



Paul's Letter to the Colossians Study  
Bible Study Session 13  
Colossians 3:12-17 : Topic 6.3  
"Get Dressed!"

Study By  
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**Greek NT**

12 Ἐνδύσασθε οὖν ὡς ἐκλεκτοὶ τοῦ θεοῦ, ἅγιοι καὶ ἠγαπημένοι, σπλαγγνα οἰκτιρμοῦ, χρηστότητα, ταπεινοφροσύνην, πραῦτητα, μακροθυμίαν, 13 ἀνεχόμενοι ἀλλήλων καὶ χαριζόμενοι ἑαυτοῖς ἂν τις πρὸς τινα ἔχη μομφήν· καθὼς καὶ ὁ κύριος ἔχαρίσατο ὑμῖν οὕτως καὶ ὑμεῖς· 14 ἐπὶ πᾶσιν δὲ τούτοις τὴν ἀγάπην, ἧ ἔστιν σύνδεσμος τῆς τελειότητος. 15 καὶ ἡ εἰρήνη τοῦ Χριστοῦ βραβεύετω ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ὑμῶν, εἰς ἣν καὶ ἐκλήθητε ἐν ἐνὶ σώματι· καὶ εὐχάριστοι γίνεσθε. 16 ὁ λόγος τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐνοικεῖτω ἐν ὑμῖν πλουσίως ἐν πάσῃ σοφίᾳ· διδάσκοντες καὶ νοουθετοῦντες ἑαυτοὺς ψαλμοῖς, ὕμνοις, ᾠδαῖς πνευματικαῖς ἐν χάριτι, ᾄδοντες ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ὑμῶν τῷ θεῷ· 17 καὶ πᾶν ὃ τι ἂν ποιῆτε ἐν λόγῳ ἢ ἐν ἔργῳ, πάντα ἐν ὀνόματι κυρίου Ἰησοῦ, εὐχαριστοῦντες τῷ θεῷ πατρὶ δι' αὐτοῦ.

**Gute Nachricht Bibel**

12 Ihr seid von Gott erwählt, der euch liebt und zu seinem heiligen Volk gemacht hat. Darum zieht nun wie eine neue Bekleidung alles an, was den neuen Menschen ausmacht: herzliches Erbarmen, Freundlichkeit, Bescheidenheit, Milde, Geduld. 13 Ertragt einander! Seid nicht nachtragend, wenn euch jemand Unrecht getan hat, sondern vergebt einander, so wie der Herr euch vergeben hat. 14 Und über das alles zieht die Liebe an, die alles andere in sich umfasst. Sie ist das Band, das euch zu vollkommener Einheit zusammenschließt. 15 Der Frieden, den Christus schenkt, muss euer ganzes Denken und Tun bestimmen. In diesen Frieden hat Gott euch alle miteinander gerufen; ihr seid ja durch Christus ein Leib. 16 Werdet dankbar! 16 Gebt dem Wort Raum, in dem Christus bei euch gegenwärtig ist. Lasst es seinen ganzen Reichtum unter euch entfalten. Unterweist und ermahnt einander mit aller Weisheit. Singt Gott von ganzem Herzen Psalmen, Hymnen, Loblieder, wie seine Gnade sie schenkt und sein Geist sie euch eingibt. 17 Alles, was ihr tut und was ihr sagt, soll zu erkennen geben, dass ihr Jesus, dem Herrn, gehört. Euer ganzes Leben soll ein einziger Dank sein, den ihr Gott, dem Vater, durch Jesus Christus darbringt.

**NRSV**

12 As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. 13 Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. 14 Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. 15 And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. 16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. 17 And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

**NLT**

12 Since God chose you to be the holy people whom he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. 13 You must make allowance for each other's faults and forgive the person who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. 14 And the most important piece of clothing you must wear is love. Love is what binds us all together in perfect harmony. 15 And let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For as members of one body you are all called to live in peace. And always be thankful. 16 Let the words of Christ, in all their richness, live in your hearts and make you wise. Use his words to teach and counsel each other. Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to God with thankful hearts. 17 And whatever you do or say, let it be as a representative of the Lord Jesus, all the while giving thanks through him to God the Father.

**The Study of the Text:<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Serious study of the biblical text must look at the 'then' meaning, i.e., the historical meaning, and the 'now' meaning, i.e., the contemporary application, of the scripture text. In considering the historical meaning, both elements of literary design and historical context are important. An electronic copy of this study can be accessed at <http://cranfordville.com/Cranfordville/Resources.htm>. These are located under Bible Study Series. The study is free and provided as a ministry of C&L Publishing, Inc.

## 1. What did the text mean to the first readers?

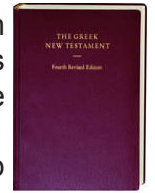
Col. 3:12-17 represents the 'positive' side of the Christian living 'sandwich' with 3:5-11 the negative side. The 'meat' of this 'sandwich' is the foundational principles set forth in 3:1-4. Whereas 3:5-11 centered on getting rid of worldliness that typified a pagan life style, 3:12-17 focuses on replacing the abandoned traits with positive Christian traits that fill up the daily living of the believer. The passage continues the paraenesis begun in 3:1, and stands as an important insight into the kind of life style that God expects His people to follow. As such it belongs to a series of similar texts, especially in the Pauline paraenetic tradition in the New Testament. When considered together these texts provide a wider perspective on the apostle's understanding of how the Christian life is supposed to function on a day to day basis.



### Historical Context:

This historical setting for this passage centers on the larger background issue of the paraenetic nature of these verses as containing a virtue list.

**External History.** In the history of the hand copying of these verses during the first millennium of Christian history, four variations of wording surface that the editors of the United Bible Societies fourth revised edition of *The Greek New Testament* considered significant enough to impact the translation of the Greek text into other languages.



The first instance surfaces in verse thirteen.<sup>2</sup> Uncertainty about the subject of the verb ἐχαρίσατο ὑμῖν, "favored you," prompted copyists to change ὁ κύριος, "the Lord," to refer specifically to either Christ or God.<sup>3</sup> The somewhat ambiguous term ὁ κύριος is original and best explains the attempts to clarify with the substitution of either Χριστός or θεός.

The second instance is found in verse sixteen where the unusual phrase ὁ λόγος τοῦ Χριστοῦ, "the word of Christ," is replaced by the more common phrase ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ, "word of God."<sup>4</sup> From both internal and external factors the most likely original reading was ὁ λόγος τοῦ Χριστοῦ.<sup>5</sup>

The third instance is also found in verse sixteen where the phrase τῷ θεῷ, "to God," was replaced by κυρίῳ, "to the Lord," under the influence of Eph. 5:19.<sup>6</sup> But the earliest and most important manuscripts contain cal aspects must be considered. In each study we will attempt a summary overview of these procedures in the interpretation of the scripture text.

<sup>2</sup>{C} κύριος P<sup>46</sup> A B D\* F G 1175 it<sup>b, d, f, g, o</sup> vg geo<sup>1</sup> Pelagius Augustine Speculum // Χριστός κ<sup>2</sup> C D<sup>2</sup> Ψ 075 0150 6 81 104 256 263 365 424 436 459 1241 1319 1573 1739 1852 1881 1912 1962 2127 2200 Byz [K L P] Lect it<sup>ar, mon</sup> syr<sup>p, h</sup> cop<sup>sa, bo</sup> eth geo<sup>2</sup> slav Clement Chrysostom Nilus Theodoret; Ambrosiaster Jerome // θεός κ\* vg<sup>mss</sup> // θεός ἐν Χριστῷ 33 arm<sup>7</sup> [Kurt Aland, Matthew Black, Carlo M. Martini et al., *The Greek New Testament*, Fourth Revised Edition (With Apparatus); *The Greek New Testament*, 4th Revised Edition (With Apparatus) (Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft; Stuttgart, 2000; 2009).]

<sup>3</sup>"On the strength of the weight of P<sup>46</sup> joined by the best witnesses of both the Alexandrian and the Western texts (A B D\* G itd, g vg Speculum al) the Committee preferred κύριος, and explained Χριστός (κ C Dc K P Ψ 614 1739 Byz Lect it<sup>b, d, f, g, o</sup> syr<sup>p, h</sup> cop<sup>sa, bo</sup> goth eth Clement al) as an interpretation by copyists of the more indefinite κύριος, and the other two variant readings (θεός κ\* and θεός ἐν Χριστῷ 33 arm Augustine<sup>1/2</sup>) as due to scribal assimilation (partial or complete) to Eph 4:32." [Bruce Manning Metzger and United Bible Societies, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, Second Edition a Companion Volume to the United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament (4th Rev. Ed.) (London; New York: United Bible Societies, 1994), 557-58.]

<sup>4</sup>{A} Χριστοῦ P<sup>46</sup> κ<sup>2</sup> B C<sup>2</sup> D F G Ψ 075 0150 6 81 256 365 424 1319 1573 1739 1852 1881 1912 2200 2464 Byz [K L P] Lect it<sup>ar, d, f, g, mon, o</sup> vg syr<sup>(p), h</sup> cop<sup>sa, boms</sup> arm geo slav Chrysostom; Ambrosiaster Pelagius Speculum // θεοῦ A C\* 33 104 263 436 459 1241 1962 / 60 / 147 / 593<sup>1/2</sup> / 599 / 1154 / 1365 / 1439<sup>1/2</sup> vg<sup>mss</sup> eth Theodore<sup>lat</sup> Theodoret<sup>lem</sup>; Ambrose<sup>1/2</sup> Augustine Quodvultdeus // κυρίου κ\* I 1175 2127 cop<sup>bo</sup> Clement<sup>7</sup> [Kurt Aland, Matthew Black, Carlo M. Martini et al., *The Greek New Testament*, Fourth Revised Edition (With Apparatus); *The Greek New Testament*, 4th Revised Edition (With Apparatus) (Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft; Stuttgart, 2000; 2009).]

<sup>5</sup>"Instead of the unusual expression "the word of Christ," which occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, several witnesses substitute the more customary "the word of God" (A C\* 33 451 1241 al) or "the word of the Lord" (κ\* I 2127 copbo Clement). Χριστοῦ is strongly supported by P46 κ B C2 D G K P Ψ 81 614 1739 Byz Lect it vg syr(p), h copsa, bo ms goth arm al." [Bruce Manning Metzger and United Bible Societies, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, Second Edition a Companion Volume to the United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament (4th Rev. Ed.) (London; New York: United Bible Societies, 1994), 558.]

<sup>6</sup>{A} τῷ θεῷ P<sup>46</sup> κ A B C\* D\* F G Ψ<sup>c</sup> 075 6 33 81 365 424<sup>c</sup> 1739 1881 2464 (256 263 1175 1319 1573 1962 2127 / 60 / 597<sup>1/2</sup> / 599 transpose after ἄδοντες) it<sup>b, d, f, g, mon, o</sup> vg syr<sup>p, h</sup> cop<sup>sa, bo</sup> arm geo<sup>1</sup> Clement Chrysostom<sup>com</sup> Theodore<sup>lat</sup>; Ambrosiaster Speculum // τῷ κυρίῳ (see Eph 5.19) C<sup>2</sup> D<sup>2</sup> Ψ\* 0150 104 424\* 436 459 1241 1852 1912 2200 Byz [K L] Lect it<sup>ar</sup> vg<sup>mss</sup> cop<sup>bo</sup> slav Chrysostomlem<sup>7</sup> [Kurt Aland, Matthew Black, Carlo M. Martini et al., *The Greek New Testament*, Fourth Revised Edition (With Apparatus); *The Greek New Testament*, 4th Revised Edition (With Apparatus) (Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft; Stuttgart, 2000; 2009).]

τῷ θεῷ, and thus is considered to be original with strong confidence.<sup>7</sup>

The fourth instance of variation in wording surfaces in verse seventeen, where copyists found the unusual phrase τῷ θεῷ πατρὶ needing to be simplified grammatically by inserting καὶ in imitation of Eph. 5:20.<sup>8</sup> Instead of τῷ θεῷ πατρὶ, “to God Father,” it becomes τῷ θεῷ καὶ πατρὶ, “to God even Father.” Both external and internal factors strongly favor the printed text reading, τῷ θεῷ πατρὶ.<sup>9</sup>

The much more detailed text apparatus of the Nestle-Aland Novum Testamentum Graece (27th rev ed.) lists several additional variations with lesser impact on the wording of the text.<sup>10</sup> But careful



<sup>7c</sup>In place of θεῷ, which is strongly supported by early and diversified testimony (P<sup>46vid</sup> & A B C\* D\* G Ψ<sup>c</sup> 33 81 1739 it<sup>b, d, f, g</sup> vg syr<sup>p, h</sup> cop<sup>sa, bo</sup> arm Clement Speculum al), the *Textus Receptus*, influenced by the parallel in Eph 5:19 (where there is no variation), substitutes κυρίῳ, with C<sup>2</sup> D<sup>c</sup> K Ψ\* 614 *Byz Lect* it<sup>ar</sup> goth al.” [Bruce Manning Metzger and United Bible Societies, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, Second Edition a Companion Volume to the United Bible Societies’ Greek New Testament (4th Rev. Ed.) (London; New York: United Bible Societies, 1994), 558.]

<sup>8c</sup>{B} θεῷ πατρὶ P<sup>46vid</sup> & A B C 81 1739 it<sup>ar, b, mon</sup> vg<sup>mss</sup> syr<sup>p</sup> cop<sup>sa, bo</sup> eth Ambrose Speculum // θεῷ καὶ πατρὶ (see Eph 5.20) D F G Ψ 075 0150 6 33 104 256 263 365 424 436 459 (1175 1881 omit following δι’) 1241 1319 1573 1852 1912 1962 2127 2200 2464 *Byz* [K L] *Lect* it<sup>d, f, g, o</sup> vg syr<sup>h</sup> arm geo slav Clement Chrysostom Theodore<sup>lat</sup>; Ambrosiaster Pelagius” [Kurt Aland, Matthew Black, Carlo M. Martini et al., *The Greek New Testament*, Fourth Revised Edition (With Apparatus); *The Greek New Testament*, 4th Revised Edition (With Apparatus) (Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft; Stuttgart, 2000; 2009).]

<sup>9c</sup>The very unusual collocation τῷ θεῷ πατρὶ, which is widely supported by P<sup>46vid</sup> & A B C 81 442 1739 1985 it<sup>ar, b, mon</sup> syr<sup>p</sup> cop<sup>sa, bo</sup> goth eth Ambrose Speculum, was emended by copyists who inserted καὶ, thus imitating Eph 5:20 and similar passages. (See also the comments on 1.3 and 12.)” [Bruce Manning Metzger and United Bible Societies, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, Second Edition a Companion Volume to the United Bible Societies’ Greek New Testament (4th Rev. Ed.) (London; New York: United Bible Societies, 1994), 558.]

#### <sup>10</sup>Kolossar 3,12

\* A D\* F G 1505. 1881 *pc* (the phrase τοῦ θεοῦ is omitted by these mss but included by those on the next line)

| txt & B C D<sup>2</sup> Ψ 075. 0278. 33. 1739 *M*; CI

\* 1 B 6. 33. 1739 *pc* (καὶ is omitted by these manuscripts)

#### Kolossar 3,13

\* μεμψιν D\* (μομφήν [complaint] is replaced by either μέμψιν [reason for complaint] or ὀργήν [anger])

| οργήν F G

\* Χριστός &<sup>2</sup> C D<sup>1</sup> Ψ 075. 1739. 1881 *M ar m sy co*; CI Ambst (κύριος is replaced with either Χριστός, θεός, or θ. ἐν Χριστῷ)

| θεός &\* vg<sup>mss</sup>

| θ. ἐν Χριστῷ 33

| txt P<sup>46</sup> A B D\* F G 1175 *pc lat*

#### Kolossar 3,14

\* ος &\* D\* 81 (ὸ is replaced with either ὅς or ἡτίς)

| ητίς &<sup>2</sup> D<sup>1</sup> Ψ 075 *M b g* vg<sup>mss</sup>

| txt A B C F G P 048. 33. 365. 1241<sup>s</sup>. 1739. 1881 *pc*; CI

\* ενότητος D\* F G it vg<sup>mss</sup>; Ambst (τελειότητος [completeness] is replaced by ἐνότητος [oneness])

#### Kolossar 3,15

\* θεου &<sup>2</sup> C<sup>2</sup> D<sup>2</sup> Ψ 33. 1881 *M* vg<sup>mss</sup>; Ambst (Χριστοῦ is replaced with θεοῦ)

| txt &\* A B C\* D\* F G P 075. 81. 365. 629. 1175. 1241<sup>s</sup>. 1505. 1739. 2464 *pc lat sy co*; CI

\* P<sup>46</sup> B 6. 1739. 1881 *pc* (ἐνὶ is omitted by these mss)

#### Kolossar 3,16

\* κυριου &\* I 1175 *pc bo*; CI (Χριστοῦ is replaced with κυρίου or θεοῦ)

| θεου A C\* 33. 104. 323. 945. 1241<sup>s</sup> al vg<sup>ms</sup>; Aug

| txt P<sup>46</sup> &<sup>2</sup> B C<sup>2</sup> D F G Ψ 075. 1739. 1881 *M lat sy*<sup>(p)</sup> sa bo<sup>ms</sup>; Ambst

\* bis καὶ C<sup>3</sup> D<sup>1</sup> I<sup>vid</sup> Ψ 075 *M* vg<sup>mss</sup> sy<sup>p</sup>; Ambr (C<sup>2</sup> 33. 1881: καὶ<sup>1</sup>, A<sup>vid</sup>: καὶ<sup>2</sup> tantum) (καὶ is inserted between the three words in the list)

| txt P<sup>46</sup> & B C\* D\* F G 1175. 1241<sup>s</sup>. 1505. 1739 *pc* it vg<sup>st, ww</sup> sy<sup>h</sup>; CI

\* &\* A C D<sup>2</sup> 075. 33. 1881 *M* (in the phrase ἐν τῇ χάριτι the article τῇ is omitted)

| txt P<sup>46</sup> &<sup>2</sup> B D\* F G Ψ 6. 1505. 1739 *pc*; CI

\* τη –δια D<sup>2</sup> I *M*; CI (ταῖς καρδίαις is replaced with τῇ διὰ)

| txt P<sup>46</sup> & A B C D\* F G Ψ 075. 6. 33. 81. 104. 326. 1175. 1241<sup>s</sup>. 1505. 1739. 1881. 2464 *pc latt sy co*

\* κυριω C<sup>2</sup> D<sup>2</sup> Ψ\* *M ar* vg<sup>mss</sup> bo<sup>mss</sup> (θεῷ is replaced with κυρίῳ)

| txt P<sup>46vid</sup> & A B C\* D\* F G Ψ<sup>c</sup> 075. 6. 33. 81. 365. (1175). 1505. 1739. 1881. 2464 *pc lat sy co*; CI

#### Kolossar 3,17

\* I. Χριστου A C D\* F G (κυρίου Ἰησοῦ is replaced with Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, or κυρίου)

| κυρ. I. Χρ. &<sup>2</sup> 365. 1175 *pc* (ar b) vg<sup>cl</sup> (sy<sup>p</sup>) sa<sup>mss</sup> bo

| κυρ. L; Hier

| txt P<sup>46</sup> B D<sup>2</sup> 075 (Ψ 104. 1241<sup>s</sup> *pc*: + του) 33. 1739. 1881 *M f m* vg<sup>st, ww</sup> sy<sup>h</sup> sa<sup>mss</sup>; CI Ambst



examination of these variations reflects the typical pattern of later attempts to update the language and/or make a phrase here conform to a similar phrase elsewhere in Paul's writings. None of these variations change the core idea of the text expression. Consequently, we can base our exegesis of the adopted reading of the text with full confidence that it expresses the original ideas set forth by Paul through his writing secretary.

**Internal History.** Because of the paraenetic nature of this text with a focus on the present, virtually no time / space markers are found in the passage. One indirect spatial point, that is important, is the collective, community focus of the admonitions. The second person plural frame of reference dominates the entire passage and stresses Christian living inside the community of faith. To individualize the responsibilities set forth here as though believers could personally adopt these traits largely in isolation from a community of believers would be to seriously misunderstand Paul in this passage.

Additionally, the use of music in the ancient world plays a limited but helpful role in understanding better the emphasis upon singing in the gathered community for worship. Understanding this in detail is a major challenge for scholars today.<sup>11</sup> In ancient Greece music played an important role in almost every event in life such as birthdays, weddings, funerals etc.<sup>12</sup> It was monophonic, i.e., a single, simple melody rather than harmony, was played and sang. Less about the Romans is known, but it appears from the available data that they were less interested in music than the Greeks, and borrowed heavily from the Greeks in their use of music.<sup>13</sup> In the background of the Jews in Palestine lay the



\* καὶ D F G Ψ 075. 33. 1881 m lat syh; CI Ambst (καὶ is inserted in τῷ θεῷ πατρὶ) | txt P<sup>46</sup> κ A B C 81. 1739 it vg<sup>ms</sup> sy<sup>p</sup>; Spec

[Eberhard Nestle, Erwin Nestle, Kurt Aland et al., *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 27. Aufl., rev. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelstiftung, 1993), 528-29.]

<sup>11</sup>“Investigation of the music of the early church has drawn on the efforts of liturgical scholars, musicologists and historians, as well as biblical scholars, in attempting to find out what the music of the earliest Christian church consisted of and where it came from. There are still many questions to be answered, and perhaps many questions yet to be asked.

“The distance of time and culture makes the task of identifying or reconstructing the musical fiber of the early Christian church particularly elusive. While interest in the subject is rising and investigation of it is increasingly sophisticated, essential features of this music still remain largely unknown to us. For instance, what did the music sound like? What melodies did it use? Was the music Jewish? These most basic of questions and others like them form the basis of scholarly discussion about music in the early Christian church, for even elementary characteristics of the music remain somewhat of a mystery. Essays on this topic frequently begin by saying that the early Christian church was a singing church, but what that means is hard to define.

“The sources of information on the subject of music in the early Christian church are limited. Some require much lateral thinking in order to interpret the possible relevance they may have for the subject, and this is one area in which comparative musicology has played a role. Musical texts are likely preserved in the Bible and in other related literature, but how they were used is unclear.

“Finally, scholarly discussion about the music of the early Christian church inevitably turns to the question of backgrounds and influences; that is, based on the religious and cultural backgrounds against which the early Christian church was set and within which it thrived, determining which of these influenced its music.”

[Stanley E. Porter and Craig A. Evans, *Dictionary of New Testament Background: A Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship*, electronic ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000). S.V., “Music.”]

<sup>12</sup>“The music of ancient Greece was almost universally present in society, from marriages and funerals to religious ceremonies, staged dramas, folk music and the ballad-like reciting of epic poetry. It thus played an integral role in the lives of ancient Greeks. There are significant fragments of actual Greek musical notation<sup>[1][2]</sup> as well as many literary references to ancient Greek music, such that some things can be known—or reasonably surmised—about what the music sounded like, the general role of music in society, the economics of music, the importance of a professional caste of musicians, etc. Even archaeological remains reveal an abundance of depictions on ceramics, for example, of music being performed. The word music comes from the Muses, the daughters of Zeus and patron goddesses of creative and intellectual endeavours.” [“Music of Ancient Greece,” Wikipedia online]

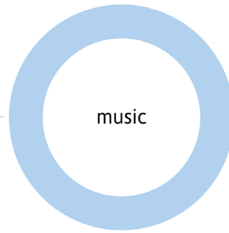
<sup>13</sup>“Less is known about Ancient Roman music than is known about the music of ancient Greece. There is a number of at least partially extant sources on the music of the Greeks. For example, much is known about the theories of Pythagoras and Aristoxenus (some of it from Greek sources and some through the writings of later Roman authors), and there exist about 40 deciphered examples of Greek musical notation. Very little survives about the music of the Romans, however. There are various reasons for this, one of which is that early fathers of the Christian church were aghast at the music of theatre, festivals, and pagan religion and suppressed it once Christianity became the official religion of the Roman empire.<sup>[1]</sup>

The Romans are not said to have been particularly creative or original when it came to music. They did not attach any spiritual ethos to music, as did the Greeks.<sup>[2]</sup> Yet, if the Romans admired Greek music as much as they admired everything else about Greek culture, it is safe to say that Roman music was mostly monophonic (that is, single melodies with no harmony) and that the melodies



**Greek Musicians**

συμφωνία  
music: band; bagpipe



**Egyptian Musicians**

Semitic heritage from Mesopotamia in the Sumerian culture of the Old Testament era.<sup>14</sup> Some musicologists credit the Sumerians for creating music, although certainty in this is not possible, given the limited data available. What we can know about ancient Jewish music comes mostly from the Bible, and is rather limited in detail.<sup>15</sup> The influence of Egyptian music, which was highly developed in comparison to other cultures, can be traced in ancient Jewish music.<sup>16</sup> Even less can be gleaned from ancient sources about Christian music in the first Christian century. Clearly the influence of Jewish music in the singing of the Psalms both in the temple and especially in the synagogue sabbath services is present, at least in the beginning decades

were based on an elaborate system of scales (called ‘modes’). The rhythm of vocal music may have followed the natural metre of the lyrics.<sup>[3]</sup>

There were also other, non-Greek, influences on Roman culture – from the Etruscans, for example, and, with imperial expansion, from the Middle Eastern and African sections of the empire.<sup>[4]</sup> Thus there were, no doubt, elements of Roman music that were native Latin as well as non-European; the exact nature of these elements is unclear. An attempt to recreate Roman music reconstructing the instruments has been done recently in Italy by Walter Maioli and his group Synaulia.” [“Music of Ancient Rome,” Wikipedia online]

<sup>14</sup>For more details see “Music of Mesopotamia,” Wikipedia online. For music generally in the ancient world see “Ancient Music,” Wikipedia online.

<sup>15</sup>See “History of music in the Biblical period,” Wikipedia online:

“Knowledge of the biblical period is mostly from literary references in the Bible and post-biblical sources. Religion and music historian Herbert Lockyer, Jr. writes that ‘music, both vocal and instrumental, was well cultivated among the Hebrews, the New Testament Christians, and the Christian church through the centuries.’<sup>[1]</sup> He adds that ‘a look at the Old Testament reveals how God’s ancient people were devoted to the study and practice of music, which holds a unique place in the historical and prophetic books, as well as the Psalter.’

“The music of religious ritual was first used by King David, and, according to the *Larousse Encyclopedia of Music*, he is credited with confirming the men of the Tribe of Levi as the ‘custodians of the music of the divine service.’<sup>[2]</sup> Historian Irene Hesk notes that of the twenty-four books of the Old Testament, the 150 Psalms in the Book of Psalms ascribed to King David, have served as ‘the bedrock of Judeo-Christian hymnology,’ concluding that ‘no other poetry has been set to music more often in Western civilization.’<sup>[3]</sup>

“The study of ancient musical instruments has been practiced for centuries with some researchers studying instruments from Israel/Palestine dating to the ‘biblical period.’<sup>[4]</sup> 145 Archaeological and written data have demonstrated clearly that music was an integral part of daily life in ancient Israel/Palestine. Figurines and iconographic depictions reveal that people played chordophones and frame drums, and that the human voice was essential as women and men sang love songs along with laments for the deceased. Data also describes outdoor scenes of music and dancing in sometimes prophetic frenzies, often with carefully orchestrated and choreographed musicians and singers within specially built structures.<sup>[4]:106</sup>

According to ancient music historian Theodore Burgh, ‘If we were able to step into the . . . biblical period, we would find a culture filled with music . . . where people used music in their daily lives.’<sup>[4]</sup> ‘Such music was capable of expressing a great variety of moods and feelings or the broadly marked antitheses of joy and sorrow, hope and fear, faith and doubt. In fact, every shade and quality of sentiment are found in the wealth of songs and psalms and in the diverse melodies of the people.’<sup>[1]:”</sup>

<sup>16</sup>“Egypt was among the oldest cultures of the Near East and had a highly developed musical culture dating back to around 3000 B.C. Egyptian sources, however, include only pictorial relics, some instruments, and a few literary records concerned with performance practices. On various pieces of sculpture there are reliefs of harpists and flutists taking part in religious ceremonies and social entertainments.

“A number of instruments have been identified as being used in Egypt, including the lyre, a type of harp, an oboe-like instrument, the lute, various drums from Asia, and the sistrum (rattle). Murals showing singers and instrumentalist performing have also been found. According to music historian Homer Ulrich, it is likely that Egypt influenced the ‘educational and ethical aspects of Greek music.’<sup>[5]:”</sup> [“History of music in the Biblical period,” Wikipedia online]

when Christianity was still dominated by Jewish believers.<sup>17</sup> But exactly how that took place is not clear.

<sup>17</sup>The evolution of Hebrew music in the biblical period moves from purely individual or family orientation to corporate orientation that later on included religious gatherings. The sociological shifts in ancient Israelite life also reflect changing roles of music in the life of the Israelite people. Note the observations of Victor Matthews below:

Even in its most primitive forms, music would have been employed by human communities for a variety of purposes. For instance, it could be used to soothe a child (see the Sumerian lullaby in ANET, pp. 651–52) or restive flocks of sheep. While engaging in strenuous or monotonous work (e.g., treading grapes—Jer 25:30 and 48:33—or digging irrigation canals or wells—Num 21:17–18—or raising a new house or barn), musical chants could be used to help maintain the rhythm of the workers and speed completion of the day's toil.

Yet another common use for music and dance would have been in celebrations, both large and small. They were used to mark the major events in the life of the people or just to express their joy and contentment with life. Thus, in Eccl 3:4, in the litany of the events of life, dancing is contrasted with mourning (see also Lam 5:15 and Ps 30:12—Eng v 11). Not all frivolity was acceptable to the biblical writers, however. For example, a mocking drunkard's song is mentioned in Ps 69:13—Eng v 12, and in Job the sufferer observes with incomprehension that the children of the wicked dance while the wicked themselves sing to the rhythm of the tambourine, lyre, and pipe (21:11–12).

The diversions provided by entertainment were essential to their lives, amid so many concerns over hostile environmental conditions and unfriendly neighbors. That could well explain, at least in part, the sanctity of the hospitality code which required that visitors (both relatives and strangers) be housed, fed, and sent away with good feelings. Hosting visitors also afforded a measure of entertainment for both householder and guest, which, as suggested by Laban in his chiding of Jacob, may have included songs and instrumental music (Gen 31:47).

Since the economic base for most of the population, even during the monarchic period, was primarily a mixture of pastoral and agricultural activity, planting, harvesting, and sheep shearing would have been occasions for mass get-togethers and religious celebrations. Thus the maidens of Shiloh danced each year beside their vineyards (Judg 21:19–21), and the sons of David made merry at a feast following the shearing of Absalom's sheep (2 Sam 14:28). In the case of the Shiloh festival and the maiden's dance in Cant 6:13, dancing provided an opportunity for eventual match making, serving both a religious purpose and aiding in the perpetuation of the community (Eaton 1975: 137).

Weddings were also occasions in which music and other merriment took place. Samson's riddle, so filled with alliteration and wordplay (Nel 1985: 542–43), suggests a chant or plainsong style that would fit into the festivities of his marriage feast (Judg 14:14). The ritual of the marriage feast also included a staged meeting between the bride and the groom's party, who were accompanied by musicians playing tambourines (1 Macc 9:37–39; Sendrey 1969: 461). They and the whole company then joined in songs as the feasting and other activities commenced (Jer 16:9). Curiously, the wedding feasts described in the NT (Matt 22:1–13 and John 2:1–11) do not include any mention of musicians or songs. However, these may have been such common aspects of the feast that they were simply to be assumed by the audience.

Births, with their promise of new life and continuity of inheritance, were also marked by ceremony and ritualized singing. Even before the infant was born, chants and incantations were used to guard it and effect a speedy and safe birth (van Dijk 1975: 55). In preparation for the birth, midwives were called in, and in some cases singers were also summoned to celebrate the birth and guard the child (e.g., see the Ugaritic legend of Aqhat, KTU 1.17 II: 10–42; ANET, pp. 150–51). The use of the "Fear not" formula by the midwives in Gen 35:17 and 1 Sam 4:20, followed by the mother naming the newborn child, suggests a traditional litany to be sung or chanted at the birth of sons. This is at least partially echoed in the Lucan account of Jesus' birth, in which angels tell the shepherds not to fear, then name the child and sing in chorus (Luke 2:9–14).

With the establishment of a royal court, new applications for music and dance were introduced. The coronation of kings was announced by the blaring of trumpets (2 Sam 15:10; 1 Kgs 1:39), and in Solomon's case a procession marching to the tune of pipes (1 Kgs 1:40). The latter marks an intentional paralleling of his father's career. David had also entered Jerusalem in procession as the ark of the covenant was brought to the new capital city. On that occasion the people sang as they marched to the sound of lyres, harps, tambourines, castanets, and cymbals (2 Sam 6:5). Upon reaching the city, David both worshiped and demonstrated his right to rule through the power of Yahweh and the ark by dancing "with all his might" as horns played (vv 14–15). It is quite likely that David's dance and procession were subsequently reenacted by his successors to the throne, thereby legitimizing their rule and invoking the covenant Yahweh made with David (see Psalm 132; Eaton 1975: 138).

There are in fact a whole group of "enthronement psalms" (among them Psalms 2; 20; 72; 89; 101; 110; 144) which reiterate the Davidic dynasty's right to rule and which were probably used in an autumnal festival to commemorate its founding (Johnson 1967: 68–72; Mowinckel 1962: 152).

Among the events that would have taken place in this annual festival is a grand procession, perhaps using Psalm 68, which exhorts the people: "Sing to God, sing praises to his name" (v 5—Eng v 4), in its opening chant. Priests and nobles, advisers and representatives of designated tribes, would march through the streets of Jerusalem to the temple with "the singers in front, the minstrels last, between them maidens playing timbrels" (v 26—Eng v 25). There sacrifices and speeches would be made, which, as in this psalm, would include in condensed form the triumphant acts of Yahweh (Weiser Psalms OTL, 487). Both Yahweh, "who rides upon the clouds" (v 5—a title also used for Baal in the Ugaritic epics, e.g., KTU 1.2 IV:8) and his chosen king were thus exalted.

Once enthroned in their palaces, kings and their wealthy nobles would have wanted to add all the luxuries found at other royal courts. Thus, as described in Eccl 2:8, they "gathered ... silver and gold and the treasure of kings and provinces ... singers, both men and women, and many concubines, man's delight." Singers and musicians became one of the trappings



Synagogue singing was not congregational, and probably not in early Christian tradition either. Perhaps a shift took place with the transition from Judaism into a distinct religion during the middle of the first century. The influence of Greek music upon early Christianity cannot be clearly traced until several centuries into the Christian movement. One would assume that by the end of the first Christian century when the great majority of Christians were non-Jewish their orientation in music would come mainly out of their own cultural background, rather than from the Jewish heritage. This would especially be true in the last decades of the first century when anti-Jewish attitudes were exploding in different Christian communities all over the Roman Empire. But the early church



fathers of the second through fourth centuries barely discuss the role of music in Christian worship, apart from banning the use of musical instruments in the church in a manner similar to the Jewish synagogue tradition. The one thing that does surface is their absolute condemnation of Roman music as used in the theater, the sports games etc, that is, 'secular music.' Much later, "one of the earliest forms of worship music in the church was the Gregorian chant. Pope Gregory I was acknowledged as the first person to order such music in the church, hinting at the name 'Gregorian' chant. The chant took place around 590-604 CE (reign of Pope Gregory I). The Gregorian chant was known for its very monophonic sound. Believing that complexity ruined the music, Gregory I kept things very simple with the chant."<sup>18</sup>

In summary, the following conclusions can be reasonably drawn regarding music in first century church experience. The following is set forth as the best possible logical conclusion from demonstrable trends from ancient sources and as the best correlation of evolving patterns found inside the New Testament. But absolute certainty for the details is not possible simply because of limited detailed data on the subject.

**1. Jewish-Christian era (AD 30s - 40s).** In the first couple of decades when virtually all Christians were Jewish and most believers continued attending the synagogue after Christian conversion, the influence of the patterns of musical expression in the Jewish synagogue were dominant in Christian worship.

What did this mean for Jewish Christians?

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of power (2 Sam 19:35), both for entertainment and ostentation (Isa 5:12). Such extravagance led to social criticism by the prophets. Among these voices of dissent was that of Amos, who chastised the wealthy who "stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat lambs from the flock ..., who sing idle songs to the sound of the harp ..." (6:4-5).

The military also made use of music, but this was principally to rally their forces (Judg 3:27; 6:34), to guide disparate groups of men on the battlefield, or to signal troops to advance (Num 10:9) or retreat. Sendrey (1969: 469-70) suggests there may have been preparatory "war dances" prior to battles. He cites Ezek 6:11, "Smite with your hand, and stamp with your foot," as an allusion to such a dance. Isa 13:3, which enjoins the soldiers to "consecrate themselves" before the coming battle, may also be an indication of ritual activity, including dance.

The trumpets used by Gideon (Judg 7:15-24) served the additional function of startling the Midianites and aiding in the Israelites' surprise attack. Similarly, the blasting of rams' horns by the Israelite priests in the siege of Jericho added to the psychological effect after the people had marched in silence before the city for six days (Josh 6:3-16).

Victories, of course, sparked spontaneous celebration and joy (Judg 11:34). To commemorate these occasions heroic ballads and songs of praise to Yahweh were composed. Among the best examples of these hymns of thanksgiving are the "Song of the Sea" (Exod 15:1-18), the ballad of victory over Sihon and the Amorites (Num 21:27-30), and the "Song of Deborah" (Judges 5). Each of these epic poems, as well as the shorter boastful chants of Lamech (Gen 4:23) and Samson (Judg 15:16), have a rhythmic style. The instrumental accompaniment, while subordinate to the reciting of the verses, would have helped to create mood, heighten tension, and add to the symmetry of the composition (Polin 1954: 14). Dance, too, would have been a part of these celebrations, as processions of women with hand-drums performed a "round-dance" (māhōl) as they joined the victorious soldiers or priests on their way to the sanctuary of Yahweh (Eaton 1975: 137).

Less elaborate chants, designed to accompany rhythmic dancing, were also composed. The progressive phrase sung by village women to welcome Saul and David—"Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands" (1 Sam 18:7)—must have haunted King Saul. These women would have stamped their feet as they sang and whirled to the sound of the timbrel just as modern bedouin women still do today (Sendrey 1969: 466). Just how pervasive this phrase became can be seen in its repetition among the Philistines two separate times in the narrative (1 Sam 21:11; 29:5). There was probably at one time an entire body of heroic epics and chants which is no longer in existence. They may have been included in either of the lost resources of the biblical writers: the Book of the Wars of the Lord (Num 21:14) or the Book of Jashar (Josh 10:13; 2 Sam 1:18).

[Victor H. Matthews, "Music and Musical Instruments: Music in the Bible" In vol. 4, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1996), 931-32.]

<sup>18</sup>Cf. "Christian music," Wikipedia online.

a) The content of music used centered in the Psalms. Other musical expressions may have been used on occasion but in a secondary role to the Psalms. This clearly implied that only the special form of musical style, found in temple worship, was considered appropriate to synagogue worship. The only mention of Jesus singing is at the close of their Passover celebration on Thursday evening (cf. Mt. 26:30 and Mk. 14:26), which was the traditional Jewish hymn associated with the Passover. In Acts 16:25 Paul and Silas sang hymns (ὑμνοῦν τὸν θεόν) while in the Philippian jail.<sup>19</sup> Other “secular” or “popular” musical expressions were not considered appropriate for worshipping God in corporate worship.

b) Music played a very secondary role in worship. Just as in the synagogue so in early Christian use, music was a very optional part of worship which centered on the reading of the Hebrew Bible, with possible Christian explanation of its meaning, and prayers. Music would be used only with the presence of a properly trained cantor who did most of the ‘singing’ as a solo.<sup>20</sup> One should remember that the lyrical ‘reading’ -- (cantillation) -- of scripture and the giving of prayers, would have had a highly ‘musical’ tone so that the difference between singing a psalm and reading a psalm would not have been very great. In the temple the Levitical singers sang in unison the psalm, while an individual priest read the psalm with cantillation. In the synagogue both these patterns were done by the cantor, who was a synagogue member with proper training for this. The congregation participated only through prescribed responses such as selah (amen) etc. Additionally, public music and dance was banned on the sabbath by the temple authorities by the beginning of the Christian era (cf. *m. Besa* V2 / Yom Tov). Thus the use of music on the sabbath was already at a highly diminished level.

c) The use of musical instruments was prohibited. Although it is not entirely clear when the Jewish synagogue ban the use of musical instruments in synagogue worship, strong indications from the Jewish sources suggest that it was prior to the beginning of the Christian era. The destruction of the Jerusalem temple in AD 70 only intensified an already existing tradition. This particularly applied to instruments associated with non-Jewish music coming out of the dominate Greek and Roman traditions of that time.<sup>21</sup> The few references

<sup>19</sup>In **1 Cor. 14:15** Paul declares, “What should I do then? I will pray with the spirit, but I will pray with the mind also; ***I will sing praise with the spirit, but I will sing praise with the mind also.***” (τί οὖν ἔστιν; προσεύξομαι τῷ πνεύματι, προσεύξομαι δὲ καὶ τῷ νοῖ: ***ψαλῶ τῷ πνεύματι, ψαλῶ δὲ καὶ τῷ νοῖ.***)

<sup>20</sup>“The musical elements of worship in the synagogue were the chanting of Scripture, psalmody, postbiblical prayers, and spiritual songs. The choral singing of the temple was replaced by a single cantor. The cantor was a layman who, according to tradition, had to have the following qualifications: ‘He had to be well educated, gifted with a sweet voice, of humble personality, recognized by the community, conversant with Scripture and all the prayers; he must not be a rich man, for his prayers should come from his heart.’ The most important job of the cantor was the cantillation of the Pentateuch and the Prophets. A series of accents and punctuations, forerunners of actual musical notation, were indications for the cantor in the musical interpretation of the Scripture.” [Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1988), 1508.]

<sup>21</sup> “Proper” Hebrew musical instruments in the ancient world included the following:

A. Idiophones

“Idiophones are musical instruments of resonant material which emit sounds when they are shaken, struck, flexed, or rubbed.”

1. mēna ‘an ‘îm

Possible translations at 2 Sam 6:5 include “shakers” (probably preferable), “rattles,” “castanets,” “sistrums.”

2. mēšiltayîm

The Heb word mēšiltayîm may refer to twin cymbals, saucer like plates with pierced centers for wire finger-holds and reflexed rims. They were capable of producing a high-pitched tinkling when struck together or when one was dashed against the rim of the other (Yadin 1972: 69 for a pair of these inside a bronze bowl in a 14th century B.C.E. stela temple). Alternatively the reference may be to small bronze cones, sometimes for striking against each other vertically, which produced a resonating or dull clash according to the way in which they were held or struck.

3. šeššēlîm

In Psalm 150 the cymbals are described as šilšêlê tērû‘â and šilšêlê šāma‘. These are generally understood as musical terms, either indicating the kind of cymbal used (high-pitched or low-pitched), or the musical use made of the cymbals (clashed or allowed to ring). It is possible, however, that the additional terms indicate primarily how they were employed in the temple worship and only secondarily what kind of cymbals they were or how they were played.

4. kymbala

The word *kymbala* frequently indicates the use of cymbals in Gk translations of the OT. It does so also in 1 Cor 13:1. This Pauline verse is open to a number of interpretations. It may be a comparison of “speaking with tongues of men and of angels” with bombastic musical instruments (*chalkos* = a bronze gong, *kymbala* = bronze cymbals), contrasting these with the way of Christian love. Alternatively it may compare glossolalia and visionary voices with inessentials such as the bronze jars used as theatrical acoustic amplifiers and *kymbala alalazonta*, the cymbals used in the temple ritual, contrasting both with the one essential quality of love.



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5. *šālīš*

The Vg translates Heb *šālīš* at 1 Sam 18:6 as “sistrum.” It is by no means certain that *šālīš* is a musical instrument. The context is the singing and dancing of the Israelite women welcoming Saul and David, so a reference to a musical instrument here would be appropriate. But even if it is a musical instrument, its exact character remains uncertain

6. *pa‘āmōn*

In Exod 39:24–26 and 28:35, Heb *pa‘āmōn* is often translated “bell.” It is quite possible that the word originally referred to platelets or bell-shaped objects hung as decoration around the high priest’s robe and as a means of deflecting destructive powers. By the 1st century C.E. and perhaps even earlier, these were understood to be “bells” in a modern sense, i.e., bells with a ringing clapper inside each cavity (cf. Philo Vita Mos II. 110[23]).

B. Membranophones (*tōp*)

These are musical instruments from which sound is produced by movement of a stretched membrane, often of skin. The Hebrew word associated with this type of instrument is *tōp*. Possible translations include “drum,” “frame drum,” “tambourine,” and “timbrel.” In some cases the generic term “drum” may be an appropriate translation (cf. Gen 31:27, where the drum and lyre accompany songs; and Isa 5:12; 30:32; Ps 81:3, where the drum is made to “sound out”). In other cases, a “frame drum” may be indicated, i.e., a hand drum with a skin stretched over a circular (cf. Jer 31:4) or triangular frame, gripped by the left hand, with the fingers of the left hand tightening or releasing the tension on the skin, which is then struck with the palm of the right hand. 1 Sam 10:5 (and possibly Exod 15:20) includes such a frame drum as part of the so-called “Canaanite orchestra” (or “band” in the RSV; on this see C.1.a. below; on the evidence for this, cf. the 10th century B.C.E. Ashdod pottery stand, probably of Philistine origin). Some prefer the translation “tambourine” or “timbrel,” but that suggests additional jingling circlets of metal. The evidence for such instruments is late, and the main uses of *tōp* are early. The Heb *tōp* is thus associated with singing, festivals, processions, and bands.

C. Aerophones

Aerophones are musical instruments which produce sound through vibration of air in, through, or around them. They can be subdivided into two main groups.

1. Group 1

In this group of aerophones, sound is produced at the point where air enters the instrument.

a. *ḥālīl*

(1) A double-pipe. A “double-pipe” is composed of two pipes, cones, or cylinders, in a V-shape with a reed or reeds at the point of the V. The two pipes may be the same length, one having several holes and the other one hole only, so that the latter acts as a kind of drone. An example of this may be 1 Sam 10:5, where the *ḥālīl* is another part of the “Canaanite band.” Reed-pipes were also associated with funeral songs (cf. Jer 48:36 and Matt 9:23). Reed instruments may have been used to express great pathos.

(2) A single-pipe. This was particularly popular at feasts (cf. Isa 5:12; 30:29).

(3) Pipes or flutes. Extant from the 1st century C.E. is an example of a bone-flute with a blocked top and a narrow entrance into the instrument’s vertical cavity. There are other kinds of flutes, some vertical, with the player blowing over the top rim, others transverse, with the opening on the upper side of the instrument. In a context such as 1 Kgs 1:40, the reference may be to several different kinds of pipes or flutes, although perhaps not including reed pipes. In 1 Cor 14:7 an instrument of the flute family may be intended (*aulos* Gk).

b. *nēḥīlôt*

The Heb *nēḥīlôt* (cf. Psalm 5) are probably the lamentation-pipes for which monuments and reliefs give impressive evidence.

There are other Hebrew terms sometimes associated with this class of aerophones, but the evidence concerning them is not strong, e.g., *‘al ‘ālāmôt* (cf. Psalm 46). 1 Chr 15:20 suggests that an instrumental interpretation of this word is inappropriate. It could perhaps refer to vocal instructions (cf. Exod 15:20; Judg 11:34).

2. Group 2

In this group of aerophones the lips of the player produce the vibration of air.

a. *šōpār*

Since the ancient distinction between the Heb *šōpār* and the trumpet does not correspond to the modern distinction between “horn” and “trumpet,” the simple transliteration “shophar” (rather than “ram’s horn,” as a translation of the Heb) has much to commend it. The *šōpār* has two interrelated areas of association. (war and worship)

b. *ḥāšōšērâ*

Where *šōpār* and *ḥāšōšērôt* occur together (Hos 5:8 and Ps 98:6) it is convenient simply to transliterate the former as “shophar” and to translate the latter as “trumpet.” But whether or not this is an accurate rendering depends on two factors: to what date should a text such as Ps 98:6 be assigned? And, at what date did the instrument described by Josephus first appear in Israelite-Jewish culture?

The silver trumpets made of hammered metal (Num 10:1) had a specific liturgical function at the end of the OT period (cf. Sir 50:16–19). 2 Kgs 12:13 suggests that they also had a role in the temple at an earlier period. In Numbers, as in Ecclesiasticus, they are signs of divine favor.

The *ḥāšōšērôt* are played by the priests rather than by the Levites in the later strands of the tradition in Chronicles (2 Chr 5:12). In the earlier strands that distinction is missing or blurred (1 Chr 16:42; cf. 2 Chr 29:25, where the Levites play “the instruments of David”). The Targumic evidence in 1 Chr 13:8 supports the translation of *ḥāšōšērôt* as “trumpets.”

c. *qeren*

The Heb word *qeren* is parallel to *šōpār* in Josh 6:5. Some suggest that *qeren* refers to “horn” without any metal attachment, whether as mouthpiece or as bell. But that should not be taken to suggest that *šōpār* did not also carry the same possible

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sense. (For the use of qeren in Aramaic, see below).

d. yōbēl

The Heb yōbēl is parallel to šōpār in Exodus 19 and Joshua 6. Again, like qeren, it is probably an alternative designation for (rather than a subcategory of) the šōpār. In Exod 19:13 God gives notice that the yōbēl is to be blown as permission for the people to approach the mountain (cf. the use of salpinx in Heb 12:19); in v 16 the šōpār sounds, and in v 19 it becomes an accompaniment to the divine voice. Read as a consecutive narrative the passage gives the impression that the yōbēl and the šōpār are the same instrument.

D. Chordophones

These instruments produce sound from the plucking or bowing of strings stretched over or into a sounding box. The Mesopotamian and Egyptian instruments identifiable from depictions and descriptions include three main types: (1) the harp (akin to the warrior's bow with up to twelve strings), with the soundbox on the horizontal or the vertical part of the bow; (2) the lyre (Eg. knnr), with two arms (symmetrical or asymmetrical) raised from ends of the soundbox, supporting a yoke from which the strings (three to eleven in number) descend into or over the soundbox; and (3) the lute, whose strings stretch along a narrow neck and then over a bulging soundbox. Details concerning the length of string, tuning, playing, and damping in the use of these instruments have been partly clarified from three interrelated areas of research: the study of ancient notations, the study of the depictions of players, and modern reconstructions and recordings (Wulstan; Kilmer). The lyre is well represented in Israelite archaeological finds (e.g., the 12th century B.C.E. Megiddo ivory plaque, the 7th century B.C.E. Jasper Seal, and the Bar Kokhba coins ca. 132 C.E.). The lute is less well attested (cf. the 16th century pottery figurine from Tell el-Ajul, and the 15th–13th century Beth-shean bronze statuette). The harp is not found at all.

1. kinnôr

The identification of Heb kinnôr with the lyre is very probable (cf. Ant 7.306, the various versions of the OT which understand kinnôr as a kithara, and Abraham ben Meir ibn Ezra's description; by contrast, the links of the harp with Syria are insufficient to explain the forty-two uses of the word kinnôr in the OT [cf. Juv. Sat. 3.63–4 "obliquas chordas"]).

2. nēbāl

With this Heb term we enter a far more difficult area, as the variant translations in the OT versions show. The term appears parallel to kinnôr in 2 Sam 6:5, 1 Sam 10:5, Pss 57:9; 71:22; 81:3; 108:3; 150:3 and in the Chronicler; in Pss 33:2; 92:4; 144:9 it is parallel to kinnôr but is itself linked with the term 'asôr ("ten stringed"?). It appears to have cultic associations in Amos, especially in 5:23 and 6:5, of which some suggest that the language evokes dissolute, noisy improvisation indicating careless self-confidence. Amos seems to imply that the instrument is plucked with the fingers. Josephus (Ant 7.306) agrees, describing it as having twelve notes (phthongous cf. 1 Cor 14:7). The rabbis regarded it as a larger, lower-pitched kinnôr, and modern writers sometimes affirm the use of different sizes of instrument, unwisely using as a basis the evidence from 1 Chr 15:20f. (cf. above on 'al 'ālāmôt; the difficulties in interpreting 'al 'ālāmôt make it doubly difficult to reach a conclusion regarding šēmînî, especially the conclusion that šēmînî refers to an instrument capable of playing an octave lower). Attempts to derive the character of the instrument etymologically can be misleading, as we shall see below; but it is possible that in this case the word nēbāl evokes the picture of a bulging bottle (cf. LXX 1 Kgdms 10:3; Jer 13:12). The lute is the most appropriate stringed instrument known from archaeological work to correspond to such a picture. It would not, however, be wise to assume that nēbāl should always be translated "lute" (it could refer in some contexts to a different size of lyre).

3. 'ûgāb

The Heb 'ûgāb is usually considered a wind instrument. The arguments for this involve an etymological association with the flute family, the role of Gen 4:21, the weight of discussion among modern commentators (Sendrey), and Tg. Onq. on Gen 4:21. But there are arguments against this view: Josephus regarded Jubal as creating two string instruments; the LXX and Peshitta at Gen 4:21 suggest that 'ûgāb was a stringed instrument; and Symmachus has kithara at Job 21:12 and Ps 150:4.

E. Daniel 3

From the Hellenistic period there is pictorial evidence of an increased use of mixed groups of musicians (Fleischhauer 1982: 150). Recent discussions of the "orchestra" of Nebuchadrezzar in Daniel 3 (Mitchell), in attempting to place individual instruments mentioned there as early as the 6th century B.C.E., have neglected this factor. There are undoubtedly early traditions in the book of Daniel and the "orchestra" could be one of these, but the depicting of an Eastern potentate as possessing a mixed orchestra would have constituted a significant barbaric motif in the eyes of an early 2d century B.C.E. reader. According to Daniel 3, this mixed orchestra included the following instruments:

1. qarnā'

The translation "horn" (Aram qarnā'; Heb qeren) is often favored here, on the grounds of language and because of the assumed rarity of trumpets within the depictions of musical instruments from the 6th century B.C.E. "Horn" would then be understood as an instrument formed from the horn of an animal. If, however, the book of Daniel is read as addressed in its final form to Hellenistic times, then the possibilities of translation are much greater. "Pagan" bands included brass instruments. In such a context qarnā'/qeren could be understood as the equivalent of the cornu (Latin) or the buccina (Latin), although the distinction between these two names is a matter of debate. The tuba (Latin) and lituus (Latin, see below) might also be considered. Perhaps an appropriate translation of qeren here might be "bugle-horn."

2. mašrôqîṭā'

The LXX translates mašrôqîṭā' as "syrinx," and the Vg translates it as fistula, either of which might point to panpipes, a row of pipes of different lengths bound together, which produce a piccolo-type sound capable of birdlike twittering and running scales. Some scholars relate the Aramaic name to a Semitic root, "to hiss or whistle." The humble "whistle" is also a possible contender for an orchestral place.

to musical instruments inside the New Testament suggest a similar attitude by early Christians.<sup>22</sup> Paul's

3. qaytrôs

The LXX translates this Aramaic word as kithara, and qaytrôs itself may actually be a loanword from the Gk kithara or kitharis. In a 6th century B.C.E. Babylonian setting this would be the lyre; in a Hellenistic setting the Aramaic name would evoke the Greek style of instrument and of performance depicted on Greek amphora from the 5th century B.C.E. (Michaelides 1978, cf. Rev 14:2; 18:22).

4. sabbēkā'

The LXX and Vg translate this Aramaic word as "sambyke," which probably was a stringed instrument of the harp family with a large sounding-board of proverbially barbaric and immoral character (Michaelides). It was employed in Hellenistic times as part of instrumental bands (Fleischhauer 1982: 187). Those who argue for Daniel 3 as representing an actual 6th-century B.C.E. orchestra suggest that it is a loanword indicating an Assyrian-type horizontal harp.

5. pēsanterîn

The LXX and Vg translate this Aramaic word as "psalterion," a member of the harp family and well-known in Greek circles from the 4th century B.C.E.

6. šmpōnyâ

The discussion of this word is complicated by the presence in Luke 15:2 of the Gk word symphonia, which is often confused with the Aram šmpōnyâ. In all probability the two are unconnected. Symphonia, from which English has the derivation "symphony," can indicate either sound made by voices singing together (Peshitta and Harclean at Luke 15:2 understood symphonia in this sense), or voices together with instruments, or simply "a band." Some argue for the translation "bagpipe," others "double pipe," but NEB's preference for "music" is probably correct. Šmpōnyâ, by contrast, is probably a transliteration of a dialect form of the Gk tympanon, a kettledrum. This would provide the orchestra in Daniel 3 with a much-needed percussion instrument (one which had been in use from Mesopotamian times; Mitchell).

F. salpinx in the NT

The Gk word salpinx can refer to a wide range of musical instruments. We have seen already that it has a LXX usage covering qeren, šôpâr, and ḥāšôšêrôt. The Gk salpinx functioned in military and cultural contexts. It heralded the opening of competitions and the verdict of the judges. It played an important part in Etruscan and Roman military circles. Other instruments referred to by the word salpinx were the cornu and buccina, which were also military instruments, and which, despite their raucous character, were used in various instrumental combinations (Fleischhauer 1982: 16). With the lituus, they are depicted in representations of solemn funeral processions, civic ceremonies (cf. perhaps Matt 6:2 with irony or sarcasm), and military triumphs. The lituus has been reconstructed from archaeological finds, and its haunting alpine-horn call must have been familiar wherever Roman soldiers made their camps and wherever gladiatorial combat took place. The tuba (as the relief on Trajan's Column indicates) accompanied military marching and marked the strategic movements of troops in war (cf. 1QM; 1 Cor 14:8), and with the buccina and cornu it was intended to create panic among the enemy.

In intertestamental literature the sounding of a salpinx was understood to initiate messianic times (1 Thess 4:16; cf. also the holy war tradition in L. A. B. 36:3), the gathering of God's people who had been humiliated by the heathen (Apoc. Ab. 31.1), or the resurrection of God's people (Ques. Ezra B 12; 1 Cor 15:52). The golden trumpet pointed heavenward heralds a series of scenes: it puts heart into the seer, splits the heavens wide open, calls the saints to intercession as they do daily when the trumpets answer each other between heaven and earth, and warns of the coming wrath of God's judgment (Apoc. Zeph. 9–12; Matt 24:31). The association of the trumpet with the fire is particularly strong in judgment scenes (T. Ab. 12:10; cf. Heb 12:19), and the Feast of Trumpets no doubt lent strength to this tradition (L. A. B. 13:6). Proclamation of both the mercies and majesty of God is another function of the trumpet (L. A. E. 47:1). Sometimes this is associated with cosmic motifs (L. A. B. 32:18).

The use of salpinx in the NT is therefore distinctive not only because of its extremely rich group of associations, the trumpet being part of a series of interlocking motifs—musical, ritual, secular, and cosmic—but also because it focuses these motifs in a single Greek word. This is all the more interesting in the case of Revelation because the imagery there is based on what is heard (Rev 1:10). It also explains the construction of the trumpet scenes, since these bring together the devastation of the earth with its plague and its cosmic associations (Rev 8:6–9:13), the call to repentance (Amos 3:6; Joel 2:1, 15; Rev 9:20), the prophetic associations of judgment (cf. Rev 18:22, where the songs to the "cithara," musicians, players of the "aulos" and the "salpinx" are heard no more), and the announcement of the Day of the Lord (Revelation 14). The holiness of the divine presence is also evoked by the trumpet references (4:1), as they reflect the interplay of heavenly and earthly liturgies (8:1ff).

[Ivor H. Jones, "Music and Musical Instruments: Musical Instruments" In vol. 4, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1996), 934-39.]

<sup>22</sup>Only four or perhaps five different instruments are mentioned in the NT: the double pipe, the lyre, the trumpet, the cymbals, and possibly a gong.

1. For a description of the Gk *aulós* (RSV, NEB "flute"; AV "pipe") see II.C.1 above. The instrument occurs only in 1 Cor. 14:7, but "flute players" (AV also "piper" and "minstrels") appear in Mt. 9:23 and Rev. 18:22, and the verb "pipe" (RSV, NEB also "to play") in Mt. 11:17; 1 Cor. 14:7. The playing of the *aulós* is associated both with dancing (Mt. 11:17; 1 Cor. 14:7) and with mourning (Mt. 9:23).

2. For a description of the Gk *kithára*, see II.B.1 above. It appears four times (1 Cor. 14:7; Rev. 5:8; 14:2; 15:2). While there is now no doubt that the *kithára* was a type of lyre, the versions maintain the traditional translation "harp" (NEB once also "lyre" in 1 Corinthians), also for the associated verb and nomen professionis (1 Cor. 14:7; Rev. 14:2; 18:22),

3. The LXX used Gk *salpinx* to translate both Heb "trumpet," and *šôpâr*, "ram's horn" (see II.A.1, 2 above). In the NT there is no direct evidence favoring one over the other. The instrument itself appears eleven times (Mt. 24:31; 1 Cor. 14:8; 15:52; 1 Thess.



comparisons of meaningless noise to several musical instruments suggests a rather low opinion of those instruments on his part.<sup>23</sup> And his writings coming in the 50s reflect a continued low view of at least some musical instruments, a view typical of the Judaism of the time.

**2. Post Jewish-Christian era (from late 40s on).** With the Pauline mission to non-Jews beginning in the middle 40s that shifted Christianity increasingly to a non-Jewish religious movement, changes in musical expressions took place among Christians. What were these? No clear definitive answers can be given, but the date suggests the following:

a) Gradual dominance of musical content focusing on Christ, rather than the Psalms. This is particularly reflected in the eschatological songs found in Rev. 4:11; 5:9-10; 7:15-17; and 11:17-18.<sup>24</sup> Interestingly, these eschatological songs are sung without instruments by the angels (5:11-12; 7:11-12) and the 24 elders (11:16-18), but the four living creatures and the 24 elders sing accompanied by only a harp (5:8-10).

The Christological focus of the hymns found inside the New Testament outside of Revelation likewise reflect that singing as a part of Christian worship centered exclusively on Christ, and not on the worshipper or his experience.<sup>25</sup> Clearly the Jewish base for the Magnificat (1:46-55) and the Benedictus (1:68-79) in Luke's Gospel is present, but the remaining hymnic material reflects mixed heritages.<sup>26</sup>

b) The diverse roles of music in Jewish, Greek, and Roman cultures diminished the importance of

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4:16; He. 12:19; Rev. 1:10; etc.); the RSV translates it as "trumpet," also "bugle" (1 Cor. 14:8); the AV also has "trump." The verb and noun professionis appear only in Revelation, Mt. 6:2; 1 Cor. 15:52.

4. Cymbals are mentioned only in Paul's musical metaphor in 1 Cor. 13:1: "clanging cymbal" (*kýmbalon alalázon*; cf. AV "tinkling cymbal"). The first member of the comparison (*chalkós échōn*) is also usually taken as another type of musical instrument (hence RSV "noisy gong"; NEB "sounding gong"; the AV translates more literally: "sounding brass"). The two phrases might represent a modified quotation of Ps. 150:5 (see II.D.2 above). According to a more recent interpretation, however, *chalkós échōn* refers to the brass sounding vases, about 1 m (3 ft) tall, tuned musically to roughly the range of an octave, that were placed in niches at the rear of Greek amphitheatres. They resonated sympathetically to various pitches of the actors' voices, providing a primitive but effective acoustic amplification system (see W. Harris, *Biblical Archaeology Review*, 8/1 [1982], 38-41).

[Geoffrey W. Bromiley, vol. 3, *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Revised (Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1988; 2002), 446.]

<sup>23</sup>For example, **1 Cor. 14:7-8**, "7 It is the same way *with lifeless instruments that produce sound*, such as the flute or the harp. If they do not give distinct notes, how will anyone know what is being played? 8 And if the bugle gives an indistinct sound, who will get ready for battle?" (7 ὁμοῦς τὰ ἄψυχα φωνὴν δίδόντα, εἴτε αὐλὸς εἴτε κιθάρα, ἐὰν διαστολῆν τοῖς φθόγγοις μὴ δῶ, πῶς γνωσθήσεται τὸ αὐλούμενον ἢ τὸ κιθαριζόμενον; 8 καὶ γὰρ ἐὰν ἄδηλον σάλπιγξ φωνὴν δῶ, τίς παρασκευάζεται εἰς πόλεμον;). Compare also 1 Cor. 13:1. Paul does not appear to have had as positive a view of the harp (κιθάρα) as does John in Rev. 5:8, 14:2, 15:2.

<sup>24</sup>Indirectly, the use of the trumpet to signal the return of Christ connects music to the end of times: Matt. 24:31; 1 Cor. 15:52; 1 Thess 4:16; Heb. 12:19.

<sup>25</sup>"It can be assumed that the early Christians composed hymns in praise of Christ. Logically, most of the hymns found in the NT are based on Hebrew poetic psalm forms, but there is Greek and Latin influence also. The hymns from the Gospel of Luke have become well-known canticles adopted by the church: the Magnificat (1:46-55), the Benedictus (vv 68-79), the Gloria (2:14) and the Nunc dimittis (vv 29-32). While patterned after the psalms of the OT, these hymns are full of confidence in the salvation of Christ and in his imminent return. Other christological hymns found in the NT include the prologue to the Gospel of John; Ephesians 2:14-16; Philippians 2:6-11; Colossians 1:15-20; 1 Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 1:3; and 1 Peter 3:18-22. These texts are set apart by their formal poetic structure and their 'ardor of enthusiasm.'

"In Philippians 2:6-11 we find a deviation from the Hebrew poetic structure and spirit. The passage lacks any parallelism between lines, either in poetic reference, length, or accented syllables. While it may have been a hymn of the early church, it could not have been sung in a traditional Jewish psalm makam."

[Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1988), 1509.]

<sup>26</sup>"The style of Jewish song is plain in the Magnificat<sup>79</sup> and the Benedictus.<sup>80</sup> A fixed form of a different kind is apparent in Eph. 5:14 (which is shown to be traditional by its introduction as a quotation). This is probably a liturgical fragment<sup>81</sup> (a summons to the baptismal candidate?) but not the fragment of a song. Also fixed in form is 1 Tm. 3:16 with its six lines of praise. One hesitates to see here part of a larger whole, but the name of Christ must have preceded it.<sup>82</sup> The piece is plainly differentiated from the context by its style. Short sentences are used in formal balance and material contrast. Elsewhere we find longer sentences, sometimes with subsidiary clauses or participles. But sometimes the texts can contain short parts of sentences which are relatively autonomous. It is fairly generally recognized that Phil. 2:6-11 is a pre-Pauline song.<sup>83</sup> In any case the piece existed as a totality prior to the composition of Phil. As regards other passages one may at least ask whether there can be any certainty how far the author of the writing in question is adopting formulations which he himself did not compose (as may often be the case), how far he introduces variations, and what he himself has perhaps added.<sup>84</sup>"

[*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley and Gerhard Friedrich, electronic ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964-), 8:500-01.]

music for worship in an increasingly non-Jewish church.<sup>27</sup> With the Greek speaking focus of Christians in the second half of the first century, perhaps the higher love of music from the Greek culture played some role in the church during this era, but the New Testament contains no indication of any adoption of the Greek philosophy of music. The Jewish tendency against music instruments in worship seems to have continued among Christians during this period.<sup>28</sup> The clear priority is that musical praise is primarily vocal, rather than instrumental. The poetical structures of the Christological hymns, especially those in the writings of Paul, suggest a growing expansion of musical composition to include non-Jewish influences. This is particularly the case for Phil. 2:5-11.

One should not forget the logistics for Christian gatherings to worship. During this era and for quite some time later, Christians came together in private homes meeting in small groups for worship. The centrality of prayer and hearing the Word of God (from both the Hebrew scriptures and the traditions about Jesus) continued to function as the hub around which worship occurred. For members of such small groups to have the formal training required for formal Jewish musical expression would have been rare. Given the strongly negative attitudes toward folk music and popular music as inappropriate forms of musical worship of God, most musical expressions would not have been acceptable.

The singing of hymns (more literally a psalm) could be done, if someone desired to sing one, according to 1 Cor. 14:26, “What should be done then, my friends? When you come together, each one **has a hymn**, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up” (Τί οὖν ἐστίν, ἀδελφοί; ὅταν συνέρχησθε, ἕκαστος **ψαλμὸν ἔχει**, διδαχὴν ἔχει, ἀποκάλυψιν ἔχει, γλῶσσαν ἔχει, ἔρμηνείαν ἔχει· πάντα πρὸς οἰκοδομὴν γινέσθω.). What Paul seems to allude to here is a psalm (ψαλμός) rather than a freely composed hymn (ὕμνος). In the context, the individual would present it as a solo expression, not lead the group to sing it. James 5:13, written in the mid to late 50s, alludes to Christians singing a song of praise when they felt good: “Are any cheerful? They should sing songs of praise.” (εὐθυμεῖ τις, ψαλλέτω) The context suggests a more general setting, than just of corporate worship for this admonition and is individualized action.

Unclear from the threefold designation in Col. 3:16 (ψαλμοῖς, ὕμνοις, ᾠδαῖς πνευματικαῖς) and Eph. 5:19 (ψαλμοῖς καὶ ὕμνοις καὶ ᾠδαῖς πνευματικαῖς) is whether the terms refer to a singular type of worship music considered appropriate, or to three distinct types of worship music. The three terms are sometimes used inter-changeable in later Christian writings with little distinction among them in meaning.

Later Christians in the early decades of the second century continued to use hymn singing more as a group activity, according to the indirect witness sometime prior to 113 AD of a Roman governor Pliny the Younger in the now combined Roman province of Bithynia and Pontus (cf. *Epistulae* X.96). During the second century the evidence points toward increased use of non-Jewish musical forms in the corporate worship of Christians.<sup>29</sup> The Council of Laodicea in 363-364 forbid the use of non-biblical hymns, i.e., singing non-

<sup>27c</sup>While the Jewish rabbis considered music an art form for the praise of God, and the Greek philosophers thought of it as a powerful moral force in creation, the Romans considered music mainly as entertainment. The music of the Roman games was neither religious nor philosophic and, from the accounts of witnesses, it was not technically exceptional. In the Roman Empire musicians were given a lower status and looked on as mere entertainers. One reason the early church did not include instrumental music in their worship was in reaction to the debased secular use of instruments by the Romans.” [Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1988), 1508.]

<sup>28</sup>The statements by Paul in Col. 3:16 ᾄδοντες ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ὑμῶν τῷ θεῷ (singing in your hearts to God) and in Eph. 5:19 ᾄδοντες καὶ ψάλλοντες τῇ καρδίᾳ ὑμῶν τῷ κυρίῳ (singing and praising in your hearts to the Lord) have sometimes been taken to exclude the use of instrumental music in Christian worship. Although such is not certain, the two declarations clearly emphasize vocal musical praise as the priority of Christian music.

<sup>29c</sup>In the post-apost. fathers a common song of the whole community is obviously presupposed at Ign. R., 2, 2, cf. also Eph., 4. 1 f. Also in hymnal style are Eph., 7, 2 (cf. Ign. Pol., 3, 2)<sup>93</sup> and 19, 2 f.<sup>94</sup> Acc. to Socrates Hist. Eccl., VI, 8<sup>95</sup> Ign. introduced antiphonal singing to Antioch and from there it spread to other churches. A Gnostic ὕμνος has come down to us in Act. Joh. 94 f.<sup>96</sup> In this the singer, Jesus, stands in the centre of a circle of disciples clasping hands, moving around Him, and responding to each line with Amen, cf. the dancing and singing girls of Herm. s., 9, 11, 5. At the sound of a stringed instrument Thomas strikes up the so-called wedding song in Act. Thom. 6 f. (in Hbr.; ὕμνησεν and ᾠδή occur in 8). The pearl song is called a ψαλμός in 108–113. The Naassene hymn (ψαλμός, ὕμνοφδέω, 10, 1) in Hipp. Ref., V, 10, 2 has been preserved in Gk. measures.<sup>97</sup> The first hymn of the Church in Gk. verses is in Cl. Al. Paed., III, 101, 3. It contains 65 short lines in anapaests.<sup>98</sup> The first Chr. song with notes is in V 8, p 503 P. Oxy., XV, 1786 (3rd cent. A.D.): “All glorious (creations) of God together ... should not keep silent and the light-bearing stars should not hold back ... All roaring rivers should praise our Father and Son and Holy Ghost, all powers should agree: Amen, Amen! Might (and) praise ... to the only Giver of all good things, Amen, Amen!”<sup>99</sup> Already in the 3rd cent. there is some opposition to the use of non-biblical hymns in Chr. worship.<sup>100</sup> The Council of Laodicea (4th cent.) forbade this.<sup>101</sup> But it could not be fully suppressed in the East.<sup>102</sup> The so-called biblical odes arose instead.<sup>103</sup> In keeping is the fact that Bible MSS in Gk. do not yet contain

psalms. This prevailed in western Christianity, but in the east the so-called biblical odes emerged which tend to be listed after the psalms in the LXX manuscripts from the fifth century onward. These were Christological in nature.

Of course, Christian music in today's world bears virtually no resemblance to the music of the early church. Western culture has profoundly shaped church music in the various expressions of our day. How did Christian music get from the first century to the present situation? Numerous dynamics have played a role. These include 1) deep ignorance of the role of music in the early church; 2) outright adoption of the surrounding secular music into church worship; 3) acceptance of the role of music in the surrounding culture as legitimate for church use; 4) attempts to preserve a revered past musical tradition in contemporary church practice. At least these dynamics drive the modern scene, and have created the chaos that presently exists in modern church worship patterns.

What is the way out of the current confusion? The future is increasingly encouraging. Enormous ignorance of the use and objectives of music in the ancient world have plagued biblical scholars for most of Christian history. The limited data available along with the huge complexity<sup>30</sup> of studying such a topic have been major barriers. Added to that has been the great tendency to strongly resist change in musical styles during most of Christian history. But with better research producing more solid conclusions, modern churches will have increasingly stronger foundations upon which to evaluate their use of music in corporate worship so that it can be maximized for the advancement of the Gospel and for the worship of God within the biblical framework that God can bless. Just this small venture into this hugely complex topic has caused me to re-think my understanding of music in worship substantially.

### **Literary Aspects:**

The literary aspects of this text play an important role in the interpretive process. Thus careful consideration needs to be given.

**Literary Form.** At the **broad genre** level we are still considering a passage that is part of the body section of an ancient letter. Thus the 'occasional' nature of the letter is important background understanding. For our passage this implies that the positive Christian traits emphasized grow out of the apostle's perception of the distinctive needs of the Colossians. He is not working off a standardized list of traits, but instead is stressing what he felt was needed in the Christian communities of the Lycus Valley at that point in time.

At the **small genre** level, this text is *paraenesis*. That is, the text contains moral admonitions that advocate a particular standard of living and ethical behavior. Important here is to note the collective nature of the exhortations. The specific behavior emphasized by Paul is clearly a way of living to be carried out in the context of the community of believers. Individual Christians must decide to live by these standards, but they must follow them as a part of the community of faith. Given the collective orientation of ancient culture in general both in the Greco-Roman and Jewish traditions, such is entirely normal and expected. But in this passage Paul goes out of his way to emphasize participation in the Christian community, perhaps in part because of the inter-relationship nature of most of the admonitions, and in part because the communities needed to pull together more closely in order to fend off the influence of the false teaching present.

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the collection of bibl. odes in the 4th cent., whereas all the Gk. MSS from the 5th cent. do.<sup>1047</sup>

[*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley and Gerhard Friedrich, electronic ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964-), 8:502-03.]

<sup>30</sup>To be qualified to do technical study on this requires the scholar to be an expert in ancient literature in a least six or seven languages and especially in the poetic forms of these languages, be highly skilled in the diverse forms of ancient music across numerous linguistic barriers, possess deep knowledge of biblical interpretation principles against a social, cultural backdrop -- to name only the beginning requirements. Obviously very few such individuals exist today, or have ever existed.

The alternative is for collaborative efforts among scholars who individually possess some of these skills and training in select disciplines. Such efforts at pooling the highly specialized skills are just recently beginning to surface, especially in European and Middle Eastern scholarship. Out of these efforts the future should bring to the table much better awareness of just how music played a role in shaping religious worship in the ancient world. The Jewish - Christian Dialogue tradition of recent times is helping open the door to such efforts.

One beginning effort in English, although serious but not scholarly, is the seven volume series *The Complete Library of Christian Worship* edited by Robert E. Webber. It suffers from the lack of use of highly technical scholars who have a better grasp of the ancient world, but does bring together a wide array of American sources on the topic from across various denominational lines.



Additionally Col. 3:12-17 contains a distinctive type of paraenesis known as a virtue list. These can occur either with the vice list or separately. In 3:5-11 Paul presented two separate vice lists, and now follows those with the virtue list. The connectedness of these is signaled by exactly five items showing up in all three lists.<sup>31</sup> Scattered throughout the New Testament are several virtue lists and together comprise an important topic of study.<sup>32</sup> The background of this kind of teaching is significant. In Hellenistic Judaism a lot of emphasis came

<sup>31</sup>Note the three lists here in Colossian 3:

Vice List (1st; verse 5)	Vice List (2nd; verse 8)	Virtue List (Verse 12)
fornication (πορνείαν)	anger (ὀργήν)	compassion (σπλάγχνα οίκτιρμοῦ)
impurity (ἀκαθαρσίαν)	wrath (θυμόν)	kindness (χρηστότητα)
passion (πάθος)	malice (κακίαν)	humility (ταπεινοφροσύνην)
evil desire (ἐπιθυμίαν κακήν)	slander (βλασφημίαν)	meekness (πραΰτητα)
greed (= idolatry) (τὴν πλεονεξίαν, ἥτις ἐστὶν εἰδωλολατρία)	abusive language (αἰσχρολογία ἐκ τοῦ στόματος ὑμῶν)	patience (μακροθυμίαν)

<sup>32</sup>Note the following lists in the letters of the New Testament:

New Testament Virtue Lists
Based on J.D. Charles, "Vice and Virtue Lists," Dictionary of New Testament Background, Craig A. Evans & Stanley E. Porters, eds. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 1252-1257.
<b>2 Cor. 6:6-8</b> 6 by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, holiness of spirit, genuine love, 7 truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; 8 in honor and dishonor, in ill repute and good repute.
<b>Gal. 5:22-23</b> 22 By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, and self-control.
<b>Eph. 4:32</b> 32 and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you
<b>Eph. 5:9</b> for the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true
<b>Phil 4:8</b> Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things
<b>Col. 3:12</b> As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience.
<b>1 Tim. 4:12</b> Let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.
<b>1 Tim. 6:11</b> But as for you, man of God, shun all this; pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, gentleness.
<b>2 Tim. 2:22</b> Shun youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.
<b>2 Tim. 3:10</b> Now you have observed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, ...
<b>Jas. 3:17</b> But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy.
<b>1 Pet. 3:8</b> Finally, all of you, have unity of spirit, sympathy, love for one another, a tender heart, and a humble mind.
<b>2 Pet. 1:5-7</b> 5 For this very reason, you must make every effort to support your faith with goodness, and goodness with knowledge, 6 and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with endurance, and endurance with godliness, 7 and godliness with mutual affection, and mutual affection with love.

upon vice lists that were seen as indicating paganism.<sup>33</sup> Some of this influence may possibly be reflected in that vice lists are much more frequent than virtue lists in the New Testament. But Hellenistic Judaism seems hesitant to make use of the virtue lists that were also fairly common on Greco-Roman ethical teaching, particularly in Stoicism and Cynicism.<sup>34</sup> The New Testament writers, however, seem more willing to make use of this teaching vehicle in their writing ministry in the second half of the first Christian century. This pattern continues into the second Christian century with the early Church Fathers making use of both vice and virtue lists in their writings. But the early Christian writers felt no compulsion to follow the pattern of the philosophers in the content of the lists nor in the organizing schema of their lists. The concept of ‘virtue’ even goes a different direction from its use in the Greek moralists. The Greek word ἀρετή is used only five times<sup>35</sup> in the entire New Testament: Phil. 4:8, 1 Peter 1:9; 2 Peter 1:3,5.<sup>36</sup> In all but 2 Peter 3:5 the ἀρετή mentioned belongs to God, not individuals. Here the command is to undergird one’s faith with the essential goodness that comes out of relationship with Christ. For the Greek moralists, ἀρετή was something each individual had to achieve for themselves. For the Stoics and some others this came through disciplined education and the acquiring of knowledge, and once achieved it lifted the individual to a superior status in society. In Hellenistic Judaism this self achievement enabled the idea of ἀρετή to approach ‘righteousness’ achieved by keeping the Torah. With the utter rejection of this thinking by Jesus and the apostles, one can understand the hesitancy to use a term subject to so much misunderstanding. And then with the limited use, the focus is

<sup>33</sup>Two primary Jewish sources are Philo (e.g., *Philo Sacr.* 20–27; *Leg. All.* 1.19.56; 2.23.24; *Spec. Leg.* 3.63) and the Wisdom of Solomon (cf. chapters 4, 8, 12, and 14), although the tendency to adopt vice and virtue lists among Greek writing Jews is not confined to these two writers. The Dead Sea Scrolls exhibit a tendency toward lists of sins and righteous actions, but without the background influence of Greek thinking, as is clear from the other writings.

<sup>34</sup>In many of the Greek philosophical streams, but not all of them, the symbolism of the number four as signifying completeness in life led to the contention of four cardinal virtues from which all the rest originated: the virtues *andreia* (“courage”), *phronēsis/sophia* (“wisdom”), *sōphrosynē* (“prudence”) and *dikaiosynē* (“justice”). Socrates proposed these and Plato called them the four ‘cardinal’ *aretai* in his writing *The Republic*.

“The prototypal use of ethical catalogs begins with Zeno (340–265 B.C.), founder of the Stoa, and is expanded under the Stoic teachers who follow. The early masters, notably Chrysippus (280–210 B.C.), tend to use ‘virtue’ and ‘knowledge’ (*epistēmē*) interchangeably, a practice that is significant for the Stoic understanding of ethical discourse. Stoic definitions of the cardinal virtues illustrate this conceptualization: justice is knowledge of what is due or right; temperance is knowledge of what to choose or not to choose; prudence is knowledge of what to do or not do in a given situation; and courage is knowledge of what should and should not be feared.

“Stoic moral doctrine mirrors both a return to and an expansion of the *tetradic* schema that characterized Socratic and Platonic ethical teaching. Organization serves an important recall function in Stoic pedagogy. Proceeding from the four cardinal virtues, Stoic teaching derives multiple subsets of virtues. Chrysippus, for example, divides the *aretai* into two groups of cardinal (*prōtai*) and subordinate (*hypotetagmenai*) virtues, with a lengthy list of subordinates thereto attached. One of the most comprehensive catalogs of virtues comes from the Stoic Andronicus, who compiled the writings of his master Chrysippus and whose list contains no fewer than twenty *aretai* (*SVF* 3.64). All in all, the *tetradic* schema of organizing vice and virtue for didactic purposes occurs more frequently in earlier Stoic lists, with later teachers typically dividing cardinal traits into subsets. We encounter in Andronicus a bewildering array of variety and detail — he lists twenty-seven kinds of *epithymia* (‘lust’), twenty-seven kinds of *lypē* (‘sorrow’), thirteen kinds of *phobos* (‘fear’) and five kinds of *hēdonē* (‘pleasure’) (*SVF* 3.397, 401, 409, 414), although his list pales by comparison with that of Philo, who identifies 147 vices to personify the ‘friends’ of the *philēdonos*, the hedonist (*Philo Sacr* 32).” [Stanley E. Porter and Craig A. Evans, *Dictionary of New Testament Background : A Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship*, electronic ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000). S.V., “Vice and Virtue Lists,” by J.D. Charles.]

<sup>35</sup>**Phil. 4:8** (NRSV): “Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is **any excellence** and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.”

**1 Peter 2:9** (NRSV): “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, in order that you may proclaim **the mighty acts** of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.”

**2 Peter 1:3** (NRSV): “3 His divine power has given us everything needed for life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and **goodness.**”

**2 Peter 1:5** (NRSV): “For this very reason, you must make every effort to support your faith with **goodness, and goodness with knowledge,**”

<sup>36</sup>“It is important here that the LXX finds no use for the Greek idea of ‘virtue’ and hence has the term only in the sense of ‘excellence’ or ‘fame.’ Not surprisingly, then, it is extremely rare in the NT. In Phil. 4:8 Paul puts it next to ‘praise’ in a series with ‘what is true’ etc., and if the series has mainly a religious ring, what he has in mind is the excellence that the righteous are to maintain in life and death. The same applies in 2 Pet. 1:5 (in spite of a secular parallel that might suggest ‘virtue’) while in the only other verse (1 Pet. 1:9) the context suggests either ‘self declaration’ (e.) or ‘fame’ (f.)” [Gerhard Kittel, Gerhard Friedrich and Geoffrey William Bromiley, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1995), 77-78. S.V., “*aretē*,” by Otto Bauernfeind.]

overwhelmingly upon the excellence of God who alone is righteous.<sup>37</sup>

Thus the 'virtues' advocated in the New Testament lists represent Christian character and behavior patterns that grow out of one's faith commitment. To the Colossians, Paul has framed these qualities as an expression of the 'resurrection' life experienced at conversion and reflected in one's baptism.<sup>38</sup> These are never ever virtues achieved by human effort, and certainly do not elevate the individual to some superior Christianity. But to "clothe oneself" (Ἐνδύσασθε) in them requires a definite commitment to live by these qualities; it doesn't happen automatically without our commitment.

**Literary Setting.** As is reflected in the outline of Colossians on the right, 3:12-17 is a continuation of the letter body of this document. When Paul has clearly moved into the letter body by 1:24 (and most likely earlier), he stresses his concept of Christian ministry (1:24-2:5), since they do not know him personally. The emphasis on ministry as suffering ("my sufferings for your sake", ἐν τοῖς παθήμασιν ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν, 1:24) and as struggles ("how great a struggle", ἡλίκον ἀγῶνα, 2:1) set the tone and orientation of Christian living as for others (ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν...). Thus the positive traits advocated in 3:12-17 are going to be relational traits defining how believers connect to one another in the community of faith. Paul's example sets a functional pattern that could be grasped concretely.

Additionally, 3:12-17 stands as the third pericope of the paraenetical section in 3:1-4:6. The foundational pericope in 3:1-4 established the concept of Christian living as governed by "the things above" instead of the "things on the earth." These Heavenly things are to be sought after (τὰ ἄνω ζητεῖτε) and to be the continuing top priority of our commitment (τὰ ἄνω φρονεῖτε). The locating of Christ in these Heavenly places (οὗ ὁ Χριστός ἐστιν ἐν δεξιᾷ τοῦ θεοῦ καθημένος) calls attention to the central role that Christ is to play in the development of the positive traits of Christian living. These qualities are not 'added on' to our commitment to Christ as something we're responsible to do ourselves. Instead, they come out of our relation to the risen Christ who possesses all authority and power to enable His people to live properly before God. How this works is 'hidden' from the understanding of natural man (ἡ ζωὴ ὑμῶν κέκρυπται σὺν τῷ Χριστῷ ἐν τῷ θεῷ). In the transcendent spiritual union with Christ we receive all that is needed to live a godly Christian life. And the believer must never forget that this process began with a spiritual death on his part (ἀπεθάνετε γάρ). This unquestionably eliminates all boasting and pride about individual achievement. Dead people don't brag about achieving something themselves! As Paul has made very clear to the Colossians, out of this spiritual death has come a spiritual life in conversion that can't be experienced or even understood apart from going through it personally.<sup>39</sup>

Even further, it comes as the positive trait side of the negative / positive emphasis in 3:5-17. One's spiritual death in conversion pushes the believer into shedding all vestiges of the pre-Christian pagan life, as stressed in 3:5-11. As a new person (ἐνδυσάμενοι τὸν νέον τὸν ἀνακαινούμενον εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν κατ' εἰκόνα τοῦ κτίσαντος αὐτόν, 3.10), the ongoing spiritual renewal process both shoves the old person (ἀπεκδυσάμενοι τὸν παλαιὸν ἄνθρωπον σὺν ταῖς πράξεσιν αὐτοῦ, 3.9) out the door and establishes the new person as

<sup>37</sup>One interesting but puzzling irony is the tendency of most Greek Lexicons related to biblical Greek to continue to use the English word 'virtue' as a translation term for the Greek ἀρετή. Obviously inside the Septuagint, and especially the Greek New Testament, this English word is incorrect and misleading.

<sup>38</sup>Col. 3:1-2 (NRSV): "1 Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. 3 For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God."

<sup>39</sup>Col. 2:9-14 (NRSV): "9 For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, 10 and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority ; 11 and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ ; 12 having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. 13 When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, 14 having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross."

#### Outline of Colossians

##### Praescriptio

Introduction: 1:1-2  
Superscriptio: 1:1  
Adscriptio: 1:2a  
Salutatio: 1:2b

##### Proem

Thankfulness: 1:3-8

##### Body

Intercession: 1:9-12  
Christus Hymnus: 1:13-20  
Reconciliation: 1:21-23

Paul's Ministry 1: 1:24-29  
Paul's Ministry 2: 2:1-5

Christian Living 1: 2:6-15  
Christian Living 2: 2:16-19  
Christian Legalism: 2:20-23

Seeking the Heavenly Things: 3:1-4  
Christian Behavior: 3:5-11  
Getting Dressed: 3:12-17

Haustafeln: 3:18-4:1  
Husband/Wife: 3:18-19  
Father/Children: 3:20-21  
Master/Slaves: 3:22-4:1

Admonitions and Requests: 4:2-6

##### Conclusio

Tychicus: 4:7-9  
Greetings: 4:10-17  
Closing: 4:18  
Letter Validation: 4:18a  
Prayer Request: 4:18b  
Benedictio: 4:19c



the true individual now in Christ. With the imagery of getting undressed (ἀπεκδυσάμενοι) and then getting dressed again (ἐνδυσάμενοι) in 3:9-11, Paul underscores that this undressing / dressing happened spiritually at conversion (i.e., the two Aorist Greek participles). Now the task is to implement this inward spiritual reality in one's practice and living outwardly. In order to define some of the necessary traits Paul uses the vehicle of a 'virtue list' in verse 12, and supplements it with other traits expressed as admonitions in vv. 13-17. These clearly do not exhaust the range of Christian qualities taught in the New Testament, as they are customized for the needs of the Colossian believers at the time of the writing of this letter.

**Literary Structure.** The block diagram of the original Greek text highlights the inner connectedness of the ideas inside the passage. The literalistic English translation of that text below illustrates how the Greek sentences are put together.

<sup>3.12</sup> Therefore  
34 **put on**  
as the elect of God  
holy and beloved  
compassion,  
kindness,  
humility,  
meekness,  
patience,  
<sup>3.13</sup> bearing with one another,  
and  
forgiving one another,  
if someone may have a complaint against you;  
  
just as the Lord also forgave you,  
so also  
35 **you (forgive);**  
  
<sup>3.14</sup> And  
above all these things,  
36 **(put on) love**  
which is the bond of completeness.  
  
<sup>3.15</sup> And  
37 **let the peace of Christ be ruling**  
in your hearts,  
unto which you also have been called  
in one body;  
  
and  
38 **be thankful.**  
  
39 <sup>3.16</sup> **Let the word of Christ dwell**  
in you  
richly,  
with complete wisdom  
teaching  
and  
admonishing one another,  
with psalms  
hymns,  
spiritual songs,  
with grace  
singing  
in your heart  
to God;

3:17 and  
 whatever you may do  
   in word  
   or  
   in deed,  
 40 **all (do)**  
       in the name of the Lord Jesus  
       giving thanks to God the Father  
       through Him.

In the punctuation structure of the UBS 4th rev. edition of the *Greek New Testament*,<sup>40</sup> three sentences are understood: vv. 12-14, 15, 16-17. The text moves in two basic directions with vv. 12-14 the first segment and vv. 15-17 the second. Admonitions 34, 35, 36 focus on specific character traits that are important to believers. Admonitions 37-40 stress the development of a distinctive atmosphere within the community of faith, with the final admonition being climatic and all inclusive.

### Exegesis of the Text:

#### **Get dressed, vv. 12-14:**

12 As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. 13 Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. 14 Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony."

12 Ἐνδύσασθε οὖν ὡς ἐκλεκτοὶ τοῦ θεοῦ, ἅγιοι καὶ ἡγαπημένοι, σπλάγχνα οἰκτιρμοῦ, χρηστότητα, ταπεινοφροσύνην, πραΰτητα, μακροθυμίαν, 13 ἀνεχόμενοι ἀλλήλων καὶ χαριζόμενοι ἑαυτοῖς ἕαν τις πρὸς τινα ἔχη μομφήν· καθὼς καὶ ὁ κύριος ἐχαρίσατο ὑμῖν οὕτως καὶ ὑμεῖς· 14 ἐπὶ πᾶσιν δὲ τούτοις τὴν ἀγάπην, ἧ ἔστιν σύνδεσμος τῆς τελειότητος.

Although not translated by the NRSV,<sup>41</sup> the Greek text conjunction οὖν ('therefore') signals a connection of vv. 12-17 to vv. 5-11. What is stated in vv. 12-17 makes clear what is implicit in vv. 5-11. This is especially the case with the clothing language in vv. 9-11.

The standard for the admonitions is "As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved" (ὡς ἐκλεκτοὶ τοῦ θεοῦ, ἅγιοι καὶ ἡγαπημένοι). Clearly collective in emphasis, the patterns of 'getting dressed' will be the spiritual 'clothes' appropriate to God's people, as divinely chosen, dedicated to God, and objects of His love. As Peter O'Brien notes:<sup>42</sup>

The members of the congregation are addressed by means of exalted titles: they are the chosen, holy and beloved people of God. These descriptions are important not only because they were used of Israel as God's own possession — and as Lightfoot, 219, claimed are now transferred to the Colossians as the new people of God — but also since they are designated of Christ, thereby underlining the point of their similarity to and identification with him, features that are all the more significant in a context where they are encouraged to put on his graces.

All three affirmations stress God's action in the lives of the believers. And the result is that these people -- Jews and Gentiles -- now stand as the people of God, because of their common commitment to Jesus Christ.

The controlling verbal image for vv. 12-14 is 'getting dressed' (Ἐνδύσασθε). The Aorist imperative verb form of the Greek matches the parallel 'put to death' (Νεκρώσατε) admonition in v. 5. The significance of this

<sup>40</sup>Also the 27th revised edition of the Nestle-Aland Novum Testamentum Graece.

<sup>41</sup>ASV: "Put on therefore, as God's elect, holy and beloved, a heart of compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, long-suffering;"

AV 1873: "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering;"

Cotton Patch: "Wear the clothes, then, that will identify you as people whom God has selected and dedicated and loved."

ESV: "Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience,"

HCSB: "Therefore, God's chosen ones, holy and loved, put on heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience,"

Net Bible: "Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with a heart of mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience,"

<sup>42</sup>Peter T. O'Brien, vol. 44, *Word Biblical Commentary : Colossians-Philemon*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2002), 211.

is the call for a decisive action of getting dressed. In verse 10, the same getting dressed image is used with an Aorist participle (ἐνδυσάμενοι τὸν νέον) stressing that in conversion they ‘put on’ the new self. Now Paul calls for implementing that experience by adopting a set of character traits as their ‘spiritual clothes’ to wear daily.

The clothes to be put on are expressed in the fivefold ‘virtue’ list: “compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience” (σπλαγγνα οἰκτιρμοῦ, χρηστότητα, ταπεινοφροσύνην, πραΰτητα, μακροθυμίαν). All of these underscore a posture toward God that leads to a posture toward other believers. We are to be compassionate (σπλαγγνα οἰκτιρμοῦ) toward others. Also we are to show kindness (χρηστότητα). Humility (ταπεινοφροσύνην)<sup>43</sup> and meekness (πραΰτητα) are necessary. Finally we must be patient (μακροθυμίαν) toward others. The terms in the list must be understood out of their Old Testament background. In the surrounding Greco-Roman culture some of these terms were not viewed as ‘virtues.’ Rather, they were looked upon as negative weaknesses to be avoided. Against the Old Testament backdrop and with Christ as the model these Christian traits become the goals that believers move toward in their living.

Added to the list are two participle designations in v. 13, that address tension within the believing community: bearing with and forgiving (ἀνεχόμενοι ἀλλήλων καὶ χαριζόμενοι ἑαυτοῖς). These are a part of the spiritual clothes to be put on as well. These qualities are closely linked to the need for patience listed at the end of the virtue listing. They call upon the believers to be tolerate of one another, and to be willing to forgive others in instances where occasional tension arises.<sup>44</sup> The basis for a tolerating and forgiving spirit is “just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive” (καθὼς καὶ ὁ κύριος ἐχαρίσατο ὑμῖν οὕτως καὶ ὑμεῖς), especially where criticism is present (ἐάν τις πρὸς τινα ἔχη μομφήν). Thus the second admonition, # 35 in v. 13, grows out of the spiritual clothes to be put on.

The final admonition in this first set elevates the need for love to the top of the list of qualities to be put on by believers: “Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony” (ἐπὶ πᾶσιν δὲ τούτοις τὴν ἀγάπην, ἧ ἔστιν σύνδεσμος τῆς τελειότητος). The primacy of Christian love is widely taught in the New Testament and especially by Paul. One should remember that biblical love is not the same thing as modern love in western culture. It is a commitment to the betterment of the other person, and can take on the ‘tough love’ tones when needed.

The importance of ‘putting on love’ is ‘bond’ that pulls everything together, ἧ ἔστιν σύνδεσμος τῆς τελειότητος. The image of the sinews of the body is used to describe the role of love. The muscles of the body keep everything functioning properly; love does the same thing for the community of believers. Also note that in the way the Greek relative clause is structured it is the putting on of love that achieves this objective, not just the idea of love itself.

### **Develop the community, vv. 15-17:**

15 And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. 16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. 17 And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”

15 καὶ ἡ εἰρήνη τοῦ Χριστοῦ βραβευέτω ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ὑμῶν, εἰς ἣν καὶ ἐκλήθητε ἐν ἐνὶ σώματι· καὶ εὐχάριστοι γίνεσθε. 16 ὁ λόγος τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐνοικεῖτω ἐν ὑμῖν πλουσίως ἐν πάσῃ σοφίᾳ· διδάσκοντες καὶ νοουθετοῦντες ἑαυτοὺς

<sup>43</sup>“ταπεινοφροσύνη has already been used twice in the letter (2:18, 23) by the Colossian opponents to denote ‘mortification,’ ‘self-denial’ or even ascetic practices such as fasting that were a prelude to receiving visions of the heavenly mysteries (see 142, 153). Here, however, it signifies the grace of ‘lowliness,’ ‘humility’ (BAG, 804; cf. Grundmann, *TDNT* 8, 21–23, Esser, *NIDNTT* 2, 259–64). It is well-known that in profane Greek literature the term occurs on only a few occasions, and then usually in a derogatory sense of servility, weakness or a shameful lowliness.” [Peter T. O’Brien, vol. 44, *Word Biblical Commentary : Colossians-Philemon*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2002), 213.]

<sup>44</sup>“The present tense of the verb (χαριζόμενοι) makes it plain that this forgiveness is to be unceasing, even unwearying (a point which Jesus himself taught when instructing his disciples that forgiveness ought to be ‘until seventy times seven,’ Matt 18:22; cf. vv 21–35), while the conditional sentence, ‘if one has a complaint against another’ (ἐάν τις πρὸς τινα ἔχη μομφήν), recognizes that within the congregation there will be grounds for grievance from time to time (μομφή, ‘blame,’ ‘cause for complaint,’ BAG, 527, cf. Grundmann, *TDNT* 4, 571–74, appears only here in the Greek Bible, occurring elsewhere only rarely and in poetry). ‘One against another’ (τις πρὸς τινα) is a general reference suggesting that legitimate complaints might be directed by any member of the community against any other. But whenever these grievances arise the readers are to forgive.” [Peter T. O’Brien, vol. 44, *Word Biblical Commentary : Colossians-Philemon*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2002), 216.]



ψαλμοῖς, ὕμνοις, ᾠδαῖς πνευματικαῖς ἐν χάριτι, ᾄδοντες ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ὑμῶν τῷ θεῷ· 17 καὶ πᾶν ὃ τι ἐὰν ποιῆτε ἐν λόγῳ ἢ ἐν ἔργῳ, πάντα ἐν ὀνόματι κυρίου Ἰησοῦ, εὐχαριστοῦντες τῷ θεῷ πατρὶ δι’ αὐτοῦ.

In these three verses three additional admonitions are set forth: ἡ εἰρήνη τοῦ Χριστοῦ βραβεύετω, εὐχάριστοι γίνεσθε, ὁ λόγος τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐνοικεῖτω.

The peace that comes from Christ is to control (βραβεύετω<sup>45</sup>) the life of the community. Christ both embodies and produces this peace. In the New Testament ἡ εἰρήνη plays off the Hebrew background of peace which points to wholeness and completeness, not just to the absence of conflict. The present tense imperative calls for the continuing dominance of peace in the community. This peace is to permeate the community to the very core of its existence; hearts as the inner self over against the outward expression. The achieving of this spiritual wholeness is the objective that God has called the church to. And only in such wholeness can the church, the body, come to the level of unity that God desires. When individuals violate this peace by attacking others, the oneness of the body is broken.

Thankfulness is a key ingredient that can enable the church to move the right direction: “And be thankful” (καὶ εὐχάριστοι γίνεσθε). Already a prominent theme in Colossians, i.e., 1:3, 12; 2:7; 3:17; 4:2, the Colossians are encouraged to make thanksgiving an ongoing expression of gratitude to God. This stood in great contrast to the pagan religious background of many of the Colossians where gratitude to deity was not a significant part of worship.

The reasons for being thankful are not specified here, but elsewhere in Colossians and in Paul they are made clear. Note Peter O’Brien’s (WBC, 218) comments:

Here at verse 15 the grounds for thanksgiving are not spelled out, though previously in the letter the readers were encouraged to praise God for having delivered them from a tyranny of darkness and transferred them into the kingdom of his beloved Son (1:12–14). Elsewhere in Paul’s letters, while the grounds for the giving of thanks are manifold, the great emphasis falls upon the mighty work of God in Christ bringing salvation through the gospel. God’s activity in creation is, on occasion, mentioned as a basis for the expression of gratitude (cf. Rom 1:21 and the thanksgivings said over food: Rom 14:6; 1 Cor 10:30; 1 Tim 4:3, 4). But the majority of the Pauline references are in the context of God’s grace given in Christ (1 Cor 1:4; cf. 2 Cor 9:15 with 8:9; Rom 1:8; 2 Cor 1:11; Eph 1:16; Phil 1:3, etc). At Colossians 3:15 such thanksgiving, which is inculcated upon those who are in one body, will be offered as the readers “sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs” (v 16). However, it will not be restricted to these corporate occasions (at v 17 the giving of thanks to God as Father is to be the accompaniment of every activity), as it is to be offered “under all circumstances” (ἐν παντι, 1 Thess 5:18), being the appropriate response of those who are filled with God’s Spirit (Eph 5:18–20).

The next admonition in verse 16 urges the immersion of the community in the teachings of Christ: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly...” (ὁ λόγος τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐνοικεῖτω ἐν ὑμῖν πλουσίως...). The message of the Gospel<sup>46</sup> delivered initially to the Colossians by Epaphras needed to become the essence of their belief and practice (ἐνοικεῖτω). This would insulate them against the false teaching, and keep them moving forward in the right direction.

The means of incorporating the message of Christ into their community was by “teaching and admonishing one another” (διδάσκοντες καὶ νουθετοῦντες ἑαυτοῦς). Disciplined study and encouragement of one another is key to getting into the message of Christ. Both are needed, for we need to apply what we study, and

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<sup>45</sup>βραβεύω which occurs only here in the NT (at Col 2:18 the compound καταβραβεύω, ‘condemn,’ is used) originally referred to the function of the umpire (βραβευτής) who presided over and presented prizes at the games (evidence for this comes from the time of Euripides, fifth century B.C.; cf. Stauffer, *TDNT* 1, 637, 638, BAG, 146, Pfitzner, *Paul*, 155, Field, *Notes*, 196). But there is considerable evidence to show that the verb was normally used in the more general sense of ‘judge,’ ‘decide,’ ‘control,’ or ‘rule’ (BAG, 146; for examples see Field, *Notes*, 196; against Lightfoot, 221, who presses the point about Christ’s peace acting as umpire: “the idea of a *decision* and an *award* is prominent in the word”). [Peter T. O’Brien, vol. 44, *Word Biblical Commentary : Colossians-Philemon*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2002), 216.]

<sup>46</sup>“The expression, ‘the Word of Christ’ (ὁ λόγος τοῦ Χριστοῦ), is used here instead of ‘the Word’ (ὁ λόγος, 4:3), ‘the Word of God’ (ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ, 1:25) or ‘the Word of the Lord’ (λόγος κυρίου, 1 Thess 4:15; 2 Thess 3:1). The change from ‘of God’ or ‘of the Lord’ may have been due to the Colossian situation; certainly the present expression is in keeping with the rest of the letter with its emphasis on the person and work of Christ (von Soden, 64, and Abbott, 290). While the genitive ‘of Christ’ (τοῦ Χριστοῦ) might be subjective indicating that Christ himself is the speaker when his word is proclaimed (cf. Lightfoot, 222, Meyer, 447, Bruce, 283), it is probably objective referring to the message that centers on Christ, that Word of truth or gospel (ὁ λόγος τῆς ἀληθείας τοῦ εὐαγγελίου, 1:5; cf. Gal 1:7; 1 Cor 9:12; 2 Cor 2:12) which came to the Colossians and took up a firm place in their lives from the time Epaphras first preached it to them. As such it is normative and ought to control their lives.” [Peter T. O’Brien, vol. 44, *Word Biblical Commentary : Colossians-Philemon*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2002), 218.]

sometimes the encouragement of fellow believers is signification to applying insights.

These actions are to be done “in all wisdom” (ἐν πάσῃ σοφίᾳ). The teaching is not just the ‘facts’ of the Gospel. Rather understanding of the gospel and wisdom in knowing how to apply it to life situations are called for here. A key vehicle of communicating this message is “psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs” (ψαλμοὶς, ὕμνοις, ᾠδαῖς πνευματικαῖς ἐν χάριτι, ᾄδοντες ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ὑμῶν τῷ θεῷ). The use of religious music as a teaching vehicle is set forth here.<sup>47</sup> Sharp distinctions between “psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs” are not possible.<sup>48</sup> The first term does signify the singing of the psalms. Hymns typically referred to ‘festive hymnic praise,’ while spiritual songs usually designated a song in which God’s actions are praised (cf. Rev. 5:9; 14:3; 15:3). Taken together they cover the full range of musical expression used to communicate the message of Christ.

The singing is to be done “from the heart” (ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ὑμῶν) and “to God” (τῷ θεῷ), and “with gratitude” (ἐν χάριτι,). These three qualities underscore that singing (ᾄδοντες) must be done with focus and understanding of what we’re doing. The musical tune should never overwhelm the words. We must never ‘mouth’ words with little understanding or awareness of what we’re singing. The desire to praise God, and Him alone, must be the goal of our singing.

The final admonition, in v. 17, is climatic and all inclusive: “And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him” (καὶ πᾶν ὃ τι ἐὰν ποιῆτε ἐν λόγῳ ἢ ἐν ἔργῳ, πάντα ἐν ὀνόματι κυρίου Ἰησοῦ, εὐχαριστοῦντες τῷ θεῷ πατρὶ δι’ αὐτοῦ.). The point of the apostle is that all actions and words must come under the control of the Lord.<sup>49</sup> The distinctive manner of these actions

<sup>47</sup>“This mutual instruction and warning are to take place ‘by means of psalms, hymns and spiritual songs.’ The ASV punctuates the sentence along these lines (cf. also the AV and RV) although the RSV renders the Greek ‘and as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God’ (cf. NIV) so linking these three nouns with the following participle ᾄδοντες (“singing”). It is not patently clear as to which is the correct interpretation and commentators are as divided on the point as the versions (so, for example, Delling, *TDNT* 8, 498, Lohse, 136, 151, Schweizer, 153, and Barrels, *NIDNT* 3, 675, link the noun with the following participles, while Meyer, 448, Lightfoot, 222, Percy, *Probleme*, 395, and Bruce, 283, 284, opt for the other alternative). Our preference for joining ‘psalms, hymns and spiritual songs’ with ‘teaching and admonishing one another’ is for the following reasons: (a) the two participial clauses ἐν πάσῃ σοφίᾳ διδάσκοντες ... (‘in all wisdom teaching ...’) and ἐν (τῇ) χάριτι ᾄδοντες ... (‘with thanksgiving [or grace] singing ...’) are symmetrically balanced with their prepositional phrases (both commencing with ἐν, ‘in’) at the head of each clause and the participles immediately following (cf. Meyer, 448). By contrast the other alternative with ψαλμοὶς κτλ. being attached to the following involves an overweighting of the final participial clause (a criticism noted by Bruce, 284). (b) The RSV rendering necessitates the insertion of ‘and’ before ‘singing’ (ᾄδοντες, cf. NIV) but this does not appear in the original (cf. Schweizer, 157, against Delling, *TDNT* 8, 498). (c) The parallel passage in Ephesians 5:19 (which interestingly enough the RSV renders as ‘addressing [λαλοῦντες] one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart’) gives the same general sense as our interpretation. (d) The objection that mutual teaching and admonition would not take place in such psalms, hymns and spiritual songs is not valid. If the apostle had in mind antiphonal praise or solo singing for mutual edification in church meetings (Bruce, 284) then mutual instruction and exhortation could well have been possible.” [Peter T. O’Brien, vol. 44, *Word Biblical Commentary : Colossians-Philemon*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2002), 218.]

<sup>48</sup>“Perspectives on these three terms, ‘psalms, hymns and spiritual songs’ (Eph 5:19; Col 3:16), ranged widely over the twentieth century. From a musicological perspective, E. Wellesz proposed that the terms were specific in meaning. He defined psalmody as ‘the cantillation of the Jewish psalms and of the canticles and doxologies modelled on them’; hymns as ‘songs of praise of a syllabic type, i.e. each syllable is sung to one or two notes of melody’; and spiritual songs as ‘Alleluias and other chants of a jubilant or ecstatic character, richly ornamented’ (Wellesz 1955, 2). It is thought that Wellesz’s distinctions are typical of later Christian chant but not necessarily early Christian chant (see J. A. Smith 1994), and it has also been argued linguistically that the three words seem to be synonyms (see Meeks, 144). Wellesz was aware of the view that the three words are synonyms but suggests that ‘the individuality of psalm, hymn, and spiritual song is obvious to the student of comparative liturgy’ (Wellesz 1961, 33–34). At this point, therefore, it remains unknown exactly what musical form may have been meant by any of these three terms, if any, although it is possible that Wellesz’s proposal was too easily dismissed.” [Stanley E. Porter and Craig A. Evans, *Dictionary of New Testament Background : A Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship*, electronic ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000). S.V., “Music.”]

<sup>49</sup>“In the name of the Lord Jesus’ (ἐν ὀνόματι κυρίου Ἰησοῦ) is used elsewhere in the context of baptism (Acts 10:48). The whole content of salvation revealed in Jesus is comprised in his name (Acts 4:12; 1 Cor 6:11). Belief in the name of Jesus, i.e., his messianic mission (John 3:18), is God’s command (1 John 3:23; 5:13), so that anyone who believes in that name receives the forgiveness of sins (Acts 10:43; 1 John 2:12), has eternal life (John 20:21; 1 John 5:13) and escapes the judgment (John 3:18). The formula “in the name of Jesus” is used with reference to God giving the Holy Spirit (John 14:26) and the offering of thanks (Eph 5:20). Jesus’ disciples perform miracles and acts of compassion in his name (Luke 10:17; Mark 8:38, 39), while Paul was able to admonish through the name of the Lord Jesus (2 Thess 3:6; 1 Cor 1:10), and give judgment in that name (1 Cor 5:4) as one commissioned and authorized by him (so Bietenhard, *NIDNTT* 2, 654; for further details see his treatment in *TDNT* 5, 270–81). Here

is gratitude to God the Father through Christ (εὐχαριστοῦντες τῷ θεῷ πατρὶ δι' αὐτοῦ). Paul ends with the emphasis upon being thankful to God for everything granted to us from the hand of the Heavenly Father. And we realize that God grants these blessings to us through Christ, and Christ alone.

## 2. What does the text mean to us today?

How does this passage apply to us today? The paraenetic nature of the text suggests simple, direct application of each of the admonitions. By reducing the distance of the culture gap between the 'then' and 'now' meanings of the text through statements of basic principles, application to today's world becomes significantly easier.

Critical to proper application is the correct understanding of the meaning of virtue from a biblical perspective, over against the ancient secular view which shapes much of modern thought. Biblical virtue is not something that humans achieve through self-effort. Instead, healthy qualities of living come out of the spiritual union of the believer with the risen Christ who supplies the necessary resources to live a life that is spiritually healthy and glorifying of God. Both the ancient and the modern world see virtue as something individuals personally accomplish through self-determination and as life qualities that make them superior individuals. Paul, Jesus, and the rest of the NT writers utterly condemn such thinking as false and ultimately disastrous to individuals.

With the shadow of the false teachers in the Lycus Valley (cf. 2:6-23) standing in the background, Paul vigorously puts on the table the authentic Christian lifestyle in contrast to "flesh based" counterfeit proposal of the false teachers. Much of modern Christianity is seriously infected with the same phoney approach to Christian living as was proposed by these heretical teachers centuries ago. Thus it is all the more critical for believers to understand how true Christianity works.

The positive traits that Paul commends to his readers in 3:12-17 depict a spiritually vibrant lifestyle focused on developing productive relationships with other people both inside and outside the church. They become the spiritual 'garments' we put on daily and that transform our living moment by moment. May God help each of us to incorporate these qualities into our daily living!

- 1) What kind of spiritual clothes do you wear daily?
  
- 2) How many of the spiritual garments mentioned here have you dressed yourself with?
  
- 3) How important is it to wear these spiritual clothes as a part of a community of believers?
  
- 4) How much of the message of the Gospel are you taking into your life and living?

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at Colossians 3:17, "The whole life of the Christian stands under the name of Jesus," as Bietenhard has aptly put it (*TDNT* 5, 274. Lohse, 152, Martin, NCB, 117, and others have drawn attention to the rabbinic parallel, credited to Rabbi Jose [c. A.D. 100]: "Let all thy deeds be done for the sake of Heaven" [lit. "in the name of heaven"; Danby's translation]). In becoming a Christian the believer calls upon Jesus as Lord (Rom 10:9, 10) and comes under the authority of Christ. He belongs wholly to him; thus everything he says or does ought to be in the light of the fact that Jesus is his Lord. His behavior should be entirely consistent with Jesus' character (Merk, *Handeln*, 214, following Schrage, *Einzelgebote*, 240, 241, claims that this singular expression, "in the name of the Lord Jesus," is a reference to the historical Jesus), and this will occur as the word of Christ richly indwells him and other members of the congregation (v 16)." [Peter T. O'Brien, vol. 44, *Word Biblical Commentary : Colossians-Philemon*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2002), 220.]