



INSTRUMENTS *are good*

In the story of my life, music is important. One of my first memories was playing with records, RCA Victor 45 rpm vinyl recordings. My mother tells me that I played Elvis records over and over when I was three or four years old. As much as the sound, I think I was fascinated by the dog barking into the “Victrola.”

I have always been fascinated by musical instruments. I fiddled around with an old piano at my grandmother’s house as early as I can remember. I liked messing with a ukulele that my uncle brought back from Hawaii while he was in the Navy. I could play “Cat Scratch Fever” on it. When I was in middle school I started studying the trumpet in band. Through high school I played several other brass instruments like tuba and baritone. In the eighth grade I marched with one of those sousaphones, a big partly brass with white plastic contraption. It was in my high school years that I discovered guitar at the time when Eddie Van Halen was all the rage. I learned to play guitar with an Eagles Greatest hits book and an “Eight Track” tape of the recording. In college after a couple of years studying trumpet I switched to classical guitar.

In college, Christ revealed Himself to me. I began to follow Him as a disciple in the context of the Navigator ministry. During my first few months as a committed disciple, someone I met at a church concert shared the gospel of anti-contemporary Christian music with me. He explained that all music with a backbeat was sinful and appealed only to our flesh. The melody appeals to our spirit, the harmony appeals to our soul or mind, but the beat of music appeals to our sinful flesh. So essentially all pop styles of music which have a beat fail to be good music. This was my first introduction in the mid 1980s to the “worship wars.”

During those years in college I was always writing songs, leading praise groups, playing guitar/voice pieces for church, doing recording sessions, and rewriting hymn tunes.¹ In my last term before graduation, I organized a rock group with my friend Don Inkster, ITR (“In the Rock”). We played at camps and churches, doing some pop Christian music, my own songs, and hymn arrangements, as well as a few tunes like “Help” by the Beatles.

From there I went to seminary and was hired as an adjunct professor in the music department at Columbia Bible College and Seminary (1987). There were strong opinions on both sides about breaking with traditional forms of music in church. Through my three years in seminary, I enjoyed serving in music at a couple of very different churches and leading several different music groups for youth events and missions conferences. One year I led worship at a Baptist church that prescribed that I select from exactly twenty-five hymns they knew from the Broadman hymnal. Then I led the worship team at a church that was very charismatic, along the lines of the Vineyard church movement. It was quite a contrast.

I was asked to lead one of the touring musical groups for the College and Seminary during the summer prior to my last year. We traveled and performed in a number of different kinds of churches and church camps. Our music was sacred with some traditional hymns and a few contemporary pieces (circa 1989). In our chapel concert before touring we played, “Turn, Turn Turn.” “To everything (turn, turn, turn) / There is a season (turn, turn, turn),” a song by the Byrds, with lyrics from Ecclesiastes chapter 3. This seems pretty tame to me now, but at the time it was seen as rebellious and some of the professors thought I was desecrating the memory of Vietnam Vets. Actually it was just a song with a cool guitar part suggested by one of the female vocalists, Holly.

Looking back on our few weeks of touring, it’s like the Johnny Cash song, “I’ve been everywhere, man.” We performed in churches and camps in North Carolina, Virginia, Illinois, and Iowa. I remember a Pentecostal camp in Kentucky where the leader told us that most of the kids go to snake-handling churches. In Ohio we were in a Mennonite church. An older gentleman from the church met us and said, “I saw that you had electric instruments in your picture” (e.g., a bass and a keyboard), “those won’t be acceptable in our church.” He said only recently had their congregation permitted instruments at all. We were fine to sing and play only acoustic instruments. Of course we did sing into microphones. But what I most remember was this man took us out to an actual Five Star restaurant! This is not something that happens in these kinds of church concert tours. Then that evening my wife and I stayed with a family from the congregation. The husband had just returned from an African Safari. He had a seven or eight foot tall mounted giraffe head and neck and a dozen other mounted trophies. This was my introduction to Mennonites, which is funny since I now live in

Mennonite-central, Lancaster, Pennsylvania. I don't see too many of the Five Star Safari Mennonites these days, but many of the more conservative groups still do not use instruments in worship. They sing beautifully.

My last year in seminary I did two musical outreaches which helped me see how much music creates opportunities for relationships. In our church, one of our small group members, Beth, had the idea that we could regularly listen to local live jazz groups. By supporting them in attending their pub performances we could get to know the musicians and share Christ with them as our relationships developed. Over that time we got to know several of the musicians and I learned a lot about playing jazz guitar, too. Then with some friends from the Navigator ministry (University of South Carolina) we formed a blues band and regularly played at a bar on open mic night. We played some classic rock and blues and looked for opportunities to befriend other musicians to share Christ with them.

After seminary I served a wonderful congregation on the pastoral staff, Audubon Drive Bible Church. At that time the church had many families influenced by Bill Gothard's ministry, i.e., "Basic Life Principles." He spoke very strongly against pop music and any Christian music with a beat. He taught this music affects you both physically and spiritually in a negative way. By listening you were enslaving yourself to dark spiritual forces. At that time there was a great deal of tension about the "right" kind of music at church during those days.

It was in this context that I began to research the idea of contemporary music and contemporary music styles, and music in the Bible. A few years later I presented these ideas at the Evangelical Theological Society meeting in 1998 in Orlando, in a paper called "Music in the Bible and Music on the Radio."² Many people are still interested in this topic and I have presented this to some very different audiences from high school students to seminarians in Russia and even at a Seventh Day Adventists worship conference.

In the early days of the worship wars it seemed like some were saying about nineteenth century "gospel hymns" what others had said about the King James Version of the Bible: "If it was good enough for Paul, it's good enough for me." However music has always been a cultural expression and has radically changed over civilizations and culture. Music even in the most traditional services is unlike any music that was heard in biblical times.

The next music controversy was because our evangelical Bible Church was moving in a decidedly Reformed direction. Our elders and pastor were reading the Reformers and the Puritans. This is like worship wars "2.0." Now the challenge was the Reformed and Puritan "Regulative Principle" of worship: only what is warranted in the Bible may be done in worship. "But the acceptable way of worshiping the true God is instituted by himself, and so limited by his own revealed will . . ."³

This warrant doesn't have to be so specific as to find a verse that endorses playing Fender Stratocasters. But as it turns out, one does have to prove the use

of instruments in worship. Following this principle, many have concluded that musical instruments should not be used in worship. In this tradition, Presbyterian writer G.I. Williamson says, "The conclusion to which we are driven is this: God has not commanded us to use musical instruments in New Testament worship."⁴ Here the most rigorous Reformed Protestants and the most conservative Anabaptists (Mennonites and Amish) share a common liturgical practice.

Though we seriously studied the Regulative Principle in our reforming Bible Church, at the time we never ceased using musical instruments. But I think if we had been more rigorous, we may very well have limited our music and musical instruments. Through almost a decade of experience with that church, a lot of young musicians played in the service. We raised a small orchestra of young folks on keyboards, as well as percussion, strings, and wind instruments. Some of those musicians became quite good and even professional music teachers. Quite a number of young musicians could have been adversely affected had I led in the direction of a more restrictive use of musical instruments.

Since 2002, I have been serving a church which embraces historical liturgical practice and weekly Eucharist. The purpose of our music in the liturgy is to serve the basic events of the service: The Call, Confession, Consecration in the Word, Communion, and the Commission to depart and serve. We still use a variety of musical instruments in the service and include many ancient and Reformation era ("renaissance") psalms along with traditional hymns and contemporary compositions. We have a small orchestra playing in worship. In our church and school community I've worked with a lot of young musicians to help them learn to play pop music too, from "old timey," "O Brother, Where Art Thou" music to the blues and classic rock. I enjoy the contrast of paleo-hymnody in the liturgy and blues at a Pentecost feast.

On a missions trip to Ukraine in March 2012, I enjoyed participating in a birthday dinner for a pastor with a group of Reformed Pastors and several Catholic priests. This was a true cross-cultural celebration experience. I think it was after serving the grilled Carp (fish), that the four Roman Catholic priests announced that they would sing something from their liturgy. It was the Lord's Prayer. As they began to sing one of their ancient songs, I realized that we sing that same tune in our own service in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. While there is diversity to be celebrated across time and culture, there is also a precious unity that I wish we all experienced more. There is no good reason that everything in Christian liturgies should be the same, but there is even less reason that all things should be different.

MUSIC IN THE BIBLE

Now I've laid out some of my autobiography on music and you can see that I am not neutral about the value of musical instruments. But I would like to offer what I consider an objective Biblical study of instrumental music for God's

kingdom and advance in the Church

Many biblical passages support the use of music generally as a fundamental category in the worship of the new covenant church (Matthew 26:30; 1 Corinthians 14:19, 14:26; Ephesians 5:18–20; Colossians 3:16; Hebrews 2:12). Music is a means for praise, expressing joy, thanksgiving, even sorrow for sin (Isaiah 16:10), prayer (1 Corinthians 14:15; Psalm 72:20), and a means of teaching and spiritual communication (Colossians 3:16; Ephesians 5:19). In these later texts we “teach” or “counsel” (*noutheteo*) with music.

In Scripture the music makers are both professional as well as nonprofessional (1 Chronicles 15:22; 25:7; Isaiah 5:11–12; Ezekiel 33:32). There are those who direct music and teach music (Psalms 4:1, 5:1, 6:1, etc.; Nehemiah 12:8, 1 Chronicles 15:22). The people of the Bible overflow with music in every circumstance including cultural uses which are both godly and ungodly. Music sounded in every aspect of life—work, play, celebration, and war (Isaiah 16:10; Jeremiah 48:33; Matthew 11:17; Luke 15:25; Genesis 31:27; Exodus 32:17–18; Ecclesiastes 2:8; John 11:34–35; 2 Samuel 19:35). Jewish musicologist Abraham Idelsohn says, “As many references in the Bible to the music performed in secular life testify, Israel enjoyed life through music both vocal and instrumental, and associated music with dance and wine in which men and women participated.”⁵

INSTRUMENTS IN THE BIBLE

The use of musical instruments is evident in the many commands and examples in Scripture from the timbrels of Miriam to the harps of Revelation (Exodus 15:20; Revelation 5:18, 14:2, 15:2). In the Psalms we read such commands as, “Give thanks to the Lord with the lyre; Sing praises to Him with a harp of ten strings” (Psalm 33:2). “I will also praise Thee with a harp, Even Thy truth, O my God; To Thee I will sing praises with the lyre, O Thou Holy One of Israel” (Psalm 71:22). Many references to instruments may be found in the prefaces to the Psalms (4:0; 6:0; 11:2; 21:12; 33:2; 54:0; 55:0; 61:0; 67:0; 76:0).

The most well known instrumentalist in the Bible is King David. David’s “heart after God” (Acts 13:22) is seen in the many expressions of praise in the Psalms, including his praise with instruments. David was a skillful instrumentalist. After he was anointed privately by Samuel, his first action as the anointed king (or king-elect) was playing the harp. “And so it was, whenever the spirit from God was upon Saul, that David would take a harp and play it with his hand. Then Saul would become refreshed and well, and the distressing spirit would depart from him” (1 Samuel 16:23). The very term “psalm” originally meant plucking a stringed instrument or “music of the lyre” which seems to have originated with David’s instrumental worship.⁶

United with David’s Psalms of praise is his creative introduction of various instruments. For example, Psalm 8 is a well known, “O LORD, our Lord, How

excellent is Your name in all the earth.” It goes on to address the restoration of man’s true dominion. “You have put all things under his feet” (Psalm 8:6). Because of this, it is cited repeatedly in the New Testament of Jesus Christ (Matthew 21:16, 1 Corinthians 15:27, Ephesians 1:22, Hebrews 2:8). The preface to Psalm 8 says, “To the Chief Musician. On the instrument of Gath. A Psalm of David” (NKJV).⁷ David praises God and prophesies of Christ with a Philistine musical instrument. David has plundered the Egyptians, musically.

David was an instrumental entrepreneur who created and apparently imported a variety of instruments. One passage speaks of the “musical instruments, ‘which I made,’ said David, ‘for giving praise’” (1 Chronicles 23:5). These instruments were emphatically approved of God for later temple service (2 Chronicles 29:25). They are referred to as “the musical instruments of God” (1 Chronicles 16:42 NKJV). Only after David do we find instrumental music incorporated into the cultic service at the temple, both Solomon’s temple and the rebuilt temple of Zerubbabel (Nehemiah 12:36).⁸ David’s “instruments of God” may be reflected in the redeemed and faithful who play “harps of God” (Revelation 15:2–4, emphasis mine).

About half of the 150 Psalms are attributed to David. Given David’s foundational role in the Psalter and his instrumental exuberance, it is not surprising to see the symphonic climax of the Psalter filled with instruments for praise. Psalm 150 is a summative statement:

Hallelujah. Praise God in His sanctuary; praise Him in the sky, His stronghold. Praise Him for His mighty acts; praise Him for His exceeding greatness. Praise Him with blasts of the horn; praise Him with harp and lyre. Praise Him with timbrel and dance; praise Him with lute and pipe. Praise Him with resounding cymbals; praise Him with loud-clashing cymbals. Let all that breathes praise the LORD. Hallelujah.⁹

This list of instruments culminating the Psalter covers every fundamental kind:

from chordophones (lyres, harps, kinnors), to membranophones (timbrels), to aerophones (flutes, trumpets, shofars, pipes), to metalphones (cymbals).¹⁰

INSTRUMENTS IN THE HISTORIC CHURCH

Despite all of this, if we could travel together through time and space, we could visit churches for centuries all over the world where no musical instruments were used and were, in fact, forbidden. In some ancient and modern traditions it is still the case that musical instruments have little or no role in worship. Very few (Eastern) Orthodox churches permit instruments. Those that do, permit an organ

in a few parishes. This only developed in twentieth century in America.¹¹ The (Western) Catholic church did not admit instruments until very late, around the seventh century and then many Protestants and Anabaptists objected to their use in the sixteenth century and beyond.

There are two main arguments against musical instruments in worship. First, early on in the history of the church there was concern about looking and sounding like pagans.¹² Instruments were connected to the often immoral Greco-Roman theater. “There is hardly a major church father from the fourth century that does not inveigh against pagan musical practice in the strongest possible language.”¹³

The second reason is that there is a relative silence in the New Testament on instruments. Without an explicit endorsement in the New Testament, many theologians argued against musical instruments, seeing them as wedded to the sacrificial system.¹⁴ Like Augustine and Chrysostom before, Calvin saw the musical instruments of the Old Testament as typological of the people of God in the New Testament.

With respect to the tabret, harp, and psaltery, we have formerly observed, and shall find it necessary afterwards to repeat the same remark, that the Levites, under the law, were justified in making use of instrumental music in the worship of God; it having been His will to train His people, while they were as yet tender and like children, by such rudiments, until the coming of Christ. But now, when the clear light of the Gospel has dissipated the shadows of the law, and taught us that God is to be served in a simpler form, it would be to act a foolish and mistaken part to imitate that which the Prophet enjoined only upon those of his own time.¹⁵

Southern Presbyterian R.L. Dabney (1820–1898) argued against the popular movement of adding organs in Presbyterian churches. He wrote, “For as the temple-priests and animal sacrifices typified Christ and his sacrifice on Calvary, so the musical instruments of David in the temple-service only typified the joy of the Holy Ghost in his pentecostal effusions.”¹⁶ Adam Clarke (1762–1832), the noted Methodist commentator, said, “Music, as a science, I esteem and admire: but instruments of music in the house of God I abominate and abhor. This is the abuse of music; and here I register my protest against all such corruptions in the worship of the Author of Christianity.”¹⁷ The Baptist, Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834–1892), did not permit instruments or choirs in his Metropolitan Tabernacle. He said, “No musical or aesthetic accompaniment will ever be used.”¹⁸

Often the arguments against instruments tend toward the claim of Old Testament vs New Testament spirituality. Non-instrumental music is more “spiritual” and fitting for “the more spiritual dispensation” of the new covenant.

I challenge this trajectory. Scripture drives us toward a creational embrace awaiting a consummation which is even more robustly creational.¹⁹ On what grounds may we call human voices *spiritual* while we charge David with *carnality* because he made sounds from the materials of a good creation? The sounds of voices register the vibrations of created matter just as do the sounds of non-vocal instruments. A larynx is not more creational than a string. Air flow through nasal cavities in singing is not more creational than that in the mouthpiece of a trumpet. Instruments are creational extensions of persons.

Beyond debunking bad philosophical arguments mustered against instruments, is there a positive case, Scripturally? Can it be shown that the Bible expects instrumental music in new covenant worship? I believe so.

INSTRUMENTS IN THE TABERNACLE OF DAVID

A strong line of defense for musical instruments is found in the example of the “Tabernacle of David.”²⁰ The Tabernacle of David was the tent for the Ark of the Covenant during David’s reign, prior to the construction of Solomon’s temple. David brought the Ark into Jerusalem in the famous episode where he danced before the Lord (2 Samuel 6:14).²¹

David established this house of worship in Jerusalem on Mount Zion, even while the Tabernacle of Moses was in Gibeon. Mosaic sacrifices continued to be offered in Gibeon (2 Chronicles 1:3). Janice E. Leonard writes about the Tabernacle of David, “Priests and Levites were sanctified to carry on worship before it, but except for the initial dedication ceremonies, this worship did not involve burnt offerings.”²²

So they brought the ark of God, and set it in the midst of the tabernacle that David had erected for it. Then they offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before God. . . . And he appointed some of the Levites to minister before the ark of the LORD, to commemorate, to thank, and to praise the LORD God of Israel: Asaph the chief, and next to him Zechariah, then Jeiel, Shemiramoth, Jehiel, Mattithiah, Eliab, Benaiah, and Obed-edom: Jeiel with stringed instruments and harps, but Asaph made music with cymbals; Benaiah and Jahaziel the priests regularly blew the trumpets before the ark of the covenant of God. (1 Chronicles 16:1–6 NKJV)

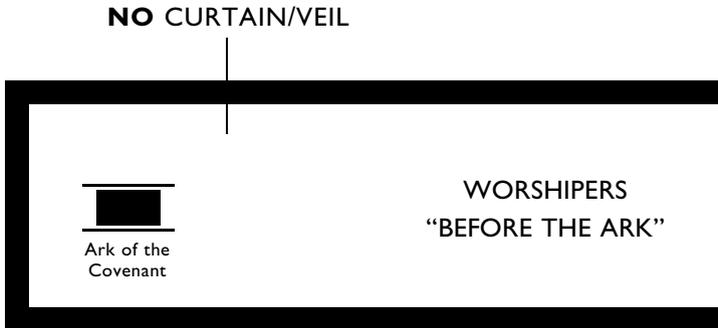
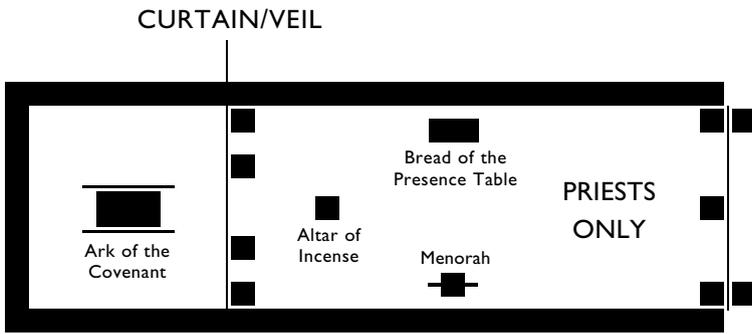
Three important matters stand out about the Tabernacle of David in contrast to the previous Mosaic Tabernacle.

Unlike the Mosaic Tabernacle, the Ark was not hidden behind a veil or curtain. Worshipers were “before” the Ark which was in the “middle of the tent” (2 Samuel 6:17 NET, 1 Chronicles 16:4).

Unlike the Mosaic Tabernacle, the worshipers included Gentiles along with Jews, namely Obed-Edom the Gittite (1 Chronicles 16:5, 2 Kings 6:10-11).

Unlike the Mosaic Tabernacle in which there were no songs of praise, worship at the Davidic Tabernacle emphasized praise with musical instruments.²³

Therefore, the Tabernacle of David provides the first example of direct access before the Lord in worship by multi-ethnic worshipers with instrumental, praise-centered worship. It provides a foretaste of new covenant worship in which the temple veil has been torn apart so that all nations may have equal access to give praise to the Lord with their music (Matthew 27:51, Mark 15:38, Luke 23:45). This Tabernacle is prophetic of the new covenant in which the promise of God is for Jews and Gentiles to come into Christ as a New Man, a new Adam, or “new humanity” (Ephesians 2:15 NRSV).



It is surprising to discover Gentiles and Jews worshipping together before the Lord in the Old Covenant. But like Rahab and Ruth, many Gentiles have populated the genealogies of Israel. Likewise, the musician Obed-Edom, was a “Philistine from Gath who apparently was loyal to David and Israel. At Obed-edom’s house David left the ark of the covenant following the death of Uzzah at the hand of God (2 Samuel 6:6–11).”²⁴ Peter Leithart says, “Moreover, the blessings upon Obed-edom reveal that the Davidic covenant will be a covenant of blessing to Gentile nations, a promise fulfilled especially in Solomon’s reign, when the nations came to learn wisdom from Israel’s king (1 Kings 10:24), but also seen earlier as many foreigners come to join David and become mighty men (like Uriah the Hittite).”²⁵

This example of worship might still lie undisturbed in the annals of Chronicles except that it was cited in the New Testament. The inclusion of Gentiles in the Church was the subject of the first Church council in Acts 15. In summary James cites Amos 9:11 which refers to the Tabernacle of David. It is precisely because of Gentile inclusion in the Church that he references this Tabernacle. By rebuilding this Tabernacle there will be salvation to the Gentiles. Jews and (uncircumcised) Gentiles will now assemble together in the name of Jesus to worship the true God.

Men and brethren, listen to me: Simon has declared how God at the first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name. And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written: ‘After this I will return And will rebuild the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down; I will rebuild its ruins, And I will set it up; So that the rest of mankind may seek the LORD, Even all the Gentiles who are called by My name, Says the LORD who does all these things.’ (Acts 15:13–17 NKJV)

Some commentators think the Tabernacle here is just the Davidic “house” or “dynasty.” But the Gentile connection is strong evidence that James and Amos understood their inclusion in the distinctly Davidic worship on Mount Zion. Even more, David’s psalm of dedication for the Tabernacle emphasizes Gentile worship, “Sing to the LORD, all the earth . . . Declare His glory among the nations, His wonders among all peoples . . . And let them say among the nations, ‘The LORD reigns.’” (1 Chronicles 16:23–24, 31, also Psalm 105). David’s Psalms emphasize Gentiles worshipping Yahweh. “Therefore I will give thanks to You, O LORD, among the Gentiles, And sing praises to Your name” (Psalm 18:49). “All the ends of the world shall remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations shall worship before You” (Psalm 22:27). The bold Messianic Psalm 2 says, “Yet I have set My King On My holy hill of Zion . . . Ask of Me, and I will give You the nations for Your inheritance” (Psalm 2:6–8).

David’s worship at Zion’s hill becomes connected with not only the renewal

of Israel, but also the inclusion of the nations. In an ode to Zion the sons of Korah wrote, we read, “The LORD loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. Glorious things are spoken of you, O city of God!” (Psalm 87:2-3). From Zion flows living water, “Both the singers and the players on instruments say, ‘All my springs are in you.’” (v7). This Psalm about Zion explicitly refers to the inclusion of other nations in the register of Zion. “I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon to those who know Me; Behold, O Philistia and Tyre, with Ethiopia: ‘This one was born there.’ And of Zion it will be said, ‘This one and that one were born in her; And the Most High Himself shall establish her’” (vv4-5). Commentator, Derek Kidner explains, “A representative sample of the Gentile world is being enrolled in God’s city . . . Towards the people of God they are not mere proselytes: they can avow, as Paul said of his Roman status, ‘But I was born a citizen’ (cf. Acts 22:28). This is the gospel age, no less.”²⁶

Isaiah 16:5 uses Zion’s Tabernacle as the very place of Christ’s reign over all the world, “In mercy the throne will be established; And One will sit on it in truth, in the tabernacle of David.” Throughout the Old Testament Zion becomes the location of God’s special presence with is people: “God is in the midst of her, she will not be moved” (Psalm 46:5). “His tabernacle is in Salem; His dwelling place also is in Zion” (Psalm 76:2). “Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God has shone forth” (Psalm 50:2).

Even more striking is the fact that while we popularly associate Mount Zion with going up to worship at the temple in Jerusalem, *neither* Solomon’s temple *nor* the later temple of Zerubbabel and its expansion by Herod were built *on Mount Zion*. The temple was built on Mount Moriah. “Now Solomon began to build the house of the LORD at Jerusalem on Mount Moriah . . .” (2 Chronicles 3:1). In fact, after the temple was constructed they removed the Ark from Mount Zion and brought it to the temple on Mount Moriah (2 Chronicles 5:2). The only worship that happened on Mount Zion was at the Tabernacle of David.

A striking truth for those who love the Psalms is that David’s place of worship was this place, not the later temple built by Solomon and not the Mosaic Tabernacle located in Gibeon.²⁷ So in the Psalms when we read that David longed to be at the House of the Lord or meditated on the beauty of God in His temple, he was referring to this Tabernacle (of David) (Psalm 5:7, 11:4, 18:6, etc). Psalm 27 says “One thing I have desired of the LORD, That will I seek: That I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, To behold the beauty of the LORD, And to inquire in His temple” (Psalm 27:4). When David was beholding the beauty of the Lord, he was doing so in praise, seeing the Ark at the place known to us as the Tabernacle of David.

The biblical theology of the concept of Zion is a golden stair-case winding to heaven. While this Tabernacle is the place of the first and only worship on this mount, Zion truly becomes an icon of heaven’s worship. The Tabernacle of David

is the origin.²⁸

The concept of Zion is also significant in the New Testament. Hebrews 12 contrasts two mountains. “But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven. . .” (Hebrews 12:22). The other mountain is *unnamed*, but described as “the mountain that may be touched and that burned with fire, and to blackness and darkness and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet” (Hebrews 12:18–19). Mount Sinai was the place of the giving of the law and certainly fits the description. But perhaps the reason Mount Sinai is not named is because there is a more subtle contrast with the standing temple in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah. Throughout Hebrews the appeal is made toward those tempted to return to old covenant forms (without Christ) rather than persevering with the new covenant assemblies of Christ. It is not that they would literally return to Mount Sinai, rather they may actually return to Mount Moriah, the temple in Jerusalem, forsaking the new covenant Church (Hebrews 10:28).

In the triumph of the Lamb in Revelation 14 and 15 John brings together Zion, instruments, and all nations. He sees “a Lamb standing *on Mount Zion*, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand” who “were redeemed from the earth” with “the sound of harpists playing their harps” and “they sang as it were a new song before the throne” (Revelation 14:1–3 emphasis mine). In chapter 15 with “harps of God,” they sing, “Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty! . . . *For all nations shall come and worship before You . . .*” (Revelation 15:2–4, emphasis mine).

INSTRUMENTS IN CHRISTIAN CULTURE

I have argued that the deepest biblical proof for the value of musical instruments arises from the typological example of Davidic worship on Mount Zion which is the basis for much of the instrumental references even in the Psalms.²⁹ This *type* of the new covenant includes direct access to the presence of the Lord, a world of multi-ethnic worshippers, *and praise with instruments*, as a model of new covenant worship. In the name of great David’s greater Son, we, from all nations, have access through one Spirit to praise the Father (Ephesians 2:18).

It is fitting then that our worship should include praise with instruments in a multi-ethnic Church. Instruments arise from culture. Musicians make sounds with the particular cultural artifacts of their times and places, whether Gath or Germany. Further refinements culturally and technologically necessitate different musical sounds. Before the technology to make valves for brass instruments or hinged keys for woodwind instruments, wind instruments had different sounds with limitations in range and technique. Therefore, musical sounds develop over time even by virtue of the technological and material changes.

By the development of instruments we “have dominion” over the raw elements of creation, like wood and metal, ebony and ivory, in order to transform them into tools for sound. With musical instruments we explore creation finding and expressing more of the reality God made in the soundscape. By the work of luthiers and instrumental artisans, combined with the creative skills of musicians, auditory art embellishes the native creation which enriches creation.

We show the *imago dei* as we make sounds which aim to musically re-create. Through such musical *work*, we *glorify* (add weightiness to) creation and the Creator. Our rightful dominion is a cultivation which produces new fruits. These fruits require the work of human hands. This is beautifully illustrated in the Eucharist service. We pray, “Blessed are you, Lord God, King of the Universe who gives seed to the sower and bread to the eater (Isaiah 55:11). Through your goodness we have received this bread, *which the earth has given and human hands have made*, and through Your surpassing mercy You have given us the bread of life. Blessed be God for ever. Amen.”

The Eucharist follows the Offertory because we are really and symbolically bringing the work of our cleansed human hands into God’s presence. On the Table is bread, not unprocessed wheat kernels. Bread is required and bread requires the fruit of the earth and the time of the fruitful labor of human hands. Wine is not raw grapes (nor mere grape juice). It requires the fruit of the earth and the fruitful labor of human hands in time. This is a model for all of our labor, musical or otherwise. We add to the beauty of creation.

What should we expect then in the developing global Christian cultures? Scripture demands the praise of the nations (*ethne*). For example, Isaiah commands, “Sing to the Lord a new song, sing His praise from the end of the earth! (Isaiah 40:10). “Sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth” (Psalm 96:1). “New songs” are being commanded from other nations. Worship from other nations is a climactic hope in the drama of redemption. God desires for “the Gentiles to glorify God for His mercy” (Romans 15:9–11).

We should expect that a “new song” will arise from all nations. This is envisioned in Revelation. The elders with harps (*kithara*) give praise. “And they sang a new song . . . Thou wast slain, and didst purchase for God with Thy blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation” (Revelation 5:8–10). A “new song” “refers to the introduction of a new composition for the purpose of celebrating . . .” The call for a new song rings out seven times in Scripture (Psalms 33:3; 40:3; 96:1; 98:1; 144:9; 149:1; Isaiah 42:10).³⁰ The salvation of a world of peoples is much to celebrate.

Christ is saving a whole world of different cultures, thus the music of the redeemed will flow from all redeemed peoples and cultures. This is God’s plan of world redemption. This strongly implies that the nations will use their music in their language to glorify God. Since more peoples are saved and sanctified, there

will be a greater expansion of the praises to our Triune God reflected in different kinds of music and musical instruments that arise from different cultures. We must rejoice in this rather than restrict it. Our Triune God's praises cannot be exhausted. His fullest praise requires worlds of music and musical instruments for Mount Zion's Lamb of God. Hallelujah!

Endnotes

- 1 Some of those are now available in iTunes, search "Strawbridge House."
- 2 An expanded version of this is still available here: <http://www.wordmp3.com/details.aspx?id=222>
- 3 Westminster Confession of Faith 21:1.
- 4 <http://www.westminsterconfession.org/worship/instrumental-music-in-worship-commanded-or-not-commanded.php>
- 5 Jewish Music: Its Historical Development (New York: Dover, 1992 [1929]), 21.
- 6 One source says, "psalmos, psalmou, ho (psallo), a striking, twanging (Euripides, others); specifically, a striking the chords of a musical instrument (Pindar, Aeschylus, others)" THAYER'S Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, n.p. Also <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Psalms>.
- 7 The Jewish Publication Society translation and others have this as "on the gittith," also in the preface to Psalm 81 and 84. While this term possibly refers to the name of a tune or "winepress," evidence points to an actual instrument just as the NKJV translates it. The ancient Targums (Aramaic version) has it as, "For praise, on the lyre that he brought from Gath. A hymn of David." <http://targum.info/pss/ps1.htm>
- 8 "David introduced music into the Tabernacle and Temple services (1 Chronicles 16:4–7)." On Psalm 150, Life Application Study Bible (Accordance electronic ed. Carol Stream: Tyndale House Publishers, 2004).
- 9 The JPS translation (1985) Tanakh: Jewish Publication Society.
- 10 See "Music: Musical instruments" by H. M. Best & D. Huttar in M. C. Tenny, ed., Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), 311–324. Also Andrew Wilson-Dickson, *The Story of Christian Music: From Gregorian Chant to Black Gospel* (Fortress, 1992), 17.
- 11 The irony of the organ as a sacred instrument is that it mimics instruments of an orchestra, including percussion.
- 12 Andrew Wilson-Dickson, *The Story of Christian Music: From Gregorian Chant to Black Gospel* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 28.
- 13 *Music in Early Christian Literature*, ed. James W. McKinnon (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1987), 2.
- 14 John L. Girardeau, *Instrumental Music in the Public Worship of the Church* (Edmonton, Alberta: Still Waters Revival Books, [1888] 2000).
- 15 On Psalm 81:2 in John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries (Complete)* (trans. John King; Accordance electronic ed. Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1847), n.p.
- 16 Dabney wrote this in a review of the classic treatment of the Puritan Regulative Principle view espoused by Columbia Theological Seminary professor, John L. Girardeau, *Instrumental Music in the Public Worship of the Church* <http://www.naphtali.com/articles/worship/dabney-review-of-girardeau-instrumental-music/>
- 17 Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Whole Bible* (Accordance electronic ed. 6 vols.; Altamonte Springs: OakTree Software, 2004), Vol. 4, page 684.
- 18 Lewis A. Drummond, *Spurgeon: Prince of Preachers* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1992), 351.
- 19 See the literary defense of this point in C.S. Lewis's classic, *The Great Divorce*, in which the inhab-

- itants of hell are vaporous, isolated ghosts and heaven is hard and heavy creational wonderland.
- 20 I am indebted to Peter J. Leithart in his recorded lectures in the Christ Church Ministerial Conference, "The Other Day the Music Died" (Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 2000). These ideas are more fully explicated in his, *From Silence to Song: The Davidic Liturgical Revolution* (Moscow ID: Canon, 2003). This book is not only a needed exposition of this Tabernacle, but provides a biblical theology of Chronicles, p. 19ff.
 - 21 The Augustinian-Calvinian and Puritan arguments take no account of this distinctive advance in biblical worship, but seem to lump it into the Levitical temple service.
 - 22 *The Complete Library of Christian Worship: The Biblical Foundations of Christian Worship*, Vol. 1, Robert Webber ed. (Peabody MA: Hendrickson, 1993), 121. The idea that animal sacrifices ceased after the dedication seems to be drawn from 1Chronicles 16:37-43, distinguishing the ministry at the ark (music) with animal sacrifices at Gibeon. One exception is that after receiving divine wisdom (in a dream at Gibeon), Solomon came to Jerusalem, "stood before the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and offered burnt offerings and made peace offerings, and made a feast for all his servants" (1Kgs. 3:15). See Leithart, *From Silence to Song* (55-56).
 - 23 Prior to this the only use of instruments at the Mosaic Tabernacle was the two silver trumpets "for calling the congregation and for directing the movement of the camps" (Num. 10:1-10).
 - 24 "OBED-EDOM," Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Eds Chad Brand, Charles Draper, Archie England (Nashville: Holman, 2003. Electronic text hypertexted and prepared by OakTree Software, Inc.
 - 25 "Death and Resurrection of the Tabernacle" (Biblical 53 Horizons, February, 1999), www.BiblicalHorizons.com.
 - 26 Derek Kidner, Psalms 73-150: An Introduction and Commentary (TOTC 16; IVP/Accordance electronic ed. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1975), 346.
 - 27 "David had actually been barred from Gibeon because he was afraid (cf. 13:12) and unable to enquire of God." Martin J. Selman, 1 Chronicles: An Introduction and Commentary (TOTC 10; IVP/Accordance electronic ed. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 219. Leithart teaches that the divided worship of Gibeon (Mosaic) and Zion (Davidic) was united by Solomon in the temple. 1&2 Kings; Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2006), 67.
 - 28 Some might argue that Zion simply becomes another name for Jerusalem. This may be so for some texts, but there is a clear origin of this iconic location.
 - 29 It was precisely because of David's use of instruments that they were taken up into temple service later. This fact seems to be overlooked by critics of instrumental music in worship.
 - 30 David E. Aune, Revelation 1-5 (Word Biblical Commentary 52A; Accordance/Thomas Nelson electronic ed. Dallas: Word Books, 1997), 359.

