



Clement of Alexandria (c. 150-215) and the use of *musical metaphors* and *musical myths* in his texts

Clemente de Alejandría (c. 150-215) y el uso de *metáforas* y *mitos musicales* en sus textos

Clemente de Alexandria (c. 150-215) e o uso de *metáforas* e *mitos musicais* em seus textos

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Resumen: Clemente de Alejandría o Tito Flavio Clemens estaba familiarizado con la literatura y la filosofía griega clásica. Cuando se convirtió al cristianismo, trató de hacer algunas distinciones claras contra el paganismo. Muchas cosas del paganismo fueron interpretadas de una manera que sirve a la teología cristiana. En el *Protrepticus* de Clemente de Alejandría, el padre de la iglesia trata de explicar cómo se pueden usar los mitos de la música clásica bien conocidos para crear el conocimiento de una “Nueva canción” superior. En lugar de eso, los cristianos sirven la Nueva Canción: Jesús en la Iglesia y fuera de la Iglesia, continúan “divirtiéndose con juegos impíos y temblorosos, ocupados con la flauta, el baile, la intoxicación y todo tipo de basura. Los que cantan así, y cantan en respuesta, son los que antes del himno de la inmortalidad, que se encuentran al final malvados y perversos cantando este palinodo más pernicioso, “Comamos y bebamos, porque mañana moriremos”. Clemente explica que de esta manera los cristianos siguen siendo cristianos de nombre, por lo que están muertos en Dios, no mañana. Pero no mañana en verdad, sino que ya están muertos para Dios; En este artículo, vamos a mostrar que la polémica de Clemente de Alejandría no fue contra la música antigua y los instrumentos musicales, sino contra la forma en que fueron utilizados por los cristianos. Además, analizaremos el método con el que Clemente emplea las metáforas musicales y los mitos musicales en sus textos para educar a los cristianos y lograr ganar la salvación.

Abstract: Clement of Alexandria or Titus Flavius Clemens was familiar with classical Greek philosophy and literature. When he converted to Christianity, he tried to draw some clear distinctions against the paganism. Many things from paganism were interpreted by a way that serve Christian theology. In Clement of Alexandria’s *Protrepticus*, the church father tries to explain how the well-known classical music-

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myths can be used to create the knowledge of a Superior “New Song”. Instead of that, Christians serve the New Song – Jesus in Church and outside the Church, they continue to “amuse themselves with impious playing, and amatory quavering, occupied with flute-playing, and dancing, and intoxication, and all kinds of trash. They who sing thus, and sing in response, are those who before hymned immortality, –found at last wicked and wickedly singing this most pernicious palinode, “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die”. Clement explains that by this way christians remain christians in name so they are dead in God not tomorrow. But not tomorrow in truth, but already, are these dead to God. In this paper, we are going to show that the polemic of Clement Alexandria was not against ancient music and musical instruments, but against the way that they were used by Christians. Also, we will analyse the method that Clement employs the musical metaphors and musical myths in his texts in order to educate Christians and to manage to earn the salvation.

Keywords: Clement of Alexandria – New Song – Protrepticus – Musical metaphors – Musical myths – Music – Hymns.

Palabras-clave: Clemente de Alejandría – Nueva canción – Protrepticus – Metáforas musicales – Mitos musicales – Música – Himnos

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I. Introduction: The use of Music from Ancient greek to Christians

Music is a gift of God and part of the created order. From its inception, “When the morning stars sang together, And all the sons of God shouted for joy”², to its consummation, when “And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them” will sing to the Lamb on the throne³, creation is musical. “All nature sings and round me rings the music of the spheres”⁴. Human music making participates in the music of creation and reflects the order, beauty, and diversity of God’s creation.

Ancient Greece was also monumental in the development of music. Ancient Greeks thought through music, decided who they were through it, expressed themselves

² Cf. Job 38:7, New King James Version (NKJV).

³ Cf. Rev. 5:13, New King James Version (NKJV).

⁴ Cf. “This Is My Father’s World”, *The United Methodist Hymnal* Number 144. [Internet](#).



through it.⁵ The first preserved document of notated Greek music dates back to the middle of 300 B. C.⁶ The musical modes were in the culture of that time inseparable from the beliefs about morality. Greek philosophers sorted through the modes dividing them into the categories of beneficial or harmful according to how the music affected them psychologically.⁷ There was a connection between different modes of music with the Ethos; the moral element that drives a person's actions as the philosophers believed.⁸ Ancient Greeks attributed various ethical powers to music and claimed that music could affect character.⁹ Music was an indispensable part of all philosophical consideration.

In ancient Greece, music was an element of a highly civilized community and expressed societies which had a real quality of life. It was an integral part of people's everyday routine and due to the fact that music was a complicated form of art as well as a cultural expression, it was highly regarded and present in all private and public festivities.¹⁰ It was employed in unpleasant occasions and it made daily hardships more tolerable. It was a main feature in celebrations such as weddings, banquets, social gatherings and moments of joy but also a valuable companion in everyday routine.¹¹ First, the main types of music were singing and playing the lyre. The flute

⁵ Cf. NICHOLAS COOK, *Music: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford University Press, Oxford - New York 2000, p. ix.

⁶ STEFAN HAGEL, *Ancient Greek Music: a new technical history*, Cambridge, University Press, New York: Cambridge 2010, 1-3.

⁷ Cf. D.B. MA. MONROE, *The Modes of Ancient Greek Music*, Oxford University Press Warehouse, London 1894, p. 2.

⁸ Cf. ALISHA SYMINGTON, "Music and Athletics: An Inseparable Bond", *The Research and Scholarship Symposium*, 15 (2016), p. 7, (1-9).

⁹ Cf. JAMES HAROLD, "On the Idea that Music Shapes Character". *Internet*, p. 5, 1-19: "The fact that music plays such a critical role in developing one's character provides the basis for evaluating music. A piece of music is judged good or bad according to whether it cultivates appropriate virtues. Plato praises the Phrygian and Dorian modes because songs in these modes, he thinks, promote courage and quiet deliberation respectively. But Aristotle argues that songs in the Phrygian mode tend to promote an excessive frenzy, rather than courage, and for this reason he considers them inferior to songs in the Dorian mode. This disagreement, however, masks a deeper underlying agreement about the criterion to use in judging music: music is good when it aids in the growth of appropriate moral virtues". Cf. Plato, *Republic*, 399a, 401d, trans. by C.D.C. Reeve, Hackett Publishing Company, Indianapolis, IN, 2004, p. 81, 84. Aristotle, *Politics* VIII, 1340a, p. 214. Aristotle, *Politics* VIII, 1342a-1342b, trans. by Benjamin Jowett, in Benjamin Jowett and Thomas Twining (eds.), *Aristotle's Politics and Poetics*, The Viking Press, New York 1657, p. 219.

¹⁰ Cf. "Music in Ancient Greece". *Internet*.

¹¹ Cf. "Music in Ancient Greece". *Internet*.



and aulos music were introduced possibly by Spartans into public contest.¹² The sound of music would be the company for the workers during harvest, the women while they were kneading, the oarsmen as well as the soldiers on their way to battle. Also, music was closely connected with sports and athletic games not only because they included music competitions but because the music would encourage and motivate the athlete. So, music was a feature at all Greek games.¹³ Especially the music of the flute helped the athlete to find his rhythm in order to coordinate his feet and his hands.¹⁴

Moreover, according to ancient Greeks, music was divine gift and helped in healing both body, soul health and improve functional outcomes. It purified and soothed people's souls and it inspired, encouraged and helped them relax.¹⁵

Music from ancient Greeks was used by Christians. We don't know much about the the beginnings of use of music and mainly liturgical chant in Christian liturgy and christian daily life.¹⁶ James McKinnon underlines: "The New Testament references to music, for example, are imprecise and illusive even if they do create the general impression that sacred song was encouraged".¹⁷ Characteristic example of the use of music and specially the song of hymn is found in the New Testament and mainly to the gospels of Matthew¹⁸ and Mark.¹⁹ After the Last Supper, Jesus and his apostles

¹² Cf. ANDREW BARKER, "Public Music as 'Fine Art' in Archaic Greece", in JAMES MCKINNON (ed), *Man and Music. Antiquity and the Middle Ages. From Ancient Greece to the 15th century*, The Macmillan Press Ltd, London 1990, p. 55 (45-67).

¹³ Cf. "Music and Musical competitions at the games". [Internet](#).

¹⁴ Cf. PHILOSTRATOS, *On Gymnastics*, 35; A47.

¹⁵ Cf. LESLIE BUNT, BRYNJULF STIGE, *Music Therapy: An art beyond words*, Routledge, New York 2014, p. 13.

¹⁶ Eric Werner supports that earliest forms of Christian liturgy and singing come from the Jewish tradition: "No matter how much they differed theologically, chronologically, nationally, and geographically, certain elements were common to all of their rites. Without exception, these basic [musical] concepts stemmed from Judaism", Cf. ERIC WERNER, *The Sacred Bridge: The Interdependence of Liturgy and Music in Synagogue and Church During the First Millennium*, 2 Vols, Ktav Publishing House, New York 1984, p. 17, in JADE BROOKLYN WEIMER, *Musical Assemblies: How Early Christian music functioned as a Rhetorical Topos, a Mechanism of Recruitment, and a Fundamental Marker of an Emerging Christian Identity*, doctorate thesis, Centre for the Study of Religion, University of Toronto 2016, p. 124.

¹⁷ Cf. JAMES MCKINNON, *Christian Antiquity*, in JAMES MCKINNON (ed), *Man and Music. Antiquity and the Middle Ages. From Ancient Greece to the 15th century*, The Macmillan Press Ltd, London 1990, p. 70 (68-87).

¹⁸ Cf. Matt. 26:30, New King James Version (NKJV).

¹⁹ Cf. Mark 14:26, New King James Version (NKJV).



sung a hymn. Perhaps the hymn was Hallel, which included the psalms CXIII-CXVIII.²⁰ Later, Christians put into practice songs of psalmody, hymns and psalms²¹ to praise God not only after the Holy Eucharist but after the common meals, the agapes, the love feasts. Moreover, hymns and psalms were often referenced in defining Christianity against pagan. Characteristically, Cyprian of Carthage underlines for these kind of songs after the love feasts:

Now that the sun is sloping towards the evening, let us spend it in gladness, nor let even the hour of repast be without heavenly grace. Let the temperate meal resound with psalms; and as your memory is tenacious and your voice musical, undertake this office, as is your wont. You will provide a better entertainment for your dearest friends, if, while we have something spiritual to listen to, the sweetness of religious music charm our ears.²²

Moreover, Christians expanded the use of music that was intrinsic to the liturgy of the church, for it is frequently used to express the liturgical text. Hymns as songs are used to Worship and praise God. Apostle Paul urges in Colossians:

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.²³

And he adds in Ephesians:

²⁰ Cf. JAMES MCKINNON, *Christian Antiquity*, in JAMES MCKINNON (ed), *Man and Music. Antiquity and the Middle Ages. From Ancient Greece to the 15th century*, The Macmillan Press Ltd, London 1990, p. 70. Hallel consists of six Psalms (113–118), which are recited as a unit, on joyous occasions including the three pilgrim festivals mentioned in the Torah, Pesach (Passover), Shavuot, and Sukkot (the “bigger” Jewish holy days), as well as at Hanukkah and Rosh Chodesh (beginning of the new month). Full Hallel (Hebrew: הלל שלם, translit. Hallel shalem, lit. “Complete Hallel”) consists of all six Psalms of the Hallel, in their entirety. It is a Jewish prayer recited on the first two nights and days of Pesach (only the first night and day in Israel), on Shavuot, all seven days of Sukkot, on Shemini Atzeret and Simchat Torah, and on the eight days of Hanukkah. The sages have provided a “siman” (a way to remember) the days when full Hallel is recited. It is called “BeBeTaCh”. Hallel expresses incorporate gratitude for God's past acts of salvation and confidence in God's future redemption of Israel.

²¹ Cf. JOSEF LÖSSL, *The Early Church: History and Memory*, T&T Clark, London 2010, p. 134.

²² Cf. CYPRIANUS CARTHAGINIS, *Epist. 1- Ad Donatum*, 16, PL 4, 222B, transl. by ROBERT ERNEST WALLIS, *From Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 5, ed by Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, Christian Literature Publishing Co., Buffalo, NY 1886; revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight. [Internet](#).

²³ Cf. Col. 3:16. New King James Version (NKJV).



And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.²⁴

To the previous passages of the epistles of Paul, we can find the instructions for Christians to sing. God doesn't give us any regulation for instruments - no harps, trumpets²⁵, lyres or anything else. Just singing! The Capella singing was part of worship of God in private prayers and in in the holy divine liturgy.

Kevin Pendergrass expresses a different opinion about the interpretations of the above passages from Colossians and Ephesians. He underlines that God didn't forbid the use of instruments in His worship:

Some argue that if the melody is to be made in the heart, then that would somehow forbid melody being made on a piano, a guitar or any other instrument. Some claim that the instrument that we are to pluck or play is the instrument of our heart strings, thus, excluding any mechanical instruments. This alleged argument holds no weight and should be dismissed for the following reasons: First, the phrase "in your heart" in Ephesians 5:19 is an adverbial prepositional phrase which describes the manner of the action, not the method... In conclusion, the Greek word combination that Paul uses in Ephesians 5:19 is "ado" and "psallo." These two words are paired together multiple times in the Greek Old Testament and they never forbid instruments.²⁶

This view can be found many supporters mainly in the Western Christian Churches and not in Churches of Easter Christianity as Orthodox Church where the instrumental music is forbidden to be used in the holy divine liturgy.

In *Acts*²⁷ Paul and Silas sing and pray in prison at Thyatira. Also, in the epistle to Romans²⁸ there is a passage which "refers directly to liturgical song. It expresses two musical conceptions that will become common in patristic literature: living in

²⁴ Cf. Eph. 5:18-19. New King James Version (NKJV).

²⁵ In 2 Chronicles 29: 25-27, God commanded King David to build some new instruments. Once again only certain people (the Levites) were to play those instruments at certain times. It didn't matter who was most talented. If someone was not not a Levite, he could not play.

²⁶ Cf. Gen. 17:17; Josh. 14:7; Psa. 15:2; Prov. 3:5; Psa. 119:2; Lk. 2:19; Mt. 5:28. KEVIN PENDERGRASS, "A study of music in worship: psallo". [Internet](#).

²⁷ Cf. Acts 16:25-26.

²⁸ Cf. Rom. 15:5-6.



harmony and exclaiming in a single voice, the *una uoce dicentes* of the eucharistic prayer”.²⁹

Generally, unaccompanied vocal music continued to be the norm in Christian worship from the period of the New Testament to Christian communities for centuries. But was the music used only to praise God? Many Church fathers employed the music, the images from music to speak about God, to interpret the Bible with allegorical way and of course to worship God and pray to Him.

II. Clement of Alexandria and the use of *musical metaphors* and *musical myths* in his texts

Clement of Alexandria spoke for God and he used many texts from classical and Biblical literature. On page after page of his treatises are copious citations of all kinds of literature. “For Clement, the Bible has hidden meanings to incite us to search and discover the words of salvation, which are hidden from those who despise them. The truth is in the pearls which must not be offered to the swine’s. Clement insisted, however, that the Scriptures had a literal, historical sense – a primary meaning – that had to be respected. But allegorical reading could find further “spiritual” meanings containing universal and eternal truths.”³⁰

Clement of Alexandria was one of the early church fathers who realised the great value in gleaning whatever was worthy, good, real, or useful from the secular, Greek intellectual tradition. Clement was a proponent of integrating Greek philosophy and musical study into Christian catechesis, yet he believed that Christians should carefully pick up ideas, concepts and examples which were in agreement and tune with Christian truth and teaching:

But he who culls what is useful for the advantage of the catechumens, and especially when they are Greeks (and the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness there of), must not abstain from erudition, like irrational animals; but he must collect as many aids as possible for his hearers. But he must by no means linger over these studies, except solely for the advantage accruing from them; so that, on grasping and obtaining this, he may

²⁹ Cf. J. QUASTEN, *Musik und Gesang in den Kulturen der heidnischen Antike und christlichen Frühzeit*, Münster in Westphalia, 1930, cited here from *Music and worship in pagan and Christian antiquity*, transl. from 2nd edn of 1973 by B. Ramsey, Washington, D.C., 1983, 66-72. Cf. JAMES MCKINNON, *Music in early Christian literature*, Cambridge University Press, New York 1993, p. 14.

³⁰ Cf. EIRINI ARTEMI, “Clement’s of Alexandria teaching about the cryptic philosophical tradition”, *Vox Patrum* 34 (2014) t. 62, p. 67, (61-71).



be able to take his departure home to the true philosophy, which is a strong cable for the soul, providing security from everything.³¹

The Alexandrian Church Father scorned the lyre and cithara as lifeless instruments.³² This was his own belief and didn't base on the Scripture, because in Colosians there is the advice to praise God on lyre and cithara. By rejecting instrumental music, Clement supposed that Jesus "sings to God on his many-voiced instrument and he sings to man, himself an instrument".³³

By this thought, Clement underlined the allegory that man was God's musical instrument.³⁴ For this reason in his *Paedagogus* he suggests allegorical musical instruments to be in place of real ones:

The Spirit, distinguishing from such revelry the divine service, sings, Praise Him with the sound of trumpet; for with sound of trumpet He shall raise the dead. Praise Him on the psaltery; for the tongue is the psaltery of the Lord. And praise Him on the lyre. By the lyre is meant the mouth struck by the Spirit, as it were by a plectrum. Praise with the timbrel and the dance, refers to the Church meditating on the resurrection of the dead in the resounding skin. Praise Him on the chords and organ. Our body He calls an organ, and its nerves are the strings, by which it has received harmonious tension, and when struck by the Spirit, it gives forth human voices.

Praise Him on the clashing cymbals. He calls the tongue the cymbal of the mouth, which resounds with the pulsation of the lips. Therefore, He cried to humanity. Let every breath praise the Lord, because He cares for every breathing thing which He has made. For man is truly a pacific instrument; while other instruments, if you investigate, you will find to be warlike, inflaming to lusts, or kindling up amours, or rousing wrath.³⁵

³¹ Cf. CLEMENS ALEXANDRINUS, *Stromata*, VI, 11, 88, PG 9, 309CD, transl. by William Wilson, *From Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 2, ed. by Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, Christian Literature Publishing Co., Buffalo, NY 1885. Rev. and ed. for New Advent by Kevin Knight. [Internet](#).

³² Cf. JAMES MCKINNON, *Music in early Christian literature*, Cambridge University Press, New York 1993, p. 30.

³³ Cf. CLEMENS ALEXANDRINUS, *Protrepticus* I, 5, 3 – I, 7, 3, PG 8, 60D-61A. transl. by William Wilson, *From Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 2, ed. by Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe. Christian Literature Publishing Co., Buffalo, NY 1885. Rev. and ed. for New Advent by Kevin Knight. [Internet](#).

³⁴ Cf. JAMES MCKINNON, *Music in early Christian literature*, Cambridge University Press, New York 1993, p. 30.

³⁵ Cf. Psalm. 150. Cf. CLEMENS ALEXANDRINUS, *Paedagogus* II, 4, PG 8, 441B, transl. by William Wilson, *From Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 2, ed. by Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and



In the beginning of the *Protrepticus*, Clement used metaphors and images from music in order to reject the musical mythology of Greeks. Music is a divine medium, which one can either utilize in a way that adheres to his tenets of Christianity or to the pagan practices of the Greek cults.³⁶ At the same time, he wanted to declare that the only real New Song is only the incarnate Logos, Jesus Christ. God's Word was not only declared, he was a song sung over and through all creation³⁷ and imparted harmony to the universe and made music to God. Through this Song, Logos, the Father "sung" the pillars of the universe and created a polyphonic music which represented the whole creation with its laws. All these are the natural revelation of God. With the supernatural revelation of the pure Song, incarnate Logos there was an answer to any cacophonies of heresies and paganism.

In Clement's teaching there was a progressive revelation, a continual ascending scale of eternal music, which had its beginning in "the incomplete presence of the Logos in ancient Greek texts of philosophy and secular texts, went up through the Old Testament scriptures and reached its peak in the New Testament texts, especially the Gospels, and within the Gospels in the words spoken by Jesus Christ."³⁸

So with the metaphors of ancient geek music, Clement managed to speak for the real God and real man, Christ. He used the analogy and the metaphor with Orpheus, who was a pagan musician and misled his listeners, and at the same time the real Orpheus, Logos who had the power as real and only God to guide and influence the animals and the whole nature. Additionally, Clement employed the musical metaphor to incorporate the "voice of the prophets, co-singer of the truth"³⁹:

A. Cleveland Coxe, Christian Literature Publishing Co., Buffalo, NY 1885. Rev. and ed. for New Advent by Kevin Knight. [Internet](#).

³⁶ JADE BROOKLYN WEIMER, *Musical Assemblies: How Early Christian music functioned as a Rhetorical Topos, a Mechanism of Recruitment, and a Fundamental Marker of an Emerging Christian Identity*, doctorate thesis, Centre for the Study of Religion, University of Toronto 2016, p. 148.

³⁷ Cf. BRICE ROGERS, "Listen to the Music—The Canon of Clement of Alexandria". [Internet](#), p. 7. (1-15).

³⁸ Cf. BRICE ROGERS, "Listen to the Music—The Canon of Clement of Alexandria", [Internet](#), p. 7. (1-15). CHARLES H. COSGROVE, "Clement of Alexandria and Early Christian Music", *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, Vol.14, 3 (2006), 276-281. (255-282)

³⁹ Cf. CLEMENS ALEXANDRINUS, *Protrepticus* I, 4, 1, PG 8, 57A; *Protrepticus* I, 4, 2, PG 8, 57C trans. by William Wilson, *From Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 2, ed. by Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe. Christian Literature Publishing Co., Buffalo, NY 1885. Rev. and ed. for New Advent by Kevin Knight. [Internet](#).



A beautiful breathing instrument of music the Lord made man, after His own image. And He Himself also, surely, who is the supramundane Wisdom, the celestial Word, is the all-harmonious, melodious, holy instrument of God. What, then, does this instrument –the Word of God, the Lord, the New Song– desire? To open the eyes of the blind, and unstop the ears of the deaf, and to lead the lame or the erring to righteousness, to exhibit God to the foolish, to put a stop to corruption, to conquer death, to reconcile disobedient children to their father. The instrument of God loves mankind. The Lord pities, instructs, exhorts, admonishes, saves, shields, and of His bounty promises us the kingdom of heaven as a reward for learning; and the only advantage He reaps is, that we are saved. For wickedness feeds on men's destruction; but truth, like the bee, harming nothing, delights only in the salvation of men.

So, Clement presented the Logos as “new Orpheus”. His song made free and vivified men, in the same way that Orpheus’ song led them to the trap of slavery and idolatry.⁴⁰ Clement proposed “θέλωσθαι μουσικῆ”⁴¹, “to be charmed by music” and meant the enchanting power of music which he used for his apologetic purposes.⁴² The musical metaphor would be employed to present some Biblical concepts like *nomos*, *pneuma*, or the power of the divine Word (Logos). “These metaphors introduce theological notions: e.g. in the musical metaphor *pneuma* is the wind which makes the instrument sound, and *nomos* is the melody of the song”.⁴³

Moreover, in connection with the musical imagery there were some secondary metaphors, which will appear several times throughout the book: theatre, trial, agon, mysteries. By these metaphors, Clement made the comparison between the real Song: Logos, who would save the humanity from the chains of Satan, Sin and death and of the ancient songs which condemned man to live in the darkness of passions, idolatry and very far from real love and gnosis of God. Clement used the metaphor of the Gospel as a trumpet of Christ in order:

He has blown it, and we have heard. Let us array ourselves in the armour of peace, putting on the breastplate of righteousness, and taking the shield of faith, and binding our brows with the helmet of salvation; and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God let us sharpen.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Cf. CLEMENS ALEXANDRINUS, *Protrepticus* I, PG 8, 52A.

⁴¹ Cf. CLEMENS ALEXANDRINUS, *Protrepticus* I, 3, 1, PG 8, 55C.

⁴² Cf. H. VERSNEL, “The Poetics of the Magical Charm: An Essay on the Power of Words”. in Mirecki-Meyer (eds.), *Magic and Ritual in the Ancient World*, Brill, Leiden -Boston - Köln 2002, p. 105-158.

⁴³ Cf. MIGUEL HERRERO DE JÁUREGUI, *The Protrepticus of Clement of Alexandria: A Commentary*, Bologna 2008, p. 16. [Internet](#).

⁴⁴ Cf. Eph. 6:14-17. CLEMENS ALEXANDRINUS, *Protrepticus*, XI, 116, 2-3, PG 8, 236B.



In another part of his writing *Protrepticus*, the Logos presented to be not the song but the singer, a new Eunomos Terpander and Cepion.⁴⁵ Clement employed the analogy of instruments as part of war and on the other side man is the instrument of peace. He gave examples from ancient Greeks that the instruments were used in battles in order to wake in men aggression, inflaming the passions, enkindling lust, or stirring up wrath.⁴⁶ Man should worship God with humns and should avoid the erotic songs which are not propriate for Christians, because they give birth to any kind of passions⁴⁷:

And outside they foolishly amuse themselves with impious playing, and amatory quavering, occupied with flute-playing, and dancing, and intoxication, and all kinds of trash. They who sing thus, and sing in response, are those who before hymned mmortality – found at last wicked and wickedly singing this most pernicious palinode, ‘Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die’.⁴⁸

For Clement the best hymn for God is the righteous man in whose character the precepts of the truth are engraved.⁴⁹ In this deification, man becomes the instrument for divine music. So, the singing voice of a pure heart - man was and is the primary instrument in church. This point of view of Clement was repeated by John Chrysostomus in his *Exposition on the Psalms*:

David formerly sang songs, also today we sing hymns. He had a lyre with lifeless strings, the church has a lyre with living strings. Our tongues are the strings of the lyre with a different tone indeed but much more in accordance with piety. Here there is no need for the cithara, or for stretched strings, or for the plectrum, or for art, or for any instrument; but, if you like, you may yourself become a cithara, mortifying the members of the flesh and making a full harmony of mind and body. For when the flesh no longer lusts against the Spirit, but has submitted to its orders and has been led at length into the best and most admirable path, then will you create a spiritual melody.⁵⁰

⁴⁵ Cf. CLEMENS ALEXANDRINUS, *Protrepticus*, I, 1, 2, PG 8, 50D.

⁴⁶ Cf. CLEMENS ALEXANDRINUS, *Paedagogus* II, 4, PG 8, 441-444.

⁴⁷ Cf. CLEMENS ALEXANDRINUS, *Paedagogus* II, 4, PG 8, 445B.

⁴⁸ Cf. CLEMENS ALEXANDRINUS, *Paedagogus* III, XI, PG 8, 660, trans. William Wilson, *From Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 2, ed. by Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe. Christian Literature Publishing Co., Buffalo, NY 1885. Rev. and ed. for New Advent by Kevin Knight. [Internet](#).

⁴⁹ Cf. CLEMENS ALEXANDRINUS, *Protrepticus*, X, 107,1, PG 8, 212A-C.

⁵⁰ Cf. JOHN CHRYSOSTOMUS, *Exposition on the Psalms* 41, O Strunk, *Source Readings in Music History*, W.W. Norton and Co., New York 1950, p. 70.



Finally, by the writings of Clement it is underlined that music is expressed – interpreted, almost exclusively, by the human voice which seeks to enter the Divine Darkness of the Mystery of Salvation, via theosis and to give to man the ability to speak to God, to supplicate Him, to praise Him, to give thanks to Him, and to seek His mercy. Musical instruments, according to the Alexandrian father are not allowed into Christian worship because church music is not just art but an enhanced form of prayer. Instruments cannot pray, only human voices can create the synergy between the words of worship and the melody of the hymns. Through this vocal music the liturgical life of the church is lifted at celestial heights.

Conclusions

Ancient Greeks used music instruments and hymns to praise Gods. In early Christianity the use of musical instruments is condemned, because the Holy Fathers and Clement viewed instrumental music as something secular that tends to evoke a kind of emotionalism and is foreign to the Christian spiritual life.

Clement loved the use of musical allegories to articulate, realize and explain his theological interpretations. He expressed his personal feelings about instrumental music. Although he had negative view for the use of instruments in worship to god he clearly saw no problem with using instruments in it. The condemnation didn't take place on the basis of Bible authority, but because of pagan influences and the connection of instrumental music with war and pagan feasts which didn't suit to the ethic of Christian.

Jesus Christ was presented as an antitype of Orpheus. The characterization of Christ as a singer was indeed a clever missionary plan. This thought had crucial importance when it was underlined the reticence toward music and instruments, which Clement exhibited both in his writings.⁵¹ Most of times, these views connected with morally dangerous ideas of music. Clement attributed to the Logos a power of resurrecting which Orpheus' voice and music never had. The vivifying power of the Word of God was completely strange to the Greeks.

The Alexandrian father used the musical metaphor, a New Song, who is Christ and his truth will replace the old one, the paganism and false Gods. Christ was the pure song who revitalized the whole creation with his melodius power. The musical

⁵¹ Cf. CLEMENS ALEXANDRINUS, *Paedagogus*, II, 4, 40-44, PG 8, 444A-D, CLEMENS ALEXANDRINUS, *Protrepticus* I, 5, 3, PG 8, 52A.



metaphor *pneuma* was the wind which made the instrument sound, and *nomos* was the melody of the song, of real song which is Christ and Christianity.

Logos is the “Symphony” and “harmony of the Father”. By this way Clement called musical metaphors in order to present the unity of Father with his Son and with the Holy Spirit. Moreover, Clement used allegory in his writings without always undermined the literal meaning, as the main idea of symphony and harmony between Father and Logos.⁵²

To sum up, Clement supported with emphasis that pure ecclesiastical music should be executed only with the voice and not with instruments. Only does this music have the real divine harmony, which avails for spiritual resurrection. By this way, music is proved a way for transformation of believers to lift the up and to teach the truth and convey the theological teaching, the divine truth.

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⁵² CF. JOHN FERGUSON, “The Achievement of Clement of Alexandria”, *Religious Studies* 12 (1976), p. 67.



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