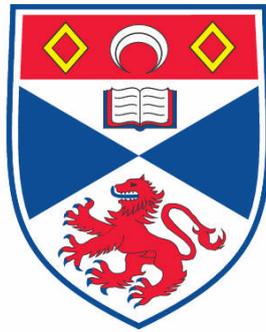


***FIDES EX AUDITU : DOGMATIC THEOLOGY AND THE  
ECCLESIAL PRACTICE OF MUSIC***

**J. Andrew Edwards**

**A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of MPhil  
at the  
University of St. Andrews**



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UNIVERSITY OF ST ANDREWS

*FIDES EX AUDITU:*  
DOGMATIC THEOLOGY AND  
THE ECCLESIAL PRACTICE OF MUSIC

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO  
THE FACULTY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF THEOLOGY  
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

ST MARY'S COLLEGE

BY  
J. ANDREW EDWARDS

ST ANDREWS, SCOTLAND  
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## ABSTRACT

Any consideration of the aural reception of Christian faith must take the ecclesial practice of music and its relation to the divine *logos* into account. Specifically, the *logos* provides normativity for such music, as the latter endeavours to proclaim that divine Word. Contemporary theological reflections on music are made difficult by the modern development of the concept of taste, which has culminated in a radicalized subjectivity that eschews normative criteria. A reclamation of the normative role of the *logos* is thus required in the dogmatic theology of music.

Karl Barth's theology is examined in order to establish the critical relation between proclamation and dogmatics. Barth's praise of Mozart is reviewed to demonstrate how his detachment from a broader historical tradition confines him to a strictly formalist aesthetic that is unable to hear musical meaning. Further examination of his early writings reveal how his critical revelatory dialectic, vis-à-vis his reading of the *Auftrag*, prohibits a proclamatory role for the ecclesial practice of music.

Pope Benedict XVI's theology provides a fitting alternative, as his dogmatic reflections assume a necessarily kerygmatic role for music that Barth denies. In this Benedict is more in tune with the ancient Church Fathers. His dogmatic reflections on the "musified" *logos* are in dialectical tension with modern philosophies of music, as he espouses a Christian rationality over against modern secular/subjective reason. This dialectic is augmented with a comparison of Augustine and Kant on the practice of counting. Finally, contrary to some readings, the normativity of Benedict's musical *logos* is not an oppressive force, hampering the freedom of musical performance.

A "descriptive" method of dogmatic reflection is finally recommended, in which the theology of music approximates a kind of journalistic "music criticism," albeit one that listens for the Word of Christ, the hearing of which brings faith (Romans 10:17).

## DECLARATIONS

I, James Andrew Edwards, hereby certify that this thesis, which is approximately 41,950 words in length, has been written by me, that it is the record of work carried out by me and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

Date\_\_\_\_\_ Signature of Candidate\_\_\_\_\_

I was admitted as a research student in July 2004 and as a candidate for the degree of M.Phil. (retroactively applying a year of M.Litt. work in 2003-04 to the M.Phil.); the higher study for which this is a record was carried out in the University of St Andrews between 2003 and 2007.

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I hereby certify that the candidate has fulfilled the conditions of the Resolution and Regulations appropriate for the degree of M.Phil. in the University of St Andrews and that the candidate is qualified to submit this thesis in application for that degree.

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Ronnie Carl Edwards

*In Memoriam*

10 August 1951 – 2 September 1983

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This dissertation is dedicated to the first church organist I met: my uncle Ronnie, who—in his presence and in his passing—has continually encouraged and supported my inquiries regarding faith and music.

## ABBREVIATIONS

### Documents

- DV Vatican II, *Dei Verbum*, 18 November 1965.  
*Acta Apostolica Sedis* 58 (1966): 817-836.
- LG Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, 21 November 1964.  
*Acta Apostolica Sedis* 57 (1965):1-67.
- MS Sacred Congregation of Rites, *Musica Sacram*, 5 March 1967.  
*Acta Apostolica Sedis* 59 (1967): 300-320.
- SC Vatican II, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 4 December 1963.  
*Acta Apostolica Sedis* 56 (1964): 97-138.
- TLS Pope Pius X, *Tra le Sollecitudini*, 22 November 1903.  
*Acta Sanctae Sedis* 36 (1903): 329-39.

### Books

- BT Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, translated by Douglas Smith, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).
- CD I/1 Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* I.1, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, second edition, edited and translated by G.W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1975).
- CD IV.3.2 Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* IV.3.2, *The Doctrine of Reconciliation*, edited by G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance, translated by G.W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1962).
- ChrD Karl Barth, *Die christliche Dogmatik im Entwurf I: Die Lehre vom Worte Gottes* (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1927).
- GD Karl Barth, *The Göttingen Dogmatics: Instruction in the Christian Religion* I, ed. Hannelotte Reiffen, translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans, 1991).
- KBCRDT Bruce McCormack, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).
- KU Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der ästhetischen Urteilskraft*, in *Kritik der Urteilskraft und naturphilosophische Schriften*, Theorie-Werkausgabe in zwölf Bänden 10, edited by Wilhelm Weischedel (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1968).
- PLSM Robert Hayburn, *Papal legislation on sacred music: 95 A.D. to 1977 A.D.* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1979).

## **Journals**

<i>Com.</i>	Communio
<i>IJST</i>	International Journal of Systematic Theology
<i>JAAC</i>	Journal of Aesthetics & Art Criticism
<i>JHI</i>	Journal of the History of Ideas
<i>MT</i>	Modern Theology
<i>NB</i>	New Blackfriars
<i>PE</i>	Pro Ecclesia
<i>PQ</i>	The Philosophical Quarterly
<i>SJT</i>	Scottish Journal of Theology
<i>ZDT</i>	Zeitschrift für dialektische Theology

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

“Faith comes from listening to God’s word. But wherever God’s word is translated into human words there remains a surplus of the unspoken and unspeakable which calls us into silence—into a silence that in the end lets the unspeakable become song and also calls on the voices of the cosmos for help so that the unspoken may become audible.”<sup>1</sup>

#### SPEECH AND SONG IN JEAN-LUC GODARD’S *ONE PLUS ONE*

In *One Plus One*, promoted by its producers as *Sympathy for the Devil*, film director Jean-Luc Godard presents an inquiry into the sources and methods of communicating meaning through sound.<sup>2</sup> From the outset, the visual imagery of the film is secondary in importance to its sound, serving to contextualize the more prominent reverberations of speech and music.

Multiple vignettes disclose an assortment of social commentary.<sup>3</sup> Militant revolutionaries, seeking freedom for themselves, proclaim an ideology that ends in violence toward others. A metaphorical interview with Democracy reveals that she neither knows nor cares what she truly believes. A pornographic bookstore reverberates with a reading of *Mein Kampf*, while its customers abuse two Jewish prisoners. In each of these scenes (and others), speech and text is presented as suspect, as if they are means toward hampering the peace and prosperity of a free and creative society.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, “‘In the Presence of the Angels I Will Sing Your Praise’: The Regensburg Tradition and the Reform of the Liturgy,” *A New Song for the Lord: Faith in Christ and Liturgy Today* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1996), 175.

<sup>2</sup> Jean-Luc Godard, dir., *One Plus One, aka Sympathy for the Devil* (London: Cupid Productions, 1968).

<sup>3</sup> While describing *One plus one* as his “last bourgeois film,” Godard confesses his arrogance in taking images “thinking I knew what they meant.” See Kent E. Carroll, “Film and Revolution: Interview with the Dziga-Vertov Group,” in *Focus on Godard*, edited by Royal S. Brown, Film Focus (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1972), 62.

<sup>4</sup> For a detailed account of the sources utilized in *One plus one*, see Julia Lesage, *Jean-Luc Godard: a guide to references and resources*, A Reference Publication in Film (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1979), 96-99.

Such a subtext is made particularly evident by an auditory contrast that is presented throughout the film. Interspersed with the vignettes described above are scenes of the Rolling Stones in London's Olympic Studios, recording their hit song, "Sympathy for the Devil."<sup>5</sup> In stark contrast to the dictatorial manner of speech and text elsewhere in the film, music is portrayed as a more organic process, in which each performer has a unique contribution to make, in a free and honest "conversation" of sorts with the others in the room. When a background vocal track is finally added, a makeshift choir assembles around a microphone to join in song. The lyrical words are fixed, but—unlike the fixed texts of the more violent or repressive ideologies—the words as sung take on life as they find articulation in lively harmony. A diametric opposition between speech and music is presented to the audience, as the creative process of singing and playing in community is juxtaposed with violence and repetition without change. Regardless of his artistic intent, Jean-Luc Godard in effect raises the question what difference there is between singing and speaking. Such is the underlying issue of this dissertation.

The difference between speech and song forms a particularly vexing problem for Christian theology. If, as Romans 10:17 indeed proclaims, faith comes from hearing (*fides ex auditu*), and that what is heard comes through the word of Christ, the question of how such hearing occurs is begged. Will faith arrive while hearing the biblical text read aloud? By a dynamic preacher, trenchantly relating scripture with contemporary events? Or perhaps by the sound of choirs singing, lutes playing, or cymbals being struck? Godard's question, then, becomes a theological one—what difference is there between *speaking* the Word, and *singing* the Word?

Phenomenologically speaking, there clearly *is* a difference between speech and music. But Godard's curious juxtaposition demands an evaluative examination that is

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<sup>5</sup> Rolling Stones, "Sympathy for the Devil," *Beggars Banquet*, Decca SKL4955.

both moral and aesthetic in character. Is pure text—without the “play” of tonality, rhythm and timbre in music—an inherently violent force? How does the imposition of textual elements upon musical performance affect the moral and aesthetic character of such music? In theological terms, what role does the divine *logos* play in regards to music, particularly the *ecclesial* practice of music?

While a variety of aural practices are performed within the church, perhaps none is as familiar as the sound of music. Whether in the style of Byzantine or Gregorian chant, Victorian hymn, Southern gospel or contemporary “praise and worship,” the overwhelming majority of Christian churches include music as a prominent practice.<sup>6</sup> Any consideration of the aural reception of Christian faith, therefore, must take the musical practice of the church and its relation to the divine *logos* into account.

The primary contention of this dissertation is that the *logos* provides normativity for the ecclesial practice of music. Such normativity is not an oppressive force, hampering the freedom of musical performance, although such an argument has been made.<sup>7</sup> Rather, the divine Word sings and sounds the way music *should* sing and sound. It is an aesthetic norm; it is a moral norm.

#### THE QUEST FOR AESTHETIC AND MORAL NORMATIVITY

Up to the eighteenth century, there was no need to establish aesthetic and moral norms; they had been established with the Platonic triad of truth, beauty and goodness. As the aesthetic category of “taste” emerged in philosophical discourse, however, a subjective-objective disjunction began to break down these universal norms. Originally taste assumed a normative role in aesthetics and ethics; however it gradually developed to

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<sup>6</sup> Although several Christian traditions severely restrict the manner of their musical practice, an instance of a church completely lacking in musical practice is difficult to identify. In any event, the wholesale lack of music would simply present *another* type of musical practice, one which values the *absence* of tonality or rhythm in its “music.”

<sup>7</sup> Most notably in Heidi Epstein’s published doctoral dissertation, *Melting the Venusberg: a feminist theology of music* (New York: Continuum, 2004), which will be analysed and critiqued below.

emphasize a radical subjectivity—one that now eschews the imposition of aesthetic standards.

The “gustatory metaphor” of taste emerged as the “central theoretical debate of early modern aesthetics.”<sup>8</sup> In the late seventeenth century, Anthony Ashley-Cooper, Third Earl of Shaftesbury, countered the Hobbesian notion that human actions are intrinsically selfish. Acknowledging Hobbes’ observation that humans may indeed receive pleasure in performing an action, Shaftesbury refuted the claim that such pleasure is the primary motive for the act. Thus arose a “disinterested aesthetic contemplation” in contrast to a “practical interest.”<sup>9</sup> Subjective pleasures and desires were subsequently depicted as less than true, as an objective disinterest began to bear the responsibility of a moral compass. Thus it was only by divesting oneself of personal involvement that one could identify the true, the good and the beautiful.<sup>10</sup> Taste, like harmony, was both an aesthetic and a moral category; the person with good taste was, for Shaftesbury, also one with moral sense. Peter Kivy has argued that for this reason, much in modern aesthetic theory would be benefited by reclaiming Shaftesbury’s notion of “moral sense.”<sup>11</sup> Shaftesbury answered the question of standards of taste by recourse to reason and natural law: “For HARMONY is Harmony *by Nature*, let men judge even so ridiculously of Musick. So is *Symmetry* and *Proportion* founded still *in Nature*, let Mens Fancy prove ever so *Gothick* in their Architecture, Sculpture, or whatever other designing Art.”<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Carolyn Korsmeyer, “Taste,” in *The Routledge Companion to Aesthetics*, edited by Berys Gaut and Dominic McIver Lopes, Routledge Companions to Philosophy (London: Routledge, 2001), 196.

<sup>9</sup> Jerome Stolnitz, “On the Origins of ‘Aesthetic Disinterest’,” *JAAC* 20 (1961): 131-143.

<sup>10</sup> Shaftesbury’s debt to the Cambridge Platonists is plainly evident. See Stolnitz, “On the Significance of Lord Shaftesbury in Modern Aesthetic Theory,” *The Philosophical Quarterly* 11 (1961): 97-113 and Dabney Townsend, “Shaftesbury’s Aesthetic Theory,” *JAAC* 41 (1982): 205-213.

<sup>11</sup> Peter Kivy, *The Seventh Sense: Francis Hutcheson & Eighteenth-Century British Aesthetics*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 2003), 20.

<sup>12</sup> Qtd. in *ibid.*, 22.

After Shaftesbury, taste became increasingly important in the emerging field of aesthetics.<sup>13</sup> The empiricists of the eighteenth century (Hutcheson, Addison, Burke *et al*) established various approaches to the matter of standards of taste, but it was David Hume who guided it toward the radically subjective understanding that is widespread today.<sup>14</sup> In this essay, Hume understands taste as both preference for particular things *and* the ability to discriminate. Hume seeks a *standard* of taste, however, conceding that the “great variety of Taste” is “too obvious not to have fallen under every one’s observation.”<sup>15</sup> Yet Hume is not the aesthetic relativist. It is by “a species of common sense” that there must be some standard; to claim the opposite would be the equivalent of judging “a mole-hill to be as high as TENERIFFE.”<sup>16</sup> Through practice and education, a certain “delicacy of imagination” (i.e. the ability to distinguish objective aesthetic qualities, such as the hint of metal or leather in wine) may be developed.<sup>17</sup> Hume preserves the “aesthetic attitude” of disinterest, by challenging the critic to “preserve his mind free from all *prejudice*, and allow nothing to enter into his consideration, but the very object which is submitted to his examination.”<sup>18</sup> Hume is ambiguous about what exactly the *standard* of taste is: whether it consists in the judgment of experts or certain rules.<sup>19</sup> Despite the lack of definitive standards in Hume’s thought, however, this essay both establishes an assumption of the

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<sup>13</sup> As Kivy and others have noted, it was the rise of the English middle class that demanded aesthetic theory—as multitudes of consumers wished to understand the art to which they were now gaining access. Kivy, 10-11; see also John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 3-55.

<sup>14</sup> This cursory review of taste in philosophical perspective cannot attend to the numerous theories of taste that emerged in the eighteenth century, but can only sketch the direction of thought on taste toward its current notion of radical subjectivity.

<sup>15</sup> Hume, “On the Standard of Taste,” *Essays: Moral, Political, and Literary*, volume 1, edited by T.H. Green and T.H. Grose, London: Longmans, Green & Co, 1907, 266.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 269.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 272, 280.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 276.

<sup>19</sup> See Jeffrey Wieand, “Hume’s Two Standards of Taste,” *PQ* 34 (1984): 129-142 and James Shelley, “Hume’s Double Standard of Taste,” *JAAC* 52 (1994): 437-445.

variety of tastes in society, and turns further toward the subject's own ability to discern aesthetic values.<sup>20</sup>

Following Hume's examination of subjective taste, is Kant's third critique, the *Critique of Judgment*. No longer puzzled with identifying the "synthetic a priori," Kant now wishes to establish the "intersubjective validity of taste." It is in this work that Kant proceeds to demonstrate how aesthetic judgments (e.g., beauty and, to a different extent, the sublime) may be both subjective *and* universal. The objective element has been eliminated; there is no need for Kant to find aesthetic qualities in objects themselves. Kant does this by asserting that judgments regarding the beautiful are judgments in which the subject's imagination harmonizes with the concepts of the understanding. "*Es wird also eine Gesetzmäßigkeit ohne Gesetz, und eine subjektive Übereinstimmung der Einbildungskraft zum Verstande, ohne eine objektive, ... mit der Eigentümlichkeit eines Geschmacksurteils allein zusammen bestehen können.*"<sup>21</sup> Such a judgment is, for Kant, universal in that all subjects have similar categories of understanding and reason. Similarly, judgments of the sublime are those in which the subjective imagination defers to the subject's own reason.<sup>22</sup> In either case, taste—as the faculty of aesthetic judgment—is an entirely subjective affair. Universal though the judgments of taste may be, Kant's codification of the aesthetic into the subjective sphere empties the object of any sort of meaning or value.

While Kant indeed intended to establish a kind of universal standard or norm in the third critique, the contours of his argument did not survive into general discourse. What did result, however, was a radical turn into subjectivity. As Hans-Georg Gadamer

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<sup>20</sup> There has been much debate concerning a "causal theory" of taste in Hume, in which objective aesthetic qualities cause a certain sentiment to arise in the subject. Given Hume's infamous argument against causation, however, such an assessment is difficult to maintain. See Roger Shiner, "The Causal Theory of Taste," *JAAC* 54 (1996): 237-249.

<sup>21</sup> *KU*, 325.

<sup>22</sup> Kant's *Analytic of the Sublime* and its peculiar account of reason will be examined in chapter four.

has observed, “we generally fail to recognize the ideal normative element in the concept of taste and are still affected by the relativistic-skeptical argument about differences of taste.”<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, just as Gadamer observes that Kant’s moral philosophy “purified ethics from all aesthetics and feeling,” Kant’s *aesthetics* comes perilously close to losing its moral elements.<sup>24</sup> Kant “restricted the idea of taste to an area in which, as a special principle of judgment, it could claim independent validity—and, by so doing, limited the concept of knowledge to the theoretical and practical use of reason.”<sup>25</sup> Hence through Kant’s construction of intersubjective taste, this “gustatory metaphor” lost its relation to knowledge or the “moral sense,” leading aesthetics toward a *radically* subjective enterprise.

Gadamer continues his critique of post-Kantian aesthetics in the larger context of the humanities in general. As knowledge was limited to metaphysics and ethics, and forced out of the reach of aesthetics, “the methodological uniqueness of the human sciences lost its legitimacy” as it became “impossible to acknowledge the truth claims of traditional materials....”<sup>26</sup> Kant cannot allow the artwork to possess truth in the manner of conceptual knowledge (pure and practical reason), leaving the assessment and criticism of art to be guided by “the superiority of genius [over] any aesthetics based on rules.”<sup>27</sup>

In a postmodern context of such radical subjectivity arises the unremarkable (but extraordinarily composed) thesis of Pierre Bourdieu in his examination of the role of preference (i.e. subjective “taste”) in making aesthetic distinctions.<sup>28</sup> For Bourdieu the various competing “discourses of justification” are ultimately rooted in social class and

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<sup>23</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., translated by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Continuum, 1999), 40.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> See Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, translated by Richard Nice (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1984).

aspiration. Thus a person's preference of Mozart over Metallica is due not to any intrinsic aspects of Mozart or Metallica's music, but rather the social class or aspirations of the individual. A world of art has diffused into distinct art-worlds, where the value of artworks arises from within the various groups that patronize particular types of art.<sup>29</sup> While the subjectivity of taste may no longer reside with the autonomous Kantian individual, it remains the determinant factor of aesthetic judgment in the form of disparate social groups. Aesthetics have left the public arena to be judged collectively, as part of a group *habitus*, where a non-objective taste reigns supreme in a new form of collective subjectivism.

#### TASTE, NORMATIVITY, AND THE ECCLESIAL PRACTICE OF MUSIC

The modern presumption of taste as a determinative category in aesthetic judgment has largely informed what is often (and unfortunately) called the "worship wars."<sup>30</sup> In the wake of the liturgical reforms of the Second Vatican Council, Protestant and Catholic communities alike have been racked with heated discussions regarding stylistic factors in the ecclesial practice of music. Far too often, such discussions of the church's music reduce considerations of any and all aesthetic norms to a preferential notion of the principle of taste, i.e. whatever style of music the community prefers to hear, that is the music they shall have. Such taste, informed as it is by social location and/or social aspirations, and whether exercised in the aesthetic or the moral sphere, ultimately serves a more divisive than unifying role in communities of faith. As Quentin Faulkner has observed, differences of taste in the worshipping community "are largely irreconcilable

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<sup>29</sup> Cf. Howard S. Becker's pluralist adaptation of Danto's notion of the "artworld" in *Art Worlds* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1982), 131-164. Danto's singular version is presented in Arthur Danto, "The Artworld," *The Journal of Philosophy* 61 (1964): 571-584.

<sup>30</sup> See Thomas G. Long, *Beyond the Worship Wars: building vital and faithful worship* (Washington, DC: Alban Institute, 2001); Ronald P. Byars, *The Future of Protestant Worship: beyond the worship wars* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002); Marva J. Dawn, *How Shall We Worship?: biblical guidelines for the worship wars* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2003).

and...have made a point of contention out of what ought to be one of the major signs and causes of Christian peace and unity.”<sup>31</sup> Faulkner correctly indicates the problem, yet offers no solution.

One solution regarding taste has been proposed by Frank Burch Brown in *Good Taste, Bad Taste, and Christian Taste*.<sup>32</sup> Although he is one of the few to address the notion of taste in the context of the ecclesial practice of music,<sup>33</sup> he attempts to reframe the debate over worship wars while retaining the category of taste. Arguing against the capriciousness of subjective taste, Brown calls for an inclusive, ecumenically *Christian* taste that invites everyone to the table.<sup>34</sup>

This at first appears as a valid argument, but critical analysis of another contemporary scholar of the ecclesial practice of music reveals the pitfalls of Brown’s solution. Gordon Graham has characterized the debate in terms of specific values.<sup>35</sup> In the place of “traditional” and “contemporary” musical tastes, he has described those who pursue musical excellence for the glory of God on the one hand, and those who value greater inclusion on the other. One includes music as a kind of moral good, in which the perfection, or sanctification, of performability is the goal. The other sees music as a practice in which the church may come together in a communal performance—not unlike Brown’s espousal of inclusivity. Yet the fact that such values are perceived to be in conflict demonstrates that the capriciousness of taste has simply shifted to the moral,

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<sup>31</sup> Quentin Faulkner, *Wiser than Despair: The Evolution of Ideas in the Relationship of Music and the Christian Church*, Contributions to the Study of Music and Dance 40 (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996), 204.

<sup>32</sup> Frank Burch Brown, *Good Taste, Bad Taste, and Christian Taste: aesthetics in religious life* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2000).

<sup>33</sup> Marva J. Dawn has also attended to the matter of taste in *Reaching Out Without Dumbing Down: a theology of worship for the turn-of-the-century culture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1995), 181-183 and *A Royal “Waste” of Time: the splendor of worshiping God and being Church for the World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1999), 186-193. Although she, like this dissertation, advocates the dismissal of taste in liturgical aesthetics, her project treats music as an ancillary matter—it serves as a stylistic accompaniment without any theological content of its own. In this respect she is closer to the position of Karl Barth, which will be examined in detail below.

<sup>34</sup> Brown, 162-198.

<sup>35</sup> Gordon Graham, “The theology of music in church,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 57 (2004): 139-145.

rather than the aesthetic, sphere.<sup>36</sup> To be sure, the values outlined in Graham’s study are laudable. An ecumenically-informed ecclesiology must value inclusivity, and any conception of soteriology that attends to the continual process of sanctification will surely honor the working towards aesthetic perfection.<sup>37</sup> Yet something is obviously amiss when these two values are held in opposition. Either path—perfection or inclusivity—demonstrates that taste cannot adequately determine the values (aesthetic or moral) of worship.

The resulting ecclesiology refers less to an *ecclesia*, a gathering or assembly according to the Spirit of Christ, than it refers to an economic enterprise—a record label or concert venue, perhaps—that serves the desires of its customers. Such an ecclesiology is clearly against the church’s self-understanding as shaped by scripture and tradition. In large measure this project is an attempt to bring music back within a properly ecclesiological framework, as its place within the church’s definitive mission and witness is described. The gustatory approach to the church’s music must be superseded; a normative external standard is required.

If taste is excluded as a normative principle for guiding the music of the church, then it remains to be shown what can and should perform this guiding task. By framing the contemporary “worship wars” in terms of (early) modern aesthetics, the more ancient concerns regarding music have been neglected. Only by retrieving the ancient, and critiquing the philosophical foundations of the modern, may the present discussion move forward. What is needed, however, is not just another anthropocentric principle—*like*

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<sup>36</sup> Alistair MacIntyre’s virtue-based ethic is in large measure a response against such an approach in moral reasoning, which he defines as “emotivism.” “Emotivism is the doctrine that all evaluative judgments and more specifically all moral judgments are *nothing but* expressions of preference, expressions of attitude or feeling, insofar as they are moral or evaluative in character.” For MacIntyre, the emotivist approach to ethics is clearly misguided in its failure to uphold any objective means for moral valuation at all, and yet it is the dominant mode of moral reasoning in contemporary culture. See *After Virtue: a study in moral theory*, 2d ed. (Notre Dame, IN: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1984), 11-12, 22.

<sup>37</sup> Charles Wesley exemplifies this view in his unpublished poems on musical aesthetics. See my Th.M. thesis, “Charles Wesley’s Musical Aesthetic and the Doctrine of Christian Perfection: Toward a Methodist Aesthetic Theology” (Union-PSCE, 2002).

taste but somehow different—some single absolute principle that exercises its tyranny over the many. This would just present the same problem that is presented when taste is elevated to a principial level. We must turn from the radically subjective, gustatory approach to aesthetics and instead (re)learn to approach it via the normativity of the divine *logos*.

What is needed is a kind of theological science, a *Theologiewissenschaft*, that takes the ecclesial practice of music as its object of critical study, while preserving the normativity of the divine *logos*. To be sure, there are centers of “practical theology” of music all over the world—the Institute of Sacred Music at Yale University and the Pontifical Institute of Sacred Music in Rome being perhaps the most notable examples. But these are exceptions to the rule. Church music is often a field of its own, with little integration into the other theological sciences. Church music directors are generally valued more for the practical results of their labors than their theology, and academic theologians are not (usually!) known for their knowledge of music.<sup>38</sup> The designation of “practical theology” is often viewed in the academy as more “practical” than “theological,” preparing students to practice, but without the necessary *critical theological* reflection upon such practice.

#### THE KERYGMATIC ROLE OF THE ECCLESIAL PRACTICE OF MUSIC

There are signs in theological circles that this situation is changing. A number of studies of church music and theologies of music have come out in recent years, taking different approaches but all looking toward a future of increased scholarship in the area. Many of these projects have opted for a historical look at music and the church, but a few exceptions have attempted a full constructive theology of music.

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<sup>38</sup> Frank Burch Brown characterizes the situation with humor: “For reasons that are clear to everyone but theologians, musicians...do not generally make a habit of reading theology.” See Brown, 160.

One such approach could be termed the *natural-theological approach*, taken by Albert L. Blackwell in *The Sacred in Music*.<sup>39</sup> Blackwell describes how music, in sacramental fashion, imparts a sense of the transcendent God. In music we encounter “mystery,” and that for him constitutes the presence of the sacred. Such an approach, constructing a picture of God from the material of natural phenomena, is highly questionable after Barth’s historical *Nein!* in response to Emil Brunner’s natural theology. Blackwell is cognizant of the Barthian perspective, and defends himself by castigating Barth for silencing such theological work, claiming that Barth’s

tendency to divorce God the creator from the created world is a cause of alienation for many in our day who marvel at the cosmos, revere its mystical origin and sacred integrity, and might do so within established religious traditions if only those traditions would give them greater opportunity. This alienation engendered by radical theism is as unnecessary as it is unfortunate....<sup>40</sup>

Blackwell boldly asserts that if natural theology was not considered anathema to Christian orthodoxy, more people would become Christians. This accommodation of theology to apologetics is regrettable, for Blackwell’s project is one of the few theological studies of music to delve so deeply into matters of music theory and composition.<sup>41</sup>

Patrick Sherry provides a succinct and critical account of natural theology, agreeing that it “answers certain basic urges in human beings, and...its arguments are closely related to some religious doctrines, so that it has a perennial appeal.”<sup>42</sup> However, he adds, such attractiveness “is not necessarily the foundation of theistic belief.”<sup>43</sup> Barth provides an even stronger nail for the natural-theological coffin, one which insists that the

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<sup>39</sup> Albert L. Blackwell, *The Sacred in Music* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999). Another instance of a natural theology of music, significantly informed by late medieval philosophy, is Alfred Pike’s doctoral dissertation, *A Theology of Music* (Toledo, OH: Gregorian Institute of America, 1953).

<sup>40</sup> Blackwell, 31.

<sup>41</sup> Jeremy Begbie’s critique of Blackwell’s approach may be found in his “Music, mystery and sacrament,” in *The Gestures of God: explorations in sacramentality*, edited by Geoffrey Rowell and Christine Hall (New York: Continuum, 2004), 173-180.

<sup>42</sup> Patrick Sherry, “The Religious Roots of Natural Theology,” *New Blackfriars* 84 (June 2003): 304.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 306.

possibility for knowledge of God resides not in humanity or nature, but in God.

Upholding the sovereignty of God (and the corresponding epistemic depravity of humanity) as his primary principle, Barth views the possibility of knowledge of God as relying ultimately and completely on God's power to reveal. Without revelation of God, there would be no human knowledge of God.

Barth's critique must stand, therefore, for if music—as an element of the natural world—is included within the rubric of that which is fallen from grace, how can it possibly yield theological insights that are not themselves also disconnected from God's truth?<sup>44</sup> Thus in constructing a theology of music, we cannot take Blackwell's natural-theological route. Our feeble minds and bodies may certainly marvel that the hills are “alive with the sound of music.” Music is indeed a source of wonderment. But that is not to say that such wonderment imparts knowledge of God. It simply demonstrates how easily impressed we depraved humans can be; knowledge of God is an entirely different affair.<sup>45</sup>

An alternative approach could be termed the *doxological approach*, taken by Jeremy Begbie in *Theology, Music and Time*.<sup>46</sup> This approach does not succumb to Barth's criticisms of natural theology, as it refuses to describe the divine in terms of the fallen created order. Begbie affirms that an “epistemic alienation” from God nullifies any kind of natural theology and, furthermore, denies that his project takes such an approach.

...it would be inappropriate to characterize this study as an attempt at natural theology, since there has been a desire to avoid presupposing theological criteria more ultimate than the reconciling self-disclosure of God in and through the incarnate Son, testified in Scripture, recognized and affirmed through the transforming presence and activity of the Spirit.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> It is Barth's retreat from natural theology that informs both his formalist adoration of Mozart's music and his refusal to grant music the status of proclamation. This will be covered in detail below.

<sup>45</sup> Barth's approach to natural theology and the *analogia entis* will be covered further in chapter two.

<sup>46</sup> Jeremy S. Begbie, *Theology, Music and Time*, Cambridge Studies in Christian Doctrine (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 275.

Begbie argues that since music is a “set of practices” that exist concretely (and not abstractly), it is fully embedded within the fallen order of things. What music *can* do for theology, he argues, is a matter of (re)presentation. Music can “highlight” and “instantiate” one aspect of the created order, namely, temporality. In doing so, “music to some degree discloses that temporality.”<sup>48</sup> Begbie comes close to saying that music is revelatory *of the natural world*, acting as a kind of epistemological medium. Thus music does not tell us so much about God, as it does God’s creation.<sup>49</sup>

As for music’s relation to God, Begbie takes an approach quite similar to Barth, in that he defines music as “*the sound of the created order praising God*, in its contingency, finitude and non-divinity.”<sup>50</sup> Among the more unique contributions of Begbie’s perspective is that he refuses to treat the so-called “Pythagorean comma” as a theological *problem*: “But why...should the Pythagorean comma be regarded as a *disorder*? The problem here seems to be an over-keenness to give divine sanction to a particular type of mathematical order.”<sup>51</sup> Such attention to how music discloses God’s creation and, thereby, praises God’s handiwork is part of his larger project, that of theology *through* the arts, rather than theology *of* the arts.<sup>52</sup>

The approach of the present dissertation, however, presents a different approach to music. Although not *opposed* to Begbie’s doxological approach, it would be better characterized as a *kerygmatic* approach; that is, as a theology *of* music, it understands the role of the ecclesial practice of music as *proclaiming* the Word of God. Taking the Pauline dictum, *fides ex auditu*, seriously, this project assumes that the auditory practices

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<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 276.

<sup>49</sup> Begbie’s temporal approach to music is reminiscent of Augustine’s perspective in *De Musica*, which presents a study on rhythm in the classical tradition (i.e., largely informed by Euclidean mathematics). Augustine, *On Music*, translated by Robert Catesby Taliaferro, in *Writings of Saint Augustine 2* (New York: CIMA, 1947). The Augustinian approach to “mensuration” will be presented in chapter four.

<sup>50</sup> Begbie, *Theology, Music and Time*, 277. Italics original.

<sup>51</sup> Begbie, “Music, mystery and sacrament,” n. 12, p. 188.

<sup>52</sup> Although Begbie certainly does not eschew theologies *of* the arts; see his doctoral dissertation, *Voicing Creation’s Praise: towards a theology of the arts* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991).

of the church should endeavor to proclaim faith in the Word of God. Yet music does not perform this role automatically; one cannot play any sort of music and presume that it fulfills this daunting and necessary task. Rather, the ecclesial practice of music requires critical dogmatic reflection in order to ensure its harmony with the divine *logos*. Thus the Word provides a normative function, as what ecclesial musical performance is *supposed* to achieve.

Such an approach is in marked contrast with another recent contribution to contemporary theology of music, one which argues that a preoccupation with the normativity of the Word of God is something to be rejected, rather than fundamentally assumed. Jettisoning the dogmatic task within contemporary theology of music is Heidi Epstein's *Melting the Venusberg*.<sup>53</sup> Epstein challenges what she describes as a "logocentric," male-dominated and idealist/metaphysical view of music in contemporary theologies of music.

Epstein's critique is, in the first analysis, credible. She describes a historically rooted "phallic rage for order" in which the desire for harmony becomes a moral demand for conformity at the expense of particularity.<sup>54</sup> The thesis of *Melting the Venusberg* is that contemporary theologies of music assume such normativity without questioning the metaphysical and sexist assumptions underlying it.<sup>55</sup> In the attempt to be adequate to the postmodern situation, then, Epstein dismisses the "sacramentalist worldview" as antiquated, opting instead for a "metaphorical" worldview. The former, she argues, attempts to describe the physical in terms of the metaphysical, whereas metaphors maintain symbolic connections within the concreteness of language.<sup>56</sup> Although such desire for concreteness is laudable, Epstein too quickly equates a sacramental

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<sup>53</sup> See note 7 above.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

understanding of the world with a metaphysical one. Critiquing the medieval understanding of music, Epstein asserts that the “harmony of the spheres” creates “a rhetoric of musical purity and danger,” which in turn leads to the principle of the primacy of text over music as an authoritarian attempt to discipline music’s more natural tendency to descend into chaos.<sup>57</sup> In this respect Epstein utilizes a particularly graphic metaphor of text as a “chastity belt” intended to contain and preserve the purity of music. Such rhetoric “escalates into portraits of music as dangerously effeminizing.”<sup>58</sup>

Epstein substantiates this claim with a smorgasbord of musico-misogynist references of theologians throughout church history who have informed the contemporary situation. She then dismisses entirely the dogmatic critique of musical practice, as it has too often been couched in “highly charged sexual rhetoric.”<sup>59</sup> Epstein then traces how music has been a metaphor for sexual relations throughout church history, alongside the more metaphysical, neoplatonic symbolization. Preferring the more visceral and embodied description of what it is that music *does*, she faults other contemporary theologians for adopting the metaphysical assumptions of their predecessors, while ignoring the more particular issues of embodiment and identity. “Contemporary theologians have yet to reframe music as a technique of the self, even though the Presocratics and others intuitively recognised that music shaped personal and social identity.”<sup>60</sup> Although her goal of a *practical* theology of music is commendable, and one which this dissertation identifies with, she misreads many contemporary theologians and apparently misunderstands much of traditional Christian doctrine.

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 26. The “Venusberg” of Epstein’s title (the court of Venus in the German legend of *Tannhäuser*, celebrated in Wagner and abhorred in Kierkegaard) refers to her attempt to reclaim sensuality so that it “flows” through contemporary theology of music. Cf. Søren Kierkegaard, “The Immediate Erotic Stages or The Musical Erotic,” in *Either/Or* I, edited and translated by Howard V. Hong and Edna V. Hong, *Kierkegaard’s Writings* III (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 90.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 40. One notable exception is found in Charles Wesley. Unfortunately, however, the quote given by Epstein, taken from a secondary reference, is completely out of context.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 58.

Oskar Söhngen's systematic theology of music is dismissed as "logocentric" on several grounds, one of which is his endorsement of the primacy of text over music. In addition, she accuses Söhngen's "missionary position" of logocentrism from his implication that music may serve a kerygmatic function. Here Epstein provides an interesting contrast with Barth: music and proclamation are not to be related—not because music is not worthy of God's Word, but God's Word is apparently not worthy of music!<sup>61</sup> Moreover, Epstein's aversion for the most fundamental of traditional Christian doctrines is demonstrated by the following comment: "In addition to these constraining metaphysical lenses, further evidence of Söhngen's hermeneutical conservatism lies in his use of the Trinity to structure further musico-theological inquiry."<sup>62</sup> If the Trinity is too "conservative" for Christian theology, then Epstein's alternative resides within an entirely different theological conversation. For much of Christian theology, the Trinity is so fundamental that to deny it is to be doing something else entirely.

Epstein also condemns Jeremy Begbie's approach to musical temporality as overly kerygmatic and metaphysical. "Begbie's attempt to expunge human ambivalence toward time is a modified form of the spiritual escapism through music that he rejects."<sup>63</sup> If attending to the actual effects of music upon a listening subject's sense of time is "escapist," then one would be hard-pressed to find any approach to music that satisfies the demands of such a radical materialism. One must wonder what kind of music exists in an *atemporal* world; neither rhythm nor tonality could exist. It is, therefore, Epstein's own critique that is "escapist." Furthermore, Begbie is criticized for "shift[ing] his attention almost immediately to the divine."<sup>64</sup> Although theologies without God are not unheard of, Epstein fails to identify or connect with this contemporary a-theological

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<sup>61</sup> Barth's refusal to hear the *logos* through music is the subject of chapter two.

<sup>62</sup> Epstein, 81.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

scene.<sup>65</sup> Instead, she criticizes theologians who *do* talk about God, without properly justifying the alternative.

Although in many respects she is correct in her critique of past approaches to theological reflection upon music, she unfortunately misdiagnoses the symptoms she describes so well. The problem with Christian theologies of music is not, as Epstein insists, the search for normative principles rooted in the divine *logos*, but rather the failure of many theologies to ground the doctrine of the Word in truly incarnational, concrete human terms.

In contrast to the allegedly unrealistic theologies of music that she critiques, Epstein prefers to speak of music in terms of embodiment and subjectivity. In this respect she prefers what has been called the “New Musicology” of Susan McClary, in which music is described by means of metaphors that ascribe kinetic and bodily meanings to music.<sup>66</sup> The position of this dissertation does not disagree with such a practical and embodied approach to the theology of music. Indeed, discussing the actual *practice* of music and how it affects persons in their practical lives and churches in their practical ministries is precisely what any properly incarnational theology of music should hope to achieve. Such theological realism would help assuage the “worship wars” and bring congregations to shared understandings of their practices. To reflect upon music in a critical manner—as proclamation of the divine Word incarnate in human flesh—*that* is the goal this dissertation endeavors to pursue. But such a goal cannot be achieved if the Word is discarded as “logocentric” and traditional Christian doctrine is jettisoned in favor of an a-theological programme.

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<sup>65</sup> See Mark C. Taylor, *Erring: a postmodern a/theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987); Don Cupitt, *After God: The Future of Religion* (New York: Basic Books, 1997). An excellent (and succinct) introduction is found in Gavin Hyman, *The Predicament of Postmodern Theology: radical orthodoxy or nihilist textualism?* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 22-26.

<sup>66</sup> See Susan McClary, *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991).

The approach taken in this dissertation *appreciates* the turn toward sensuality taken in Epstein's project. However, it *rejects* her method of divesting theology of the *logos*. An "incarnational" approach to theology does not mean divesting the flesh of the spirit, yet that is precisely what Epstein appears to claim. Rather, the incarnation brings the *logos* into the sensual world of tonality and rhythm (i.e. the very *time* that she rejects as metaphysical), redeeming them from meaninglessness and celebrating their particularity in God's good creation.

#### THE DOGMATIC TASK AND THE NORMATIVITY OF THE WORD

It is the contention of this dissertation that critical theological reflection upon the ecclesial practice of music requires that it be set within the manifold redemptive work of the Word of God in Christ through the Church. The first task of this dissertation, then, is to establish that the ecclesial practice of music may serve in a proclamatory role, that it may proclaim the Word of God.

Given Karl Barth's contribution to the discussion of the relationship between proclamation and dogmatic theology, then, I will first examine Barth's approach to the possibility of a musical proclamation and the dogmatic task that would provide normative guidance for the musical practice of the church. His approach, however, is a negative one. As will be demonstrated through an examination of his early works, Barth refuses to allow for dogmatic reflection upon the ecclesial practice of music. It is not that Barth rejects the idea of musical proclamation wholesale; as the oft-quoted Barthian adage goes, God may proclaim God's Word through a "dead dog" if God so wishes. Rather, it will be shown how Barth severely restricts *divinely commissioned* proclamation to exclude the musical life and practice of the church.

Barth's restriction of proclamation, however, provides a foil for the work of Pope Benedict XVI. The third chapter focuses upon the latter's assertion that music may indeed

proclaim the Word of God. After locating Benedict's theology of music within the history of Catholic Christian reflection on the place of music within the life of the church, it will be demonstrated how the proclamation of the Word is the primary purpose of music. Benedict rightly acknowledges this and presents it in a coherent fashion for contemporary theology.

The fourth chapter presents an assessment of Benedict's dogmatic reflection upon music, attending particularly to the Apollonian-Dionysian paradigm he borrows from ancient and late modern aesthetic theory and reconfigures in a decidedly Christian fashion. The legacy of Kant's analytic of the sublime will be contrasted with Augustine's *De Musica*, in order to demonstrate how Benedict's dogmatic approach to the ecclesial practice of music does not present an aesthetic of domination (as Godard and Epstein would aver), but rather an aesthetic of peace. Thus a Ratzingerian approach is advocated as the kind of *kerygmatic* theology of music called for by the present project.

The conclusion, then, points toward possible means of critically examining the ecclesial practice of music further. A "descriptive" method of dogmatic reflection is finally recommended, in which the theology of music approximates a kind of journalistic "music criticism," albeit one that listens for the Word of Christ, the hearing of which brings faith (Romans 10:17).

## CHAPTER TWO

### KARL BARTH'S MUSICAL ICONOCLASM

“God may speak to us through Russian Communism, a flute concerto, a blossoming shrub, or a dead dog. We do well to listen to Him if He really does. But...we cannot say that we are commissioned to pass on what we have heard....”<sup>1</sup>

#### A PRELUDE ON MOZART

In seeking to understand Barth's theological position regarding music, it is customary to first examine his flattery of Mozart, so often invoked with regard to “parables of the Kingdom.”<sup>2</sup> It is well-known that Barth spent each morning listening to a half hour of Mozart's music, and even published a few writings on the composer. A preliminary analysis would find that Barth's thoughts on Mozart were not particularly deep; perhaps they would be better attributed to the more amusing side of Barth, the charming personality associated with pipe-smoking and clever witticisms, rather than the serious Reformed dogmatician. As one audience member at Barth's bicentennial address on Mozart in Geneva described the event, it was “not with heavy solemnity but rather with not unmischievous good humor.”<sup>3</sup> David Moseley, arguing against this view, writes: “The standard response of certain Barth scholars who care to comment on his musical passion—*obsession*, even—for Mozart is to make an amused observation of the fact, at

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<sup>1</sup> Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics I.1, The Doctrine of the Word of God* (hereafter *CD I/1*), 2d ed, translated by G.W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1975), 55.

<sup>2</sup> Paul Louis Metzger, *The Word of Christ and the World of Culture: Sacred and Secular through the Theology of Karl Barth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans, 2003), 204-215; David James Richard Silvanus Moseley, ‘Parables of the Kingdom’: *music and theology in Karl Barth*, Ph.D. dissertation (Cambridge, UK: University of Cambridge, 2001); Philip Edward Stoltzfus, *Theology as Performance: The Theological Use of Musical Aesthetics in Friedrich Schleiermacher, Karl Barth, and Ludwig Wittgenstein*, Th.D. dissertation (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Divinity School, 2000), 189-210.

<sup>3</sup> Howard Schomer, “Barth on Mozart,” *Christian Century* (21-28 March 1984; reprinted from 18 July 1956), 309.

the level of *obiter dicta*, equivalent to that which is also frequently reserved for Barth's well-known love of military history, detective novels, and his pipe."<sup>4</sup>

Furthermore, by his own attestation, he merely loved the *sound* of Mozart's music. In fact, he refuted studies of Mozart that attempted to impart meaning upon his compositions.

He does not reveal in his music any doctrine....Mozart does not wish to *say* anything; he just sings and sounds. Thus he does not force anything on the listener, does not demand that he make any decisions or take any positions; he simply leaves him free. Doubtless the enjoyment he gives begins with our accepting that.<sup>5</sup>

Barth's love of Mozart is largely rooted in his belief that Mozart is not *saying* anything. The music is pure praise of God, with no meaningful content besides enjoyment.<sup>6</sup>

Theodore Gill recounts a tour of Barth's office in Basel, well-known to have been adorned with portraits of both Calvin and Mozart. "'My special revelation,' he smiled, looking at Calvin. 'And my general revelation,' he said, as he beamed at Mozart.'"<sup>7</sup> Gill poses the question whether this joke was meaningless or if it masked a more serious view of the place of music within Barth's systematized worldview. Unfortunately, Gill quickly abandons the particulars of this quote to speculate on a Barthian theology of the arts in general.

As other scholars have demonstrated, however, music was indeed a crucial element in Barth's theology. This chapter will add to this scholarly material by locating the genesis of Barth's critical use of the *Auftrag* (otherwise known as the "great commission") in his correspondence with a pastor on the subject of the status and role of

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<sup>4</sup> Moseley, 'Parables of the Kingdom', 6.

<sup>5</sup> Karl Barth, *Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart*, translated by Clarence K. Pott (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans, 1986), 37.

<sup>6</sup> Speculating on the performance of music in heaven, Barth quipped, "...it may be that when the angels go about their task of praising God, they play only Bach. I am sure, however, that when they are together *en famille*, they play Mozart and that then too our dear Lord listens with special pleasure." See *ibid.*, 23.

<sup>7</sup> Theodore Gill, "Barth and Mozart" *Theology Today* 43 (October 1986): 405.

liturgical music. Before proceeding to this task, however, it will first review Barth's writings on Mozart and their role in his concern with natural theology.

### **Freedom in Barth's appreciation of Mozart**

Barth's writings on Mozart present a normative musical aesthetic in which freedom, as set within the limits of creation, is celebrated and explored. Barth addressed music toward the beginning of his lectures on Protestant theology in the nineteenth century. In a section entitled, "Man in the Eighteenth Century," Barth provides a broad overview of the intellectual and cultural currents preceding his primary subject matter.<sup>8</sup> It is here that Barth presents the claim that one can better understand a historical period by an awareness of the music of that period.

We can study the history of a past age, we can contemplate its architectural and other works of art, its portraits and its dress, and we can read the books it gave us, but we cannot hear the voices of the people then living—and this imposes a tremendous limitation upon our understanding—except as they are transcribed and laid before us in their music in so far as it has been handed down to us.<sup>9</sup>

This concern for the formal, aesthetic *voice* of the past is curious. As will be shown below, Barth later exhibited very little concern for similar formal aspects of revelation. For Barth, the music of the eighteenth century is perhaps *more* definitive of the spirit of that century than music of other centuries: "there is something in the way in which it was musical which is so characteristic of the whole spirit of the age."<sup>10</sup> He finds that eighteenth century musicians were more craftsmen than artists or composers, in that through their proficiency with sounds, they could craft the created order and thus celebrate the mastery of humanity over nature. This mastery was "the sovereign attitude which they had first of all towards the instrument producing the sounds and then to the

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<sup>8</sup> Karl Barth, *Die protestantische Theologie im 19 Jahrhundert: ihre Vorgeschichte und ihre Geschichte* (Zürich : Evangelischer Verlag, 1947), English Translation in *From Rousseau to Ritschl* (London: SCM Press, 1959).

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

abundance of possibilities inherent in these sounds.”<sup>11</sup> Barth utilizes strong active verbs to describe the work of the musician: “forcing, imposing and stamping” the “mass of possible sounds.”<sup>12</sup>

But while the “world of sound” is mastered in this way, it also becomes an arena for game-playing. The eighteenth century composer *plays* with sound, enjoying the freedom of being its master. This distinguishes Mozart from both his predecessors and his followers. Earlier music tried too hard to “subdue the raw material of sound” and composers after Beethoven did not love sound enough “for its own sake” and therefore could not properly play the “game” that is music.<sup>13</sup>

Barth makes one more move, however, in analysing the music of the eighteenth century. Beyond the infinite sea of playfulness, there is a shore. Barth does not hear Bach, Handel, Gluck or Haydn acknowledging this shore at all. In Mozart, however, he hears the limitations of play. “[Mozart] had in addition something entirely personal to himself: the sadness or horror inherent in the knowledge of the border before which absolutist man...stands in blissful unawareness.”<sup>14</sup> Barth even draws a comparison between Mozart and his Don Giovanni, who continues to play despite his awareness of his mortality as the Commodore’s statue stands before him.<sup>15</sup>

Barth’s aesthetic of musical freedom also appears later in his career, in an essay devoted to “Mozart’s Freedom,” as part of the bicentennial celebration of Mozart’s birth in January 1956. In this essay, Barth outlines two “riddles in the phenomenon that is Mozart.” The first of these regards Mozart’s reception of musical skill from among his colleagues, past and present, as well as his creative appropriation of those skills. With the

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>12</sup> “aufzudrängen, aufzuerlegen, einzuprägen,” *Die protestantische Theologie im 19 Jahrhundert: ihre Vorgeschichte und ihre Geschichte* (Zürich : Evangelischer Verlag, 1947), 51; ET *From Rousseau to Ritschl*, 49.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

technical ability that Mozart has received, he is able to configure and reconfigure the sonic dimension of the created order in a free and creative manner.<sup>16</sup> The second “riddle” concerns more specific musicological details. Here Barth attempts to get *inside* Mozart’s music, describing its particular accomplishments. “Mozart’s music always sounds unburdened, effortless, and light. This is why it unburdens, releases, and liberates us.”<sup>17</sup> While Barth does not provide a conventional musicological description, he tells us *what he hears* when listening to Mozart. This indeed is helpful for understanding the mind of Barth (much more than understanding Mozart!).

### **Barth’s musical aesthetic and natural theology**

Musicologically, Barth’s reflections on Mozart are hardly unique. As Philip Stoltzfus’ dissertation has aptly demonstrated, Barth was working within an aesthetic framework that emerged in the mid-nineteenth century and had continued to develop well into the twentieth.<sup>18</sup> Stoltzfus identifies Barth’s musical aesthetic with the “formalism” of Eduard Hanslick, as well as the *Neue Sachlichkeit* (“new objectivism”) movement of the early 1920s.<sup>19</sup> Writing throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century, Hanslick attempted to purge musicological discussions of their romantic preoccupations with emotional expression.<sup>20</sup> He achieved this by grounding the content of music in “tonally moving forms.”<sup>21</sup> Such musical “formalism” eschewed the idea that music had any kind of

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<sup>16</sup> Barth, “Mozart’s Freedom,” in *Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart*, translated by Clarence K. Pott (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans, 1986), 45-47. In this respect, one could say music serves as an analogy—or better, an exemplar—of the moral life. But Barth does not pursue such a line of thought. He simply acknowledges Mozart’s freedom, and praises it for its goodness.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>18</sup> Stoltzfus’ larger project is a methodological one: through a dialectical contrast of the musical aesthetics of Barth and Schleiermacher, he proposes a Wittgensteinian theological methodology that understands the practice of theology itself as a “performance.”

<sup>19</sup> Stoltzfus, 162.

<sup>20</sup> Although Hanslick did *completely* dismiss the expressive qualities of music; he simply wished to allocate their proper place. On this see R.A. Sharpe, *Philosophy of Music: an introduction* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2004), 16-22.

<sup>21</sup> Hanslick, *On the Musically Beautiful*, edited and translated by Geoffrey Payzant (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1986), 29.

meaning or reference outside of itself.<sup>22</sup> There are also notable similarities with the *Neue Sachlichkeit*, a movement that followed upon the heels of expressionist painting in the 1920s.<sup>23</sup> Fritz Schmalenbach, writing in 1936, located *Neue Sachlichkeit*'s "innermost kernel" in "a radical rejection of all emotional bias, a deliberately cultivated unsentimentality..."<sup>24</sup> Thus Barth was not unique in his musicological observations.

As Thomas Erne has noted, however, the uniqueness of Barth's reflections on Mozart is to be found in the *theological* nature of those reflections.<sup>25</sup> More specifically, these reflections should be located within Barth's larger rejection of natural theology and the *analogia entis*.<sup>26</sup> In short, the *analogia entis* is the "analogy of being," in which the existence and characteristics of being imply the existence and characteristics of God. Its theological genesis is to be found in jumbled form in Thomas Aquinas' work, and unfortunately misunderstood in Cajetan's later efforts toward clarification.<sup>27</sup> Protestant scholastics attempted to appropriate this analogy, with varying success, but it was Barth who finally severed the connection.<sup>28</sup>

Barth's rejection of the *analogia entis* emerged in his critique of Roman Catholicism, although he soon aimed at his own tradition vis-à-vis Emil Brunner's

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<sup>22</sup> Later examples of musical formalism include Heinrich Schenker's grammatical analysis of musical structure, Lehrdahl and Jackendoff's cognitive psychological modification of Schenkerian analysis, as well as the more contemporary Roger Scruton, Malcolm Budd and the "enhanced formalism" of Peter Kivy.

<sup>23</sup> Stephen Webb also cites the *Neue Sachlichkeit*, attributing the shift in Barth's rhetoric between the *Römerbriefe* and his dogmatic works to the similar transition in German aesthetics between expressionism and the "new objectivity." McCormack, however, has little patience for a culturally-bound Barth, citing his disinterest in contemporary art during the 1920s. McCormack's puritanical Barthianism, however, ignores the possibility that one may share in a culture without making a cognitive decision to do so. See Webb, *Refiguring Theology: the rhetoric of Karl Barth*, SUNY Series in Rhetoric and Theology (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1991), 149ff and *KBCRDT*, 329.

<sup>24</sup> Fritz Schmalenbach, "The Term *Neue Sachlichkeit*," *The Art Bulletin* 22 (1940): 163-4. Although not published until 1940, Schmalenbach states that he had written this essay four years earlier.

<sup>25</sup> Thomas Erne, "Barth und Mozart," *ZDT* 2 (1986): 245-6.

<sup>26</sup> Both Stoltzfus and Moseley acknowledge this position. See Stoltzfus, 137-8, and Moseley, 151.

<sup>27</sup> Although its *philosophical* genesis is in Presocratic mathematics. For the standard history of the concept, see Battista Mondin, *The Principle of Analogy in Protestant and Catholic Theology*, 2d ed. (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1968).

<sup>28</sup> A critique of the contemporary revival of the *analogia entis* is Laurence Paul Hemming, "Analogia non Entis sed Entitatis: the ontological consequences of the doctrine of analogy," *IJST* 6 (2004): 118-129.

espousal of a human “capacity” (*-mächtigkeit; -fähigkeit*) for revelation as well.<sup>29</sup> Barth argued that humanity possesses *nothing* of its own that can grasp any knowledge of God.<sup>30</sup> To affirm such would be tantamount to affirm Feuerbach’s critique of the essence of Christianity—that it is purely man-made.<sup>31</sup> In his preface to the first volume of the massive *Kirchliche Dogmatik*, Barth adamantly refused to go the course of the *analogia entis*. “I have had no option but to say No at this point. I regard the *analogia entis* as the invention of the Antichrist....”<sup>32</sup>

Barth emphasizes rather the sovereignty of God in providing any possibility for such knowledge. George Hunsinger has classified this emphasis as an “objectivist motif,” in which the basis for knowledge of God “lies not in human subjectivity but in God.”<sup>33</sup> In Barth’s own words,

The possibility of a real knowledge by natural man of the true God, derived from creation, is, according to Calvin, a possibility in principle, but not in fact, not a possibility to be realised by us. One might call it an objective possibility, created by God, but not a subjective possibility, open to man. Between what is possible in principle and what is possible in fact there inexorably lies the fall.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Prior to his split with Brunner, Barth had engaged the *analogia entis* in the work of Erich Przywara. For an account of this earlier debate, see Bruce L. McCormack, *Karl Barth’s Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 319-322 (hereafter *KBCRDT*). Eugene Rogers’ dissertation has shown that, although Barth often aimed his shots at natural theology in the direction of Thomas Aquinas, they were closer to each other in this area than Barth surmised (specifically in regards to Thomas’ use of scripture as a “first principle”). See Eugene F. Rogers, Jr., *Thomas Aquinas and Karl Barth: Sacred Doctrine and the Natural Knowledge of God* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995).

<sup>30</sup> The English translation of the debate may be found in a single volume: *Natural Theology: Comprising “Nature and Grace” by Professor Dr. Emil Brunner and the Reply “No!” by Dr. Karl Barth*, translated by Peter Fraenkel (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1946). Trevor Hart rightly calls attention to the ambiguity regarding this human “capacity,” calling for a distinction between “active” and “passive” capacities. See Hart, “The Capacity for Ambiguity: revisiting the Barth-Brunner debate,” in *Regarding Karl Barth: essays toward a reading of his theology* (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 1999), 164-72.

<sup>31</sup> See Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, translated by George Eliot, Great Books in Philosophy (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus, 1989), 150: “In Christianity, man was only concentrated on himself... he made himself a self-sufficing whole, an absolute, extra- and supra-mundane being.”

<sup>32</sup> *CD I/1*, xiii.

<sup>33</sup> George Hunsinger, *How to read Karl Barth: the shape of his theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 35f.

<sup>34</sup> Barth, “Nein! Answer to Emil Brunner,” in *Natural Theology*, 106. Such Barthian “objectivism” of course has roots within a Reformed notion of total depravity, but one cannot ignore an equally strong foundation in Marburg Neo-Kantianism. See Simon Fisher, *Revelatory Postivism? Barth’s Earliest Theology and the Marburg School*, Oxford Theological Monographs (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), Johann Friedrich Lohmann, *Karl Barth und der Neokantianismus* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1995), and *KBCRDT*, 43-49.

Barth would later systematize this theological epistemology into a doctrine of faith, in which religious knowledge is gained from a response to revelation.

The possibility of faith as it is given to man in the reality of faith can be understood only as one that is loaned to man by God, and loaned exclusively for use. The moment we regard it as a possibility which is in some sense man's own, the opposite statement regarding man's incapacity comes back into force.<sup>35</sup>

Thus Barth's theological epistemology—his understanding of the source of knowledge of God—leads away from the *analogia entis* and toward his trademark *analogia fidei*.

Given such a strong aversion to placing theological value in human activity, it is remarkable that Barth manages to heap such praise upon Mozart. Some have postulated whether the writings on Mozart present a cautious step back toward the realm of natural theology.<sup>36</sup> Indeed Stoltzfus remarks, “any seemingly ‘anthropological’ preoccupation with the medium of music initially strikes one as a highly paradoxical aspect of [Barth’s] thinking....”<sup>37</sup> But both Stoltzfus and Moseley have shown that Barth’s musical aesthetic is actually consistent with his rejection of natural theology. In valuing the freedom of Mozart’s music *within* the limits of creation, and by denying any expression of *meaning* to music, Barth grants to Mozart a refuge away from the threatening task of daring to proclaim the *logos*. Nowhere does Barth claim that Mozart’s music proclaims the Word; rather, Mozart’s music is found entirely *within* the created order, celebrating the limits that it finds there. In Moseley’s words, “Barth’s constant theme with Mozart is that his music was the sounding forth of the ‘self-attestation’ of creation as a witness, *not* as a presumptuous ‘revelation’.”<sup>38</sup> And in those of Stoltzfus, “Within Mozart’s compositional structures, Barth finds a uniquely objective and ‘free’ voicing of the ordering harmony of

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<sup>35</sup> *CD I/1*, 238.

<sup>36</sup> Chapter five of Moseley’s dissertation calls attention to these scholars, particularly Hans Küng and Ned Wisnefske. See Moseley, 116-20, 124-7.

<sup>37</sup> Stoltzfus, 137.

<sup>38</sup> Moseley, 151.

creation. This relationship then stands, for Barth, not as any sort of opening for natural theology, but rather as a parallel analogy, or ‘parable’, for the beautiful ‘*Gestalt*’ or ‘*Form*’ of God’s objectivity and freedom as actualized in Jesus Christ.”<sup>39</sup> In such a manner, then, Barth’s “formalist” musical aesthetic, as found throughout his reflections on Mozart, was integrally related to his eschewal of natural theology. In adopting such an aesthetic, Barth preserved within his theology a place for music that never verged on the idolatrous.

While Barth’s writings on Mozart do indeed provide an illuminating perspective on the possibilities of music within the limits of creation, they are of little assistance to the project undertaken here—which seeks normative guidance for the ecclesial practice of music. Along with his turn from natural theology and the *analogia entis*, Barth also turned from the larger tradition of the church in reflecting upon its own musical practices.

#### DEFINING DOGMATICS IN GÖTTINGEN, 1924

Utilizing his own definition of theology, that of a critical science for the church’s own self-examination, it becomes clear that Barth indeed has no theology of music. In fact, he outrightly refuses the possibility. Not content with this theological situation, this chapter will now examine how and why Barth takes such a dogmatically iconoclastic position toward music. Put simply, Barth’s critical use of a revelatory dialectic prohibits a proclamatory role for music, thus preventing any critical theological reflection upon music as an ecclesial practice. Further, this “critical use” of revelation is made evident in his use of the Great Commission, and I hope to show how this move of restricting the scope of proclamation emerged out of a specific struggle to cope with the theological challenges of church music.

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<sup>39</sup> Stoltzfus, 138.

## Dogmatics and the Word of God

Even before Barth began his first series of lectures in dogmatics, he lamented the broad application of dogmatics to forms of Christian activity other than preaching. In his lectures on Schleiermacher's theology, delivered in the winter of 1923-24, he claimed: "Dogmatic language has [unfortunately] been shaped gradually on the basis of the other public utterances of religion—the poetic and oratorical."<sup>40</sup> In the same section, he dismissed Schleiermacher's high regard for music in the *Christmas Eve* dialogue, since music is "rated *above* speech and silent devotion above both."<sup>41</sup> So even in the winter of 1924 there is in Barth a preference for the spoken word above other sonic phenomena.

In his Göttingen dogmatic lectures, which began in May of that year, he would clarify his position on the relationship—or lack thereof—between dogmatics and music. Barth did not dislike music; he was just not concerned with it, at least not as an object of dogmatic reflection. Writing to his friend Eduard Thurneysen at the time, Barth described the "primary object" of such dogmatics as "neither biblical theology nor church doctrine, nor faith, nor religious awareness, but Christian preaching as it is actually given. This can be *recognized as* the 'Word of God' (which is the aim of the exercise)."<sup>42</sup> Thus Barth's practical starting point for these lectures was to provide a guide for the pastor's task of preparing and preaching sermons. Barth elevated Christian speech above other Christian activities, the basis of which is in his emphasis on the Word of God as the proper object of dogmatic reflection.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Barth, *The Theology of Schleiermacher*, ed. Dietrich Ritschl, translated by G.W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans, 1982), 207.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 210.

<sup>42</sup> Barth, qtd. in Eberhard Busch, *Karl Barth: His Life from Letters and Autobiographical Texts*, translated by John Bowden (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans, 1976), 155. This is in marked contrast to the historicist dogmatics of Schleiermacher and Troeltsch, who took historical Christianity—rather than the transcendent Word of God—as the object of dogmatic reflection. On this distinction see Walter E. Wyman, Jr., *The Concept of Glaubenslehre: Ernst Troeltsch and the Theological Heritage of Schleiermacher*, American Academy of Religion Academy Series 44 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983), 16.

<sup>43</sup> Barth's concurrent emphasis on the Word of God and radical divestment of the spiritual from material elements confirms his continuity with the Swiss Protestant tradition of Zwingli.

Barth begins these lectures with a definition of dogmatics as “scientific reflection on the Word of God,” emphasizing his continuity with the modern theological tradition (including Schleiermacher, Hermann and Troeltsch).<sup>44</sup> Ever since the early nineteenth century, when Schleiermacher had reconfigured theology as a science (both internally and externally in relation to other disciplines), theologians had struggled with the fundamental definitions of their labor.<sup>45</sup> Barth locates himself within this tradition, accepting dogmatics as a science, but augments this affirmation with a proviso that science is defined by “the closest possible adjustment of knowledge to the distinctiveness of its object.”<sup>46</sup> Therefore, the object of a science entirely determines the science—its methods, norms, practices, and so on.

Also keeping with the modern theological tradition, Barth is aware that God cannot be the object of any science. This was made impossible by Kant’s critique of metaphysics. But then Barth’s dissent from the modern theological tradition emerges. For he will not identify the object of dogmatics with the relationship between a church and its teaching (Schleiermacher), the origin and validity of religion (Herrmann), or even the Christian faith (Troeltsch, Schweizer), but rather *the Word of God*.<sup>47</sup> Not God, but God’s *Word*—the divine act of speaking and thereby revealing Godself—is to be the object of dogmatic reflection. Barth argues that this provides the only proper object of a distinctly *Reformed* dogmatics.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Barth, *The Göttingen Dogmatics: Instruction in the Christian Religion I* (hereafter *GD I*), ed. Hannelotte Reiffen, translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans, 1991), 7-8.

<sup>45</sup> Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Brief Outline on the Study of Theology*, translated by Terrence N. Tice (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1970). See also B.A. Gerrish, “*Ubi theologia, ibi ecclesia?*” Schleiermacher, Troeltsch, and the Prospect for an Academic Theology,” in *Continuing the Reformation: Essays on Modern Religious Thought* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1993), 255ff.

<sup>46</sup> *GD I*, 8.

<sup>47</sup> *GD I*, 8-10.

<sup>48</sup> Barth stuck close to his Reformed sources, acknowledged in *KBCRDT*, 349, as Heinrich Heppe’s Philippist *Die Dogmatik der evangelisch-reformirten Kirche* but, in his account of the *Deus dixit* principle, he quoted almost verbatim from Hermann Bavinck’s *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*. Cf. *GD I*, 10 and Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics I: Prolegomena*, translated by John Vriend (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), 30.

### The Word of God as Proclamation

After establishing the proper object of dogmatic reflection as the Word of God, Barth introduces his paradigmatic division of that divine Word in threefold form. The first address of God's speaking a Word (*Deus dixit*) is one "in which God himself and God alone is the speaker," the Word of God as revealed in Christ. The second address is one "in which it is the Word of a specific category of people (the prophets and apostles)," or the Word of God as scripture. The third address is one "in which the number of its human agents or proclaimers is theoretically unlimited." This latter form he calls (here in the *Göttingen Dogmatics*) "preaching." Thus preaching is itself a form of the continuing revelation of God's Word.<sup>49</sup> The threefold pattern here is pressed into conformity with the credal formulas, as Barth interweaves his paradigm with the Nicene Creed on the incarnation, and the Western pneumatology of dual procession:

The Word of God on which dogmatics reflects...is one in three and three in one:...the Word of God as revelation, the Word of God as scripture, and the Word of God as preaching, neither to be confused nor separated. One Word of God, one authority, one power, and yet not one but three addresses. Three addresses of God..., yet not three Words of God, three authorities, truths, or powers, but one. Scripture is not revelation, but from revelation. Preaching is not revelation or scripture, but from both.<sup>50</sup>

Bruce McCormack has also indicated the christological elements in the second and third forms of revelation:

Revelation is an act of God's grace in which He takes up the creaturely media of scripture and preaching and gives to them a capacity that they do not possess in and for themselves to bear adequate witness to God. In that this occurs, the media *correspond* to revelation itself. In this relation of correspondence, they participate actualistically in that primary form of unity-in-differentiation which is Jesus Christ. They obtain a *share* in God's act of self-revelation.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> *GD* I, 14.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 14-15. This "trinitarian analogy" has been taken up and expanded by Dietrich Ritschl. See *A Theology of Proclamation* (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1960), 25-33.

<sup>51</sup> McCormack, "What Has Basel to Do with Berlin? Continuities in the Theologies of Barth and Schleiermacher," *Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 23 (2002): 166.

It is telling that at this point in Barth's theological career, the third form is not yet "proclamation," but "preaching." Although terms such as *kerygma* and *Verkündigung* are occasionally used, it is *preaching* which alone constitutes the third form of the Word of God. *Preaching* is the Word of God spoken in and to the church in the present day; *preaching* is the object of the scientific reflection called dogmatics. "This phenomenon of Christian speaking, whether by Christianity, in its name, for its extension or establishment, or however we might put it, is as it were the *raw stuff* of dogma and dogmatics. As such it is our methodological starting point."<sup>52</sup> Years later in the *Church Dogmatics*, this "raw stuff" or "raw material" (German: *Stoff*) would be augmented with the sacraments to become "proclamation," but in Göttingen Barth was only concerned with preaching.

In fact, Barth considers this task to define ecclesiology as a whole, as the church is fundamentally the location where the Word of God is preached. "But what always makes it the church, what distinguishes it from any other fellowship of faith and spirit and distinctive orientation and sacrament, is the vital link between this very specific hearing and making heard, the Word which it receives and passes on."<sup>53</sup> This is not to say that he did not consider the various other activities of the Christian church. But they are not the Word of God, and it is that Word that constitutes the object of dogmatics.

To the degree that the Christian church is something other than the fellowship of hearing and speaking God's Word, to the degree that it is, for example, a free society of like-minded souls, to the degree that it participates more or less adequately in all kinds of educational and cultural work, to the degree that it includes in its activity the sacred dance and reverent silence, the mystery play and the Christ or Luther film, it still cannot escape the task of reflection, and it must take note how this turns out. But it does not need dogma and dogmatics, for *this* reflection relates to the Christian church to the degree that it can and should intend to *speak*. Dogmatics is very specifically reflection on this speaking with reference to

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<sup>52</sup> *GD* I, 23-24.

<sup>53</sup> *GD* I, 24.

the Word of God, namely, how far the Word of God is, or is meant to be, identical with it.<sup>54</sup>

Thus Barth admits the necessity of reflecting upon these extra-homiletical activities, but such reflection is *different from* dogmatic reflection, because the act of preaching alone involves—*constitutes*—the Word of God as spoken and heard today.

*Proclamation and the revelatory dialectic*

As elucidated above with reference to natural theology, Barth invokes a dialectical tension between God's Word and the works of humans, so that the idea of coherence between *any* human act and that of the divine marks the height of presumption.

Might not other human voices proclaim this Word too, and do they not do so by common experience? Does not God speak through *nature* too, through *history*, through Handel's Largo and all kinds of good *art*? And can we say that God does not speak directly to people today? No, we cannot, is the obvious answer. As Calvin says, God is not tied to such aids or such inferior means, and as the East Frisian preachers...say similarly, God's work is not tied to ours.<sup>55</sup>

Even the claim that preaching might communicate the divine Word is nearly impossible to justify. To the extent that God's Word is *present and active* in human affairs, it is also quite *hidden* in those affairs. One cannot identify this or that particular event as God's act. For if the coherence is between God's Word and human action is assured, the critical function of dogmatics is unnecessary. Only one particular event is assured for Barth, of course, and that is the event of Jesus Christ, the incarnation of the Word.

This identification of preaching as a part of—or extension of—divine revelation by means of the incarnation, however, is not easily achieved. Furthermore, the hiddenness of the divine Word is not just limited to that Word in preaching, but each member of the threefold paradigm.

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<sup>54</sup> *GD* I, 25.

<sup>55</sup> *GD* I, 33.

Preaching, of course, is God's Word in human words, concealed by the total inability of everything human to attain to this object, just as God's Word in scripture is concealed by the separating distance of everything historical, by Lessing's "ugly ditch," and just as God's Word in revelation is concealed by God's inaccessibility, by his incomprehensibility, which does not cease but becomes very great in his revelation.<sup>56</sup>

This "dialectic of veiling and unveiling," in which the presence of God's Word includes its hiddenness, has recently been identified by Bruce McCormack as the "material principle" of Barth's dogmatics.<sup>57</sup> McCormack has argued that Barth's methodological discussions in the *Göttingen Dogmatics* are incomplete. For—despite his protests against using "material principles" such as Schleiermacher's "feeling of absolute dependence"—Barth employed a similar material principle in this "dialectic of veiling and unveiling." Also in ways similar to Schleiermacher, Barth employed this principle both *critically* and *heuristically*. The critical use of this material dialectic principle assists in his "establishing the limits of what can be said within the realm of dogmatics"; the heuristic use guides him in "assimilating the witness of Holy Scripture to particular doctrinal themes and the witness of tradition to that witness."<sup>58</sup> In other words, the veiling/unveiling dialectic active in Barth's doctrine of revelation serves to fix or restrain the kinds of practices considered contiguous with the divine Word (the critical function) on the one hand, and serves as the interpretive glue that keeps the Word of God in scripture together with the tradition that follows. Understood in this critical and heuristic way, then, Barth's dialectic of veiling/unveiling curiously allows, while also prohibiting, claims of the church's participation in the ministry of the Word of God. The hidden presence of the Word, as a critical principle, is suspicious of any claims of such participation, but by its very nature must also admit that the Word demands such participation.

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<sup>56</sup> *GD I*, 37.

<sup>57</sup> McCormack, "What Has Basel to Do with Berlin?" 169. McCormack also states that this will be one of the principle claims in a forthcoming book.

<sup>58</sup> McCormack, "What Has Basel to Do with Berlin?" 169.

McCormack's identification of this "material principle" is indeed helpful for properly configuring the necessity and possibility of proclaiming the very Word of God. What has perhaps been overlooked in McCormack's study, however, is the imperative element in Barth's use of this unconscious principle. In the *Göttingen Dogmatics*, the only reason Barth offers for the participation of preaching in this Word is a command (*Auftrag*) that proceeds from the Word of God in its second form, that of scripture.<sup>59</sup> Specifically, he refers to Mark 16.15, "πορευθέντες εἰς τὸν κόσμον ἅπαντα κηρύξατε τὸ εὐαγγέλιον πάσῃ τῇ κτίσει," and 1 Corinthians 9.16, "ἀνάγκη γάρ μοι ἐπίκειται· οὐαὶ γάρ μοι ἔστιν ἐὰν μὴ εὐαγγελίσωμαι."<sup>60</sup> This command is never invoked negatively, with respect to the *limiting* of dogmatics' scope (although it will later provide such a critical function). It is used here, however, simply to substantiate his claim *that preaching is commanded*. It is the underlying dialectic of veiling and unveiling that says "no" to the range of human action, while leaving room for exceptions; it is the command of scripture that positively identifies such an exception. John the Baptist may extend the index finger toward the crucified Christ in Grünewald's macabre altarpiece, but for Barth it is Christ himself who points toward the pulpit.

#### *Proclamation as anaesthetic*

A crucial aspect of Barth's conception of the Word of God, however, is that it is void of any superfluous aesthetic form. The Word does not concern itself with oratorical flourishes, poetic devices, or anything one might associate with performance. The Word, as Word, consists of the communication of meaning in and through propositional, linguistic structures.<sup>61</sup> "The Christian church begins by listening to the address of the prophets and apostles, which was not babbled, or mimed, or put to music, or danced, but

<sup>59</sup> *GD* I, 51-58.

<sup>60</sup> *GD* I., 54, 56.

<sup>61</sup> See McCormack's second through fourth theses in his "§27 'The Limits of the Knowledge of God': Theses on the Theological Epistemology of Karl Barth," *ZDT* 15 (1999): 76-77.

spoken and written in statements and groups of statements.”<sup>62</sup> At one point Barth likens the situation of the preacher disposed to impressive oratory to Gorgias, the rhetorician in Plato’s dialogue of the same name. Plato’s Socrates challenges and embarrasses Gorgias, dismissing the skills of rhetoric as “not an art, but the occupation of a shrewd and enterprising spirit, and of one naturally skilled in its dealings with men, and in sum and substance I call it ‘flattery’.”<sup>63</sup> As a Socrates for the twentieth century, Barth is not interested in how convincing or dramatic a preacher may be, but only how well the preacher can create the proper combination of lexical and grammatical elements, producing a structure through which God communicates.

Stephen Webb demonstrates in his study of Barth’s own rhetoric that he often employed a technique known as “realism”: “Realism pretends to be...a rejection of rhetoric, while in actuality it is merely another kind of rhetoric, one which orders itself to some (rhetorically constructed) view of reality.”<sup>64</sup> It is, then, somewhat ironic that Barth would dismiss the art of rhetoric in theology, given that he is such a rhetorician himself.<sup>65</sup>

Aware of potential criticism regarding the matter of extra-linguistic preaching, Barth offers three facts to substantiate his claim. He appeals to the dogmatic tradition of referring to credal formulas, he cites the abundance of homiletic material on which dogmatics may reflect, and emphasizes the need for preaching to be so scrutinized.<sup>66</sup> Neither of these rationales, however, provides adequate grounds for excising the structure of a text from its delivery and prohibiting the larger range of Christian practices from participating in the ministry of the Word. That dogmatics have traditionally referred to

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<sup>62</sup> *GD* I, 24.

<sup>63</sup> Plato, *Gorgias* 463a, in *The Collected Dialogues*, edited by Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns, Bollingen Series LXXI (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1961), 245-246.

<sup>64</sup> Webb, 155.

<sup>65</sup> Webb also calls attention to Barth’s use of irony, such as in his comments that the angels in heaven must laugh at the *Church Dogmatics*, but that their chuckles are well-intended. In the use of such irony, Barth dissuades his critics by granting them the license to look at issues outside of his own configuration, while sidestepping the issue entirely.

<sup>66</sup> *GD* I, 26-30.

credal formulas does not address the possibility that they could perhaps do more. After all, tradition is always under construction, particularly for the Reformed tradition. The same logical critique applies to Barth's claim that the dogmatist has such a ready supply of sermons that she need not look elsewhere for material to critique. A plenitude of sermons does not obviate the need to assess the other activities of the church. Furthermore, the necessity of scrutinizing sermons hardly abrogates the necessity of scrutinizing those other activities. Barth can prove that preaching is positively commanded in scripture by means of the *Auftrag*—there is no question there. But Barth is still struggling to legitimize the *exclusivity* of his dogmatic attention on preaching.

The positive use of the *Auftrag*, like the dialectical principle identified by McCormack, is repeated in the 1927 dogmatics.<sup>67</sup> Barth discusses the command to preach in section five, but again with reference to the necessity of preaching, not the restriction of dogmatic reflection.<sup>68</sup> A more negative use of the *Auftrag*, however, would emerge specifically in regards to music. This occurred in Barth's correspondence with a German pastor in the spring of 1930, just prior to embarking upon his study of Anselm. In this correspondence, Barth stumbles upon a more negative, critical use of the *Auftrag*. Not only are preaching and the sacraments positively *commanded*, but dogmatic attention to music (and consequently all other Christian practices) is *rejected*.

#### A NEW DIMENSION FOR THE AUFTRAG, 1930

##### **Critical use of the *Auftrag***

On 14 March 1930, Walter Kiefner, a *Stadtpfarrer* (pastor) in the Swabian city of Ulm, sent a letter to Barth challenging the latter's position on several matters related to music

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<sup>67</sup> Barth, *Die christliche Dogmatik im Entwurf I: Die Lehre vom Worte Gottes* (Münich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1927), 59-65. (Hereafter *ChrD I*.) In fact, McCormack largely ignores the *Christliche Dogmatik im Entwurf*, stating that it "added little that was decisively new." See *KBCRDT*, 375.

<sup>68</sup> *ChrD I*, 59-60: "es könnte sein, daß die Theologen der bekannten Unmöglichkeit zum Trotz predigen, weil sie es müssen, und müssen, weil sie einen Auftrag haben."

and its place in the ministry of the Word of God.<sup>69</sup> He had already published two essays on sacred music, both of which he included with his letter—one on the meaning of the *Singbewegung* (“singing movement,” a revival of folk traditions that impacted on the early twentieth century liturgical reforms), and the other on the use of the organ in the worship life of the church.<sup>70</sup>

In “*Die Orgel im Gottesdienst*,” Kiefner responded to various attacks on the organ, calling out Barth in particular. “A theological teacher, one respected by the younger generation of theologians and one who especially knows the various Reformers, is said to have said in lecture: ‘In our churches a terrible monster stands: the organ.’”<sup>71</sup> Kiefner was referring here to Barth, most probably to a statement reflected in the *Göttingen Dogmatics*: “A formidable and even demonic instrument, the organ, is also active....”<sup>72</sup> In his defense against the disparagement of the instrument, Kiefner argued that the organ’s justification was to be found in its unique role—one that neither the minister nor the community can perform in its absence. The organ, he argued, takes “wood and metal, air and electricity”—things of the created order that in themselves are incapable of proclaiming the divine Word—and brings them into participation with that ministry. Under the hands of the organist, then, these elements “begin to cooperate with the event of sound related to the Word; they begin to *speak*.”<sup>73</sup> In this manner, the organ

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<sup>69</sup> I am indebted to Clifford Anderson, Curator of the Karl Barth Research Collection at Princeton Theological Seminary, for pointing me in the direction of this letter.

<sup>70</sup> Walter Kiefner, “Die Bedeutung der Singbewegung für das kirchliche Leben,” *Monatsschrift für Pastoraltheologie* 25 (1929): 257ff; “Die Orgel im Gottesdienst. Ein Kapitel praktischer Theologie,” *Württembergische Blätter für Kirchenmusik* 3 (1930): 136-141. All quotes from and references to these works of Kiefner are from the editor’s commentary to Karl Barth, “An Stadtpfarrer Walter Kiefner, Blaubeuren, 1930.” *Karl Barth Gesamtausgabe* 35: *Offene Briefe, 1909-1935*, ed. Diether Koch (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 2001), 140-146.

<sup>71</sup> Kiefner, qtd. in *Gesamtausgabe*, 142-143.

<sup>72</sup> *GD* I, 71.

<sup>73</sup> Kiefner, qtd. in *Gesamtausgabe*, 143.

“begins to speak from its nature, it becoming...the second pulpit.”<sup>74</sup> Barth responded by first deflecting the issue with characteristic hyperbole:

“A rejection of sacred music, and the organ especially, is for my part out of the question. What I desire is to reach fundamentally clearer insight into the matter of the worship service. Only with this intention do I occasionally investigate the subject of both the iconoclasts and/or organoclasts of the sixteenth century. And truly, I have not called the organ a “terrible monster” (that is a myth)—but only an instrument once inhabited by uncanny demons, and its use in the worship service would thus have to be done with at least a clear conscience.”<sup>75</sup>

Barth soon became serious, however, in delineating what is properly considered “proclamation” and what is not.

In that same essay, Kiefner had conceded that in the worship service the organ is not necessary. However, on the basis of his reading of 1 Corinthians 6:12, “Πάντα μοι ἔξεστιν ἀλλ’ οὐ πάντα συμφέρει,” he appealed to a Pauline notion of Christian freedom. Thus the organ may not be *necessary*, but it “is justified...insofar as it ‘is beneficial’ [nützt], i.e. that it becomes subservient to the events of the worship service.”<sup>76</sup> In addition, Kiefner invoked a phrase of Luther’s: “God speaks with us through his Word, and we again speak with him through prayer and praise.”<sup>77</sup> Barth’s response, however, adds a new dimension to his use of the *Auftrag*.

Barth writes that “we are not to ask what in any case *can* happen in the Christian worship service, for the sake of Christian freedom, but rather, what *should* happen according to the nature of the church, according to the commission (*Auftrag*) that has become the church.”<sup>78</sup> The *Auftrag* serves here not just to command the church into its mission and purpose, but also to *limit* the church’s practices. “That the creature, entirely

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Barth, *Gesamtausgabe*, 144.

<sup>76</sup> Kiefner, qtd. in *Gesamtausgabe*, 143.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Barth, *Gesamtausgabe*, 144-145: “Ich meine aber, wir haben nicht zu fragen, was allenfalls im christlichen Gottesdienst um der christlichen Freiheit willen geschehen kann, sondern danach, was dem Wesen der Kirche entsprechend, entsprechend dem der Kirche gewordenen Auftrag, in ihm geschehen soll.”

incapable of the Word, could and should praise and make offerings to God with men, is a thing for itself. I am not of the opinion that the Word of God is to be restricted to the oral sermon of the Church. Thank goodness that is not the case. Nevertheless I ask: what is commanded of the church as such?”<sup>79</sup>

This negative use of the *Auftrag* strengthens the “critical” use of the dialectic of veiling and unveiling, which McCormack has himself unveiled as the “material principle” at work in Barth’s dogmatics. But Barth did not stumble upon this negative, critical use until he was challenged by Kiefner’s appeal to Christian freedom. Again, Barth is not concerned with what *can* happen in genuine worship. Music may indeed proclaim the *logos*, but for him the *Auftrag* has already established a specific agenda, with no room for redaction.

Following this point, then, Barth is able to distinguish sharply between proclamation and doxology, between God’s Word and human words.

It seems indispensable to me to distinguish fundamentally between the proclaimed Word commanded of the church as the exclusive representation of the divine revelation in the worship service on the one hand, and all the elements representing the human answer to divine revelation—doxology, confession, praise and thanksgiving—on the other. As Luther’s words, so excellently quoted by you, show: “God speaks with us through his Word, and we again speak with him through prayer and praise!”<sup>80</sup>

In this manner, then, Barth has deconstructed Kiefner’s appropriation of Luther to *distinguish between* musical praise and the proclaimed *logos*. Kiefner’s own approach was consistent with a heuristic use of the revelatory dialectic, in which the veiling and unveiling of the *logos* shapes the ecclesial practice of music. But Barth’s *critical*

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 145: “Daß die ganze des Wortes unfähige Kreatur mit den Menschen Gott loben und anbeten darf und soll, ist eine Sache für sich. Ich bin auch nicht der Meinung, daß das Wort Gottes auf die mündliche Predigt der Kirche beschränkt sei. Gottlob ist dem nicht so. Dennoch frage ich: was ist der Kirche als solcher befohlen?”

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.: “Indem ich das mit bedenke, scheint es mir unumgänglich, zwischen der der Kirche befohlenen Wortverkündigung als dem alleinigen Repräsentanten der göttlichen Offenbarung im Gottesdienst einerseits und allen die menschliche Antwort auf die göttliche Offenbarung repräsentierenden Elementen der Anbetung, des Bekenntnisses, des Lobes und Dankes andererseits grundsätzlich zu unterscheiden. Dahin weist doch gerade das von Ihnen zitierte ausgezeichnete Lutherwort....”

development of that dialectic unearthed strict boundaries upon what practices the Church may perform.

For Barth God's Word and its human response are not consubstantial; they are two different things altogether. They may be homogenous, in that they both find their origin in God's Word—but they are not identical. The human response in doxology and confession is just that: a *human* response. The practices involved in this response never reach such heights as preaching and the sacraments, since—by means of the *exclusive Auftrag*—they are *not* commissioned. “To construct a likeness and symbol of God is, besides just sermon and sacrament, not commanded but rather quite *forbidden* to us.”<sup>81</sup> One may engage in these activities, to be sure, but never claim too much for them.

Furthermore, Barth emphasizes that the church “does not understand itself from itself....”<sup>82</sup> The church, as a *commissioned* enterprise, is God's work. It is God's Word that comprises the church, so all other human words—even if spoken as part of worship in prayer and thanksgiving—are not to be thought of as *church* practices. The only true church practices are those that are commissioned: preaching and the sacraments.

It may be useful here to examine the German word, *Auftrag*. According to *Cassell's German Dictionary*, the term is consistent with the English understanding of “commission.” It may be conceived in terms of an order or instruction, a charge or mandate, but also as a fee for services handled by someone else. When used in conjunction with some prepositions, it may convey the sense of doing something “by order of” or “on behalf of” someone.<sup>83</sup> So the *Auftrag* as described by Barth is something done by the church *for* God, but also in an important sense, it is done *by* God. Hunsinger may be helpful on this point, in his description of the unique character of such “double

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 146: “*Ein Bildnis und Gleichnis Gottes aufzurichten ist uns eben abgesehen von Predigt und Sakrament nicht geboten, sondern geradezu verboten.*”

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 145: “*Es versteht sich nicht von selbst...*”

<sup>83</sup> *The New Cassell's German Dictionary*, ed. Harold T. Betteridge (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1958), s.v. “*Auftrag*.”

agency”: “The event in which divine and human actions coincide, in which they exist in differentiated unity—the event of fellowship according to the mystery of the Chalcedonian pattern—is regarded as an event that is absolutely unique in kind.”<sup>84</sup>

Barth closes his letter with a reference to Kiefner’s characterization of the organ as the “second pulpit,” but does not elaborate—he cordially notes that they disagree, and that it would be in Kiefner’s interests to reconsider. The “second pulpit” does reappear, however, in §3 of the *Church Dogmatics*, as Barth attacks the notion that any other practices might rival preaching and the sacraments as forms of proclamation.<sup>85</sup>

### **The Auftrag in the Church Dogmatics**

When the first volume of the *Church Dogmatics* appeared in the year following this correspondence, Walter Kiefner must have immediately noticed its similarity with his correspondence with Barth.<sup>86</sup> In that volume, Barth took careful steps to delineate what is and what is not proper “proclamation,” thereby limiting the scope of his dogmatic reflections. To be sure, Barth opened up proclamation to include the sacraments—something that had not been done in his earlier Göttingen lectures. In §3 of *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, proclamation consists of both preaching *and* the sacraments, the former defined as “the attempt by someone...to express in his own words and make intelligible...the promise of the revelation, reconciliation and vocation of God as they are to be expected here and now.”<sup>87</sup> Thus preaching consists of the human *expression* of the faith that results from God’s threefold revelation. The latter consists of the “symbolical

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<sup>84</sup> Hunsinger, 197.

<sup>85</sup> Barth, *CD I/1*, 63. Barth attributes the term “second pulpit” to Julius Smend, a prominent figure in the *Organsbewegung* (alongside Albert Schweitzer). In the same passage, Barth quotes (and collectively condemns) similar positions by Tillich, Birtner, Dibelius and Bär.

<sup>86</sup> Kiefner in turn wrote a response to Barth’s letter, but never received another response. In 1977, however, he wrote that he “was alluded to in some sentences in the *Church Dogmatics*.” See editor’s note, *Gesamtausgabe*, 140, n. 6.

<sup>87</sup> *CD I/1*, 56.

act...in accompaniment and confirmation of preaching....”<sup>88</sup> Barth expands the scope of proclamation, even though the focus remains on preaching as it is “accompanied” and “confirmed.” Why this ever so slight loosening of the Barthian grip? The *Auftrag* provides him with a biblical mandate to do so.

Invoking Matthew 28:19-20, Barth subjects proclamation to the authority of the *Auftrag*.<sup>89</sup> “πορευθέντες οὖν μαθητεύσατε πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, βαπτίζοντες αὐτοὺς εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος, διδάσκοντες αὐτοὺς τηρεῖν πάντα ὅσα ἐνετειλάμην ὑμῖν· καὶ ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ μεθ’ ὑμῶν εἰμι πάσας τὰς ἡμέρας ἕως τῆς συντελείας τοῦ αἰῶνος.” In this passage Barth found how the continued revelation of God’s Word in Christ is intrinsically related to the ongoing work of the church. The making of disciples, therefore, consists of baptizing and teaching; neither celebrating the Eucharist nor singing praises to God are even included in this strictly circumscribed commission.<sup>90</sup> Proclamation is defined here not by Barth’s teaching duties (as at Göttingen), but by the commission of Christ, as mediated through scripture. It is the Incarnate Word itself, through the first “address” of Christ and the second “address” of scripture, that defines the scope of the third “address.”

The positive use of the *Auftrag*, however, was not new. As shown above, the *Auftrag* had already been positively invoked in *The Göttingen Dogmatics* in order to establish preaching’s role as proclamation. A new, critical and negative use of the *Auftrag* appears, however, as Barth restricts the *commission* of proclamation to preaching and the sacraments: “God may speak to us through Russian Communism, a flute concerto, a blossoming shrub, or a dead dog. We do well to listen to Him if He really does. But...we

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>90</sup> Presumably, Barth must also wish to include the Eucharist within the scope of proclamation, as Jesus instructs his disciples: “τοῦτο ποιεῖτε εἰς τὴν ἐμὴν ἀνάμνησιν” (Luke 22.19). Curiously, however, Barth refers neither to this passage, nor any texts dealing with eucharistic practices in the section regarding the *Auftrag*.

cannot say that we are commissioned to pass on what we have heard....”<sup>91</sup> He does not refuse the possibility of proclamation occurring through other means, because that would compromise the sovereignty of God. God’s Word may say whatever, wherever, and whenever God wishes. But the church need not concern itself with any of these things; it is the *Auftrag*, and the *Auftrag* alone, that concerns the church.

The move from Matthew 28 to an ecclesiology *in toto* is characteristic of Barth’s theology. In describing a motif of “particularism” in Barth, George Hunsinger points out that Barth nearly always moves “from the particular to the general rather than from the general to the particular.”<sup>92</sup> This motif is manifested in places like these reflections on the *Auftrag*, where particular biblical passages move to construct more general theological claims.

#### DOGMATIC REFLECTION AS IMPRACTICALLY CONCRETE

Barth’s initial definition of dogmatics, then, as the “scientific reflection on the word of God,” never changed.<sup>93</sup> Thus the relationship between dogmatics and proclamation was secure by May 1924. But the negative, critical element increased at the turn of the decade. Barth, like Schleiermacher, takes dogmatics out of an abstract realm and applies it to concrete practices.<sup>94</sup> This is in contrast to much of the dogmatic tradition, which focuses on abstract, “timeless” dogmas. Gerhard Ebeling’s historical study of dogmatics uncovers an original “philosophical, linguistic usage,” in which faith is relegated to thought rather than practice.<sup>95</sup> Ebeling credits the Reformation for uncovering the question “whether there does not inhere in [such abstract] dogmatics a tendency toward self-representation

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<sup>91</sup> *CD I/1*, 55.

<sup>92</sup> Hunsinger, 32.

<sup>93</sup> *GD I*, 3; see also *CD I/1*, 3.

<sup>94</sup> See Alasdair I.C. Heron, “Barth, Schleiermacher and the Task of Dogmatics,” *Theology Beyond Christendom: essays on the centenary of the birth of Karl Barth*, ed. John Thompson (Allison Park, PA: Pickwick, 1986), 278-281.

<sup>95</sup> Gerhard Ebeling, *The Study of Theology*, translated by Duane A. Priebe (London: William Collins Sons, 1979), 128-130.

and perfection that is difficult to harmonize with the serving function that should determine all theological work....”<sup>96</sup> Barth’s restriction of the scope of dogmatic reflection, however, does limit this concrete and practical function of theology. Preaching and the sacraments are assisted, to be sure, but only as they are lifted out of their liturgical context and made even *more* abstract.

Such criticism of Barth has become popular in recent years, as theologians such as Reinhard Hütter and Stanley Hauerwas have sought the means to make theology more *concrete*.<sup>97</sup> Nicholas Healy has diagnosed Barth’s ecclesiology as bearing the weight of a fundamental “Christological-primacy rule,” which “requires that we understand ecclesiology to be a function of Christology.”<sup>98</sup> However, Healy has gradually come to appreciate this heavily christological element in Barth’s ecclesiology, in that it leans toward consistency of the church’s practices with *God’s* action, rather than emphasizing human agency (and thereby endangering the church of succumbing to “the intrusion of alien principles, practices or beliefs”).<sup>99</sup> Healy has thus turned to criticize Hauerwas and Hütter for not empowering their ecclesiologies with a sufficiently “robust” doctrine of God.<sup>100</sup> Accordingly, he also finds that the emphasis on practices in recent ecclesiology too often assumes church practices to be self-authenticating, so that no dogmatic guidance is necessary.<sup>101</sup> Rather, he argues, “Repeated performance of behavior patterns does not, of itself, issue in the right formation of church members nor the acquisition of Christian

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<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 135.

<sup>97</sup> See Reinhard Hütter, “Ecclesial Ethics, The Church’s Vocation, and Paracletis,” *PE* 2 (1993): 433-450; “The Church as Public: Dogma, Practice, and the Holy Spirit,” *PE* 3 (1994): 334-361; *Suffering Divine Things: Theology as Church Practice*, translated by Doug Stott (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans, 2000); Stanley Hauerwas, *With the Grain of the Universe: the church’s witness and natural theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2001), 173-241.

<sup>98</sup> Nicholas M. Healy, “The Logic of Karl Barth’s Ecclesiology: Analysis, Assessment and Proposed Modifications,” *MT* 10 (1994): 255.

<sup>99</sup> Healy, “Karl Barth’s Ecclesiology Reconsidered,” *SJT* 57 (2004): 298.

<sup>100</sup> Healy, “Practices and the New Ecclesiology: Misplaced Concreteness?” *IJST* 5 (2003): 302.

<sup>101</sup> Healy finds an exception among the work of Kathryn Tanner. See *ibid.*, 290-291.

virtues. Character is indeed formed through practices, but only as they are performed with appropriate intentions and construals.”<sup>102</sup>

Barth’s virtue is that he clearly presents the relationship between proclamation and dogmatic theology. Following in similar Barthian tradition, John Webster has rightly observed that Word and Church *must* be held together. On the one hand, theological accounts of ecclesial practices too often ignore the normative contributions of the divine *logos*.<sup>103</sup> Thus they “remain dogmatically underdeveloped, threaten to confuse ‘church’ and ‘sociality’, and often presuppose an Aristotelian anthropology which is not easy to coordinate with a Christian understanding of revelatory grace.”<sup>104</sup> On the other hand, however, the incarnation must also be rooted in the practices of the church. “Much of the disrepair of the doctrine of the incarnation in modernity stems from the assumption that the doctrine can be transplanted out of its natural habitat – the practices of the Christian faith – and nevertheless continue to flourish.”<sup>105</sup> The incarnation must be rooted in the practices of the church, yet without transplanting the whole endeavour into a moral and teleological vacuum. Rather, the active element from above must be emphasized; the graciousness of God must be prior to human action in any given ecclesial practice. In this respect the Barthian tradition is useful for understanding the relationship between practices of musical proclamation and the requisite dogmatic task.

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 295.

<sup>103</sup> Don and Emily Saliers present such a non-normative account of music as an ecclesial practice. See Don Saliers, “Singing Our Lives,” in *Practicing Our Faith: a way of life for a searching people*, ed. Dorothy C. Bass, The Practices of Faith Series (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997), 179-193; Don and Emily Saliers, *A Song to Sing, a Life to Live: reflections on music as spiritual practice*, The Practices of Faith Series (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005).

<sup>104</sup> John Webster, “Introduction,” in *Word and Church: essays in Christian dogmatics* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2002), 2. Exactly what Webster means by “Aristotelian anthropology” is difficult to identify with certainty, but given the contrast with Christian revelation, this reader suspects that he intends to describe and critique a theory that takes practices as ends in themselves, without reference to normativity or prescription. Whether Aristotle’s virtue ethic actually deserves Webster’s criticism, however, is another matter. Cf. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* I.6-7, translated by David Ross, World’s Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 7-15.

<sup>105</sup> Webster, “Incarnation,” in *Word and Church*, 119.

As an ecclesial practice, music thus necessitates dogmatic reflection for its proper performance. Barth, however, cannot supply such reflection. For all the potential that his logocentric view of incarnation and his christological approach to ecclesiology and ethics offers, his strictly particularist configuration of the dialectic of veiling and unveiling—his material principle—prohibits any dogmatic reflection upon the music of the church. In *CD IV.3.2*, Barth does allow for discussion of music as praise, one of the core practices of the church, yet he fails to account for his previous prohibitions regarding music as proclamation.<sup>106</sup>

It is not the logocentrism or Christocentrism of Barth's dogmatics that are at fault for the lack of critical reflection on the ecclesial practice of music. Like the more recent essays of Nicholas Healy, the perspective taken here *appreciates* Barth's situating the practices of the church within a strongly christological, dogmatic framework that takes its starting point from an *analogia fidei* over against natural theology. If this were not the case, then there would be no need to deal with Barth at all; one could simply proceed in the fashion of the "new ecclesiologists" and discuss the ecclesial practice of music without resorting to any quest for normativity.

The problem, rather, is with the particular way in which Barth *limits* the scope of christologically-based church practices, i.e. the category of "proclamation." If the scope of proclamation is widened to include the ecclesial practice of music, then the instrument of dogmatic critique may be utilized to ensure the adherence of such practice to the normativity of the Word of God. The next chapter presents the first of these movements, that of widening the scope of proclamation to include music; the subsequent move of dogmatic critique is presented in chapter four. Barth's approach to dogmatics is extremely helpful; his approach to ecclesial practices, however, must be supplemented.

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<sup>106</sup> *CD IV.3.2*, 865-867.

CHAPTER THREE  
POPE BENEDICT XVI  
AND THE ANCIENT ECCLESIAL PRACTICE OF MUSIC

“In liturgical music, based as it is on biblical faith, there is, therefore, a clear dominance of the Word; this music is a higher form of proclamation.”<sup>1</sup>

MUSIC AND THE CATHOLIC TRADITION

From more informal chirographs to apostolic letters and dogmatic constitutions, the Roman Catholic tradition has successfully guided its practice of music through official dogmatic promulgations. But even apart from such legislative documents, the history of the Catholic tradition includes numerous instances of persons exercising the kind of critical theological reflection on musical practices that Barth proscribes. After tracing this tradition through its direction of early psalmodic practice, its engagement with classical Western philosophy, and the broad history of its legislative actions, this chapter will focus on the culmination of this tradition in the musico-theological reflections of Joseph Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict XVI.<sup>2</sup> As a contemporary dogmatician of music, Benedict works within a particular tradition of liturgical theology that takes seriously the proclamatory power of the ecclesial practice of music—and the necessity of that music to adhere to the normativity of the *logos*.

**Psalmody in the Ancient Church**

The ancient fathers sought to establish psalmody as a distinctly Christian practice, in contrast to the liturgical practices of the Jewish tradition, as well as that of the ancient

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph Benedict, “Music and Liturgy,” *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, translated by John Saward (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000), 149.

<sup>2</sup> This dissertation adopts the nomenclature style of Laurence Paul Hemming, in utilizing “Benedict” to refer to the current pope throughout his life, since “God knows us better than we do ourselves. He knows us in our end, as well as from our beginning....” See Hemming, *Benedict XVI, ‘fellow worker for the truth’* (New York: Continuum, 2005), xi-xii. Bibliographic citations, however, will use “Joseph Ratzinger.”

Graeco-Roman world. Music comprised a major element of the pagan cultic practices, serving simultaneous apotropaic and epicletic functions (warding off evil spirits and calling down the gods respectively).<sup>3</sup> The Pharisees, offended by the idolatrous practices of many Jews who participated in Greek cultic liturgies, became opposed to instrumental music of any type. As the Sadducees refused to excommunicate these Jews as long as they paid the Temple tax, upon destruction of the Temple and the Pharisees came to power, all instrumental music was banned.<sup>4</sup> By the end of the first century, then, there was a period of musical iconoclasm among both Jews and Christians, although it lasted longer for the Jewish tradition.<sup>5</sup>

On this basis ancient liturgical scholar Eric Werner reads the illustration of Paul (a Pharisee) in 1 Corinthians 13.1 as a disparagement of musical instruments: “Ἐὰν ταῖς γλώσσαις τῶν ἀνθρώπων λαλῶ καὶ τῶν ἀγγέλων, ἀγάπην δὲ μὴ ἔχω, γέγονα χαλκὸς ἠχῶν ἢ κύμβαλον ἀλαλάζον.”<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, however, Paul holds vocal music in high regard. Also in 1 Corinthians, he holds praying and singing together, valuing both when performed “τῷ πνεύματι” and “τῷ νοῷ.”<sup>7</sup> Likewise in his letter to the Ephesians, he distinguishes proper worship in contradistinction from the libational practice of the pagan cults: “καὶ μὴ μεθύσκεσθε οἴνῳ, ἐν ᾧ ἐστὶν ἀσωτία, ἀλλὰ πληροῦσθε ἐν πνεύματι, λαλοῦντες ἑαυτοῖς [ἐν] ψαλμοῖς καὶ ὕμνοις καὶ ᾠδαῖς πνευματικαῖς, ᾄδοντες καὶ ψάλλοντες τῇ καρδίᾳ ὑμῶν τῷ κυρίῳ....”<sup>8</sup>

In opposition to the bacchanalian intoxications, the Fathers tended to articulate a more sober disposition toward musical practice of the psalmody. Both John Chrysostom

<sup>3</sup> Eric Werner, *The Sacred Bridge I* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), 332; Johannes Quasten, *Music and Worship in Pagan and Christian Antiquity*, translated by Boniface Ramsey, NPM Studies in Church Music and Liturgy (Washington, DC: National Association of Pastoral Musicians, 1983), 15-17.

<sup>4</sup> Typical Pharisaic slogans included “Music in the house, ruin at the threshold” and “The ear that listens to [instrumental] music should be torn out.” Werner, *The Sacred Bridge II* (New York: Ktav, 1984), 47.

<sup>5</sup> Werner, II, 23.

<sup>6</sup> Werner, II, 47-8.

<sup>7</sup> 1 Corinthians 14.15.

<sup>8</sup> Ephesians 5.18-19. On libations in pagan liturgical practice, see Werner, I, 332; Quasten 14, 59-60.

and Niceta of Remesiana emphasized singing “with the understanding” in their expositions of Psalm 46. Chrysostom enjoined Christians to sing the psalms “with understanding...so that the mind may hear the tongue.”<sup>9</sup> It was not enough for his audience to “offer mere words,” but he instructed them to practice psalmody fully aware of “the very meaning of our discourse.”<sup>10</sup> Niceta of Remesiana also emphasized that proper psalm-singing entails an awareness of the textual content of their practice, “so that we think of what we sing, rather than allow the mind, caught up in distractions (as often happens), to lose the fruit of its labor.”<sup>11</sup> Of course, there is the oft-cited passage from Book X of Augustine’s *Confessions*, where he admits struggling with the sensual pleasures of singing the psalms while seeking to rationally pronounce them.<sup>12</sup>

In this same passage, Augustine references the extremism of Athanasius, who “required the reader of the psalm to perform it with so little inflection of voice that it resembled speaking more than singing.”<sup>13</sup> Athanasius would also emphasize the rational element in psalmody in his letter to Marcellinus: “to sing the Psalms demands such concentration of a man's whole being on them that, in doing it, his usual disharmony of mind and corresponding bodily confusion is resolved, just as the notes of several flutes are brought by harmony to one effect.”<sup>14</sup> Thus for the fourth-century bishop of Alexandria, disciplining the senses and the mind through psalmodic practice served a moral function. “For a soul rightly ordered by chanting the sacred words forgets its own afflictions and contemplates with joy the things of Christ alone.”<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Chrysostom, “Exposition on Psalm 41,” in *Source Readings in Music History 2*, rev. ed., edited by James McKinnon, translated by Oliver Strunk, 14.

<sup>10</sup> Chrysostom, in Strunk 16.

<sup>11</sup> Niceta of Remesiana, “On the Benefits of Psalmody,” in *Source Readings in Music History 2*, translated by James McKinnon, 21.

<sup>12</sup> Augustine, *Confessions* X.33.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Athanasius, *Athanasius: the Life of Antony and the Letter to Marcellinus*, edited by Robert C. Gregg, The Classics of Western Spirituality (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1980), 146.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 147.

As the early church sought to establish its own practice of psalmody, distinguished from Jewish and pagan liturgical practices, its understanding of this practice shifted with a new exegetical approach that heard the voice of Christ in and through the psalter itself. As Hilary of Poitiers' psalmodic hermeneutic states: "The primary condition of knowledge for reading the Psalms is the ability to see as whose mouthpiece we are to regard the Psalmist as speaking, and who it is that he addresses."<sup>16</sup> In the twentieth century, Marie-Josèphe Rondeau proposed an approach to patristic exegesis along similar lines: *exégèse prosopologique*.<sup>17</sup> Such an approach to the psalms "*consiste à s'interroger sur l'identité des personnages mis en scène, en particulier sur l'identité du personnage qui parle*."<sup>18</sup> Scholarship along these lines has found that the patristics often read the voice of Christ in the Psalms. Balthasar Fischer wrote that "*die Psalmen reden der Frühkirche entweder von oder zu Christus, oder sie hört Christus in ihnen reden*."<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, the patristic psalms did not just read Christ in general terms, but either in conversation with the Father or listening to the voice of the church. "

*Der Psalter ist für die Kirche der Märtyter ein Christusbuch, dessen Lieder um den am Kreuz erhöhten Kyrios kreisen, sei es, daß sie von Ihm, sei es, daß sie zu Ihm, sei es, daß Er selbst in ihnen zum Vater redet, wobei das "zu Ihm" die tragende Mitte ist: Psalmus vox de Christo / Psalmus vox Ecclesiae ad Christum / Psalmus vox Christi ad Patrem.*<sup>20</sup>

The voice of Christ (the head) and the voice of the church (the body) are brought together through the doctrine of the *totus Christi* in Augustine's *de doctrina Christiana*, thus

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<sup>16</sup> Hilary of Poitiers, in *Homily on Psalm 1*, in *St. Hilary of Poitiers*, edited by W. Sanday, translated by E. W. Watson and L. Pullan, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Series II, Vol. IX, edited by Philip Schaff (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1898), 236.

<sup>17</sup> Marie-Josèphe Rondeau, *Les Commentaires Patristiques du Psautier II: Exégèse Prosopologique et Théologie*, *Orientalia Christiana Analecta* 220 (Rome: Pontificiae Universitatis Gregorianae, 1985). See also Carl Andresen, "Zur Entstehung und Geschichte des trinitarischen Personbegriffes," *Zeitschrift für neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 52 (1961): 1-39.

<sup>18</sup> Rondeau, 8.

<sup>19</sup> Balthasar Fischer, "Die Psalmenfrömmigkeit der Märtyrerkirche," in *Die Psalmen als Stimme der Kirche* (Trier: Paulinus-Verlag, 1982), 23.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

softening the distinctions between the various voices—all are the voice of Christ.<sup>21</sup> In singing the psalms, then, the ancient church sang in, to, and along with Christ. Thus even in the church's earliest musical practices do we find the *logos* as the primary hermeneutic, as it comprises the juncture of Trinitarian and Christological discourse.

### **Philosophy and the Ancient and Early Medieval Church**

In addition to early psalmodic practice, the ancient and early medieval church was conversant with contemporary philosophies regarding music. Through both Plato's *Timaeus* and the Pythagoreans before him, the study of music entailed an examination of the order that governs the cosmos.<sup>22</sup> Through both the a priori deductions of Euclidean mathematics and the somewhat flawed observational studies of sound and sky, the planets were believed to emit their own frequencies along a harmonious scale.<sup>23</sup> Jamie James sees a relation between this musico-cosmic order and the divine *logos*: "Pythagoras's [*sic*] identification of ratio, or *logos*, with the divine principle of universal order harmonized with the gospel's identification of *logos* with God, of which Jesus was the manifestation."<sup>24</sup> Although the Christian *logos* should hardly be reduced to Pythagorean science, there is indeed an analogy between the two. Clement of Alexandria, representative *par excellence* of the Alexandrian school of *logos*-christology, took up music in his *Exhortation to the Greeks*: "Behold the might of the new song [Christ]!...It also composed the universe into melodious order, and tuned the discord of the elements to

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<sup>21</sup> Augustine, *de doctrina Christiana*, 3.31.55.

<sup>22</sup> Plato, *Timaeus* §§27-38. Aristotle recounts the Pythagorean account of number in *Metaphysics* I.5 (985<sup>b</sup>22-986<sup>b</sup>1), and the ratios of the planets in *On the Heavens* II.9 (290<sup>b</sup>16-24).

<sup>23</sup> Aristotle, *On the Heavens* II.9 (290<sup>b</sup>25-27) explains how the music of the spheres is unable to be heard: "the sound is in our ears from the very moment of birth and is thus indistinguishable from its contrary silence...." On the imprecision of the empirical observations of sound, there is of course the Pythagorean comma, the ratio 531,441:524,288, which produces the difference between eight octaves and twelve perfect fifths. See Stuart Isacoff, *Temperament* (New York: Vintage, 2003), 65, Thomas Levenson, *Measure for measure: a musical history of science* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), 55-7, and Jamie James, *The music of the spheres* (New York: Grove, 1993), 88-89. For Jeremy Begbie's theological deconstruction of the comma, see chapter one above, n. 51.

<sup>24</sup> James, 36-7. Although it should be mentioned that it is Heraclitus who originated the classical philosophical *logos*, not Pythagoras.

harmonious arrangement, so that the whole world might become harmony....The violence of fire it has softened by the atmosphere, as the Dorian is blended with the Lydian strain; and the harsh cold of the air it has moderated by the embrace of fire, harmoniously arranging these the extreme tones of the universe.”<sup>25</sup> Yet Clement was also keen to distinguish the Christian *logos* from that of Middle Platonism by his identification of the *logos* in historical terms, in the person of Jesus Christ.<sup>26</sup> In his musical cosmogony, he made it a point to extricate “Thracian music, which is like that invented by Jubal” from the harmony of the universe, which was rather “according to the paternal counsel of God, which fired the zeal of David.”<sup>27</sup>

The order underlying music, however, was not just observed in the natural sciences; early social science also incorporated the study of music into its repertoire. Plato’s *Republic* discusses how music helps to build a “harmonious” personality and calms the passions.<sup>28</sup> Aristotle’s *Politics* addresses both the study of music as a rational, moral discipline of leisure and aesthetic enjoyment.<sup>29</sup> Like Plato, Aristotle examines the various modes according to their psychological effects.<sup>30</sup>

Likewise, ancient and medieval Christian writings reflect this musico-philosophical unity between cosmic order and moral harmony. In addition to Athanasius’ letter to Marcellinus (recounted above), Jerome classified the psalms according to their purpose. Utilizing a threefold scheme—one that may be confusing by its reiteration of the term “psalm” to denote a subgroup within the Psalms—Jerome distinguished between “psalms,” “hymns” and “spiritual songs.” The former contain the moral element, entreating persons to discern right and wrong. Hymns, which include the *Alleluia* as

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<sup>25</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *Exhortation to the Greeks* I.

<sup>26</sup> Aloys Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, vol. 1, second edition, translated by John Bowden (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1975), 136.

<sup>27</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *op. cit.* I.

<sup>28</sup> Plato, *Republic* III.9-13, 17-18 (398b-405a, 410a-412b).

<sup>29</sup> Aristotle, *Politics* 8.2-3, 5.

<sup>30</sup> Aristotle, *Politics* 8.7

either a prefix or appendix, “declare the power and majesty of the Lord.” The latter deal with “the harmony of the world and the order and concord of all creatures.”<sup>31</sup> The sixth book of Augustine’s *de Musica* examined the study of musical rhythm, in gradual ascent toward the most perfect delineation of number, that of justice.<sup>32</sup>

In the Augustinian tradition, Boethius’ student Cassiodorus pursued the study of the pagan classics within the liberal arts, particularly those relating to music. Cassiodorus translated the classical musical modes into Christian terms, expanding Augustine’s study of rhythm into a general Christian music theory that took hold throughout the medieval era.<sup>33</sup> Thomas Aquinas followed in Cassiodorus’ wake, citing Boethius and Aristotle’s *Politics* in affirming whether God should be praised with song. He writes: “it is evident that the human soul is moved in various ways according to various melodies of sound....Hence the use of music in the divine praises is *a salutary institution, that the souls of the faint-hearted may be the more incited to devotion.*”<sup>34</sup> Umberto Eco distinguishes between Augustine and Aquinas:

In St. Augustine’s discussion of sacred music there was a recurrent theme, namely, his fear that he would concentrate on the music without reference to its religious function, his fear of losing himself in vain contemplation. Aquinas, who always has Augustine in mind and quotes from him repeatedly, seems unaffected by this fear and solves the problem in a different manner: he recognizes the psychagogic function of sacred music and puts the pleasure experienced in music on a different level.<sup>35</sup>

Although Augustine and Aquinas treat the matter differently, both affirm the primary importance of the Word in their deliberations regarding the power of music.

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<sup>31</sup> Jerome, *Commentary on the Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians*, in *Source Readings in Music History* 2, rev. ed., edited by James McKinnon, translated by Oliver Strunk, 17.

<sup>32</sup> Augustine, *de Musica* VI.15.50.

<sup>33</sup> Herbert M. Schueller, *The Idea of Music*, Early Drama, Art, and Music Monograph Series 9 (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1988), 273-8. See also James McKinnon, “Christian Antiquity,” in *Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, edited by James McKinnon, Music and Society (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1990), 85.

<sup>34</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologicae* IIa IIae, Q. 91.

<sup>35</sup> Umberto Eco, *The Aesthetics of Thomas Aquinas*, translated by Hugh Bredin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), 134.

The relation between Christian music theory and the ecclesial practice of music has been debated, however. Medieval music scholar James McKinnon makes the interesting observation that the philosophy of music and concrete musical practices comprised two separate entities in ancient Christian thought: “The medieval authors took it for granted that they were to apply their theory to the chant they sang every day at Mass and in the Office, while it never occurred to Augustine, Boethius and Cassiodorus that the academic discipline of music had anything to do with the psalmody they heard in church.”<sup>36</sup> Augustine’s use of the Ambrosian hymn *Deus Creator Omnium* in *de Musica* appears to contradict this claim, however. While it may be argued that this hymn is used simply as an illustration of his numerical ascent toward justice, rather than as a concrete ecclesial practice, it is hard to imagine that Augustine and his readers would have sung this hymn, among others, without meditating upon the rhythm of the words during their performance.

### **Legislation on the ecclesial practice of music**

In addition to theological reflection on both the philosophy of music and the ecclesial practice of music, the Catholic tradition has a significant history of legislating on musical matters. The first pope to legislate sacred music was Clement (fl. 92-101); his Epistle to the Corinthians forbade chanting and hymn-singing outside immediate context of the liturgy.<sup>37</sup> It was not until the fourth century, however, that attention was again paid to sacred music. Pope Damasus (fl. 366-384) prescribed chant to be performed in the manner of Jerome,<sup>38</sup> and Pope Celestin (fl. 422-432) devised the first system by which the psalter was to be chanted before the celebration of the mass. Monasteries devoted to the

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<sup>36</sup> McKinnon, “Christian Antiquity,” 85.

<sup>37</sup> *PLSM*, 1-2.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 2-3.

development and performance of chant were instituted soon thereafter, as well as the *annalem cantum*, the organization of melodies to be chanted for each day of the year.<sup>39</sup>

Hayburn's history of papal legislation on sacred music presents Pope Gregory (fl. 590-604) as the author of the Roman Rite, and holds that the popes succeeding Gregory for the next three centuries strictly followed his lead, establishing legislation that either enforced, explicated or elaborated upon Gregorian reforms. Such a view holds that "Gregorian" chant moved into Germany and the Frankish Empire during the eighth century.<sup>40</sup> The first papal document devoted exclusively to matters of sacred music was Leo IV's bull, *Una Res*, which officially prescribed the forms of chant to follow, as well as those to avoid (under threat of excommunication).<sup>41</sup>

But it was in the twelfth century that musical developments within Gregorian chant emerged as serious issues. The twelfth century bishop of Chartres, John of Salisbury (1120-80), was appalled by the developments in Notre Dame, later christened as the *Ars antiqua*: "Bad taste has, however, degraded even religious worship, bringing into the presence of God, into the recesses of the sanctuary a kind of luxurious and lascivious singing, full of ostentation, which with female modulation astonishes and enervates the souls of the hearers."<sup>42</sup> St Aelred (1109-66), the Cistercian abbot of Rievaulx Abbey in Yorkshire, complained of intervals and phrasing in chant that likened it to "the whinnying of a horse."<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 9ff. Other histories argue that "Gregorian" chant was a gradual fusion of Frankish and Roman worship music around the same time, and that Pope Gregory's participation has been exaggerated. See Jan Michael Joncas, *From Sacred Song to Ritual Music: twentieth-century understandings of Roman Catholic worship music* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1997), 14.

<sup>41</sup> *PLSM*, 7-9.

<sup>42</sup> John of Salisbury, *De nugis curialium*, qtd. in *PLSM*, 18. A succinct account of the *Ars antiqua* may be found in Paul Westermeyer, *Te Deum: the Church and Music* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), 113.

<sup>43</sup> St Aelred, *Speculum charitatis* 2.23, qtd. in *PLSM*, 19.

By the early fourteenth century, further developments in musical composition and performance practice exacerbated the situation.<sup>44</sup> In his papal bull, *Docta Sanctorum Patrum* (1324), Pope John XXII established that no violence be done to the words of Gregorian chant, and that one “must sing with modesty and gravity, melodies of a calm and peaceful character.”<sup>45</sup> He was principally reacting against the developments in the metre of plainchant. “But certain exponents of a new school, who think only of the laws of measured time, are composing new melodies of their own creation with a new system of notes, and these they prefer to the ancient, traditional music.”<sup>46</sup> More specifically, the bull claimed that this use of stricter metre prevented a proper reverence in the music: “These musicians run without pausing, they intoxicate the ear without satisfying it, they dramatize the text with gestures and, instead of promoting devotion, they prevent it by creating a sensuous a innocent atmosphere.”<sup>47</sup> The bull tolerated polyphony in the use of octaves, fourths and fifths, allowing them on the greater feasts, the Mass, and the Divine Office, but insisted that monophonic chant maintained priority.

During the sixteenth century reformation, the closing sessions of the Council of Trent deliberated upon four musical concerns: the regulation of liturgical texts, the unintelligibility of sacred words, the use of secular or profane songs, and lengthy organ compositions.<sup>48</sup> These concerns arose in response to the Protestant use of hymns, local German folk songs, and lyrics that were, like much of early Protestant rhetoric, significantly anti-Catholic. Other roots of these concerns include the sources of song

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<sup>44</sup> Westermeyer also describes the *Ars nova* in good measure; see Westermeyer, 113-115.

<sup>45</sup> Pope John XXII, *Extravagantes communes* III.1: *De vita et honestate clericorum*, qtd. in *PLSM*, 20-21.

<sup>46</sup> Qtd. in *PLSM*, 20.

<sup>47</sup> Qtd. in *ibid.*, 21.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

texts, poor performance practices on the part of cathedral canons, and use of chant books other than those prescribed by Rome.<sup>49</sup>

Hayburn lists the total papal legislation regarding sacred music until 1977 as four *motu proprio*s, four encyclical letters, two edicts, seventeen apostolic constitutions, ten apostolic letters, 78 papal letters, four decrees during the Council of Trent and 265 decrees from various congregations (primarily the Congregation of Sacred Rites). Hayburn concludes that the purpose of all of these documents is “to regulate the dignity of worship.”<sup>50</sup> More specifically, however, it is evident in the vast majority of such legislation that the relation between words and music has been an ongoing struggle, but Church legislation has consistently placed the emphasis on the words, so that music should serve them and accentuate their proclamation. Hayburn writes:

[The purpose of sacred music] is to emphasize the words of the liturgical text. It should give these words a dramatic force and power. It should impress them more deeply on the mind. It should lend them a sweetness and a persuasiveness that will engrave them indelibly on the heart. If the music in church obscures, confuses, or entangles the words which it is intended to illustrate and enforce, then it fails in its purpose.<sup>51</sup>

Moving to more contemporary legislation on sacred music, Hayburn considers Pius X’s *Tra Le Sollecitudini* (1903) to be the *fortissimo* in the history of papal legislation on sacred music.<sup>52</sup> His terminology is appropriate, as this document has informed all Catholic reflection on sacred music since its promulgation. Pius X, previously Giuseppe Sarto, was actively involved in the regulation and teaching of sacred music before his election as pope in August 1903. As Bishop of Mantua, he convened the Synod of Mantua in 1888, the decrees of which included specific legislation regarding music. Five years later, as Cardinal and Patriarch of Venice, he issued both a votum and a pastoral

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 25-26. The bulk of Hayburn’s historical account concerns the various editions of chant books (Medicean, Ratisbon, Solesmes and Vatican editions).

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 387.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 388.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., xi.

letter on sacred music. Just three months after his election as pope, the third section of his earlier votum would be issued as *TLS*, with only minor revisions.<sup>53</sup>

*TLS* outlines how art, specifically sacred music, should be used in the service of the liturgy. The primary qualities of sacred music are defined as holiness, dignity, beauty and universality. Sacred music, *TLS* affirms, is to be directed to the general object of the liturgy, which is the “glory of God and the sanctification and edification of the faithful.”<sup>54</sup> Most significantly for this dissertation is the “chief duty” of sacred music: “to clothe the liturgical text.”<sup>55</sup> Gregorian chant, “so happily restored to its original perfection and purity by recent study,” is held as the “highest model” of sacred music. In this respect, *TLS* claims, “the more a musical composition...is like Gregorian chant in its movement, its inspiration, and its feeling, so much the more is it right and liturgical, and the more it differs from this highest model so much the less is it worthy of the house of God.”<sup>56</sup> Other types of music are discussed (classical polyphony, modern music, Italian opera), but primacy is given to Gregorian chant, guided by the simple purpose of sacred music to serve the text. A minimalist aesthetic is promulgated, as the monophony of chant is assumed to allow the text a greater presence, unimpeded by musical embroidery or distracting cultural associations (such as theatre music).<sup>57</sup>

Latin is defined in *TLS* as “the language of the Roman Church,” and the use of vernacular languages is prohibited in sacred music. Furthermore, the text, as fixed to the liturgical calendar, cannot be changed for different occasions. The text must be sung according to the authentic books promulgated by the church. No “needless repetition” is allowed, although no specifics are given to distinguish between what is “needless” and

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<sup>53</sup> Hayburn recounts in detail the various persons and institutions involved in the development of Pius X’s thought. See *ibid.*, 195-247.

<sup>54</sup> *TLS* §1.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, §3.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, §§4-6.

what is necessary. Nor are division of syllables to be allowed, in order to prevent excessive embellishment on an otherwise minimalist musical aesthetic.<sup>58</sup>

Use of the organ is allowed, but any other instrument requires the permission of a bishop. The piano-forte, along with drums, cymbals and triangles, are expressly forbidden. Instruments must “sustain” the voices, not “crush” them. There should be no instrumental prelude to the voices, nor interruption of those voices; vocal accompaniment is the *only* use of any musical instrument. Bands are forbidden from performing in the liturgy, but they are allowed outside the church (at festivals, for instance). In all performance and planning of liturgical music, then, music is to be the “humble attendant” to the liturgy; never should it be primary.<sup>59</sup>

Promulgated in 1903, the first year of Pius X’s pontificate, *TLS* would set the tone of all twentieth century Catholic documents on music. On Christmas Day of 1955, Pius XII issued his encyclical letter, *Musicae sacrae disciplina*.<sup>60</sup> The purpose of sacred music is explained as consisting in the fact

that its lovely melodies and splendor beautify and embellish the voices of the priest who offers Mass and of the Christian people who praise the Sovereign God. Its special power and excellence should lift up to God the minds of the faithful who are present. It should make the liturgical prayers of the Christian community more alive and fervent so that everyone can praise and beseech the Triune God more powerfully, more intently and more effectively.<sup>61</sup>

This document would relax the prohibitions in *TLS*, but as an encyclical letter it has served more as a commentary on *TLS* than as separate legislation.<sup>62</sup> Other twentieth century documents on sacred music would follow a similar path, examining the same issues and treating them in similar ways.

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<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, §§7-9.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, §§15-23.

<sup>60</sup> *Musicae sacrae disciplina, Acta Apostolica Sanctae* 48 (1956): 5-25. English translation in *PLSM*, 345-356.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, §31; ET 349.

<sup>62</sup> *Joncas*, 2-3.

However, a slow development also took place, leading to post-conciliar liturgical reform. In 1958 the Sacred Congregation of Rites put forward an *Instruction on Music and Liturgy*, the most significant contribution of which was a categorization of types of liturgical participation: internal, external and sacramental.<sup>63</sup> Five years later, at the beginning of the Second Vatican Council, the Dogmatic Constitution on the Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, devoted an entire chapter to the practice of sacred music.<sup>64</sup> This constitution would examine the notion of “active participation,” prompting liturgies in the vernacular rather than Latin.<sup>65</sup> Significantly, *SC* would also claim that “Genuine worship music is not simply an auxiliary prop to the liturgical action, but the very means by which certain liturgical acts occur....”<sup>66</sup> Four years later the Congregation for Divine Worship would put forward *Musicam Sacram* in order to examine the impact of *SC* for liturgical music. This document broke significant ground in that it attended to the particularity of the performers of sacred music. The style of music should be guided by the abilities of the performers, it encouraged a variety of styles, and claimed that the solemnity of liturgical music depends on the reverence of the performers, rather than on the style of music performed.<sup>67</sup> In addition, *MS* would allow instruments to provide solos in addition to vocal accompaniment (except at solemn occasions such as Advent, Lent, the Easter Triduum and the funeral mass).<sup>68</sup> These radical changes to the liturgy in the latter half of the twentieth century provide the context for Benedict’s writings regarding liturgy and sacred music.

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<sup>63</sup> *Instruction on Music and Liturgy*, *Acta Apostolica Sanctae* 50 (1958): 630-663. English translation in *PLSM*, 356-377.

<sup>64</sup> *SC*, §§112-121.

<sup>65</sup> *SC*, §§14-20.

<sup>66</sup> *SC*, §112.

<sup>67</sup> *MS*, §§9-11.

<sup>68</sup> Joncas, 105-107.

## **Benedict XVI and the Catholic Tradition**

This history demonstrates several things about Benedict's approach to the ecclesial practice of music. First, Benedict does not inherit the same Reformed reservations about music and other ecclesial practices as Barth. Lacking Barth's fearful reticence towards the divine Word, Benedict bravely embraces the ministry of the divine Word in a multiplicity of forms. In particular, music is a significant revelatory form. Music performed by the church, *as* the church, is not just a human activity occupied solely with itself, but *God's* activity in and through the church for the world. What this means for the ecclesial practice of music is that an ethic of music is not just a possibility, but both a fact and a necessity. Whereas Barth would rather abstain from applying dogmatic scrutiny to music (however much he might enjoy it as a listener), Benedict affirms such work earnestly.<sup>69</sup>

Secondly, Benedict must attend to the manner of the relationship between music and the divine Word. For him, the music of the church dares to proclaim the very Word of God. It is for this reason that he articulates controversial statements such as: "Not every kind of music can have a place in Christian worship. It has its standards, and that standard is the Logos,"<sup>70</sup> and "because of its very nature [rock] music...must be excluded from the Church."<sup>71</sup>

Thirdly, Benedict emerges from a tradition that takes stylistic considerations seriously. Indeed Benedict comes down hard on rock and pop music (his distinction between them fitting into his taxonomy of music in general). The problem of genre and performance style in the ecclesial practice of music must be suspended, however, until after the primary theological issues are addressed. In the remainder of this chapter, I will demonstrate that Benedict offers a particularly dogmatic way of reflecting upon the

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<sup>69</sup> Benedict's specific dogmatic reflections on music will be presented in detail in chapter four.

<sup>70</sup> Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, translated by John Saward (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000), 151.

<sup>71</sup> Ratzinger, "Liturgy and Sacred Music," translated by Stephen Wentworth Arndt, *Com.* 13 (1986): 387-388.

ecclesial practice of music. Like Barth, he does this by locating music within a robustly logocentric doctrine of the Word, as well as a fundamentally theocentric ecclesiology.

“THEOLOGICAL PROBLEMS OF CHURCH MUSIC”: AN EARLIER ESSAY

While consistent with his later writings on music, an earlier essay of Benedict’s on the “Theological Problems of Church Music”<sup>72</sup> provides a good demonstration of his adherence to the historical tradition of Catholic reflection on music. In particular, this essay is representative of the *ressourcement* movement, which—over against Catholic modernism—sought to ground contemporary Catholic theology in the broader historical tradition of the church.<sup>73</sup> Faced with an iconoclastic challenge in the church, Benedict will defend the Catholic heritage that takes sacred music seriously, as it participates in the incarnation of the Word of God. In later essays he will spell out this relation between music and the Word more explicitly, but for the moment it is important to see how this early essay demonstrates Benedict’s willingness to be conversant with the ancient sources of his tradition.

Benedict opens this essay by describing the “properly ecclesiastical and theological crisis of church music,” which has fallen between two “widely differing theological millstones.” These millstones, he asserts, “agree only in grinding *musica sacra* down to dust.”<sup>74</sup> The first of these “theological millstones” is described as the “puritanic functionalism of a liturgy conceived in purely pragmatic terms,” by which he means an iconoclasm that dismisses efforts toward artistic “splendour” in favor of more

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<sup>72</sup> Ratzinger, “Theological Problems of Church Music,” *Crux et Cithara: selected essays on liturgy and sacred music*, translated and edited by Robert A. Skeris, *Musicae Sacrae Meletemata*, volume 2 (Altötting: Verlag Alfred Coppenrath, 1983), 214-222.

<sup>73</sup> See Marcellino D’Ambrosio, “*Ressourcement* Theology, *Aggiornamento*, and the Hermeneutics of Tradition,” *Com.* 18 (1991): 530-55. Benedict is particularly indebted to his doctoral work on Augustine, as evident in an often quoted passage from 1969: “I have developed my theology in dialogue with Augustine, though naturally I have tried to conduct this dialogue as a man of today.” Ratzinger, “Glaube, Geschichte und Philosophie,” *Hochland* 61 (1969): 543; qtd. in Aidan Nichols, *The Thought of Benedict XVI* (London: Burns & Oates, 2005), 27.

<sup>74</sup> Ratzinger, “Theological Problems of Church Music,” 214.

“pragmatic” projects, such as building a sense of community within a local congregation.<sup>75</sup> The second millstone that threatens the music of the church is the “functionalism of accommodation,” in which the distinctive culture of the church has been set aside in favor of appealing towards more contemporary or secular artistic forms.<sup>76</sup> Between puritan iconoclasm and cultural accommodation, then, sacred music finds its integrity endangered.

Regarding the first threat, a “Christian” iconoclasm that insists upon the rejection of artistic embellishment upon the Word of God, Benedict asks whether it is not iconoclasm that is un-Christian, “so that art and precisely church music would actually be an *inner requirement of what is Christian*, and thus, along with church music, music in general could constantly draw new hope from this fact?”<sup>77</sup> To argue this point, Benedict reviews the writings of the patristics in order to argue for an *original* anti-iconoclasm. Contemporary iconoclasts, he states, presuppose an original iconoclasm in the early Church. According to such a view, Christian worship must make a definitive break with the Temple, and move toward a less ornate and more “commonplace” worship. Benedict admits that there must be a significant shift in worship between the world of the Old Testament and that of the New, but argues that this shift must not be understood as a desacralizing or a preference for the “commonplace.” Rather, the New Testament assumes a rich liturgical life in which psalms, hymns and spiritual songs are performed.<sup>78</sup>

This much is clear: from the very beginning, Christian worship was the worship of *God* and clearly contrasted with the everyday and the commonplace. Indeed, from the very beginning it was characterised by earnest efforts toward a new form of poetic and musical praise, and this from theological motives.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 217; italics added.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 217-218.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 218.

The shift from the Old to the New is understood by Benedict as “the transition from crying to singing.”<sup>80</sup> Such a depiction of the biblical witness in real and emotional *human* terms demonstrates the corporeality with which Benedict is to understand music. As the Church “can and must lay claim to the inheritance of the Temple,” a Christian liturgy will regard “the whole cosmos as its temple, must have a cosmic character, must make the whole cosmos resound.”<sup>81</sup> Thus he answers the iconoclasts by affirming that “church music with artistic pretensions is not opposed to the essence of Christian liturgy, but is rather *a necessary way of expressing belief* in the world-filling glory of Jesus Christ.”<sup>82</sup> It is not that the church *may* be artistic, but rather that the church *must* express its faith in artistic terms. Benedict considers art not merely permitted, but *mandated*.

The Church’s liturgy has a compelling mandate to reveal in resonant sound the glorification of God which lies hidden in the cosmos. This, then, is the liturgy’s essence: to transpose the cosmos, to spiritualise it into the gesture of praise through song and thus to redeem it; to “humanise” the world.<sup>83</sup>

Benedict concludes this essay with a brief look at “the question of sacredness.” It is here that the crux of his spiritualised understanding of music becomes clear. He states that the distinction between sacred and secular music “was very much present in the Church of the early Fathers, but was almost completely buried under a mass of other problems.”<sup>84</sup> This distinction, according to Benedict, finally became apparent with the developments of polyphonic organum (the *Ars Antiqua* and *Ars Nova*). Accounting for Pope John XXII’s *Docta Sanctorum Patrum* as a struggle between the same two “theological millstones,” Benedict identifies a puritanical bias against new developments in music on the one hand and the Church’s accommodation to secular culture on the

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<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 219.

<sup>81</sup> In this respect the organ finds its justification, according to Benedict. Despite the fact that its original use was as an instrument of the cult of the Byzantine emperor, such use presupposed the emperor as divine ruler of the universe. The organ thereby gained a reputation as the voice of the cosmos, and came to be used by the pope in opposition to secular empires. See *ibid.*, 220-221.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 221; italics added.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

other. Pope John's admittance of polyphony "on condition that the melodies themselves remain intact in the pure integrity of their form" was, according to Benedict's reading, a synthesis that answers the two dialectically opposed "millstones," while establishing the primary value of church music as its service toward the Word. "In other words relationship to the text, predominance of the melody and reference to the formal structures of the chant as the point of departure for ecclesiastical polyphony as against a concept of structure which destroys the text, as against the emphasis upon sensual sound effects."<sup>85</sup> This is the "logocentrism" of sacred music: that music—regardless of its style should serve the Word, rather than the Church accommodating to (or completely denying) culture:

the liturgy demands an artistic transposition out of the spirit of the faith, an artistic transposition of the music of the cosmos into human music which glorifies the Word made flesh. Such music must obey a stricter law than the commonplace music of everyday life: such music is beholden to the Word and must lead to the Spirit."<sup>86</sup>

The struggle between Gregorian chant and the French *ars nova* resolves itself in relationship to the Word. Benedict ignores the matter of measured music that was, along with polyphony, the musical element at issue in the *Docta Sanctorum Patrum*. Proper historical attention to measured music, however, would strengthen Benedict's argument rather than weaken it. Both polyphony and measured music were judged by Pope John XXII on the basis of their service toward the Word.<sup>87</sup>

Thus, in contrast to iconoclastic arguments (such as Barth's), Benedict argues that music is a *necessary* part of the church's commission: "in the face of puritanical pride [the Church] must justify the necessary incarnation of the spirit in music, and vis-à-vis the commonplace she must seek to point the spirit and the cosmos in the direction of the

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 222.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Pope John XXII, *Extravagantes communes* III.1: *De vita et honestate clericorum*, qtd. in *PLSM*, 20-21.

Divine.”<sup>88</sup> Here in this early essay, it is evident that Benedict is eager to defend Catholic tradition against the kind of iconoclasm seen in Barth. Yet he does this without discarding the centrality of the Word; it is music’s close relation to the Word that drives Benedict to treat it with such care and reverence. Benedict is able to do such theological work by adhering more closely to the ancient traditions of the church’s theological reflections on music.

#### SACRED MUSIC IN THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD

Now that Benedict’s relation to a more ancient theological tradition has been established, the contours of his use of that tradition may be traced more fully. In short, Benedict’s understanding of revelation leads him to affirm the ecclesial practice of music as a necessary part of the church’s ministry of the Word.

#### **The primacy of the *logos***

For Benedict, treating music dogmatically is natural, given his position on music’s participation in the proclamation of the divine Word. Benedict considers music to be a valid, albeit *non-textual*, form of divine revelation. Such a claim is not significant in itself, however, for truly *divine* revelation may occur by whatever means God chooses. Barth readily acknowledged this in his oft-quoted statement regarding communism and dead dogs. But whereas Barth insisted that the church is not commissioned to pass on what it hears through these things, Benedict disagrees. Both Barth and Benedict maintain that the acts of worship are intrinsic to the constitution of the church, meaning that the church *is* what the church *does*. But Benedict would include the entirety of the church’s

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 222. Although it should also be noted that the respective iconoclasm of Barth and the post-conciliar Catholics targeted by Benedict utilize different arguments. While Barth’s iconoclasm is rooted in a curiously minimalistic reading of scripture, the iconoclasm faced by Benedict appears concerned with a moral imperative that views music as an unnecessary artistic embellishment that takes away from more pressing matters. In short, Barth would rather attend to the practice of preaching, and the latter would rather attend to social work and community building.

practices, rather than simply a few privileged “commissions.” Among these broader practices stands music. Before examining the particular practice of music among these broader practices, however, it is first necessary to inquire into Benedict’s understanding of the divine liturgy and its relationship to the divine Word. Fundamental to Pope Benedict’s understanding of music’s role within divine revelation is his insistence that revelation, in and through the divine liturgy, is an act of God.

Benedict emphasizes in his *Introduction to Christianity* that the fundamental claim of the Christian faith is “the primacy of the *logos* as against mere matter.”<sup>89</sup> This means that the divine communication that ordered the world is real and alive and infiltrates the created world. Revelation of this *logos* within creation enlivens and redeems the material world.

For Benedict, as for Barth, divine revelation is an *act*. Whatever the Word is in itself, its manifestation in human affairs comes as an event: “...in the cross and resurrection, the Incarnation of the Word becomes the ‘verbification’ of the flesh. Each penetrates the other....The flesh itself is ‘logicized’.”<sup>90</sup> This does not mean that in Christ the human body becomes a mathematical equation or positivistic doctrine. Rather, Benedict indicates here the relationship between flesh and the divine *logos*, the communication of God that manifests itself as a human person.<sup>91</sup>

Thus, for Benedict, as the Word becomes flesh, that flesh is incorporated into the activity of that Word. The “‘verbification’ of the flesh” describes the activity, or practices, of a humanity joined with God in Christ. For this reason, Benedict is more ready to explore the extra-textual possibilities of the divine Word. It is a Word, to be sure, but not one that is limited to words.

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<sup>89</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, translated by J.R. Foster (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004), 151. This primacy is followed by the “primacy of the particular” and the “primacy of freedom.”

<sup>90</sup> Benedict, “Liturgy and Sacred Music,” 386.

<sup>91</sup> Thus “logicized” would be better pronounced as a plosive /g/ rather than as a fricative /dz/.

The act of worship itself is the locus of divine revelation for Benedict. In discussing the liturgy, he takes the Pauline λογικὴν λατρείαν of Romans 12.1, translating it as “divine worship moulded by the Word.” He then explains that “‘Word’ in the biblical (and also in the Greek) sense is more than language or speech, namely creative reality.... ‘Word’ in the biblical sense is more than ‘text’.”<sup>92</sup> Relying on the Johannine prologue and farewell discourse, Benedict extends this relation even further.<sup>93</sup> The Word does not just “mould” worship, but it is *in worship* that the divine Word is made flesh. In worship the “living reality” that is the Word is spoken and given bodily form by “a God who is self-communicating meaning and who communicates himself by becoming man.”<sup>94</sup>

In terms of the concrete practices that constitute worship, then, these activities are rooted in a divine, rather than human, initiative. “[I]t is not the case that you think something up and then sing it; instead, the song comes to you from the angels, and you have to lift up your heart so that it may be in tune with the music coming to it.”<sup>95</sup> For Benedict the liturgy is an act of God, in which human practices are taken up and incorporated into the divine act of revelation. “Earthly liturgy is liturgy because and only because it joins what is already in process, the greater reality.”<sup>96</sup>

It is on this basis that Benedict attends to the post-conciliar reform of the liturgy. His primary difficulty with such reform is what he calls the “sociological reduction” of the liturgy.<sup>97</sup> The shift that occurred between pre- and postconciliar liturgical practice is not, he insists, from the priest to the congregation as the liturgical subject. This popular

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 385. Cf. the RSV and NRSV, which read “spiritual worship” and the *Douay-Rheims*’ and *King James*’ “reasonable service.” The literal context of this passage is, of course, an exhortation to dedicate churchmembers’ bodies to the one body of Christ.

<sup>93</sup> John 1:1-18; 14:2, 18; 16:5. Benedict, “Liturgy and Sacred Music,” 385-386.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 386.

<sup>95</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, “‘In the Presence of the Angels I Will Sing Your Praise’: The Regensburg Tradition and the Reform of the Liturgy,” *A New Song for the Lord: Faith in Christ and Liturgy Today* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1996), 166.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 170.

misconception of liturgical reform constitutes a serious concern for Benedict. “The priest...never had the right to determine by himself what was to be done in the liturgy. Liturgy was completely nonarbitrary for him. It preceded him as ‘rite’, that is, as an objective form of the corporate prayer of the Church.”<sup>98</sup> Citing the Catechism for authority, he defines the liturgy as “service in the name of/on behalf of the people,” further emphasizing that such practices do not emerge from any human initiative, but rather are divine acts incarnated within human practice.<sup>99</sup>

It cannot be overemphasized that such a view of human practices emerges out of a distinctively *christological* approach to theology and ethics. Christology shapes much, if not all, of Benedict’s writings in what is often termed “practical theology,” particularly his approach to the liturgy. “The decisive factor, therefore, is the primacy of Christology. Liturgy is God’s work or it does not exist at all.”<sup>100</sup> As the priest himself is not the subject of the liturgy, he is the vehicle through which the person of Christ continues the ministry of the Word of God. “In the liturgy the priest says and does what he cannot do and say on his own; he acts...*in persona Christi*...”<sup>101</sup> Such a divine encounter occurs in *each* concrete practice of the liturgy, from preaching to sacrament, from kneeling to singing: “every liturgical action...is an encounter between Christ and the Church.”<sup>102</sup>

### **Divine action and ecclesiology**

From the assertion that God-in-Christ acts in and through liturgical practices follows an equally robust, yet fundamental, claim about ecclesiology: that God acts in and through the church. Throughout his career, ecclesiology has been one of the primary topics of Catholic theology. Whereas the First Vatican Council in the previous century “had simply

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid. 169.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 170.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 171.

left a fragment of ecclesiology,” ‘the Church’ became perhaps the primary contribution of the Second Vatican Council.<sup>103</sup> Benedict suggests that the ecclesiological focus of the council was in part due to Barth’s influence among the German bishops.<sup>104</sup> Whatever ecclesiological road the council took, however, there were forces in place to ensure that the question of God was taken seriously. Benedict recounts one elder German bishop exclaiming in a preliminary meeting: “My dear Brothers, at the Council you must above all talk about God. That is what is most important.”<sup>105</sup> He uses this anecdote to introduce the importance of prohibiting the tendency of ecclesiology to ignore its properly *theological* aspect.<sup>106</sup> Too often, he argues, ecclesiology succumbs to the temptation to conceive of the church along sociological lines of argument.

In elucidating the German word *Gemeinde* (assembly, gathering), Benedict states that it is difficult to translate this term into other languages as it has two distinct senses: that those brought together are joined together “through the liturgical event into a concrete representation of the People of God” and the People of God are “by virtue of the Lord active co-celebrants of the liturgical event.”<sup>107</sup> Of course, Benedict’s discussion of co-celebration sounds strikingly similar to Barth’s use of the *Auftrag*, in which the church both receives and shares its commission to preach and administer the sacraments. Benedict is equally cautious, however, that the scales of such co-celebration might be tipped in favor of the community and taking away from God. He writes:

“But we must resolutely defend ourselves against the hypostatization of the community, which is common today. As the *Catechism* rightly states, the assembled derive their unity from the communion of the Holy Spirit;

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<sup>103</sup> Ratzinger, “The Ecclesiology of the Constitution *Lumen Gentium*,” in *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith: The Church as Communion*, ed. by Stephan Otto Horn and Vinzenz Pfnür, translated by Henry Taylor (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), 123.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 124. Specifically, Barth’s project of the *Kirchliche Dogmatik*. Benedict also cites Otto Dibelius’ *Das Jahrhundert der Kirche* (1926), as well as Romano Guardini’s *Vom Sinn der Kirche* (1922).

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.

<sup>107</sup> Ratzinger, “In the Presence of the Angels,” 171. The notion of the “People of God” gained a renewed significance as the subject of the second chapter of *LG*, §§9-17. It was also the subject of his dissertation: *Volk und Haus Gottes in Augustins Lehre von der Kirche* (Munich: Karl Zink Verlag, 1954).

they are not such on their own, as a sociologically self-contained quantity.”<sup>108</sup>

Furthermore, Benedict insists that the community is much greater than a group of shared sociological similarities. It is the Spirit of God that brings together the “People of God,” which he states “comes into being again and again only through the service of the Son and by his lifting us into the community of God which we cannot enter on our own.”<sup>109</sup>

This notion of the “People of God” strikes at the heart of Benedict’s robust, yet fundamental, ecclesiology: the Church consists of people, to be sure, but people who belong *to God*.

For Benedict, questions of ecclesiology, liturgy, and music are intertwined. In the liturgical reform after Vatican II, the question of what constitutes proper liturgical music became for him *fundamental* to liturgical theology. “It has become a question of the essence of liturgical action as such, of its anthropological and theological foundations. The controversy about Church music is becoming symptomatic for the deeper question about what the liturgy is.”<sup>110</sup> Because of this fundamental importance, he finds the battles over liturgical music to be a crucial aspect of ecclesiology as a whole. In his writings, liturgical music often serves as both an example of an ecclesial practice—which, upon further investigation, opens up broader issues of ecclesiology—and as the particular object of his dogmatic scrutiny.

Benedict argues against those in the post-conciliar liturgical renewal movement who would conceive of their work in terms of group-sociology rather than a properly theological ecclesiology. In particular, he takes issue with the approach taken to liturgical music in the *Nouvo Dizionario di Liturgia*. Published in 1984, this dictionary is representative of the liturgical reform that took place in the wake of *Sacrosanctum*

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<sup>108</sup> Ratzinger, “In the Presence of the Angels,” 171-172.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 170-172.

<sup>110</sup> Ratzinger, “Liturgy and Sacred Music,” 377-378.

*Concilium*. The essay on singing and music, “*Canto e musica*,” caught Benedict’s watchful eye and thus his criticism. He argues that “a basically new understanding of liturgy” is taking hold, surpassing the council rather than remaining within its spirit.<sup>111</sup>

He aims his criticism at their use (or misuse) of Matthew 18:20, “For where there are two or three gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”<sup>112</sup>

Benedict finds that such a definition of the church is much too thin for a properly *theological* ecclesiology. Although Benedict does not fault progressive liturgists for the widespread removal of the passage from its larger scriptural context (that of community judgment and forgiveness), he criticizes instead the isolation of the text from “the whole liturgical tradition,” thereby setting up a more sociological—and less theological—conception of the church.<sup>113</sup> “For the two or three are now placed in opposition to an institution with its institutional roles, and to every ‘codified program’. Thus this definition comes to mean: it is not the Church that precedes the group but the group that precedes the Church.”<sup>114</sup>

Benedict particularly takes offense to the notion that the hierarchy of the Church and church tradition may be summarily dismissed as antiquarian and authoritarian. “A certain administration of power, we are told, feels threatened by process of cultural transformation and reacts by masking its striving for self-preservation as love for the tradition.”<sup>115</sup> Benedict does not have much patience for those who are suspicious of a hierarchical church, and is eager to dismantle their position. In an interview he has characterized this more progressive approach thusly:

People think they know the Church. They think she is a very ancient system that has become sclerotic over time, that gets progressively more insulated and rigid, that forms a sort of armor that smothers one’s personal

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<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 378.

<sup>112</sup> Matthew 18:20, *Douay-Rheims Version*, American Edition.

<sup>113</sup> Ratzinger, “Liturgy and Sacred Music,” 378. Cf. Matthew 18:15-35.

<sup>114</sup> Ratzinger, “Liturgy and Sacred Music,” 378.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 379.

life. That is the impression of many people. Few people manage to recognize instead that there is something fresh and also bold and large-minded here, something that offers escape from the stale habits of one's life.<sup>116</sup>

Benedict also takes great offense at the notion that the “institutional” nature of the church would contribute to such “stale habits.” As an institution, the church “bears a negative quality in the type of sociology adopted here [in “*Canto e musica*”]. It embodies power, and power is considered an antithesis to freedom.”<sup>117</sup> Accordingly, he accuses these progressive liturgists of finding the historical liturgy “more a question of cultic bureaucracy than of the singing activity of the people.”<sup>118</sup> They wish to discard tradition, he claims, so that it “is not obedience to the whole but the creativity of the moment that becomes the determining form.”<sup>119</sup> In his attack of this “new conception” of the liturgy, Benedict finds error with two specific values: authenticity and identification.

The first error is in how the “new conception” defines *authentic* music.<sup>120</sup> A loosely defined “freedom” is held by the progressive liturgists to be an essential principle of authenticity, that is, an authentically created music would be one in which its participants act freely and without constraint.<sup>121</sup> But the church is not like that, he argues. “One who truly acts in the liturgy also disappears with the collective subject ‘Church’.” For it is forgotten that the liturgy is to be the *opus Dei* in which God himself acts first and we are redeemed precisely through the fact that he acts.”<sup>122</sup> Benedict relies heavily here on the liturgical-theological work of Romano Guardini, who stressed a more ontological

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<sup>116</sup> Ratzinger, *Salt of the Earth* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1997), 17.

<sup>117</sup> Ratzinger, “Liturgy and Sacred Music,” 381.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 379.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>120</sup> While “authenticity” is not a term used by Benedict himself, he does refer to the value of “full and authentic action of all persons.” See *ibid.*, 380. I expand the term to “authenticity” because of its similar use in musicological literature. See Nicholas Cook, *Music: a very short introduction* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1998), 6-14, 95-96; Simon Frith, *Performing Rites: evaluating popular music* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1996), 3-20; Alistair Williams, *Constructing Musicology* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2001), 83-89.

<sup>121</sup> Ratzinger, “Liturgy and Sacred Music,” 381-382.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 382.

than ethical approach. The liturgy, Guardini held, is the inner trinitarian dialogue moving outwards, “God’s action in and among us.”<sup>123</sup> Benedict states that Guardini “stressed emphatically that in the liturgy it is not a question of *doing* something but of *being* something. The idea that general activity is the most central value of the liturgy is the most radical antithesis imaginable to Guardini’s conception of the liturgy.”<sup>124</sup> Benedict does several things here. First, he reinforces the tendency of ecclesiology toward being properly *theological*. Secondly, by doing so (being theological rather than sociological), he affirms liturgical music as participating in the divinely spoken Word. Thirdly, he thus legitimates the task of investigating music dogmatically.

Benedict then takes Guardini’s three “ontological dimensions” of the liturgy—cosmos, history and mystery—to hold the “new conception” accountable. “For the group liturgy is not cosmic, it lives from the autonomy of the group. It has no history, it is precisely that emancipation from history and doing things oneself that are characteristic for it...Moreover, it is ignorant of mystery, because in it everything is and must be explained.”<sup>125</sup> Thus for Benedict, an authentically performed music has nothing to do with being “free” of institutional or traditional restraints. Rather, an authentic music emerges from the cosmic, historical and mysterious dimensions of the Word made flesh.

The second error of the “new conception” of liturgy is in its emphasis on identification. The practice of music, according to this conception, should reflect the sociologically-informed identity of the “two or three gathered,” rather than a theologically-informed identity of the church *qua* church. Thus the church’s “unity...threatens to disappear through the derivation of the liturgy from the group instead of from the Church.”<sup>126</sup> In this respect, the “new conception” is an extension of

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 383.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 384.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 380.

the ethnomusicological investigations into music as a social practice that constructs identity.<sup>127</sup> For Benedict, however, the liturgical activity of the church must be seen as *opus Dei*, a work of God. Such divine work ontologically and temporally precedes any human works, so that it is not the identity of a group that is constructed, but rather the identity of God that is imparted or made known through the music of the church.<sup>128</sup>

### **The liturgical supplement**

The fundamental claim that divine liturgy is from God is, of course, strikingly similar to the Barthian position on proclamation—that this is *God's* act. Benedict would even agree that preaching and the administration of the sacraments are distinguished among ecclesial practices as divinely commissioned forms of revelation, as this is affirmed in the Second Vatican Council's *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation*.<sup>129</sup> But this does not obviate their need for some sort of liturgical supplement. The context or medium of preaching and the sacraments, while not primary in the same manner as their content, is nonetheless necessary. “[T]he Word cannot be mere talk. The sacramental signs are certainly the central way in which the Incarnation continues to work. But they become homeless if they are not immersed in a liturgy that as a whole follows this expansion of

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<sup>127</sup> Cf. Philip V. Bohlmann, “Ethnomusicology’s Challenge to the Canon; the Canon’s Challenge to Ethnomusicology,” in *Disciplining Music: musicology and its canons*, ed. Katherine Bergeron and Philip V. Bohlman (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1992), 116-136; Bohlmann, *World Music: a very short introduction* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2002); as well as the various essays in Martin Stokes, ed., *Ethnicity, Identity and Music: the musical construction of place*, Ethnic Identities Series (Oxford: Berg, 1997).

<sup>128</sup> “Ontological and temporal priority” has become a contested Ratzingerian phrase. While the ecclesiological dispute between Benedict and Cardinal Walter Kasper highlights the contours of the former’s approach to the universal and local church, this dissertation is not the place to examine the dispute. For further investigation, see Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, “Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church: On Some Aspects of the Church Understood as Communion (*Communio in Notio*)” (28 May 1992): *Acta Apostolica Sedis* 85 (1993): 838-850, as well as Ratzinger, “The Local Church and The Universal Church: A Response to Walter Kasper,” *America* 185, no. 16 (Nov 19, 2001): 7; Walter Kasper, “Church as *communio*,” *Com.* 13 (1986): 100-117; “On the Church : A Friendly Reply to Cardinal Benedict,” *America* 184, no. 14 (April 23, 2001): 8; “Letter to the Editor,” *America* 185, no. 17 (November 26, 2001): 28; “*Communio*: The Guiding Concept of Catholic Ecumenical Theology,” in *That They May All Be One: the call to unity today* (London: Burns & Oates, 2004), 50-74; and Kilian McDonnell, “The Benedict/Kasper Debate: the universal and local churches,” *Theological Studies* 63 (2002): 227-250.

<sup>129</sup> DV, §21.

the Word into the realm of the bodily and all our senses.”<sup>130</sup> This “homelessness” of the fundamental elements of worship stands in marked contrast to the almost puritanical liturgical thinking of Barth.<sup>131</sup> It is not the case that Benedict considers sermon and sacrament insufficient. Rather, the proper practice the ministry of the Word of God, which consists of sermon and sacrament, *includes* the larger liturgy, in all its various appurtenances.

In an essay entitled, “Sing Artistically for God,” Benedict exegetes Psalm 47:7b (“sing praises with a psalm”), which in turn leads him to propose three “biblical directives” for church music. The first is that musical expression in the liturgy is *mandatory*. Unlike Barth, Benedict finds an imperative towards musical proclamation: “musical expression is part of the proper human response to God’s self-revelation.”<sup>132</sup> Expressing the Word through song is for Benedict an integral part of the incarnation into humanity; to be human is to sing, thus the Word must be sung. “Mere speech, mere silence, mere action are not enough. That integral way of humanly expressing joy or sorrow, consent or complaint which occurs in singing is necessary for responding to God....”<sup>133</sup> Furthermore, Benedict includes instrumental music with such musical proclamation.<sup>134</sup>

The second biblical directive that Benedict proposes is that while the church must sing, it must also, as the Psalmist proclaims, “sing unto the Lord *a new song*.”<sup>135</sup> Two assertions are important within this directive. First, Benedict uses the term “culture” to

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<sup>130</sup> Ratzinger, “Liturgy and Sacred Music,” 386.

<sup>131</sup> Also of note is the difference in emphasis between the two liturgical elements. Whereas Barth somewhat grudgingly includes the sacraments, insofar as they testify to the Word preached, Benedict emphasizes the sacraments as the “central” manifestation of the incarnated Word.

<sup>132</sup> Ratzinger, “‘Sing Artistically for God’: Biblical Directives for Church Music,” in *A New Song for the Lord: Faith in Christ and Liturgy Today*, translated by Martha M. Matesich (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1996), 126.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>134</sup> Benedict makes this affirmation based on a discovery that the pre-Septuagint Greek word *psallein* denoted playing a stringed instrument, “in which, as it were, creation is made to sound.” See *ibid.*, 125-6.

<sup>135</sup> Psalm 33:3, 96:1, 98:1, 149:1. See also Psalm 40:3, 144:9, Isaiah 42:10, Revelation 14:3, Judith 16:13.

describe the extra-linguistic form in which the Word is proclaimed. This culture cannot be excised from proclamation in such a way as Barth would like:

There is no such thing as a faith completely undetermined by culture...which would then let itself be inculturated any way one likes. The faith decision as such entails a cultural decision; it forms the people, and by doing this it excludes a good many other cultural patterns as deformations. Faith itself creates culture and does not just carry it along like a piece of clothing added from the outside.<sup>136</sup>

While culture is secondary to faith, it is *necessary* to faith. From this assertion follows a further description of culture that then leads to Benedict's directive to "sing a new song": "The level of a culture is discernible by its ability to assimilate, to come into contact and exchange, and to do this synchronically and diachronically." Benedict thus does not see the culture of faith as a static, universal enterprise. It must change and adapt to local circumstances. "This ability to exchange and flourish...finds its expression in the ever-recurring imperative: 'Sing the Lord a new song.' Experiences of salvation are found not only in the past, but occur over and over again; hence they also require the ever-new proclamation of God's contemporaneity...."<sup>137</sup>

Benedict's third directive regards the *quality* of the music that is to be offered to God. Musical expression is mandatory, and it should be offered always and everywhere and in new and fresh ways that engage the world in which the Word is made incarnate. But the one offering such music back to God must also perform in an appropriate manner. Attention to Benedict's dogmatic scrutiny of music appears below, but at this point it is important to emphasize what Benedict calls "music in accordance with logos":

There is an art form corresponding to God, who...is the creative Word which also gives meaning. This art form stands under the primacy of logos; that is, it integrates the diversity of the human being from the perspective of this being's highest moral and spiritual powers, but in this way it also leads the spirit out of rationalistic and voluntaristic confinement into the symphony of creation.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> Ratzinger, "Sing Artistically for God," 126-127.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, 127.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 129.

Here Benedict briefly constructs a Christian art theory, based upon YHWH's instructions in Exodus regarding the construction of the tabernacle.<sup>139</sup> He proposes three elements to this art theory. First, the artists themselves do not conceive or fabricate that which is worthy of God, or "beautiful."<sup>140</sup> That is the purview of God alone. From this follows the second element, which is that the artists are persons "to whom the Lord has given understanding and skill so that they can carry out what God has instructed them to do."<sup>141</sup> The final element, and perhaps the most revealing, is that such instruction or inspiration finds its manifestation in the "stirring of hearts."<sup>142</sup> Artists must be moved within their hearts, by which Benedict means that whatever art or culture is indeed of the type that comes from faith (and for faith) as the proclamation of the divine Word will have a much greater impact than mere cognitive awareness. Inspiration is a truly moving event, one which strikes at the core of the persons involved.

### **Music and Incarnation**

One of these necessary and cultural-artistic appurtenances to the incarnation is the church's music. For Benedict, liturgy and music are virtually the same entity: "one cannot speak of liturgy without also talking about the music of worship."<sup>143</sup> For it is music that brings expressive, rhetorical power to words, expanding what might be merely *said* into a Word to be *proclaimed*. "Wherever man praises God, the word alone does not suffice. Conversation with God transcends the boundaries of human speech, and in all places, it has by its very nature called music to its aid, singing and the voices of creation in the harmony of instruments."<sup>144</sup> Benedict states elsewhere that the power of God's Word is so

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<sup>139</sup> See Exodus 26, 35-36.

<sup>140</sup> Ratzinger, "Sing Artistically for God," 129.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, 130.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*; see also Exodus 36:2.

<sup>143</sup> Ratzinger, "Sing Artistically for God," 174.

<sup>144</sup> Ratzinger, "Liturgy and Sacred Music," 377.

strong that it leads one into silence—a silence that cannot comprehend its subject, but in this silence leads to song:

“Faith comes from listening to God’s word. But wherever God’s word is translated into human words there remains a surplus of the unspoken and unspeakable which calls us into silence—into a silence that in the end lets the unspeakable become song and also calls on the voices of the cosmos for help so that the unspoken may become audible.”<sup>145</sup>

As the Word’s accompaniment to its actualization in sermon and sacrament, liturgical music for Benedict is itself an integral part of the incarnation. “Liturgical music results from the claim and the dynamics of the Incarnation of the Word.”<sup>146</sup> For Benedict, the incarnation *begets* liturgical music. Such music is not simply an optional addendum to the church’s ministry; rather it is the very *actualization* of the Word of God in the Christian life. He labels this musical actualization as *musification*: “The ‘musification’ of faith is a part of the process of the Incarnation of the Word.”<sup>147</sup> By entering into the world, the revealed Word takes the world unto itself, redeeming those worldly elements and attributes that it has taken on. Corporeality and spirituality intermingle in this divine hypostatic act.

On the one hand, the musification of the Word is sensualization, Incarnation, attraction of pre-rational forces, attraction of the hidden sounds of creation, discovery of the song that lies at the bottom of things. But...it is not only Incarnation of the Word, but at the same time ‘spiritualization’ of the flesh....A corporealization takes place which is spiritualization, and a spiritualization which is a corporealization. The Christian corporealization is always a spiritualization at the same time, and the Christian spiritualization is a corporealization into the body of the incarnate Logos.<sup>148</sup>

Benedict’s understanding of music, then, is firmly rooted within a doctrine of the incarnation. Moreover, the kind of *logos*-christology presented here is not ignorant or dismissive of the pneumatological. The Holy Spirit is equally co-efficient in and with the

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<sup>145</sup> Ratzinger, “In the Presence of the Angels,” 175.

<sup>146</sup> Ratzinger, “Liturgy and Sacred Music,” 386.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, 386.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, 386-387.

divine Word, spiritualizing the flesh as it receives the Word. In an essay from *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, Benedict portrays the Holy Spirit as a kind of “singer-songwriter”:

The singing of the Church comes ultimately out of love. It is the utter depth of love that produces the singing. ‘*Cantare amantis est*’, says St. Augustine, singing is a lover’s thing. In so saying, we come again to the trinitarian interpretation of Church music. The Holy Spirit is love, and it is he who produces the singing. He is the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit who draws us into love for Christ and so leads to the Father.<sup>149</sup>

While the church may perform music in the liturgy, it is God who originates the musical Word, in and through the Spirit of Christ.<sup>150</sup> Just as the Word of God is a redemptive word, music may participate in this salvific ministry of the Word: “Music uncovers the buried way to the heart, to the core of our being, where it touches the being of the Creator and the Redeemer. Wherever this is achieved, music becomes the road that leads to Jesus, the way on which God shows his salvation.”<sup>151</sup>

Whereas Barth refuses to include the ecclesial practice of music within the scope of proclamation, Benedict embraces such musical proclamation. For him music is a cultural form that God may use and transform in such a way as to communicate the divine word into human practice and understanding. Much of the difference between Barth and Benedict on this point may be attributed to the latter’s adherence to a more ancient ecclesial tradition. Benedict does not dismiss the ancient and medieval church because of some “satanic” commitment to the *analogia entis*. Like Barth, the Fathers were wary of importing culture wholesale into the Christian witness. In their theological reflections on the nature and practice of music, however, they were able to—albeit cautiously—treat music as a valid participant in the proclamation of the Word of God.

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<sup>149</sup> Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 142.

<sup>150</sup> One could easily speculate here on musical metaphors for the economic trinity. With the Spirit as singer, the Word is the song itself, and the Father as songwriter. Such a model, however, would have difficulty defining the church, in that every possible metaphor has significant flaws: listener, background choir, record producer, sound engineer, et al.

<sup>151</sup> Ratzinger, “Sing Artistically for God,” 137.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DOGMATIC REFLECTION UPON MUSIC IN THE THOUGHT OF POPE BENEDICT XVI

“The cosmic character of liturgical music stands in opposition to the two tendencies of the modern age...: music as pure subjectivity, music as the expression of mere will. We sing with the angels. But this cosmic character is grounded ultimately in the ordering of all Christian worship to *logos*”<sup>1</sup>

To fail to reflect upon the church’s music would be to ignore the very commission of Christ: to proclaim the Word of God. Many other practices of the church are also involved, to be sure, such as hospitality and education.<sup>2</sup> But if music also participates in such proclamation, then it must not be ignored by dogmatic theology. By setting music within the manifold redemptive work of the Word of God, Pope Benedict is able to provide critical theological reflection on music as an ecclesial practice. “The medium of communication and the communicated message must stand in a meaningful relationship to each other.”<sup>3</sup> The Word and its proclamation should be intimately bound. Such an imperative requires specific critically reflective measures to ensure its actualization. Quite simply, the ecclesial practice of music requires dogmatic scrutiny to ensure its harmony with the divine *logos*.

Benedict is keenly aware of this and, as has already been shown to some extent, he actively proposes principles and directives to ensure that the church’s music is in accordance with the Word of God. While reluctant to exclude musical instruments from

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<sup>1</sup> Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 155.

<sup>2</sup> The Practices of Faith series by Jossey-Bass is currently publishing numerous titles on the wide variety of ecclesial practices that embody Christian mission and ministry. For hospitality and education specifically, see L. Gregory Jones, “Beliefs, Desires, Practices, and the Ends of Theological Education,” and Reinhard Hütter, “Hospitality and Truth: The Disclosure of Practices in Worship and Doctrine,” in *Practicing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life*, ed. Miroslav Volf and Dorothy C. Bass, (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans, 2002), 185-205, 206-227; Christine D. Pohl, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans, 1999).

<sup>3</sup> Ratzinger, “Sing Artistically for God,” 136

any discussion of musical proclamation, Benedict affirms that “We must surely admit that the liturgy of the incarnate Word is necessarily and specifically word-oriented.”<sup>4</sup> In this way, as music is “word-oriented” he carefully avoids a text-music duality in which one must be ascribed primacy over the other. Instead, one sees in Benedict that music is a kind of “culture” in which the Word of God provides guidance, its content, and its purpose. “If music is to be the medium of worship, it needs purifying; only then can it in turn have a purifying and ‘elevating’ effect.”<sup>5</sup> The dogmatic task is *necessary* for the ecclesial practice of music, as music, for Benedict, has the ability—the mission—to communicate the Word of God.

Precisely because liturgical music serves as a proclamation of the Word, Benedict is able to scrutinize its practice in a critical manner. Not just *any* music may proclaim the Word; the Word has limits. Specifically, the Word is directly linked to “the word-relatedness, the rationality, the intelligibility, and the sobriety of the Christian liturgy.”<sup>6</sup> In this respect Benedict emphasizes the term “sober inebriation.” The Spirit indeed brings the church into a kind of ecstatic existence, leaving its sense behind. One might even think of a Pentecostal speaking of tongues, as the person receiving a Word from God is entirely possessed by that Word, thus communicating an apparent nonsense. But the Word is not nonsense—it is entirely sensible.

It is above all in Church music that the ‘sober inebriation’ of faith takes place—an inebriation surpassing all the possibilities of mere rationality. But this intoxication remains sober, because Christ and the Holy Spirit belong together, because this drunken speech stays totally within the discipline of the Logos, in a new rationality that, beyond all words, serves the primordial Word, the ground of all reason.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Ratzinger, “On the Theological Basis of Church Music,” *The Feast of Faith: Approaches to a Theology of the Liturgy*, translated by Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986), 120.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 119.

<sup>6</sup> Ratzinger, “Liturgy and Sacred Music,” 385.

<sup>7</sup> Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 140.

Because the Word is expanded by music, art, and other liturgical practices, it does not follow for Benedict (as for Barth) that the Word does not provide limits. By virtue of its very nature as *logos*, the Word has particular attributes that define its actualization. As will be demonstrated in this chapter, Pope Benedict XVI's critical reflection on music according to the *logos* provides a direct critique of modern philosophies of music that are opposed to that Word.

## BENEDICT'S DOGMATIC REFLECTIONS ON MUSIC

### **Church and culture**

Benedict grounds his dogmatic reflections on contemporary sacred music in the historical tradition of countering the threat of inculturation vis-à-vis the ecclesial practice of music. He opens his essay, "Musica e liturgia," with a historical account of the Church's struggle against inculturation in its musical practice.<sup>8</sup> Throughout this narrative, it is evident that Benedict's primary suspicion is that of inculturation, in which non-Christian modes of thought and behavior infiltrate the ecclesial practice of music, thus perverting proclamation into something other than the Word of God. In the biblical world, he argues, the threat of inculturation came from the temptation to overwhelm with power. As Benedict surveys the biblical literature—from psalmic harps and lyres to the apocalyptic song of the Lamb—he draws a conclusion rhetorically related to trends in contemporary worship music: "The paradox now becomes even more powerful. It is not the gigantic beasts of prey, with their power over the media and their technical strength, who win the victory. No, it is the sacrificed Lamb that conquers....Liturgical singing is established in the midst of this great historical tension."<sup>9</sup> An analogue with contemporary media-driven

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<sup>8</sup> Ratzinger, "Musica e liturgia," *Com.* 29 (2000): 37-48; ET in *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 136-156.

<sup>9</sup> Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 137.

liturgies is apparent in Benedict's rhetoric, as he clearly prefers a more reserved aesthetic of sacred music.

In the early and medieval church, Benedict recounts, the ecclesial practice of music was easily co-opted by mysticism: "As the Church was uprooted from her Semitic soil and moved into the Greek world, a spontaneous and far-reaching fusion took place with Greek *logos* mysticism, with its poetry and music, that eventually threatened to dissolve Christianity into a generalized mysticism."<sup>10</sup> Benedict has in mind here the ancient mystery cults, as well as Gnosticism, against which early Christianity had to distinguish itself. Given how prevalent such "generalized mysticisms" are in the contemporary world, however, he likely has an additional target in mind—one which often claims the moniker, "spiritual, but not religious."<sup>11</sup>

In the late medieval world, the technical complexities made possible by developments in polyphony, the utilization of instruments, and the employment of secular music forms began to overshadow the original purpose of sacred music. Instead, artistry began to create its own ends, in contradistinction to serving the Word.

It is clear that these opportunities for artistic creativity and the adoption of secular tunes brought danger with them. Music was no longer developing out of prayer, but, with the new demand for artistic autonomy, was now heading away from the liturgy; it was becoming an end in itself, opening the door to new, very different ways of feeling and of experiencing the world. Music was alienating the liturgy from its true nature.<sup>12</sup>

Thus Benedict turns to the Council of Trent's pronouncements as an intervention to counteract the increasing notion of "art for art's sake": "It was made a norm that liturgical music should be at the service of the Word; the use of instruments was substantially reduced; and the difference between secular and sacred music was clearly affirmed."<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 144.

<sup>11</sup> Robert C. Fuller, *Spiritual, but not Religious: understanding unchurched America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

<sup>12</sup> Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 145-146.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 146.

The Baroque era then developed that which had been laid down at Trent; it “succeeded in dedicating the whole luminous power of music . . . to the glorifying of God.”<sup>14</sup> Bach and Mozart are named in particular here, as Benedict describes the inner dynamics of their music: “Subjective experience and passion are still held in check by the order of the musical universe, reflecting as it does the order of the divine creation itself. But there is already the threat of invasion by the virtuoso mentality, the vanity of technique, which is no longer the servant of the whole but wants to push itself to the fore.”<sup>15</sup> In the nineteenth century, “this led in many places to the obscuring of the sacred by the operatic.”<sup>16</sup> This in turn led to Pope Pius X’s declaration of Gregorian Chant and Counter-Reformation polyphony (e.g. Palestrina) as canonical for liturgical music, and a further distinction between what constitutes liturgical music over against merely “religious” music.<sup>17</sup>

Repeatedly, Benedict describes a cultural crisis in sacred music and its corresponding dogmatic restriction, all of which serves to bolster his own restrictions against certain contemporary forms of liturgical music. Contemporary sacred music, then, is for Benedict yet another development in the same historical continuum, in which culture threatens proclamation more than it provides the site for proclamation. A pragmatic note is evident, however, in Benedict’s historical theology of music. He nowhere claims that the aesthetic decisions of the church have a timeless, universal validity. Rather, the church must constantly renew its dogmatic reflections based on the threat of inculturation. In his account of the early struggle against mysticism, for instance, Benedict calls attention to a fourth-century debate regarding the psalter, in which non-scriptural hymns were forbidden by the Council of Laodicea. “We may regret the cultural

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. Although Mozart is not generally considered *baroque*, one may affirm his location within the development referenced here without *too* much debate.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 146.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 147.

impoverishment this entailed, but it was necessary for the sake of a greater good. A return to apparent cultural poverty saved the identity of biblical faith, and the very rejection of false inculturation opened up the cultural breadth of Christianity for the future.”<sup>18</sup> The critical point, of course, is in identifying which musical practices are necessary to exclude and which of those, posing no threat, may enrich the “cultural breadth” of the Church.<sup>19</sup>

Three cultural threats to contemporary sacred music are identified by Benedict: cultural universalization, the elitism of the Western art music tradition, and the degeneration that has taken place within popular music.<sup>20</sup> Focusing his attention on the first and third of these aesthetic antagonists, Benedict finds fault with both rock and pop music as compromising the church’s proclamation.<sup>21</sup>

On the one hand, there is pop music, which is...aimed at the phenomenon of the masses, is industrially produced, and ultimately has to be described as a cult of the banal. ‘Rock’, on the other hand, is the expression of elemental passions, and at rock festivals it assumes a cultic character, a form of worship, in fact, in opposition to Christian worship.”<sup>22</sup>

The former is boring, condensing the cultural diversity of the world into a singular mass market; the latter is idolatrous, proposing a new object of worship other than the triune God.

Benedict intends his own dogmatic reflections on ecclesial musical practice to maintain the tradition of countering inculturation from outwith the Church. His positioning of these reflections within a historical theology of music bolsters his argument with the weight of tradition. But the element that is most characteristic is the dialectical character of his reflections, as they continually argue *against* modes of thought and

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<sup>18</sup> Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 144-145.

<sup>19</sup> Benedict prefers to err on the side of caution, excluding “rock” and “pop” entirely, making minimal aesthetic distinctions in an almost unfathomably diverse range of performance styles and practices. On “genre essentialism” as the *bête noire* of popular music studies, see Keith Negus, *Popular Music in Theory* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1996), 123-133; and Lawrence Grossberg, “Another Boring Day in Paradise: Rock & Roll and the Empowerment of Everyday Life,” in *Popular Music: Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies*, vol. II, ed. Simon Frith (London: Routledge, 2004), 311-342.

<sup>20</sup> Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 147-148.

<sup>21</sup> Benedict identifies, but does not elucidate, the second of the three: cultural elitism.

<sup>22</sup> Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 148.

practice that he finds are alien to the *logos*. In such a manner, Benedict truly provides a *dogmatic* approach to music as proclamation of the Word of God.

### **Attributes of the *logos***

In the course of being proclaimed, then, the Word draws liturgical practices (i.e. music) unto itself. Such a claim begs the question of what difference this Word, the divine *logos*, makes. How does the sacred-profane distinction present itself within the practice of music?<sup>23</sup> If one is to accept—and critically examine—music as a practice that dares to proclaim the very Word of God, what types of characteristics should one expect? In answering these questions, Benedict identifies the distinctive attributes of proper sacred music in regards to the *logos*, thereby distinguishing such music from other musics.

Benedict examines three attributes of liturgical music properly inhabited by the *logos*. Although he never names these characteristics in a succinct manner, they may fall under the following terms: textuality, rationality, and cosmicality. First, liturgical music accompanies liturgical words. “[T]he relation of liturgical music to *logos* means, first of all, simply its relation to words. That is why singing in the liturgy has priority over instrumental music, though it does not in any way exclude it.”<sup>24</sup> Perhaps the most obvious example of relating words to liturgical music may be found in the practice of Gregorian chant. As one publication from the Abbey of St Pierre in Solesmes observes: “The Gregorian repertoire finds its first source in the cantillation of the Word of God, that is, in

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<sup>23</sup> In 2003, Pope John Paul II reflected upon this in a centennial chirograph on Pope Pius X’s *motu proprio* on sacred music, *Tra le sollecitudini*, §4: “Today, moreover, the meaning of the category “sacred music” has been broadened to include repertoires that cannot be part of the celebration without violating the spirit and norms of the Liturgy itself.” See *Chirograph for the Centenary of the Motu Proprio “Tra le Sollecitudini” on Sacred Music* (22 November 2003), in *L’Osservatore Romano*, 28 January 2004. See also Jan Michael Joncas’ study in “An Anniversary Song,” in *Music in Christian Worship: at the service of the liturgy*, edited by Charlotte Kroeker (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2005), 48-49, as well as his exploration of the variety of types of “sacred” music in *From Sacred Song to Ritual Music* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1997).

<sup>24</sup> Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 149.

the public reading of Holy Scripture.”<sup>25</sup> Thus Gregorian chant “musifies” the words of scripture in order to proclaim them.

Of course Gregorian chant is not the only manner of envisioning the relation. The Word’s musical accompaniment may be intermittent or contemporaneous with the words of the service, providing instrumental reflection on spoken words, or melodic inflection to words sung or chanted. Keeping within the tradition of Catholic reflections on sacred music, Benedict insists that it is the *words* that are primary. “It goes without saying that the biblical and liturgical texts are the normative words from which liturgical music has to take its bearings. This does not rule out the continuing creation of ‘new songs’, but instead inspires them....”<sup>26</sup> Indeed, Benedict’s conception of the musical proclamation of the Word is not so bold as to ignore words altogether. Rather, the non-textualness of liturgical music is best understood as a *supplement* to liturgical words.

In a rare exposition on Thomas Aquinas, Benedict defends the practice of purely instrumental music within the sacred liturgy. Arguing Thomas *contra* Thomas, he takes the following statement regarding the textual nature of the musified Word from the medieval scholastic: “‘Even if those who listen sometimes do not understand the words being sung, they do understand the reason for the singing, namely, the praise of God. And that is sufficient to arouse men to worship.’”<sup>27</sup> Here we see perhaps the most direct incorporation of the non-textual in Benedict’s theology of the Word. Even lacking congregational comprehension of the words, the Word may be proclaimed through music.

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<sup>25</sup> Dom Daniel Saulnier, *The Gregorian Modes*, translated by Edward Schaefer (Solemes, France: Abbaye Saint-Pierre, 2002), 22. It should be noted here that the “canonical” implications of Solesmes scholarship has received criticism within the broader academic field of musicology. See Katherine Bergeron, “A Lifetime of Chants,” in *Disciplining Music: musicology and its canons*, edited by Katherine Bergeron and Philip V. Bohlman (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 185-193.

<sup>26</sup> Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 149.

<sup>27</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* Q 91.2; qtd. in Ratzinger, “On the Theological Basis of Church Music,” 121. In another essay, Benedict similarly defends the use of Latin against the Reformation (and post-conciliar) emphasis upon the vernacular: “a text is not yet understandable to everyone just because it has been translated into each person’s mother tongue....” See Ratzinger, “In the Presence of the Angels,” 178.

In this respect, Thomas' case for a Latin liturgy leads Benedict to argue for the possibility of purely instrumental sacred music. To be sure, Benedict is cautious regarding music that lacks vocal performance: "Perhaps it should be said that, where an instrument is concerned, there is a greater possibility of alienation from the spirit than in the case of the voice; music can slip away from or turn against the spirit, the more remote it is from the human being."<sup>28</sup> But this does not hinder Benedict from making a direct connection between the liturgical use of Latin and purely instrumental music. Neither aural phenomena—Latin speech or instrumental music—are necessarily comprehended by the congregation; but such incomprehension does not mitigate their relation to words and, thereby, the Word. Thus Benedict upholds the attribute of *textuality* over against a complete inattention to scriptural revelation.

Secondly, while liturgical music may present to the listener something *more than* words, it is not irrational. Benedict's "musified" Word coheres with an understanding of *logos* as reason. The "sober inebriation" of the Spirit's work in the incarnation is crucial: "Words are superseded, but not the Word, the Logos....The Church's Tradition has this in mind when it talks about the sober inebriation caused in us by the Holy Spirit. There is always an ultimate sobriety, a deeper rationality, resisting any decline into irrationality and immoderation."<sup>29</sup> Following this characterization of liturgical music as shaped by reason, Benedict imports an interesting aesthetic paradigm: the distinction between "Apollonian" and "Dionysian."<sup>30</sup> The former is held to be closer to the Spirit of the Word, as it "is the music that draws senses into spirit and so brings man to wholeness. It does not abolish the senses, but inserts them into the unity of this creature that is man. It

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<sup>28</sup> Ratzinger, "On the Theological Basis of Church Music," 121.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 150.

<sup>30</sup> Benedict attributes the paradigm to Plato and Aristotle, however in the contemporary context it is impossible to extricate it from its use by Nietzsche in *The Birth of Tragedy*, which will be examined in more detail below. See Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, translated by Douglas Smith, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) [hereafter *BT*].

elevates the senses by uniting them with the spirit.”<sup>31</sup> The latter, however, is alien to the rational Word, as it “drags man into the intoxication of the senses, crushes rationality, and subjects the spirit to the senses.”<sup>32</sup> Thus Benedict maintains the attribute of *rationality* over against a pure sensuality that ignores the spirit.<sup>33</sup>

From the ultimate rationality of the Word and its music follows Benedict’s claim that liturgical music involves the entire *cosmos* within the liturgy. Depending heavily upon Augustine’s appropriation of a Pythagorean-mathematical conception of music, Benedict appropriates a sort of “harmony of the spheres”:

The courses of the revolving planets are like melodies, the numerical order is the rhythm, and the concurrence of the individual courses is the harmony. The music made by man must...be taken from the inner music and order of the universe....The beauty of music depends on its conformity to the rhythmic and harmonic laws of the universe. The more that human music adapts itself to the musical laws of the universe, the more beautiful it will be.<sup>34</sup>

In this respect, Benedict’s approach to the doctrine of incarnation coheres with a doctrine of creation. “The mathematics of the universe does not exist by itself, nor...can it be explained by stellar deities. It has a deeper foundation: the mind of the Creator. It comes from the Logos, in whom, so to speak, the archetypes of the world’s order are contained.”<sup>35</sup> The pre-existent Word of God is co-eternal with the Father, preceding and participating in the creation of the cosmos. As a rational component of the created order, music practiced by the church—as proclamation—must also reflect (or express) this cosmological breadth. Benedict affirms the attribute of *cosmicity* over against the modern turn away from classical Western musical aesthetics to a radical subjectivism.

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<sup>31</sup> Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 150.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 150.

<sup>33</sup> Benedict’s admittedly cautious use of this paradigm will be explored more fully below.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 152-153. See also Augustine, *On Music*, as well as its postmodern, “radical orthodox” appropriation in Catherine Pickstock, “Music: soul, city and cosmos after Augustine,” in *Radical Orthodoxy: a new theology* (London: Routledge, 1999), 243-277.

<sup>35</sup> Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 153.

Benedict is not interested in theories of subjective taste and their challenge to aesthetic normativity. Rather, he finds normativity in an objective Word of God.

Textuality, rationality and cosmicality—these are the attributes of a *logos*-inhabited music according to Benedict. Such characteristics are necessary to retain in any reforms of liturgical music. Within the ebb and flow of the historical nexus, the characteristics of the *logos* must be maintained if music is to proclaim that *logos*. As proclamation of the Word of God, liturgical music participates in the very salvation of the created order. “This, then, is the liturgy’s essence: to transpose the cosmos, to spiritualise it into the gesture of praise through song and thus to redeem it; to “humanise” the world.”<sup>36</sup> Thus musical dogmatics for Benedict are a way to ensure that the magnanimity of sacred music’s task is preserved and fulfilled. Textuality, rationality and cosmicality are at the heart of this essence for Benedict. The greatness of a “cosmic” liturgy that emerges from the very Word of God becomes *action*; it is made “visible and concrete.” Words, reason, and the universe are made *real* in sacred music. By maintaining these characteristics within sacred music, Benedict is simply concerned to preserve music’s purpose as participating in the continual communication of God’s Word in Christ through the Spirit.

### **Apollo contra Dionysus**

The primary aesthetic distinction that Benedict makes throughout his writings on sacred music is the paradigm of the Apollonian versus the Dionysian. The former refers to a rational, supersensual approach to aesthetics; the latter emphasizes the sensual and ecstatic side of music. It is the contemporary threat of the Dionysian element that Benedict fears may inculturate the musical practice of the Church. If the hyper-sensual approach to music was simply a matter of radically subjective taste without objective

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<sup>36</sup> Ratzinger, “Theological Problems of Church Music,” 221.

value, Benedict would not object. But he identifies an explicitly non-Christian anthropology and soteriology in music of this type. In his use of the Apollonian-Dionysian paradigm, Benedict is primarily concerned with the salvation of the flesh by the spirit, in contrast to the liberation and enlightenment posed by modern philosophies.

In contrast to both idealist and strict materialist philosophies, Benedict promotes an incarnational anthropology that holds spirit and flesh in concert. Benedict claims that while his critique of church music has been based on spiritualization, it should be understood as a *proper* spiritualization, which includes the corporeal as spiritually transformed.<sup>37</sup> The spiritualizing tendency of Platonism, he finds, is helpful to a degree, and concedes that both it and Christianity “pursue parallel courses for quite a distance.”<sup>38</sup> But while admitting that there can and must be a “genuine communion of interest” between the two worldviews, he insists that an *incarnational* Christology includes the body *within* spiritualization, rather than opposing the two realms.<sup>39</sup>

Unlike the Platonic and idealist traditions, Benedict is not critical of the sensual body in general, but rather affirms that the incarnation tames this aspect of humanity and draws it within the more rational, divine *logos*. “Spiritualization of the senses is the true spiritualization of the spirit.”<sup>40</sup> Benedict merely insists upon a properly Christian anthropology, in which the senses need deliverance from sin and to be drawn within the spiritual.

Proper liturgical music, then,

must be ordered to that integration of human being that appears before us in faith in the Incarnation. Such a redemption is more laborious than that of intoxication. But this labor is the exertion of truth itself. In one respect, it must integrate the senses into the spirit...Every sensual pleasure is strictly circumscribed and is ultimately incapable of intensification because the sense act cannot exceed a certain measure. ...[T]hrough

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<sup>37</sup> Ratzinger, “On the Theological Basis of Church Music,” 118.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 108.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 119.

integration into the spirit, the senses receive a new depth and reach into the infinity of the spiritual adventure.”<sup>41</sup>

The sensual, Benedict argues here, must be drawn into the life of the spirit—invigorated in the service of something *other*, rather than exhausting the body’s own limitations with overuse. To this end, Benedict asserts again that music should be ordered towards the *logos*. “Does [music] integrate man by drawing him to what is above, or does it cause his disintegration into formless intoxication or mere sensuality? That is the criterion for a music in harmony with the *logos*, a form of that *logikē latreia* (reason-able, *logos*-worthy worship)....”<sup>42</sup> The *logos* draws the body to “what is above,” that is, something *other than* the self’s own body and senses. Thus the spirit draws the body away from itself in order to realize its freedom in love.

Benedict’s concern with the philosophical anthropology reflected in Dionysian music leads into his concern that music’s portrayal of subjectivity may point toward a soteriology that is alien to the Christian position. Specifically, he maintains that rock music “seeks redemption” in ways that are contrary to Christian notions of freedom and responsibility. Rock music for him takes “a very precise position on the anarchical ideas of freedom which predominate today....But precisely for that reason, it is thoroughly opposed to the Christian notion of redemption and of freedom as its exact contradiction.”<sup>43</sup> The liberation of the individual is presented by rock music in terms of denying the self rather than embracing a transformed self.

People are, so to speak, released from themselves by the experience of being part of a crowd and by the emotional shock of rhythm, noise, and special lighting effects. However, in the ecstasy of having all their defenses torn down, the participants sink, as it were, beneath the elemental force of the universe. The music of the Holy Spirit’s sober inebriation seems to have little chance when self has become a prison, the mind is a

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<sup>41</sup> Ratzinger, “Liturgy and Sacred Music,” 387.

<sup>42</sup> Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 151.

<sup>43</sup> Ratzinger, “Liturgy and Sacred Music,” 387.

shackle, and breaking out from both appears as a true promise of redemption that can be tasted at least for a few moments.<sup>44</sup>

This dissolution of subjectivity is, for Benedict, altogether different from what is meant by salvation in the Christian sense.

For Benedict, religion and music are very close in their inclination to descend toward the Dionysian: “In not a few forms of religion, music is ordered to intoxication and ecstasy. . . . Such music lowers the barriers of individuality and of personality. Man frees himself in it from the burden of consciousness. Music becomes ecstasy, liberation from the ego, and unification with the universe.”<sup>45</sup> One must be careful, then, to distinguish liberation *from* the body and salvation *of* the body. Incarnational theology does not teach that the body and its senses are to be dissolved or annihilated, but rather transformed, renewed and properly oriented in the spirit of Christ.

In the contemporary world, Benedict claims, the “profane return” of such cultic music is found in rock and pop, “the festivals of which are an anti-culture of the same orientation—the pleasure of destruction, the abolition of everyday barriers, and the illusion of liberation from the ego in the wild ecstasy of noise and masses.”<sup>46</sup> Rock music, for Benedict, is a kind of liturgical music, but one that is of an entirely different church than that instituted by Christ. “This imbalance toward the senses recurs in modern popular music: the ‘God’ found here, the salvation of man identified here, is quite different from the God of the Christian faith.”<sup>47</sup> More specifically, for Benedict, “Through rhythm and melody themselves, pagan music often endeavors to elicit an ecstasy of the senses, but without elevating the senses into the spirit; on the contrary, it attempts to swallow up the

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid..

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ratzinger, “On the Theological Basis of Church Music,” 118-119.

spirit in the senses as a means of release.”<sup>48</sup> Thus the reason for Benedict’s antagonism toward rock and pop is not an aesthetic decision based on his own subjective taste, but is rooted in his observation of theological doctrines in such musical practices that are diametrically opposed to Christian faith.

In his use of the Apollonian-Dionysian paradigm, then, Benedict is primarily concerned that music’s engagement with the body may contradict the incarnational emphasis on the rational Word redeeming the sensual. While he careful not to appropriate the typology too literally (conceding that “Apollo is not Christ”), Benedict nevertheless continues to depend upon this paradigm.<sup>49</sup> What one cannot ignore in his use of this typology, however, is his dialectical dependence upon the modern philosophical ideas upon which the typology is based. That is, in adopting this philosophically charged paradigm, Benedict is reacting against a particular movement in modern philosophy that had already claimed the typology for its own purposes. By tracing a genealogy of this movement, one may better grasp the dialectical nature of Benedict’s dogmatic reflections on music.

#### A GENEALOGY OF MODERN MUSICAL HERESY

Benedict’s *logos*-driven dogmatic reflections on music—specifically his use of the Apollonian-Dionysian typology—are philosophically informed, as he weaves through both ancient and modern aesthetics. He is careful, however, to engage such philosophies in an exceptionally implicit manner. Benedict does not name the philosophers with whom

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<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 118. A curious aspect of Benedict’s dismissal of such music is his granting of intentionality to music. One would be hard pressed to say that music “endeavors” or “attempts” to do anything. It may *tend to* do these things, but Benedict’s use of active verbs indicates an intentionality that would be better ascribed to the performer or composer. Again, he contrasts proper liturgical music with the Dionysian: “By its nature [logos-oriented] music must be different from music that *is supposed to* lead to rhythmic ecstasy, stupifying anesthetization, sensual excitement, or dissolution of the ego in Nirvana, to name just a few possibilities.” See Ratzinger, “In the Presence of the Angels,” 176 (italics mine).

<sup>49</sup> Ratzinger, “Liturgy and Sacred Music,” 387.

he engages. Given what he *does* say, however, it is possible to reconstruct a genealogy of Benedict's philosophical foil.

Benedict is careful to distinguish a cosmically incarnational theology of music from modern philosophies of music. "The cosmic character of liturgical music stands in opposition to the two tendencies of the modern age...: music as pure subjectivity, music as the expression of mere will. We sing with the angels. But this cosmic character is grounded ultimately in the ordering of all Christian worship to *logos*."<sup>50</sup> The former refers to Hegel's absolute *Geist*; the latter to the *Wille* of Schopenhauer, which prioritizes action before reason.<sup>51</sup> In contradistinction from these modern philosophies, Benedict espouses Guardini's contribution to liturgical theology, the priority of *logos* before *ethos*.<sup>52</sup> Benedict's distinction here between the primacy of the *logos* in Christian thought and the idealist strands of modern philosophy is fundamental to understanding the project that Benedict takes up in his reflections on music. The origin of Benedict's aesthetic antithesis in his critical reflections on ecclesial music may ultimately be located in Kant's severance of the sublime from its ancient rhetorical roots. By challenging this strand of modern philosophy, Benedict continues the dogmatic project of challenging the non-Christian inculturation of the ecclesial practice of music.

### **Nietzsche's Dionysian Pessimism**

As stated earlier, Benedict's employment of an Apollonian-Dionysian paradigm inexorably places him in conversation with Friedrich Nietzsche.<sup>53</sup> In the latter's first

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<sup>50</sup> Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 155.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 154. Hegel and Schopenhauer are named on the preceding page. The prioritization of action before reason is also characteristic of Nietzsche's espousal of the Dionysian in *BT*, which bears the brunt of Benedict's critique in his use of the Apollonian-Dionysian paradigm.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 155. See the final chapter of Romano Guardini, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, translated by Ada Lane, Mileposts in Catholic Theology (New York: Herder & Herder, 1998), 85-95.

<sup>53</sup> Although Benedict does not name Nietzsche in his reflections on this paradigm regarding music, he is aware of its use in Nietzsche. While presenting an account of the history and concept of "freedom," he writes: "Similar ideas resurface in Nietzsche, who opposes Dionysian frenzy to Apollonian order, thus conjuring up primordial antitheses in the history of religions: the order of reason, whose symbolic

book, *The Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music*, the author ingeniously fused classical philology and German idealist philosophy to critique his contemporary culture.<sup>54</sup> As he viewed the circumstance of art in late-nineteenth century Germany, it had become too removed from the unity of thought and action, reflection and performance, that he found in ancient Greek tragedy. Nietzsche demanded the return of Dionysian aesthetic elements, so that modern culture would be redeemed and transformed to once again *celebrate* the tragic chaos that pervades existence. Nietzsche's Dionysian exemplifies a reaction against modern secular reason, but—as Benedict demonstrates—while much of Nietzsche's criticism is justified, it is often misplaced.

A primary resource of Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy* is Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Representation*. He refers to it throughout, even quoting Schopenhauer's passage on music in full.<sup>55</sup> Nietzsche's Apollonian and Dionysian loosely correspond to Schopenhauer's *Vorstellung* and *Wille*, respectively. As *Vorstellung*, Schopenhauer's world is the idealist representation of things, as opposed to things themselves.<sup>56</sup> In this manner Schopenhauer continues the Kantian idealist tradition. But as *Wille*, Schopenhauer's world is also the movement of his body.<sup>57</sup> Nietzsche's Apollonian and Dionysian follow this pattern: the former is found the art of sculpture, the latter in the moving art of music.<sup>58</sup> The former exemplifies Schopenhauer's *principium*

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representation is Apollo, corrupts the free, unrestrained frenzy of nature." See Ratzinger, "Truth and Freedom," *Com.* 23 (1996): 18.

<sup>54</sup> Of course Nietzsche was not the first within modern German thought to appropriate the classical concept of the Dionysian, he certainly expanded the concept to have a renewed relevance. See Adrian Del Caro, "Dionysian Classicism, or Nietzsche's Appropriation of an Aesthetic Norm," *JHI* 50 (1989): 589-605.

<sup>55</sup> *BT*, 87-89. Christopher Janaway has observed that in *The Birth of Tragedy*, the "train of thought is uniquely Nietzsche's, and that at almost every turn he has learned how to express it from Schopenhauer." See Janaway, *Self and World in Schopenhauer's Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 345.

<sup>56</sup> Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Idea*, edited by David Berman, translated by Jill Berman, The Everyman Library (London: J.M. Dent, 1995), 3: "Thus no truth is more certain, more independent of all others, and less in need of proof, than this: that all that is there for the knowing – that is, this whole world – is only object in relation to the subject, perception of the perceiver – in a word, idea (*Vorstellung*)." *Vorstellung* has, of course, been translated as both "idea" and "representation."

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 32: "Every true act of will is also at once and without exception a movement of the body: he cannot really will the act without being at the same time aware that it manifests itself as a movement of his body."

<sup>58</sup> *BT*, 19.

*individuationis*; the latter dissolves individuals to experience their unity with the world in a state of “self-annihilation.” The former resides in the fictitious dreams of the mind, the latter in intoxication and ecstasy of the senses.<sup>59</sup>

The relation *between* these two aesthetic elements, however, is complicated. In one sense, Nietzsche adopts Schiller’s proto-Hegelian methodology, advocating a “binary synthesis” of Apollo and Dionysus.<sup>60</sup> In §21, he employs familial language of a “fraternal bond” (*einen Bruderbund*) between the two gods.<sup>61</sup> Benjamin Bennett has argued (against Walter Kaufmann) that the Dionysian and Apollonian elements are not “pure” in their primitive, isolated state, but rather *become* pure only when they are in proper balance.<sup>62</sup> On the other hand, Nietzsche seems to pit the two against each other in a continual struggle, privileging Dionysus (as Schopenhauer prioritizes the *Wille*) in order to overcome the modern tyranny of Apollo.<sup>63</sup> Nietzsche describes how Apollo “tears man up” and “tears us away” from Dionysus, and then how “the Dionysian again achieves predominance” and “at the most essential point that Apollonian illusion is broken through

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<sup>59</sup> There has been much discussion and debate regarding the relationship between Schopenhauer’s and Nietzsche’s respective dualities. Benedict does not participate in such discussions, however, nor does he address any specific texts of either thinker. For the purposes of elucidating Benedict’s reaction against modern aesthetics, therefore, the present account will take a more generalized approach, one which sees Schopenhauer and Nietzsche in concord. This approach is not taken without recourse to contemporary scholarship, however. Walter H. Sokel writes:

The world for Nietzsche is an aesthetic phenomenon in two senses – one active and the other passive. In the active sense, it is aesthetic as the arena of creativeness; in the passive sense, it stages performances for spectators. In Schopenhauer’s terms, the former is the world as Will, as the creative energy of the universe, in Nietzsche’s term, the Dionysian. The latter is the world as Representation, in Nietzsche’s term the Apollonian, as contemplation, observation, and judgment of what the Will has created and creates.

See Sokel, “On the Dionysian in Nietzsche,” *New Literary History* 36 (2005): 514. For an early argument against equating these dualities, see Grace Neal Dolson, “The Influence of Schopenhauer upon Friedrich Nietzsche,” *The Philosophical Review* 10 (1901): 245-246.

<sup>60</sup> Paul Bishop and R.H. Stephenson, “Nietzsche and Weimar Aesthetics,” *German Life and Letters* 52 (1999): 420-421.

<sup>61</sup> *BT*, 117.

<sup>62</sup> Benjamin Bennett’s critique of Kaufmann concerns the latter’s anthropological assumption that the “pure” is the “primitive” and his corresponding reading of that assumption in *BT*. See Bennett, “Nietzsche’s Idea of Myth: The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Eighteenth-Century Aesthetics,” *PMLA* 94 (1979): 420.

<sup>63</sup> *BT*, 115, 117.

and annihilated.”<sup>64</sup> Nietzsche is ambiguous, therefore, in whether he prefers the Dionysian to take precedence or achieve a proper balance with the Apollonian.<sup>65</sup>

Nietzsche observes that the *musical* aspect of Greek tragedy, however, is Dionysian. One of the many tasks of *The Birth of Tragedy* was to outline the relation between music and language (a hot topic in musical aesthetics in the wake of Hanslick’s *On the Beautiful in Music*, which was originally published in 1854 and moved through ten editions). As a project of classical philology, Nietzsche addressed the loss of awareness of the musico-speech culture of ancient Greece. Reading Greek through Latin lenses had distorted the natural rhythm of long and short syllables in Greek, so that the ancient musical poetry was (wrongly) assumed to follow the model of *stressed* syllables.<sup>66</sup> He further associated the “spirit of music” with Dionysus, particularly in regards to the tragic struggle over individuation. Kathleen Marie Higgins has written that, in *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche “links Dionysus to a mode of self-awareness that is characterized by a forgetting of all that is individual and by a sense of oneness with the rest of humanity and the rest of nature.”<sup>67</sup> It is music that “restores such awareness,” however, as “Language depends on, yet does not communicate, the Dionysian awareness of oneness with the world.”<sup>68</sup> Music, furthermore, serves as a “transcendental precondition for the possibility of language.”<sup>69</sup> Despite the ambiguity regarding whether Dionysus should be fraternally bonded or *à la mode*, then, the *musical* aesthetic of Nietzsche clearly highlights the latter.

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 117.

<sup>65</sup> In this respect one may consider another contemporary debate in Nietzsche studies: whether *The Birth of Tragedy* is to be seen as an endorsement or a criticism of Schopenhauer’s thought. For the former approach, see Julian Young, *Nietzsche’s Philosophy of Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 25-57; for the latter, see Walter Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press), 108-9 and H.L. Mencken, *The Philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche*, Library of Essential Reading (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2006), 45-46.

<sup>66</sup> Babette E. Babich, *Words in Blood, Like Flowers*, SUNY Series in Contemporary Continental Philosophy (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2006), 47.

<sup>67</sup> Kathleen Higgins, “Nietzsche on Music,” *JHI* 47 (1986): 666.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 663.

Nietzsche advocates both Apollonian and Dionysian in concert, but nevertheless he emphasizes the latter due to the dominance of the former in modern thought. The pendulum swung back and forth between the two in ancient Greece, but Nietzsche claims that, ever since that “theoretical man” (*theoretischen Menschen*) *par excellence*, Socrates, the West has been trapped under the tyranny of Apollo.<sup>70</sup> Nietzsche even considers the situation unfortunate that no one has been able to find the necessary hemlock by which to overthrow such domination.<sup>71</sup> In the realm of tragedy, it was Socrates’ friend, Euripides, who definitively tarnished Dionysus’ reputation in *The Bacchae*.<sup>72</sup> Furthermore, in §18, he congratulates Kant & Schopenhauer for “winning the most difficult victory, the victory over the optimism which lies hidden in the essence of logic, the optimism which is also the substratum (*der Untergrund*) of our culture.”<sup>73</sup> Thus Nietzsche comes to advocate a kind of pessimism, but one augmented with Dionysian performance so to be positive and life-affirming.<sup>74</sup>

But in theological perspective, it should be recognized that Nietzsche’s critique works best as a critique of *modern secular* reason, not the rationality of the Christian *logos*.<sup>75</sup> This is most evident when examining Kant’s analytic of the sublime. James Kirwan has observed that the “sublime” features prominently in Nietzsche’s early work (i.e. *The Birth of Tragedy*), and that his notion of Dionysian art has “obvious affinities”

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<sup>70</sup> For Socrates’ description as *theoretischen Menschen*, see *BT*, 81.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

<sup>72</sup> Nietzsche’s account of the death of tragedy is in *ibid.*, 62-73.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 98-99.

<sup>74</sup> This is in contrast to Schopenhauer’s philosophical pessimism. Nietzsche’s description of “*Dionysian* pessimism” is described in § 370, “What is romanticism?” of *The Gay Science*, edited by Bernard Williams, translated by Josefine Nauckhoff and Adrien Del Caro, Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 234-236.

<sup>75</sup> James I. Porter writes that Nietzsche’s “Dionysianism consists in features that...are legible only from a modern perspective.” See Porter, *The Invention of Dionysus* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000), 6. Regarding his critique of Christianity and *BT*, Nietzsche considered *BT* to contain “a profound hostile silence with regard to Christianity throughout the book.” See his *Ecce Homo*, translated by R.J. Hollingdale, Penguin Classics (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin, 1979), 79.

with the sublime.<sup>76</sup> Furthermore, Schopenhauer's aesthetic, which was deeply influential for Nietzsche, also extends Kant's discussion of the sublime.<sup>77</sup> What these observations mean, however, will be explored in the next section. Nietzsche's Dionysian, then, represents a reaction against a tyranny of reason in modern thought. In Pope Benedict's own use of the Apollonian-Dionysian paradigm, he implicitly deconstructs Nietzschean aesthetics in order to correct the trajectory of this reaction and defend the normative rationality of the *logos*.

### **The Kantian Sublime**

Much of Nietzsche's philosophy is a rejection of the idealism and romanticism that followed in the wake of Kant's critical philosophy, although it unfortunately accepts many of Kant's assumptions without criticism. As John Walker has noted, "Nietzsche's attack on metaphysics...retains essentially Kantian premises."<sup>78</sup> In addition, Nick Land has traced Nietzsche's notion of the Dionysian to its roots in Kant's description of the sublime.<sup>79</sup> It is in Kant's "Analytic of the Sublime" that a supersensible reason—not unlike Nietzsche's Apollonian type—is pitted over and against the lower faculties of perception and imagination. Kant succeeded in critiquing the same optimism that Nietzsche rejects in his first critique (see *Transcendental Dialectic* section), but he elevated reason beyond measure in his analytic of the sublime.

Crucial to understanding Kant's notion of the sublime is that the *objects* of aesthetic judgment are *not* sublime. Their *presentation* to the perceiving subject is what may be properly called sublime, as the sublime cannot be contained within "sensuous

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<sup>76</sup> Kirwan also notes that Nietzsche's "eternal recurrence" and his "will to power" are "fundamentally sublime reveries." See Kirwan, *Sublimity* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 132.

<sup>77</sup> Schopenhauer, 124-131.

<sup>78</sup> John Walker, "Nietzsche, Christianity, and the legitimacy of tradition," in *Nietzsche and Modern German Thought*, ed. Keith Ansell-Pearson (London: Routledge, 1991), 11.

<sup>79</sup> Nick Land, "Art as insurrection: the question of aesthetics in Kant, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche," in *Nietzsche and Modern German Thought*, 240-256.

form”; it concerns rather the ideas of reason.<sup>80</sup> Kant defines the aesthetic category of the sublime as that which is “absolutely great” (*schlechthin groß*).<sup>81</sup> *Erhaben ist das, mit welchem in Vergleichung alles andere klein ist.*<sup>82</sup> The sublime is so “great,” in fact, that it “evidences a faculty of mind transcending every standard of sense.”<sup>83</sup>

Unpacking this, Kant delineates two types within the sublime: the *mathematisch* and the *dynamisch*.<sup>84</sup> The former describes the aesthetic feelings arising from an encounter with magnitude (*Größenschätzung*) and the latter with those that encounter some form of power (*Macht; Gewalt*).<sup>85</sup> When the perception of magnitudes or powers exceeds the limits of the imagination, aesthetic judgment is overwhelmed and the feeling of the sublime thus arises.<sup>86</sup> Kant also identifies a curious combination of aesthetic pleasure and pain in encountering the sublime. Pain arises from the imagination’s struggle and subsequent failure to surpass its limits.<sup>87</sup> But then the subject’s reason—that “supersensible” (*übersinnlich*) faculty of the mind which “transcends every standard of sensibility” (*übertrifft allen Maßstab der Sinnlichkeit*)—intercedes in order that the subject may comprehend such greatness, up to and including infinity.<sup>88</sup> An aesthetic pleasure then results, as the subject marvels in his or her own faculty of reason. Again, sublimity is *not* found in objects of perception, but in the subject’s own mind. Thereby one’s imagination—along with any and all objects that the world has to offer up to one’s aesthetic judgment—must “sink into insignificance before the ideas of reason.”<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> *KU*, §23d. Translated portions (ET), unless otherwise noted, are from *Kant’s Critique of Aesthetic Judgement*, translated by James Creed Meredith (Oxford: Clarendon, 1911).

<sup>81</sup> *KU*, 333.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 335.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 336. ET, 98.

<sup>84</sup> *KU*, 332.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 337, 348.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 337.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 338.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 341.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 344. ET, 105.

Despite Kant's limits of rationality in his first critique, the third critique provides an opportunity to re-enthroned reason in its tyranny over all else. "Reason exerts a dominion over sensibility...."<sup>90</sup> This rejection of sensibility and elevation of reason beyond measure is precisely the audacity of the German idealist tradition. Schiller, in his 1795 work, *On the Sublime*, claimed that "The sublime creates for us a way out of the sensuous world."<sup>91</sup> As Mark Evan Bonds has astutely observed in his study of *Music as Thought*, "the sublime was more than a matrix of aesthetic qualities: it was perceived by many as an epistemological means toward the integration of the finite and the infinite."<sup>92</sup> Furthermore, he writes, "the object of description" in musical aesthetics "had shifted from music's effect to music's essence or, more specifically, to the perception of an ideal realm reflected in that music."<sup>93</sup> The pragmatics of musical *practice* was disappearing; instead an "absolute music" began to usurp its place in the musical aesthetics of the eighteenth century.<sup>94</sup> Such idealism is portrayed in Peter Shaffer's *Amadeus*, in which Antonio Salieri reads a draft of Mozart's Twenty-ninth Symphony and marvels at how it perfectly transcribes that which was already complete in the mind of the genius himself (while the audience unfortunately requires an audible performance simultaneous to his reading): "I was staring through the cage of those meticulous ink strokes at—an Absolute Beauty!"<sup>95</sup> It is this unrealistic dominance of reason that Schopenhauer rejects in his primacy of *Wille*; it is this tyranny that Nietzsche rejects in his (albeit balanced) preference for the Dionysian. Although Nietzsche (following Schopenhauer) rejects this idealism of the Kantian sublime, he allows that same idealism to exhaust his definition of the Apollonian.

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<sup>90</sup> *KU*, 354. This translation is from Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, translated by J.H. Bernard (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2005), 66.

<sup>91</sup> Qtd. in Mark Evan Bonds, *Music as Thought* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), 46.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>94</sup> Daniel Chua deconstructs the notion of an "absolute music" in *Absolute Music and the Construction of Meaning*, *New Perspectives in Music History and Criticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

<sup>95</sup> Peter Shaffer, *Amadeus* (New York: Harper & Row, 1980) I.12, 45.

But such an idealist representation of rationality is *not* the Christian *logos*—and *that* is what Benedict is keen to point out in his dogmatic description of the Apollonian type. By explicitly countering Hegelian subjectivity and the primacy of Schopenhauer’s *Wille* with Guardini’s primacy of the *logos*, as well as his repeated critical attention to the Apollonian-Dionysian paradigm, Benedict addresses the philosophical heresy in modern musical aesthetics. By doing so he participates in the Catholic dogmatic tradition of critiquing contemporary culture by means of the normative divine *logos*.

### **Learning to Count: logic, rhetoric and modulation**

Another aspect of modern musical heresy that Benedict does *not* address, however, is the loss of the rhetorical locus of sublimity. Such a critique is entirely consistent with his dogmatic approach, however. It is included here to supplement Benedict’s approach, as well as demonstrate his similarity with contemporary theological attention to the Kantian sublime. John Milbank has attended to the sublime and its audacious claim to usurp the transcendence of God with the greatness of human reason.<sup>96</sup> Milbank’s argument applies to the matter of music particularly in regards to his assertion that modern thought has lost the *rhetorical* locus of sublimity, as originally outlined in Longinus’ initial manifesto on the subject.<sup>97</sup> Consistent with Milbank’s position, then, is an Augustinian approach to musical *mensuratio* that reveals the pitfalls of Kant’s account of measuring magnitude in his *Analytic of the Sublime*.

When Kant outlines the “judgment of measurement” in §26 of the *Analytic*, he is more interested in the logic of mathematics than its rhetoric. He describes counting as the

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<sup>96</sup> See John Milbank, “Sublimity: the modern transcendent,” in *Religion, Modernity and Postmodernity*, edited by Paul Heelas and David Martin, Religion and Modernity (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 258-84. Cf. the opposite approach of Clayton Crockett’s appropriation of Kantian thought in his *A Theology of the Sublime* (London, Routledge, 2001).

<sup>97</sup> Milbank, 265; Longinus, *On great writing (On the sublime)*, translated by G.M.A. Grube (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1991).

“successive aggregation of units” in which the imagination “advances *ad infinitum*.”<sup>98</sup> It is the faculty of understanding that assists the imagination in this respect, in that it contains the concepts necessary to repeat counting in Euclidean orders (e.g. repeating digits after ten, as in the decimal scale, or after two, as in binary code). Thus in the act of counting, the mind compensates for the limitations of the lower faculties of imagination and perception.

Augustine also presents Euclidean mathematics in his description of the practice of musical *mensuratio* in book one of *De Musica*: “although as we have said numbers progress to infinity, men have made certain articulations in counting by which they return again and again to one, the beginning or principle of numbers. For, in counting, we progress from one to ten, and from there we return to one.”<sup>99</sup> But later in book six, Augustine incorporates this practice of counting musical time into a kind of doctrine of mathematical ascension. This Augustinian version of the sublime, however, has nothing to do with the audacious idealism of Kant and his followers. By attending to the counting of *music*, Augustine utilizes the “rhetorical perspective on sublimity” espoused by Milbank. Augustine does not count in order to marvel at his *own* reason; instead he allows himself to *be lifted* by a more perfect rhythm that comes from without. Augustine does all this in a study of the Ambrosian hymn, *Deus creator omnium*. The cosmological statement that God is Creator of all—and therefore Lord of all—thereby guides every perception, measurement and action into right order. To confess *Deus creator omnium* is to exercise prudence, the initial virtue that subsequently leads the soul through temperance and fortitude to justice, finally culminating in the *telos* of sanctification. Thus the final book of *De Musica* gleans the fruit from classical music theory and replants it in an explicitly theological project.

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<sup>98</sup> *KU*, 340; ET, 101.

<sup>99</sup> Augustine, *On Music*, 195.

An Augustinian approach to the practice of counting musical time is parallel to Benedict's privileging of the Apollonian over the Dionysian. It is in *reflection* upon musical *practice* that the *logos* has priority over *ethos*. In the practice of counting rhythm, one is led into an awareness of the ebb and flow of the temporal cosmos. Augustine does not butcher time along the lines of a Kantian "successive aggregation of units" that has no respect for the particularity of those units and the rhetorical shape they collectively grant to the movement of time.<sup>100</sup> In reflecting upon that musical rhetoric, then, one able to be brought up into the virtuous life of the spirit that pervades and redeems the particularities of performance.

#### PRINCIPLES OF PARTICULARITY

One final observation should be made regarding Benedict's dogmatic reflections on music—one which addresses his refusal to allow rock and pop into the musical practice of the Church. One immediate criticism that comes to mind is that Benedict is himself an aesthetic tyrant who privileges the universal over against particularity.<sup>101</sup> But such criticism too quickly ignores much of what he has to say about the ecclesial practice of music.

In Benedict's strict stance against cultural universalization, for instance, he dismisses pop precisely on the grounds that it presents a "music of the masses"; that is, it is *pop music* that destroys particularity, not its prohibition. Benedict is concerned that music as a commercial enterprise threatens to alleviate cultural particularity in favor of appeasing the mass populace with homogeneity. Thus he emphasizes the local and particular aspects of sacred music when he presents his concerns regarding popular

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<sup>100</sup> The "new musicological" critique of the final movement of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony (the "Ode to Joy") seems apt here. Beethoven successively "beats" the music out of the performance in a violent manner, compared by Susan McClary to the "throttling murderous rage of a rapist incapable of attaining release." Susan McClary, "Getting Down Off the Beanstalk," *Minnesota Composer's Forum Newsletter* (January 1987), 8.

<sup>101</sup> See chapter 3 of this dissertation, n. 130.

music. By comparing pop music with folk music, Benedict distinguishes between the mass society and local communities. “The audience to whom pop music refers is mass society. In contrast, folk music...is the musical expression of a clearly defined community held together by its language, history, and way of life, which assimilates and shapes its experiences in song...”<sup>102</sup> Mass society is entirely different from such local communities. “The masses as such do not know experiences firsthand; they only know reproduced and standardized experiences.”<sup>103</sup> This is closely related to his concern with preserving personal identity in the life of the spirit—rather than annihilating the self vis-à-vis the Dionysian—is his critique that such music also destroys cultural distinctions in favor of a “music of the masses.”

The Church does perform its music in a universal fashion, but not in a way that destroys cultural particularities. The ecclesial practice of music—as proclamation of the cosmic Word—is, for Benedict, a performance by the *universal* church. “All our singing is a singing and a praying with the great liturgy that spans the whole of creation.”<sup>104</sup> The chant, chorale, hymn, and even the fugue are located not just in their performance on Sunday morning by the choir, congregation or organist. The ecclesial practice of music involves the entire body of Christ. As one is baptized into the universal church and partakes of the resurrected body of Christ, one sings and plays with that same *corpus mysticum*.<sup>105</sup>

Thus, when Benedict establishes “governing principles” for liturgical music in his 1981 essay, “*Theologische Grundlagen der Kirchenmusik*,” he begins with the relation

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<sup>102</sup> Ratzinger, “Sing Artistically for God,” 135.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid. Here Benedict acknowledges his dependence upon the work of Calvin Johansson, Paul Hindemith and Theodor Adorno.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 152.

<sup>105</sup> Benedict attends to the modernist distinction between *corpus mysticum* and *corpus verum* in *ibid.*, 85-91, defining the former as “pertaining to the mystery, the sphere of the sacrament.” By employing the term here I do not intend to say that Benedict holds a “transubstantial” view of music. While he may consider the ecclesial practice of music to be *sacramental*, it is highly doubtful that he would deem it a *sacrament*.

between the universal and the particular.<sup>106</sup> First, the liturgy and its music is *catholic*, meaning that it is available for everyone. Benedict argues that such catholicity in music will tend toward a more “simple” music, but with a simplicity that is more an “expression of maturity” than banal.<sup>107</sup> Secondly, the liturgy is *particular*, so that the variety of settings and circumstances in local churches will engender an accordingly broad range of musical expressions.<sup>108</sup> Benedict is surprised and offended by one aspect of postconciliar liturgical music, that “postconciliar pluralism has created uniformity in one respect at least: it will not tolerate a high standard of expression.”<sup>109</sup> Benedict’s sharp rhetoric here leads him into an interesting emphasis—that the “whole range of possibilities within the unity of the Catholic liturgy” must not be impaired.

Benedict’s other principles serve to highlight the proper relation between the universal and particular. His third principle is that the liturgy must include “active participation,” though Benedict creatively affirms that this may be achieved in a variety of ways.<sup>110</sup> The principle of “active participation,” introduced in *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, is often interpreted as mandating that everyone—priest and congregation—must assist in the performance of liturgical music.<sup>111</sup> This mandate often leads to a predominance of congregational hymns or praise songs, as well as the elimination of special choirs, as that is assumed to be the easiest way for everyone engage in “active participation.” Such a view, however, is characterized by Benedict as “primitive

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<sup>106</sup> Ratzinger, “Theologische Grundlagen der Kirchenmusik,” in *Das christliche Universum*, edited by Bruno Moser (Munich: Südwest Verlag, 1981), 362; ET: “On the Theological Basis of Church Music,” in *The Feast of Faith: Approaches to a Theology of the Liturgy*, translated by Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986), 97-126. Benedict borrows the title to this essay from a 1958 essay by the Lutheran theologian of music, Oskar Söhngen.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 122.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 123.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.

<sup>111</sup> SC, §§14-20. See also Thomas Day, *Why Catholics Can’t Sing: the culture of Catholicism and the triumph of bad taste* (New York: Crossroad, 1990), 14.

actionism,” as he interprets the principle of “active participation” differently.<sup>112</sup> Each person must not necessarily *perform* along with the community, he argues. The practice of listening, rather, is equally active as musical performance. “Are we to compel people to sing when they cannot, and, by doing so, silence not only their hearts but the hearts of others too?”<sup>113</sup> Benedict maintains that those congregants who sing “with the heart” rather than “with the mouth” participate just as actively as the cantor or choir. Thus, given his own interpretation of this principle, Benedict appears to allow for a greater variety of musical proclamation than one might expect from a so-called traditionalist.

Fourthly, the liturgy must be *grand*. “The Church must not settle down with what is merely comfortable and serviceable at the parish level; she must arouse the voice of the cosmos and, by glorifying the Creator, elicit the glory of the cosmos itself, making it also glorious, beautiful, habitable and beloved.”<sup>114</sup> In this respect, the liturgy must not forget its place as God’s Word. That it has such a noble task does not make it metaphysical or overly spiritual; rather it must, like the incarnation, allow for human flesh to sing the divine. Again, Benedict is not specific in what he regards as fulfilling this principle. Whether such music is grandiose in the fashion of the final movement in Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony or as complex and full as the opening movement of Tavener’s *Fall and Resurrection* is not specified. From such a loosely defined principle, then, one is inclined to conclude that Benedict is, again, generous in allowing for a wide variety of possibilities in musical proclamation.

In order to preserve particularity and variety in musical proclamation, the liturgy must finally be willing to include *indigenous religious music*. Benedict is cautious here, however, for he does not wish to jettison the Word in order to adapt to a secular folk culture. So Benedict provides an interpretation of the Constitution on the Liturgy that

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<sup>112</sup> Ratzinger, “In the Presence of the Angels,” 177-178.

<sup>113</sup> Ratzinger, “On the Theological Basis of Church Music,” 124.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*

emphasizes the more *religious* aspect of indigenous music, in order that the church, when adapting the musical Word to local cultures, will preserve the sacredness of those cultures over the secular aspects.<sup>115</sup> “That is why the Church has had to be critical of all ethnic music; it could not be allowed untransformed into the sanctuary.”<sup>116</sup> Benedict’s caution regarding indigenous music may be easily misunderstood as a kind of Western cultural elitism.<sup>117</sup> But that is not the case; Benedict wishes to eliminate any element of music—Western or non-Western—that does not conform to the Word of God. “The Church must maintain high standards; she must be a place where beauty can be at home; she must lead the struggle for that ‘spiritualization’ without which the world becomes ‘the first circle of hell’.”<sup>118</sup> Benedict is not an iconoclast, hampering cultural efforts toward musical proclamation; he simply has “high standards,” demanding that the Church’s music proclaim the Word and not some other philosophy.

#### DOGMATIC REFLECTION ON MUSIC IN PROPER PERSPECTIVE

One criticism that could be made of Benedict is that he employs philosophical categories (as the Apollonian-Dionysian paradigm) without explicitly engaging the primary sources from which they emerge. With rare exception, Benedict does not even name the philosophers against whom he argues. He either assumes his audience is familiar with the philosophical subtext, or he is attempting to avoid confusion with those theologies that take their bearings directly from philosophy.<sup>119</sup> In any case, Benedict’s dogmatic reflections on music resist inculturation from philosophies that are alien to the Christian *logos*.

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 126.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 118.

<sup>117</sup> For a significant critique of Rome’s sharing in indigenous music, see Stephen B.G. Mbunga, *Church Law and Bantu Music*, *Neue Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft* Supplement XIII (Schöneck-Beckenried, Switzerland: Nouvelle Revue de science missionnaire, 1963).

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 125.

<sup>119</sup> Paul Tillich, Karl Rahner, and Rudolf Bultmann immediately come to mind here.

Such resistance is the hallmark of proper dogmatic behavior. Benedict does not intend his dogmatic prescriptions for sacred music to inhibit fresh and creative expressions of faith. He is quick to affirm that critical engagement with liturgical practices pushes those practices into a genuinely creative future. “Normativity, when properly understood, does not mean the exclusion of the new, but guidance which points one toward what lies on the horizon.”<sup>120</sup> To this end one cannot provide dogmatic guidance too early. Benedict insists that it is impossible “to lay down a priori musical criteria for this spiritualization process,” thus one must reflect and critique the ecclesial practice of music that has already been performed and now lies before the church as an established act.<sup>121</sup> In such a process of practice and reflection the church learns how to perform its music. One cannot establish purely positive principles of musical dogmatics; one cannot say the church must do music *this way*, but rather the church must *not* do music *that way*, as she has learned that way is contrary to the Word of God. Dogmatic work of this type, then, is not *constructive* theology so much as it is *descriptive* theology.

Vatican II was well advised, therefore, only to indicate very general standards: music must ‘accord with the spirit of the liturgical action’; it must be ‘suitable’, or be capable of being ‘made suitable, for sacred use’; it must ‘accord with the dignity of the temple’ and ‘truly contribute to the edification of the faithful’.<sup>122</sup>

Keenly aware of the flexibility that must be allowed within such “general standards,” Benedict’s position appears to cohere with a kind of “generous orthodoxy,” in which sufficient room is given for liturgical innovation and creativity.<sup>123</sup> But it is the ecclesial

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<sup>120</sup> Ratzinger, “In the Presence of the Angels,” 174.

<sup>121</sup> Ratzinger, “On the Theological Basis of Church Music,” 119. Such an approach has recently been proposed by Nicholas Adams’ “description” project, in which the rhetoric of dogmatic pronouncements is oriented toward description rather than proscription. See Nicholas Adams and Charles Elliott, “Ethnography is Dogmatics: Making Description Central to Systematic Theology,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 53 (2000): 339-64.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 119-120.

<sup>123</sup> This paper’s use of the term “generous orthodoxy” does not intend to identify either Benedict or its own position with Brian McLaren’s “emergent church” program; the term is useful, however, for describing the kind of dogmatic reflection that is reflected in Benedict’s writings. Cf. Brian D. McLaren, *A Generous Orthodoxy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004).

practice of music—and *not* critical theological reflection on that music—that bears the creative responsibility of the Church.

In another essay, Benedict situates the musical aesthetic of the contemporary church as caught between two worlds.<sup>124</sup> On one end of the spectrum there is “music of the masses” that may be “industrially manufactured and is evaluated by how well it sells.”<sup>125</sup> On the other end there is high art, “a rationally construed, artificial music with the highest technical requirements which is hardly capable of reaching out beyond a small, elite circle.”<sup>126</sup> Church music, however, settles between these two extremes. Benedict finds it inevitable, however, that the church would be tempted to surrender its own place and reach for either extreme.<sup>127</sup> His problem with the church in such instances is that it tends to import culture into the church’s proclamation without exporting its witness to that culture. So Benedict insists that “this dialogue must necessarily be bilateral.”<sup>128</sup> The job of the theologian, in such circumstances, is to look for how faith makes room and provides direction for art.

When theologians try to contribute something in this struggle, they must make use of the means available to them. They cannot enter into the musical discussions per se, but they can nonetheless ask where the seams are, so to speak, that link faith and art. They can try to explain how faith prepares an interior place for art and which directives it gives for the path of art.<sup>129</sup>

Benedict insists that sacred music cannot indulge either extreme of high art music or popular music for the masses, for “if music crosses these boundaries, it sacrifices the culture of faith and hence stops being music from the word of God and for the word of

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<sup>124</sup> Ratzinger, “Biblische Vorgaben für die Kirchenmusik,” in *Brixener Initiative Musik und Kirche 3: Symposion “Choral und Mehrstimmigkeit”* (Brixen: Weger Verlag, 1991), 9-21; ET: “Sing Artistically for God,” in *A New Song for the Lord*, 119-140. Methodologically, of course, such dialectical thinking recalls Benedict’s earlier essay, “Theological Problems of Church Music,” in which Christian iconoclasm is pitted against cultural accommodation, with the church caught between the two. The two art worlds described here in “*Biblische Vorgaben*,” however, present an entirely different paradigm.

<sup>125</sup> Ratzinger, “Sing Artistically for God,” 121.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 122.

God.”<sup>130</sup> Sacred music must not succumb to pure aestheticism, in which art is simply “for art’s sake,” for “this presumptuousness necessarily leads to a nihilistic lack of standards and therefore generates nihilistic parodies of art, but not a new creativity.”<sup>131</sup> Art *must* be in the service of something if it is to be of any value and in the church that is the Word of God. Nor must sacred music be tempted to indulge popular culture simply because to do so would be pastorally practical.

Benedict often finds himself responding to issues of musical dogmatics within the context of postconciliar disputes regarding the liturgy. Frustrated by “the helpless plight of church music that has resulted from the halfhearted realization of liturgical reform,”<sup>132</sup> Benedict takes the current situation and places it in its historical context. For him, the liturgy

always stands in the tension between continuity and renewal. It is always growing into new todays, and it must constantly prune the today that has become yesterday, so that what is essential may appear vigorous and new. Liturgy needs growth as well as cleansing, and the preservation of its identity is crucial.<sup>133</sup>

The preservation of Christian identity in the liturgy is indeed the crucial issue for Benedict, as well as for any proper dogmatic reflection on music as proclamation of the Word of God. Such dogmatic work cannot look forward; it must always be *reflection* upon existing *practice*, allowing for new aesthetic patterns and forms, but continually shaped by the normative, divine *logos*.

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 133.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> Ratzinger, “In the Presence of the Angels,” 167.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 168.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE DOGMATICS OF MUSIC: A CONCLUSION POINTING FORWARD

In his lectures on Schleiermacher, Barth laments how in Schleiermacher's *Christmas Eve* dialogue, "music is rated *above* speech."<sup>1</sup> Barth would presumably express a similar criticism with regards to Jean-Luc Godard's film, *One Plus One*. This dissertation, however, does not claim that music is better or worse at proclaiming the gospel than the spoken word. Language may indeed be profoundly specific in its communication of meaning; words are extraordinary gifts from God for which much praise and thanksgiving is due. But God has also granted to humanity the gift of music, a marvelous means by which meaning and emotion may be embodied and expressed in terms that our own bodies may comprehend.<sup>2</sup> Timothy Gorringer rightly asserts that "It is God who is the origin of music's power to express emotion, to lead us to dance, to reduce us to tears. All this has its origin in God, and we explore the depths of God's world and of its imaginative possibilities in making music."<sup>3</sup> The originating divine *logos* is indeed the power behind, underneath and in the gift of music. But how does that *logos* relate to the *ecclesial practice* of music?

#### *FIDES EX AUDITU* IN REVIEW

It has been the primary contention of this dissertation that critical theological reflection upon the ecclesial practice of music requires that it is set within the manifold redemptive work of the Word of God in Christ through the Church. By pointing to contemporary

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<sup>1</sup> Barth, *The Theology of Schleiermacher*, 210.

<sup>2</sup> Graham Ward presents an incarnational approach to a phenomenological analysis of touch, but his account could easily be augmented with sound, for hearing is, ultimately, a specific kind of touch, vis-à-vis the various components of the ear. See Ward, "The *Logos*, the Body and the World: On the Phenomenological Border," in *Transcending Boundaries in Philosophy and Theology: Reason, Meaning and Experience*, edited by Kevin Vanhoozer and Martin Warner, *Transcending Boundaries in Philosophy and Theology* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007), 105-126.

<sup>3</sup> T. J. Gorringer, *The Education of Desire: Towards a Theology of the Senses* (London: SCM Press, 2001), 16.

“worship wars” as the site where a radically subjective aesthetic of taste has infiltrated the Church’s reflections on its musical practices, the introduction demonstrated the current need for normative criteria by which such practices may be judged. Various contemporary theologies of music were compared, as a “kerygmatic” approach—one which views the Church’s music as proclaiming the *logos*—was finally called for. Providing foils for this approach are the natural-theological approach of Blackwell and the a-theological approach of Epstein.

The second chapter, then, demonstrated how Barth’s dogmatic theology, critically reflecting on the proclamation of the *logos*, offers a possible resource for the present approach. However, his critical use of a revelatory dialectic prohibits a kerygmatic role for music, thus preventing any critical theological reflection upon music as an ecclesial practice. Barth’s infamous praise of Mozart was initially examined in order to survey the musical territory of Barth studies. Although Barth proposes a normative aesthetic of music along formalist lines, his detachment from the Catholic dogmatic tradition restricts his reflections to a strictly modern aesthetic framework and he was unable to hear anything (besides a meaning-less “play” in music). Further examination of Barth’s early writings then revealed how it is Barth’s curious reading of the *Auftrag*, or “Great Commission,” that prohibits an understanding of music’s proclamatory role within church practice. The consequences of Barth’s restriction of the dogmatic task are indeed disastrous for the ecclesial practice of music. Any church that takes Barth as his word is then left to ignore the critical task of reflecting upon its musical performance.

The third chapter of this dissertation demonstrated that, by remaining within a more ancient dogmatic tradition, Pope Benedict XVI (in his writings as Joseph Ratzinger) is able to provide critical reflection on music according to the *logos*. As a *ressourcement* theologian, Benedict’s reflections on music are informed by similar reflections of the

ancient Fathers. It was shown how both the Fathers and Benedict's appropriation of them view the ecclesial practice of music as a necessary component of the church's ministry of the Word. The benefit of Benedict's contribution is that, *contra* Barth, ecclesial music is not left to fend for itself. Critical reflection and guidance is indeed possible for the church that understands its music within the normativity of the *logos*.

In the fourth chapter, the particulars of Benedict's dogmatic reflections on the ecclesial practice of music were examined and shown to provide a direct critique of modern philosophical aesthetics. Like the Fathers, Benedict is wary of inculturation; thus his dogmatic reflections on music are usually in dialectical tension with those aesthetics that are contrary to the *logos*. In this respect he utilizes a paradigm taken from Nietzsche in order to argue for a Christian rationality. This "Christian Apollonianism" is in contrast to the secular and subjective reason of post-Kantian aesthetics. After augmenting Benedict's position with a comparison of Augustine and Kant on the practice of counting, it was then shown how Benedict's incarnational approach to music is reflected in his concern with preserving the cultural particularity of the Church's musical practice. Benedict affirms the critical importance of reason and reflection via his espousal of an Apollonian aesthetic.<sup>4</sup>

#### THE THEOLOGIAN AS MUSIC CRITIC

In the organic process of practice and reflection the church learns how to perform its music. One cannot establish purely positive principles of musical dogmatics; one cannot say the church must do music *this way*, but rather the church must *not* do music *that way*, as she has learned that way is contrary to the Word of God. Dogmatic work of this type, then, is not *constructive* theology so much as it is *descriptive* theology. Although this

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<sup>4</sup> It is difficult to ignore the fact that both Barth and Benedict are quite aesthetically reserved. The latter, however, does not extend these reservations into his dogmatic task. Rather, Benedict's dogmatic reflections on music enable him to shape this somewhat "minimalist" aesthetic, whereas Barth's lack of dogmatic attention toward music paradoxically allows greater cultural influx.

dissertation has not the space to examine this fully, one possible instantiation of the dogmatic project called for here may utilize the theological method of “theological description,” associated with Nicholas Adams and Charles Elliott (among others).<sup>5</sup>

If their 2000 essay, “Ethnography is Dogmatics,” is taken as the methodological manifesto, the project is an amalgamation of Karl Barth’s injunction that “ethics is dogmatics” and Foucault’s introduction to *Discipline & Punish*, in which the rhetoric of Foucault’s purely *descriptive* text is clearly designed to illuminate an ethical problem and provide critical judgment.<sup>6</sup> Taken together these two methods amount to the claim that descriptive reflection on a given situation, laden with moral judgment, is a useful method of doing dogmatics.<sup>7</sup> Finding support in the work of Stanley Hauerwas, Samuel Wells and William Cavanaugh, descriptive dogmatics allows the particularities of local situations to be themselves, without being forced to fit the application of “universal” principles. This does not entail an avoidance of normativity, however. Rather, the “ought” is implied in and through carefully crafted description of God’s action in the world. Adams and Elliott repeatedly insist that “dogmatic clarification does not add anything substantial to the description itself,” meaning that the description of a moral situation should be sufficient in itself to convey the theological/moral lesson.<sup>8</sup> Adding interpretive theological statements would only be redundant.<sup>9</sup> “Dogmatics is for teaching Christians how to see with an eye on transformation.”<sup>10</sup> Because God is always acting to liberate the world “to

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<sup>5</sup> While the methods are evident in a few, predominantly British, scholars working today, a “Description Group” has informally met at the American Academy of Religion since 2004.

<sup>6</sup> Nicholas Adams and Charles Elliott, “Ethnography is Dogmatics: Making Description Central to Systematic Theology,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 53 (2000): 339-364; Michel Foucault, *Discipline & Punish: the birth of the prison* (New York: Random House, 1995), 3-7; Barth, *Ethics*, edited by Dietrich Braun, translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (New York: Seabury, 1981), 15.

<sup>7</sup> Or, put in terms of a summative statement, “ethics is dogmatics” + “ethics is description,” where “description = ethnography,” then “ethnography is dogmatics.” See Adams and Elliott, 339f.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 363.

<sup>9</sup> Graham Ward also finds interpretation inextricable from description, citing Wittgenstein and Heidegger’s concurrence that “we do not simply see; we see *as*.” See Ward, 107-108.

<sup>10</sup> Adams and Elliott, 363-364.

be the world,” the descriptive method of dogmatics must include this redemptive action within its account.

With regards to a theological description of ecclesial music, then, the descriptive dogmatician could present a nuanced hearing of a particular performance—somewhat similar to a concert review in *The Times* or *Rolling Stone*. Such a description must be perceptive enough to account for what the music actually communicates. The ability to hear incarnational themes (i.e. embodiment/sensuality, emotion/desire, cosmicity/rationality) in music would be paramount for such description to succeed in its task. If God’s participation in and transformation of the world is made evident through a positive description, then the music is indeed genuine musical proclamation. If, however, the description suggests something other than God’s saving work in the world, then the practitioners would be advised to take the implied criticism into consideration when preparing for future performances. Thus the performance is dealt with on its own terms, as the description may include references to specific notes and relationships between notes. The description is not purely tonic, however, as rhythm and timbre may also be include within the analysis. The critical judgment of the description is not prominent, but neither is it absent, as advocates of the “description project” prefer to leave the dogmatic judgment latent within the description itself. Whether such judgments are spelled out is not the primary issue in the present discussion, however. The key aspect of theological description with regards to the type of theology of music proposed here is that it attends to the particularity of musical performance. No broad generalities are offered that would reduce or ignore specific performance practices. The particularity of those practices must be heeded and criticism provided on that basis.

The descriptive dogmatic method is just one possibility of doing a dogmatics of music that attend to the particularities of performance, however. Whether dogmatic judgments

are overt or latent, however, the specificity of the attention paid to particularities of performance should be a key component of any contemporary theology of music. For it is in those musical particularities that the *logos* becomes, to use Benedict's phrase, "musified." The *logos* was made concrete in the particular person of Jesus Christ. For the benefit of those outside of Christ's immediate and concrete presence, that *logos* was further particularized in the words of scripture, testifying to His person. And it is in the Church's *kerygma* that the same *logos* is proclaimed again and again in that which is heard: in preaching *and* in song. Through speech *and* music the church has the potential to proclaim the gospel and thus share in God's redemptive participation in the world through the Word of God made flesh. It is this Word that makes theology possible, as it reflects upon the faith that comes from hearing.

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