

# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

---

A table of contents for *Reformation & Revival* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_ref-rev-01.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_ref-rev-01.php)



ADVANCING THE  
CHRISTIAN TRADITION  
IN THE THIRD MILLENNIUM

---

VOLUME 15 • NUMBER 1 • 2006

---

## MUSIC IN THE EARLY CHURCH



GRAHAM KEITH

To study the early church's attitudes toward music is of interest in its own right, because it demonstrates the first attempts of a largely Gentile church to formulate a policy on music suitable not only to God's own revelation but also to the culture of the Graeco-Roman world of the time. The policy they reached was remarkable. They combined a repudiation of the musical instrumentation of their own day with an acceptance of the place of music as one of the liberal arts, and so deserving of study in its proper place. On this there was a remarkable degree of consensus. That is not to deny that there were areas of disagreement, most notably on whether singing was a proper activity for church services. But, unlike the church in the West today, we cannot say that music *per se* or the content of church songs ranked high among those disputes that did break out in the early churches.

There is, however, another reason why early church attitudes merit study today. Many of the continental Protestant Reformers outside the Lutheran tradition preferred to follow

early church to medieval church practice in the matter of praise.<sup>1</sup> That would include Zwingli as well as Bucer and Calvin, whatever differences there were in the practices they eventually adopted. Therefore, those who today follow the teaching and practices of either Zwingli or Calvin cannot shirk an evaluation of the stance of the early church. This might seem to go counter to the Reformation principle of *sola Scriptura*, but none of the magisterial Reformers thought that principle inconsistent with examining the mind of the churches in previous generations.

#### REJECTION OF INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC

The early church consistently repudiated the use of instrumental music for Christians, not only in religious services but also in all contexts.<sup>2</sup> This is surprising, because the few references in the New Testament to musical instruments are natural enough and imply no polemic. James McKinnon points out that the patristic opposition grew in intensity in the third century and became commonplace in the fourth century, which might be described as the golden age of early Christian writing.<sup>3</sup> At times, that opposition could be voiced in extraordinarily violent words, as in this passage from John Chrysostom:

For marriage appears to be an honorable thing, both to us and to those without it; and it is indeed honorable. But when weddings are performed, there take place the sort of absurd practices of which you will now hear. For the majority are bound and misled by custom, since they do not discern the unnaturalness of these things, but instead require others to teach them. For then they introduce dancing, cymbals, auloi, shameful words and songs, drunkenness and carousing, and much such rubbish of the devil.<sup>4</sup>

The growth in Christian opposition to musical instruments requires explanation, as McKinnon points out.<sup>5</sup> He suggests alertness to the dangers of worldliness as the church

expanded in numbers and influence from the third century onward. Awareness of pagan philosophical reservations about some popular music among Christian intellectuals, of whom the church had a significant number in that period, may be another factor. I would add that once a tradition of Christian ethical teaching is established and given importance, it would tend to harden, unless it clearly becomes obsolete or unless some steps are taken directly to refute it. By the fourth century, Christian leaders were convinced that marriage ceremonies and banquets, the great social occasions of the day—to say nothing of the theatrical entertainments—had become so depraved, as a result of the music they employed and the songs people sang, that there was no alternative but to reject the music altogether. While they could not stop Christians attending weddings, they could try to restrict how Christians participated. Thus, the Canons of the Council of Laodicea (from the mid-fourth century) outlawed dancing for Christians at weddings, while an even stricter standard was imposed on any clergy who were present. They had to make sure they left before the musicians arrived!<sup>6</sup>

Rejection of instrumental music was not primarily a matter of taste.<sup>7</sup> It was more a matter of association. The main-spring for contemporary music was pagan religious worship and even more the spectacles of the time, which were closely associated with idolatry. There was little place in that society to consider the arts in the abstract, as we might be able to do today. Music was carefully interwoven with the great social and recreational occasions of the community, and these were never without religious overtones and, we might add, rarely without overtly sexual overtones. These comments from Tertullian could be replicated from a number of early church writers:

Clearly Liber and Venus are patrons of the theatrical arts. That immodesty of gesture and bodily movement so peculiar and proper to the stage is dedicated to them, the one god dissolute in her sex, the other in his dress. While whatever transpires in voice, melody, instruments and writing is in the domain of Apollo, the muses, Minerva and Mercury, O Christian, you will

detest those things whose authors you cannot but detest.<sup>8</sup>

Even without the associated bodily gestures and movements, music was recognized as having a strong emotional pull. We might say that as far as Graeco-Roman society was concerned, it was the *raison d'être* of music. Answering the question, "What is the business of a pipe player?" Philostratus, a Greek writer from the beginning of the third century AD, answered, "Why, what else, except that the mourner may have his sorrow lulled to sleep by the pipe, and that those who rejoice may have their cheerfulness enhanced, and the lover may wax warmer in his passion, and that the lover of sacrifice may become more inspired and full of sacred song?"<sup>9</sup> Philostratus implied his approval of all these emotional effects of music, but there was a philosophical tradition that sought to be more discriminating on the music it was prepared to countenance. Plato, for example, would have censored musical styles and instruments that he considered enervating or excessively mournful.<sup>10</sup> Aristotle agreed with Plato that music both imitates and seeks to shape mood and character, though he was less drastic in his proposed censorship. Christian intellectuals would be aware of and sympathetic to this tradition, to which they would add their concern that church music should not obscure concentration on the words to be sung in praise of God and for the edification of the singers.

In this respect it is significant to look at a line of argument pursued by Niceta of Remesiana in his unique and fascinating little treatise *On the Benefit of Hymns*. Niceta addressed opponents of the singing of psalms and hymns who argued that the apostolic injunction to sing and make melody to the Lord was intended only of a thankful, contemplative spirit in the heart and not of actual vocal singing, which to their mind smacked of the frivolity of the theatre. As part of his response, Niceta contended that the vocal singing of psalms and hymns extinguished rather than excited the passions.<sup>11</sup> To our way of thinking, this is an unusual line of argument—would it not have been better for him to take the line that the singing of

psalms inculcated the right sort of emotions? To some extent Niceta was reflecting a common view in the church of that time that emotional excitement was never to be encouraged. That does not, however, mean that he despised what we might regard as the softer emotions; for he saw in the wisdom of God a divine strategy to overcome the natural reluctance of the human heart to embrace anything that might seem difficult. God had designed the psalms as a sort of sweet potion to encourage Christians to imbibe the medicine contained in the more prosaic parts of the Bible—

For a psalm is sweet to the ear when sung, it penetrates the soul when it gives pleasure, it is easily remembered when sung often, and what the harshness of the Law cannot force from the minds of man it excludes by the suavity of song. For whatever the Law, the Prophets and even the Gospels teach is contained as a remedy in the sweetness of these songs.<sup>12</sup>

Niceta's sentiments were echoed by others of his day. Athanasius, for example, can say that the soul "gaining its composure by the singing of its phrases [i.e., the words of the Psalter], becomes forgetful of the passions and, while rejoicing, sees in accordance with the mind of Christ, conceiving the most excellent thoughts."<sup>13</sup> Both Athanasius and Niceta seem to steer clear of the language of instilling healthy emotions. The primary role of the psalms is to assist in the expulsion of unhealthy emotions—the sort of emotions that invariably were stirred by the musical instruments of that time, amongst other things.

The evil lure of contemporary music is highlighted in a different way by Basil of Caesarea in his *Exhortation to Youths as to How They Shall Best Profit by the Writings of Pagan Authors*. His witness is all the more significant, because he was much more inclined to moderation in speech and in viewpoint than was that fellow pillar of the Eastern church, John Chrysostom, whom I quoted earlier. In this work Basil takes a moderate, and naturally selective, course in what he recommends from pagan sources. When it comes to music, Basil is aware of the

philosophical distinction between healthy and unhealthy styles. He even cites with approval the example of the philosopher Pythagoras, who at one time came across a band of drunken revellers with a flute player. He got the flute player to change the tone in which he was playing with the result that the revellers tore off the garlands they were wearing and returned home ashamed. Basil concludes, "Such is the difference in filling one's ears with wholesome or wicked tunes! And since the latter type now prevails, you must have less to do with it than with any utterly depraved thing."<sup>14</sup> Basil was in agreement with other church leaders of the time in that he regarded the contemporary music scene as beyond redemption.

Surprisingly, the writers of the early church had no difficulty in interpreting those parts of the Old Testament that encouraged the worship of God through instrumental music. Commentaries on the Psalms were especially popular during this period, and it was here commentators had to face the challenge of explaining why God had apparently encouraged the Jews to use instrumental music in his worship. Here two different lines were taken. The more common approach was to resort to allegory. This was a natural enough device at a time when many thinking people operated with a sort of Platonic worldview in which material things were but a pale reflection of spiritual realities that were more ultimate. Musical instruments could readily be placed in this category. In his treatment of Psalm 33:2, which refers in the Septuagint to the cithara and the ten-stringed psaltery, a commentator, probably Evagrius of Pontus, could develop a typical allegory:

The cithara is the practical soul set in motion by the commandments of God; the psaltery is the pure mind set in motion by spiritual knowledge. The musical instruments of the Old Testament are not unsuitable for us if understood spiritually: figuratively the body can be called a cithara and the soul a psaltery, which are likened musically to the wise man who fittingly employs the limbs of his body and the powers of the soul as strings. Sweetly sings he who sings in the mind, uttering

spiritual songs, singing in his heart to God. The ten strings stands for ten sinews, for a string is a sinew. And the body can also be said to be the psaltery of ten strings, as it has five senses and five powers of the soul, with each power arising from a respective sense.<sup>15</sup>

The psaltery, a type of harp, is given a higher place than the cithara, because its sound comes from above rather than from below.<sup>16</sup>

The less common approach to musical instruments was to subsume them among those aspects of the Old Testament that either applied to the infancy of the church at that time, or more crudely were intended as a curb on the Jewish propensity to idolatry. John Chrysostom puts it this way, "In ancient times, they were thus led by these instruments due to the slowness of their understanding, and were gradually drawn away from idolatry. Accordingly, just as he allowed sacrifices, so too did he permit instruments, making concession to their weakness."<sup>17</sup> These weaknesses included "thoughtlessness, laziness and carelessness," for which God compensated by "blending the sweetness of melody in with the effort of paying attention."<sup>18</sup> A question addressed by a later writer, Theodoret, wonders why all singing was not put aside as part of the infancy of the church. The answer he gives distinguishes between singing to instrumental music, which has been put aside, and singing without such accompaniment, which has been retained.<sup>19</sup> It is worth emphasizing that, at this period, there is no sign of an argument used in later times that the church should follow the practice of the synagogue in avoiding instrumental music. With strong anti-Judaic undercurrents in the early church, it is unlikely to have followed any distinctly Jewish institution like the synagogue.<sup>20</sup>

#### WAS IT RIGHT TO SING ALOUD IN CHURCH?

I have already indicated, through reference to the work of Niceta, that there was within the church a current of thought that was suspicious of vocal singing. Not only was this a

reflection of hostility to the sort of singing people might encounter in wider society, it also mirrored, consciously or otherwise, the outlook of certain pagan philosophers towards the supreme being. One such philosopher, Porphyry, for example, categorized different types of god. As far as the supreme being was concerned: "No speech is appropriate to him, whether spoken or uttered within, if the soul happens to be defiled by some disturbance; rather we must worship him with pure silence and unsullied thoughts." With lesser gods, however, vocal praise was appropriate.<sup>21</sup> But probably the most influential factor of all in the appraisal of church singing was the tricky area of emotional impact.

In this connection the testimony of Augustine is of particular importance. On the one hand, his testimony, especially in his *Confessions*, is uniquely introspective for a man of his time. On the other hand, the introspection reflects many of the issues and tensions with which other thoughtful Christians would have been burdened at that period. Augustine's first experience of congregational singing was in Milan, shortly before his conversion or, as he put it, his recovery of faith. There Bishop Ambrose had introduced what had up to that time been a predominantly Eastern practice of church singing. Augustine tells us that Ambrose had made this change amid a crisis caused by the queen mother who was an active supporter of the Arian heresy. His motive was to encourage the congregation at a time when they might well have been overcome by the tedium of sorrow. Despite his relative disinterest in Christianity at this point, Augustine felt moved by the aesthetic beauty of the singing. Others too must have been impressed. The practice persisted long after the immediate crisis passed and spread to other churches in the West.<sup>22</sup>

Looking back at this later in his life when he was writing the *Confessions*, Augustine reflected on this initial beneficial effect of the singing. He weighed it against the danger he felt that the emotional impact of the singing might become more attractive than the words sung—a phenomenon which he did not hesitate to describe as a sin. The emotions that were stirred by the activity of singing were inclined to develop a

momentum of their own and to leave the understanding well behind. And while he recognized this danger and the problem of addressing it, Augustine concluded in favor of church singing because of the benefits it could bring to weaker souls. Yet, he was not prepared to be dogmatic about the issue and quoted approvingly advice Athanasius was said to have passed on to the person responsible for reading the psalm in church: namely, that it should be "performed with so little inflection of voice that it was closer to speaking than to singing."<sup>23</sup>

It seems, then, that patristic writers became aware of the attraction of corporate singing both as an activity for the singer and for its sensual impact on the listener. Because of their hesitations about giving free rein to the emotions, they were not entirely sure how to evaluate this. In the end, the testimony of the Scriptures—New Testament as well as Old—that God was pleased with the vocal praises of his people must have swayed most. That, at any rate, was the most cogent argument produced by Niceta in his response to the skeptics.<sup>24</sup>

One result of the vogue for congregational singing was to raise the question of the appropriateness of women engaging in this. Was the Pauline injunction, "women should keep silent in the churches," relevant here?<sup>25</sup> Cyril of Jerusalem evidently thought so and urged female catechumens to imitate Hannah in allowing her lips to move but emitting no sound.<sup>26</sup> An Egyptian writer from a slightly later period, Isidore of Pelusium, made a quite different objection. He accepted that, from the beginning, the apostles had allowed women to sing in churches but claimed that a good ordinance was now being abused and so should be withdrawn. "They do not feel compunction in singing the divine hymns, but rather misuse the sweetness of the melody to arouse passion, thinking it is no better than the songs of the stage."<sup>27</sup>

It is unlikely, however, that these reservations made more than a local impact, since there were other scriptural criteria which normally took precedence. If one of the main purposes of congregational singing was to impart unity and harmony,

it was important that everyone participate—women included. The words of Romans 15:4–5, which speak of the people of God glorifying the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ “with one heart and mouth,” were particularly relevant. It was on account of quite different factors, notably the emergence of monastic houses with their hours of worship and concentration on complex musical styles like Gregorian chant, that did most at a later date to break down the emphasis on congregational harmony through singing together.

#### ACCEPTING MUSIC AS ONE OF THE LIBERAL ARTS

Despite their abhorrence of the contemporary use of musical instruments, the early church remained open to the study of music, since it was included as one of the liberal (or encyclical) arts. This was a program of learning to which Plato, Aristotle, and Pythagoras had all made contributions, but which reached its definitive form in the *De Nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii* (On the Wedding of Philology and Mercury) of an early fifth-century writer, Martianus Capella. For a work with an unusually complex style, it enjoyed considerable popularity for the next eight centuries.

This program identified three language arts (the trivium of grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic) and four numerical arts (the quadrivium of arithmetic, music, geometry, and astronomy). Music was closely identified with number. Indeed, basic to this system is the idea that nature itself is composed of number and that the world sings in a sort of musical harmony. Thus, music as an academic discipline was a matter of number, notably the fractions defining the intervals of the tonal system and the ratios underlying the rhythmical and metrical systems. Musical instruments were classified according to their tone production. This theoretical scheme bore little relation to the contemporary practice of music, and this was why the early church could adopt it in perfect consistency with their total rejection of the instrumental music of their day.<sup>28</sup>

The only early church figure to write on the subject

music—if we except later and transitional figures like Cassiodorus and Boethius—was Augustine. His early work *De Musica* (On Music) clearly illustrates the character of this highly theoretical and mathematical approach to music. Having defined music as the knowledge of good modulation, Augustine insists that such knowledge is essentially that of the mind. Thus, a skilled flutist is no more entitled to be called a good musician than is a nightingale, if he has no theoretical knowledge.<sup>29</sup> And Augustine was convinced that such was the case of all flutists of his day. Yet, Augustine would be amazed if we dismissed his position as of no practical use, because he did believe that knowledge of aspects of music, including the nature of contemporary musical instruments, was helpful in elucidating Scripture.<sup>30</sup> Clearly, this he implied by means of allegory.

The acceptance of music as a liberal art was of momentous significance for the future history of church music, indeed, musicologists would tell us, for the history of all music in the Western world. The reason was that, in the Carolingian era, musical theorists took classical theoretical conceptions and applied them to the Gregorian repertory and the beginnings of ecclesiastical polyphony.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, the early church had left open the possibility of a more positive view of instrumental music when someone like Basil could distinguish between healthy and unhealthy tunes, and when a large number of writers could relish musical instruments as a rich mine of allegorical information. At the very least, to allegorize such instruments implied that when Jubal had designed the first musical instruments, he had not opened a Pandora's box!

#### WHAT WERE CHRISTIANS TO SING?

If a number of Christians were hesitant about the role of vocal singing and connected this to the rousing of the emotions, the question of what made for suitable singing inevitably took a secondary position. With this proviso, however, some observations can be made.

There is sufficient evidence to indicate that, from the time



of the apostles, it was acceptable, indeed, it was seen almost as a natural development of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, for Christians to compose some musical items of their own for worship. In addressing the Corinthian church, the apostle Paul assumes that some believers will be spiritually gifted to compose their own items of praise to God. "Singing in the Spirit" was as much part of church life as "praying in the Spirit."<sup>32</sup> While set patterns in prayer and praise may well have been followed from time to time, Christian worship was not restricted to these. This helps with our understanding of two of the earliest texts on Christian worship beyond the pages of the New Testament—the Roman governor Pliny's letter to the Emperor Trajan on Christian practices, and Tertullian's account of Christian meetings in his *Apology*. Pliny tells Trajan that Christians, among other things, gathered before dawn on a set day to together sing a hymn to the Christ, as to a god.<sup>33</sup> Such a hymn could not correspond exactly to anything we find in Scripture. Tertullian, for his part, in speaking probably of the relatively informal setting of an agape, says, "After the washing of hands and the lighting of lamps, each is urged to come into the middle and sing to God, either from the sacred scriptures or from his own invention."<sup>34</sup>

Tertullian writes of the practice in North Africa at the beginning of the third century. Another writer from around this period, an anonymous figure quoted by Eusebius in his *Church History*, reinforces the picture of a church that had, from its earliest Gentile origins, begun to write hymns to Christ: "For who does not know the books of Irenaeus, Melito, and the others which pronounce Christ to be both God and man, and all the psalms and songs written from the beginning by faithful brethren, which hymn Christ as the Word of God, and address him as God?"<sup>35</sup>

It is impossible to say from these short but significant allusions whether these early churches devised rules for occasions when singing was appropriate and when it was not. We may surmise some diversity, because, at this period, the churches had little opportunity to harmonize their practices.

However, from the latter half of the third century and especially into the fourth century, some of our sources (in any event, more plentiful from this period) do begin to press the superiority of Scriptural songs over those of purely human composition.<sup>36</sup> This in turn reflected a deepening interest in and appreciation of the Old Testament Psalter. The emerging monastic movement in the East, especially in Egypt and Palestine, gave a focus to this. It became the regular practice for monks, either on their own or collectively, to chant large portions of the Psalter, which they had been encouraged to memorize.<sup>37</sup> Since the earliest monks were not highly educated and could hardly be called students of the Psalter in the modern sense, they must have been reflecting the importance attached to this part of the Bible by the teachers within the local churches. We are fortunate in having the best fruits of this teaching in Athanasius' *Letter to Marcellinus*, a sort of pastoral letter addressed by the famous Bishop of Alexandria to a deacon.<sup>38</sup>

Athanasius argues that the Psalms have a unique role within the canon of Scripture. Not only can the reader find an overlap with every other kind of material that is found elsewhere in Scripture, but the material also comes with a different perspective. It acts as a sort of mirror of all the varied emotions to be found in a believer's soul—all depending, of course, on the range of situations he is likely to face in his earthly pilgrimage.<sup>39</sup> "I believe," says Athanasius, "that the whole of human existence, both the dispositions of the soul and the movements of the thoughts, have been measured out and encompassed in these very words of the Psalter. And nothing beyond these is found among men."<sup>40</sup> This helps to clarify the identity and situation of the believer in this world (except where the psalms are directly messianic). Indeed, as the believer sings or chants the words, he can quite reasonably make them his own. "He accepts them and recites them not as if another were speaking, nor as if speaking about someone else. But he handles them as if speaking about himself. And the things spoken are such that he lifts them up to God as himself acting and speaking them from himself."<sup>41</sup> This

would be invaluable enough in itself; but the benefit of psalms goes even further. They provide instruction on how to handle these emotions or situations the believer faces. They give words to use in prayer, for example, when one is suffering affliction, when one is being persecuted, when one is conscious of sin and needs to repent, and so on. Hence, when the Psalms are correctly used, they have a directive, and sometimes a corrective function, as they set out patterns of virtue to which the soul can aspire. Even the messianic psalms have their part to fill here, since the incarnate Christ has in many respects provided a model for his people to follow. If it is possible in a single sentence to sum up the benefits of singing the Psalms intelligently, it would be this: Such singing fulfils a therapeutic function of instilling proper balance in the soul, because it brings the soul directly in contact with the mind of Christ.

We know that Athanasius' ideas on this theme found ready acceptance elsewhere. In his introduction to the Psalter, a younger contemporary of Athanasius, Basil of Caesarea, highlights the same ideas on the place of the Psalter in the wider canon of Scripture and on its function as a healer of unhelpful emotions.<sup>42</sup> Elsewhere, when Basil was writing to a church in Neo-Caesarea to answer charges of innovation in the styles of singing he was promoting among ascetics in his care, he slips in a hint that in at least one important respect his practice was superior to that of his critics. In his regular prayers for God's mercy, unlike his critics, he did not use human words, but confined himself to the sayings of the Spirit.<sup>43</sup> In a different part of the Roman world, Augustine could in these terms contrast the singing in the catholic churches where he worshipped with that in their ecclesiastical rivals, the Donatists—"we sing the divine songs of the prophets in a sober manner, while they inflame their revelry as if by trumpet calls for the singing of psalms composed by human ingenuity."<sup>44</sup> Here Augustine manages to critique his opponents for both the style and the content of their singing.

Two sets of ecclesiastical canons from about this time went so far as to limit acceptable praise in church services to

the words of Scripture. Though the effectiveness of these restrictions is unknown and likely to be limited, the rationale for the restriction is interesting. Canon 59 of the Council of Laodicea links the prohibition of privately composed psalms with a similar prohibition on the use of non-canonical books.<sup>45</sup> Though the precise date of this council is unknown, it fits very well into the period from the mid-fourth century when the churches became very conscious of the issue of the canon. It was inevitable that consideration of this vital issue should impact on the worship of the churches and lead at least to an attempt to rein in practices that the churches had earlier accepted readily enough. The other set of canons, called rather unhelpfully the Canons of Basil, but really of unknown provenance, restricts singing at the Eucharist to psalms, here the canonical psalms.<sup>46</sup> The reason seems to be connected both with due solemnity at that time and with the practicality of ensuring that something was sung that could be understood by the congregation, so that they could then respond with appropriate vigor.

But perhaps the most detailed criticism of singing material, in addition to that found in Scripture, comes in Athanasius' *Letter to Marcellinus*. Toward the end of that letter, Athanasius warns against any alteration of the text of the psalms to be recited or chanted.<sup>47</sup> For that would be to despise those saints who were responsible for writing the psalms. This is the principle Athanasius sets forth—"As much better as the life of the saints is than that of other people, by so much also are their expressions superior to those we construct and, if one were to speak the truth, more powerful as well."<sup>48</sup> Though the Psalter is the sacred text in view, this principle could clearly be extended to additions to scriptural songs from any part of the Bible. Athanasius follows up his reference to the power of the words of the saints as recorded in Scripture with allusions to exorcism. At this point his work reflects a very different mindset from that of believers in most subsequent ages. For Christians in the Graeco-Roman world, the demonic was very much a part of their everyday world. Seeing all demons as hostile, Christians needed tested and

approved strategies on how to deal with them.<sup>49</sup> That was a matter of spiritual survival. Athanasius enjoined the intelligent chanting of the exact text of appropriate psalms as a powerful form of apotropaism against the demons. He reflects a world where exorcism demanded the use of precise formulae. While he was careful to insist on singing with the understanding, others may have been less particular about this and claimed a healthy spiritual benefit from singing psalms without understanding. In fact, Athanasius actually records a story that “long ago in Israel they drove demons away and turned aside the treacheries directed against them by merely reading the Scriptures.”<sup>50</sup>

No less a figure than John Chrysostom could admit that there is some benefit from reciting the Psalms without a proper understanding, though he is careful to add that this is less than ideal and should be seen only as a step towards the development of healthy spiritual practice: “Even if you do not understand the meaning of the words, for the time being teach your mouth to say them, for the tongue is sanctified by the words alone whenever it says them with good will.”<sup>51</sup> He bases his contention on the value of acquiring a good habit.

A variety of reasons, then, were put forward for singing exclusively scriptural songs from some writers of the fourth and fifth centuries. The variation, however, in the reasons given does betray a measure of uncertainty on the issue. It should be remembered that this period also saw increasing stipulation of those items for praise and for reading in the liturgy of the church, whether in monastic communities or in the churches more broadly. The use of inspired materials for praise was felt to be appropriate, because it promoted harmony not only across contemporary churches but also with the saints of past ages.<sup>52</sup> After the peace brought in a measure to the church by Constantine, there was a tendency not only to look back on the saints of the Old Testament era and of the age of the martyrs as a golden era of spiritual attainment, but also to envisage them as continuing their worship in heaven. Believers on earth were joining them in worship when they sang exactly what they did.

While the fourth century did see renewed stress on singing inspired materials, this should not be overemphasized. This movement should generally be seen more as a matter of assuring a suitably high position for Scripture songs than of outlawing hymns of merely human composition. In theological debates, for example, it was recognized by mainstream churchmen and heretics alike that suitably written songs were an excellent means of instructing people in those doctrines that they believed to be true. After all, theological debates normally proposed new issues, with which the believers from the past would not have had to deal, however reluctant the later Christians would have been to say as much. Interestingly, Athanasius, for all his high view of the Psalter, did not try to criticize Arius for composing his key doctrines into a song called the *Thalia*. He chose instead to ridicule the sotadic metre that Arius had adopted as the format for his extended poem or song.<sup>53</sup> Another bishop who was to become recognized as a champion of orthodoxy against the Arians, John Chrysostom, was faced in Constantinople with a situation where the local Arians had stolen a march on their rivals by engaging in nocturnal singing followed by attractive early-morning processions to their places of worship. Their songs followed Arian lines and even tried to ridicule the Trinitarian position. Chrysostom’s response was to organize singing and processions of his own.<sup>54</sup> Where key doctrines were at stake, there was felt to be room for initiative and for innovation in singing in defense of orthodoxy. Of course, that is not to assume that human songs composed for an informal, or even as here for a combative situation, would automatically be used in the relative sanctuary of a church building. No doubt, spiritual sensitivity would allow for some self-censorship.

#### CAN WE LEARN ANYTHING FROM EARLY CHURCH PRACTICE?

Early Christian attitudes may seem too conditioned by the restricted and almost uniformly bad uses of music in wider society to be of much use to us. But we should recognize that, in common with the rest of their society, these

Christians appreciated the enormous power of music in stirring up emotions. This they saw as a dangerous phenomenon. The question, then, turned to whether there was a proper use of music that subdued the passions and made the soul receptive to the influences of the Holy Spirit. The answer to which the early church inclined was positive, though the caveats of such figures as Augustine and Athanasius will also give some weight to those who are concerned about the abuse of music in churches and to those who feel there is a place for worshipping God silently from the heart without vocal expression.

Our difficulty with their outlook may not rest so much in the acute sensitivity of the early fathers on matters of sexual morality, as McKinnon suggests.<sup>55</sup> Rather, our concern may focus on the place of emotions generally in the soul of the Christian. There was a marked reluctance about speaking of engendering healthy emotions.<sup>56</sup> Thus we find divergent views on the place of melodious singing that was aesthetically attractive to the ear. Perhaps it might be allowed as a divine strategy to compensate for meditating on the more demanding parts of the Bible. But this was hardly the sort of positive endorsement that would lead to serious study of the types of music that would best blend with the various items the churches had chosen to sing. The early church was a long way from the enthusiastic appraisal of music canvassed by Martin Luther—"I would like to see all the arts, especially music, used in the service of Him who gave and made them," or again, "next to the Word of God music deserves the highest praise."<sup>57</sup>

The early church, as we have seen, would not allow musical instruments in its worship. But here its protest went too far to be pressed into a general rule, in that it insisted that Christians avoid all secular use of such instruments as well. Its treatment of the Old Testament references in both the historical books and in the Psalms to the use of instruments was unconvincing. Allegorizing musical instruments carries little weight in contemporary exegesis, while those who wisely preferred a more historical interpretation assigned musical

instruments to the category of those items like circumcision and the calendar of religious festivals, which belonged to the infancy or immaturity of the church. And while it is one thing to assert this, it is quite another to establish its validity. It certainly does not come automatically from the text of Galatians 3–4. Hence there was a lack of engagement among church leaders with genuinely musical issues—what sort of accompaniment might be appropriate for congregational singing. No doubt, they could plead an absence of the proper resources to do this. There were, after all, no musical academies at that time on whose expertise or theory they could draw. But we do not find among them any recognition of the lack of such facilities and the help they might have provided in a better musical climate. Today, unaccompanied singing certainly remains an option for particular churches, especially where they have developed acceptable ways of leading the singing without instrumentation. Clearly, it worked well in many of these early churches and is still practiced in most Eastern churches, as well as in more traditional Presbyterian groups.<sup>58</sup> It is, however, another matter to suggest that scriptural principles outlaw all instrumental music in church. The early church did not establish that.

Again, we can draw the lesson that, with the arts, the church has sometimes to operate in a much less than ideal environment. It cannot avoid the associations music has in wider society. Today, in a more diversified society with many types of secular association, it is not easy to be pastorally alert to all the potential associations of particular forms of music or even of specific tunes. The Western church does find itself in a position akin to that of the early church, in that it has little control over wider musical tastes and practice. It cannot itself set the pattern for the rest of the world to follow, as happened to some degree in the medieval period and even later. It has to exercise discrimination on what is appropriate for the setting of the worship of God and the edification of God's people. Here, if church leaders do their job properly and ensure that a stumbling block is given to none, they will exclude from public worship certain features

of the contemporary music scene that individual Christians will find perfectly acceptable. That is inevitable and should be more universally recognized than it currently is.

A few remarks may be in order about music in the Syriac church, which some have felt reflect a mindset different from that in the rest of the Roman world. Its interest in hymn writing does seem exceptional. The earliest known collection of Christian hymns, the *Odes of Solomon*, variously dated from the late-first to the third century, probably originated in the Syriac language.<sup>59</sup> This language, like its Semitic relatives, had more of a tradition of allowing poetry and music as vehicles of instruction. The outstanding figure in this tradition was Ephraem the Syrian (ca. 306–73), who composed both metrical sermons called *mimre* and stropic hymns called *madrashé*. There is probably merit in the biographical tradition that Ephraem trained choirs of virgins and boys to sing his hymns, partly to counteract a similar practice of the heretic Bardesanes. One source even suggests that Ephraem employed a harp in so doing. If true, this would have been most unusual. But there are too many difficulties in the detail of our evidence about Ephraem and about music in the Syriac church generally for us to say that, in this corner of the Roman world, a local culture preserved a distinct and more favorable musical tradition to that which prevailed in the majority of the Empire.<sup>60</sup> It is interesting and significant that Ephraem's reputation spread far beyond his own Syriac-speaking circles. Clearly, he was not felt in any way to have breached the norms of the wider church in his handling of music.

#### THE EARLY REFORMERS AND EARLY CHURCH PRACTICE

Among the early leaders of the Reformed churches—and here I exclude the Lutherans—there was great interest in the practice of the patristic era, because it was commonly believed that it had adhered far more closely to biblical patterns than did the late medieval church. Above all, these Reformers wanted to restore to congregations the duty and privilege of singing in praise of God. If God under the New Covenant

required from his people a sacrifice of praise, the fruit of lips that confess his name, it was unfortunate that the medieval church had insisted on Latin (a language not universally known) for its songs and had introduced styles of music that were so complex that it effectively prevented the congregation from singing. Praise had been confined to choirs, who were usually composed of monks or clerics. The Reformers had no difficulty in finding plenty of references from the patristic writers in favor of congregational singing.

At the same time they did encounter—and by and large did endorse—the caveats of outstanding teachers like Augustine and Athanasius. Calvin, for example, in the one part of the *Institutes* where he deals with singing, alludes to Augustine's perplexity in the *Confessions* (10:33) about the attractions of singing. Calvin accepts Augustine's conclusion that congregational singing is beneficial, if appropriate restraint is shown. "If this moderation is used," he says, "there cannot be a doubt that the practice is most sacred and salutary. On the other hand, songs composed merely to tickle and delight the ear are unbecoming the majesty of the Church, and cannot but be most displeasing to God."<sup>61</sup> Or in a different context, in the preface to the Genevan Psalter of 1542, Calvin could write, "In truth, we know through experience, that singing has a grand force and vigor in moving and inflaming the hearts of men to invoke and praise God with more zeal and ardor. One should always take care that the music is not light and flighty, but rather has gravity and majesty as Saint Augustine tells us."<sup>62</sup> For these and other reasons Calvin did away with choirs and musical instruments.

The awareness that unsuitable music might distract from the worship may help to explain why Zwingli, the leading early Reformer in Zurich, outlawed choral singing in Latin and did not replace it with German congregational singing in church services. Instead, he had the congregation read out the psalms and the hymn *Gloria in excelsis* antiphonally, with half the congregation reading one line, the other half the next line, and so on.<sup>63</sup> Surprisingly, Zwingli did not offer any rationale for the absence of congregational singing. He is known to

have approved the German singing of psalms at Strasbourg, and never spoke against the liturgical music of Wittenberg. Moreover, he himself was a gifted musician and used his own skills in the company of family and friends.<sup>64</sup> So the absence of singing in the services he organized at Zurich is noteworthy and may reflect some engagement with the hesitations expressed in certain patristic sources. In any case, Zwingli's policy was unusual among the Reformed constituency. In the patristic period, after all, the case for vocal, congregational singing had prevailed in line with the testimony of the Scriptures themselves.

The Reformers also admired and, on the whole, took over the enthusiasm of the fourth and fifth centuries for psalm singing. There were the exceptions like the brothers Ambrosius and Thomas Blarer as well as Johannes Zwick from Constance, who in the preface to the Constance Hymnbook of 1540 put forward a case for the use of some non-scriptural hymns. Zwick based his position not only on Ephesians 5:19 but also on the practice of the early church (notably with references to Tertullian and Ambrose).<sup>65</sup> But there can be no doubt that the preference of most remained for psalm singing. If worship was to be worship in spirit and in truth, what was more appropriate than to use the materials of praise the Spirit of God himself had inspired? Calvin put it this way in the preface to the 1542 Genevan Liturgy:

For that which Augustine tells us is true. No one is able to sing things worthy of God other than that which he has received from God: That is why when we have searched here and there and all over, we cannot find better songs, nor songs more appropriate to use than the Psalms of David: for these have been given to us by the Holy Spirit himself. And so it is when we sing them we can be sure that God himself has put the words in our mouths, as though he himself were singing in us to the praise of his glory. That is why Chrysostom tells men, women and children to acquire the habit of bringing them, that it be a meditation that brings us into the company of the angels.<sup>66</sup>

This, it should be noted, is not an argument from principle, whether the Regulative Principle or some other, but from experience backed up by the testimonies of Augustine (Calvin's favorite theologian from the patristic era) and of Chrysostom (his favorite expositor). Moreover, the passages to which he alludes are otherwise not particularly significant within their vast corpus of writings.<sup>67</sup> As one writer has recently put it, "Calvin's preference for exclusive psalmody was just that, a preference."<sup>68</sup> At the inception of the Reformed churches, the biblical Psalter would also have met the important practical criterion of a work that was known to all and could be sung in unison by all. At that period there was as little likelihood as now of a common hymnbook gaining acceptance across the churches.

Besides, Calvin was familiar in Strasbourg with the congregation singing a few items other than from the biblical Psalter—e.g., the Ten Commandments, the *Nunc Dimittis* and The Apostles' Creed, items which were also well known and would have reinforced unity among Reformed churches.<sup>69</sup> To our minds it might seem strange, not to say irreverent, to put the Ten Commandments into song. Is this not to trivialize one of the most solemn parts of Scripture? Similarly, a creed might also seem an unusual candidate for a musical rendering. But we need to lay aside our presuppositions about poetry and about song, which we expect, in part at least, to express the poet's own emotions. That poetry should be used for an exclusively didactic purpose is to bring us into unfamiliar territory. Yet, this different use of poetry and of song was common enough in the sixteenth century.<sup>70</sup> Indeed, going back into biblical times, poetry and song were used for a much wider range of activities than today. To put an agreement, for example, into poetic form was to heighten its significance, not to trivialize it as we might feel instinctively.<sup>71</sup> Calvin and other Reformers saw no incongruity in setting important pieces of Scripture, like the Ten Commandments and summaries of scriptural truth like the Apostles Creed, to poetic and musical forms.

If Calvin was following what we might call sanctified

wisdom in his choice of praise for the churches, he did claim more definitely a scriptural principle when he outlawed musical instruments from the public worship of God. His reasoning was very similar to that given by those early church figures like Niceta and Chrysostom, who argued that instrumental music was only appropriate to the infancy of the church when it was to be found almost exclusively among the Jews. Calvin was echoing their sentiments when he wrote, "To sing the praises of God upon the harp and psaltery unquestionably formed part of the training of the law, and of the service of God under that dispensation of shadows and figures; but they are not now to be used in public thanksgivings."<sup>72</sup> Calvin diverges, however, from the early church when he adds, "We are not, indeed, forbidden to use, in private, musical instruments, but they are banished out of the churches by the plain command of the Holy Spirit, when Paul, in 1 Corinthians 14:13, lays it down as an invariable rule, that we must praise God, and pray to him only in a known tongue." Probably Calvin did not realize the depth of early church opposition to musical instruments. He did not possess the resources open to us of early church writings, nor could he take advantage of years of scholarship on the question. Also, Calvin's reference to 1 Corinthians 14 is surprising, because the biblical text seems to have nothing to do with musical instruments. Presumably, Calvin's comment indicates that in his experience instrumental music drowned out the words and made what was being sung unintelligible. This is a fair comment for some types of ecclesiastical music, but it does illustrate to us the limits of Calvin's thoughts when we are aware of a much wider range of musical forms. A careful, restrained use of a suitable musical instrument does not have to drown out the singing.

We do Calvin and the other leaders of the Reformed tradition an injustice if we consider they were exclusively concerned with the externals of music and singing. Like the early church leaders, they insisted on the correct attitude of heart. When Calvin deals with singing as a form of prayer to God in his *Institutes*, his first concern is that the words of the singer be

matched by appropriate feelings in the heart.<sup>73</sup> From there he turns to the harmony and edification promoted by thoughtful congregational singing. These are the primary biblical principles that should be supported by whatever external format is adopted. All the leaders of the Reformed movement would have shared these positions. When it came, however, to the external format, there was understandably some divergence, even something of a trial and error process to see what most suited their spiritual goals.<sup>74</sup> Thus it is unwise to draw dogmatic conclusions from the practice of Calvin or whoever in public worship; that was more than what they themselves intended. We can, however, look at what they did with the spiritual wisdom they received to handle the situations they faced. And part of that wisdom was to look carefully at early church practice, from which they inherited both caution over the use of music and a zeal for the psalms. Indeed, the goal of the early church leaders to have psalms or spiritual songs gracing family and social occasions as well as public worship was an ideal dear to the hearts of the major Reformers. Calvin, for his part, went to greater practical lengths toward this end than any of the early church figures. Not only did he secure the services of noted composers in order to compile a suitable selection of psalm tunes, he vigorously encouraged the teaching of music in the public school system, including both music theory and voice training.<sup>75</sup> In this he saw considerable success in Geneva. He displayed an enthusiasm for the value of good music that it is hard to parallel from early church writers.

Often Luther and Calvin are contrasted in terms of their appreciation of music. But it is important to identify the contrast accurately. Calvin, no less than Luther, could speak of music as a gift of God: "among those things which are appropriate to refresh men and give them pleasure, music is either the first or one of the foremost, and we should regard it as a gift of God designed for that very purpose."<sup>76</sup> However, in the next sentence Calvin goes on to draw a conclusion that would have seemed strange to Luther. Precisely because music is God's gift, we should be all the more careful to handle it appropriately and moderately. That applied both to the words

sung and the tunes used. Calvin was in effect applying the adage *corruptio optimi pessima* (when the best things are corrupted, the results are the worst). At this point Calvin reveals his sympathy both with the warnings of Plato and those of the early church fathers who went further than Plato. Perhaps it was because Calvin was less musically gifted than Luther that he was able to weigh up more objectively, in the light of present and previous historical experience, the uses and abuses of music in a setting of worship.

A similar objectivity and appreciation of historical precedents are needed at the beginning of the twenty-first century when some sections of the church are contending for a revolution in worship that places changes in music in the vanguard. In one sense they are right—a revolution is underway. But with a wider perspective, considering the mind of the churches in different eras, we may wonder if the issues really are so novel. This is not the first generation of Christians to have considered the emotional impact of congregational singing. Here too we may find with the Preacher of Ecclesiastes that “there is nothing new under the sun.”

#### AUTHOR

Dr. Graham Keith teaches religious education in a secondary school in Kilmarnock (Ayrshire, Scotland). He is an elder in the Free Church of Scotland in Ayr. He has a D.Phil. from Oxford University in the history of the Arian Controversy. He has also written on Christianity and the Jewish people, most notably in *Hated Without a Cause?* (Carlisle, Paternoster, 1997). This is his third contribution to *ACT 3 Review*.

#### NOTES

1. Hughes O. Old, *The Patristic Roots of Reformed Worship* (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1975), 262.
2. I agree with James McKinnon, *Music in Early Christian Literature* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), that the apparent exceptions of Clement *Instructor* 2:4 (MK54), and Gregory Nazianzus *Oration V*

*against Julian* 2:35 (MK145) are to be understood allegorically. Unless stated otherwise, all the translations below are from McKinnon's most useful anthology of texts. Where appropriate, I have given not only the reference to the patristic text, but also the reference to the numbering from this anthology in the form MK+number.

3. McKinnon, *Music in Early Christian Literature*, 2.
4. John Chrysostom *In 1 Corinthians*, Hom 12:5 (MK183).
5. McKinnon, *Music in Early Christian Literature*, 2–3.
6. Canons 53 and 54 (MK 259 and 260).
7. Novatian *On The Shows* 7:1–3 (MK 92) does, however, mention taste as a secondary consideration.
8. Tertullian *On the Shows* 10:8–9 (MK 76). Christians also recognized the association of certain types of musical instrument with war. That further damned these instruments in their eyes, since they looked on them as instruments of aggression.
9. Philostratus *Life of Apollonius* 5,21.
10. Plato *Republic* 399E; *Laws* 669E.
11. Niceta *On the Benefit of Hymns* 7.
12. Niceta *On the Benefit of Hymns* 5 (MK 306).
13. Athanasius *Letter to Marcellinus* 29.
14. Basil *Exhortation to Youths as to How They Shall Best Profit by the Writings of Pagan Authors* 7 (MK 140).
15. Pseudo-Origen *Selections on the Psalms* 32:2–3 (MK68).
16. For the sophistication with which allegory could be developed on this theme, see E. Ferguson, “The Active and Contemplative Lives,” *Studia Patristica XVI* (1975): 15–23.
17. Chrysostom *On Psalm* 149,2 (MK173). Interestingly, he rejects an allegorical understanding.
18. Chrysostom *On Psalm* 150 (MK174).
19. Theodoret *Questions and Answers to the Orthodox* 107 (MK232).
20. For a different sort of argument against a direct connection between early Christian and synagogue worship, see D. Gerhard Delling, *Worship in the New Testament* (ET, London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1962), 42–43.
21. As quoted in Eusebius *Preparation for the Gospel* 4:11–12 (MK215). Porphyry was in turn quoting from Apollonius of Tyana.
22. Augustine *Confessions* 9:6:14 and 7:15 (MK351).
23. Augustine *Confessions* 10:33:49–50 (MK352). Actually, Athanasius's position was a little more complex than Augustine made out in his brief allusion; see *Letter to Marcellinus* 28–29.
24. Niceta *On the Benefit of Hymns* 9–10 (MK308–9).
25. 1 Cor. 14:34.



26. Cyril *Procatechesis* 14 (MK154). Ambrose referred to the same text at *Exposition of Psalm* 1:9, but he rejects its application (MK276).
27. Isidore *Letter* 1:90 (MK 121).
28. Here I am heavily indebted to McKinnon, *Music in Early Christian Literature*, 4–5.
29. Augustine *On Music* 1:5–12.
30. Augustine *On Christian Learning* 2:28.
31. McKinnon, *Music in Early Christian Literature*, 5.
32. 1 Cor. 14:15, 26.
33. Pliny *Letters* 10:96 (MK41). Technically, Pliny's expression "carmen . . . dicere secum" could be given a minimalist sense of reciting a poem to one another, but it has been customary to understand he is referring to singing. This was the view taken by the earliest reflection on the passage—see Eusebius, the church historian, at *Church History* 3:33:1.
34. Tertullian *Apology* 39:16–18 (MK74).
35. Eusebius *Church History* 5:28:5 (MK210).
36. One of the earliest indications of such an attitude comes from Paul (of Samosata), a Bishop of Antioch deposed as a heretic. His opponents tell us he stopped the singing of psalms addressed to Jesus on the ground that they were modern and the compositions of modern men. Surprisingly, he then went on to have female choirs sing in praise to him (Eusebius *Church History* 7:30:10 [MK211]).
37. See the background given in McKinnon, *Music in Early Christian Literature*, 51–52.
38. Perhaps the most accessible English translation of this is by Robert C. Gregg, *The Classics of Western Spirituality* series (New York: Paulist Press, 1980). This is the translation I have used. It is worth pointing out that Athanasius claims to be passing on advice and instruction he himself received from an unnamed older man. We might wonder whether this is just a literary device.
39. *Letter to Marcellinus* 9–14.
40. *Letter to Marcellinus* 30.
41. *Letter to Marcellinus* 11.
42. Basil *Homily on Psalm* 1 (MK129–131).
43. Basil *Letter* 207.
44. Augustine *Letter* 55:35 (MK377).
45. This is number 261 in McKinnon's collection.
46. Canon 97 (MK266).
47. Athanasius *Letter to Marcellinus* 31–33. It is unclear exactly what additions Athanasius has in mind. I believe it is best to give his words the widest possible sense.
48. Athanasius *Letter to Marcellinus* 31. That does not mean that Athanasius overlooks the divine inspiration behind these writers, but it is surprising

- that he does not argue that the inspired words of God are better than the uninspired words of men.
49. Conversely, it was believed that even the casual singing of profane songs gave the devil an opening into the heart: "the Christian who is faithful ought neither to sing a heathen hymn nor an obscene song, since he will be obliged by that hymn to mention the demonic names of idols, and in the place of the Holy Spirit the evil one will enter into him." Athanasius *Apostolic Constitutions* 5:10:2 (MK241).
  50. Athanasius *Letter to Marcellinus* 33. The historical exemplar of David driving away Saul's evil spirit by the power of the words he sang was commonly used by patristic writers, e.g., Basil *Exhortation to Youths* 7; Niceta *On the Benefit of Hymns* 4.
  51. Chrysostom *On Psalm* 41:2 (MK168). The fifth-century commentator on the Psalms, Theodoret, implies the same when in the preface to his *Commentary on the Psalms* he says he wants his readers to gain a double benefit by understanding the Psalms they would otherwise be using.
  52. It is worth noting that Christians adopted for singing other poetic pieces from the Bible besides the Psalms. The Codex Alexandrinus of the Bible groups fourteen such pieces; see Everett Ferguson, in *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity* (2d ed. New York and London: Garland, 1998), 550.
  53. Athanasius *Oration against the Arians* 1:2,4; *On the Councils* 15.
  54. Socrates *Church History* 6:8 (MK218) gives an extended account along with the violent and disturbing outcome.
  55. McKinnon, *Music in Early Christian Literature*, 3.
  56. Calvin's criticism of the Stoics (for which see his *Commentaries on the Four Last Books of Moses*, 3:346) could be extended to many in the early church:
 

*For the principle which the Stoics assume, that all the passions are perturbations and like diseases, is false, and has its origin in ignorance; for either to grieve, or to fear, or to rejoice, or to hope, is by no means repugnant to reason, nor does it interfere with tranquillity and moderation of mind; it is only excess or intemperance which corrupts what else would be pure. And surely grief, anger, desire, hope, fear, are affections of our unfallen nature, implanted in us by God, and such as we may not find fault with, without insulting God himself.*
  57. *Luther's Works* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985) vol. 53:316, 323.
  58. For the Orthodox Church, see Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973), 274–75.
  59. McKinnon, *Music in Early Christian Literature*, 23–24.
  60. See the cautious comments of McKinnon, *Music in Early Christian Literature*, at pages 92–93. It is worth noting that Ephraem's use of female choirs had a parallel in the activity in Syrian Antioch of the heretic Paul of Samosata.
  61. Calvin *Institutes* 3:20:32. Calvin also correctly recognized that some

early churches had not practiced singing at all.

62. Quoted and translated by Old, *Patristic Roots*, 268, from *Calvini Opera Selecta* (Munich 1970) 2:15.
63. Nick R. Needham in *Give Praise to God*, ed. Philip G. Ryken, Derek W. Thomas and J. Ligon Duncan III (Philipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2003), 399.
64. Old, *Patristic Roots*, 263.
65. Old, *Patristic Roots*, 260–61.
66. Translation from Old, *Patristic Roots*, 259–60, from *Calvini Opera Selecta* 2:17.
67. Old, *Patristic Roots*, provides the references at pages 262–63.
68. Paul S. Jones in Ryken, et al, *Give Praise to God*, 465 note 15.
69. For details on what Calvin sang at Geneva and before that in Strasbourg, where he and other Reformed church leaders enjoyed more freedom from the civil authorities, see Needham, in *Give Praise to God*, 402–4.
70. Ulrich S. Leupold, in *Luther's Works*, 53:277.
71. John M. Frame, *Worship in Spirit and Truth* (Philipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1996), 112–13.
72. Calvin, *Commentary on the Psalms*, 3:98.
73. Calvin, *Institutes* 3:20:31.
74. Cf. Old's comments, *Patristic Roots*, 95–96, on the liturgy known as the Genevan Psalter of 1542.
75. Old, *Patristic Roots*, 264–65.
76. *Calvini Opera Selecta* 2:16.