

REVIEW OF *MISSING MORE THAN MUSIC*

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Danny Corbitt argues in his book, *Missing More Than Music: When Disputable Matters Eclipse Worship and Unity* (Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 2008), that those who believe it is wrong to use musical instruments in Christian worship are guilty of an error that is dividing the body of Christ and squelching the true worship God desires. I here review the book and explain why I am not persuaded by his arguments.

As I stated in reviewing an earlier booklet on this subject, I have no desire to wrangle over this issue. I have studied the matter and am convinced that the better understanding is that musical instruments should not be used in Christian worship. (For more details, see my online paper "Music in Christian Worship.") I love those who disagree with me, but I believe their attempts to persuade members of churches of Christ to abandon their objection to using musical instruments in worship should be resisted.

The Foreword

Danny is described in the Foreword by Milton Jones as one whose knowledge of the instrumental music issue is unsurpassed and the book is said to be a one-of-a-kind "in-depth treatise" that tells the truth and renders further studies on the subject unnecessary. So, at least in Jones's eyes, this book represents the best the instrumentalists have to offer. If that is anywhere near correct, exploring it should prove enlightening.

The comment in the Foreword that Danny "has had *convictions* on both sides of this issue" (emphasis supplied) is inconsistent with Danny's account of his background in chapter 1. He had *experience* with instrumental and noninstrumental congregations, moving from a Christian Church to a Church of Christ in the seventh grade, but he emphasizes that he avoided the instrumental music issue and never taught the *a cappella* view precisely because he *lacked* conviction that it was correct. Indeed, he was occasionally worshiping with instrumental accompaniment while a campus minister, a position he held from 1986 to 2000, and says that during that time he "was surprised to learn how many *other* ministers were privately unconvinced by our arguments" (emphasis supplied). So clearly his acceptance of instrumental music in worship preceded the writing of this book. My guess is that the book is his effort to provide an intellectual defense for a prior conviction arrived at through less analytical means.

None of this is relevant to assessing the arguments the author makes in support of his view. Those arguments stand on their own merit regardless of the background, experience, and convictions of the one making them. I note the inconsistency simply to dispel any notion that Danny's arguments are entitled to a presumption of validity because they were sufficient to force him from a prior *a cappella* conviction.

The Acknowledgements

The Acknowledgements section refers repeatedly to those who feel the need to read the book in secret, mentions that the author was warned he would need every friend he could find if he published the book, and asserts that Church of Christ publishers agreed with the author's conclusions but refused to publish the book for political reasons. The implication is that the *a cappella* view survives not by its merit but by suppressing the superior arguments of its opponents. I do not believe that is the case.

No doubt staff members at many *a cappella* congregations feel pressure not to reject or undermine the *a cappella* view, but staff members at any congregation feel pressure not to reject or undermine beliefs or practices that the group that is paying them is convinced are correct. Whether such pressure is a good or bad thing depends on whether it directs one toward or away from the will of God, which in turn depends on the correctness of the belief or practice. In other words, the fact a certain teaching is resisted in a community of faith says nothing about the validity of that teaching.

Chapter 1

Chapter 1 is an account of Danny's background given to counter his concern that *a cappella* proponents may question his character because he is arguing against their understanding. He recounts the experiences and events in his life that he believes God was using to prepare him to write this book. One profound influence was a conversation he had in the mid-to-late 1980s with a fellow campus minister who had been fired by his premillennialist denomination when he let it be known that he did not subscribe to premillennialism. This man asked Danny his views on instrumental music, and when Danny told him he did not understand the arguments against their use, the man told him that he "could make a great impact for the sake of [churches of Christ] on that topic." Danny says those words never left him, and he dedicated the book to that man. This and the identification of his audience in chapter 2 make clear that the purpose of the book is to convince the Church of Christ of the error of its ways.

Chapter 2

In chapter 2 Danny declares that opposition to instrumental music in Christian worship "is not founded in scripture as we have thought" and asserts that *a cappella* bias has prevented us from seeing that our arguments "don't make good sense." He identifies the groups for whom he is writing as those who grew up in churches of Christ but who were puzzled and disturbed by the prohibition against instrumental music, many of whom he says have left the Church of Christ, those who believe musical instruments should not be used in Christian worship but who wonder why so many others disagree, those who want to talk to their friends in the first two groups, and those who yearn for unity.

So, as with other works of this kind, the call to abandon the *a cappella* view as a false doctrine is couched as an appeal for unity. Since unity on this issue also would result if the instrumentalists came to accept the correctness of the *a cappella* view, the

importance of unity lends no support to the claim that churches of Christ should change their view. Which group should change depends on the merits of their respective positions.

As I have pointed out elsewhere, unity on the instrumental music issue also could be achieved if those for whom it is a matter of indifference voluntarily abstained from using instruments in worship in deference to those they perceive to be their weaker brothers. That path to unity does not go both ways because those who believe the practice is wrong would violate their consciences by engaging in it or teaching that it is acceptable. If unity is the paramount concern, why does this particular option for unity not get more attention from those lobbying for acceptance of musical instruments in churches of Christ? Apparently they believe that giving God "unshackled praise" (meaning praise accompanied by musical instruments) is worth the price of division. The mystery is how they can take that stand and then criticize churches of Christ for believing that giving God "certainly desired praise" (meaning praise unaccompanied by musical instruments) is worth the price of division.

Chapter 3

In chapter 3 Danny accuses the Church of Christ of improperly separating from other Christians on the basis of five contentions which he asserts are at best "disputable matters" within the meaning of Rom. 14:1. The first three contentions relate to the use of musical instruments in Christian worship, the discussion of which comprises the bulk of the book (chapters 4 through 11). I will restrict my review to those chapters.

Chapter 4

Chapters 4 and 5 purport to debunk the contention that the reason the early church worshiped without musical instruments was that they believed it was God's will to do so. Danny considers this the *fundamental false premise* that leads those in churches of Christ to misread the Scriptures. According to Danny, *a cappella* proponents simply assume, without any scriptural warrant, that the early church's practice was motivated by its understanding of God's will and then twist the biblical texts to serve as expressions of that incorrectly assumed divine will. If *a cappella* proponents only could see that there is no basis for their thinking that the early church believed it was God's will to sing without instruments they would be free to stop resisting the truth and to unite with their instrumental brothers and sisters.

Chapter 5

Given the weight Danny places on there being insufficient reasons for thinking the early church's *a cappella* practice was rooted in its understanding of the divine will, one expects chapter 5, titled "Why Did the Early Church Chant?" to provide a cogent alternative explanation for that practice. After all, musical instruments were inexpensive, portable, and used widely in first-century Greek, Roman, and Jewish culture and especially in religious activities, so there must be a reason for their universal absence in

early Christian worship. As renowned church historian Everett Ferguson frames the matter, "Where something was available and every assumption would seem to favor Christian adoption of the practice and yet there is complete evidence of the rejection of the practice in the post-apostolic period, there is every reason to look to a deliberate choice made in the apostolic age."¹

Danny acknowledges in chapter 5 that it would be powerful evidence in favor of the *a cappella* position if the first Christians believed that instrumental worship was contrary to God's will. He suggests that their practice was motivated by cultural reasons rather than by an understanding of God's will, but the remainder of the chapter fails to establish that point.

First Subsection

In the first subsection of chapter 5, Danny asserts that *a cappella* proponents do not claim that the early church condemned the use of musical instruments in worship and that they thus lack a primary piece of evidence for their case. His assertion, however, could easily mislead an uninformed reader. What is accepted by virtually all scholars, including *a cappella* proponents, is that the vehement and unanimous objections of the Church Fathers to musical instruments were never expressly directed toward anyone using them in church. James McKinnon states, "Now a careful reading of all the patristic criticism of instruments will not reveal a single passage which condemns the use of instruments in church. The context of the condemnation may be the banquet, the theater, or the festivities accompanying a marriage, but it is never the liturgy."² Ferguson concurs:

[The ancient church fathers] give an explicit condemnation to instrumental music. Sometimes such outbursts are taken as proof that instruments were being used, at least by some Christians, in public worship. The principle is that what somebody opposes, somebody is doing. In this case the inference goes too far. There is no polemic against instruments in church. That is not under consideration. The condemnations are of the use of instruments at social functions – banquets, the theater, and other entertainments of pagan society – and in idolatrous worship.³

The reason there was no condemnation of the use of instruments in church is that, as Danny's quotations of Ferguson and McKinnon make clear, no one was using instruments in church. McKinnon elsewhere says it as plainly as it can be said: "Not only was [early Christian music] predominantly vocal, but it was so exclusively vocal that the occasion to criticize the use of instruments in church never arose."⁴

¹ Everett Ferguson, *The Instrumental Music Issue* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Co., 1987), 98.

² James McKinnon, *The Temple, the Church Fathers, and Early Western Chant* (Brookfield, VT: Ashgate, 1998), chapter IV, 71.

³ Everett Ferguson, *A Cappella Music in the Public Worship of the Church*, 2nd ed. (Abilene, TX: ACU Press, 1988), 75.

⁴ McKinnon (1998), chapter IV, 73.

Scholars do rightly claim, however, that the Church Fathers' condemnation of musical instruments *in non-church contexts* makes clear that they would have opposed their introduction into Christian worship. Thus McKinnon's quoted statement, "If it had ever occurred to any Christian communities of the third or fourth centuries to add instruments to their liturgical singing, indignation over the action would certainly be prominent in patristic literature." Or, as he put it elsewhere in his dissertation (p. 2), "There is the fact that early Christian music was vocal and there is the patristic polemic against instruments. The two are related in that an analysis of the polemic confirms the fact." (I will address McKinnon's alleged reversal of opinion in the discussion of subsection 3.)

Ferguson again concurs, as Danny's quotation shows (emphasis supplied): "In view of the violent response to immoral uses of instruments in social life and their cultic use in pagan religion, it becomes incredible that the instrument was present in the worship of the church. *That surely would have brought condemnation*, or at least called for an explanation. But there is not even a comment to this effect." Elsewhere Ferguson states, "If early Christian writers speak so harshly of instruments in social contexts, one can only imagine the outcry which would have been raised to their presence in a worship service. The fathers never conceived that possibility."⁵

Danny says there is no condemnation of musical instruments in worship prior to the fifth century. If he means there are no earlier indications from patristic writers that instruments would not be acceptable in church, he is sorely mistaken.⁶ The quote he provides from McKinnon, given in the preceding paragraph, directly contradicts that claim. McKinnon points out in *Music in Early Christian Literature*, which Danny touts as the work of a "seasoned professor," that the Christian polemic against pagan music that was first hinted at in the late second century "grew in explicitness and intensity throughout the third century, particularly with Latin Africans like Tertullian and Arnobius, and became a commonplace among the major figures of the fourth like John Chrysostom, Ambrose, and Augustine."⁷ It is the condemnation of instruments by these Fathers in non-church contexts that allows McKinnon to state confidently that any attempt *in the third and fourth centuries* to use instruments in the church would have been met with indignation. The use of instruments in worship was condemned implicitly by the condemnation of instruments in non-church contexts.

In the late second-century work *Paedagogos*, which addresses how Christians are to conduct themselves at banquets or feasts, Clement of Alexandria implies that musical instruments would be out of place in Christian assemblies. He writes:

The one instrument of peace, the Word alone by which we honour God, is what we employ. We no longer employ the ancient psaltery, and trumpet,

⁵ Ferguson (1988), 79-80.

⁶ He also is mistaken if he means that in the fifth-century condemnation of musical instruments began to be expressly directed toward people who were using instruments in church. Instruments did not find their way into Christian assemblies for several more centuries.

⁷ James McKinnon, *Music in Early Christian Literature* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 2.

and timbrel, and flute, which those expert in war and contemners of the fear of God were wont to make use of also in the choruses at their festive assemblies; that by such strains they might raise their dejected minds.

Eusebius was a Greek-speaking Christian theologian who was very knowledgeable about the church's history and practice, having from A.D. 300 – 325 written several editions of the first history of the church. He wrote the following in his commentary on the Psalms:

Of old at the time those of the circumcision were worshipping with symbols and types it was not inappropriate to send up hymns to God with the psalterion and kithara, . . . We render our hymn a living psalterion and a living kithara, with spiritual song. The unison of voices of Christians would be more acceptable to God than any musical instrument. Accordingly in all the churches of God, united in soul and attitude, with one mind and in agreement of faith and piety, we send up a unison melody in the words of the Psalms. We are accustomed to employ such psalmodies and spiritual kitharas because the apostle teaches this saying, "in psalms and odes and spiritual hymns."⁸

Notice how Eusebius alludes to the change in covenants and cites Paul's words in justification for the spiritualizing of worship that excludes instrumental music. Other later writers, like Niceta, Theodoret, and Chrysostom, likewise refer to the biblical connection of instruments to worship under the old covenant and to the change in covenants to which the Scriptures testify. So it is not accurate to say that the early church's rejection of instrumental music was divorced from Scripture.

Many fourth-century Christian writers spoke disparagingly of musical instruments. Arnobius asked if God sent souls to earth "so that these members of a holy and noble race should here practice music and the arts of the piper."⁹ Chrysostom said, "Where aulos-players are, there Christ is not" and referred to cymbals and auloi, along with dancing, obscene songs, and drunkenness, as "the devil's heap of garbage."¹⁰ Gregory of Nazianzus commanded Christians to celebrate a feast not "surrounded by the sound of aloi and percussion" and to "take up hymns rather than tympana."¹¹ Ambrose contrasted those engaging in prayer and the singing of hymns and psalms with those who chose carousing at the same hour by asking condemningly, "Hymns are sung, and you grasp the cithara? Psalms are sung, and you take up the psaltery and tympanum?"¹² The attitude by the fourth century was so extreme that there was a widespread legal tradition that denied baptism to aulos and kithara players and an Alexandrian law that called for the excommunication of a precentor or cantor in the church who persisted in playing the kithara.¹³

⁸ Translation from Ferguson (1988), 61.

⁹ McKinnon (1998), chapter IV, 70.

¹⁰ McKinnon (1998), chapter IV, 69.

¹¹ McKinnon (1987), 71.

¹² McKinnon (1987), 128-129.

¹³ McKinnon (1998), chapter IV, 69; Ferguson (1988), 75.

The point is not that the Church Fathers were correct in everything they thought about musical instruments. Rather, the point is that their condemnation of instrumental music in contexts other than church makes it perfectly clear that instruments would not have been tolerated in church. Danny is mistaken in thinking otherwise. To illustrate the point, modern Christian writers direct no condemnation toward abortions being done in church (because that does not occur), but one can infer from the condemnation they direct toward abortions in other contexts that they would oppose abortions being done in church. Therefore, it would be false to say that Christian writers do not condemn abortions done in church if by that one meant to convey that the writers do not indicate that they would disapprove of abortions being done in church.

Second Subsection

It is not clear how the second subsection, titled "The Influence of the Pharisees," serves the stated purpose of the chapter, which is to demonstrate that the early church's *a cappella* practice was merely a cultural preference rather than something rooted in the church's understanding of God's will. The argument seems to be that *psallo*, could not be used to refer to singing unless it was permissible for that singing to be accompanied by instruments. Since instrumental approval was inherent in *psallo*, the church could not have believed its *a cappella* practice was something desired by God, so that practice necessarily was a mere preference.

If I have understood the argument correctly, Danny simply has assumed the point in dispute by declaring that *psallo*, could not be used to refer to singing unless it was permissible for that singing to be accompanied by instruments. It has been shown *ad nauseam* that *psallo*, in the first century could mean simply sing without any implication of instrumental accompaniment.¹⁴ That is the import of the very definition Danny cites: to sing *with or without* instruments. That means the word can carry either connotation, depending on the context, not that it must carry both.¹⁵ So there is nothing about the word that would preclude its being used to refer to singing that was unaccompanied for theological reasons.

Thus the answer to Danny's question of why New Testament authors would have used a word "with such instrumental implications" if they were opposed to instruments in worship is that instrumental implications were not inherent in the word. Indeed, if *psallo*, referred only to singing that could be accompanied by instruments, the patristic writers who vehemently condemned musical instruments would have been obliged to explain how they could do so in light of Paul's words. As the Eusebius quote illustrates, they perceived Paul's

¹⁴ See, e.g., Ferguson (1988), 1-28.

¹⁵ As Thomas C. Alexander explains in *Music in Worship: A New Examination of an Old Issue* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Co., 2010), 33: "[A] lexicon will list a number of possible meanings (range of meanings) of a term along with biblical passages (and in some cases passages in related literature) where these meanings are understood on the basis of the various contexts in which the term is used. In light of the nature of such listings, one cannot take a single possible meaning of a term and assume that is the meaning every time the word occurs."

use of *psalmos* (the cognate noun of *psallo*,) as being in harmony with a worship that excluded instrumental music.

Perhaps an analogy will help here. In American vernacular, "hot dog" refers to a smooth-textured sausage of minced beef or pork with or without a bun. A request for me to pick up some hot dogs when I am on my way to a meat market refers to the item *without* a bun, whereas a request for me to pick up some hot dogs when I am on my way to a concession stand refers to the item *with* a bun. The context determines whether the bun is included in the meaning. To press the point, if I belonged to a group that was opposed to eating grain products and in a letter to my fellow members I referred to their eating hot dogs, it would be silly for someone to argue that our group accepts eating grain products because hot dog refers to a smooth-textured sausage *with or without* a bun.

By concluding incorrectly that the alleged instrumental implications of *psallo*, preclude it from referring to singing that was unaccompanied for theological reasons, Danny believes *a cappella* proponents must claim a narrower definition of the word, one that inherently rather than contextually refers solely to singing. He says Frederick Danker addresses "this dilemma" in the standard Greek lexicon by arguing that *psallo*, had a distinct New Testament usage that inherently excluded the use of instruments.

I do not believe Danker is saying that New Testament writers had some special meaning for the word *psallo*,. Rather, he is giving his judgment that the noninstrumental connotation of the word, which was part of its general first-century meaning, best suits its use in Eph. 5:19. He thinks the noninstrumental connotation is intended because, though he does not believe the early church opposed instrumental music, he recognizes, with the vast majority of scholars, that the early church sang without instruments. He simply attributes the church's *a cappella* practice to "Christian opposition to mystery cults, as well as Pharisaic aversion to musical instruments in worship" rather than to a theological opposition. Contrary to Danker, and in agreement with a number of specialists in the field, I think the early church's *a cappella* practice was indeed theologically motivated.

Having misunderstood Danker to be arguing for a uniquely restrictive New Testament meaning of *psallo*,, Danny is compelled to argue that Danker is mistaken. His argument seems to be that the restrictive usage that Danker allegedly ascribes to Paul (and other New Testament writers) is unjustified because it requires one to believe that Paul had been influenced by the culturally based hostility to instruments expressed in the teaching of the Pharisees and Philo. But that is a non-sequitur; one could believe that Paul's view had been influenced by the Pharisees and Philo and also believe that God approved that view in a Christian context by inspiring Paul to express it.

Indeed, Eric Werner argues in the very article cited by Danny that *Paul* in 1 Cor. 13:1, in keeping with his Pharisaical background, explicitly states "the primacy of vocal performance over any instrumental music," implicitly expresses "contempt of all instrumental music," and expresses "emphatic disparagement of 'gong' (calkov)" and

cymbals, two of the temple's percussion instruments."¹⁶ One who, like Werner, rejects the divine inspiration of the New Testament can claim that Paul simply was expressing an erroneous viewpoint that he had absorbed from the culture, but one who believes God inspired Paul to express that viewpoint ties God to it. In other words, if Werner is correct about Paul expressing Pharisaical attitudes, then God through Paul did indeed expressly condemn instrumental music. That is presumably why Danny winds up, correctly in my opinion (see below), rejecting Werner's view "that the Apostles were influenced by the Pharisees to oppose instruments in worship." But in so doing, he eliminates that particular contemporary cultural influence as an explanation for the nonuse of musical instruments. And yet, he continues to hint that it might be the explanation.

As I have explained, I think the discussion about Danker's alleged special meaning for *psallo*, is a needless tangent triggered by a misunderstanding, but since in the course of pursuing it Danny makes claims about the Pharisees' opposition to instrumental music in worship which he uses to link them with *a cappella* proponents, those claims need to be corrected. In the first place, I think Danny has misread Eric Werner's comments in "Music" in the *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (1962) to mean "that the Pharisees had come to oppose their own temple instruments before the New Testament was written." Referring to the short span of Israel's prosperity under the first Hasmonians (not the first century), when instrumental music was particularly popular at banquets, Werner says simply, "However the Pharisees might have felt about the temple orchestra, which was exclusively in Sadducean hands, banquet music was welcome in their houses."

Whatever feelings Werner thinks Sadducean control of the temple orchestra may have engendered in Pharisees of the time, he clearly is not saying here that the Pharisees opposed using the divinely prescribed musical instruments in the temple, for he indicates in the very next paragraph that Pharisaic hostility to instrumental music was a later phenomenon. Certainly if the Pharisees had ever opposed the divinely prescribed use of instruments in the temple there would have been a flood of ancient criticism and commentary and this would be a well known aspect of their theology, and yet there is no mention of it in standard reference works (e.g., Anthony J. Saldarini, "Pharisees" in David Noel Freedman, ed., *Anchor Bible Dictionary* [New York: Doubleday, 1992], 5:289-303; E. P. Sanders, *Judaism Practice & Belief 63 BCE – 66 CE* [Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1992], 380-451; John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew, Vol. III Companions and Competitors* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001], 289-388).

In fact, there is no reasonable basis for claiming that Pharisees opposed musical instruments in any context prior to A.D. 70, let alone opposing their use in the temple. Werner was a renowned Jewish historian of music from a prior generation, but his claims about Pharisaical opposition to musical instruments prior to A.D. 70 have not withstood scholarly scrutiny. Those claims were based on two passages from Philo and a passage from Book VIII of the Sybilline Oracles. In addition to the problem of tying those texts to the Pharisees, the Philo passages do not express contempt for musical instruments and the

¹⁶ Werner also believes these attitudes are on display in Eph. 5:19 and Col. 3:16 through Paul's speaking "only of 'psalms and hymns and spiritual songs'" and that 1 Cor. 14:7 shows Paul "considers all musical instruments 'lifeless' or 'soulless.'"

passage from the Sybilline Oracles, which may be Christian rather than Jewish, dates from about A.D. 175. Thus, McKinnon concludes, "So much for Werner's evidence; it simply has no bearing on his claims."¹⁷

So Werner does not claim that Pharisees opposed instrumental music in the temple, and his claim about their opposition to instrumental music in other contexts prior to A.D. 70 is unfounded. Therefore, Danny is off base in exclaiming that "the first century Pharisees opposed instruments in the same settings that [an *a cappella* proponent] does today" and in using the Pharisees as an example of a religious group that changed to *a cappella* worship contrary to God's will.

Third Subsection

The third subsection of chapter 5, titled "The Preference for Vocal Music," fares no better in meeting the chapter's goal of demonstrating that the early church's *a cappella* practice was merely a cultural preference rather than something rooted in the church's understanding of God's will. Danny asserts that, though the patristic literature establishes an *a cappella* practice, one finds "no statement that *God* opposed instruments in worship." Regardless of whether one finds a direct statement to that effect, the implication is clear in numerous patristic writings.

For example, the quote from Eusebius given above notes "it was not inappropriate" to sing songs to God with instrumental accompaniment under the old covenant, the implication being that it would be inappropriate under the new covenant, which is confirmed by the following statement that Christians, in contrast to those under the old covenant, sing *a cappella*. John Chrysostom, a leader of the church in Antioch and perhaps the greatest preacher of his day, wrote in the late fourth century:

I would say this [about the mention of instruments in Psalm 149], that in olden times they were thus led by these instruments because of the dullness of their understanding and their recent deliverance from idols. Just as God allowed animal sacrifices, so also he let them have these instruments, condescending to help their weakness.¹⁸

Niceta, a Latin-speaking leader in the Western church, wrote in the early fifth century:

Only what is material [from the Old Testament] has been rejected, such as circumcision, the Sabbath, sacrifices, discrimination in foods; and also trumpets, kitharas, cymbals, and tympana, which now understood as the limbs of a man resound with a more perfect music. Daily ablutions, new moon observances, the meticulous inspection of leprosy, along with anything else which was temporarily necessary for the immature are past and over with. But whatever is spiritual [from the Old Testament], such as

¹⁷ McKinnon (1998), chapter III, 80.

¹⁸ Translation from Ferguson (1988), 56.

faith, devotion, prayer, fasting, patience, chastity, and psalm-singing has been increased rather than diminished.¹⁹

Theodoret, a Greek-speaking leader in the Eastern church, wrote in the fifth century, a bit later than Niceta:

It is not singing in itself that is characteristic of immaturity, but singing to lifeless instruments and with dancing and rattles. Therefore, the use of these instruments is excluded from the song of the churches, along with other things which characterize immaturity, and there is simply the singing itself.²⁰

Another early fifth-century writer, Isidore of Pelusium, stated: "If God accepted even sacrifice and blood because of the immaturity of men at that time, why are you surprised at the music of the kithara and the psalterium?"²¹

The late second-century statement by Clement of Alexandria that Danny cites, which I quoted earlier, is perfectly consistent with the notion, even if less specific, that the change to *a cappella* worship reflects the change from old to new covenants. Danny contends that Clement shows his *a cappella* practice to be a mere preference by expressing his approval of the use of two specific instruments, the kithara and lyre, at a banquet or a feast. According to Danny, only one with an *a cappella* bias could think Clement believed that God condoned the use of the kithara and lyre at a banquet but disapproved of instruments in the Christian assembly.

In the first place, it is unlikely that Clement expresses approval of the use of the kithara and lyre at a banquet or feast. As McKinnon states:

Here in a frequently quoted passage, 'if you should wish to sing and play to the cithara and lyre, this is not blameworthy,' Clement seems to contradict all that goes before and to condone the use of these instruments. But surely the immediate context of the passage as well as Clement's views in general suggest that it is to be read allegorically.²²

An allegorical reading of the passage is supported by the fact Clement earlier in the same essay allegorizes the kithara as meaning the mouth struck by the Spirit and identifies the lyre as an instrument of war that contrasts with the one instrument of peace, the Word alone, by which Christians honor God; and immediately after the statement in question he allegorizes the psalter as referring to Jesus. In addition, in an earlier work titled *Protrepticus*, Clement described Jesus as "scorning the lyre and kithara as lifeless instruments."²³ Taking such musical references literally is what McKinnon had in mind when he said "perhaps the most common sort of misinterpretation of patristic musical

¹⁹ Translation from McKinnon (1998), chapter IV, 76-77.

²⁰ Translation from McKinnon (1998), chapter IV, 75.

²¹ Translation from McKinnon (1998), chapter IV, 76.

²² McKinnon (1987), 33.

²³ McKinnon (1987), 30, 33.

reference is to draw unwarranted conclusions from a passage involving musical figures of speech."²⁴

But even if Clement's reference was intended literally, it is clear that he is referring to conduct at a banquet or feast, and contrary to Danny's claim, one need not have a *cappella* blinders to think Clement may have distinguished conduct that was acceptable at a social banquet from conduct that was acceptable when the church was assembled in Jesus' name. The assembly is where God meets with his people *as a people*, and without denying that intimate communion with God is available for saints at other times, there is something spiritually distinctive about that encounter. Not only do we as an assembled body proclaim Jesus' redeeming death through our sharing in the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:26) but Paul indicates that the power of the Lord was present in a distinct way when the Corinthians were assembled in the Lord's name (1 Cor. 5:4; see also Mat. 18:20). He also suggests that angels were present in (or at least watching over) the Corinthians' worship assembly (1 Cor. 11:10).²⁵

The early church certainly perceived its gatherings as having a unique spiritual dimension. Larry Hurtado well captures that sense:

The author of Hebrews speaks of participation in the community of Christian believers in awesome terms:

You have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel. (Heb. 12:23-24).

Given that Christians were taught to think of themselves collectively in such terms, it is understandable that their cultic gatherings were seen as filled with meaning and significance as well. They did not have temple structures or the elaborate rituals familiar in the larger religious environment, but (perhaps, indeed, therefore) the gathered group was itself a living shrine and their praise and worship spiritual sacrifices pleasing to God. They did not have a priestly order; instead, they saw themselves collectively as a priesthood, all of them thus specially sacred and their gathering a holy occasion.

²⁴ McKinnon (1987), 5-6.

²⁵ We have worried so much about reducing Christianity to nothing more than our gatherings for worship that we have unintentionally diminished the significance of those gatherings. We need to shed the notion that by giving the worship assembly any kind of special significance we detract from the importance of daily faithful living and thus encourage a kind of ritualistic devotion. That is a false dichotomy; it is not an either-or situation. We can catch the grandeur of our gatherings without falling prey to the idea that God cares *only* about our gatherings. Indeed, holy living is a predicate to acceptable worship in our assemblies.

They experienced their assemblies as not merely human events but as having a transcendent dimension. They sensed God as directly and really present in their meetings through his Spirit. Indeed, even a gathering of two or three believers is graced with the presence of Christ (Matt. 18:20), giving it efficacy in prayer and other actions. In 1 Corinthians 11:10, the curious passing reference to the angels present in the worship assembly shows how familiar the idea was. Paul's Corinthian readers apparently needed no further explanation (though we could wish for one!). As the 'holy ones' (saints) of God, believers saw their worship gatherings as attended by heavenly 'holy ones', angels, whose presence signified the heavenly significance of their humble house-church assemblies. It is this sense that Christian collective worship participates in the heavenly cultus that finds later expression in the traditional words of the liturgy: 'Wherefore, with angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven, we do laud and magnify your glorious name.' Scholars have suggested similarities with the Qumran sect, who seem to have thought of their worship as likewise a participation in heavenly angelic cultus, and thus as blessed with the presence of angels. The point is that in their sense of their worship gatherings as an extension of and participation in the idealized worship of the heavenly hosts, and in their view of their gatherings as graced with God's holy angels, they express a vivid transcendent significance pertaining to these occasions.²⁶

The distinctiveness of the assembly is reflected in the fact that not everything that is permissible outside the congregational assembly is permissible within it. As Everett Ferguson explains:

The assembly of the church is a distinctive expression of the church. Not everything acceptable in other contexts has a place in the church meeting. Paul in 1 Corinthians indicates that there are times when "the whole church comes together" (1 Cor. 14:23), "when you come together as a church" [or "in church"] (1 Cor. 11:18; cf. 11:20). Special considerations apply for these occasions. Paul makes a distinction between behavior that is appropriate elsewhere and what can be done in the assembly; between outside activities and assembly activities. Thus, he distinguishes eating to satisfy hunger "at home" and coming together "to eat the Lord's Supper" (1 Cor. 11:20, 22, 33-34). Again, although he claimed to speak in tongues more than all the Corinthians (1 Cor. 14:18) and says he would like for all of them to be able to speak in tongues (1 Cor. 14:5), he yet declares, "in church I would rather speak five words with my mind, in order to instruct others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue" (1 Cor. 14:19). Furthermore, he does not impose permanent silence on women, only "in the churches [assemblies] women should be silent" (1 Cor. 14:34). Paul

²⁶ Larry Hurtado, *At the Origins of Christian Worship: The Context and Character of Earliest Christian Devotion* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 50-51.

does not support the idea that if something is right or good at other times it may be done in the church.²⁷

So it is not difficult at all to think Clement may have believed that instruments were acceptable at a banquet but not in church. That supposition is made even easier if the church at worship was seen as the quintessential spiritual temple in contrast to the Jewish temple (where instruments were tied to material sacrifices).²⁸ McKinnon, who is not an *a cappella* proponent, says, "If [Clement's statement] was meant to be a real toleration of these instruments, *it was intended for extra-liturgical devotion rather than for liturgical singing* and probably to accompany a non-Biblical metrical hymn rather than a psalm" (emphasis supplied).²⁹ Even those today who leave no room for a distinction between obedience/service and worship would not claim that all acts of obedience/service (e.g., sexual relations with one's spouse – 1 Cor. 7:3) would be acceptable to God if done in the assembly.

Fourth Subsection

The fourth subsection of chapter 5, titled "The Condemnation of Instruments Outside of Worship," is largely a presentation of the purported opinions of James McKinnon gleaned from *Music in Early Christian Literature*. Danny asserts that somewhere between 1965 and 1987 McKinnon changed his opinion about whether Christians would have condemned instruments in the church if anyone had tried to use them. Given the stated purpose of the chapter, I assume Danny is citing McKinnon's alleged epiphany as evidence that the use of instruments in church would not have been condemned, which if true would mean that the church's *a cappella* practice was rooted in something other than an understanding of God's will. But nothing Danny cites from *Music in Early Christian Literature* relates to his assertion that McKinnon changed his mind on the point in question, let alone supports it, and even if it could be established that McKinnon changed his mind one would need to determine whether his earlier or later opinion was better supported by the evidence.

First Argument for McKinnon's Alleged Reversal

As noted previously, McKinnon points out in *Music in Early Christian Literature* (p. 2) that the Christian polemic against pagan music that was first hinted at in the late second century grew in explicitness and intensity throughout the third century and became commonplace among the major figures of the fourth century. He then says,

²⁷ Everett Ferguson, *The Church of Christ: A Biblical Ecclesiology for Today* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 243.

²⁸ Bruce Chilton states in "Temple" in Ralph P. Martin and Peter H. Davids, eds., *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997), 1164:

Jesus' conception at the end of his ministry was that his meals, his wine and bread, were more acceptable to God as "blood" and "flesh" than sacrifices in the temple were. In the circles of Peter and of James, as well as in other communities of primitive Christianity, a cultic understanding of the meal was preserved (and developed further). That practice led naturally to the claim that a church at worship took the place of the temple.

²⁹ McKinnon (1998), chapter IV, 71 (fn. 4).

"Why the polemic should have been absent from the writing of earlier church fathers and so prominent in those of later ones is not easy to explain." He first speculates that the mass conversions of the third and fourth centuries increased the threat of pagan music to Christians, a possibility Danny ignores. He then speculates that the later fathers may have been influenced by "the musical Puritanism of pagan intellectuals" through their classical education, but he recognizes that even if that were true the later fathers "for reasons of their own" took the polemic to an unprecedented explicitness and intensity.

Danny cites this discussion as the first point (heading A) of his proof that McKinnon changed his opinion about whether Christians would have condemned instruments in the church if anyone had tried to use them, but one is left wondering how it relates to that claim. McKinnon's opinion that the patristic writers certainly would have condemned any attempt to introduce instruments into the church was based on the fact they so vehemently denounced them in contexts outside the church. In the discussion Danny cites, McKinnon is *affirming* the explicitness and intensity of the Fathers' condemnation of instruments. Since that is the very fact on which his prior opinion was based, it makes no sense to cite it as evidence that he changed his position.

One suspects that Danny simply lost focus here and instead of arguing that McKinnon changed his opinion is citing McKinnon's comments to claim that Christian opposition to instrumental music did not exist prior to the Fathers' written polemic against pagan music in the late second century and only arose because of pagan cultural influences on the Fathers. There is much here to untangle.

It is recognized by a broad spectrum of scholars that the early church did not use instruments in worship. This agreement obviously is not based on a *cappella* bias since it includes many who have no stake in that position.³⁰ Rather, it is based on the consensus that none of the New Testament documents or the noncanonical writings of early Christians indicate that musical instruments were used in church and the fact patristic writers uniformly (East and West) and vehemently condemn musical instruments in contexts other than church but in ways that make clear their use in church would not be tolerated and do so without any challenge and without any need to explain their position in relation to an apostolic (or any other) tradition that considered instrumental worship acceptable. Certainly if the use of instruments previously had been considered acceptable in Christian worship, the uniform reversal of that viewpoint would have left some evidence of a controversy, but there is nothing.

The question that needs to be answered, the question this chapter is said to address, is why the early church did not use instruments in worship given that they were inexpensive, portable, and used widely in first-century Greek, Roman, and Jewish culture

³⁰ To choose just one of many examples, Christian Hannick, a professor at the Bavarian University in Germany and the director of the Institute for Liturgical Studies at the Ukrainian Catholic University, states in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (Washington, DC: Macmillan, 1980), 4:368: "The religion of classical Greece and the Jewish Temple liturgy both used musical instruments extensively, as literary descriptions and artistic representations show (see the illustrations by Quasten, 1930). By contrast, early Christian music excluded them completely. There is much evidence for this prohibition."

and especially in religious activities. Why were instruments not used in church when everything favored Christian adoption of their use? It is no answer to say that the written record of Christian condemnation of musical instruments does not begin until the late second century and to speculate that the reason for that condemnation was some kind of pagan cultural influence exerted on the later Church Fathers. One must explain why instruments were not used prior to that time.

In declaring that opposition to instruments was "new" in the third century, Danny is again assuming the very matter in dispute, i.e., he is assuming that the nonuse of instruments prior to the third century was not because of theological opposition. *A cappella* proponents beg to differ. We think the early church understood correctly that musical instruments, which were an integral part of the sacrificial worship of the Jewish temple,³¹ were excluded implicitly from Christian worship by the teaching that came to be expressed in the New Testament documents, the teaching that the sacrificial worship of the temple was superseded by the higher worship inaugurated by Christ. We think this theological explanation of the early church's *a cappella* practice is far superior to claims that the practice was a reaction against association with paganism or Judaism or was an unexamined adoption of synagogue practice, and we see confirmation of our view in the later patristic writers' frequent references to the change in covenants in the explanation of their practice. Ferguson states:

Instrumental music, therefore, was an important feature of the temple worship, and it was closely associated with its sacrificial system. Here may be a significant clue explaining the absence of instrumental music in early Christian worship. Early Christianity saw the sacrificial system and temple worship as superseded by the sacrifice of Christ and the worship of the church. When the Levitical priesthood and the sacrificial cultus were abolished, naturally its accompaniments were too.³²

Various other specialists in the field who are not associated with the *a cappella* view concur. For example, Edward Foley writes, "I would suggest there was an element of 'rejection' in Christianity's earliest assessment of instrumental music: a rejection wed to a growing rejection of the type of priesthood, cult, and religious view embodied in the Temple."³³ Quentin Faulkner states:

As soon as Christianity moved beyond its earliest stage as a Jewish sect, then, Christians rejected the idea and practice of temple worship entirely, discarding at the same time its sensuous, emotional and spectacular character and its use of instruments in the liturgy. Thus, while Christian rejection of pagan customs discouraged the use of instruments in general,

³¹ Werner, for example, in the article Danny cited from the *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, says, "It is important to bear in mind that all music of the temple, regardless of the period, was nothing but an accessory to its sacrificial ritual. Without sacrifice the music loses its *raison d'etre*."

³² Ferguson (1988), 31.

³³ Edward Foley, *Foundations of Christian Music* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1996), 81. Foley is professor of liturgy and music at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago.

the doctrine of spiritual sacrifice eliminated them specifically from Christian worship. Christian writers often asserted that God had allowed the use of instruments under the old covenant merely as a concession to human weakness.³⁴

Let me just add that Danny's use here of McKinnon's comments in *Music in Early Christian Literature* is potentially misleading. As I have already stated, McKinnon points out that the Christian *polemic against pagan music* that was first hinted at in the late second century grew in explicitness and intensity throughout the third century and became commonplace among the major figures of the fourth century. He then says (emphasis supplied), "Why *the polemic* should have been absent from the writing of earlier church fathers and so prominent in those of later ones is not easy to explain." His question is not why opposition to instruments in church was not expressed earlier. The ready explanation for that phenomenon, in McKinnon's own words, is that Christian music "was so exclusively vocal that the occasion to criticize the use of instruments in church never arose."³⁵ Rather, his question is why condemnation of *pagan music* was not expressed earlier. So he is not suggesting here that the early silence implies that the use of instruments was acceptable in church and thus is not suggesting that opposition to instruments in church was new in the late second century.³⁶

Second Argument for McKinnon's Alleged Reversal

The second point (heading B) of Danny's proof that McKinnon changed his opinion about whether Christians would have condemned instruments in the church if anyone had tried to use them is McKinnon's recognition that the church's condemnation of pagan music was motivated by that music's association with idolatry and sexual immorality and went so far as to demonize the instruments themselves. This was, of course, known to McKinnon decades before the publication of *Music in Early Christian Literature* in 1987, so one wonders how it could be the basis for his alleged reversal of opinion. Moreover, McKinnon in his earlier work cited the patristic writers' demonization of instruments *as proof that they would never have been tolerated in Christian assemblies*. He says that "to argue that instruments might have been tolerated if disassociated from evil circumstances and baptized, so to speak, for use in the liturgy may be logical in the abstract but is incompatible with the real attitude of the Church

³⁴ Quentin Faulkner, *Wiser Than Despair: The Evolution of Ideas in the Relationship of Music in the Christian Church* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996), 63. Faulkner is Steinhart Distinguished Professor of Music at the University of Nebraska.

³⁵ McKinnon (1998), chapter IV, 73.

³⁶ McKinnon recognizes that the early church sang without instruments, but he does not believe they were theologically motivated to do so. In the 1960s he contended that the church sang *a cappella* simply out of Jewish habit, a practice inherited from the synagogue, but his own later work contributed to undermining the notion that there was singing in the early synagogue. This is important because if there was no singing in the early synagogue, then obviously the early church added singing to whatever it may have inherited from the synagogue; and if the early church added singing to whatever it may have inherited from the synagogue, then the absence of instruments in the synagogue does not explain their absence in the church (because instruments could have been added as easily as singing). There are additional reasons for doubting the inherited-synagogue-practice explanation which I have discussed elsewhere. I am unclear as to how McKinnon currently explains the early church's *a cappella* practice.

Fathers. To them the instruments were evil themselves."³⁷ It thus makes no sense to present this as evidence that McKinnon changed his opinion on the point in question.

Third Argument for McKinnon's Alleged Reversal

The third point (heading C) of Danny's proof that McKinnon changed his opinion about whether Christians would have condemned instruments in the church if anyone had tried to use them is McKinnon's recognition that the Church Fathers accepted the idea of music as an academic discipline and employed musical figures of speech. Not only was McKinnon no doubt aware of these facts for decades prior to 1987, but nowhere does he even hint that they have any relevance to whether musical instruments would have been accepted in the church. On the contrary, the "comparatively rare" examples of acceptance of music as an academic discipline and the frequent use of musical figures of speech *coexisted* with the very denunciations of instruments that made clear they would *not be* tolerated in church.

Fourth Argument for McKinnon's Alleged Reversal

The final point (heading D) of Danny's proof that McKinnon changed his opinion on the point in question is McKinnon's recognition that patristic denunciations of musical instruments were made in the contexts of the theater, marriage celebrations, and banquets and not in the context of church. Since this was a principal assertion of the dissertation in which McKinnon expressed the opinion, quoted by Danny, that Christians *would have* condemned instruments in the church if anyone had introduced them, it makes no sense to cite it as evidence that he changed that opinion.

In fact, the very paragraph of *Music in Early Christian Literature* from which Danny quotes shows that the patristic denunciations, despite being directed at instrumental music in contexts other than church, make clear that instruments would not have been tolerated in church. McKinnon states (p. 3, emphasis supplied), "What one observes [in the sources] are two separate phenomena: a consistent condemnation of instruments in the contexts of [the theater, marriage celebrations, and banquets] and an ecclesiastical psalmody *obviously* free of instrumental involvement." It is *obviously* free of instrumental involvement because one could not say what the patristic writers said about instruments and then accept their use in church. The exclusion of instruments from church is necessarily implied by what they said about their use outside of church. This is the same point McKinnon made in his dissertation (p. 2, emphasis supplied): "There is the fact that early Christian music was vocal and there is the patristic polemic against instruments. *The two are related in that an analysis of the polemic confirms the fact.*"

McKinnon's point is that one cannot take the objections made against pagan music as the reasons instruments were not used in church because the patristic writers never (or only with rare exception) connected those objections to the church's *a cappella* practice. Thus he says (p. 3-4) "the church fathers failed to forge an ideological link between the two . . ." He certainly does not mean, however, that one cannot infer from

³⁷ McKinnon (1998), chapter IV, 72 (article published originally in 1965).

the patristic writers' denunciations of musical instruments that instruments were not used in church or conclude that the introduction of them into church would have been condemned. In saying that it was left to "the *a cappella* partisans of the nineteenth century," a group much larger than churches of Christ, to forge an ideological link between patristic condemnation of pagan music and *a cappella* practice, McKinnon simply is saying that this appears to be the first time that those objections were said to be the reasons the early church did not use instruments in worship.

Danny's confusion leads to the following declaration:

If the church fathers opposed accompaniment in worship in either the home or in 'designated assemblies,' it is odd that they *never said so*. Neither the Bible nor the early church for several hundred years speaks a word against accompaniment in worship. Acceptance of Christians singing with accompaniment would not contradict the writings of any church father until the dawn of the fifth century."

Yes, they did not condemn the use of instruments in Christian worship, the reason being, to quote McKinnon again, is that Christian music "was so exclusively vocal that the occasion to criticize the use of instruments in church never arose."³⁸ So it is not the least bit odd that condemnation of instruments was not directed toward their use in Christian worship. And though the Church Fathers condemned musical instruments in contexts other than church, their remarks left no doubt that instruments would not have been tolerated in church should they have been introduced. As explained above, that is why McKinnon says that one observes "an ecclesiastical psalmody *obviously* free of instrumental involvement." So it is ludicrous to assert that patristic writings prior to the fifth century were compatible with the use of musical instruments in Christian worship, all the more when the very scholar on which one relies insists otherwise.

Fifth Subsection

The fifth subsection of chapter 5, titled "The Condemnation of David," opens with a claim that patristic writers in the fifth century began condemning instruments in worship. If by that Danny means that they began condemning the actual use of instruments in churches, he is mistaken. Instruments did not begin to be used in churches for several more centuries. McKinnon states:

A superficial reading of the passage [from Theodoret] might prompt the conclusion that Theodoret had in mind a controversy over the use of instruments in some contemporary Christian church. However, the instruments he mentions are the instruments of the Old Testament which is clear not only from the explicit reference to the Old Law in the text of the question itself, but also from several other patristic passages referring to

³⁸ McKinnon (1998), chapter IV, 73.

how God tolerated the use of instruments by the Jews because of their spiritual immaturity.³⁹

McKinnon likewise says of an early fifth-century sermon by Niceta: "Obviously Niceta, like Theodoret, was not referring to a profanation of the Christian liturgy by instruments; rather he was comparing their absence under the New Law with their use under the Old Law."⁴⁰

On the other hand, if Danny means that the comments of these fifth-century writers make clear that instruments were not used and would not be tolerated in churches, this is true of patristic writings prior to the fifth century, as I have discussed at length. The difference is that in the earlier writings the nonuse and lack of toleration of instruments in church is almost exclusively shown by comments about instruments in contexts other than church whereas the later writings more directly address the absence of instruments in church. In neither case is any condemnation ever directed toward anyone actually using instruments in church.

This subsection not only fails to serve the chapter's goal of showing how the early church's *a cappella* practice was motivated by something other than its understanding of God's will, it undermines it. It confirms that the church was motivated by its understanding of God's will by noting that patristic writers asserted that instrumental music and other aspects of Jewish worship under the old covenant were incompatible with the spiritual worship under the new covenant. Danny attempts to discount this evidence by quoting one statement from Theodoret and taking umbrage at his claim that the allowance of instrumental worship under the old covenant was a concession to help keep the Jews from idolatry. Danny says, "These fifth century writers call the instruments that God asked for 'evil.' That is so far from Biblical truth that I cannot see them as an authority for how I should sing today."

That is a diversion. No one is putting forward any Church Father as the authoritative basis for *a cappella* practice. The question under consideration is why the early church did not use instruments in worship. The burden of this chapter is to show that this practice was motivated by something other than the church's understanding of God's will. The fact many patristic writers believed the new covenant instituted by Christ included a spiritual worship that was incompatible with the instrumental worship under the old covenant indicates that they were indeed motivated by their understanding of God's will. The change in covenants and the implications of that change are fundamental aspects of New Testament theology.

It is not surprising that some would speculate about why God allowed the temporary practices of the old covenant. The New Testament forces those kinds of questions upon us. The fact Theodoret explained the temporary nature of old-covenant instrumental worship as a suboptimal accommodation to help keep the Jews from idolatry (and thus the lesser of two evils) does not detract from fact he saw *a cappella* practice as

³⁹ McKinnon (1998), chapter IV, 76.

⁴⁰ McKinnon (1998), chapter IV, 77.

a product of the covenant change and thus as a matter of God's will. I have previously cited a number of others who make the same point, including Eusebius from the early fourth century.

In a brief digression, Danny asserts that early church history is replete with evidence of instrumental music in worship that *a cappella* proponents unreasonably dismiss. The only example he has cited is Clement of Alexandria, and I have already explained why Clement is not good evidence of instrumental music in Christian worship. And as I have pointed out, it is recognized by a broad spectrum of scholars that the early church did not use instruments in worship, so that conclusion obviously is not driven by *a cappella* bias. The bulk of scholars simply do not agree that the New Testament or any noncanonical writings of early Christians establish the use of instruments in church.

In Danny's summation at the end of the chapter he repeats various claims and misunderstandings with which I have already taken issue. I will not plow that ground again. The bottom line is that chapter 5 utterly fails to achieve its goal of demonstrating that the early church's *a cappella* practice was motivated by something other than its understanding of God's will. Danny periodically tosses out that the patristic writers were subject to various cultural influences, but nowhere does he even attempt to convert that truism into an argument demonstrating that the nonuse of instruments was a mere cultural preference rather than a product of theological opposition tied to the change in covenants. Since Danny acknowledged that it would be powerful evidence in favor of the *a cappella* position if the first Christians believed that instrumental worship was contrary to God's will, his failure to present a superior alternative explanation for the nonuse of instruments is telling.

Chapter 6

In chapter 6 Danny accuses *a cappella* proponents of inconsistency in claiming it is unacceptable to worship God with musical instruments but acceptable to do so outside of Christian assemblies.⁴¹ The first thing to note in response is that this is not a challenge to the correctness of the view that it is unacceptable to worship God with instruments. Challenging the consistency with which one applies an understanding of God's will is different from challenging the correctness of that understanding. One could be correct in thinking it is unacceptable to worship God with instruments and be incorrect in thinking it is acceptable to do so outside the assembly. The proper response in that case would be to abandon the incorrect belief that worshiping God with instruments outside the assembly is acceptable. So assuming Danny is correct that *a cappella* proponents are inconsistent in allowing instrumental worship outside the assembly, it does nothing to advance his claim that they are in error in thinking it is unacceptable to worship God with instrumental music.

⁴¹ The chapter seems more concerned with the assembly/non-assembly distinction as it is applied to conduct other than instrumental music (solos, choirs, dancing), but I am focusing on the issue of instrumental music. The arguments regarding these other matters are not in all respects identical to the arguments regarding instrumental music.

I agree that worshipping God with instrumental music is improper wherever it is done, just as worshipping with old-covenant sacrifices is improper wherever it is done.⁴² Though I believe there is a distinction between obedience/service and worship, I agree that worship is not restricted to what is done in the assembly. I am not convinced that all of Danny's examples qualify as instrumental worship, but that is a different question from whether the propriety of instrumental worship is determined by whether it was done in or out of the assembly. On that we are in accord.

Danny claims that Clement of Alexandria's acceptance of worshipping God with instruments at a banquet eliminates the possibility that God desires Christians to worship him without instruments in all settings. But as I have already pointed out, it is unlikely that Clement expresses approval of the use of the kithara and lyre at a banquet. As McKinnon states, in the book Danny touts as the work of a "seasoned professor":

Here in a frequently quoted passage, 'if you should wish to sing and play to the cithara and lyre, this is not blameworthy,' Clement seems to contradict all that goes before and to condone the use of these instruments. But surely the immediate context of the passage as well as Clement's views in general suggest that it is to be read allegorically.⁴³

Again, an allegorical reading of the passage is supported by the fact Clement earlier in the same essay allegorizes the kithara as meaning the mouth struck by the Spirit and identifies the lyre as an instrument of war that contrasts with the one instrument of peace, the Word alone, by which Christians honor God; and immediately after the statement in question he allegorizes the psaltery as referring to Jesus. In addition, in an earlier work titled *Protrepticus*, Clement described Jesus as "scorning the lyre and kithara as lifeless instruments."⁴⁴ Taking such musical references literally is what McKinnon had in mind when he said "perhaps the most common sort of misinterpretation of patristic musical reference is to draw unwarranted conclusions from a passage involving musical figures of speech."⁴⁵

And even if Clement's reference was intended literally, it makes more sense, given the totality of his remarks, to think his acceptance of instruments there was based on the banquet setting than to think he believed instrumental worship was acceptable in an assembly. As I discussed earlier, there is something spiritually distinctive about the community of faith gathered for worship and not everything that is permissible outside the congregational assembly is permissible within it, so thinking that Clement was employing an assembly/non-assembly distinction is reasonable. Thus a literal

⁴² A case can be made, however, for an assembly/non-assembly distinction (see the earlier discussion relating to Clement of Alexandria), and others find that case persuasive. This distinction does not depend on calling the same conduct worship in one setting but not in the other. It depends on seeing the assembly as the spiritual replacement of the Jewish temple in a distinctive sense and thus as a time of distinctive requirements vis-à-vis the temple's practices.

⁴³ McKinnon (1987), 33.

⁴⁴ McKinnon (1987), 30, 33.

⁴⁵ McKinnon (1987), 5-6.

interpretation of his musical reference argues for the viability of an assembly/non-assembly distinction not against it.

Danny seems to think that *a cappella* proponents rest their case on the claim that Eph. 5:19 and Col. 3:16 affirmatively exclude instrumental music. He thinks those texts cannot exclude instrumental music because they apply to all of life and Clement demonstrates that instrumental worship in banquets is acceptable to God and thus that whatever instrumental prohibition exists does *not* apply to all of life. So he thinks that if he can show that these verses do indeed apply to all of life he has shown, in light of Clement, that they cannot exclude instrumental music.

In the first place, the case against instrumental music in Christian worship does not rest on the claim that Eph. 5:19 and Col. 3:16 affirmatively exclude instrumental music. (That is not to deny that some may have done so.) Those texts *contextually* refer to singing without accompaniment (see prior discussion), as the vast majority of scholars recognize was the practice of the early church, but since *psallo*, at that time did not *inherently* exclude instrumental music one cannot establish that exclusion from these verses. The exclusion is established from the fact instrumental music was an integral part of sacrificial worship in the Jewish temple, the fact instruments were not used by the early church when everything argued for their adoption, the fact there is no indication that God desires or accepts instrumental worship from Christians, the fact Christ instituted a new covenant under which the external, ceremonial aspects of temple worship were superseded by a higher worship, and the fact patristic writers explain their nonuse of instruments in terms of the shift in covenants.

Secondly, the notion that Eph. 5:19 and Col. 3:16 refer to an assembly is recognized by many leading commentators who are not *a cappella* proponents. So the suggestion that the conclusion is driven by *a cappella* bias is unfounded and unfair. Here are some examples regarding Eph. 5:19.

Clinton Arnold: "[T]he text is simply asserting a connection between being filled with the Spirit and the church gathering together for corporate worship. This is not a mechanistic approach, but rather a recognition that God meets his people and strengthens them by his Spirit as they corporately worship him and praise his name."⁴⁶

Frank Thielman: "Paul next says that as a result of their growth toward maturity in the realm of the Spirit (5:18; cf. 3:19; 4:13), his readers will meet together for praise of God and instruction. . . . Paul may have intended to contrast the crude singing typical of Greco-Roman feasting . . . with the Spirit-inspired singing of corporate Christian worship (e.g., Eadie 1883: 399; Swete 1909: 241)."⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Clinton Arnold, *Ephesians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 352.

⁴⁷ Frank Thielman, *Ephesians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), 361.

John Muddiman: "If pressed, a true reflexive would mean 'speaking to yourselves' and the maxim would then be recommending inward praise during the daily life of believers (as, probably, 1 Thess. 5:16f. and Phil. 4:4-6). But the larger context implies corporate worship and interaction with other Christians (and this must be the sense at Col. 3:16, with its 'teaching and admonishing each other')."⁴⁸

Ernest Best: "This verse [v. 20] forms the third clause dependent on v. 18, and, like those of v. 19, relates to communal worship; believers have spoken to one another in song, praised Christ and now as a kind of climax they are to return thanks to God."⁴⁹

Andrew Lincoln: "Wise living is then shown to be Spirit-filled living, which is described primarily in terms of its consequences for the community's corporate worship. . . . This Spirit-filled living will manifest itself in their corporate worship, as they address and edify one another by means of all the types of songs the Spirit inspires, as they sing their praise of Christ from the heart, and as they in Christ's name offer thanksgiving to their God and Father for all the blessings he has bestowed upon them."⁵⁰

F. F. Bruce: "The meetings of those early Christians must have been musical occasions, as they not only sang and made melody to the Lord, in their hearts as well as their tongues, but addressed one another for mutual help and blessing in compositions already known to the community or in songs improvised under immediate inspiration."⁵¹

Here are some examples regarding Col. 3:16.

Douglas Moo: "TNIV's among you translates a phrase that could also be translated 'in [each of] you.' . . . Some interpreters argue for this individualized application based on the parallelism with v. 15 ('in you hearts'). But the rest of this verse, with its focus on the worship of the collective body, suggests rather that Paul is urging the community as a whole to put the message about Christ at the center of its corporate experience."

James Dunn: "The elements of Christian worship commended are not altogether surprising: 'the word of Christ,' teaching and admonition, and singing and thanksgiving, elements which have been a feature of typical Christian worship from the beginning until now. . . . That a corporate context is envisaged, a sharing of the word of Christ within the gathered assembly, is confirmed by the next clause, where the 'indwelling' of the word is further described or the complimentary activity indicated: 'in all wisdom teaching and warning each other.'"⁵²

⁴⁸ John Muddiman, *The Epistle to the Ephesians*, Black's New Testament Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2001), 248.

⁴⁹ Ernest Best, *Ephesians*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 513.

⁵⁰ Andrew Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word Books, 1990), 347.

⁵¹ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 380-381.

⁵² James D. G. Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and Philemon*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 236, 237.

Gordon Fee: "This passage comes toward the conclusion of the paraenesis that began in v. 12, all of which has community life in purview. Verses 12-15, therefore, speak mainly to *relationships* within the community, concluding in v. 15 with the reminder that they have been called to become 'one body.' Our passage picks up these concerns by focusing on their *corporate worship* as the place where they will both praise God and be reminded of these obligations to one another."⁵³

Ralph Martin: "While singing is mentioned as a feature of corporate praise and thankfulness, a restrictive ban on freely created and ecstatic songs (sung in glossolalia = by the use of the tongue?) may be seen in the way in which such hymnody is subordinated to the ministry of teaching and exhortation."⁵⁴

F. F. Bruce: "Plainly, when early Christians came together for worship, they not only realized the presence of Christ in the breaking of the bread but also addressed prayers and praises to him in a manner which tacitly, and at times expressly, acknowledged him to be no less than God."⁵⁵

Everett Ferguson, whom Danny singles out for criticism, says nothing more than these other scholars. In the discussion to which Danny refers, Ferguson is disagreeing with those who deny that Eph. 5:19 and Col. 3:16 apply to conduct in the assembly of the church. In making the allegedly shocking statement, "In any case it is not a private religious exercise which is described," he merely is acknowledging the obvious corporate or communal (i.e., non-private) indications in the texts. Doing something to "one another" requires more than one person and thus cannot be done privately.

Ferguson agrees with these other scholars that Paul in these texts has in mind the congregational assembly. After all, churches do gather for worship, and since Paul is writing to churches, their assemblies are the most natural referent. Ferguson says in the statement seized upon by Danny that *at the very least* ("In any case") Eph. 5:19 and Col. 3:16 are describing some kind of *non-private* or *communal* religious exercise. In other words, even if Paul was not describing a congregational assembly he necessarily was describing a group activity rather than a private religious exercise. So Ferguson was not saying, as Danny charges, that Eph. 5:19 and Col. 3:16 apply only to assemblies, and he certainly was not saying that worship is confined to what occurs in assemblies. He was saying that these texts necessarily are describing non-private or communal conduct, regardless of whether one accepts that Paul is referring to a congregational assembly.

Danny misconstrues Ferguson's comment because he has created an imaginary dilemma from which he thinks Ferguson is trying to extricate himself. In Danny's mind, *a cappella* proponents base their exclusion argument on Eph. 5:19 and Col. 3:16 but

⁵³ Gordon D. Fee, *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 648.

⁵⁴ Ralph P. Martin, *Colossians and Philemon*, New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 115.

⁵⁵ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 159.

because of Clement's testimony must find a way to restrict the exclusive force of those texts to the assembly. This entire premise is flawed, as I have explained, and in any event, Ferguson does not use Eph. 5:19 or Col. 3:16 to construct the "loophole" Danny alleges, meaning he does not argue from them that one can worship only in an assembly or that one is free to worship with instruments outside of an assembly. Indeed, Ferguson has elsewhere stated unequivocally, "Worship to God occurs in the church meetings, but not exclusively there. . . . The limitation of the concept of worship to activities at formally stated times and places is one common misunderstanding of worship."⁵⁶ Danny reads the notion of loophole construction into Ferguson's words rather than out of them.

Danny asserts that the variation in thinking over how to apply the prohibition of instrumental worship is a consequence of the fact God never explicitly condemned instruments and never said why he would oppose them. That leaves people to apply the prohibition in a vacuum, which leads to variation in application. According to Danny, "If instead our views were based on what God 'did say,' then we would not have such variety among ourselves in how we apply the rules."

I dare say that if God had stated explicitly that musical instruments are not to be used in Christian worship because their prescribed association with Jewish sacrificial worship makes them incompatible with the spiritual worship under the new covenant instituted by Christ, there still would be disagreement over how that command applies to many of the same situations Danny mentions. Disagreement over how God's will applies under different facts and circumstances certainly is not unique to aspects of God's will that are inferred. So I do not see how variety in application of the prohibition against instrumental music can be blamed on the fact the prohibition is not stated explicitly. But even if the fact the prohibition is inferred rather than explicit has increased the uncertainty of its application, the question remains whether the prohibition is indeed God's will.

Chapter 7

Danny has convinced himself that the *a cappella* view requires its proponents to exempt from their prohibition instrumental worship outside of congregational assemblies. He thinks they do this by asserting that worship can be done only in the assembly. The point of this chapter is to show that worship is not restricted to what is done in the congregational assembly.

Danny apparently has engaged people who insist that worship can be done only in the assembly, but I am not one of them. And neither is Ferguson, whom Danny rightly identifies as a leading *a cappella* proponent, as the above quote makes clear. So insisting that worship can be done only in the assembly obviously is not a necessary part of the *a cappella* view.

Since I have no quarrel with the chapter's main point, I will confine my remarks to isolated portions of it. Danny states that "the Bible never says that public assemblies

⁵⁶ Ferguson (1996), 226-227.

offer a higher quality of worship." I agree there is no statement to that effect, but as I have already said, the assembly is where God meets with his people *as a people*, and there is something spiritually distinctive about that encounter (even if one hesitates to describe it as "higher quality"). Moreover, it is as a gathered community that the worship we offer to God edifies one another.

Danny indicates in the subsection titled "Every-Waking-Minute Worship," relying on Rom. 12:1, that one's entire life is worship. Worship is a "24-7," "*all the time*" affair. There certainly is a sense in which all that we do in submission to God is worship. Our obedience says that the one we obey is worthy of that response. We give him our allegiance and serve him with our entire lives because he is worthy to be served. But I think it is important to recognize a distinction between God-glorifying obedience or service and specific acts or expressions of reverence and adoration that are consciously directed toward God.⁵⁷ Worship in this more specific sense is not a continuous activity; it is not everything we do that brings glory to God. Rather, the life of one submitted to God is *punctuated* with acts of worship. As theologian Edmund Clowney writes, "In private, as in public, a worship activity such as prayer is distinguished from the regular activities of life. Though we do all to the glory of God, not all that we do is the special activity of worship."⁵⁸

This distinction is apparent in numerous biblical examples. For instance, in Gen. 22:1-4 Abraham takes Isaac to Moriah in obedience to the Lord's command. In 22:5 he tells the servants he had brought with him, "Stay here with the donkey, and I and the lad will go yonder; and we will worship and return to you." Abraham clearly saw worship as a distinct expression of devotion or reverence. It was something he planned to do at a specific place.

Likewise, when David learned that the child born to him by Bathsheba was dead, he bathed, changed clothes, and went into the house of God "and worshiped" (2 Sam. 12:20). Again, his worship was a distinct act done in a specific place.

In Mat. 14:33, after Jesus walked on water, "those who were in the boat worshiped Him, saying, 'You are certainly God's Son.'" Similarly, Mat. 28:17 reports that when the disciples saw the resurrected Lord, "they worshiped Him," and Lk. 24:52 says that after the disciples witnessed Jesus' ascension near Bethany, "they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy."⁵⁹ In each of these instances, worship was a distinct expression of reverence that was done at a specific time and place.

The apostle Paul served (or worshiped) God with his entire life (e.g., Acts 24:14), yet in Acts 24:11 he speaks of having gone "up to Jerusalem to worship." If the worship

⁵⁷ Some reserve the term "worship" for this more specific expression of devotion, referring to the broader submission by the term "service." E.g., Hugo McCord, "Worship," *Firm Foundation* (June 1, 1982), 6, 11. Regardless of whether one uses different words, the conceptual distinction should be appreciated.

⁵⁸ Edmund P. Clowney, *The Church* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 126. See also, Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 1003-1004.

⁵⁹ A few manuscripts lack the phrase "worshiped him," but it should be accepted as original.

to which Paul referred was not a distinct act, a subset of an overall life of submission, it is hard to imagine how he could go to Jerusalem to do it.

Romans 12:1 does not mean (and Danny may not be saying otherwise) that in Christianity there are no longer distinct or direct acts of worship.⁶⁰ It simply means that, as was true in the Old Testament, this more specific worship must be practiced as part of the wider worship embracing the whole of the Christian's life. Otherwise, it is unacceptable to God. As C. E. B. Cranfield says about this verse:

Paul's use of the word *latreia* . . . implies that the true worship which God desires embraces the whole of the Christian's life from day to day. It implies that any cultic worship which is not accompanied by obedience in the ordinary affairs of life must be regarded as false worship, unacceptable to God (cf. the insight of the OT. Prophets – e.g. Isa I.10-17; 58:I-II; Amos 5:21-24). But it would be quite unjustifiable to argue that the logical implication of Paul's use of *latreia* here is that no room is left for a Christian cultic worship carried out at particular times and in particular places. Provided that such worship in the narrower sense is always practised as part of the wider worship embracing the whole of the Christian's living and is not thought of as something acceptable to God apart from obedience of life, there is nothing here to deny it its place in the life of the faithful.⁶¹

Likewise, Michael Thompson remarks:

The apostle urges a way of life as a whole, identified as a right-minded worship or service. In doing so, he no doubt expands our understanding of what kind of worship God values. True worship is inseparably connected with Christian behaviour in general. But it is a logical fallacy to conclude from this text that he redefines worship as, or reduces worship to, Christian ethics – any more than Hosea's commendation of love and knowledge over sacrificial offerings (Hos. 6:6) proves that the prophet was calling for an absolute end to form and ritual.⁶²

Danny misidentifies *leitourgia* as a verb and *leitourgeo*, as a noun, but more importantly, in saying "In Acts 13:2, the noun [sic] is tied to a fast," he fails to note that the

⁶⁰ NIV translates, "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship." The word "worship" is translated "service" in the KJV, ASV, NKJV, and in a footnote in ESV. The standard Greek lexicon, BDAG (p. 598) recommends "thoughtful service" for the phrase *logike,n latreian*. Everett Harrison suggests that "service" is a more suitable translation in this context "since it covers the entire range of the Christian's life and activity." Everett Harrison, "Romans" in Frank Gaebelin, ed., *Expositor's Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976) 10:128.

⁶¹ C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans Vol. II*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1979), 601-602.

⁶² Michael B. Thompson, "Romans 12:1-2 and Paul's Vision for Worship" in Markus Bockmuehl and Michael B. Thompson, eds., *A Vision for the Church* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), 127.

probable subject of *leitourgeo*, is the church mentioned in 13:1. As I. Howard Marshall, in agreement with many commentators, explains, "Since the list of names in verse 1 is primarily meant to show who was available for missionary service, and since changes of subject are not uncommon in Greek, it is preferable to assume that Luke is thinking of an activity involving the members of the church generally."⁶³ Gerhard Krodel says of this verse, "During a gathering of the community for worship, the Holy Spirit made known his will through one of its members."⁶⁴ So contrary to what one sometimes hears (not from Danny), the activity of the assembled community is indeed described as worship.⁶⁵

Danny declares, "In fact, every New Testament reference to singing is outside of the context of a designated Christian assembly, except one: 1 Corinthians 14:15, 26." It is a bold person indeed who will render that opinion as a fact when many of the world's leading commentators, some of whom I previously quoted, are convinced that Eph. 5:19 and Col. 3:16 refer to an assembly.

Chapter 8

This short chapter serves as an introduction to the following three chapters in which Danny promises to refute arguments that God opposes instrumental music in Christian worship and to present evidence that God still desires instrumental worship. After identifying certain kinds of biblical evidence that would be relevant to whether God still desires instrumental worship, Danny leaves a blank space to portray dramatically that the identified evidence does not exist. Though I disagree that none of the identified evidence exists, the real question is whether the evidence that does exist is sufficient to make the case not whether additional evidence is lacking. One must be careful in assuming that God must reveal truths with the kind of directness one would prefer and then allowing that assumption to blind one to the power of the less direct evidence he has provided. The truth about the Trinity illustrates the point.

Danny declares, "Indeed, if [a cappella proponents] were convinced that the first century church used instruments in praise, then [they] would find no contradiction with any passage of scripture in the Old or New Testaments." Of course, that is a gigantic "if," given the evidence that has convinced the vast majority of scholars that the church did not use instruments for roughly the first 900 years. But if it is stipulated contrary to that evidence that the early church did in fact worship with instruments, then Scripture would have to be interpreted in light of that fact. I agree that there is nothing in Scripture that prohibits instrumental worship in such an airtight way that it would be impossible to harmonize with the practice, but the point is to determine God's will on the matter not to determine whether instrumental worship is beyond the logical limits of harmonization in a counterfactual hypothetical. The relevant inquiry on the propriety of infant baptism, for example, is not whether Scripture prohibits infant baptism in such an airtight way that it would be impossible to harmonize with the practice if it were stipulated that the apostolic church

⁶³ I. Howard Marshall, *Acts*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 215.

⁶⁴ Gerhard A. Krodel, *Acts*, Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1986), 228.

⁶⁵ See also, Ferguson (1998), 233-234.

engaged in it but whether all the available evidence, including the historical evidence, permits a reasonable conclusion on the matter.

Danny is here attempting to devalue historical evidence by giving a hypothetical that contradicts it. The implication is that what *really matters* is whether a case for the *a cappella* view can be made from Scripture interpreted in isolation from historical evidence and whether that case is not only persuasive but beyond possible dispute. He is framing the worth of certain evidence and the standard of proof in a way that favors his position. To repeat, the relevant question is whether all the available evidence, including the historical evidence, permits a reasonable conclusion on the matter. Scripture remains the authority but history can aid in its interpretation.

Chapter 9

In this chapter, Danny takes issue with the argument that *a cappella* is an inherent aspect of the Greek words in commands to sing and that the words themselves thus exclude instrumental music in worship. As I have stated repeatedly, the *a cappella* view, at least as many of us articulate it, is not based on the claim that the Greek words in commands to sing *inherently* exclude instrumental music. The exclusion is established from the fact instrumental music was an integral part of sacrificial worship in the Jewish temple, the fact instruments were not used by the early church when everything argued for their adoption, the fact there is no indication that God desires or accepts instrumental worship from Christians, the fact Christ instituted a new covenant under which the external, ceremonial aspects of temple worship were superseded by a higher worship, and the fact patristic writers explain their nonuse of instruments in terms of the shift in covenants.

Danny argues that *a cappella* proponents cannot establish that **ado**, and **o**,**de**, in Eph. 5:19 and Col. 3:16 exclude musical instruments. On the contrary, he claims that John's use of these words in Revelation shows that they contextually include instrumental accompaniment and thus cannot possibly exclude it inherently. Though I have no quarrel with the claim that the exclusion of instruments is not inherent in these words, I must correct some things Danny says here.

Danny asserts that John in Rev. 14:3 uses **ado**, and **o**,**de**, to refer to singing that was accompanied by the playing of harps. John does no such thing. The sound from heaven that John hears in 14:2 was very loud, being like the sound of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder. It also was melodious, being *like* "the sound of harpists playing their harps." This loud, melodious sound is identified in 14:3 as the singing of the redeemed (or angelic host). There is no mention of any instruments being played; the singing is compared to the sound of harp playing. Ian Boxall remarks:

The **sound** (fwnhv), **from heaven** here is probably a heavenly sound (contrast 4:1; 6:6; 9:13; 10:8; 11:12; 12:10; 14:13; 16:1, 17; 18:4; 19:5; 21:3), **loud**, as one has come to expect from the heavenly realm, but melodious nonetheless, for it is **like that of harpists playing on their harps**. **Many waters** describes the voice of 'someone like a son of man' at

1:15, and the **loud thunderclap** has hitherto described the divine Presence (4:5; 8:5; 11:19; see also 16:18). But the sound of heavenly worshippers, rather than God himself, is more appropriate here (cf. 19:6, where the Hallelujahs of a great multitude will be described in this way). These heavenly beings making this heavenly music **were singing something like a new song before the throne and the four creatures and the elders.**⁶⁶

Danny states, "In Revelation 5:8, 9, John sees the creatures of Heaven also singing a new song, and each of them has his own harp." The suggestion is that the singing was accompanied by harp playing, but that is not true. Revelation 5:8 says that each of the twenty-four elders, who probably are angelic beings, "had a harp *and* golden bowls full of incense, *which are the prayers of the saints.*" The description of the twenty-four elders as having both a harp and bowls of incense suggests that the harp, like the bowl, is a static symbol of something, as it certainly could not be played by one holding one or more bowls.⁶⁷ And, in fact, there is no indication that it is played. In keeping with apocalyptic literature, this is a stylized depiction of a worship scene with an explanation of the symbolic meaning of the objects – they represent the prayers of the saints, both sung and spoken.⁶⁸

The fact *heavenly counterparts* of old-covenant cult objects are used to symbolize the prayers of the saints certainly does not mean that use of old-covenant cult objects is permissible in new-covenant worship. (If it did, burning incense to God from golden bowls would be permissible, as would using a golden altar [8:3].) The *earthly forms* of the old-covenant cult are mere shadows of the heavenly reality, shadows that have been superseded by the worship inaugurated by Christ (Col. 2:17; Heb. 8:5, 10:1). The heavenly counterparts that are employed in the heavenly symbolism cannot be equated with the earthly forms, the superseded shadows, and it is only the latter that is available to us on earth. So even if one could demonstrate that the use of heavenly harps and bowls of incense as apocalyptic symbols represents divine approval of those objects in worship, one has not shown divine approval of any objects to which we have access.

Danny says that "in Revelation 15:2, 3, those who have been victorious over the beast hold 'harps given to them by God' and sing the song of Moses and the Lamb." Once again, the suggestion that the singing was accompanied by harp playing is dubious at best. In Rev. 15:2, John sees the victorious ones standing beside the glassy sea "having harps of God." That is all the Greek text states. The Greek word *echo*, can mean holding something, which is why some translations insert the word "hands" or add "given to them by" God, but *echo*, also can mean "having" in the sense of being equipped with. It often is used of a person having hands, feet, ears, and eyes.

⁶⁶ Ian Boxhall, *The Revelation of Saint John*, Black's New Testament Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2006), 201.

⁶⁷ The plural "bowls" can be understood as being distributed among the elders so that each holds only one bowl (e.g., NJB).

⁶⁸ A song is identified with prayer in Ps. 42:8, so it would not be out of place for both the harp and bowls of incense to represent prayers. Indeed, many Psalms are sung prayers (see, e.g., Ps. 4:2, 5:2, 6:9, 39:12, 54:2, 55:1, 61:1, 69:13, 80:4, 84:8, 86:6, 88:2, 102:1, 141:2; also Hab. 3:1).

These victors are not said merely to have "harps" but "harps of God." I am persuaded that rather than a picture of victors holding heavenly harps given to them by God this is a metaphorical reference to the human voice animated by the human spirit under the direction of the Spirit of God. That is "God's harp" because it is, for reasons I have outlined elsewhere, the music that is especially fitting for the worship of a God who is spirit. As Everett Ferguson explains:

Vocal expressions are peculiarly well suited to the expression of spiritual worship, to the expressing of what comes from the human spirit and through the Spirit of God. They are rational, not in the sense of non-emotional, but as proceeding from and appealing to the highest of human nature. The whole self (including the emotions) is involved in Christian worship, but the mind (reason) is to be in control. Instrumental music can express feelings and emotions. Vocal music can express the will and intellect. The latter is better suited for the communion of spirit with Spirit. In vocal music there is an immediate contact. In instrumental music there is an intermediary. The voice is much more a matter of one's self than any other gift of praise can be. Vocal music thus best corresponds to the nature of one's relationship to God.⁶⁹

Note that in Rev. 14:2 singing was said to be like the sound of harpists playing their harps. So there already is an association in Revelation between the voice and a harp. Moreover, this kind of description would not be out of place in apocalyptic literature. In fact, about a century after Revelation was written, Clement of Alexandria described the tongue as "the psalter of the Lord" and said the kithara (harp) was "the mouth struck by the Spirit, as it were by a plectrum." It was Athanasius, the fourth-century church leader in Alexandria, or Hesychius, the fifth-century monk in Jerusalem, who identified the command in Psalm 150 to "Praise him with psalterion and kithara" as meaning "hymning him with the grace of the Holy Spirit with heart, tongue, and your lips."⁷⁰

In addition, there is no mention of these harps being played. The text merely reports that those having God's harps are singing. Given the persuasive evidence that the church never used musical instruments in worship and saw the human voice as the instrument best suited for worshiping a God who is spirit, it would be primed to understand "God's harps" as a metaphor for the singing capacity of the Spirit-filled Christian. It is true that one does not see a voice, but John knew by the victors' triumph and singing (15:3-4) that they possessed harps of God, human instruments ready to extol him in heartfelt song. His description reflects that knowledge.

So Danny's claim that John's use of *ado*, and *o*,*de*, in Revelation shows that those words contextually include instrumental accompaniment (and thus cannot possibly exclude it inherently) is incorrect. Again, I have no quarrel with the contention that the exclusion of

⁶⁹ Ferguson (1988), 90.

⁷⁰ Ferguson (1987), 97.

instruments is not inherent in these words; I simply am pointing out that Danny's argument that these words include instrumental accompaniment in Revelation is flawed.

Next we have a rehashing of the meaning of *psallo*, and *psalmos*, which I discussed in relation to the second subsection of chapter 5. As I explained there, Danny is mistaken in thinking that instrumental implications are inherent in the words such that they cannot be used to refer to singing that was unaccompanied for theological reasons. It has been shown *ad nauseam* that *psallo*, in the first century could mean simply sing without any implication of instrumental accompaniment.⁷¹ That is the import of the very definition Danny cites: to sing *with or without* instruments. That means the word can carry either connotation, depending on the context, not that it must carry both.

Thus, Andrew Lincoln, a leading scholar who has no stake in the instrumental music issue, says of Eph. 5:19, "Although its original meaning involved plucking a stringed instrument, *yavllw* here means to make music by singing (cf. also 1 Cor 14:15; Jas 5:13), so that there is no reference in this verse to instrumental accompaniment (cf. the discussion in BAGD 891; *pace* Barth, 584)."⁷² Clinton Arnold likewise remarks, "[S]ome have argued that [*psallo*,] implies the use of stringed instruments. It is true that the original meaning of the verb (*yavllw*) referred to the plucking of strings, but it certainly does not carry that meaning into all of its usages."⁷³

From the perspective of many *a cappella* proponents, Ferguson and myself included, Danny is here jousting at windmills. We do not base the prohibition of instrumental music in worship on the claim that *psallo*, *psalmos*, or any other musical word inherently excludes the use of musical instruments. When Danny states that an *a cappella* proponent "typically argues that *psallo*, had only one meaning in the first century, and that the one meaning was *a cappella*" (emphasis supplied), he cannot be referring to the scholars among us, as that position has long been recognized as an overstatement.⁷⁴

Danny at times seems to slip from claiming that *psallo*, does not inherently *exclude* instruments to suggesting that it inherently *includes* them, as when he tries to turn Ferguson's remarks about the use (or nonuse in Philo's case) of *psallo*, by Hellenistic Jews when writing for Gentile audiences into an affirmative approval of instruments by Paul.⁷⁵

⁷¹ See, e.g., Ferguson (1988), 1-28.

⁷² Lincoln (1990), 346.

⁷³ Arnold (2010), 354.

⁷⁴ See, e.g., Wm. M. Green, "Concern for the Pattern," *Restoration Quarterly* 10.2 (1967), 99.

⁷⁵ Paul was a Pharisee, having been brought up in Jerusalem at the feet of Gamaliel. He describes himself as a Hebrew of Hebrews. Though Paul had a mastery of Greek, he cannot be compared with someone like Philo in terms of Hellenistic influences. Martin Hengel states in *The Pre-Christian Paul* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press, 1991), 38, "Greek was Paul's mother tongue, but he also had command of Hebrew, the 'holy language' of scripture and liturgy, and Aramaic, the vernacular of Jewish Palestine. . . . For a man like Philo the situation was completely different. A deep divide separates Paul from the Alexandrian here." Moreover, Paul was not writing to a generic Gentile audience; he was writing to a *Christian* Gentile audience, a group that was familiar with church practice; and he probably was not writing to an exclusively Gentile audience but one that included a Jewish element.

But if **psallo**,, necessarily carries the notion of instrumental accompaniment, then the commands employing that verb would *require* the church to use instruments, a position Danny rejects. Moreover, it would be impossible in that case to account for the accepted historical fact that the early church did not use instruments and the fact a writer like Eusebius perceived *psalmos* (the cognate noun of **psallo**,,) as being in harmony with a worship that excluded instrumental music.

Danny complains that some *a cappella* proponents who concede that **psallo**,, in Eph. 5:19 carries a connotation of "playing" argue unreasonably that it cannot mean playing an instrument because the object of that playing is specified to be the heart rather than an instrument. Since the phrase "with/in your heart" modifies both singing and playing, it could mean playing an instrument with the involvement of one's heart just as it means singing with the involvement of one's heart. As Danny presents the argument, I think his objection to it is well founded. I do not accept that **psallo**,, here carries a connotation of playing and thus have no stake in that argument.

Danny says impatiently, "Another argument acknowledges that **psallo**,, broadly implied instruments in the first century, yet proposes an exception for Greek-speaking Jewish Christians only when they wrote in religious contexts." He is referring to Ferguson's assessment and again seems to be suggesting that **psallo**,, inherently *includes* instruments, which is not his position. Rather than address the evidence from the Septuagint, *Psalms of Solomon*, the Apocrypha, and Pseudepigrapha on which Ferguson bases his suggestion that it was in Jewish religious language that the instrumental connotations originally inherent in **psallo**,, began to be decoupled from it, Danny just dismisses it as though it were some kind of baseless contrivance of an *a cappella* partisan. He then declares two sentences later that the proposal is "foreign to the lexicons," which is puzzling given that the lexicons recognize that instrumental accompaniment was not an inherent aspect of **psallo**,, in the first century.

The brief sections on **psalmos**, **humneo**,, and **humnos** repeat the same uncontested point that the musical words do not inherently exclude instruments. Danny again hints, however, contrary to his own view, that instrumental accompaniment is inherent in **psallo**,, by speculating that Luke in Acts 16:25 chose **humneo**,, instead of **psallo**,, because **humneo**,, "means to sing praise, *regardless of instruments*" (emphasis supplied), the necessary implication being that **psallo**,, does *not* mean to sing regardless of instruments (i.e., instrumental connotations are inherent in the word). But that is precisely what **psallo**,, meant in the first century, hence the definition "to sing songs of praise, with or without instrumental accompaniment" (BDAG, 1096), the very definition Danny embraces. **Psallo**,, and **humneo**,, are essentially synonyms, as the bulk of scholars recognize with regard to their cognate nouns in Eph. 5:19 and Col. 3:16, so nothing should be read into the use of one instead of the other in the single occurrence in Luke's writings.

Danny repeats his incorrect claim that John in Revelation refers to singing that was accompanied by instruments and then proceeds to criticize an uncharitable interpretation of

a statement by Jack Lewis. Lewis writes, "It has never been logical to me to argue that the instrument is authorized but then also to argue that its use is optional. Things like water baptism, use of fruit of the vine in the Lord's Supper, and meeting for worship are authorized, but they are not optional." According to Danny, Lewis, because of his *a cappella* blindness, is asserting that God logically could not have made instrumental music an optional practice in Christian worship.

Lewis is no fool. He is well aware that a sovereign God could have made instrumental music an optional Christian practice if he chose to do so. He is speaking in the context of the instrumental music debate in churches of Christ. I assume he is responding to the claim that instruments are authorized in worship because their use is inherent in the word *psallo*.,. If their use is inherent in *psallo*., then their use is commanded and not optional. He is expressing his bewilderment over those who claim authorization via the former while denying the latter.

In the final section of this chapter, Danny goes off on a bit of a tangent and accuses *a cappella* proponents of misrepresenting the history of the word *a cappella*. He rightly claims the word comes from Italian, but in suggesting that it comes from Italian *instead of* Latin he fails to recognize that the Italian word (*cappella*) is derived from Latin (*cappa*).⁷⁶ Or as Ferguson puts it, "A *cappella* comes from the Latin by way of Italian and means 'in the style of the church,' 'as is done in the church.'"⁷⁷

Danny states as simple fact "that *a cappella* is Italian for a kind of *accompanied* singing that was in vogue after the Middle Ages – and unknown to the early church," and adds, "Today the word is primarily known for the part that *wasn't true – the absence of accompaniment*" (emphasis supplied). This is at the very least debatable and appears to be incorrect.

L. J. Wagner states in "A Cappella" in the *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 1 (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1967), an 18-volume work which presumably is an excellent source on matters relating to the Roman Catholic Church:

A CAPPELLA, a term referring to choral music without instrumental accompaniment. During the Renaissance the performances of the Sistine Choir in Rome were considered exemplary; and since the use of instruments was forbidden by its statutes, the term came to be used for any performance in the manner similar to those in the Sistine chapel. The

⁷⁶ Alison Latham, ed., *The Oxford Companion to Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 235-236, says of the word "chapel" (*cappella* in Italian), "St Martin's famous cloak (Lat.: *cappa*), which he divided with the beggar, was preserved by the Carolingian kings in a reliquary, whose custodians were called *cappellani* and thence gave the name of *cappella* (or *capella*) to the church where it was housed. Thus any smallish place of worship, whether a free-standing structure or within a larger edifice such as that of a cathedral or palace, came to take the name." See also, Editors of the American Heritage Dictionaries, *More Word Histories and Mysteries: From Aardvark to Zombie* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2006), 4-5.

⁷⁷ Ferguson (1988), 84.

Sistine tradition of unaccompanied voices stems from the monophonic, purely vocal style of plainchant.

Notice that Wagner not only ties the lack of instrumental music in the Sistine Chapel to statutes forbidding the practice, he also says that the absence of instruments there was rooted in the older church practice of plainchant.⁷⁸ So it is not unreasonable to claim that the term *a cappella* always referred to unaccompanied singing and that the unaccompanied singing in the Sistine Chapel that gave rise to the term reflected an earlier historical absence of instrumental accompaniment in the church.

Other scholars acknowledge the noninstrumental roots of the term *a cappella*. Leeman Perkins writes, "In fact, only two institutions systematically excluded the organ from their liturgical services, and these were important church communities rather than the chapels of secular courts. The papal choir, first of all, sang without instruments from the time of its foundation, establishing a performing tradition still known as 'a cappella.'"⁷⁹ The entry "Sistine Chapel" in *Worship Music: A Concise Dictionary* states, "The main papal chapel in the Vatican, built (1475-83) under Pope Sixtus IV, from whom it derives its name. . . . The chapel does not have an organ and by tradition the choir sings without instrumental accompaniment. The term *a cappella* is thought to derive from this practice."⁸⁰

Danny closes with an accusation that *a cappella* proponents continue "to divide the church on behalf of a word that has been passed over for every translation of the Bible." I am constantly amazed by how readily instrumentalists project the blame for division onto *a cappella* proponents. Our position is the historical stance of the church, and it is one that *excludes no one*, as all agree that it is acceptable to praise God without instruments. Instrumentalists, on the other hand, are relative newcomers whose practice excludes those who believe it is contrary to God's will to worship with instrumental music. One would think their professed passion for unity would prompt them to surrender what for them is an optional practice. That would be in keeping with the principle of abstention that Paul articulates in Rom. 14:1-15:13. Instead, they cling to it, evangelize about it, and then wag their finger at *a cappella* brothers and sisters for dividing the church. And for the umpteenth time, the disagreement is not over whether one or more musical terms inherently exclude instruments.

Chapter 10

In this chapter, Danny makes what he thinks is the silver-bullet argument, the one that proves conclusively that God does indeed intend for Christians to worship him with instrumental music. Put simply, the argument is that Paul's use in Rom. 15:9 of Ps.

⁷⁸ Similarly, the entry "a cappella" in *More Word Histories and Mysteries: From Aardvark to Zombie* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2006), 4, includes: "The Italian expression *a cappella* . . . originates in the musical traditions of the early Christian Church as they were upheld and continued by the Roman Catholic Church in the medieval era."

⁷⁹ Leeman L. Perkins, *Music in the Age of the Renaissance* (New York: W. W. Norton Co., 1999), 103.

⁸⁰ Edward Foley Capuchin and others, *Worship Music: A Concise Dictionary* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000), 285.

18:49⁸¹ shows beyond doubt that David prophesied that as a consequence of Christ's coming Gentiles would praise God among the nations with instruments. Since David so prophesied, God necessarily desires the use of instruments in Christian worship. There are a number of problems with this argument.

In the first place, Paul's use of Ps. 18:49 does not say anything about the manner in which Gentile Christians would praise God. Paul states in Rom. 15:7-13 (reference to Ps. 18:49 in bold):

⁷Therefore, welcome one another, just as also Christ welcomed you for the glory of God. ⁸For I say Christ has become a servant of the circumcision for the sake of God's truth, in order to confirm the promises to the fathers, ⁹and the Gentiles glorify God for [his] mercy, just as it is written, "**On account of this I will acknowledge you among the Gentiles and sing praise to your name.**" ¹⁰And again it says, "Rejoice, Gentiles, with his people." ¹¹And again, "Praise the Lord, all the Gentiles, and let all the peoples praise him." ¹²And again Isaiah says, "He will be the shoot of Jesse, the one who arises to rule the Gentiles; on him the Gentiles will hope." ¹³May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Paul in v. 7 urges the Jewish and Gentile Christians to accept one another as fellow members of a family because they have been received by Christ and therefore *are* members of a family, the family of God. This kind of acceptance and unity redounds to the glory of God.

In verses 8-9a he says they also are to receive one another because Christ has acted to bring God's blessings to both Jews and Gentiles in fulfillment of Scripture. Christ became a servant of the Jew (e.g., Mat. 15:24 – he was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel) in order to show that God is faithful, which he did by fulfilling the promise of blessing that God had made to the Jewish patriarchs. He also became a servant of the Jew in order that the Gentile might glorify God for the sake of his mercy through their subsequently being grafted into the people of Israel through faith in Christ.

In vv. 9b-12 Paul quotes various Scriptures to show that the inclusion of Gentiles with Jews in the praise of God has always been part of God's purpose; his intent to bless the Gentile is not an afterthought. The antiquity of that divine purpose is indicated by the fact David said that *he*, on account of how God had delivered *him* from *his* enemies, would acknowledge God *among the Gentiles* and sing praises to his name (not that the Gentiles would do so). Paul's point is that in stating his intent to acknowledge and praise God among the Gentiles David reflected God's ancient interest in the Gentiles, which interest has now been expressed ultimately by Christ's having blessed the Gentiles

⁸¹ Danny initially misdirects attention to Ps. 57:9, the context of which contains a reference to instruments, but he quickly concedes that "the verse that most closely matches Paul's citation is Psalm 18:49." Indeed, the reference in Rom. 15:9 is almost verbatim from Ps. 17:50 LXX (which is Ps. 18:49 in English translations); only the vocative "O Lord" is omitted.

through becoming a servant of the Jews. He is not saying that David was prophesying in Ps. 18:49 that Gentiles after Christ would praise God in the manner of David. That verse says nothing about *Gentiles* praising God; it is about David's activity *among* the Gentiles.⁸²

So even if it were indisputable that the Hebrew word **za,,mar** necessarily had instrumental connotations and that **psallo,,** in Ps. 17:50 LXX (Ps. 18:49 English text) therefore also had instrumental connotations as a translation of **za,,mar**, Paul's reference in Rom. 15:9 to Ps. 17:50 LXX would not establish that God desires or approves of instrumental music in Christian worship, let alone establish that David prophesied the church would praise God in that manner. Clearly the early church did not understand this text as a prophecy that it would use instruments in worship. If it did, it certainly would have begun using them sooner than 900 years.

The understanding I have outlined is no doubt what Jack Lewis meant in saying that Rom. 15:9 was a reference to what David would do and not a description of what is done in the church. Danny calls this "puzzling" and suggests it is another example of *a cappella* blindness, but it is only puzzling for one who has misread the function of Paul's citation and unjustifiably interpreted Paul as turning David's words into a prophecy about how the church would praise God.

Secondly, it is clear that the Hebrew word **za,,mar** does *not* necessarily have instrumental connotations. Thomas Alexander summarizes the treatment of **za,,mar** in the two most widely used Hebrew lexicons:

So the lexicons identify the use of **zamar** in an instrumental setting in some Old Testament passages. However, by listing other uses of the word they make it clear that the playing of an instrument of music does not inhere in the word itself. That is, the word does not always mean to play on an instrument or to sing with the accompaniment of an instrument in its Old Testament occurrences. That the term sometimes appears in an instrumental context is certain. However, in many cases in the Old Testament, the word **zamar** means simply to sing or to praise.⁸³

Since **za,,mar** can refer to singing without instrumental accompaniment and since there is nothing in the context of Ps. 18:49 (Ps. 17:50 LXX) to exclude that possible meaning, Paul's reference to Ps. 18:49 cannot establish conclusively God's approval of instrumental worship by Christians (i.e., it is not a "silver bullet").⁸⁴ This is true even under the mistaken assumption that Paul was saying that David prophesied that Gentiles

⁸² When Gentiles are mentioned in v. 11 as praising the Lord the words used are **aineo,,** and **epaineo,,** and neither of the underlying Hebrew words is **za,,mar**.

⁸³ Alexander (2010), 34.

⁸⁴ In fact, Ps. 18:49 employs the parallelism characteristic of Hebrew poetry, and the word with which **psallo,,** in 17:50 LXX is paired is a word for vocal praise (**exomologeoo,,**).

after Christ would praise God as described in Ps. 18:49. The nature of the praise described in Ps. 18:49 is at the very least ambiguous with regard to instrumental accompaniment. That is why Danny and other instrumentalists try to drag Ps. 57:9 into the discussion of Rom. 15:9. There are contextual indicators that the praise described in Ps. 57:9 involves instrumental accompaniment, precisely what is lacking in Ps. 18:49.

Danny wonders "how the early church knew to exclude instruments without a scripture from God to exclude instruments." They knew to exclude them from the fact they were external, material elements that were an integral part of the sacrificial worship of the Jewish temple, which worship system was a shadow that had been superseded by the higher, more spiritual worship instituted by Christ. These truths are expressed in Scripture, and their application to musical instruments is confirmed by the fact there is no record of Christians worshipping with instruments for nearly a millennium, by the uniform and vehement condemnation of musical instruments in church history with no hint of a prior contrary practice, and by the fact multiple patristic writers refer to the shift in covenants as a reason for their nonuse of instruments.

Danny next converts his mistaken notion that Paul said David had prophesied that after Christ Gentiles would worship with instrumental music into a claim that Jesus, having come to fulfill prophecy, came to fulfill the alleged prophecy that Gentiles would know the instrumentally-accompanied song of God (what he calls the *za„mar*-song of God). He then characterizes *a cappella* proponents as those who break God's commandment to worship with instruments and teach others to do the same, referring to Mat. 5:17-19. So Danny does not hesitate to accuse *a cappella* proponents of sinning and leading others astray, and yet many instrumentalists lecture us about the impropriety of referring to them as "unbiblical."

Danny asserts that Jesus never breathed a word about excluding musical instruments, but that depends on what he means by "breathed a word." If he means Jesus never expressly excluded instruments from worship, he is correct; but if he means Jesus never said anything to suggest that the sacrificial worship of the Jewish temple, of which instrumental music was an integral part, would be superseded by a more spiritual worship that he would institute, he is mistaken. And even if that were not the case, all Scripture is God-breathed, so it would not matter if these things were only revealed elsewhere in Scripture.

Danny says regarding instrumental worship, "It is difficult indeed to argue that God dislikes what he asked for and what he prophesied for us." I have explained why Danny is mistaken in thinking God prophesied instrumental worship for Christians, but I am struck by his suggestion that there must be continuity between what God asked for in worship under the old covenant and what he desires under the new. Whether one characterizes it as "dislike," Christ's coming radically altered the worship practices God had commanded under the Law (e.g., Jn. 4:20-24). That effect was so drastic that the writer of Hebrews reports that God *did not desire* the very sacrifices and offerings he had commanded (Heb. 10:5-9). Given the divinely-prescribed nexus between instrumental music and not only temple worship generally but sacrifices specifically, and given the

fact the early church, contrary to all expectations, did not use musical instruments, it is not difficult at all to argue that instrumental music is part of the obsolete shadow of the old-covenant cult.

Chapter 11

Danny opens this chapter with the claim that the reference in Heb. 2:12 to Ps. 22:22 shows that David prophesied that Jesus would praise God in the manner in which David praised God. The verb for praise in Ps. 22:22 is **ha,,lal**, and since **ha,,lal** is used in the Old Testament to refer to singing that sometimes was accompanied by instrumental music and dancing, David was prophesying that Jesus would worship with instrumental music and dancing. There is much wrong with this.

Heb. 2:11-12 state (Ps. 22:22 reference in bold): ¹¹For both the one who sanctifies and those being sanctified [are] all of one; on account of which reason he is not ashamed to call them brothers, ¹²saying, **"I will proclaim your name to my brothers, in the midst of the assembly I will sing praises to you."** Thus, the inspired writer understands David's words in Ps. 22:22 as a prophecy about Jesus in the sense they are a revelation of words uttered by the Son at some unspecified time, words that indicate his solidarity with those being sanctified through the reference to "my brothers."

Danny tries to force instrumental connotations onto David's revelation of the Son's statement "I will sing praises" by citing examples where the underlying Hebrew verb, **ha,,lal**, is used in contexts including instrumental music. The fact the word is not incompatible with dancing and instrumental accompaniment does not mean those things are part of word's meaning. They are not. When the princes of Pharaoh "praise" Sarah for her beauty (Gen. 12:15), when Israel "praises" Absalom for his handsomeness (2 Sam. 14:25), when a city is "praised" for its wealth (Ezek. 26:17), when a man is "praised" for his good sense (Prov. 12:8), or when a wife is "praised" by her husband (Prov. 31:28), there is no notion of dancing or instrumental music. Moreover, the parallel verbs in Isa. 38:18 and Ps. 35:18, 44:9, and 109:30 show that **ha,,lal** can function as a synonym for "thank." Indeed, the parallel verb in Ps. 22:22[23] (**sa,,par**), the very text in question, means simply to tell or declare.

The Greek word for "sing" in Heb. 2:12 (and in Ps. 21:23 LXX) is **humneo,,**. Recall that less than 25 pages ago Danny suggested with regard to Acts 16:25 that **humneo,,** was a more appropriate word than **psallo,,** to describe the indisputably unaccompanied singing of Paul and Silas because it "means to sing praise, *regardless of instruments*" (emphasis supplied). Now he wants one to read instruments into **humneo,,**.

Danny next asserts that *a cappella* proponents, Ferguson in particular, claim that instrumental worship ceased because it was "unspiritual." He says this contradicts David's claim in Ps. 108:1 to sing and make music (on the harp and lyre) with "all his soul" because the definition of "unspiritual" in the context of worship is an expression that "fails to engage our hearts and souls," that is, an expression by one who is merely

going through the motions. Since the Bible never identifies David's instrumental worship as unspiritual, we have no warrant for doing so.

As a preliminary matter, it is by no means clear that David says in Ps. 108:1 that he will sing and make music with all his soul. John Goldingay suggests that the opening participle "set" applies to both lines of the verse so that "I will make music" parallels "I will sing" and "yes, my soul" parallels "my heart." This yields the following:

My heart is set, God, I will sing;
I will make music; yes, my soul [is set].⁸⁵

If that is correct, what one has is a repetition of David's resolution to sing and make music in praise of God. He does not declare the involvement of his heart in the matter. That fits with the fact Ps. 108:1-5 commonly is seen as derived from Ps. 57:7-11, which speaks only of the steadfastness of David's resolve.⁸⁶

More importantly, Ferguson does not say or imply that David's instrumental worship was "unspiritual" in the sense in which Danny defines it. He does not use the word "unspiritual" in the quote provided and would not suggest that David was merely going through the motions in praising God, singing to instrumental accompaniment without any intellectual or emotional investment. That is not the point. The point, rather, is that singing differs from playing instruments in spiritually significant ways. Specifically, singing, like all speech, is an internal, immediate expression of the rational element of the inner man, the spirit,⁸⁷ whereas instrumental music is an external, noncommunicative sound made through manipulation of an inanimate ("lifeless" in Paul's words – 1 Cor. 14:7), manmade device. The difference is inherent in the means; it is not a matter of the intent or sincerity of the worshiper. To repeat a quote from Ferguson:

Vocal expressions are peculiarly well suited to the expression of spiritual worship, to the expressing of what comes from the human spirit and through the Spirit of God. They are rational, not in the sense of non-emotional, but as proceeding from and appealing to the highest of human nature. The whole self (including the emotions) is involved in Christian

⁸⁵ John Goldingay, *Psalms Vol. 3: Psalms 90-150*, Baker Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 265.

⁸⁶ Psalm 71:23 is perhaps a better candidate for Danny's point, but the focus there is clearly on the singing, the vocalization of the lips, rather than the playing.

⁸⁷ It is noteworthy that *words* and *spirit* are associated in Scripture. Job expresses the fact words are vocalizations of the spirit when he asks in Job 26:4, "Who has helped you utter these words? And whose spirit spoke from your mouth?" Elihu says in Job 32:18-19, "For I am full of words, and the spirit within me compels me; inside I am like bottled-up wine, like new wineskins ready to burst." And most importantly, Jesus says in Jn. 6:63, "The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life." The same concept is present in Mat. 12:34 (and Lk. 6:45; see also, Mat. 5:18) where Jesus says "out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks." As noted in *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 3:119, "*Pneuma* [spirit] is used several times in the New Testament in the sense of *the inward person* or *heart* (e.g., Mark 2:8; 8:12; Matt 5:3; Luke 1:47, 80; John 11:33; 2 Cor 2:13)." See also, Ps. 71:23 ("My lips will shout for joy, when I sing praises to you; my soul also, which you have redeemed").

worship, but the mind (reason) is to be in control. Instrumental music can express feelings and emotions. Vocal music can express the will and intellect. The latter is better suited for the communion of spirit with Spirit. In vocal music there is an immediate contact. In instrumental music there is an intermediary. The voice is much more a matter of one's self than any other gift of praise can be. Vocal music thus best corresponds to the nature of one's relationship to God.⁸⁸

Most importantly, even if one replaces Danny's concept of "unspiritual" with the proper distinction between singing and instrumental music, *a cappella* proponents (at least those of my stripe) do not cite the nature of instrumental music as the primary reason for its exclusion from Christian worship. As I have said repeatedly, *a cappella* proponents contend that instrumental music was excluded from Christian worship because it was an integral part of the sacrificial worship in the Jewish temple, which form of worship was superseded by the higher worship instituted by Christ. The differences between singing and playing an instrument do not so much explain why instrumental music was excluded from Christian worship as they help to understand why singing was continued in new-covenant worship despite its association with the temple.

In the next subsection, Danny objects to the notion that instrumental music was part of the old-covenant worship system that was superseded by the new worship instituted by Christ. He acknowledges that *animal* sacrifices were done away with by Christ's sacrifice, but insists that instrumental music was not done away with because instruments are nowhere in Scripture specifically identified as a shadow.

There are, of course, various elements of old-covenant worship that are not separately and expressly called a shadow that Christians widely recognize would be improper in new-covenant worship (purification rites, fires, vestments, incense, altars). It is not simply *animal* sacrifices that were done away with by Christ's sacrifice but the Law's entire sacrificial system, including the temple cult through which that system was administered. Jesus indicated in Jn. 4:19-24 that the temple cult would be rendered obsolete by the new worship he was instituting, a worship that was more commensurate with the truth that God is a spiritual rather than a material being. The Levitical priesthood's entire ministry of sacrificial offerings was conducted "in a copy and a shadow of the heavenly things" (Heb. 8:5), and the regulations for worship that were part of the old covenant were rendered obsolete along with the covenant of which they were a part (Hebrews 9).

As I have pointed out, Scripture is clear that musical instruments were a divinely prescribed part of the worship rituals of the Jewish temple and were closely associated with the offering of sacrifices. For example, 2 Chronicles 29:26-28 indicates that the musical accompaniment began with the burnt offering and ended when that sacrifice was finished (ESV, emphasis supplied):

⁸⁸ Ferguson (1988), 90.

²⁶ The Levites stood with the instruments of David, and the priests with the trumpets. ²⁷ Then Hezekiah commanded that the burnt offering be offered on the altar. *And when the burnt offering began, the song to the Lord began also, and the trumpets, accompanied by the instruments of David king of Israel.* ²⁸ The whole assembly worshiped, and the singers sang and the trumpeters sounded. All this continued *until the burnt offering was finished.*

In the singing commanded thereafter, there is no mention of instrumental accompaniment. At the very least, the connection of instruments with sacrifice is emphasized.

The association between instrumental music and sacrifices was so close that the rabbis considered playing instruments an *essential* part of temple worship. As such, instruments could be played in the temple on the Sabbath without violating the prohibition against work because work that was essential to the temple service was outside the Sabbath prohibition.⁸⁹

As I have written elsewhere, a number of other scholars have commented on the link between instrumental music and the Jewish sacrificial system. Werner writes:

It is important to bear in mind that all music of the temple, regardless of the period, was nothing but an accessory to its sacrificial ritual. Without sacrifice the music loses its *raison d'etre*. What was the inherent connection between the sacrifices and its accompanying music? This is an unsolved puzzle.⁹⁰

Everett Ferguson states: "Instrumental music, therefore, was an important feature of temple worship, and it was closely associated with the sacrificial system."⁹¹ Edward Foley states: "The singing of religious texts appears to have followed the offering of

⁸⁹ McKinnon (1998), chapter III, 82.

⁹⁰ Eric Werner, *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), 3:459. Perhaps G. I. Williamson, a minister in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, has the solution to Werner's puzzle. He wrote in "Instrumental Music in the Worship of God: Commanded or Not Commanded?" in Edward A. Robson, ed., *The Biblical Doctrine of Worship* (Beaver Falls, PA: Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, 1974), 7-8 (reference is from Brian Schwertley, *Instruments in the Public Worship of God*, online at <http://www.reformed.com/pub/music.htm#r66>):

The whole system of ceremonial worship served as a '*shadow of heavenly things*' (Heb. 8:5). It was '*a figure for the time then present*' (9:9), but a figure of something better in the future. In plain words, here the drama of the redemption was enacted symbolically. We use the word 'drama' because this Old Testament ceremonial worship was only a representation of the real redemption which was to be accomplished, not with the blood of bulls and goats, but with the precious blood of Christ. That is why this impressive assembly of musicians was needed. In a similar way, a motion picture is a pale thing in comparison with the reality depicted. That is why sound effects, and a musical background are so important! It helps His Old Testament people (as children under age, Galatians 4) sense something more in these animal sacrifices than was actually there. So, as the sacrifice was offered, the emotions of God's people were stirred by this great cacophony of music.

⁹¹ Ferguson (1988), 31.

sacrifices (2 Chron. 29:20-30) and trumpet blasts often accompanied the sacrifices (Num. 10:10). Later rabbinic literature as well as the writings of Josephus (d. ca. 100 C.E.) further note the connection between instrumental music and sacrifice in the Temple."⁹²

Many theologians throughout history have recognized the significance of the new covenant's abrogation of ceremonial temple worship on the use of musical instruments in Christian worship. I earlier quoted several from the early centuries of the church. Here are just a few from the Reformation and after:

John Calvin wrote in his *Commentary on the book of Psalms*, vol. 1, tr. Rev. James Anderson (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981 [reprint: 1557]), 539:

I have no doubt that playing upon cymbals, touching the harp and the viol, and all that kind of music, which is frequently mentioned in the psalms, was part of the education; that is to say the puerile instruction of the law: I speak of the stated service of the temple. . . . But when they frequent their sacred assemblies, musical instruments in celebrating the praises of God would be no more suitable than the burning of incense, the lighting of the lamps, and the restoration of the other shadows of the law. The Papists, therefore, have foolishly borrowed this, as well as many other things from the Jews. Men who are fond of outward pomp may delight in that noise; but simplicity which God recommends to us by the apostle is far more pleasing to him.⁹³

John Girardeau, a professor at Columbia Theological Seminary, wrote in the late nineteenth century in *Instrumental Music in the Public Worship of the Church* (Richmond: Whittet & Shepperson, 1888), 79:

Those who have urgently insisted upon [Old Testament authorization for musical instruments in worship] have acted with logical consistency in importing priests into the New Testament church; and as priests suppose sacrifices, lo, the sacrifice of the Mass! Instrumental music may not seem to stand upon the same foot as that monstrous corruption, but the principle which underlies both is the same; and that whether we are content with a single instrument, the cornet, the bass-viol, the organ, or go on by a natural development to the orchestral art, the cathedral pomps, and all the spectacular magnificence of Rome. We are Christians, and we are untrue to Christ and to the Spirit of grace when we resort to the abrogated and forbidden ritual of the Jewish temple.⁹⁴

⁹² Foley (1996), 41.

⁹³ This reference is from Moore, *Sing to the Lord*, 35-36.

⁹⁴ John Girardeau, *Instrumental Music in the Public Worship of the Church* (Richmond: Whittet & Shepperson, 1888), 79. The page citation is from Laurence James Moore, *Sing to the Lord a New Song: A Study of Changing Musical Practices in the Presbyterian Church of Victoria, 1861-1901*, 35 (Australian Catholic University master's thesis), but the quote is from the online edition at <http://www.covenanter.org/Girardeau/Instrumental/chapter2.htm>.

Brian Schwertley, a modern-day Presbyterian minister, writes in *Musical Instruments in the Public Worship of God* (taken from the online edition at <http://www.reformed.com/pub/music.htm>):

The glory of the temple with its visible display and audible grandeur no doubt stimulated the senses and inspired awe, but now that Christ has come and instituted New Testament ordinances our focus is to be wholly upon Him—the reality. The simple unadorned worship of the gospel era brings us into the presence of the greater temple—Jesus Christ—as we sing divine songs, hear the word of God, listen to the preaching, and feast spiritually upon Christ's body. Putting shadows, incense, musical instruments, vestments, altars, etc., into new covenant worship merely serves to hide Christ and His glory under obsolete externalities.

Now certainly these facts, especially when coupled with the fact the early church did not use musical instruments, at the very least give rise to a presumption that musical instruments were part of the sacrificial worship of the Jewish temple that was superseded by the worship instituted by Christ. The proponent of instrumental music must come forward with evidence sufficient to rebut this presumption, evidence that affirmatively establishes that God does indeed desire or accept instrumental music in Christian worship. There is no such evidence, and thus musical instruments should not be used.

At the end of this subsection, Danny claims that one cannot logically maintain that instrumental music was both "unspiritual" and a "shadow." This is a conflict of his own making, as *a cappella* proponents do not claim that instrumental music is "unspiritual" in the sense Danny means (see above discussion). There is nothing contradictory in thinking that unaccompanied singing is more consistent with the nature of the new worship instituted by Christ. That has been the understanding of countless people for millennia.

In the next subsection, Danny suggests that *a cappella* proponents believe instrumental music is unacceptable in Christian worship because it is entertainment. Some do warn that instrumental music in worship too readily becomes essentially entertainment, but that generally is not the basis on which instrumental music is excluded.

In the following subsection, Danny repeats his misleading claim that the first Christians to condemn instruments in worship lived in the fifth century. If he means there are no earlier indications from patristic writers that instruments would not be acceptable in church, he is sorely mistaken, as I have previously demonstrated. He also is mistaken if he means that in the fifth-century condemnation of musical instruments began to be expressly directed toward people who were using instruments in church. Instruments did not find their way into Christian assemblies for several more centuries.

Danny then repeats his consternation over Theodoret suggesting that the allowance of instrumental worship under the old covenant was a concession to help keep

the Jews from the "greater evil" idolatry. It is not clear why he brings this up again, but in any event, it is a diversion. As I stated, no one is putting forward any Church Father as the authoritative basis for *a cappella* practice. The fact Theodoret in the fifth century explained the temporary nature of old-covenant instrumental worship as a suboptimal accommodation to help keep the Jews from idolatry (and thus the lesser of two evils) does not detract from fact he saw *a cappella* practice as a product of the change in covenants. I have cited others who make the same point, including Eusebius from the early fourth century. So they were indeed making the same central argument as many modern *a cappella* proponents.

In the final subsection of this chapter, Danny accuses *a cappella* proponents of using unbiblical terminology to skew the debate about instrumental music in their favor. He apparently considers it dirty pool to employ terms like "*a cappella*," "congregational singing," "corporate worship," and "mechanical instruments." Danny has no problem coining terms like "za,,mar-song" and "ha,,lal-praise" when he thinks it captures what he is trying to convey, and yet here he objects to recognized words and terms being used because they are not found in Scripture. It is one thing to complain that a term is misleading. That charge can be assessed in the given context in which the term is used. It is another thing to complain that a word that communicates an intended concept should not be used because it is not in the Bible.

Danny declares in closing, "We have seen that the Bible tells us to 'sing and make music,' a phrase which Bible translators say they use to embrace accompaniment, spanning the Old Testament (Psalms 57, 108, etc.) and the New (Ephesians 5:19). We have found that the New Testament uses the vocabulary of accompanied praise, cites prophecies of accompanied praise, and gives examples of accompanied praise." If you have read what I have written, you should appreciate that this statement could hardly be more wrong.

This concludes the instrumental-music portion of the book. I do not wish to spend more time ferreting out and assessing the arguments in the remaining few chapters which deal principally with solo singing and the need for unity. I hope that what I have written has been fair to Danny, even though critical, and of benefit to some.