

I WAS GLAD WHEN THEY SAID UNTO ME:  
WE WILL GO INTO THE HOUSE OF THE LORD. PS. CXXII

## A BRIEF THEOLOGY OF CHURCH MUSIC

ORGANIZED BY RELEVANT SCRIPTURES IN BIBLICAL ORDER

In churches where “the word of God, as contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, is the only infallible rule of faith and practice,”<sup>1</sup> a convincing theology of music must begin with biblical texts. However, among protestant traditions, there has been not only disagreement on interpretation of these texts, but also on the question of what weight to give musical references in the Old Testament. Nevertheless, a comprehensive survey of these texts in context ought to be revealing.

It should be taken as the default posture by children of Israel that the Old Testament holds authority when investigating questions of faith and practice. Sadly, some church traditions have ignored this rich heritage, and so we cannot presume to argue theological points from the Old Testament without careful defense. St. Paul’s widely-known statement, “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,”<sup>2</sup> is, in its original context, applied specifically to the Old Testament, which were the only scriptures Paul knew. Still, it has been argued by some that Christians are under the new covenant with Christ and not under the old covenant with Abraham, so the Old Testament is not only unbinding, but actually *must* be disregarded in terms of informing ecclesiastical practice. The letters of Paul do contain numerous statements that can read as abrogation of the Law under which Old Covenant life was governed: “So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith.”<sup>3</sup> However, in the Gospel according to St. Matthew, Jesus seems to state the opposite.<sup>4</sup> Regardless of how one harmonizes these ideas, Paul was a

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<sup>1</sup> Author unknown [different wording with same concept appears in both the Westminster Shorter and Longer Catechisms] —as quoted by Charles Hodge in his *Systematic Theology*

<sup>2</sup> *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Wheaton, IL: Good News/Crossway, 2011), 2 Timothy 2:13. All scripture quotations are from the ESV.

<sup>3</sup> Galatians 3:24

<sup>4</sup> “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be

Pharisee:<sup>5</sup> “the Law” for him had a specific identity and scope, and was not synonymous with authority of all Scripture. Judaism traditionally recognizes 613 commandments found in the Hebrew Scriptures, and these make up the Law.<sup>6</sup> But not an iota, not a dot, of any of those commandments mentions music. A passage from 2 Chronicles directly testifies to this distinction, in the narrower context of temple worship.

And Jehoiada posted watchmen for the house of the Lord under the direction of the Levitical priests and the Levites whom David had organized to be in charge of the house of the Lord, to offer burnt offerings to the Lord, *as it is written in the Law of Moses*, with rejoicing and with singing, *according to the order of David*.<sup>7</sup>

This internal acknowledgement that musical directives were not part of the Law lends even more strength to the argument that there is no scriptural basis for the exclusion of Old Testament teaching on music.<sup>8</sup>

The first scriptural reference to music in a setting of corporate praise is Exodus 15 (the song of Moses given in praise to God for deliverance from the Egyptians). “Then Moses and the people of Israel sang this song to the Lord...”<sup>9</sup> —this stands as a model of corporate singing in worship of God, and also demonstrates that God did not expect his people to ask permission to praise him for his mighty acts. One argument against instrumental music in corporate worship stipulates that instrumental music was allowed in the Temple, but only because God specifically authorized it. But nowhere does God authorize Moses to have the entire nation of Israel sing to him in corporate praise; there is likewise no authorization for Miriam to use a tambourine nor to incite “all the women...”<sup>10</sup> to dance. Moses’ song also establishes the use of the imagination to praise God; the text is not limited to literal, dry, or calm statements – it is highly exuberant. Within the song is the line, “The Lord is my strength and my song, and he *has become* my salvation,”<sup>11</sup> which suggests that reasons for singing praise originate not only in God’s acts (the work of salvation) but also in his character and relationship to his people.

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called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”  
St. Matthew 5: 17–19

<sup>5</sup> Acts 23: 6

<sup>6</sup> This particular enumeration post-dates Paul, and is likely from the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD

<sup>7</sup> 2 Chronicles 23: 18, emphasis added

<sup>8</sup> Even if the Law included all texts relating to music, and even if it were no longer binding, it isn’t reasonable to assert that the requirements of the Law *must not* be followed.

<sup>9</sup> Exodus 15: 1

<sup>10</sup> Exodus 15: 20

<sup>11</sup> Exodus 15: 2, emphasis added; this line is repeated in Isaiah 12 and Psalm 118.

Deuteronomy 31 and 32 detail the succession of leadership from Moses to Joshua. Moses gives a command that the Levites would read the Law to all Israel every seven years, so that, “they may hear and learn to fear the Lord your God, and be careful to do all the words of this law, and that their children, who have not known it, may hear and learn to fear the Lord your God...”<sup>12</sup> But almost immediately after this, God tells Moses that, “this people will rise and whore after the foreign gods among them in the land that they are entering, and they will forsake me and break my covenant...”<sup>13</sup> So the reading of the law isn’t expected to be particularly effective in safeguarding the faithfulness of Israel. For this purpose, God enlists music:

Now therefore write this song and teach it to the people of Israel. Put it in their mouths, that this song may be a witness for me against the people of Israel. [...] And when many evils and troubles have come upon them, this song shall confront them as a witness (for it will live unforgotten in the mouths of their offspring). For I know what they are inclined to do even today, before I have brought them into the land that I swore to give.<sup>14</sup>

In this, God implements a preferred method of re-orienting his people toward a righteous faith: through song. He intends that this song will be retained over time and taught to each new generation,<sup>15</sup> and he recognizes as self-evident the power and usefulness of song – that part of the passage could be paraphrased, ‘*they may forget my law, and me, but they cannot forget this song once it is engrained in their memories.*’ It is instructive, again, to look at the nature of the song text – it is highly imaginative and emotionally charged, but also densely packed; a high concentration of ideas are encoded into the poetry.<sup>16</sup>

In 2 Samuel 6, we find more instrumental music being used in corporate worship (“all the house of Israel were celebrating *before the LORD...*”<sup>17</sup>). Lyres, harps, tambourines, castanets, and cymbals are mentioned; the music is given in celebration for the bringing of the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem. The parallel account in I Chronicles 13 is more emphatic, saying that “David and all Israel were celebrating before God *with all their might...*”<sup>18</sup> and the list of instruments used includes trumpets.

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<sup>12</sup> Deuteronomy 31: 12–13

<sup>13</sup> Deuteronomy 31: 16

<sup>14</sup> Deuteronomy 31: 19–21

<sup>15</sup> Also reiterated in 32: 46, “Take to heart all the words by which I am warning you today, that you may command them to your children...”

<sup>16</sup> Poetry is partly impossible to translate into another language, since poetry relies on qualities of words (including their sound) in addition to their literal meaning. However, even though this song when read in English translation may not always seem immediately ‘singable,’ the basic themes and images are still clear.

<sup>17</sup> Emphasis added, 2 Samuel 6: 5

<sup>18</sup> 1 Chronicles 13: 8; emphasis added

Directly after the description of this music is the record of God's killing of Uzzah, who was struck down because he touched the Ark. This further suggests that God's silence and God's explicit prohibition cannot be taken as equivalent.<sup>19</sup> There is no mention of a negative reaction from God when the instruments were playing 'before him.' If God prohibits freely given worship through music generally, instead permitting it only in certain ways where he has ordained the method, why didn't this harp-tambourine-cymbal jam session draw any reported ire from him<sup>20</sup> who so conspicuously strikes down a man for engaging in prohibited behavior just moments later?<sup>21</sup>

When Jabin, king of Canaan, is defeated in Judges 4, Deborah and Barak sing a song of victory, including,

“Tell of it, you who ride on white donkeys,  
you who sit on rich carpets  
and you who walk by the way.  
To the sound of musicians at the watering places,  
there they repeat the righteous triumphs of the Lord,  
the righteous triumphs of his villagers in Israel.”<sup>22</sup>

This is another example of un-decreed music being the expected and normal response to “righteous triumphs of the Lord,” in which drama is high, imagination is engaged, and the senses are called upon.<sup>23</sup> Another victory song is found in 2 Samuel 22, where David is artful, eloquent, and noble in his response to victory in war. Again, the senses are brought into play, helping to paint a dramatic picture; poetic hyperbole flows freely, and thought is dense and organized.

In 1 Chronicles 15, “David also 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, to raise sounds of joy.”<sup>24</sup> This is the first instance we have examined that describes how music given in praise of God should sound: it is loud<sup>25</sup> (the 1 Chron. 13 passage hints at this: ‘with all their might’). This directive

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<sup>19</sup> It may also be necessary to point out that this music is not part of temple worship; some anti-instrument theologians try to disqualify all Old Testament instrumental references as instructive for our time because we do not have the temple – however, there was no temple during David's reign.

<sup>20</sup> This is not to say God was in a ‘cranky mood,’ rather, the point is that if an activity is prohibited by God through silence, there is no basis for its commission to be any more tolerable to God than an act prohibited through specific decree.

<sup>21</sup> Numbers 4:15

<sup>22</sup> Judges 5: 10–11

<sup>23</sup> For example, Judges 5: 11, “Then loud beat the horses' hoofs with the galloping, galloping of his steeds.”

<sup>24</sup> 1 Chronicles 15: 16 – this is during the last ‘leg’ of the Ark's trip to Jerusalem.

<sup>25</sup> See also 2 Chronicles 20: 19

of unbridled exuberance is not without objectors (then as now!), and the end of the chapter tells how Michal is displeased with David for the ‘loud’ way in which he chose to celebrate in the street, but he defends himself, saying, “It was before the LORD...and I will celebrate before the LORD.”<sup>26</sup> Nehemiah 12 provides a detailed account of the dedication of the Jerusalem city wall: multiple choirs and all the usual instruments were summoned together to celebrate before God. When God blesses his people, the expected response for the children of Israel has always been full-hearted celebration, which calls for music. Isaiah 5 references this basic assumption, reinforcing what the tools of celebration are for:

Woe to those who rise early in the morning,  
that they may run after strong drink,  
who tarry late into the evening  
as wine inflames them!  
They have lyre and harp,  
tambourine and flute and wine at their feasts,  
but they do not regard the deeds of the LORD,  
or see the work of his hands.<sup>27</sup>

Isaiah’s rhetoric stipulates to—and even reinforces—the fact that lyre, harp, tambourine, flute, and wine are the proper means of celebration. “But” is the turning point in his argument, making it clear that the problem to which he is speaking is that, even though these partiers have all the right tools, they do not use them to ‘regard the deeds of the LORD.’

“The whole assembly worshiped, and the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded.”<sup>28</sup> There has been significant argument about whether corporate worship should include any musical elements that are provided by trained musicians. It is clear that this kind of music making was common in the temple, but the Levitical musicians didn’t necessarily always have a large assembly present. The above quote confirms that, even in times when there was a large assembly gathered for worship, playing and singing by the trained musicians still occurred. The corporate worship of God need not be limited exclusively to activities that are undertaken by the whole assembly.

Modern churches often live out their theology through the budgeting process, and while most churches would say that music is an important part of their worship, music budgets are often the first to get cut and the last to receive an increase. This was not the case when Nehemiah was rebuilding Jerusalem;

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<sup>26</sup> 2 Samuel 6: 16

<sup>27</sup> Isaiah 5: 11 – 12

<sup>28</sup> 2 Chronicles 29: 28

right after the wall was finished, before the town was even really habitable, he reports, “Now when the wall had been built and I had set up the doors, and the gatekeepers, the singers, and the Levites had been appointed, I gave my brother...charge over Jerusalem...”<sup>29</sup> Of the essential first tasks, the establishment of music is listed even before the appointing of a ruler for the city. This is an example of how music’s importance can be lived out, including when starting new churches— it ought to be one of the first things provided for, and one of the most fiercely defended in times of hardship.

The rest of the people, the priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the singers, the temple servants, and all who have separated themselves from the peoples of the lands to the Law of God, their wives, their sons, their daughters, all who have knowledge and understanding, join with their brothers, their nobles, and *enter into a curse and an oath to walk in God's Law that was given by Moses the servant of God, and to observe and do all the commandments of the Lord our Lord and his rules and his statutes.*<sup>30</sup>

The above quote makes clear that all who are set apart to serve vocationally in the house of God ought to be expected to live faithful lives, committing to right action. But there were two sides to the coin; Nehemiah 10:39 instructs that in return for their service, the musicians of the temple were to have their material needs provided for by the people.

From time to time, various parts of the Church become generally content to have music in praise to God sung only by the trained musicians. While the singing of praise to God by trained musicians, in the presence of a large assembly, is biblically warranted, the exclusive use of this music has no biblical defense. Churches must heed the many examples given where the entire assembly, not just the Levites, were involved in song. In situations where the desire to ‘outsource’ all music is accepted by the laity, or when certain persons are reticent to participate, there is often a sense that non-musicians are unqualified to sing praise to God. This kind of thinking is problematic on two levels. First, it fails to recognize that basic singing is a universal human ability, not the gift of the artistically elite.<sup>31</sup> Second, it disregards the scriptural norms of universal singing. Passages like the Song of Moses in Exodus testify that all Israel sang, not the select few.<sup>32</sup> A statement like, “Sing, O heavens, for the Lord has done it; shout, O depths of the earth; break forth into singing, O mountains, O forest, and every tree in it,”<sup>33</sup> doesn’t make any sense

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<sup>29</sup> Nehemiah 7: 1–2

<sup>30</sup> Nehemiah 10: 28–29; emphasis added

<sup>31</sup> In other words, singing is more like talking, walking, and laughing than it is like sculpting marble.

<sup>32</sup> See also Psalm 92: 1–3

<sup>33</sup> Isaiah 44: 23

apart from an expectation that music is universally (and even, perhaps, primarily and normatively) the natural expression of joy. There is a metaphorical sense to Isaiah's language; the point is not that inanimate objects literally sing, but that God is so exceedingly good that, in principle, even inanimate objects ought to respond, and that this response is, naturally, singing. Clearly there are other modes of creative expression, but these other modes are often not universal: if Isaiah had said, "Carve a figure, O heavens, paint a picture, O mountains," the point would not have been made – the poetry here only holds together when the reader intuitively understands that *singing is the universal manifestation of rejoicing*.

The sense of music as a natural and universal behavior invites Christians to proclaim the gospel to the unbelieving world through music, "Go out from Babylon, flee from Chaldea, declare this with a shout of joy, proclaim it, send it out to the end of the earth; say, "The Lord has redeemed his servant Jacob!"<sup>34</sup> Evangelism is not limited to spoken paradigms. Numerous passages suggest that the appropriate reaction to the salvation of Israel is always singing, and this could suggest that talking isn't really even sufficient to communicate the full power of the Gospel. "Joy and gladness will be found in [Zion], thanksgiving and the voice of song."<sup>35</sup>

Two passages of scripture mention specifically the music that God makes. The book of Zephaniah contains a particularly compelling witness for the centrality of music in the lives of children of Israel:

Sing aloud, O daughter of Zion;  
shout, O Israel!  
Rejoice and exult with all your heart,  
O daughter of Jerusalem!  
The Lord has taken away the judgments against you;  
he has cleared away your enemies.  
The King of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst;  
you shall never again fear evil.  
On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem:  
"Fear not, O Zion;  
let not your hands grow weak.  
The Lord your God is in your midst,  
a mighty one who will save;  
he will rejoice over you with gladness;  
he will quiet you by his love;

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<sup>34</sup> Isaiah 48: 20

<sup>35</sup> Isaiah 51: 3

he will exult over you with loud singing.<sup>36</sup>

This passage continues the well-established idea that the appropriate response to God's goodness is singing with all our hearts. But this passage provides a new realization: God sings too. God's reaction to the salvation of Israel is loud singing, the same as Israel's reaction. This speaks strongly to the idea that music is a universal activity, part of human creation in God's image. If God sings loudly over Israel with gladness, Israel can do nothing less in response; to fail to respond to God's love with 'loud singing' is to lower the standard of enthusiasm that God himself has set for us.

The only other report of divine music-making in the Bible is in the gospels according to St. Matthew and St. Mark. The reference is incidental, not substantive to the narrative: "And when they had sung a hymn, they went out..."<sup>37</sup> The fact that neither writer felt the need to explain or introduce the idea of a group singing to God further suggests that Old Testament musical norms can still be valid in the New Covenant.<sup>38</sup> Further reflection brings curiosity. The singing of God in Zephaniah is perhaps beyond human evaluation, but what kind of musician was Jesus? Isaiah 53: 2 is traditionally considered to point to Jesus; it reads, "he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him." It would be in opposition to this concept if Jesus were to have had a remarkable or exceptionally pleasant singing voice. Nor would he have received any special musical training: he was not a Levite, he was the son of a carpenter. Jesus the carpenter would not have been any better a singer than Peter the fisherman, or Matthew the tax collector.

The 150 psalms give us further insight into appropriate norms for music sung before God. Psalm 33 gives a reminder that loud music is especially welcomed by God, and contains the oft-quoted "play skillfully on the strings," a reminder that God enjoys not only the music of the whole assembly but also the offerings of the highly skilled musicians. Psalm 33 is one of the places containing the exhortation to sing a new song, which can be interpreted many different ways, but it certainly calls Christians to ensure that the art of music is flourishing. The psalms also show that not only joyful praise can be directed to God through song; the psalms bring lament, struggle, confession, and supplication to God in song. Any who sincerely doubt the role of music in the worship of God need only to read Psalms 145 through 150.

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<sup>36</sup> Zephaniah 3: 14–17

<sup>37</sup> St. Matthew 26: 30 & St. Mark 14: 26

<sup>38</sup> See also Acts 16: 25 "About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them..." This is the way authors write about a known, common, and even expected activity. This does not read like a re-authorization.



It has been argued that Old Testament music is connected and entangled with the Old Covenant sacrificial system. The argument goes that, since Christ fulfilled the law, there is no longer any need for sacrifice. This is certainly true of animal sacrifice, which had a specific ritual and theological purpose. However, sacrifice still has an important role to play in the Christian life. St. Paul writes, “I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and *acceptable to God*, which is your spiritual worship.”<sup>39</sup> The living of our lives in a godly fashion is itself a sacrifice to God. The Bible is abundantly clear that only the best we have, the firstfruits, are “*acceptable*” sacrifices. This means we must bring God the best from our hearts in all things— in preaching the Gospel, in raising children, and in singing our praise. Paul also writes,

Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name. Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.<sup>40</sup>

This idea of praise as a sacrifice pleasing to God is consistent with the Old Testament, especially Psalm 107: 22 and Psalm 119: 108. Therefore, even though music was performed in connection with animal sacrifice, the music itself was also a sacrifice, and *that* class of sacrifice is still called for today.

Church music has two audiences, God and man. Music is a tool for the edification and inspiration of the assembly,<sup>41</sup> owing to music’s power to teach and inspire our minds and hearts, and consideration should be given to that end in the planning and execution of all music. However, music must first be offered to God as a sacrifice of praise. Therefore the primary consideration when planning music must be the suitability of the music as an offering from the people to God.

When choosing music, on one hand, the only criterion should be whether God will accept it as an offering;<sup>42</sup> whether a congregation will like it is unimportant. On the other hand, the only biblically-endorsed level of participation for music is, ‘with all their might,’ and so there is a need for music with which people can engage. These two issues must be held in tension, but ultimately worship is primarily directed to God. With that in mind, musicians will do well to consider how their offerings reflect the fact

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<sup>39</sup> Romans 12: 1; emphasis added

<sup>40</sup> Hebrews 13: 15

<sup>41</sup> 1 Corinthians 14: 26

<sup>42</sup> Efforts in discerning the acceptability and suitability of various musical offerings to God must be guided by humility, prayer, and study of biblical paradigms; trained musicians may be able to offer helpful insight. Ultimately, we must offer our hearts. See *In the Bleak Midwinter* by Christina Rossetti, and *Brightest and Best of the Sons of the Morning* by Reginald Heber for a poetic response to the question of: “who decides what is acceptable to God?”

that the arts come from God. “Singers and dancers alike say, ‘All my springs are in you.’”<sup>43</sup> This reality invites creativity and musical variety but also creates an imperative for excellence, careful order, servant hearts, and patience.

The Church should use music that is determined to be theologically sound and of the highest quality;<sup>44</sup> to do otherwise would be offering a blemished sacrifice. A musician-in-charge must act as both a gatekeeper on behalf of the congregation, ensuring that selections are suitable to be offered in worship, and as an enabler, ensuring that selections are suitable to be offered by the congregation (with all their might). There is every reason to think that the preparation of the sacrifice of praise (from church building design to the tuning of the organ, to the care with which the choir is rehearsed, to the choice of hymn reharmonization) should be approached with the same care and zealously of heart as were required under the Law for temple sacrifice. Performances of music must be of high enough quality to represent and engage the whole congregation (private sacrifice of praise brings the firstfruits of the private individual, but corporate sacrifice must bring the firstfruits of the whole assembly).

Trained musicians, making music before God, are part of an offering being given, but the ones making the offering (the ones who are worshipping) are not *necessarily* the ones who perform the music. Musicians may be, as in ancient Israel, professionals responsible to the church; their music is an offering from the church itself. The popular language here is that these musicians are singing or playing “on behalf of the congregation,” but this can be misleading. The choir is certainly not worshipping on the congregation’s behalf. The common language implies that the musicians are performing some specific *musical* duty of worship that the congregation is unable to perform for itself, when, in fact, the congregation is perfectly capable of carrying out its duty of praising God without any exclusive music,<sup>45</sup> as some churches have chosen to do. A better way to understand this is that the musicians are carrying out work which is required by the offering the *congregation* has chosen to make to God,<sup>46</sup> which happens to be (in this case) the playing or singing of certain music by a certain group.<sup>47</sup> And it is not just an ‘upward’ act;

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<sup>43</sup> Psalm 87: 7

<sup>44</sup> The line between highest-quality and lesser-quality, orthodox and problematic, must be drawn by individual churches, according to their means, ability, and knowledge.

<sup>45</sup> “Exclusive music” in this context means music that requires training and/or rehearsal, and is performed by a specific group rather than by the entire assembly.

<sup>46</sup> The spire of Park Street Church is a witness to the beauty and permanence of God, the prominence of God in our lives, and the centrality of the Faith to this community. We have staff tasked with its upkeep, but it is not merely their witness to Boston, it is the whole church’s witness to Boston. They are not “witnessing to Boston on our behalf.”

<sup>47</sup> If these musicians themselves direct their music to God as a sacrifice of praise, then it will also be received as such by God.

it is edifying to experience art that lifts the spirit and renews the mind, reorienting us toward Christ. (On the other hand, music hired out by a church because the people don't want to do it themselves, or because it makes them feel important to have such music, is not *intended* as a sacrifice and is not received by God as such.<sup>48</sup>) The second way to look at 'exclusive' music in churches is that the most-trained musicians sing or play music as representatives of the community. The community 'sends' and supports them in this purpose, and they represent the community, but the musicians also participate personally; in this way the musicians themselves *and* the greater community from which they come are equally the sacrificers.

Congregational song 'belongs' to the people, not to the musicians. Music that tends to intrinsically conflict with this principle presents challenges; this generally includes music that is not primarily driven by melody, because melody is what congregations produce. The organist's music belongs to the congregation in the same manner, serving chiefly to encourage them, and to give voice to universal sentiments that are not well put into words. The organ has historically been used because its sound is suited to assisting the congregation in these ways, but its use is practical, not dogmatic. An organ undergirds and supports the congregation (in an age where hearty public singing is unusual), maximizes repertoire possibilities, and it allows the musician to heighten a congregational melody and text with relative freedom and economy.<sup>49</sup>

Some churches today have found that the cultural foreignness of traditional approaches to congregational singing and its corresponding repertoire (and of choral music, which has been the heritage of the Church) can be an obstacle engaging the faithful. To respond to that challenge, accompaniment instruments, styles, and song structures that more closely reflect the musical materials of modern culture have been instituted in many churches. The resulting music is often "groove-driven"<sup>50</sup> (as opposed to melody-driven), which also presents a challenge since the principal performer of the music is still meant to be the melody-producing congregation.<sup>51</sup> Ultimately, for many people, the foreignness of what has been called "traditional" outweighs the intrinsic difficulties of what is called "contemporary;" therefore it is with

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<sup>48</sup> Amos 5: 21–23 The importance of the posture of the heart cannot be overemphasized.

<sup>49</sup> Unskilled, unpracticed, or self-important organists can also do equal or even greater damage to congregational singing with poor or wrongly-motivated playing.

<sup>50</sup> This is not a new idiom; cf. Bach cantata 140 (*Wachet Auf*). The "new" is that congregations are using it.

<sup>51</sup> In cases where the performance of the band is primarily something to be heard, and the congregation is there to listen and inconsequentially "sing along," a different issue is present: the delegation of all music to an elite group, which is incompatible with protestant theology.

perhaps less structurally-friendly but more immediately-emotionally-accessible music that they are able to engage in praise of God “with all their might.”

Music can bypass the skepticism of our minds, and unbelievers and believers alike can feel their hearts uplifted to God by hearing and singing music. To worship God through music is to be drawn up into the praise of Zion, the city of God, to see a glimpse of his glory, and to join in the eternal work of the redeemed children of Israel.

• LAETATUS SUM IN HIS QUAE DICTA SUNT MIHI: IN DOMUM DOMINI IBIMUS. •