

ABSTRACT

Sanctifying Song; Christianity, Music, and Instrumental Worship

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Scholars agree that the first Christians worshipped with music, yet the origins and practices of the first liturgical music are not fully understood. One mystery is the use of musical instruments in the Early Church. Consensus believes that as a result of various factors, musical instruments did not play a major role in Christian worship from the beginning. However there are still two important questions to address in understanding the early and enduring lack of musical instruments in Christian liturgical music; When were musical instruments first excluded and why did the absence persist? Many of the aspects defining the Christian musical heritage trace their origin to the beginnings of organized liturgy during and before the fourth and fifth centuries. As a result, searching this era for clues offers glimpses into understanding a form of auditory expression with minimal direct evidence. Through careful examination of modern scholarship and ancient writing, a clearer picture of the gains of the fourth and fifth centuries indicates that little changed from the a-cappella style of the fifth century until the late medieval period. During the fourth and fifth centuries the appropriation of Greek knowledge, the establishment of a unified tradition of worship, and the need to enhance the solemnity of worship led to an elaborate musical tradition that continually grew over time with the church. The ideas about worship in the first four centuries solidified a musical tradition with an uncertain attitude towards the appropriateness of musical instruments.

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SANCTIFYING SONG: CHRISTIANITY, MUSIC, AND INSTRUMENTAL WORSHIP

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INTRODUCTION

During the first five centuries C.E. the music used in Christian worship developed without the accompaniment of musical instruments for three main reasons: 1) the appropriation of Hellenistic Wisdom in the writings of the Church Fathers; 2) the unification of the church traditions from diverse geographic areas; and 3) the increasing prominence and solemnity of the Church. These three ideas functioned in an interrelated way to keep musical instruments out of the Church well into the Middle Ages. By understanding these three trends it becomes possible to better place and contextualize the emergence of an instrumental tradition as part of liturgical worship when it emerges during the Middle Ages.

Despite the available musical evidence in early Christian worship, understanding the development of liturgical music and the role of musical instruments presents several difficulties. One of the limiting factors is the absence of the original music, which has been lost primarily due to a lack of notation. Another difficulty that arises comes from the oral tradition of music making that existed during the time of the Early Church. For this reason, the earliest treatises on music do not emerge until centuries after the first churches. Despite this, gaining clues about the sounds of early Christian worship can be done through examining sources that recreate an impression of how the music was made and what writers of the time felt about that music.

Evidence of music in the church from the fifth century and before is diverse and relatively abundant. It includes a variety of forms including archaeological remains from

instruments and performance spaces. It can be found in the writings of Church Fathers. It can be found in the Bible and in the commentaries about the Bible. It can be found in the writings of first-hand accounts. And it can be found in the polemic against instrumental music that developed in the writings of the fourth and fifth centuries.

One challenge to charting the development of liturgical music which scholars have confronted is a “gap in the sources” which began after the fifth century and lasted until the eighth century.¹ This era is a vital one for early music researchers because it marks the time in which the origins of Gregorian chant, the dominant musical expression of the church-and one that prolonged the absence of musical instruments from the church for hundreds of years, developed. The issue of understanding the bridging time between the patristic period and that of the Carolingians requires decoding and reconfiguring the evidence from existing fourth and early fifth century scholarship.² As with the study of Gregorian Chant, the search for the origins of the relationship between worship and musical instruments depends on an understanding of musical traditions through the fourth and into the early fifth centuries.

Understanding music in the context of worship not only requires evidence beyond the physical practice of singing, but also evidence from theology, philosophy, and history. Addressing the criteria for what qualified as music appropriate for worship begins this process of consolidation because it gathers sources and makes sense of trends that describe the underlying forces at work that changed worship and music over time. These trends point to a Christian musical tradition that likely began without instruments.

¹ James McKinnon, *Music in Early Christian Literature*, Cambridge Readings in the Literature of Music (Cambridge ; Cambridge University Press, 1987), 5.

² McKinnon, *Music in Early Christian Literature*, 5.

However, after millennia of change, many Christians have embraced musical instruments in worship, and have done so for centuries. This conflict between original and contemporary worship raises questions about the origin of musical instruments and their modern applications in worship.

As will be seen, evidence supports a late date for the emergence of liturgical instrumental use in the Church. Understanding this early period helps to highlight the changes that took place to make instruments acceptable for worship later. Hopefully, with careful examination of the evidence, a greater understanding of this era will reconcile the presence of instruments in modern worship with their absence in the beginning.

At the heart of the issue of instruments in the Church lies what type of music, if any, meets the standards appropriate for worship. Over time, this definition has changed, often seeming to broaden the scope of what contemporary leaders find acceptable. However, to the observer of history, the questions of what motivates change and what sanctions it remain. Throughout time, something has allowed worship to maintain its sacred status while its components have adapted to different situations. In the purview of this paper specifically, music has functioned to promote development of tradition over time. To begin this exploration, the following chapter will explore the influences for the music of the first Christians.

CHAPTER ONE

Background and Influences

Music in the Hellenistic Period

Worship music for the early Church emerged in a culture surrounded by disparate musical influences. In the Hellenistic period, diverse people across the Mediterranean and Near East treated music as an important part of life. Even today, English words which define musical concepts perpetuate the influence of the Hellenistic period. The word ‘music’ comes from the Greek word describing art mythologically derived from sources such as the god Apollo, the mythological musician Orpheus, and the Muses.³ One of the key genres of music for worship in many cultures, the hymn, derives from Grecian “hymnos”, which carried a similar connotation of religious devotion for Jews, Christians, and Greeks.⁴ Finally, in the course of translating the Septuagint, the term *téhellîm* in the Hebrew became *psalmos*, a word in Greek signifying the plucking of strings.⁵ This term has links to the superscriptions of the Book of Psalms which seem to deal with instructions for playing instruments.⁶ This idea is supported by evidence that links the form of some of the psalms to performance practices requiring soloist, choir, and instrumental interaction.

³ Chrysostom Nassis, “The Use of Music in Christian Worship: Background and Early Evidence,” *Phronema* 22 (2007). 24.

⁴ Nassis, “The Use of Music in Christian Worship,” 24.

⁵ Nassis, “The Use of Music in Christian Worship,” 24.

⁶ Nassis, “The Use of Music in Christian Worship,” 24.

Also, the abundance of musical instruments mentioned in the psalms, like in Psalm 150, supports the link between psalms and musical instruments (ESV). In Psalm 150 there are mentions of praise through musical instruments such as the trumpet, lute, harp, tambourine, strings, pipe, and cymbals (Ps. 150:3-5). The association between praising God and performing on instruments indicates a relationship between instrumentalists and the music of worship for the descendants of Abraham in the Old Testament. The word psalm in Greek preserved the instrumental and musical associations of the Hebrew word and highlighted the physical act of music making associated with praise.

These three terms; music, hymn, and psalm, reveal evidence of connections between Hellenistic terminology and the practice of musical worship in Christian and Jewish liturgies. These connections show that singing in worship existed across the region as a shared ritual practice in many religious, cults, and sects at the dawn of the Christian era.⁷ Indeed, in the Near East, examples of musical traditions with secular and sacred include Mesopotamia and Egypt, neighboring regions which likely interacted or at least entered the conscious of the Hebrew, Israelite, and later Jewish musical culture.⁸ While music of this time certainly included signing in many disparate regions, there is concrete evidence of the widespread use of instruments as well. This might explain the

⁷ Nassis, "The Use of Music in Christian Worship," 24.

⁸ David Noel Freedman, *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 5 vols. 1st ed. (New York, N.Y: Doubleday, 1992), 4: 930. As a note: throughout this article the term Hebrew designates the followers of the Judaism before the settlement of Israel, Israelites designates the people before their return from exile, and Jews designates the people after the 5th century BCE.

prevalence, observed in at least 25 books, of musical instruments in the Old Testament.⁹ While the Old Testament tracks a lineage of instrumental musicians and important rituals surrounding the use of instruments, one important difference between the Jewish liturgies before the Christian era and the Christian liturgies themselves is the inclusion of musical instruments.



Figure One: Unknown artist. Christ as Orpheus with his lyre. 4th century CE. Fresco. Christian cemetery of SS. Pietro e Marcellino, Rome. Photo. Christopher Page, *The Christian West and Its Singers: The First Thousand Years* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 41.

Instruments and Performance Spaces

For the question of musical instruments, archaeological discoveries illuminate the relationship between ritual, music, and society across cultures and regions. Examples of this include the musical styles which can be gleaned from the forms of dancers depicted

⁹ Yelena Kolyada, *A Compendium of Musical Instruments and Instrumental Terminology in the Bible*, Bible World (London: Equinox, 2009), 3.

in Egyptian tomb paintings along with a wide variety of instruments.¹⁰ Examples like this stress the deep history of musical instruments and human civilization. More examples supporting a musical tradition with instruments include the “models of the “kalu harp player” in ancient texts from Mari and Uruk.¹¹

Archeological evidence depicts the cultural influence of musical instruments. In Figure 1 above, musical elements of Hellenistic culture, like Orpheus the musician of myth, made their way into the art on Christian cemetery walls as early as the 4th century. While shedding no light on how liturgical music might have sounded, this type of archeological evidence indicates the prevalence of musical culture and musical iconography in the Hellenistic period. Musical instruments were common, and they represented an important element of society.

The scope of research into what ancient instruments sounded like in the Near East is vast.¹² With all the instruments that were known to have existed, there is the possibility to imagine a diverse array of sounds from drums and other percussive instruments through brass instruments, stringed instruments, both bowed and plucked, and woodwind instruments. Equally important to the types of instruments used, the acoustic environment where people encountered and listened to musical instruments is equally important. Later in this chapter, the Jewish Temple and the Synagogue will be explored and their architecture briefly outlined. However, an understanding of the performance spaces of early Christian music helps to understand the evolving acoustics

¹⁰ Freedman, *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 4:930.

¹¹ Freedman, *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 4:930.

¹² If one wishes to see images of many of the instruments that might have existed during the time of the early Christian communities and before see: Claire Polin, *Music of the Ancient Near East* (New York: Vantage Press, 1954).

that shaped their liturgy. By examining these performance spaces, the role that musical instruments might have played in Christian music making gains greater context.

The performance spaces for the first Christians were likely smaller in size. A combination of two factors likely influenced this fact. First, the first Christian communities were smaller in number, made up of cells of the faithful and as such their

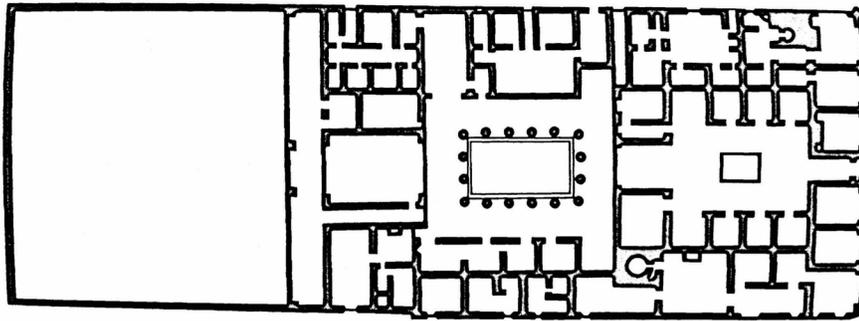


Figure Two: Horst de la Croiz and Richard Tansey. Plan of the house of Pansa, Pompeii, second century BCE, after Helen Gardner. Drawing. Photo. *Art Through the Ages*, 8th rev. ed. (Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, San Diego, 1986), 174.

meeting places were very localized, often houses of the members or the community.

Especially towards the end of the second and third centuries, the persecution of the first Christians meant that most musical performances associated with worship took place in house churches in small, hidden communities throughout the region. There is evidence that in small gatherings, Christian or non-Christian alike, song was accompanied with musical instruments. This can be seen in archaeological remains including murals, vases,

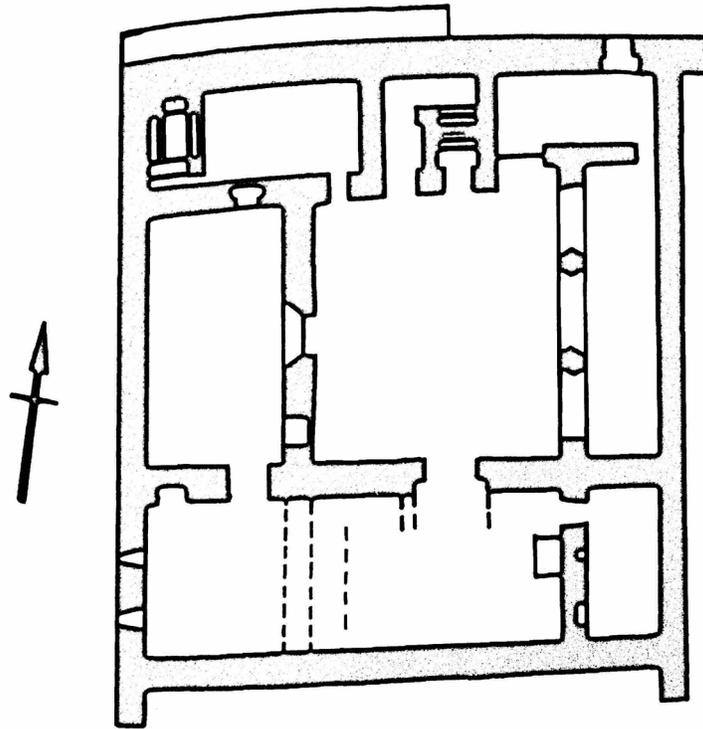


Figure Three: Plan of the house church at Dura Europos. Drawing. Photo. “The Architectural Setting of the Liturgy” in *The Study of the Liturgy*, ed. Cheslyn Jones *et. al.* (Oxford University Press, New York, 1978), 481.

and burial grounds. The Figure Two depicts the plan of the House of Pansa, Pompeii. There was not a “mother church” in Christianity, (outside Judea) meaning that the first Christians worshipped together in many dwellings and around many tables.¹³ For this reason, houses like the one in Figure Three represent the sort of environment where the first Christian music was heard. In Figure Three, a house church at Dura Europos is depicted. This is the clearest evidence of the earliest type of dwelling appropriated specifically for the needs of Christian liturgy. This building existed from 230 to 257 and

¹³ Edward Foley, *Foundations of Christian Music: The Music of Pre-Constantinian Christianity*, Gorgias Liturgical Studies 24 (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2009), 51. There was no ‘mother church’ specifically outside Judea because the church at Jerusalem, at least through the first several decades, was in fact a ‘mother church.’

represents a signal of the development of greater religious ceremony and ritual.¹⁴ What marks the difference in performance space between the first image of the house church and the second is that the first house church was primarily a house whereas the second was much more the dedicated church as understood in modern times.¹⁵ Before 200 CE, gatherings in the houses used as churches were usually restricted to small, lower class dwellings.¹⁶ In larger Roman style dwellings, like those of the later example, there was normally a large dining room, well suited for the eucharist, as well as a pool in the atrium for baptism.¹⁷ After 200 CE, the establishment of dedicated buildings of worship bridged the gap between more itinerant meeting places and the basilicas of the Constantinian era. These dedicated structures likely augmented the musical experience in worship and contributed to the sense of greater ritual and formal practice.

As we turn to address the specific needs of instruments, there was likely a high degree of saturation in the culture. This means that moving from houses to houses of worship meant that any musical instruments normally found in a house would have had to be selected in order for them to arrive in a house-church common after 200 CE. In the evidence of the first Christians, figures with musical instruments are often seen, like in the Orpheus example, during the first 4 centuries. However, the presence of musical instruments in art alone is not enough to confirm their use in worship music in particular. The Orpheus example functions as a symbol more than as a depiction of Christian instruments in the liturgy. As will be seen, the symbolic portrayal of musical instruments

¹⁴ Foley, *Foundations of Christian Music*, 72.

¹⁵ Foley, *Foundations of Christian Music*, 72.

¹⁶ Foley, *Foundations of Christian Music*, 70.

¹⁷ Foley, *Foundations of Christian Music*, 69.

came to emphasize the metaphorical rather than literal application of musical instruments in the Church by the end of the fifth century.

Archeological evidence of instruments and their depictions in art as well as



Figure Four: Davies and Gardener. Lyre held by a Semite following his donkey, based on an Egyptian wall-painting. Beni Hasan, Tomb of Khehhotep 1900-1920 BCE Egypt. drawing of a wall-painting. "Ancient Egyptian Paintings," Oriental Institute. Photo. Claire, Polin, *Music of the Ancient Near East* (New York: Vantage Press, 1954). XX.

evidence of the structures where music was performed can reveal the instruments that were used and where music was made in the past, but more evidence is necessary to understand how this music sounded.

Recreating Early Music

Archeological evidence of buildings and instruments helps to depict an acoustic outline of the sounds that might have been in the past. As in Figure Four, collections of art from ancient archeological sites sometimes include non-auditory references to the past aural soundscape.¹⁸ To better understand the mechanics of music and its customs in performance, it is important to attempt to recreate the ancient music of distant civilizations. One way to recreate this music is to observe the sharing of musical styles and instruments between different cultures. In this way, knowledge of one group's musical techniques can give insight into the way another group used instruments and musical ideas. One example of this type of cultural sharing comes from Egypt and the Israelites.

During the time of Egyptian bondage, the Israelites adopted musical instruments and musical customs from the Egyptians.¹⁹ "The Egyptian harp went into the musical ritual of Solomon's Temple, where the nefer (lute) was popular."²⁰ Additionally, more foreign instruments from across the region appeared in the First Temple liturgy including harps, zithers, oboes, cymbals, and sistra.²¹ The kinnor, an instrument played by the Hebrews which was also used by the Israelites after the Egyptian exile has much in common with the instrument depicted in the Figure Four, a Semitic lyre from an Egyptian wall painting at Beni-Hasan.²²

¹⁸ "Paintings3.Pdf," accessed March 13, 2021, <https://oi.uchicago.edu/sites/oi.uchicago.edu/files/uploads/shared/docs/paintings3.pdf>, 26.

¹⁹ Polin, *Music of the Ancient Near East*, 54.

²⁰ Polin, *Music of the Ancient Near East*, 55.

²¹ Polin, *Music of the Ancient Near East*, 58.

²² Polin, *Music of the Ancient Near East*, 68.

This type of musical instrument likely resembled the instruments shown on these Palestinian coins in Figure Five which depict ancient Hebrew kinnors, or lyres.

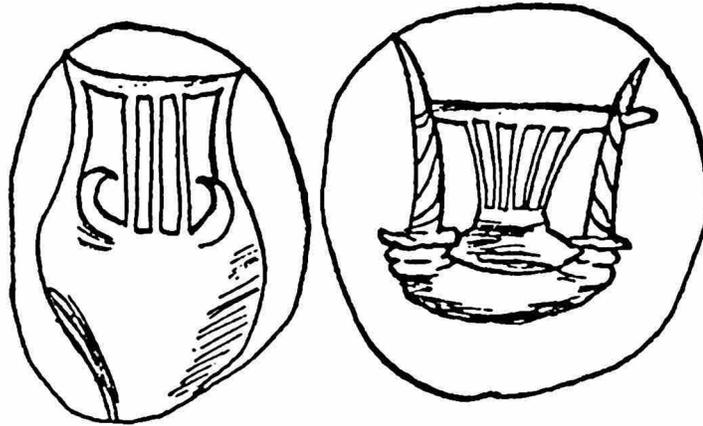


Figure Five: Clair Polin. Hebrew Lyres depicted on second century Palestinian coins. drawn 1954: Line drawing. Photo. Polin, Claire. *Music of the Ancient Near East*. New York: Vantage Press, 1954. 68.

In recreating the music of the Hellenistic Near East, several details about ancient Greek music give an impression of what instrumental and vocal music might have been like during this time. Monophonic instrumental music consisting of a sole, unaccompanied melodic line, which might have been sung or played on instruments, constituted much of their music.²³ Sometimes additional melodic lines would be added to the primary one to create heterophony. In these styles of music rested a close connection between instrumental music and vocal music. Vocal music had melodies and rhythms drawn from “rhythms and speech inflections” found in texts in a similar way that instrumental music featured melodies which imitated the stressed and unstressed syllables

²³ Nassis, “The Use of Music in Christian Worship,” 25.

found in speech.²⁴ While there were undoubtedly exceptions to the rule, a lot of the music likely sounded similar to this. While Hellenistic culture influenced many musical traditions, music specifically for worship had additional qualities that set it apart, as was especially the case for the Jewish people.

Music in Ancient Israel

The early Christians have a unique relationship to the music and culture of the Jewish people. As a result of this, while it is important to note the independence of Jewish and Christian music and avoid mistaking similarities the result of direct influence, an understanding of music in Jewish history represents a vital step in understanding the role of musical instruments in early Christianity. Throughout their history, the Jewish people used a wide variety of music in their worship including much that prominently featured instruments. Considering the wide range of situations which featured musical connections, it comes as no surprise that the number of musical instruments mentioned in the Old Testament is high. The Jewish culture placed a high regard on music, seen in the first Genesis account of city life, where musicians were numbered among the three first occupations.²⁵ Jubal is called the “father of all those who play the lyre and pipe” (Gen. 4:21). For a culture that regarded itself as having musicians from its beginning, the role of musicians is understandably important.

The craft of making music with musical instruments was important to the Jewish people. Throughout the Old Testament there are many references to musical instruments

²⁴ Nassis, “The Use of Music in Christian Worship,” 25.

²⁵ Nassis, “The Use of Music in Christian Worship,” 25.

showing that they were important artifacts in Jewish history. This may be a product of the Jewish people's encounters with other ancient musical traditions across the regions. Looking across the region that contained Israel, similar musical practices and instruments are present across extremely diverse groups, likely addressing similar psychological and emotional needs and accompanying similar events.²⁶ Because of this, understanding the instruments of non-Jewish cultures in the region can help to shape the understanding of the role those instruments played in Jewish history. This allows the evidence of performance spaces and instruments from archeological sites to contextualize the surviving documentation of instruments from this era in Christian writing because it gives us a better idea what they were writing about and what they were experiencing.

In the Old Testament the evidence of the many uses of music and musical instruments. emphasizes how musical instruments could be associated with certain occasions throughout history. One such occasion was victory. There is evidence that women singers and drummers composed and performed in small groups using both traditional choruses or refrains as well as developing texts in response to the specific occasion.²⁷ These traditions emphasize the evidence that “the Israelites had a portable drum” which accompanied singing and dancing and might even have went along with other instruments where in occurrences in the Old Testament it was connected with merry making or praise.²⁸ As this drum evidence highlights, in general the music of the

²⁶ Joachim Braun, *Music in Ancient Israel/Palestine: Archaeological, Written, and Comparative Sources*, Bible in Its World (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 2002), 193.

²⁷ Jonathan L Friedmann, *Music in the Hebrew Bible: Understanding References in the Torah, Nevi'im and Ketuvim* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2014).

²⁸ Ovid Rogers Sellers, “Musical Instruments of Israel,” *The Biblical Archaeologist* 4, no. 3 (September 1941). 32.

Israelites was “largely rhythmical, rather than melodious and harmonious,” a cultural aesthetic also shared with ancient Hebrew Poetry.²⁹

Musical traditions not only reflected the aesthetic of language, but often went along with words that memorialized heroes and immortalized their actions. One example of this is the Song of Deborah in Judges 5.³⁰ In this example, women performing music for the occasion of victory and would seem to imply the use of a drum given the rhythmic form of Hebrew poetry and song and the close association in folk tradition of both dancing and singing.³¹ Since instruments were associated with victory, this provides an important link to their importance in religious worship and how the connotation of warfare might influence the type of religious music that Jewish musicians performed.

Aside from historically important moments, music functioned in important life ceremonies such as in Samson’s riddle which suggests music for the festivities of his marriage feast.³² The ways that a musical people use music throughout their lives underscores again why musical instruments were vital to religious ceremony.

The strong link between music, leadership, and religion is felt throughout the Old Testament. Musical instruments were important because music played a role in recognizing important figures in society. Major Jewish figures, such as kings David and Solomon, stand out because of their excellence in poetry and music emphasizing the

²⁹ Sol Baruch Finesinger, “Musical Instruments in OT,” *Hebrew Union College Annual* 3 (1926). 23.

³⁰ Judges 5:1; “Then sang Deborah and Barak the son of Abinoam on that day.”

³¹ Carol L Meyers, “Of Drums and Damsels: Women’s Performance in Ancient Israel,” *The Biblical Archaeologist* 54, no. 1 (March 1991). 16.

³² Freedman, *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 4: 931. Judges 14:14; “Out of the eater came something to eat./ Out of the strong came something sweet.”

importance of music for the people by its prominence in their leadership.³³ Moreover, this trend is a through line throughout the Old Testament as seen in the way that leaders used music in the various prophetic narratives (1 Sam 10:5, 2 Kings 3:15, Isaiah 24:16, and Amos 5:23, 8:3). Using music is seen in the Old Testament as a way that important figures recognized and worshiped their deity.

Music was important in a variety of religious functions. The use of music by prophets in the context of the instrumental history of Israel might best be seen as another emphasis on the centrality of music to the Jewish people's religious history. As an example, prophets sang their prophecies in these books of the Old Testament: Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Habakkuk, "engaging in musical dialogue with" God.³⁴ They understood that the function of the instrumental musician and the singer was to "place an intermediary between worshippers and their God."³⁵ If one acknowledges that the activities that constitute worship have a wide variety, then many citations of these instruments accompany a form of worship. For example, the *kinnôr*, with 42 Old Testament occurrences appears in an unusually wide variety of situations "including the transport of the arc."³⁶ "David commanded the chiefs of the Levites to appoint their brothers as the singers who should play loudly on musical instruments, on harps and lyres and cymbals" during the transport of the arc (1 Chron. 15:16). Transportation of sacred items constitutes a form of veneration, emphasizing the connection between musical instruments and worship.

³³ Nassis, "The Use of Music in Christian Worship," 25.

³⁴ Friedmann, *Music in the Hebrew Bible*, 49.

³⁵ Friedmann, *Music in the Hebrew Bible*, 49.

³⁶ Braun, *Music in Ancient Israel/Palestine*, 17.

As chronicled in the Old Testament, music functioned in multiple roles from marking important occasions to accompanying worship. Their repeated use in the Old Testament speaks of a long history of instrument use throughout society for secular and sacred occasions. Some of the first evidence of this musical heritage coming into the liturgy involved with the worship of God comes from the “Pentateuch and Deuteronomist writers” who “present events in which people involved in religious musical performances lead songs through singing, with instruments, of a combination of both.”³⁷ The Hebrew text also included references to instrumental accompaniment as well as technical musical terms giving instructions to the choirmasters that deal with style, tunes, and tones, among other things. These examples strengthened the affinity for musical worship in the Temple. As a result of this long history, musical instruments and musicians were an important part of the Temple worship entering the first century CE.

How the Temple Used Music

The first Temple in Jerusalem was built by Solomon following the instructions of his father King David between 922 and 962 BCE (1 Chron. 22:6-8 RSV). Destroyed by the Babylonians in 587 BCE, the Temple was rebuilt in 515 BCE (Ezra 5:16, Hag. 2:3 ESV). However, Herod the Great demolished and replaced this rebuilt Temple and constructed the Second Temple, which sat on a hill overlooking the Kidron valley and was about the size of the First Temple but with a grander mount and wall.³⁸

³⁷ Theodore W Burgh, *Listening to the Artifacts: Music Culture in Ancient Palestine* (London: T & T Clark, 2006), 109.

³⁸ Foley, *Foundations of Christian Music*, 26.

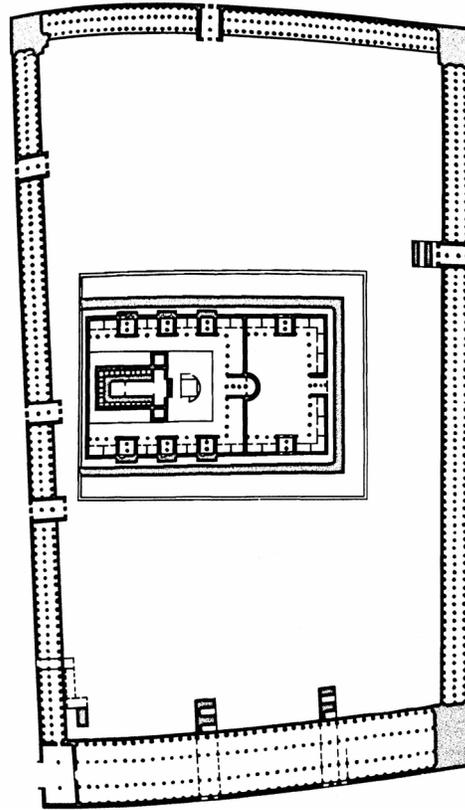


Figure Six: Geoffrey Wigoder. Plan of Herod's Temple (20 BCE) after Vincent-Steve. 1982. Drawing. Photo. Perrin, Norman, Dennis C Duling, and Robert L Fern. *The New Testament: An Introduction*, 2nd ed. (Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, New York, 1982), p.XX.

By examining Jewish records like those in the Mishnah, it is obvious that the list of instruments in the Temple that could have accompanied psalms or other forms of music is extensive.³⁹ These musical ceremonies would have at least included blasts from trumpets and the sound of harps of which there were “never less than 2 harps or more than 6” (Mishnah Arakhin 2:3). Other instruments included lyres and cymbals (Mishnah Arakhin 2:5). Cymbals are mentioned in the Temple in multiple places in the Mishnah.⁴⁰

³⁹ Note that the Mishnah is a later source, compiled around the 3rd century CE, however it still contains pertinent details about the history and practice of Temple music.

⁴⁰ Hekhalot 5.1, Arrakhin 2.5, Tamid 3.8, 7.3, and Middot 2.6.

Flutes could be used for some ceremonies (Mishnah Sukkah 5:1). Finally, “countless Levites played on harps, lyres, cymbals, and trumpets and instruments of music on 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 (Ps 120-124).”⁴¹ With all these musical forces in reserves in the Temple, the evidence of musical and liturgical indications in the Psalms should not be taken lightly. Psalm 44 includes the superscription “A Maskil of the sons of Korah.” Analysis of the Psalm helps to unpack the liturgical term Maskil, which might suggest how individual singers, a choir, and a larger ensemble could have joined together for the hymn.⁴² This example and others imply that instructions for instruments in texts related to praise through music were common in the Jewish Temple and helped to create an elaborate ceremony. This use of instruments featured prominently in Temple worship as a result, and a wealth of information about the Second Temple at Jerusalem, or the Temple of Herod, in the years preceding its Roman destruction further explains this phenomenon.⁴³

The liturgical music of the Temple coexisted with Hellenistic music. The Jewish people valued music highly in their ceremonies in the Temple where instrument accompanied music played a prominent role. The actual music played on the instruments available to the ancient Hebrews is largely unknown but some passages in the Old Testament and the Mishnah show that they were used in groups or consorts in the way of

⁴¹ Mishnah Sukkah 5.4

⁴² Foley, *Foundations of Christian Music*, 32.

⁴³ James McKinnon, *The Temple, the Church Fathers and Early Western Chant* (Brookfield, Vt: Ashgate, 1998), 77.

modern day instrument sections.⁴⁴ The indication that the Temple may have used consorts is significant because it compares to the way music is often presented in churches today. The evidence of musical instruments in the Temple is strong, but despite this the notion of what the music sounded like is difficult to discern.

One way to understand what ancient music may have sounded like is to examine the circumstances surrounding its performance. The type of music that is performed is linked to the style of worship being practiced. In the Temple, the Levites had the responsibility of singing and playing instruments as part of the Temple service. Within this context, sources outline “three ways of praising God” which correspond to “three styles of psalm accompaniment.”⁴⁵ Within the context of this type of worship, the musical instruments used became very important to the meaning of the worship. One instrument, the shofar, became a “holistic national-ethical symbol of identification.”⁴⁶ In another example of a blown instrument representing the power of God, the “Sovereign Lord will sound the trumpet” (Zechariah 9:14 NIV). This suggests the idea of God blowing this instrument to frighten his enemies and its prominence throughout Jewish history “reminds man of his sins and of the brevity of human life, according to the Talmud.”⁴⁷ Indeed, the importance of these instruments for the Ancient Hebrews allows for an understanding of their music and hence their worship. This is because unlike the Greeks, they left no notation of their music, therefor instrumental capability paints the

⁴⁴ Terence C Mitchell, “The Music of the Old Testament Reconsidered,” *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 124 (July 1992). 134.

⁴⁵ Kolyada, *A Compendium of Musical Instruments and Instrumental Terminology in the Bible*, 183.

⁴⁶ Braun, *Music in Ancient Israel/Palestine*, 318.

⁴⁷ Polin, *Music of the Ancient Near East*, 65.

best picture of their music's timbre and style.⁴⁸ For example we may know instruments on which David showed himself skillful those designated to be used to the praise of the Lord in the final Psalm, but we only know the limits of the sounds those instruments produced, not anything about the order or grouping of those sounds in a musical context.⁴⁹ However, by understanding what these instruments could do indicates the role of musical historical context in the Temple.

The type of music in the Temple is defined by the worship needed. Until the first century, the Jewish spiritual and musical life centered around the ancient capital of Israel and site of the Temple, Jerusalem, where three times a year pilgrims came to the Temple where a hereditary caste of musicians, the Levites, performed intricate music.⁵⁰ In support of this it can be seen that the a choir accompanied the sacrificial rights, "recalling the sound of angels in heaven" in a manner not to draw attention away from the high priest, king, or God (Exo. 23:17, Deut. 16:16 , and the 'Songs of Ascent:' Psalms 124-134). In Ezra 2 and Nehemiah 7 and 12, singers, constituting a highly important section of the temple personnel, sang with instrumental music.⁵¹ "The priests in their vestments and with trumpets, and the Levites (the sons of Asaph) with cymbals, took their places to praise the Lord, as prescribed by David king of Israel" (Ezra 3:10 NIV). These instruments functioned to consecrate the first Temple and again they are seen doing similar work at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem, where the Levites were sought out from where they lived and were brought to Jerusalem to celebrate joyfully with songs

⁴⁸ Finesinger, "Musical Instruments in OT," 21.

⁴⁹ Sellers, "Musical Instruments of Israel," 46.

⁵⁰ Nassis, "The Use of Music in Christian Worship," 20.

⁵¹ Sellers, "Musical Instruments of Israel," 34.

of thanksgiving accompanied by the music of cymbals, harps and lyres (Neh. 12:17 NIV). From records of the Temple ceremony the use of instruments is specifically dictated. These instruments heightened the musical climax of worship, along with the Levite musicians singing psalm for the day, as the sacrificial lamb was consumed on the altar fire.⁵² The “Levites sang from a platform called a *duchan*, and accompanied themselves with *nebel* and *kinnor* which are string instruments similar to the harp and kithara respectively.”⁵³ From these examples, the it is clear that the ceremony of the Temple abounded with vocal and instrumental music, used in tandem to elicit a powerful response akin to witnessing the angels in heaven. In order to acquire these moments of sublime spiritual transport, the worship required music that was profound, ceremonial, elaborate, and sonorous.

⁵² McKinnon, *The Temple, the Church Fathers, and Early Western Chant*, 77.

⁵³ McKinnon, *The Temple, the Church Fathers, and Early Western Chant*, 77.

In addition to their role in standard services, instruments could be associated with particular days in the worship calendar. As an example among these was the singing of the *Hallel*, psalms 113-118, in the Herodian Temple on about twelve days of the year with the *halil*.⁵⁴ As a point of interest, the *halil* is an aulos-like wind instrument, an aulos being a popular Greek instrument of the era. While instruments played a major role in defining the year in the Temple, for the synagogues spread throughout Israel, the musical instruments of the Temple did not have the same role.

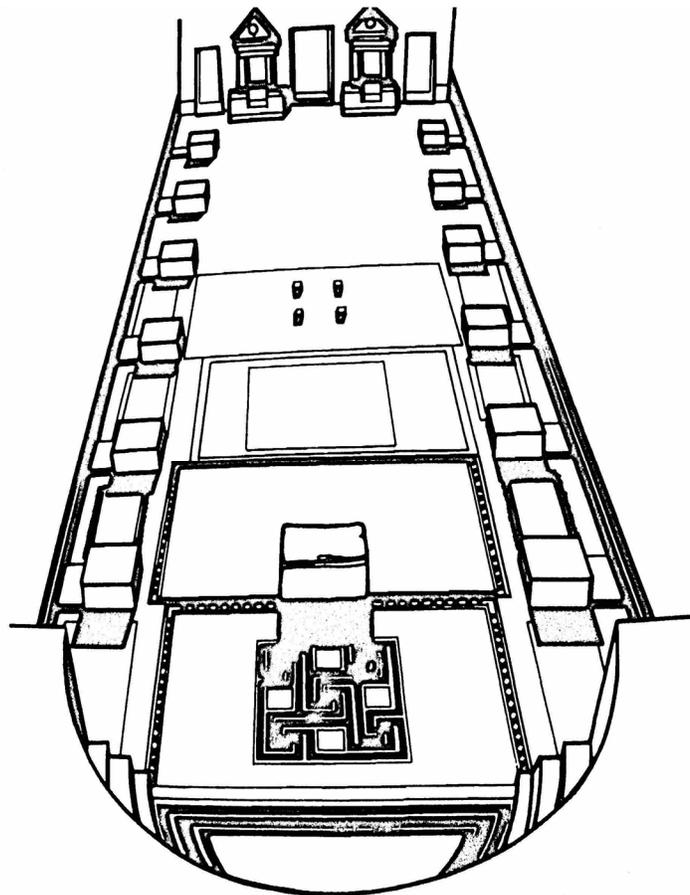


Figure Seven: Synagogue at Sardis, originally built as a Roman basilica (first century CE). Wigoder, Geoffrey. *The Story of the Synagogue* (Harper and Row, San Francisco, 1986), 32-33.

⁵⁴ McKinnon, *The Temple, the Church Fathers, and Early Western Chant*, 78.

How the Synagogue Used Music

In order to understand the role of musical instruments in the Synagogue, it is helpful to emphasize that they were quite different from the Temple. The origins of the Synagogue have been the subject of debate. Scholars usually hold that they emerged during the Babylonian exile however firm literary evidence from the writings of Philo, Josephus, and the New Testament only track the existence of the synagogue back to the first century CE.⁵⁵ It seems likely that the first synagogues arose in the second century BCE.⁵⁶ The earliest synagogues were simple structures but quite open whereas over time later synagogues became more elaborate, possibly reflecting a greater dedication to ritual and liturgy.⁵⁷ The ancient synagogues were “centers for readings and homilies rather than worship.”⁵⁸ After the fall of the Temple in 70 CE, the role of the synagogue changed. During this time, Jewish people holding small services in synagogues with some instrumental music transitioned to a strictly vocal music, a transition possibly reminiscent of St Paul’s opinion that instruments were lifeless.⁵⁹ St. Paul compares speaking in tongues to the player of a flute who doesn’t play accurate pitches (1 Cor 14:7-8 RSV). At the same time he also says that instruments are lifeless. In Ephesians, the author exhorts the church to address one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs (Eph 5:19). Hymns and spiritual songs written into the New Testament stand as an enduring legacy of the sung word on the doctrines of Christianity. While the sung word was important to Christians, around the synagogue in the coterminous era, there is a lot of

⁵⁵ Foley, *Foundations of Christian Music*, 37.

⁵⁶ Foley, *Foundations of Christian Music*, 37.

⁵⁷ Foley, *Foundations of Christian Music*, 38.

⁵⁸ Donald Jay Grout, J. Peter Burkholder, and Claude V. Palisca, *A History of Western Music*, Ninth edition (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2014), 24.

⁵⁹ Nassis, “The Use of Music in Christian Worship,” 20.

discussion among historians revolving around the ‘ban’ on instruments after 70 CE. Some sources state that “after the destruction of the Second temple, the participation in the liturgical practice of all instruments except the shofar was forbidden.”⁶⁰ This statement determines the affinity for musical instruments in the Synagogue after the first century and also outlines a particular narrative for the relationship of instrumental and vocal music. If this statement is true, then it could mean that the Christian preference for vocal music originated in the sudden abolishment of instrumental music in synagogues, which would imply a strong link between the two musical lineages. However, understanding the debate around this ‘ban’ and other possible reasons why instruments fell out of favor in both liturgies shows that the role of musical instruments lost favor for a variety of nuanced reasons, and that these two traditions were more independent from an earlier date.

In order to deal with the question of musical instruments in the synagogue, the function of the synagogue ought to be better understood. There was a musical component to the synagogue service in the first centuries CE. In terms of worship and in particular worship with music, “psalmody in the synagogue consisted of principally the reading of religious texts.”⁶¹ This seems fairly obvious since it is how the majority of religious services are conducted today. However, their reading was quite different and likely involved some form of chanting. This chanting was meant to clearly convey the words of the text, not adorn the service with musical embellishment for the sake of ritual. This might have been the result of the development of the synagogue’s evolving role over

⁶⁰ Kolyada, *A Compendium of Musical Instruments and Instrumental Terminology in the Bible*, 173.

⁶¹ James W. McKinnon, “The Exclusion of Musical Instruments from the Ancient Synagogue,” *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association* 106, no. 1 (1979), 79.

time. Originally, synagogues represented a central meeting place where civic functions, readings, and exegesis of the Torah took place outside of a purely religious context.⁶² By the time of the New Testament, there is evidence that the Synagogue became a place for prayer, or at least where prayer was discussed. Rabbinic evidence also contributes towards understanding the early synagogue liturgy. One thing about the function of the music of the synagogue is clear. The destruction of the Second Temple meant that its associated rituals and musical traditions had to cease. Without a place for elaborate musical ensembles to form at the Temple, instrumental music would have had to continue in synagogues. The evidence that this did not occur might have been the result of a combination of mourning for the Temple and rabbis of the Talmud expressing their anti-Hellenistic sentiments toward instruments commonly found in the culture around synagogues. Beyond this argument that places almost all of the stimulus for instruments leaving the synagogue with the fall of the Second Temple, another argument holds that musical instruments might never have played a major role to begin with. This statement is part of a debate about whether Synagogues developed free from instruments or whether they had instruments at one point and then stopped by a decree or by societal shift.

The differences between these arguments are key to a view that there was a ban on musical instruments, but one which did not stem from a belief in mourning about the temple.⁶³ This position states that the ban arose from pious religious leaders who disliked the immorality of musical instruments. However, some have failed to identify strong attitudes against musical instruments within the period. Reexamining the synagogue

⁶² James W. McKinnon, "On the Question of Psalmody in the Ancient Synagogue," *Early Music History* 6 (1986): 159–191.

⁶³ McKinnon, "The Exclusion of Musical Instruments from the Ancient Synagogue," 77.

service itself, McKinnon states that psalmody in the synagogue consisted of principally the reading of religious texts. For this reason, it did not rely on melody in the modern sense as seen in hymns. The issue of musical instruments did not arise at the time because instruments had no role to play in the type of chanted reading used in service. Since this practice continued on into early Christian worship, the issue of psalmody with instruments does not even arise. In conclusion, this argument states that both Jewish and Christian psalmody, developing after the liberation of the church in the fourth century, had little initial affinity for musical instruments. The use of instruments in the services before more formal psalmody was irrelevant because it would not have matched the chanted style.

The parallels between the synagogue and the early Christian church mean that it is easy to overestimate influence on the other. While they share critical aspects particularly revolving around the use of musical instruments, the two liturgies were quite independent. Both the synagogue liturgy and the church liturgy have some roots in the rituals of the Second Temple. They share texts and even approaches to chanting in their early periods. However, understanding the synagogue and the church is best seen as two branches that diverged from one common trunk at about the same time. After that point, in this case the first century CE, the traditions might have taken similar developmental paths, but that was most likely not the result of direct influence from one on the other. Like the church itself, the synagogue that emerges in the early centuries CE is an evolution of early Jewish worship. The continued role of music and the shift towards fully a-capella music in the synagogue doesn't imply that the church followed suit as a direct result. Indeed, the paths of the Synagogue and the Church naturally separated as

there were a decreasing number of new converts from Judaism in the Church and an increasing number of Gentiles in the Church. Rather than as a model for what the Church service looked like, the Synagogue's musical lineage helps to understand the forces that were also at work in Christian society, molding its musical tradition on a different path, but often taking a similar approach to the issues of the day.

Summary

This chapter explored three broad influences on the first Christian music. Of these influences, two featured a strong affinity towards instrumental music. Hellenistic cultures featured musical instruments in various uses from the religious to the secular. The Herodian Temple used extensive instruments as well. The use of instruments also represented an important part of the Jewish history. Only the practices of the Synagogue did not feature a strong affinity towards musical instruments. The influences that led synagogue worship away from instrumental music were also a key factors in traditions that leaned towards chant and song as opposed to instrumental accompaniment in early Christian music. Looking at the instruments that existed across the region during the Hellenistic era depict the vibrant instrument traditions that Christians and Jews alike responded to. The instruments seen in archeological discoveries capture a staggering diversity of forms. This diversity can be seen in the Old Testament and in other Jewish texts. Additionally, the influence of musical customs between cultures can be grasped in the transferal of instruments between different groups of people. In addition, the types of performance spaces such as the Herodian Temple, synagogues, and Christian house churches reveal the different spaces that music was heard in. Comparing the venue of the

Temple to that of the house church, one easily images that the different spaces called for and indeed admitted different types of sounds to be produced therein. Attempts to imagine the sound of the music of the ancient Near East reveals many vocal qualities. These vocal qualities factor in religious music because they support music as accompaniment rather than the focus of the ceremony. This also implies the obvious that music in the past inhabited different genres than it does today. Association between culture, custom and instruments meant different things for different people. The next chapter will examine the similarities and differences between the influences discussed in this chapter and the current understanding of the sound of early Christian music. Like the synagogue, an important part of the discussion around early Christian music is why vocal traditions emerged and persisted and musical instruments fell into disfavor.

CHAPTER TWO

Origins of A-Cappella Worship

Influences on Christian Song

The music of the first Christians drew from several key influences. With elements of the surrounding Hellenistic culture, the Temple, and the Synagogue, their music represented their various social and religious ties. The specific concepts which might have influenced Christian thought and thus music included the Old Testament Scriptures, worship in the Jerusalem Temple and the synagogue, Greek language, Greek philosophy, and Greek art.⁶⁴ Examining each of the ingredients that form the whole gives a picture of what Christian music sounded like.

For both Jews and Christians music was a vehicle for worship. Strong evidence shows that this worship took the form of singing. One important mode of worship in song for both groups was the hymn. The use of hymns is prevalent both in Christianity and in Judaism. One of the ways to better understand the hymns found in fragments in the New Testament and in writings from the first centuries is the psalms of the Old Testament.⁶⁵ The psalms represent a collection of poetry and music in the Old Testament common in both Christianity and Judaism. In this critical area of the Bible, an area once representing a prayer book for the Herodian Temple worship, there are 61 verses that contain 68 references to the word 'sing', a key fact that carries over later into

⁶⁴ Nassis, "The Use of Music in Christian Worship," 23–36.

⁶⁵ Hulitt Gloer, "Homologies and Hymns in the New Testament: Form, Content and Criteria for Identification," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 11, no. 2 (1984). 37.

Christianity.⁶⁶ These references to singing support the rationale behind the importance of sung music in worship for the Christians. While we have already seen that the superscriptions on some psalms dealt with musical instruments, those instrumental instructions pose problems for understanding what early Christian music sounded like. Despite the importance of the psalms and the importance of musical instruments in the psalms, both now, and in the ancient world, the true role instruments in worship was a difficult issue to resolve. From these instructions the role of instruments as part of worship can definitely be inferred for the Jewish people, but their adoption by early Christians is more in doubt. Their use or absence would have dramatic consequences on the style of delivery in reference to the musical accompaniment of worship.

The Psalms are just one example of Jewish influence on the text of Christian song. In further support of other Jewish influences, there is evidence that the first Christians did not sever themselves from Jewish worship itself. In the Acts of the Apostle, men of Judea who could be counted among the first Christians continued to attend the synagogue gatherings and even the worship at the Temple.⁶⁷ Peter speaks to the gathering of men from “Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem” (Acts 2:14). It is from this same group of Jews that “three thousand souls” are baptized (Acts 2:41). Later, these converts are said to “attend the Temple together”, directly implying their participation in at least some of the musical liturgy of the Temple (Acts 2:46). While attending these services with a new Christological perspective, the hymns of that worship took on new meaning. In addition to the ceremonies at the Temple, meetings at synagogues shaped the form of worship. This is seen in the fact that preaching the Gospel first happened in

⁶⁶Nassis, “The Use of Music in Christian Worship,” 26.

⁶⁷ Nassis, “The Use of Music in Christian Worship,” 27.

synagogues.⁶⁸ Jesus goes through Galilee, “teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel” (Matt 4:23). The also happens in Matt 9:35; 10:5; 13:54; Mark 6:2; 10:21-39, and Luke 4:15-44. Paul also proclaims the Gospel in the synagogues (Acts 9:20).

Especially in James 2:2, it seems the author addressed his epistle to Christians gathered in a synagogue, implying that it would be “natural for Christians to use the hymns they already knew from their strictly Jewish counterparts” alongside new formulations and understandings that took into consideration the Christian perspective.⁶⁹

Since the primary influences on the first Christian music were Jewish practices and the Hellenistic hymn culture, its style probably shared aspects in common with both. Some Hellenistic influences are seen in worship in the book of Revelation. This book contains reflects “Jewish, Christian, and even pagan traditions.”⁷⁰ The book of Revelation suggests that the heavenly ceremony in the throne room of God resembles the ceremony of the Roman imperial court in some key ways.⁷¹ Like Hellenistic kings, the Romans developed court ceremonies with hymns composed in honor of the emperor, which bear similarities with the hymns of the book of Revelation.⁷² Ancient texts also speak of guilds of hymn singers (ὕμνωδοί) who sang hymns to Roman emperors, at Pergamum (paid from a special fund set up by Augustus), at Ephesus (where hymns honored Augustus, Livia, and the imperial family), and at the birthday of Tiberius (which

⁶⁸ Nassis. “The Use of Music in Christian Worship,” 27.

⁶⁹ Nassis, “The Use of Music in Christian Worship,” 27.

⁷⁰ Hulitt Gloer, “Worship God!: Liturgical Elements in the Apocalypse,” *Review & Expositor* 98, no. 1 (2001). 51.

⁷¹ Gloer, “Worship God!: Liturgical Elements in the Apocalypse,” 50.

⁷² Gloer, “Worship God!: Liturgical Elements in the Apocalypse,” 50.

praised the emperor's glorious deeds, ceaselessly extolling his household).⁷³ These hymns in praise of the emperor, rather than God, would have been seen in harsh light by the leaders in the Synagogue and the Temple. The first Christians, sharing this belief, might have used hymns with similar forms in the book of Revelation because they sought to appropriate the connotations of imperial might associated with the Emperor while juxtaposing the inferiority of the Emperor with God.

Christian Hymns and the Characteristics of the First Christian Music

Worship in the Church often revolved around exaltation and praise, so music which uplifted the congregation fit the performance space of the early church. Since early Church assemblies met in informal spaces, hymns, such as fragments seen in the NT, emerged as central to the ceremony of the Christian Church because they "were the songs of praise" regardless of surrounding.⁷⁴ Often these hymns were of a confessional manner and connected to church teachings, often leading them to resemble creeds. At the same time, creeds often came to resemble hymns, the method by which many Christians undoubtedly connected with Scripture in an oral environment. In fact, many confessions were hymn-like and many hymns creed-like.⁷⁵ Early evidence of confessional formulas bolsters the discovery of homologies in the NT.⁷⁶ With these homologies, the faith was being transmitted by conventional formulas springing from preexisting hymns and in turn

⁷³ Gloer, "Worship God!: Liturgical Elements in the Apocalypse," 38.

⁷⁴ Gloer, "Homologies and Hymns in the New Testament," 116.

⁷⁵ Ethelbert Stauffer, *New Testament Theology* (London: SCM, 1948), 237.

⁷⁶ Gloer, "Homologies and Hymns in the New Testament," 117.

inspiring others. These “brief symbolic formulas were probably drawn up before the Gospel tradition, and, therefore, assumed a vital role in the life of the church during the period of oral tradition.”⁷⁷

Deriving from before the gospel tradition, hymns may have even shaped the way Church liturgies evolved around music. Examples of these short, hymnic, confessions appear in the ceremony of baptism, possibly found “in an account of the baptismal rite of the primitive church revealing the use of the homology πιστεύω τον υἱόν του θεού είναι τον Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν.”⁷⁸ In the ESV, verse 37 is omitted, but it is this homology.⁷⁹

Another example would be in the confession of faith of a new member, whose introduction into the worship of life of the church may have caused confessional homologies to assume a “hymnic form enabling the gathered community to sing or chant its confession of faith.”⁸⁰ Hymns enabled a bridge between song and the maintenance of theological faith as seen in a possible Jewish confession in 1 Corinthians 8:6, affirming the monotheistic foundation of Christian faith.⁸¹ This verse says “yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ through whom are all things and through whom we exist” (1 Cor. 8:6). From the structure of this verse it can be observed that it bears all the hallmarks of an affirmation

⁷⁷ Gloer, “Homologies and Hymns in the New Testament,” 117.

⁷⁸ Gloer “Homologies and Hymns in the New Testament,” 117. “I believe the son of God is Jesus Christ”

⁷⁹ Acts 8:36-37: in verse 36, the eunuch says “See here is water, what prevents me from being baptized?” and in verse 37 “Philip said ‘If you believe with all your heart, you may.’” To this the eunuch says “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.”

⁸⁰ Gloer, “Homologies and Hymns in the New Testament,” 117.

⁸¹ Gloer, “Homologies and Hymns in the New Testament,” 117.

of faith. It seems that both “*polemics* and *apologetics* contributed to the need for and use of homologies.”⁸² Hymns helped to bond congregations together in collective confession and praise. They also served as the accompaniment to pivotal activities in the daily life of the church. Finally, hymns allowed for an affirmation of the core tenets of the faith by their recitation and oral transmission. Because hymns functioned in such a broad range of roles, they established music and song as important parts of the church. At the same time, they also encouraged the growth of a specific form of music in church to the exclusion of other types of music.

The hymns used in worship fell into different categories. From evidence in the New Testament, at least two of the possible categories included “God-hymn” and the “Christ-hymn.” In the “God-hymn” each sentence makes a declaration about the greatness of God. A significant characteristic of the “God-hymn” is that it may have no specifically Christian elements and thus is probably borrowed from sources outside of Christianity. In an example of this type of hymn, this one from Romans 11:33-36, the quoted hymn begins with “Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God.” Elements that make it a ‘God-hymn’ include its description of the Godly attributes, including His “judgments,” His “ways”, and His “mind” imploring “who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?” and stating that “all things” are a result of Him, closing with the phrase common to hymns, “To Him be glory forever, Amen” (Romans 11:33-36). A similar likely hymn lists qualities such as “Sovereign”, “the King of Kings”, “the Lord of Lords”, “who alone has

⁸² Gloer, “Homologies and Hymns in the New Testament,” 117.

immortality”, and “who dwells in the unapproachable light” before closing with “to him be honor and eternal dominion, Amen” (1 Tim. 6:15).

In the Christ hymn, humiliation, exaltation, the preexistence of Christ, the concept of servanthood, and the role of Christ as cosmic Lord all appear.⁸³ Various criteria have been used to locate possible examples of hymns in the New Testament. The list of all the possible criteria is quite long but includes the presence of certain introductory formula, syntactical disturbance, content, and rhythm, and parallelism. This list of criteria also implies something about how the text might have been delivered. The importance of the text itself for this music was paramount. An example of syntactical disturbance is located in 1 Timothy 3:16 and occurs where the structure is broken by the introduction of the quoted homology.⁸⁴ The content of a homology may be the “facts” of the faith while the content of a hymn tends to deal with the nature of the event it accompanies.⁸⁵ Rhythm and parallelism are important markers because in Hebrew Poetry both are the critical.⁸⁶ Recognizing hymn placement embedded in texts shows that the hymn genre was a distinct part of worship that stood apart from the rest of scripture with the praise of the song might deepening the theology behind the facts of faith.⁸⁷ The independence of these hymns and their vital composition in the framework of the New Testament speak to the musical qualities of the worship of the first Christians. For this reason, it appears that the Church used hymns and songs in worship from its inception unlike other liturgical

⁸³ Gloer, “Homologies and Hymns in the New Testament,” 123.

⁸⁴ Gloer, “Homologies and Hymns in the New Testament,” 125.

⁸⁵ Gloer, “Homologies and Hymns in the New Testament,” 126.

⁸⁶ Gloer, “Homologies and Hymns in the New Testament,” 126.

⁸⁷ Gloer, “Homologies and Hymns in the New Testament,” 130.

elements that developed only gradually.⁸⁸ In this way, understanding how their music sounded and what qualities it possesses gives a great view for what was important to the first Christians during worship.

In the beginning of Christian music, the place of the Church in society and the changing relationship of its members in relation to the Jewish community exerted profound influences on the function and likely the style of worship. As the Christian community became distinct, specifically Christian prayers were developed from Jewish prototypes.⁸⁹ These Canticles closely reproduce the hymnal forms of Old Testament poems. Comparing various hymns in the New and Old Testament finds much similarities. As an example, the Magnificat, Benedictus, and Nunc Dimittis have much in common with Song of Moses, the Song of Deborah, and the Song of Hannah (Luke 1:46-55, Luke 1:68-79, Luke 2:29-32, Exo. 15, Judges 5, 1 Sam. 2:1-10). Luke 1:52 reads “he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate” which can be compared to Exodus 15:17, which says, “you will bring them in and plant them on your own mountain, the place, O Lord, which you have made for your abode, the sanctuary, O Lord, which your hands have established.” Luke 1:68 states “blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people” while Judges 5:31 proclaims, “so may all your enemies perish, O LORD! but your friends be like the sun as he rises in his might.” Luke 2:31 says “my eyes have seen your salvation.” This is a similar statement to the one found in 1 Sam. 2:10 which says “The adversaries of

⁸⁸ Nassis, “The Use of Music in Christian Worship,” 27.

⁸⁹ Nassis, “The Use of Music in Christian Worship,” 27.

the LORD shall be broken to pieces; against them he will thunder in.” These new songs were closely related to Jewish counterpoints, but their reframing marks a departure from their old purposes.

The Psalms

Exploring the psalms gives a glimpse at some of the structure of the music of the first Christians. Psalmody, distinct from the reading of scripture, was an element continued by the church from Judaism.⁹⁰ There even is some evidence for the way that this psalmody would have been first heard. While developed later than fifth century, systems of Masoretic written accents, detailing the way melodic motifs were chanted in public reading of Biblical texts, were deeply rooted in similar Jewish customs in the past and may have been the way the Christians heard music in worship in the first century CE.⁹¹

The psalms can be understood as broken into three general “groups: “hymnic psalms,” “laments,” and “thanksgiving songs.”⁹² Both the hymnic and thanksgiving psalms may have been special influences on Christian hymns. While both styles are forms of praise, the ““hymnic psalm” praises the greatness and majesty of God”, often relating to a “specific cultic celebration” and consisted of:

(A)n introduction containing imperatives of praise to the Lord or summons to praise, a body linked to the introduction by a relative clause and characterized by a participial style listing of the works and attributes of the Lord (often with a confessional tone), and a conclusion similar to the introduction.⁹³

⁹⁰ Harry Y Gamble, *Books and Readers in the Early Church: A History of Early Christian Texts* (Yale University Press, 1995), 228.

⁹¹ Gamble, *The Uses of Early Christian Books*, 227.

⁹² Gloer, “Homologies and Hymns in the New Testament,” 37.

⁹³ Gloer, “Worship God!: Liturgical Elements in the Apocalypse,” 37.

These formal structures in the psalm led to their performance in particular ways. New Christian hymns that drew from these psalms as a sort of starting point likely retained some of the praise and celebratory energy. Alongside the development of Christian Psalmody the singer (psalter) begins to be mentioned alongside the reader.⁹⁴ The creation of a new role in the Church dedicated to singing psalms shows that they were becoming an essential part of the music of the Church.

Another reason to look at psalms is that may have influenced the creation of new Christian hymns that sounded and behaved differently. New specifically Christian prayers based on Jewish prototypes were developed which closely reproduce the hymnal forms of Old Testament poems, but placed emphasis on new eschatological teaching.⁹⁵ These new Christian hymns reflect an early interest in creating new sacred musical forms. Their awareness of the early Jewish model shows that the first Christians recognized the importance of a musical legacy as part of their faith tradition.

When music was used in worship, psalmody with a call and response dualism seems to have been expected practice.⁹⁶ It also seems that hymns were a large factor in worship. Evidence for the use of hymns in early Christian worship is prevalent, and the performance of said hymns took some cues from the established performance of psalms, as many shared similar themes and purposes. In the Book of Acts, early Christians continued to worship in the Temple and the synagogue.⁹⁷ Additionally, extrabiblical

⁹⁴ Gamble, *The Uses of Early Christian Books*, 228.

⁹⁵ Nassis, "The Use of Music in Christian Worship," 27.

⁹⁶ McKinnon, *Music in Early Christian Literature*, 5.

⁹⁷ Gloer, "Homologies and Hymns in the New Testament," 120.

discoveries provide further evidence for the use of hymns in the first century world. This includes a collection of pre-NT hymns from the Dead Sea Scrolls including *The Book of Hymns*, *The Manual of Discipline*, *The Odes of Solomon*, and hymns by the Gnostics.⁹⁸

Examining the book of Revelation, there is evidence of some of the types of worship found in the early church. While its context is not clear from this evidence alone, it seems clear that hymns were thought to be a vital part of worship. The hymnal fragments in Revelation 4:11; 5:9-10 and the songs in 7:15-17 and 11:17-18 seem to be unaltered Jewish hymns.⁹⁹ Understanding the development and models of these hymns helps to reimagine what they sounded like and how they may have been performed.

Song in Worship

The early Christians placed a lot of importance on proper worship. For them, worship determined the shape of life and guaranteed life in the hereafter.¹⁰⁰ This meant that every aspect of worship, especially the music, had to be determined in light of their understanding of God. The Apocalypse of John is an unexpected source both of information on God's nature and information on proper worship. Seeing the liturgy as the manifestation of God's rule means that to worship is to experience God's kingdom,

⁹⁸ Gloer, "Homologies and Hymns in the New Testament." 120. *The Book of Hymns* was a collection of hymns patterned after the psalms of the OT. *The Manual of Discipline*, which contains "The Hymn of the Initiates" (115-122), is key for establishing the significant role which hymns played in the Essene community. Discovered in 1908, *The Odes of Solomon* are a collection of forty-two hymns used in the final preparations for baptism in the early second century in Palestine and Syria. Though the origin of the Odes is unknown some scholars suggest that they were originally written by Gnostics because of their emphasis on Christ as the Redeemer-Revealer. Finally the Acts of Thomas, which were also written by Gnostics, contains two hymns: "The Wedding of the Daughter" and the "Hymn of the Pearl".

⁹⁹ Nassis, "The Use of Music in Christian Worship," 27.

¹⁰⁰ Gloer, "Worship God!" 52.

therefore the Apocalypse both describes the coming of God's kingdom (the eschatological narratives) and brings the kingdom to life in the present through worship.¹⁰¹ In this way, this book serves as a source of some of the fundamental guiding principles of Christian worship.

In order to understand early Christian worship better, it can be tempting to turn to Judaism, from which much in Christianity hails its origins. While there is influence from Judaism on Christian worship in the first century, one should not equate a direct lineage between their liturgical musical backgrounds from this time. Further, musical traditions within Judaism varied between occasions. For example, psalms were not used in synagogues as they were used at the Temple in the time period. In fact, psalmody did not originate in a concrete liturgical sense until much later in the synagogue. While the liturgical use of psalms in the synagogue may not have been the clear origin of psalms in Church because of a lack of psalmody in the early synagogue, there are many similarities between the Christian liturgy and the synagogue. For example, both involve a meeting in a room around readings of the scriptures rather than meeting for animal sacrifice. Also, the Last Supper was likely a Jewish ceremonial meal and featured a recitation of a psalm. In any case, since the synagogues lacked the musical instruments associated with Temple worship, the Christians might have omitted them for similar reasons, though not necessarily as a direct result of witnessing psalms without instruments in the synagogue.

Up to this point, the emphasis for Christian music has been placed on understanding aural forms of musical communication like hymns and psalms. The absence of musical instruments in the discussion thus far aligns with a puzzling fact that

¹⁰¹ Gloer. "Worship God!" 5.

the very early period of Christianity, while favorable of music and singing in particular, lacks a similar endorsement of musical instruments. The reason and the effects of this omission will form the basis of the following chapter. But in the immediate discussion of early musical characterizations, much evidence points towards a dismissal of the existence of instruments in early worship. However, there is still definite evidence of their use in the Temple and even favorable descriptions of certain instruments in writings. For example “the lyre” was “considered the symbol of spiritual and physical consentaneity and harmony in both Jewish and Christian thought.”¹⁰² Considering a musical instrument as symbol of harmony appears incongruous with their apparent absence. In order to explain this discontinuity, it becomes important to consider why and how the first Christians included music. The type of music that might be acceptable for worship reflects the cultural and social norms of said worship. For the liturgy, the purpose of the music defined its style, and understanding its style helps to better understand its purpose. When those norms change over time, so too does the music. The symbolism of musical instruments and music itself were not directly tied to the conceptualization of music in the early Church. However, the observance of proper worship became an increasingly prevalent focus for church writers as the centuries wore on.

Early Services

From the earlier section about performance spaces for the early Church, it is likely the first Christians performed their music in much more humble surroundings than the

¹⁰² Braun, *Music in Ancient Israel/Palestine*, 270.

Temple of Herod or the grand Basilicas that would emerge in later centuries. Perhaps the intimacy of surroundings helped to shape a similarly immediate and human approach to music making. Whatever the music sounded like in these spaces, early accounts of worship services show that music was important. They also support singing in worship much more clearly than they support musical instruments. A survey of information about the era concludes that “early services were not rigidly determined” even though there were patterns in common among Christian churches.¹⁰³ Over time, each branch of Christianity developed rites consisting of calendars, liturgies, texts, ritual actions, and a repertory of “plainchant, or chant, unison song with melodies for the prescribed texts.”¹⁰⁴ The organization and codification that took place shows the influence of tradition music making that led to its universal appropriateness in worship. Because of the emergence of specific church traditions, the presence or absence of musical instruments in worship ingrained from the early period has a very prominent role in maintaining that status in later eras.

Evidence for what happened in the services in this early period can be found in first hand written accounts. One example comes from Pliny the Younger, who, in *carmen Christi* (*Ep* 10, 96), states that the Christians sang hymns to God.¹⁰⁵ This supports what has already been mentioned about hymns y located in various places in the Bible actually emerging into the practice of the Church’s rituals. Also, Pliny the Younger, governor of Bithynia and Pontus (c. 111-112 CE), in his letter to the Emperor

¹⁰³ Grout, Burkholder, and Palisca, *A History of Western Music*, 28.

¹⁰⁴ Grout, Burkholder, and Palisca, *A History of Western Music*, 28.

¹⁰⁵ Pliny, *The Letters of the Younger Pliny*, Penguin Classics ; L127 (Harmondsworth, Eng. ; Penguin Books, 1969).

Trajan (ruled from 98-117 CE) (*Letters* 10, 96), mentioned that the “custom [of Christians] was to come together on a fixed day before dawn and to sing a song alternately to Christ as to a god.”¹⁰⁶ In another example during the reign of Emperor Trajan, St Ignatius, in his letter to the Ephesians (ch. 4), provided an allusion to singing in Church by likening the unity achieved in song to that of the Church. The text reads thus: “do ye, one by one, become a choir, that being harmonious in love, and taking up the song of God in unison, ye may with one voice sing to the Father through Jesus Christ, so that He may both hear you, and perceive by your works that ye are indeed the members of His Son.”¹⁰⁷ Here, the quote text even suggests that singing (in unison) was a known liturgical practice, something that would render Ignatius' simile more powerful in the minds of the recipients of his epistle. Another example of eyewitness accounts is a transcription coming from circa 400 CE when a Spanish nun, Egeria, on pilgrimage to Jerusalem described the service which included psalms and hymns sung between prayers during the Sunday morning Vigil, which would later evolve to become the service called Matins.”¹⁰⁸

She saw that “when the Gospel has been read, the bishop leaves and is led with hymns to the Cross, accompanied by all the people.”¹⁰⁹ These hymns which she saw are an important part of the evidence of what liturgies were like and how they used music. As already discussed, there is overwhelming evidence that these hymns were a familiar

¹⁰⁶ Pliny, *The Letters of the Younger Pliny*.

¹⁰⁷ Saint Ignatius of Loyola, *Letters of St Ignatius of Loyola* (Chicago: Loyola Univ Pr, 1959), <http://ezproxy.baylor.edu/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rh&AN=ATLA0000273748&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

¹⁰⁸ Grout, Burkholder, and Palisca, *A History of Western Music*, 27.

¹⁰⁹ Grout, Burkholder, and Palisca, *A History of Western Music*, 27.

part of the religious culture of the region. In fact, one of the few concrete examples of early Christian music is a hymn. The only text of notated Christian music before the ninth century is a hymn to the trinity from the late third century found on a papyrus at Oxyrhynchos, Egypt, written in ancient Greek notation.¹¹⁰ This shows a remarkable occurrence. While music was central both in the early church and in the ninth century, it was not the notation of music that was held sacred but rather the tradition and the sound that endured. The fact that notation did not survive gives some clues as to what type of music was focused on in the early church and why that music did not feature instruments.

Evidence of Singing in Worship

Examining the ways that the liturgy was sung over time reveals what aspects of worship were seen as most important. Early Christians often sang songs with a soloist performing each verse and the congregation or choir responding with a brief refrain.¹¹¹ Many primary sources and writing about the Church and worship from this period mention the importance of singing, but very seldom do they mention the act of producing sound on instruments.

Music in worship functioned as a way to formally unite the congregation in the act of praise. In the fourth century Niceta of Remasia defended the practice of singing in church in his sermon *De vigiliis*, or the psalmody of the vigils. Like the example from the Spanish Pilgrim, *De vigiliis* alludes to a vigil that became popular in the second half

¹¹⁰ Grout, Burkholder, and Palisca, *A History of Western Music*, 31. The notion of written music itself was largely forgotten by the Church by the seventh century when Isodore of Seville claimed sounds were not something which could be notated on paper.

¹¹¹ Grout, Burkholder, and Palisca. *A History of Western Music*, 57.

of the 4th century; held in the early morning hours before the Saturday and Sunday celebration of the Eucharist characterized by the prolonged singing of psalms interspersed with prayers.¹¹² Niceta's writing is unique in that it explicitly defines the act of singing and creating music in worship. His defense "against those who thought it appropriate only 'to make melody in their heart'" is evidence of a widespread practice of singing, because if singing in this manner were not widespread then it wouldn't be attacked or defended.¹¹³

Another important style of music that developed in the liturgy alongside hymns was the chant. The type of chant heard in the early Church represented the kind of hybridity between Jewish tradition and Hellenistic culture seen throughout the philosophy and liturgy of the first Christians. Chants reflect their ancient roots in psalm texts (continuing Jewish practice as adopted by early Christians) blended with Hellenistic culture; using modes and melodic formulas similar to Jewish chanting and emphasizing correct phrasing like classical Latin rhetoric.¹¹⁴ The beginning of the chant traditions were mixed with the traditions of song in the church as in the early period the style of song was similar to the style of chanting.

Music in the early church was also characterized by its universality. It became a traditional part of the liturgy even before the liturgy became standardized. Predating and growing with other church traditions, it becomes another theme of liturgical music along

¹¹² "Niceta of Remesiana | Grove Music," accessed November 6, 2019, <https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000041670>.

¹¹³ "Niceta of Remesiana | Grove Music."

¹¹⁴ Grout, Burkholder, and Palisca, *A History of Western Music*.

with hymns and chants. In the early 3rd century, one of the African writers, Tertullian, in describing Christian worship testified: “After manual ablution, and the bringing in of lights, each is asked to stand forth and sing, as he can, a hymn to God, either one from the holy Scriptures or one of his own composing.”¹¹⁵ The openness of acceptable worship in the beginning of Christianity led over time to a more refined liturgy. Keeping in mind the relative speed that music in the church became standardized, especially around singing, indicates the significance of song as a medium for Christian worship.¹¹⁶ Since music was present in a broad way even before the trend towards unification began, it’s reasonable that music would remain an important part of tradition.

Ceremonial Meals

Another way that musical ceremony developed was around sacred meals. The Last Supper accounts, likely themselves influenced by early liturgies, displayed Jesus singing hymns with his disciples.¹¹⁷ For example, in the Gospel according to Matthew, after “they had sung a hymn, they went to the Mount of Olives” (Matt. 26:30). In both the Gospels of Matthew and Mark, the Last Supper was concluded with the singing of a ‘hymn’ furnishes a link with Jewish Musical practice on the one hand and on the other with the Christian practice of the immediately succeeding centuries.”¹¹⁸ In a passage from the Letters of Pliny, the Christians are said to “assemble on a set day before dawn

¹¹⁵ *Apologeticum*, 39; ANF, vol. 3, 47.

¹¹⁶ Nassis, “The Use of Music in Christian Worship,” 30.

¹¹⁷ Nassis, “The Use of Music in Christian Worship,” 27.

¹¹⁸ McKinnon, *Music in Early Christian Literature*, 9.

and to sing a hymn among themselves to the Christ...after which it was their custom to separate and to come together again to take food.”¹¹⁹ The second century features several examples of singing at common Christian meals in addition to this one so it seems that common meals were the principal context for early Christian song.¹²⁰

Monastic Development

Moving forward in time, another tradition is established; the standardization of musical worship. The fourth and fifth century saw the rise of the desert monks who established the model for the medieval office hours. However, there is a distinction between “early monasticism” in the dessert and that which was more likely to have influenced the spread of psalmody in urban, Christian centers.¹²¹ Rather than coming from the desert, the psalms sung by urban based ascetics more likely led to the increase in singing traditions in the cities. In the sermon of Niceta of Remesiana and in Augustine’s famous description of Ambrose’s musical innovations at Milan there is evidence that this urban style of monastic singing might have greatly influenced music in the church as a whole.¹²²

Purpose of Music in Worship

¹¹⁹ McKinnon, *Music in Early Christian Literature*, 27.

¹²⁰ McKinnon, *Music in Early Christian Literature*, 9.

¹²¹ Sean Gallagher, ed., *Western Plainchant in the First Millennium: Studies in the Medieval Liturgy and Its Music* (Aldershot, Hants, England ; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003). 31.

¹²² McKinnon, *Music in Early Christian Literature*, 10.

The music found in the liturgy had specific purposes. The purpose of the music also affected how it was performed. Hymns which helped in the teaching of new converts were performed through antiphonal singing.¹²³ This implies the style of music was largely antiphonal, or responsorial in some sense because those styles support the clear comprehension of words for the new initiates. It also implies that the music was likely distinct enough that initiates could clearly hear the syllables as they were pronounced. The New Testament has what might be the most clear examples of hymns created by the Early Church.¹²⁴ These include Ephesians 5:14, 1 Timothy 3:16, and Philippians 2:6-11.¹²⁵ The creation of new hymns shows that they were filling new roles in the church and thus were written and used for specific purposes. One purpose was for the teaching of new converts. Another was likely as part of new worship sequences to increase the solemnity of the ceremony.

The Book of Revelation contains evidence of early Christian liturgies. This outlines another purpose of the hymns, to function as integral parts of new ceremonies of worship. Hymns are prominent liturgical elements in the Apocalypse, characteristic of the scenes of heavenly worship found throughout.¹²⁶ Finding hymns in the Book of

¹²³ Gloer, "Homologies and Hymns in the New Testament," 121.

¹²⁴ Gloer, "Homologies and Hymns in the New Testament," 131.

¹²⁵ Eph 5:14: "Awake, O sleeper,/ and arise from the dead,/ and Christ will shine on you." 1 Timothy 3:16: "He was manifested in the flesh,/ vindicated by the Spirit,/ seen by angels,/ proclaimed among the nations,/ believed on in the world,/ taken up in glory." Phil 2:6-11: "who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

¹²⁶ Gloer, "Worship God!" 36.

Revelation is expected because an apocalypse was a primary element in the worship life of the early church. Paul writes “When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, an apocalypse, a tongue, or an interpretation” (1 Cor. 14:26). In this quote, revelation is listed alongside other activities already expectedly associated with liturgical practice. With the expectation of apocalypse being important to worship it is not surprising that the work was shared as a part of a worship experience and in turn led to liturgical practices similar to its descriptions.¹²⁷ Possibly, the Apocalypse arose from preexistent worship in John's churches, a pattern influenced by contemporary Jewish practices in temple and synagogue.¹²⁸ In keeping with this view, some have argued that the “hymns of the Apocalypse are in whole or in part taken from an early collection of hymns used in that liturgy.”¹²⁹

The research efforts supporting the theory that the Apocalypse functioned as an existing liturgical pattern often work backwards from the liturgies which arose from the second century and later, and thus might not be accurate.¹³⁰ The liturgical pattern of Eucharistic worship implied in the as it might have been celebrated in the churches of Asia Minor on the Lord's Day included the taking and unsealing of a book, the offering of incense, the blowing of the trumpets, the opening of the heavenly temple revealing the Ark, the gathering of bread and wine, the pouring of libations from bowls, and the summons to a sacred meal (Rev. 5:8, 8:4, 8:6, 11:19, 14:6-19, 15:7 and 16:2-17, 19:9). With all these events, it is easy to see how they might have paralleled worship practices,

¹²⁷ Gloer. “Worship God!” 38.

¹²⁸ Gloer, “Worship God!” 48.

¹²⁹ Gloer, “Worship God!” 49.

¹³⁰ Gloer, “Worship God!” 49.

thus showing that those worship practices were included with the goal to show worshippers a vision of the world to come. These examples show that in both teaching and revelation, hymns played a pivotal role in defining the purpose of worship. Whatever the influences of contemporary worship that the Apocalypse might capture, this evidence is important even if it does not come from a specific liturgy because it nonetheless captures a perception about the key aspects of worship. This includes the treatment of musical instruments.

The Role of Musical Instrument

During the era in which Christian music arose, the Hellenistic musical culture had a long tradition of musical instrument use. There were likely many different traditions of instruments used in many different occasions depending on the region. The music took after the rhythms of speech and featured one clear musical line. The manner that we understand Christian music must be made in context of this general musical understanding of the time. Knowing the influences of their music is the best way to know what their music was like because very little of it survived in notated form. From the influences described, the music of the first Christians can be described as vocal in nature. No evidence supports the existence of anything outside vocal practices in the liturgy of the church during this time because, like the Synagogue, it lacked the sacrificial practices of the Temple accompanied by instruments.¹³¹ Thus the psalmody in the early Christian Church arose as a particular type of music without a place for instruments

¹³¹ James McKinnon, "The Meaning of the Patristic Polemic Against Musical Instruments," *Current Musicology*, no. 1 (2019), <https://doi.org/10.7916/cm.v0i1.3609>.

without ever including a tradition of their use to rebel against.¹³² By the fourth century, records show a clear use of psalmody, but no clear use of instruments, a fact mirrored by the disfavor of instruments among the writings of the church fathers.¹³³ From this evidence, there seems to be a clear disfavor for musical instruments in a liturgical context in church. However, this practice went along with a generally high regard for music itself.

All of the evidence outlined before dwells primarily on the practice of singing. This is not surprising since support for instrumental music in worship during this time period is limited and unspecific at best. The instruments that the first Christians used or did not use would have been influenced by the Hellenistic world. However, for both the Jewish people and the first Christians, the interest in a pure doctrine and liturgy ran counter to the far-flung influences of Hellenistic music. In the Hellenistic period the “syncretistic inclinations of local musical culture ran directly counter to both Jewish and Christian theocracy.”¹³⁴ An example in Daniel which condemns foreign music and foreign instruments as forms of idol worship is an early precursor to an anti-instrument attitude that will manifest itself throughout the era from the first to fifth century. Alluding to the sound of “horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music”, this noise signified a requirement to worship an idol against the will of God (Daniel 3:7). Despite this, “scholars repeatedly underline the link between Old Testament Instruments and Christian dogmatics, and often draw parallels between the

¹³² McKinnon, “The Meaning of the Patristic Polemic Against Musical Instruments,” 77.

¹³³ McKinnon, *The Temple, the Church Fathers and Early Western Chant*, 77.

¹³⁴ Braun, *Music in Ancient Israel/Palestine*, 194.

ritual use of the instruments by the ancient Jews and the musical tradition of the Catholic liturgy.”¹³⁵ This continuation can seem confusing when compared to evidence that supports singing in the early church without instruments and writings of the church fathers that condemn instruments. As in Daniel, condemnation of instruments had some precedent in Judaism as well. While this example condemns musical instruments, Jewish instruments were still used in the Temple. Likely, the suspicion of instruments was connected to particular instruments and customs and not applied to all equally. However, the Synagogues of the coterminous era did not use instruments. The reasons why early Christian music lacked musical instruments likely came from a mix of theological opposition to pagan culture and the use of musical forms that simply lacked instruments. These as well as other forces will be explored in the next chapter which seeks to outline the trends and possible motivations seen in the era before and into the fifth century.

Summary

In the next chapter, three key concepts will be used to provide an explanation for the evidence of a vocal tradition seen in this chapter. These concepts, the appropriation of Greek knowledge, the unification of worship, and the need to enhance the solemnity of worship, arose from forces and influences that have already been discussed, such as the Hellenistic influence on music in the world around Christianity. From the New Testament, the effort to create a framework for standardized belief can already be seen,

¹³⁵Kolyada, *A Compendium of Musical Instruments and Instrumental Terminology in the Bible*, 182.

especially in efforts to create hymns that use music to reinforce the Church's doctrine. These forces become more concrete in the later. In the writings of the Church Fathers, the adoption of Greek ideas has an influence on the acceptance of instruments, or more precisely, their condemnation. As all of these influences were taking place, changes in society also helped to increase an awareness for the solemnity of worship. Ultimately, all three of these concepts can be seen as interrelated, and as they are explored in the next chapter, will show how vocal music fulfilled the needs of worship in this period and established a tradition that left out musical instruments.

CHAPTER THREE

Writing about Music in the Patristic Era

The Lasting Influence of the Church Fathers

From the first through fifth centuries, Christian worship underwent fundamental changes that impacted the sound, form, and function of its music. Using the writings of the Church Fathers, the most influential Christian theologians of the era, three broad trends in liturgical music can be traced. These trends include an interaction between Christian theology and Greek wisdom, the growing solemnity of worship, and the unification of traditions across a broad geographical region as the church spread throughout the Near East.

While the original Christians lacked a repertory of set sacred music, the body of chants that developed during the first five centuries CE became the most important vessel of musical continuity from the Patristic Era through the Middle Ages. The transmission of Christian music throughout Europe was dominated by the chant repertory. Over time, the chant repertory drew on sources originating in ancient Israel and Christian communities in Syria, Byzantium, Milan, Rome, and Gaul.¹³⁶ Church musicians during the Middle Ages used music theory and philosophy from ancient Greece, gathering, summarizing, and modifying this knowledge as they transmitted it through the West.¹³⁷

¹³⁶ Grout, Burkholder, and Palisca, *A History of Western Music*, 38.

¹³⁷ Grout, Burkholder, and Palisca. *A History of Western Music*, 38.

During the Patristic era, theologians turned to Greek theory and philosophy as well when they established doctrines dictating the performance of music in church.

Understanding the development of chant, its associated theory, and its distribution are vital to understanding the role of musical instruments in the church. The careful transmission of the chant through the Middle Ages carried with it a musical style absent of musical instruments. Understanding the traditional development of chant helps to reinforce the minimal instrumental additions up until the end of the Middle Ages in the church. The most important component of this tradition is that it maintained the minimal use of instruments present at the beginning of the Christian era. In writings about music through the Middle Ages, “heavy borrowing from earlier authorities was a typical trait of scholarly writing.”¹³⁸ This heavy borrowing instilled the position of tradition over innovation when it came to instrumental embellishment of chant repertoire. The use of Greek knowledge to understand and promote worship can be tied back to the Patristic period where Christian treatises reveal Greek philosophy and knowledge played a large role in influencing and establishing the framework for how music was understood and the relationship between musical instruments and worship.

Greek Knowledge

Some early evidence for a standard philosophy regarding music can be found in a quote from Plato. “Musical training is a more potent instrument than any other, because rhythm and harmony find their way into the inward places of the soul, on which they

¹³⁸ Grout, Burkholder, and Palisca, *A History of Western Music*, 38.

mightily fasten, imparting grace, and making the soul of him who is rightly educated graceful, or of him who is ill-educated ungraceful” (Plato, *The Republic*, Chapter 3). By mentioning primarily rhythm and harmony, not musical or instrumental techniques, this quote institutes the idea that musical training, not musical instruments has the inherent value in music. Second, this supports that only the right type of music will lead to desired results. These two ideas fit together leading to a philosophy that musical training harmonizes and shapes soul into a better state, reflecting only the quality and correctness of the music itself. This idea gets reflected in the writing of the Church Fathers from the beginning of the Patristic era and shows how musical instruments and music were two separate ideas even at the beginning. Indeed, it became an important point of emphasis that these two areas be kept distinct within the Church. This also shows how the quest to find and cultivate the right music for worship stems in part from Greek Philosophy.

The Patristic Fathers were concerned about creating a long lasting body of knowledge about Christian teachings and philosophy and applying this to the practice of music in the Church. While they reference musical instruments often in their writings, most do not actually reference real musical techniques or coterminous practices of the era. Referencing musical instruments often involved metaphors. One common metaphor is the comparison of harmony of the church with God to the “harmony existing among the strings of the cithara.”¹³⁹ The idea of the musical instrument as a symbol became a highly recycled idea, found through writings all the way into the Middle Ages. This is because Patristic musical imagery saw “material objects as signs of spiritual reality.”¹⁴⁰

¹³⁹ McKinnon, *Music in Early Christian Literature*, 6.

¹⁴⁰ McKinnon, *Music in Early Christian Literature*, 6.

The spiritual reality inspired by musical metaphors aligns with the notion that proper musical teaching inspires the proper ethical or moral development. The education of moral correctness mentioned by Plato became a similar strand of thinking in Christian thought. This led to the development of the study of the Greek Liberal Arts. Their relation to the writing of the Church Fathers influenced how music was viewed by the Church. As such, the study of music became similar to the study of other liberal arts, like geometry, and was allowed to encompass instruments so far as they could help to assist in understanding God's creation. The use of instruments with the study of the liberal arts went alongside a tradition that developed which did not require the use of musical instruments in worship.

Understanding the distinction between musical practice and musical study is very important because the acceptability of musical instruments in liberal arts was not matched by their acceptance in practice. In addition to the Greek philosophy of musical education for moral encouragement, the strain of musical correctness and avoidance of deleterious musical influences was adopted by Christian writers to castigate musical instruments in the interest of keeping the liturgy and the faithful free from unholy music. A distrust of musical instruments in the Early Church found philosophical support in the Hellenistic wisdom of the era. Of the musical evidence left about early Christian literature, the denunciation of pagan customs and the acceptance of the study of music as a liberal art are both at least partially reactions to Hellenistic culture.¹⁴¹

Philo of Alexandria

¹⁴¹ McKinnon, *Music in Early Christian Literature*, 6.

Evidence of music making in the first five centuries of the Church comes from the writings of the Church Fathers. One of the first important writers who dealt with issues concerning music pertinent to Christian tradition was not even a Christian himself. Philo of Alexandria was a Jewish philosopher who died in 50 CE. He wrote in Greek using the Greek translation of the Bible, the Septuagint, for his commentary which focused on reconciling the Platonic philosophy, popular in his day and place, with Judaism.¹⁴² Philo took the spirituality of music for granted and frequently alluded to the “metaphysical truth of music”, which grants a form of immortal memory to those who practice it.¹⁴³ “When a musician or scholar has died, the music or scholarship that has abode in individual masters has indeed perished with him, but the original pattern of these remain and may be said to live as long as the world lasts; and by conforming to these....those of all future generations...will attain to being musicians or scholars” (*Quoad deterius potiori insidiari potet* 75). Immortal scholarly truth resonated with Christians looking for a theology that spoke to their own eternal truths. The Church Fathers turned to Hellenistic wisdom like this as they established theological customs that they hoped would endure for centuries beyond their time. Coupled with this idea of scholasticism is the idea of the musician. This makes it clear that music was something taken as seriously as philosophy by the Greeks and as a product, also by Christian writers. Philo also wrote that the human voice was the “chief and most perfect of all instruments” (*De posteritate Caini* 103 ff.). This, along with Plato’s preference for certain music, gives another reason

¹⁴² “Philo of Alexandria - Oxford Reference,” accessed November 27, 2020, <https://www-oxfordreference-com.ezproxy.baylor.edu/view/10.1093/acref/9780192800886.001.0001/acref-9780192800886-e-517?rskey=8Vpugm&result=2>.

¹⁴³ Siegmund Levarie, “Philo on Music,” *The Journal of Musicology* 9, no. 1 (1991): 124–30, 126.

why the styles of music without instruments were seen as superior by the Church Fathers.

Justin Martyr

While the suspicion of musical instruments arose from Hellenistic wisdom early in the period at the same time that the Synagogue's text based service was leading to a similar Christian service, a clear tradition of hymn singing developed. As early writers such as philosopher and martyr, St Justin, born in Ephesus and writing in Rome in the middle of the 2 century, expressly remarked that hymns were sung in Christian worship, the acceptability of hymns for worship became entrenched.¹⁴⁴ St. Justin, (c.100 – c.165), was an apologist born of Pagan parents who converted in 130 but continued philosopher and taught Christianity. His most famous writings, 'First Apology' (c.155) addressed to the Emp. Antonius Pius and his adopted sons, and 'Second Apology' written after the accession of Marcus Aurelius (161) addressed to the Senate, led to his denunciation and upon refusal to sacrifice, beheading in 165.¹⁴⁵ He was one of the first major church writers to strive for the reconciliation of faith and reason.¹⁴⁶ He referenced music as a liberal art.

I approached a particularly eminent Pythagorean, a man who prided himself greatly on his wisdom. Then as I conversed with him, indicating that I wished to attend his lectures and be his disciple, he said, 'What? Are you not acquainted with music, astronomy, and geometry? Or do you expect to comprehend what

¹⁴⁴ Nassis, "The Use of Music in Christian Worship," 27.

¹⁴⁵ "St Justin Martyr," Oxford Reference, accessed November 27, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803100027699>.

¹⁴⁶ McKinnon, *Music in Early Christian Literature*, 20.

leads to happiness without first learning what will draw the soul away from sense objects and render it fit for things of the mind, so that it perceives the Beautiful itself and what is Good itself (Dialogue with Trypho 2; PG VI, 477; Otto II, 8)?

In this sample, St. Justin, like Clement of Alexandria, who will be mentioned next, indicates that the study of Greek subjects, including music, leads to an understanding of Goodness, or in the Christian context; God. In this way, the liberal art of music is something beneficial, just as philosophy rightly applied is beneficial. However, musical instruments, not even mentioned here, which do not appeal to the higher powers of the mind perhaps are not as welcome.

Clement of Alexandria

An Early Church Father who expressed support for the human body as an instrument, and importantly, the superior instrument, was Clement of Alexandria. Clement of Alexandria, who lived from around 150 to between 211 or 215 CE, was known for his missionary theology directed towards the Hellenistic cultural world and his three most important works; the *Protreptikos* (“Exhortation”), the *Paidagōgos* (“The Instructor”), and the *Strōmateis* (“Miscellanies”).¹⁴⁷ In his writings, the tension between musical instruments and musical practice in the Church, through the Church’s theology around music, begin to come into focus.

And He who is of David, and yet before him, the Word of God, despising the lyre and harp, which are but lifeless instruments, and having tuned the universe by the Holy Spirit, and especially the human person - who, composed of body and soul, is a universe in miniature - makes melody to God on this instrument of many tones; and to this instrument...he accordantly sings: “For you are my harp and pipe and temple.” - a harp for harmony, a pipe by reason of the Spirit, a temple by reason of the word; so that the first may sound, the second may breathe, and the

¹⁴⁷ “Saint Clement of Alexandria -- Britannica Academic,” accessed March 1, 2021, <https://academic-eb-com.ezproxy.baylor.edu/levels/collegiate/article/Saint-Clement-of-Alexandria/24322>.

third may contain the Lord. And David the king ... was so far from celebrating demons in song, that in reality they were driven away by his music... A beautiful breathing instrument of music the Lord made the human person, after His own image. And He Himself also, surely, who is supra-worldly Wisdom, the heavenly Word, is the all-harmonious, melodious, holy instrument of God (*Exhortation to the Heathen Chapter 1. Exhortation to Abandon the Impious Mysteries of Idolatry for the Adoration of the Divine Word and God the Father*).

In this passage, the sentiment revealed emphasizes a clear approval of the human body as an instrument. However, and more subtly, the author is indicating that despite using musical instruments, David was not consorting in pagan ritual practice. Hellenistic musical customs associated with festivities and rites featuring musical instruments were seen as both entertainment and divine communication. Clement finds that he must make a distinction between this Hellenistic practice and the True worship that David must have actually been committing. In exonerating David's instrument use by explaining it away as more than just music and much more akin to symbol of divine wisdom, Clement finds a comparison between a musician and his instrument and God and His creation, humanity. In this comparison, he hints that musical instruments are not the chosen musical device of the divine, rather humankind itself represents the superior source of music. Thus, despite using an instrument, it was David himself as instrument that God recognized most in worship. In the following passage from *The Stromata*, St. Clement more clearly articulates his reasons for finding validation and invalidation for musical correctness in Hellenistic writings.¹⁴⁸

It is as if they expected to gather grapes from the very first without taking any care of the vine...So also here, I call him who brings everything to bear on the truth truly learned; so that, from geometry and music, grammar and philosophy itself, culling what is useful, he guards the faith against assault.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁸ Nassis, "The Use of Music in Christian Worship," 29.

¹⁴⁹ Clement of Alexandria (trans. Ferguson, John). *Stromateis, Books 1–3 (The Fathers of the Church, Volume 85)*. Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1991. Accessed January 31, 2021. doi:10.2307/j.ctt284w4w.

St. Clement already sees the study of Greek disciplines including music as vital to the permanence of the church's own teachings. As an exponent of the allegorical method and an advocate of a special Christian Gnosticism, that is, the belief that truly learned Christians perceive beyond the simple believer, Clement nonetheless held the superiority of Christian over Pagan learning. He continued to condemn pagan musical excess while supporting philosophical ideas found in Hellenistic intellectualism. Clement takes the ideas of music finding its way into the righteous soul and puts them into a direct Christian context. By combining the usefulness of the liberal art disciplines espoused in this quote with the earlier quote, a basis for understanding Clement's musical allegory begins to emerge. In speaking of the Word of God, or Jesus, Clement alludes to the prefiguration of Christ by David. In this example he uses musical instruments as allegory for the effect of music on the soul and understanding the message of God.

He who is from David, yet before him, the Word of God, scorning the lyre and cithara as lifeless instruments, and having rendered harmonious by the Holy Spirit both this cosmos and even man the microcosm, made up of body and soul – he sings to God on his many voiced instrument and he sings to man, himself an instrument: 'You are my cithara, my aulos and my temple', a cithara because of harmony, and aulos because of spirit and a temple because of the word, so that the first might strum, the second might breathe, and the third might encompass the Lord...The Lord made man a beautiful breathing instrument after his own image (*Protrepticus* I, 5, 3-7: PG VIII, 60 - 1; GCS I, 6-7).

This quote can seem contradictory. At first Clement, calling upon the Word of God, condemns or scorns musical instruments as "lifeless," but then he claims that man is an instrument and that this image is beautiful. This contradiction is reconciled with an approach that treats instruments as symbols for spiritual concepts. Just as the Greeks used the philosophy of music as edification for the soul while steering away from sensual music, St. Clement compares musical instruments to the divine cosmic order without

implying that real instruments are in fact good things for a Christian to use. Shying away from practical musical use means that instruments are free to stand in for more divine purposes without alluding to musical practice that might go against the divine education imparted by studying the cosmic music of God, or practicing music with the divine instrument of the human body, the voice. In fact, the strings of an instrument can be compared to the components of the whole human body, illustrating how man features as a component in God's divine harmony.

‘Praise him on strings and instrument’ refers to our body as an instrument and its sinews as strings from which it derives its harmonious tension, and when strummed by the Spirit it gives off human notes...(*Paedagogus* II, iv; PG VIII, 441; GCS I, 182-3).

Quoting from Psalm 150, Clement proposes allegorical musical instruments in place of real ones. When viewing music in such an allegorical sense, it is understandable that musical instruments at least in philosophy could become a subject of classical study without breaking from a model of thought that strictly condemned musical instruments in practice. Again, this stresses the notion that music as a liberal art was nurtured despite coming from the Hellenistic wisdom tradition. This is slightly paradoxical because other aspects of Hellenistic culture were of course highly suspect to the Church Fathers. Part of the reason musical instruments themselves seem to be avoided was to avoid pagan influence, especially when musical instruments were put to use in certain social functions. Hellenistic wisdom was not alone in influencing the Christian stance on musical instruments. While musical instruments would have been a familiar sight in the Temple, interestingly, in the Synagogue, which in many ways prefigured the Liturgy of the Word in the Church, was a “place where prayers were offered and the word was

proclaimed” and was not the place for musical instruments.¹⁵⁰ This suggests a Judeo-Christian link in this era between the absence of instruments and the primacy of the Biblical text existing as coexistent values.

The above three figures, St. Justin, Clement, Philo of Alexandria, established an allegorical standard for biblical exegesis which drew on musical instruments, ignoring their historical use in Israel as well as their contemporary use in pagan society and instead composed instrumental metaphors.¹⁵¹ These instrumental metaphors became a convention in the writings of the Church Fathers. In the writings of the time there was also the expressed desire that all church’s adhere to similar conventions regarding the type of music that was used in worship. Unification of musical style follows from the concept of “the canon of faith” which provided the criterion for music that was employed in worship.¹⁵² The ubiquity of music in the church was not without suspicion however, as will be examined later in the chapter. This led to arguments for and against various styles

¹⁵⁰ Foley, *Foundations of Christian Music*, 38.

¹⁵¹ McKinnon, *Music in Early Christian Literature*, 7.

¹⁵² Nassis, “The Use of Music in Christian Worship,” 27

of singing and the simplicity or complexity of music appropriate for worship.

Tatian and Tertullian

The writer Tatian, likely born during the twenties or thirties of the second-century, was a product of Hellenistic philosophical learning like Philo, Clement, and St. Justin. He was one of the first to more explicitly script out disparaging words about musical instruments. This antipathy, again drawing from Greek wisdom, continued the examination of the music already in use in church and the music seen outside church in the broader society. At this point, “sexual morality in particular was a subject concerning which the Church Fathers display the most acute sensitivity.”¹⁵³ Responding to issues of morality and connecting the music of instruments with amoral action, the polemic against musical instruments grew in the church from the writings of Tatian. Another writer suspicious of the general Hellenistic musical customs was Tertullian. Born in Carthage between 155–160 CE when that city was a thriving center of culture and education in the West, Tertullian associated dancing, singing, and playing instruments with sexual immorality as in this quote.¹⁵⁴

...in blowing on the tibia they...lead obscene songs, ...they raise a great din with the clapping of scabella; under the influence of which a multitude of other lascivious souls abandon themselves to bizarre movements of the body, dancing and singing...raising their buttocks and hips to sway with the rippling motion of their loins...women harlots, sambucists, and harpists (*Aduersus nations II*, 42; PL V, 881-2; CSEL IV, 82).

Attacking pagan rituals and their associated music often represented the crux of the argument against musical instruments themselves. The image of the musical

¹⁵³ McKinnon, *Music in Early Christian Literature*, 7.

¹⁵⁴ “Tertullian -- Britannica Academic,” accessed February 21, 2021, <https://academic-eb-com.ezproxy.baylor.edu/levels/collegiate/article/Tertullian/71803>.

instrument naturally conjuring obscene motions and thoughts was first translated into Christian philosophy by those writers who were most influenced by Greek wisdom, like Tertullian. This is understandable because the Greeks themselves had an understanding that various types of music were more or less appropriate for the edification of the mind and soul. Musical instruments, especially those associated with dancing, were not ideal for the cultivation of reason and philosophy, at least so thought the Greeks. And as a consequence, this philosophy made its way into Christian thought during the 2nd through 4th centuries as a growing opposition to musical instruments specifically. This opposition made it increasingly difficult to separate the musical instruments themselves from the actions, festivals, and entertainment to which they were connected in society.

Origen

Alongside the growing opposition to musical instruments and acceptance of musical philosophy, the Church Fathers utilization of Greek learning in the service of Christian teaching had important consequences for music making in the church. In addition to the specific polemic against instruments that developed, there was also an accompanying movement toward scholarly learning that would become entrenched alongside music in church. Origen, a critical theologian and biblical scholar of the Early Church, born in 185 CE probably in Alexandria, Egypt and died *c.* 254 in Tyre, Phoenicia, now in Lebanon, wrote extensively and was a prolific exegete of the Bible in addition to his famous work, the *Hexapla*, which is a synopsis of six versions of the Old Testament.¹⁵⁵ Origen, as with many of the theologians, used the idea of drawing

¹⁵⁵ “Origen -- Britannica Academic,” accessed February 21, 2021, <https://academic-eb-com.ezproxy.baylor.edu/levels/collegiate/article/Origen/57374>.

Christian wisdom from Hellenistic philosophy. In this advice, Origen compares the intellectual pursuit of music to the understanding of philosophy to the use of philosophy in the understanding of Christianity. “Take from Greek Philosophy that which has the capacity, as it were, to become encyclical and propaedeutic studies for Christianity,so that just as the children of philosophers speak of ...music...as ancillary to philosophy, we too may say this of philosophy itself in relation to Christianity” (*Letter to Gregory I*; PG XI, 88). In this example the role of music itself as vital to understanding philosophy in general is found to induce a similar relationship in theology. As music became entrenched as a liberal art in the greater study of Christian truth through philosophy, writers continued to create content in the early era that would be influential for centuries to come. Arnobius, (3rd–4th cent.), was another Christian apologist who in his *Adversus Nationes* defended the consonance of the Christian religion with the best pagan philosophy.¹⁵⁶ Writing about the power of music in a philosophical context went alongside writers who reflected upon the power of God in the Church through music in performance, especially vocal performance. Eusebius (b. ca. 260–d. ca. 339), bishop of Caesaria in Palestine (ca. 313-339), in commenting on Psalm 64:9b (LXX) explained this notion.¹⁵⁷

For it is surely no small sign of God's power that throughout the whole world in the Churches of God at the morning rising of the sun and at the evening hours, hymns, praises, and truly divine delights are offered to God. God's delights are indeed the hymns sent up everywhere on earth in His Church at the times of morning and evening. For this reason it is said somewhere, “Let my praise be

¹⁵⁶ “Arnobius - Oxford Reference,” accessed November 27, 2020, <https://www-oxfordreference-com.ezproxy.baylor.edu/view/10.1093/acref/9780199659623.001.0001/acref-9780199659623-e-401?rsk=vvJ3iT&result=1>.

¹⁵⁷ “Eusebius of Caesarea | Encyclopedia of World Religions: Encyclopedia of Catholicism - Credo Reference,” accessed January 7, 2021, https://search-credoreference-com.ezproxy.baylor.edu/content/entry/fofc/eusebius_of_caesarea/0.

sung sweetly to him' (cf. Ps. 146:I) (Eusebius, *Commentary on Ps. 64*, PG 23, 630; English translation from Taft, *Liturgy of the Hours*, 33).

In this passage the importance of morning and evening prayer is connected to the singing of hymns. Eusebius was the first major church historian of Christianity. He engaged both sides of the controversy over Arianism and became an apologist for Constantine I the Great. Eusebius studied under Pamphilus, a Christian teacher at Caesarea Maretima in Palestine and a follower of Origen. Eusebius was not an original thinker, but his *Church History* became authoritative for the history of early Christianity thanks to his many quotes from the original sources he found in Pamphilus's library.¹⁵⁸ The fact that he chose to include music in his histories of Christians indicates another dimension of the musical phenomenon in the Church. As a philosophical bridge and as a spiritual bridge, music represented an essential component of the faith and a way that Christians related to their predecessors. Through the writings of historians like Eusebius, music became a part of the history of the church.

Solemnity of Worship

As music began to acquire historical significance in the church, the Church Fathers began to write more about the ceremony of singing in worship and how music was applied in the liturgy. There are several main motivators for this shift. Before going back into the writings of specific theologians, it is important to briefly establish some of the motivation for the trend towards greater musical solemnity in worship.

In the late third and early fourth century, the development of Christian singing begins to acquire greater importance and thus it begins to acquire a body of literature

¹⁵⁸ "Eusebius of Caesarea | Encyclopedia of World Religions: Encyclopedia of Catholicism - Credo Reference."

surrounding its different styles and about which debate begins to discern what type of music is most appropriate. The Edict of Milan, which allowed Churches to emerge into the public sphere in 313 CE, set into motion a transformation of public worship that reshaped musical styles. The social shift that arose continued movement towards more structure in the liturgy. In 392, Emperor Theodosius I made Christianity the official religion and suppressed others.¹⁵⁹ The peace of Constantine allowed Christians to come out of the shadows and helped to promote the development of the liturgical arts.¹⁶⁰ As a result, “Christian worship...became formal and public” and the ceremony of the service became more important.¹⁶¹

As churches grew in scope, so too did their music. Larger groups of people necessitated new styles of singing. At this time the solemnity of the service increased, requiring that there be practices outlining the type of singing allowed at points in the service. These initial practices began and later preserved a musical style that was notably independent from non-vocal parts.

In order to support the existence of this musical trend, further discussion of the next group of Church writers will show a connection between music and liturgy growing in tandem with the importance of organized, solemn, worship.

St. Basil

The next Church Father whose writings bear important information about the progression of music and the church during this period of increasing solemnity was St.

¹⁵⁹ Grout, Burkholder, and Palisca, *A History of Western Music*, 23.

¹⁶⁰ Nassis, “The Use of Music in Christian Worship,” 30.

¹⁶¹ Nassis, “The Use of Music in Christian Worship,” 30.

Basil who lived from 329–79 CE. He is known for having composed 55 Greater Monastic Rules and 313 Lesser Rules, some of which may have been written by Basil's followers in 356. Written in a catechetical format, its discussion of virtues and vices is based on references to biblical passages. The Rule is followed by most eastern Orthodox and many Catholic monasteries.¹⁶² His writings also deal with musical practices. The long list of Christian philosophers and writers illustrates the ties between the Church and the Greco-Roman world. These writers were deeply concerned with understanding and explaining God's word. They were also concerned with the correct behavior of Christians. Part of this writing encompassed the practice of music making. Their response to song and psalmody shaped the development of the liturgy through this era and beyond. The heightened scrutiny directed towards an appropriate life in relation to God exemplified in monastic communities shaped the style of music that was utilized. St. Basil wrote about the effect of melody on virtue.

What does the Spirit do since it knows that the human race is instructed in virtue with difficulty and that, due to our tendency toward pleasure, we neglect the correct life? It mingled the gratification of melody with the teaching of dogma so that, unbeknownst to us, we may be influenced by the benefit of the words through the delightfulness of hearing, just as experienced physicians do when they give difficult patients bitter tasting medicine by coating the cup with honey. That is why these harmonious melodies of the psalms were devised for us, so that when young people and those yet immature in temperament chant in appearance, in reality they educate their souls (ANF, vol. 2, 172 trans. Chrysostom Nasis).

What this passage implies is that that early monastic discipline against music in worship was not wholly against it per se but rather against the use of a particular kind of

¹⁶² "Basil, Rule of St.," in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Middle Ages* (Oxford University Press, 2010), <http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780198662624.001.0001/acref-9780198662624-e-0748>.

sound.¹⁶³ This sign of compromise between extreme, ascetic, simplistic worship and a more lively and passionate worship designed possibly to fill a large space with sound and devotees shows that even from the beginnings of Christian music, compromise and religious scrutiny went together in deciding what music was appropriate. Interpreting these words hints that music was seen as a vessel for transmitting church doctrine.

Another written source, *Apostolic Constitutions* (ca. 380 CE), seems to break new ground when it indicates that someone other than the reader should sing the psalms, an reaction that indicates a growing distinction being made between singing, chanting, and reading psalms and lessons in worship.¹⁶⁴ Finally, the epoch of the 3rd century finds evidence that there were solo performance of psalms.¹⁶⁵ There is also evidence for the congregational performance of psalms.¹⁶⁶ In St. Basil's 207 Epistle addressed to the clergy at Neocaesarea he writes;

For among us the people rise early at night to go to the house of prayer, and in labor and affliction and continuous tears confessing to God, finally rise from their prayers and enter upon the singing of psalms. And now indeed divided into two groups they sing antiphonally, thereby both strengthening their practice in reciting the Scriptures and securing both their close attention and means of keeping their hearts from distraction. Then again after entrusting to one person to lead the chant, the rest sing the response; and so having passed the night in a variety of psalmody and praying in the meantime, as the day begins to dawn all in common, as of one voice and one heart, intone the psalm of confession to the Lord, each one forming his own expressions of repentance (*207 Epistle*).

¹⁶³ Nassis, "The Use of Music in Christian Worship." 32.

¹⁶⁴ Foley, *Foundations of Christian Music*, 74.

¹⁶⁵ Foley, *Foundations of Christian Music*, 81. Tertullian writes that 'each is asked to step forward and sing, according to his ability, a hymn to God, either from the Holy Scriptures or his own composition'...it is quite probable that Tertullian is referring to psalm singing here, especially given the other notable references to psalm singing in Tertullian's works.

¹⁶⁶ Foley, *Foundations of Christian Music*, 81. Ignatius of Antioch is known for citing the evidence for congregational unison psalm singing.

This example speaks of both two groups singing back and forth and a system of following the leading singer and then responding. This description implies a focus on documenting the specific ways in which music was used. The replacement of old forms with new ones shows the emergence of official rules and traditions surrounding music. These customs and performance traditions began an effective lock out of musical instruments for hundreds of years as the middle age creation of new hymns and songs for the liturgy harkened back to these first instrument free prototypes such as the ones mentioned here. This description carefully unites prayer with music. It provides a non-musical but highly worshipful explanation for antiphonal singing which had become a tradition by this time, emphasizing that it “keeps their hearts from distraction.” This goal of keeping the congregants and the choir focused outwardly on God rather than inwardly on music helps to understand why music, which is a very worldly practice in many ways, actually benefitted the goal of prayer and worship.

During this time, two new forms were gradually overtaking an older third form. The new forms of singing, “antiphonal hymnody and responsorial psalmody” overtook “the improvisational singing of individual members.”¹⁶⁷ These texts show that churches began to agree upon the same hymns for the same parts of worship and similar styles of performance for said hymns.

Desert Ascetics

As the public worship in churches across the Christian world began to change how the faithful sung in the liturgy, there were some who favored a more minimalist

¹⁶⁷ Nassis, “The Use of Music in Christian Worship,” 32.

approach. Nitrian Abba Pambo (who died in 385 CE) took the point of view that monks (at least in the desert) should not take part in the singing done by monks in the cities.¹⁶⁸

A disciple of his once lamented that the monks did not use certain hymns, which he called 'troparia', as they did in the church of the Apostle Mark. Abba Pambo replied:

Woe to us, my child! The time has arrived when monks have abandoned the solid food, which is supplied by the Spirit, and pursue songs and sounds. What form of compunction (κατάνυξις), what type of tears are borne from troparia when one stands in the churches or in a cell and raises his voice as do oxen?¹⁶⁹

This quote reveals that some leaders in the Early Church were concerned that passionate singing or singing without the correct regard for the spirit would err on the side of music relegated to the pagan rites and festivals. Hence, the same condemnation that fell on musical instruments as already illustrated could fall on vocal music if the writer felt that said vocal music did not adhere to some degree of proper piety.

John Chrysostom

Part of a music's ability to fit into the notion of holiness or appropriateness was its ability to fulfill certain roles in worship. The previous examples stress how music reinforced one's devotion to God and helped one to philosophically understand God on a higher level. The music of the Church was also devoted towards instruction in Church philosophy and it seems that music was more and more discrete and important as an aspect of worship independent from readings and homilies and the rest of the liturgy in its ability to instruct the congregants of the faithful. John Chrysostom who lived between 354 and 407 CE, was a figure known for his denunciations of luxury, exhortations to give

¹⁶⁸ Gallagher, *Western Plainchant in the First Millennium*. The Desert, the City, and Psalmody in the Late Fourth Century, 22.

¹⁶⁹ Nassis, "The Use of Music in Christian Worship," 31.

to the poor, and advice on Christian education; his homilies *De statuis* throw light on an urban riot at Antioch in 387 and his homily *De sacerdotio* focuses on the nature of clerical duties and responsibility.¹⁷⁰ Since the 6th century, he has been known as Chrysostom (the golden mouthed).¹⁷¹

Chrysostom said instrumental music was appropriate for Jews in the Temple as a lure away from idol worship but modern Christians no longer need this enticement or distraction.¹⁷² Since musical instruments themselves were seen as associated with pagan practices, from the writings of the Church Fathers there emerged an enduring belief that in some ways the Temple itself had pagan like practices, thus the musical instruments they used could not be justified for use in a Christian context.

Isidore of Pelusium, who died around 435 CE, admired Chrysostom's position on instruments in the old Testament; "If the Holy One tolerated blood and sacrifice because of the childishness of men at that time, why do you wonder that the music of the cithara and psaltery was used..." (Epistle II, 176; PG LXXVIII, 628). This quote indicates a Biblical exegesis of the Temple's musical practices that ignores the practical performance aspects of musical instruments in favor of their symbolic value as a replacement for idols. In this view, when Christians in turn reject musical instruments then they are taking the next step to get closer to God. This is another way that music educates the faithful in correct worship by showing them how to praise and pray to God without the crutch of

¹⁷⁰ Stanley Lawrence Greenslade and W Liebeschuetz, "Chrysostom, John," in *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* (Oxford University Press, 2012), <http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780199545568.001.0001/acref-9780199545568-e-1567>.

¹⁷¹ Greenslade and Liebeschuetz. "Chrysostom, John."

¹⁷² McKinnon, *Music in Early Christian Literature*, 7.

instruments. This sentiment also emphasizes the low esteem placed on musical instruments, especially in a liturgical context at this point in the development of Church practice and music.

The anti-instrument and separation from the Temple trope became commonplace among major figures of the fourth century such as John Chrysostom.¹⁷³ This emphasis on the supremacy of vocal music despite Temple worship which featured instruments highlights how the Church writers leaned more towards the study of music as a liberal art in the abstract and dismissed discussion about musical instruments' appropriateness. The polemic against instruments reveals a shift in the authority figures of the Church towards the preservation of wisdom and the cultivation of purity. Over time, as Church Fathers studied in Greek philosophy began writing down theology they started to reflect the musical puritanism of pagan intellectuals, associating musical practice with instruments with the pagan cult of idols.¹⁷⁴ Since musical instruments functioned in pagan idol worship, there is logic that the Church Fathers went to lengths to distance the music of the Church from those rituals.

St. Augustine

St. Augustine of Hippo lived between 354 and 430 CE and was the most famous of the Church Fathers, writing some of the most famous quotations about the Church and music. His early life was marked by a series of spiritual crises before being baptized by St Ambrose in 386 and henceforth lived a monastic life, becoming bishop of Hippo in North Africa in 396, and leaving writings like Confessions and the City of God, which

¹⁷³ McKinnon, *Music in Early Christian Literature*, 2.

¹⁷⁴ McKinnon, *Music in Early Christian Literature*, 3.

have come to dominate Western theology.¹⁷⁵ His writings speak to a vocal music tradition, emphasizing the study of music as a path to understand God in a worship context and in a liberal art context. His writings also illuminate a bit of the performance styles of singing in church of his day. While writing about hymn singing he would mention the jubilus. This was the final extended melismatic alleluia of an Alleluia hymn and was regarded by St. Augustine and others as, “an expression of joy beyond words.”¹⁷⁶ This and other writing begins a record of distinct types of hymns for specific parts of the worship; where there was a needed expression of joy, this form of singing would have been most appropriate. This type of documentation of the effects of singing leads to the information regarding the way in singing was executed in Church as “documented in texts from the end of the 4 century.”¹⁷⁷

Another example of this his writing about musical performance and style comes about in his reflections on the emerging gradual psalm, which “was originally simply one of the Old Testament readings of the pre-eucharistic service of the Word.”¹⁷⁸ In his *Retractiones*, Augustine writes about negative opinions of the gradual psalm by his contemporaries who pushed against its inclusion.¹⁷⁹ Based on St. Augustine’s writing about criticism for this practice of psalmody, there is an inference of it growing importance for churches. Things that do not exist widely do not create controversy. As

¹⁷⁵ “Augustine,” Oxford Reference, accessed November 27, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oi/authority.20111116103017772>.

¹⁷⁶ Grout, Burkholder, and Palisca, *A History of Western Music*, 58.

¹⁷⁷ Nassis, “The Use of Music in Christian Worship,” 32.

¹⁷⁸ McKinnon, *Music in Early Christian Literature*, 11.

¹⁷⁹ McKinnon, *Music in Early Christian Literature*, 11.

writers responded, both positively and negatively to the musical developments in the church, the mention of musical instruments involved in the musical styles used continues to be minimal.

St. Augustine writes about a section of a psalms and their functions. While different parts of hymns had different musical effects, the power of the hymn as a teaching instrument helps to understand its roll in liturgy. Augustine wrote about music and the other arts power to draw one upward to a higher, spiritual plane: “The Beauty of the world, like the great song of some ineffable musician, rushes outward into the eternal contemplation of the splendor which is rightly worshiped as God.”¹⁸⁰ Augustine’s sermons tell us a lot about the information regarding psalmody during this time. In the *Confessions*, St. Augustine writes that he was profoundly moved by the music at Milan writing “mode of consolation and exhortation, with the brethren singing together with great earnestness of voice and heart.” At one point, “St. Augustine was so deeply moved by the singing of psalms that he feared the pleasure it gave him.”¹⁸¹ For this reason, he and others focused on creating musical practices that elevated what they saw as beneficial in music while protecting congregants from its ‘dangers’ or worldliness. Augustine writes of introducing hymns and psalms to...this practice. He also states that this style of hymn singing and psalm singing is “retained from that time until the present and imitated in many” places in order to encourage proper doctrine. For a long time this was thought to be about introducing antiphonal psalmody to the West, although it actually might have

¹⁸⁰ Augustine, *Epistolae* 138.5, ed. Alois Goldbacher (CSEL 44; Vienna: Tempesky, 1904), 130.

¹⁸¹ Grout, Burkholder, and Palisca, *A History of Western Music*, 25.

more have to do with the leading role of urban ascetics introducing the office in cities.¹⁸²

Nevertheless, this is evidence that Church Writers and Church leaders were concerned with spreading song and singing in a way as to support the Church and its faithful.

Augustine is very clear that singing psalms is morally acceptable.¹⁸³ This conviction underlines the importance of psalm singing as an instructional guide for the faith during worship. Amidst the opposition to certain types of music, as it was for the monks as well as it was for city churches, worldly music and musical instruments and non-scriptural refrains and chants were the primary if not only aspects of music that all leaders agreed were unfit for worship.¹⁸⁴ Another similar sentiment that also has ties to the Hellenistic knowledge tradition in Christian theology is expressed by St. Augustine in his *De doctrina christiana*, a treatise on biblical exegesis. St. Augustine writes: “We must not shun music because of the superstition of the heathen, if we are able to snatch from it anything useful for the understanding of the Holy Scriptures; and we need not be involved in their theatrical frivolities, if we consider some point concerning citharas and other instruments which might be of aid in comprehending spiritual things.”¹⁸⁵ This example also references the trend towards treating music as a subject for study. Additionally, St. Augustine implies that music itself doesn’t need to be shunned fully, meaning that to some, all of music was something of suspicious nature. His reference to “theatrical frivolities”, possibly a reference to Pagan rituals, reveals the strong line

¹⁸² Dryer, *Western Plainchant in the First Millennium The Desert, the City, and Psalmody in the Late Fourth Century*, 27.

¹⁸³ Jeffery, *Monastic Reading and Roman Chant*, 46.

¹⁸⁴ Taft, *The liturgy of the hours*, op. cit., 139

¹⁸⁵ McKinnon, *The Use of Music in Early Christian Literature*, 5.

between the useful study of music and the implementation of music in popular settings. In this writing, St. Augustine implies that by understanding musical instruments in as a tool for understanding God's word, they can be seen as acceptable. However, he seems to be shying away from the notion that musical instruments themselves are appropriate for church music, lest the church resemble the pagan rituals that he considers frivolous. This idea of separating the study of music as a discipline on its own would not be possible without an acceptance and understanding of Greek knowledge.

St. Jerome, St. Augustine's Contemporary, left writings that shed light on the musical practices of the day. For example, St. Jerome writes in his passage commenting on Ephesians 3.5 about the importance of the singer's interior disposition while simultaneously implying a person whose specific office was to sing in Church, a cantor.¹⁸⁶

We ought therefor to sing, to make melody and to praise the Lord more with spirit than voice...let them hear it whose duty it is to sing in the church...Thus let the servant of Christ sing, so that not the voice of the singer but the words that are read give pleasure; in order that the evil spirit which was in Saul be cast out from those similarly possessed by it (*Commentarium in epistulam ad Ephesios III, V, 19; PL XXVI, 528-9*).

Referencing a person whose duty it is to sing in Church emphasizes the growing solemnity of worship. With increasing formality and structure, worship and the liturgy require a stricter form of musical accompaniment. This move goes along with the writers so far who have stressed the importance of proper singing in connection to worship.

In 392 CE, Emperor Theodosius I made Christianity the official religion and suppressed others while, "the church organized itself on the model of the empire."¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁶ McKinnon, *Music in Early Christian Literature*, 3.

¹⁸⁷ Grout, Burkholder, and Palisca, *A History of Western Music*, 23.

This change inevitably affected the music used, as evidenced by Christian writings of the period including sermons by prominent bishops of the time which cited Biblical passages for reading and psalms in which the congregation responded with an unvarying refrain to the verses sung by a soloist.¹⁸⁸ As the style of worship changed with the times, the role of music remained central in its importance. All the while, the assimilation of Hellenistic learning and the canonization of sacred texts and beliefs contributed to the lack of musical instruments in church.

Unification of Traditions

The transmission of knowledge in the early Church relied on written word and oral customs. Liturgical music was codified through the creation of texts. Some of these texts included exegesis of the Bible including the that of the Psalms. Through explaining the Psalms theologians created a body of work that developed a doctrine around the interpretation of the most musical part of the Bible. The creation of illustrated psalms and illustrated psalm commentaries helped to establish the ideas found in the writings of some of the first Christian theologians for centuries that followed.

While transcribing the written word could be accomplished, there was no method for the first Christians to transmit musical ideas. Without musical notation to create a canon of strict chant in the way that the Bible could be consolidated and canonized in written form, the music for worship relied on oral transmission and thus was functionally implemented through vocal means only. Indeed “the earliest surviving books of chant with music notation, copied in monasteries, date from the late ninth century.”¹⁸⁹ Without

¹⁸⁸ Nassis, “The Use of Music in Christian Worship,” 30.

¹⁸⁹ Grout, Burkholder, and Palisca, *A History of Western Music*, 32.

worrying about varying instruments and local traditions across the near east, relying on the universal human voice and written text alone may have been yet another way that traditions for worship could be unified across far flung churches. Hence, the lack of musical instrument instruction for how to play with singing is another reason why there is little support for an overarching organized implementation of the use of musical instruments in worship at an early time.

In addition to written texts, the development of a calendar of sacred dates and the chants led to a more unified liturgy. This push for greater alignment of traditions would lead to Gregorian chant. Some of the processes that shaped the formation of the chant also started during this era and reveal how the growing traditions around the liturgy shaped music.

The standardization of worship involved debate about proper hymns and psalms and the performance of the congregation, be it antiphonal or responsorial, across many churches but it did not discuss an explicit role for musical instruments. With so many aspects of music and worship being standardized, the lack of any standards laid for musical instruments and indeed the lack of much direction for musical instruments at all meant that they were likely far from the most prominent part of worship. In fact, it seems that they became stigmatized and indeed remained that way for hundreds of years.

The Church's calendar of ceremonious dates lead to the proliferation of hymnody including the Church's most ancient hymns, such as 'O Radiant Light' (Φως ἴλαρον) and the earliest kernel of the Great Doxology.¹⁹⁰ Amidst these new traditions, new roles in the church emerged to meet the church's specific musical needs, roles that did not include

¹⁹⁰ Nassis, "The Use of Music in Christian Worship." 30.

paid positions for instrumentalists. The special order of cantor is firmly established. This fact is evidenced by the 15 canonical decree of the local synod of Laodicea held in ca. 360 CE. Also, at that time development of the rite that will later come to be known as the 'Sung Office' (ή άσματική ακολουθία) continued at an accelerated pace. An example of this growing tradition is the alleluia, “which was a secular wordless chant, as seen in the writing of St. Augustine, St. Jerome, and Hilary.”¹⁹¹ The creation of a sung repertoire that could be associated with the church marks the establishment of a true Christian musical liturgy.

Unification of musical style helped to ensure this righteous music became the norm. During this time, the question of musical instruments in worship was not an issue because they were seen as a separate custom that didn't lie within the genre of music appropriate for worship. Indeed, “early converts associated elaborate singing, large choruses, instruments, and dancing with pagan spectacles.”¹⁹² For this reason, they would not have been expecting the church to use that style. The continued denunciation of these spectacles and their instruments might have reinforced the lack of instruments in Church, but it was not likely a response against their active involvement already within church settings.

Monastic Movement

Towards the end of the Patristic Period, a movement of religious hermitage in the deserts of Northern Africa and the Near East contributed to the growth of a new Monastic Movement. As a result of the Monastic Movement, the popularity of psalms grew in the

¹⁹¹ McKinnon, *Music in Early Christian Literature*, 11.

¹⁹² Grout, Burkholder, and Palisca, *A History of Western Music*, 25.

fourth and fifth centuries. In the city churches of the era, hymn singing was the normal practice according to existing sources, however it was conversely viewed with reservation in some monastic circles where psalmody, being more resilient to melodic embellishment, was simpler and more austere.¹⁹³ As the popularity of worship in song or chant as used by the desert monks encouraged similar displays of sacred intend in church cities, these more elaborate city styles caused some scrutiny from those who served as their inspiration.

The absence of musical instruments in certain quotations does not prove they were never used, it seems apparent that at the very least, musical instruments were not afforded the same importance of singing in the Church. Singing at regular times of worship is another way that monasteries helped to set the standards for the holy life and ingrain the impression of truly sacred worship. The example they set involved more than the act of worship and a customary ceremony, but also accompanying times of the day, week, and year with certain practices. This led to a musical form with a cyclical nature that helped to augment the unique aspects of worship for a given day of the year. In this way, it seems that Christian music was beginning to replicate some of the roles that music had been given in outlining the calendar of worship in the Temple. Except, due to the influence of the Monastery, the music's ascetic nature again reinforced the already apparent skepticism for the decadent and even pagan practice of musical instruments. .

St. Benedict

¹⁹³ Nassis, "The Use of Music in Christian Worship," 31.

St. Benedict, 480 -547 CE, withdrew from public life around 500 CE to a cave at Subiaco to live as a hermit and the community which grew up around him is said to have established a group of monasteries in the area; his later movement to a new location led to plans for the reform of monasticism and the composition of his Rule.¹⁹⁴ Several of his writings deal with music and monastic life. The criticism of the psalmody in a specific type in the writings of monastic leaders shows that there was controversy about the type of singing suited for worship, let alone instruments. For the austere lives of monks, the practices of city dwelling Christians seemed too decadent for a truly righteous spirit. As an example take Abba Silvanus who was copied in Greek by Bishop John of Maiuma in 512 or 518, and who mentions that music may be attractive to laymen and women in the cities, but monks should have nothing to do with a studied musical treatment of the sacred texts.¹⁹⁵

Musical imports from the monastic deserts of Nitria, Kellia, and Scetis did not include a model for popular singing of the psalms where psalmody was reserved for solitary introspection. The model for the psalmodic movement took its cues from places like Antioch, Constantinople, Jerusalem, and other cities where urban monastic communities popularized psalmody since they lived closer to the Christian community.¹⁹⁶ It is important to note additionally that the Cathedral office developing in the late 4th

¹⁹⁴ E. A. Livingstone E. A. Livingstone, "Benedict, St," in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, ed. E. A. Livingstone (Oxford University Press, 2014), <http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780199659623.001.0001/acref-9780199659623-e-627>.

¹⁹⁵ Gallagher, *Western Plainchant in the First Millennium*. Dryer, *The Desert, the City, and Psalmody in the Late Fourth Century*, 22.

¹⁹⁶ Dryer, *Western Plainchant in the First Millennium The Desert, the City, and Psalmody in the Late Fourth Century*, 32.

century was not the same as the monastic office contemporaneously.¹⁹⁷ Finally, in tracing the musical lineage of Christian psalm singing, it should be noted that one of the chief ways of tracking their use, the references made by church writers to them in their sermons, had begun to wane by the sixth century; sermons referring to liturgical psalmody becoming rare (in contrast to Augustine's writings) and ceasing soon after altogether. Even for texts known to have been sung in the fourth it is usually not possible to document uninterrupted usage all the way back to the fourth century.¹⁹⁸ Perhaps this fact implies that though the effects of monastic community life and liturgy had a profound impact on the music or Christianity as a whole, the process by which psalm singing and other forms of musical worship became deeply engrained in the Church was not linear and did not stick all at one time. This implies a certain degree of flexibility in the formation of tradition, where over time chants and psalms fell into and out of favor with congregants and the manner in which music played a role in church took a while to fall into place despite what is said in the writings of Church Fathers at prominent times in the early era.

Later Writers in the Church

Returning to the discussion of writers in the early Church, in the final centuries of the Patristic Era, the theme of music as a liberal art continues. Martianus Capella worked in Carthage in the 4th and 5th centuries, leaving behind volumes of work in Latin dedicated to philosophy and liberal arts. His treatise, *De Musica*, which became widely popular from the 9th century had a large influence on medieval music theorists drew

¹⁹⁷ Jeffery, *Monastic Reading and Roman Chant*, 47.

¹⁹⁸ Jeffery, *Monastic Reading and Roman Chant*, 56.

much of its knowledge from *Peri mousikes* by Aristedes Quintillianus.¹⁹⁹ Martianus Capella, along with Boethius, another philosopher working in the fifth century, had an enormous impact on the study of music as a liberal art through the middle ages.²⁰⁰ Even though it was written at the end of the Patristic Era, exploring their work offers a glimpse at how Church musicians interpreted Greek music theory and the use of musical instruments through the middle ages. Boethius, who lived between 475 and 525, was active as a Roman philosopher and statesman. For a thousand years his treatise on ancient music, *De musica*, was the gold standard for musical knowledge in western Europe and beyond. His work transmitted Greek musical knowledge to the middle ages.²⁰¹

Boethius is famous for *On the Consolation of Philosophy*, and was not specifically Christian, but was popular among Christians for his description of the soul attaining knowledge of the vision of God through philosophy.²⁰² Born to a patrician family in 480 in Rome, Boethius played a significant role in the study of music as part of the quadrivium. His *De Institutione musica*, based largely on Greek sources, mainly a lost treatise by Nicomachus and the first book of Ptolemy's *Harmonics*, established the study of music as a philosophy through the middle ages and separated the pagan customs

¹⁹⁹ "Capella, Martianus Minneus Felix (Lived 4th–5th Centuries) | *The Hutchinson Unabridged Encyclopedia with Atlas and Weather Guide* - Credo Reference," accessed January 8, 2021, https://search-credoreference-com.ezproxy.baylor.edu/content/entry/heliconhe/capella_martianus_minneus_felix_lived_4th_5th_centuries/0.

²⁰⁰ Grout, Burkholder, and Palisca, *A History of Western Music*, 38.

²⁰¹ "Boethius | The Columbia Encyclopedia - Credo Reference," accessed February 2, 2021, <https://search-credoreference-com.ezproxy.baylor.edu/content/entry/columency/boethius/0>.

²⁰² "Boethius - Oxford Reference," accessed November 27, 2020, <https://www-oxfordreference-com.ezproxy.baylor.edu/view/10.1093/acref/9780192800947.001.0001/acref-9780192800947-e-1143?rskey=FIXuu3&result=2>.

of instrument usage from the pagan philosophy which Christian writers utilized.²⁰³ A brief excerpt from *De Institutione musica* helps to summarize a lot of the themes about music already mentioned. Indeed, the titled of the first chapter is given as “*The Association of Music with Man is a Natural One; Music can, moreover, both Establish and Destroy Morality*” (*De Institutione musica*). (Book 1, Chapter 1, trans. James Garceau, Kevin Long, Susan Burnham, Michael Waldstein, Thomas McGovern, S.J.)

For those who are more violent delight in the harsher modes of the Getae. But those who are gentler enjoy the mild modes although they are almost non-existent in our time. Since, however, the human race is now frivolous and soft, it is wholly amused by scenic and theatrical modes. But music was modest and orderly while it was performed with simpler instruments. Now however that it has been drawn out confusedly and in various ways, it has lost the mode of gravity and virtue and has almost fallen into disgrace; it preserves only a minimum of its former character (*The Association of Music with Man is a Natural One; Music can, moreover, both Establish and Destroy Morality*).

This quotation references that music that is more simple requires simpler instruments. It is easy to see how the Theologians of the Patristic Era and beyond might have taken this work of philosophy and easily applied it to their own assumptions about music. Boethius and the Church Fathers agreed that the theatrical spectacles and music enjoyed by average people were frivolous and damaging to the soul. Both believed that a simpler music more focused on “gravity and virtue” would have the opposite effect of the more entertaining forms of music. For these reasons, it does not take a large leap of assumption to reason that the simplest instrument of all, the human voice, might make the most sense for music that is designed to restore a “modest and orderly” music into existence.

²⁰³ Grout, Burkholder, and Palisca, *A History of Western Music*, 39.

Three things stand out from this information. First, he was an important figure through the middle ages despite having lived towards the end of the fifth century. Second, he also say music as part of the quadrivium and regarded it as important to the study of knowledge in pursuit of wisdom. Finally, he firmly used Greek sources to create his work, firmly linking one of the most influential books about music through the middle ages to works from the Greek tradition. He also wrote about music in relation to Philosophy in a way which informed Christians. This materialized with the study of music as a liberal art and resulted in treatises on the *ars musica* by transitional figures like Cassiodorus and Boethius.²⁰⁴

Cassiodorus, born in 490 CE in Scylletium, Bruttium, kingdom of the Ostrogoths [now Squillace, Italy] died *c.* 585 CE at the Vivarium Monastery, near Scylletium. In life he was an historian, statesman, and monk who worked to save the culture of Rome at the beginning of the Middle Ages. During the period of the Ostrogothic kings in Italy, Cassiodorus served many roles.²⁰⁵ Not long after 540 he retired and founded a monastery named Vivarium in order perpetuate the culture of Rome. While neither a great writer nor a great scholar, Cassiodorus left work of great importance in the history of Western culture because he collected manuscripts and enjoined his monks to copy the works of pagan as well as Christian authors which led to the preservation of many writings.²⁰⁶ In his own work, Cassiodorus refers to a quadrivium of four mathematical arts – arithmetic,

²⁰⁴ McKinnon, *Music in Early Christian Literature*, 5.

²⁰⁵ He was made quaestor (507–511 CE), consul in 514 CE, and, at the death of Theodoric in 526 CE, *magister officiorum* (“chief of the civil service”). Under Athalaric he became praetorian prefect in 533 CE.

²⁰⁶ “Cassiodorus -- Britannica Academic,” accessed January 7, 2021, <https://academic-eb-com.ezproxy.baylor.edu/levels/collegiate/article/Cassiodorus/20660>.

music, geometry and astronomy, defining music as the discipline which speaks of numbers found in sound.²⁰⁷ This formal definition separates the spiritual from the analytical and the philosophical from the practical. From this conceptualizing of music, it makes sense that monks might study the quadrivium over the ages as their wealth of knowledge grew without having to worry about practicing unseemly pagan music. For this reason, the study of musical and the philosophy of musical instruments coexisted with a sacred liturgical practice that did not use them. In later eras, writers in the church habitually referenced Greek learning in their written tracts. They were able to do so thanks to the people who collected and stored musical texts, like Cassiodorus, Boethius, and Capella. Writers after the Church Fathers, St Anselm, St. Thomas Aquinas, and others associated with Scholasticism, reconciled the classical philosophy of Aristotle and others with Christian doctrine through commentary which included subjects such as music.²⁰⁸ This returning and enduring interest in Greek learning parallels the perdurance of beliefs held by the Church Fathers.

Summary and Conclusion

As the church became more public, music took on a key ceremonial role in worship, and resulted in a style that elevated the holiness of the church service and cemented the traditions and beliefs of the religion to new followers. In the early mass, the ceremony at the center of worship for the Catholic church through the Middle Ages (a ceremony influenced by the singing of hymns and psalms used by the first Christians), the singing of psalms was done “antiphonally to accompany actions like the entrance

²⁰⁷ McKinnon, *Music in Early Christian Literature*, 4.

²⁰⁸ Grout, Burkholder, and Palisca, *A History of Western Music*, 84.

procession and communion.”²⁰⁹ The early mass, which adopted elements of the first Churches and the Monasteries, continued a trend of assigning specific hymns to certain parts of the liturgy, creating genres of music within the Church that filled different roles in worship. As these roles took on more ceremony and tradition, room for experimentation left and their initial style that lacked instruments remained in place.

By the time the Patristic Era ended, the traditions and styles of music that would shape worship for almost the next thousand years were largely in place. After the dark ages between the 5th and 7th century, where sources of information about music dwindle, there emerges new writings and new evidence. For example, “the Schola Cantorum (School of Singers), the choir that sang when the pope officiated at observances, was established by the late seventh century.”²¹⁰ Included in these developments was the creation of various chant traditions. Over time, liturgical music developed and changed, but it largely followed the grooves that it had established in the first four centuries of its origins. These include a tendency to transmit Greek knowledge and wisdom in a new Christian understanding. It also includes the preference to follow an established tradition. Even as worship changed, it did so gradually, continuing to rely on the wisdom of earlier generations. At the same time, however, the importance of the mass became greater and as a result, the mass became more elaborate. Chants became more florid and decorations grew. As the churches in the West emerged as a social and cultural center of Europe, the music increased in grandeur as well.

²⁰⁹ Grout, Burkholder, and Palisca, *A History of Western Music*, 56.

²¹⁰ Grout, Burkholder, and Palisca, *A History of Western Music*, 29.

When musical instruments were eventually widely included, it did not seem to create an uproar. This makes the date of their first use difficult to locate. The next chapter describes how the trends outlined in this chapter can be seen even in the inclusion of musical instruments in worship. Tying in these trends, the chapter points towards a way that musical instruments can be understood to function in worship and how this function does not necessarily put the practice of a-cappella style at odds with the accompanied music of today.

CHAPTER FOUR

The First Musical Instruments in Worship

The Absence of Musical Instruments

A myriad of factors influenced the music of the first Christians. These factors contain evidence that their music lacked musical instruments and explains why that absence came to exist. The opposition of worshippers to the customs, festivals, and rites associated with musical instruments in the wider culture is one example of this. Another is the emergence of new models of worship both independent of Temple tradition but also partly mirroring Jewish influences in the Synagogue. As new songs of praise were sung in Christian settings, traditions formed around these original models. These traditions were reinforced at various times by an emphasis on monastic simplicity and an adherence to Greek ideas of musical purity and philosophy. This combined with original models of hymns and chants that themselves lacked musical instruments and led to an environment that did not promote their inclusion. Further, the lack of evidence of instrumentalists employed in the Church for service or even a position dedicated to musical instruments, similar to the role of cantor similarly designated, and the lack of a framework of notation of customs that speak of an organized inclusion of musical instruments through the fifth century all support that musical instruments were not seen as necessary for effective worship. Often, a negative impression of musical instruments arises instead as a result of their association with pagan rituals.



Figure Eight. Unknown artist. Orpheus surrounded by animals on a wall. Fresco. 360 CE. Domitilla catacomb, Rome. Photo. Fabienne Jourdan, "The Orphic Singer in Clement of Alexandria and in the Roman Catacombs: Comparison between the Literary and the Iconographic Early Christian Representation of Orpheus," *Studia Patristica*, 2014, <https://hal.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-02426843>.

Arguments for the Earlier Instruments

While the evidence supports the rise of a musical tradition that existed without musical instruments in the first through fifth centuries, some historians have disagreed, hypothesizing that musical instruments were in fact widely in use in the church.

The existence of musical instruments in close proximity to the Church supports an earlier affinity for musical instruments in worship. For example, in frescos, paintings, and other art of this period, Christ portrayed as Orpheus, the hero from Greek myth renowned for his lyre, and numerous paintings both of Orpheus and Hermes are to be found in the catacombs of the earliest Christian communities of Naples and Rome.²¹¹ These paintings imply an affinity for music in the early followers of the church. But it

²¹¹ Emil Naumann, *The History of Music*. (London: Cassell & Company, limited, 1886). 176.

still remains to be shown that these paintings imply a specific tradition of musical instruments in worship. As seen in Figure 9, a figure of Orpheus surrounded by animals, while pagan, represented an important symbol for Christian communities. However, images like these carry with them complex levels of allusion to myth and culture that do not facilitate direct correlation with one to one relation between Orpheus and Christ, let alone Orpheus and musical Christians. Orpheus was a figure which, on the one hand, was neutral and could therefore be used by the Christians, but also sufficiently relevant to have kept its ancient meaning exactly like the lyre, for instance, which became a Christian symbol.²¹² As such, the figure of Orpheus can be associated with a complex of motifs such as harmony, peace and perhaps also salvation, but this portrait does not convey a unique meaning.²¹³ The lack of a direct connection between imagery and practice will show up again in the Medieval period where illustrated manuscripts depict musical instruments but not their performance in practice in a contemporary worship setting.

Some scholars think that the testimony of church fathers support instrumental music. For example, Sir John Hawkins argued that instruments were used in church before St. Ambrose, based on the testimony of Justin Martyr and Eusebius.²¹⁴

Further, some take the evidence of a polemic against instruments as evidence of instruments having been used prior. This argument draws on the specificity of the

²¹² Fabienne Jourdan, "The Orphic Singer in Clement of Alexandria and in the Roman Catacombs: Comparison between the Literary and the Iconographic Early Christian Representation of Orpheus," *Studia Patristica*, 122. 2014, <https://hal.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-02426843>.

²¹³ Jourdan, "The Orphic Singer in Clement of Alexandria and in the Roman Catacombs: Comparison between the Literary and the Iconographic Early Christian Representation of Orpheus," 123.

²¹⁴ Clement Antrobus Harris, "When Were Musical Instruments First Used in the Christian Church?," *The Musical Times, 1904-1995; London / New York* 61, no. 927 (May 1920), 332–33.

objections raised against instruments, in particular percussion instruments like the tambourine and cymbals owing to their association with indecent orgies.²¹⁵ Also, Clement of Alexandria objected to the flute because it was too worldly an instrument, but seemed to sanction accompaniment of voice with the lyre or cithara.²¹⁶ Naumann claims that in worship of The Last Supper as early as 180 CE the flute was used. However, this claim is made by deducing the meaning from St. Clement's quotes, and not actually drawing on evidence from the period.²¹⁷ Again, the difficulty in drawing conclusions from quotes without direct reference to musical practice in the historic and musical context of the era induces the risk of taking symbolic prose for literal musical direction.

Additionally, there are claims that the organ was added to churches in 450 CE.²¹⁸ There is also the argument that Spanish Bishop Julianus speaks of it as common in the Churches of the Peninsula.²¹⁹ These claims are somewhat skeptical already from the standpoint that organ technology itself was not terribly widespread or advanced at this early date.

Finally, scholars point to certain writings as evidence of musical instruments' involvement. For example, "St. Ambrose joined instruments of music with the public service in the Cathedral Church in Milan."²²⁰ In a reference to the most famous disciple

²¹⁵ Harris, "When Were Musical Instruments First Used in the Christian Church?"

²¹⁶ Harris, "When Were Musical Instruments First Used in the Christian Church?"

²¹⁷ Harris, "When Were Musical Instruments First Used in the Christian Church?"

²¹⁸ Harris, "When Were Musical Instruments First Used in the Christian Church?"

²¹⁹ Harris, "When Were Musical Instruments First Used in the Christian Church?"

²²⁰ Harris, "When Were Musical Instruments First Used in the Christian Church?" (citing a Dr. Rimbault).

of Ambrose, the author of *When Were Musical Instruments First Used in the Church*, says that in the year 386, St. Augustine wrote “hymns and psalms should be sung after the manner of the Eastern nations.”²²¹ From this evidence, the author concludes that music in the Christian Church at Constantinople probably came to use more musical instruments as a result of the above quote.²²²

The counterargument above relies heavily on assumptions of music that come to us from the 16th century on. The treatment of musical instruments as casually assumed present whenever mentioned, unless proven absent goes against a lot of the evidence found from carefully examining writings from the time period. While there are undoubtedly many arguments made in other places for the presence of musical instruments during the Patristic Era, without a way to harmoniously integrate the known vocal performance of hymns and psalms with this hypothetical instrumental practice, when so much is specifically known about vocal liturgy from this time relative to any sort of instrumental references, it is difficult to support this conjecture.

Later Trends in the Use of Musical Instruments

The goal to rebutting the arguments for an early use of musical instruments is based on the absence of definitive evidence of their use. The evidence needed to prove an early date for the inclusion of musical instruments in worship must be strong enough to indicate that despite the comments made by the Church Fathers and the absence of musical instruments in the precursor forms to the early Church, that instruments were

²²¹ Harris, “When Were Musical Instruments First Used in the Christian Church?”

²²² Harris, “When Were Musical Instruments First Used in the Christian Church?”

nonetheless still used. A specific use for musical instruments in the early Church would have to be strong and definitive in order to counteract the evidence already mounted against clear examples of these instruments.

The evidence for the development of early Christian music, however, points away from their use. By examining the development of Christian music and thought in subsequent centuries, an enduring polemic against musical instruments and a philosophy opposed to their literal use appears common. It also seems unlikely that early Christians would have developed a robust instrumental tradition only to abandon it in subsequent centuries, being as so much of the history of the early Church is that of standardization and canonization of liturgy and theology. Another way to examine the question of when instruments came into the church is to trace back evidence that clearly shows their involvement. This method would help to shed light on the transformation of the service without instruments to that with instruments, thus exposing the early absence of instruments. The first clear evidence of the clear use of musical instruments comes from incorporating the organ into churches, and even that implementation did not immediately lead to a widespread use of other instruments.

Specific developments in the medieval period can be linked to practices that began in the fourth and fifth centuries. These include the preservation and accumulation of Biblical commentary, the importance of the Church Father's polemic against musical instruments, the quadrivium, the development of the Mass, and opinions on vocal vs instrumental practice.

Biblical Commentary

The illustrated psalms and psalm commentaries created traditions that were passed down from the Patristic period. However, the process of creating psalm commentaries reflected the desire to embellish the source material to allow it to fill new rolls. This expansion of the Bible through commentary is similar to the growth of the liturgical musical traditions around chant and the church calendar. This is a really critical aspect. It shows the parallel between the urge to increase the importance of the service with music was viewed as similar to the importance of understanding the Bible. An example of illustrated psalms can be seen in the Isabella Breviary, a late 15th-century illustrated manuscript with one panel which depicts a group of instrumentalists on the steps up to a churchlike building.²²³ This panel, while appearing to show contemporary musicians in a church-like setting, was most likely meant to be a depiction of Levitical musicians performing on the steps of the Temple as David as a pilgrim climbs the steps, steps which symbolize a 15-step motif drawn from the Old testament.²²⁴ Illustrations like this helped to extol an interpretation of the Bible just as Biblical commentary did. Often, these illustrations were less about actual musical fact than they were about traditional allusions and symbols, all of which date back to the Patristic period. Elaborate music became a way not just to promote the Gospel but also a way to interpret it. Tropes, which are methods of expanding the text and/or melodies of existing chant, became common during the end of the early era and through the middle ages especially in Intriots and Glorias whereby these extensions increased the solemnity of the chant or connected it to

²²³ McKinnon, *The Temple, the Church Fathers and Early Western Chant*, 77.

²²⁴ McKinnon, *The Temple, the Church Fathers and Early Western Chant*, 76.

an occasion, much like the way medieval scholars added commentary in the margins of the Bible.²²⁵

As a result of the continued importance and exegesis of the Psalms, the names of ancient musical instruments were carried over in the tradition of Biblical wisdom. During the early period, some of the instruments referenced might have been those in practice. As the Middle Ages progressed, the references to instruments that were no longer likely in vernacular use heightens the perception that musical instruments had become a sort of symbol divorced from their physical context in a lot of the writing in the Middle Ages. This idea ties back to the dichotomy constructed around the polemic against musical instruments in the practical sense for the church and musical instruments discussed in the allegorical sense in the realm of classical knowledge and philosophy.

During the Middle Ages, however, the interest in classical learning led to an evolution in church practice with regard to the study of musical instruments. This process, which happened gradually over time, was not met with a marked degree of resistance and seems to have begun in areas of scholarly learning. During the Middle Ages, theologians accustomed to the writings of the Church Fathers and their polemic against musical instruments were also well-educated musicians tasked with singing the chants of the Mass and Office. As they studied their music theory to gain insight into the singing of these chants and the understanding of classical philosophy for the betterment of their own divine understanding, they took an interest again in the practical side of

²²⁵ Grout, Burkholder, and Palisca, *A History of Western Music*, 61.

musical instruments. Theologians became interested in how instruments actually functioned, even which instruments king David might have composed the psalms on.²²⁶

Some sources claim that theologians and others in the church may have been attracted by the Aristotelian studies around string-playing.²²⁷ This interest in the workings of instruments both from a philosophical and physical performance aspect followed a greater acceptance of musical instruments by authorities, for example, “Konrad of Megenberg, a magister at Paris in the fourteenth century, rules that stringed instruments ‘are sensibly classed amongst modest activities and philosophical pastimes when intervals from study are given.’”²²⁸ This sentiment, while secular, reflects a marked contrast both from the Hellenistic philosophy that musical instruments can detract from the soul and the Christian doctrine that stated that musical instruments were too closely connected to the senses and the body to be helpful in the correction or education of the spirit.

Before going further into examining the relationships between musical instruments and the Church in the end of the Middle Ages, I want to specify some instruments which might have been found during this time. This will help to frame the discussion and give needed context for what type of instruments exactly were being used, or could have possibly been used for liturgical, or other sacred music.

First, in the closing section of *Tractatus de musica* by the Dominican monk Jerome of Moravia, written in Paris in the early 1270s, it is key to point out that there are

²²⁶ Christopher Page, *Music and Instruments of the Middle Ages: Studies on Texts and Performance*, Variorum Collected Studies Series ; CS562. (Aldershot, Hampshire, Great Britain: Variorum, 1997). 109.

²²⁷ Page, *Music and Instruments of the Middle Ages: Studies on Texts and Performance*, 57.

²²⁸ Page, *Music and Instruments of the Middle Ages: Studies on Texts and Performance*, 59.

passages detailing how to tune the fiddle and the rebec, a sure sign of the presence of those and other string instruments in monastic environments.²²⁹ These stringed instruments, though bearing some resemblance to modern instruments like the violin or medieval instruments known today like the viol or viola da gamba, are best to be thought of as archetypes for more flexible regional specificities at this time. Even now, much debate remains about how the instruments were constructed and played, thus it is difficult to create an intuitive image for what they looked like.

On the woodwind side, the trumpets was a major player, it continued to be used in much the same way as its ancient ancestors, being typically reserved for the highest aristocratic stations. Meanwhile new instrument families, characterized by systems of reeds and open holes, called shawm ensembles, were considered appropriate for the lower ranks.²³⁰ Another popular instrument combination was the tabor and pipe, a very common way of providing dance music in urban outdoor settings (a tabor pipe has three or four holes and a generally narrow bore to allow overblowing; the tabor was the most common percussion instrument in the Middle Ages).²³¹

Regarding again the pipe organ, it is useful to know a little more background information about how the organ was being transmitted and constructed throughout Europe during the late Middle Ages. First, the water organ of Classical Antiquity (hydraulis) still occupied a prominent role in Europe until the eleventh century and was

²²⁹ Mengozzi, Stefano. "Instrumental Performance before c. 1430." In *The Cambridge History of Musical Performance*, edited by Colin Lawson and Robin Stowell, 263.

²³⁰ Mengozzi. "Instrumental Performance before c. 1430," 265.

²³¹ Mengozzi. "Instrumental Performance before c. 1430," 266.

no doubt common in churches and monasteries until that time.²³² Newer pneumatic instruments developed just before and continuing after the eleventh century revolutionized the organ, though they did not provide as consistent air flow, often the new types of positive and portative organs also required a second person to operate one or two pairs of bellows to maintain air pressure.²³³

With all this said, it is possible to overestimate the availability of the organ in European churches and monasteries of the late Middle Ages; no doubt many religious institutions could not afford them, and relied instead on the occasional use of wind and string instruments, particularly during processions and liturgical dramas.²³⁴ Now that the organ is in play, examining how it might have been used in Church music is tricky. Chant sequences and other plainsong melodies might have been performed with instrumental accompaniment on extra-liturgical occasions; yet the same melodies might generally have been played without the instruments (or at most with the organ) when performed during the Mass or the Office, with the possible exception of princely weddings or religious functions attended by foreign dignitaries, which would have featured trumpets and shawms. There is even evidence that extra-liturgical occasions, such as sacred plays, might have featured the instruments even when performed inside a church.²³⁵

²³² Mengozzi. "Instrumental Performance before c. 1430," 267.

²³³ Mengozzi. "Instrumental Performance before c. 1430," 267.

²³⁴ Mengozzi. "Instrumental Performance before c. 1430," 267.

²³⁵ Mengozzi. "Instrumental Performance before c. 1430," 267.

Turning back to the instrumental landscape, there are a few more instruments to mention. We have already specified the existence of organs, fiddles, rebecs, shawms, pipes, drums, and trumpets in the medieval soundscape. During the late 13th century that the lute began to make inroads on the Continent thanks to the many Tuscan poets who sojourned in Sicily at that time in order to absorb the poetic tradition of the island – a pattern of transmission confirmed by the very high number of lutes depicted in fourteenth-century Tuscan paintings.²³⁶ There is also evidence of lute–organ duos in early fifteenth century Germany (most likely portable organs were involved).²³⁷

The rebec, which was briefly mentioned earlier, evolved from an earlier instrument called the rabab, and was mentioned in thirteenth and fourteenth century French texts with various names. It had three or four strings and sometimes up to six or as few as one. It had an elongated body of various sizes and a curved back made of wood and parchment. The rabab served as the model for the larger Valencian viol in 1470's and the future Renaissance Viol.²³⁸ Another common instrument was the organistrum, or hurdy-gurdy.²³⁹

Now, it seems that the pastime of musical instruments was a moderate, and even scholarly pastime with which to engage the mind. In the Middle Ages, even the clergy became involved in playing musical instruments as is evident from “Jerome’s (of Moravia) chapter on the tuning of the *rubeba* and *viella*,” which was embedded in a

²³⁶ Mengozzi. “Instrumental Performance before c. 1430,” 269.

²³⁷ Mengozzi. “Instrumental Performance before c. 1430,” 270.

²³⁸ Mengozzi. “Instrumental Performance before c. 1430,” 270.

²³⁹ Mengozzi. “Instrumental Performance before c. 1430,” 271.

compilation "intended for friar consumption."²⁴⁰ At this point, the practical application of musical philosophy and study has led to people of the Church picking up and at least for themselves, learning to play an actual musical instrument.

English Franciscan Roger Bacon suggested that literate and learned men alike could practice musical instruments using experimental science and a fascination with instruments of all kinds.²⁴¹ A growing interest in studying the instruments themselves may have eventually led to instrumental accompaniment in the liturgy. Possibly the interest in studying how musical instruments worked in a classical philosophic context lessened the scrutiny normally applied to the performance of musical instruments. In support of this, in the medieval times, theorists fail to display the antipagan partisanship of the Church Fathers.²⁴² Johannes de Grocheio, a Parisian musical theorist from the 13th century, wrote effusively about instrumental practice because of his urban experience, an experience shared by many clerics. His work belongs to a trend in many Latin works in the 13th century displaying an increased awareness of musical instruments including sermons, tracts on the Vices and Virtues, Bible commentaries and manuals of confession.²⁴³

Along with this writing of practical musical purpose, there continued to be the transmission of Patristic Era musical imagery and allegory. The idea of the musical instrument as a symbol had already become a highly recycled idea by the Middle Ages.

²⁴⁰ Page, *Music and Instruments of the Middle Ages: Studies on Texts and Performance*, 57. The *viella* and the *rubeba* are two stringed instruments similar to those found in the violin family.

²⁴¹ Page, *Music and Instruments of the Middle Ages: Studies on Texts and Performance*, 255.

²⁴² Grout, Burkholder, and Palisca, *A History of Western Music*, 9.

²⁴³ Page, *Music and Instruments of the Middle Ages*, 53.

As a result of the preservation of philosophy in sources such as biblical commentaries and later illustrated manuscripts, the Church Father's Polemic against instruments was passed down through the Middle Ages. However, developments in the 13th century in Bible commentary show a departure from standard allegorical commentary such as the "psalterium of King David was to be interpreted as an emblem of praise, the *cithara* the admission of lowliness."²⁴⁴ They became much more concerned about the way the music of the Bible was connected with instruments of the present age. In this way the "thinking again about the meanings of the instrument names used in psalms, and terms such as *viella* and *giga*, drawn from contemporary life, begin to appear in commentaries."²⁴⁵

The Quadrivium

In addition to creating the lasting interest in Biblical commentary and the longstanding polemic against instruments, the early history of the Church contributed to a longstanding tradition of transmitting knowledge. The quadrivium taught music as one of the core disciplines. While it focused on the philosophical study of the ratios of sounds to one another, it also involved the use of various bells and organs as methods of exploring sound. The practical application of musical theory meant that gradually churches acquired the means to create music by instruments. Just as the psalmodic movement seemed to move from urban monasteries to the churches of lay people, by

²⁴⁴ Christopher Page, *Voices and Instruments of the Middle Ages: Instrumental Practice and Songs in France, 1100-1300* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986). 55.

²⁴⁵ Page, *Voices and Instruments of the Middle Ages: Instrumental Practice and Songs in France*, 55.

1100 monastic churches began to have early forms of the organ followed by organs in cathedrals by 1300.”²⁴⁶

The widespread prevalence of the organ offered new ways to create embellishments on existing chants. Embellishment in illustrated psalms was already common in the Middle Ages just as embellishment of chants was common. *Musica enchiriadis* described styles of organum, or ways that singers could adorn chant and Guido of Arezzo’s *Micrologus* (1025) described a organal voices combining oblique and parallel motion, but the largest source of oral composed organum comes from the Winchester Troper from a monastery in Winchester England which contains 174 organa, perhaps by Wulfstan of Winchester 992-996.²⁴⁷

The same 10th century monk, Wulfstan of Winchester, alluded to an epic pipe organ in use in England. While the modest size of contemporary instruments coupled with the technical difficulties of an instrument of the size he described, the hyperbolic tendencies of Wulfstan’s style, and the difficulty of place the instrument in the building it was located in all serve to moderate the instruments legendary proportions, the existence of this instrument marks the first widespread movement of including organs in liturgical use. Organs could have been in use even before this time, but in conjunction with other developments by British monks of the era, including polyphony in church, introduction of the cantus firmus mass ordinary, and the use of imperfect consonances and homophonic texture, the organ observed by Wulfstan serves as a sign that musical instruments were undergoing a transformation in their relationship to the liturgy.²⁴⁸

²⁴⁶ Grout, Burkholder, and Palisca, *A History of Western Music*. 82.

²⁴⁷ Grout, Burkholder, and Palisca, *A History of Western Music*. 86.

²⁴⁸ McKinnon, *The Temple, the Church Fathers and Early Western Chant*, 75.

The creation of polyphonic works based on traditional plain chant created a new role in church music that didn't exist before. Once there was a way to combine different voices in sacred music, the role of the organ as a teaching tool had room to expand. While the details are still difficult to trace, the role of the organ in church expanded to also become a performance accompaniment.

Opinions on vocal versus instrumental music evolved slowly in church writings from the end of the Patristic Era through to the start of the Renaissance at the end of the Middle Ages. This evolution can be tracked through the development of musical theory and guides for the production of music in the Church. Meanwhile, examining the changes to the secular culture that surrounded the Church helps to inform how the Christian community set itself apart in each age.

From the end of the Patristic period, the music of the Church changed greatly. Also, the instruments and practices of secular culture around the church was much different than when Christianity began. As a result of this, by the end of the Middle Ages the polemic against instruments in the Patristic period no longer applied to the musical instruments of the day. For this reason, the opinions suspicious of musical instruments no longer kept them at arm's length from the church.

Princely and Ecclesiastical Courts and Music

While the Church, through its development of chant and musical notation, largely controlled the written music of the Middle Ages, there was also a courtly tradition of instrumental usage which dwelt in the predominantly notation-less world before

c.1250.²⁴⁹ While there has been evidence shown here that shows an emphasis made by the Church Fathers to separate sacred music from the music of the secular society, by the height of the Middle Ages, the secular and the sacred traditions began to mix. Not only were clergy becoming more interested in musical instruments, but they were also becoming interested in the formerly separated secular styles. New genres of elaborate compositional style called Ars Nova saw continued and extended development during the 14th century; the papal court at Avignon even became one of the main patrons of secular music.²⁵⁰ This sponsorship of secular music gradually transformed into the desire for church leaders to use music as a way to demonstrate power and piety. Rulers in small principalities in Italy grew the reputation of their realms by maintaining chapels of talented singers and ensembles of gifted instrumentalists.²⁵¹

While there is evidence of the organ coming into the liturgy sometime during the huge gap between the 11th and 14th centuries, court chapels, groups of salaried musicians, and clerics who were associated with a ruler rather than with a particular building were at work throughout Europe in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries especially after the first chapels established in the thirteenth century by King Louis IX of France and King Edward I of England presented a place where musicians composed, wrote down, and performed music for church services.²⁵² This music written for church services might have included some of the first instrumental parts for worship music since these court chapels were full of talented singers, composers, and instrumentalists.

²⁴⁹ Page, *Voices and Instruments of the Middle Ages: Instrumental Practice and Songs in France*, 50.

²⁵⁰ Grout, Burkholder, and Palisca, *A History of Western Music*, 127.

²⁵¹ Grout, Burkholder, and Palisca, *A History of Western Music*, 146.

²⁵² Grout, Burkholder, and Palisca, *A History of Western Music*, 151.

Summary

Even though the a-cappella tradition remained constant for hundreds of years, some of the reasons that worship music eventually changed were due to the appropriation of Greek knowledge, especially in the writings of the Patristic Tradition. While early on the liturgical tradition in Christianity developed a polemic against instruments (with parallels in both Jewish and Greek wisdom traditions), in the later Middle Ages another influence from Greek knowledge began to take hold; the pipe organ. This instrument became connected with the church first as a way of teaching the academic arts influenced by Greek learning. As the organ became entrenched in its role in churches, cathedrals, and monasteries, it gradually took a role also in worship, but not until a later date.

Out of Hellenistic influences the church developed a philosophy with “two separate phenomena, a consistent condemnation of instruments ... and an ecclesiastical psalmody obviously free of instrumental involvement.”²⁵³ Exploring the Christian traditions surrounding worship helps to reveal that the psalmody evolved independent of instruments. It also shows that the independence from musical instruments developed alongside the polemic against them but not as a result of it. This finding supports the notion that later eras might add in musical instruments without the rejection of doctrine.

The traditions surrounding music in worship often dealt with the appropriateness for worship. Over time, as the traditions of worship become more solemn and more elaborate, there came a use for instruments where there was not before. Since the major barriers to instrumental inclusion (a lack of a way to notate instruments in appropriate style and a need to insulate the Church from outside influence) gradually diminished, the

²⁵³ McKinnon, *Music in Early Christian Literature*, 3.

use of instruments became acceptable. Through the monasteries and the teaching of the trivium and quadrivium, the organ first and later other instruments became more common in the lives of the scholarly elite amongst the clergy. This familiarity brought gradual acceptance such that when instruments began migrating into service, it was no longer attacked. When sacred and secular traditions mixed in the Middle Ages, it presented an environment that allowed instruments to break through into the a-capella world of worship that had previously been opened up a crack by the inclusion of the organ.

Many factors contributed to the tradition that surrounded the music of worship and influenced the long absence of musical instruments. However, the origin of the a cappella tradition allowed for the eventual inclusion of instruments in a critical way. Rather than the absence of instruments coming from the Patristic polemic against them, instead both the attack against instruments and the liturgy without them developed independently side by side. The polemic against instruments was preserved through the writings of the Church fathers and the traditions that grew around illustrated psalms and Biblical commentary. Meanwhile, the emergence of an increasingly complex liturgy of vocal chants derived from psalms and hymns beginning with the first Christians contributed to a tradition of worship that adapted to meet the performance needs of its worshipers. As the need for more elaborate music grew, added complexity onto the traditional forms of music functioned in a similar way to the illustrations and commentaries that surrounded the psalms in the Bible. The development of a metaphorical way of understanding musical instruments met with the preservation of Greek philosophy of music in the quadrivium and made a way for the organ to enter into the Church, first as a way to teach and later as a form of increasing the solemnity and

power of the music in worship. The study of music as one of the liberal arts influenced later scholars who saw musical instruments as something that could be studied as well. This, along with the changing context of medieval courts and further elaboration of existing chant created the environment that saw the introduction of musical instruments into the liturgy.

CONCLUSION

As the needs of worship changed, the Church responded by focusing on different aspects of its traditions, thus paving the way for an acceptable standard for instrumental accompaniment in the church service. Simple, unadorned chanting and hymn singing gave way within the Patristic period to standardized liturgical practices that would later contribute to the creation of the Mass and its associated musical forms. A growing canon of chants based on the psalms came to represent the identity of liturgical music. Since it grew from a style absent of musical instruments, as the tradition was carried on, instruments did not find a role in the church.

The largest two effects on the use of instruments in the early church were the vocal tradition of psalms and hymns and the influence of Greek philosophy on Christian writing. The vocal practices of the early church left impressions throughout the New Testament and for this reason music can be seen as important from the beginning of Christianity. The influence of Greek philosophers on the writings of the Church fathers can be seen in the emergence and transition of a polemic against musical instruments. Characterized as sinful and associated with pagan practices and immoral behavior, musical instruments were condemned for centuries. However, the interest in preserving and teaching the quadrivium made the study of music the avenue for the introduction of musical instruments into chant.

The acceptability of instruments depended on the demands of the worship and tradition and often followed the needs of the liturgy. With the creation of notation and polyphonic styles, a need arose for more musical voices. The attitudes of the leaders in

the church had a profound impact on the acceptability of musical instruments. The shift in the Middle Ages away from attacks on immoral musical instruments begins with the function of the organ in teaching the quadrivium. As the organ became common and as notation evolved to transmit Gregorian chant, the possibility for using musical instruments to adorn the chant became available.

It was at this point that the stage was set for the tradition of a cappella to be tempered with musical instruments. As the church had grown in importance in society, the solemnity of worship ceremonies increased. The regular calendar of Masses that was established by the early Middle Ages is testament to this. Larger cathedrals presented more imposing performance spaces and demanded more elaborate music to match the grandeur of the building. Alongside these transformations, the traditions of psalm illustrations and commentaries created a desire to continually build and elaborate on the writings of the past to present them in clear, new ways. Adding to the existing chants became a way to write a sort of commentary onto the liturgical music of worship just as Biblical commentary added another layer of understanding to the text. As more elaborate chants became accepted there would be less resistance to the admittance of the organ, and later, other instruments to the service.

The needs of the liturgy changed along with the culture and society that the church found itself within. As courts, both secular and sacred, sought greater prestige before their citizens and before God, the creation of music for worship grew in importance and complexity. Chapels of able musicians were a pool of resources that likely aided in the emergence of instrumental roles in worship.

What is key to uncover about these trends is that they relate to the period of the first five centuries of Christian antiquity. Without the influence of Greek philosophy to create an animosity towards musical instruments, they might have been included earlier. Without the interest in Greek learning and preserving traditions through writing and explain in volumes of texts, then the polemic and rational against musical instruments would likely not have been preserved through the Middle Ages. At the same time, the interest in studying music as part of philosophy and as another way to understand the world and God, led musical instruments, like the organ, to become tools or instruction. This role kept them close at hand all while an elaborate vocal tradition developed.

The continuation of tradition, especially in the importance of creating and recreating illustrated psalms and Biblical commentaries, led to the interpretation of musical instruments in the old testament as symbols and not appropriate vessels for Christian worship. While this worked to limit the involvement of musical instruments for hundreds of years, the interest in this tradition of commentary showed up in the chant repositories that existed across all churches, monasteries, and convents. Over time, the chant became more elaborate and more decorated. This changing situation eventually allowed for the elaboration of chant to take on musical instruments.

Finally, changing social situations that increased the prominence of the Church caused complementary changes in the scale and style of worship. With the Edict of Milan, the church became public rather than prosecuted, which coincided with larger churches and a more standardized and hierarchical leadership in the church. This led to a standardization of worship practices in the effort to create a worship that was fitting for these new spaces and Christianity's more public role. As worship changed, the role of

music changed. These forces of transformation continued into the Middle Ages. Rather than musical instruments suddenly becoming part of worship, it is far more likely that certain practices, such as processions, that had liturgical as well as public aspects continued to blur the line between sacred tradition and secular custom. As courts began creating chapels of musicians, the desire for elaborate ceremony connected with music continued to blur the line of acceptable situations for instruments. Eventually, musical instruments were seen as a useful part of worship, such as the organ at first and then later many others. By the beginning of the Renaissance, there were many composers writing sacred music to be performed in church with musical instruments, and this custom continues to this day where churches across the world find a space for musical instruments alongside voices.

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