is well with my soul,' from Shane and Shane that closes the 13 song disc, 'How Great is our God' tells the story of a generation united for his renown." End of quote. I, for one, do not feel this is the kind of worship which the Father is seeking, yet none of this seems to worry John Piper who is happy to speak at these meetings and believe that he is witnessing a refreshing desire among the young people for the Lord and his renown.

The same is, of course, true in the United Kingdom. New Word Alive makes use of the services of Stuart Townend. Newfrontiers itself now employs lights and effects to enhance the worship experience at its New Days summer event for young people, as well as at its Together on a Mission Conference in Brighton. The level of professionalism of

those singing and playing gets more sophisticated with the passage of time, and the musical offerings change as they reflect changing fashions in the world at large. But by way of a digression but an important one, it's not just through music that all experiences are to be mediated. Some New Calvinists have shown themselves at home with breath prayers, centering prayers, Jesus prayers, mind-emptying practices beloved of the non-evangelical mystics and newly revived by people in the Emerging Church. The links between Tim Keller, Mark Driscoll, Matt Chandler and John Piper and authors recommending these practices has been well-documented. Among others, they point people towards the spiritual formation route of Dallas Willard and Richard Foster which borrow heavily from across the spectrum of mystics of all hues. This indiscriminate employment of methods producing experiences is a worrying aspect of some of these sections of New Calvinism and render suspect the commitment to the old paths of the Reformers and the Puritans. It is, indeed, the high road to producing a comprehensive form of Christianity shorn of doctrinal convictions and sound practice.

But returning to the music, there is so much that could be said here. I am convinced that this is one of the most compromised parts of the New Calvinist package and one capable of doing extraordinary damage at a number of levels. Firstly, let it be repeated God is not honored by embracing the music styles like rap which are derived from a culture promoting anger, violence, immorality and all-round emotional incontinence. I am no historian of musical genres but I learn from those who understand these things better that this style of music was deliberately composed to stir up emotions and to make people dance harder and longer. Music like this is not a suitable vehicle for making an approach to our God who is a consuming fire.

This is a point to dwell on a while longer. Music designed to work up animal passions belongs more with the Israelites at the foot of the mountain rising up to play and with Moses in the presence of God receiving the 10 Commandments on the mountain. It is not the atmosphere of the New Testament church. It is not the atmosphere of heaven. Joy there is, deep and profound feelings there are, but self-control is a fruit of the Spirit. It is not put on hold when it comes to the approach that we make to the Lord God of Sabaoth. It must be stated again, the mind is to be engaged in what is done in the worship of God. What is sung and how it is sung and the intention with which it is sung must not disengage the mind.

Romans 12:2, "And be not conformed to this world but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." We will not discern nor find the will of God or have any sensitivity for it if we're not having our minds renewed, stretched, challenged, provoked, exhorted. If we are looking to meet with the Lord and desire that he meet with us, unsanctified emotions are not the biblical route to pursue, "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear but of power and of love and of a sound mind," 2 Timothy 1:7. Such a sound mind must be actively cultivated if we are to worship in spirit and in truth. Here it is not just the more overtly worldly genres that are the difficulty, worship times which employ music, even good music and sound hymns, with a view to elevating our emotions as the be all and end all fall short of biblical worship.

Certainly nobody is advocating that we all fall asleep when we worship, that brings no honor to God, but neither should we come half-heartedly into the presence of God. We are to love the Lord our God with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our mind. We're to come ready to submit our disinclined hearts and rebellious affections to delight in the Lord. We come in a spirit of obedience and faith whether we're recently bereaved, in sickness, in great anxiety of soul, or in fruitlessness. We come to worship whether our hearts are pierced with sorrow or bowed down through personal failure and sin. We come to worship following a week of smiling or frowning providences. We rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory because though we do not see Christ, we believe in him. It is by believing that the joy comes rather than through a kickstart to the motions with a mind sidelined. The emotions should follow the believing and the exercise of the mind. Time and time again people evaluate the worship by what they felt and worship leaders are ranked according to their ability to make us feel something. This is feeling leading to believing and is the reverse of the biblical order. Sections of the New Calvinism and the Reformed charismatic movement by their practice make this reversal seem virtuous. It is not. We should not go down that route.

So we end our first address at this point here and go on next time to consider more situations where the music creates problems and tensions in the New Calvinism.