



CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA: Singing the Lord's Song in Egypt

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When the Hebrew captives were detained in Babylon, they longed for the worship of Jerusalem and desperately cried out: “How shall we sing the Lord’s song in a foreign land?” (Ps 137:4, ESV).² Not only did they pine for the presence of God in the temple of Jerusalem, but the practices and values of the Babylonians also vexed them.³ Because New Covenant worship is not bound to a holy city or place (John 4:21), as the gospel goes forth to the nations, believers should prepare to find themselves worshipping God in lands where the practices and values of the surrounding peoples are contrary to Scripture.

This situation was the case for Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150–ca. 215), the late second-century Christian writer, philosopher, and teacher who lived in Alexandria, Egypt. His city of residence, named after Alexander the Great, was one of the largest cities in the Greco-Roman empire. Its location in Egypt, a place of biblical importance where Moses and the Hebrews were first held in captivity, was not lost on Clement.⁴ Matthew Pinson describes Clement’s context in Alexandria as “a multi-cultural, multi-religious, pluralistic, relativistic, highly sexualized, image-driven,

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²Unless otherwise noted, all biblical passages are in the English Standard Version. ESV® Text Edition: 2016.

³Moses was the first to express this idea of being “a stranger in a strange land” (Exod 2:22). In the New Testament, this concept is used as a way of expressing enmity with the world (Heb 11:13; 1 Pet 2:11).

⁴See Clement’s Christian use of Egypt as a symbol of the world and its lusts in *Stromateis* 2.10.46–47 (GCS 52: 137–138). I will use *Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte* (GCS) as the primary Greek text for this article, which can be found in Otto Stählin, Ludwig Früchtel, and Ursula Treu, eds., *Clemens Alexandrinus*, GCS (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1970–1985). Unless otherwise noted, all translations of Clement’s text are my own. Although there are later translations, the most complete and widely available translation of Clement’s corpus is by William Wilson, trans., *The Writings of Clement of Alexandria I and II*, Ante-Nicene Christian Library 4 and 12 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1867–1869).

entertainment-saturated culture.”⁵ This article claims that Clement desired for Christians in Alexandria and beyond to be distinct from the surrounding culture, even in their singing.

Although Clement is perhaps one of the least recognizable names inscribed on the exterior of Southwest Seminary’s Cowden Hall, he is an important figure for church musicians today for two reasons. First, he is a hymn writer. Clement provides one of the earliest full-length Christian hymns, a sixty-six line song that is commonly called the “Hymn to Christ.”⁶ Second, Clement refers to music over eight hundred times in his extant corpus, more than any first- or second-century Christian writer; thus, he is the most important figure for determining how early Christians might have viewed music in the century following the Apostolic Age.⁷ This article argues that Clement’s views on church singing reveal a kind of counter-cultural practice that distinguished the Alexandrian Christians from the worldly aspects of their Greco-Roman context.⁸

Clement is not promoting a withdrawal from culture.⁹ He is well known

⁵J. Matthew Pinson, “Reflections on Christian Cultural Engagement,” in *Christians in Culture: Cultivating a Christian Worldview for All of Life*, eds. Matthew Steven Bracey and Christopher Talbot (Gallatin, TN: Welch College Press, 2023), 9.

⁶Chris Tomlin and Ben Fielding’s “The First Hymn” (2025) has brought a lot of attention to early Christian hymns. But the Oxyrhynchus hymn, on which the Fielding and Tomlin’s song is based, is by no means the first Christian hymn. This hymn is significant because it is the earliest Christian hymn to be accompanied by music notation, but “The First Hymn” (2025) does not preserve the tune of the Oxyrhynchus hymn. Clement’s hymn has a confirmed earlier date, and there are other hymns with Christian origins that predate the Oxyrhynchus hymn. For more on early Christian hymns, see Daniel Aaron Webster, “The Father, Son and Spirit Taught in Antenicene Hymns,” *Journal of Greco-Roman Christianity and Judaism* 20 (2024): 98–118. For more on the Oxyrhynchus hymn, see Charles H. Cosgrove, *An Ancient Christian Hymn with Music Notation, Papyrus Oxyrhynchus 1786: Text and Commentary* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011). For a translation of Clement’s hymn, see the appendix in Daniel Aaron Webster, “Your Song Will Instruct Me: Music’s Didactic Voice in Clement of Alexandria” (PhD diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2025).

⁷For more on Clement’s music, see my dissertation cited above as well as Charles H. Cosgrove, “Clement of Alexandria and Early Christian Music,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 14, no. 3 (2006): 255–82; Calvin R. Stapert, “Clement of Alexandria: Musical Cosmology and Composed Manners,” in *A New Song for an Old World: Musical Thought in the Early Church*, by Calvin R. Stapert (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 42–59.

⁸My use of *worldly* in this article is akin to the apostles’ use of *world* or *worldly*. John tells the believers to “love not the world” and then describes “all that is in the world” as “the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life” (1 John 2:15–17). Paul commands Christians to be not “conformed to this world” (Rom 12:2); he also warns Titus concerning “worldly passions” (Titus 2:12). James asks, “Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God?” and then concludes that “a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God” (Jas 4:4).

⁹For more on Clement’s views on culture, see H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1951), 123–28. While I think Clement’s views on culture are more complex than Niebuhr’s discussion of them, it is still a good place to begin the conversation.

for his love of the arts, his use of Greek literature, and his desire for Christians to pursue everything true, good, and beautiful in the earth. David Dockery notes his “wide range of learning, his love for philosophy and literature, his cultivation of an intellectually serious Christian faith, and his engagement and interaction with trends and issues of his day.”¹⁰ Clement encourages spiritually mature Christians to cull from Greek studies what is true and good so that they can bring it back to the Church as a resource for learning.¹¹ So, when this article suggests that Clement desires for Christians to be separate and distinct from the world, this is not the promotion of a Christian escapism or a retreat from engagement with the peoples of the earth and culture-making. But Clement does promote an abandonment of the idolatrous and immoral cultural expressions of his neighbors.

Church musicians have much to learn from Clement’s *Paedagogus*.¹² In a key passage, he refers to the Church as *ekklesia* on numerous occasions, and he addresses not only singing, but also other matters of a liturgical setting (*Paed.* 3.11). Another key passage contains Clement’s “Hymn to Christ,” which comes at the end of his work and follows a prayer (*Paed.* 3.12). This article provides five lessons from Clement for the practice of church music. Clement’s desire for the singing of Christians to be a form of music distinct from the immoral musical expressions of his Alexandrian neighbors is an important consideration for church musicians today.

LESSON ONE: LEAVING CHURCH LIKE AN OCTOPUS

The first lesson concerns Clement’s direct teaching on how the Alexandrian Christians should be distinct from the unbelieving Greeks that

¹⁰David S. Dockery and Timothy George, *The Great Tradition of Christian Thinking: A Student’s Guide*, Reclaiming the Christian Intellectual Tradition (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 81.

¹¹*Stromateis* 6.11.89.1–2 (GCS 52:476).

¹²The *Paedagogus* (abbreviated as *Paed.*) is Clement’s second work in a sequence of works which were written as a pedagogical program for Christian discipleship. In this work, Clement presents Christ as a pedagogue (educator or instructor) who transforms the body and soul of Christians. There are three key musical passages in the *Paedagogus* in which Clement provides instructions for music at social meals (2.4.40–44), instructions for music inside the *ekklesia* (3.11.80), and a model hymn for both contexts, the “Hymn to Christ” (3.12.101). Jane M. F. Heath, who has contributed significantly to our understanding of Clement’s literary context, understands the “*Protrepticus*, *Paedagogus*, and *Stromateis* as a stepped sequence of literary works, intended for consecutive stages in a program of literary formation of Christians that culminates in Clement’s fourth and lost work, *Hypotyposesis*.” J. M. F. Heath, *Clement of Alexandria and the Judgement of Taste: Pedagogical Rhetoric and Christian Formation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2024), 28. For more on all of Clement’s works, see Frances M. Young, Lewis Ayres, and Andrew Louth, eds., *The Cambridge History of Early Christian Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 117–21.

lived nearby. He accomplishes this point with a metaphor of an octopus. In *Paedagogus* 3.11, Clement is addressing two issues: what Christians wear when they go to church and what songs they sing when they arrive. While attending to these two issues, he explains that some Christians leave the church and adapt themselves to people and customs around them, like an octopus that changes based on its surroundings.¹³ This section examines Clement's view of the *ekklesia* as he employs this octopus metaphor to contrast worldly music and church music.

Clement's first mention of *ekklesia* in Book 3 is just a few paragraphs before his teaching on church singing and the octopus metaphor. He states that men and women should be "clothed in an orderly way" when they gather with the church.¹⁴ Consistent with the rest of his teachings in the *Paedagogus*, Clement is concerned about the heart *and* body of the worshiper; he calls for "pure bodies" and "pure hearts" that are "suitable for prayer to God."¹⁵ This use of *proseuchomai* (prayer) in the *ekklesia* (church) demonstrates that Clement is interested in what Christians are doing in their worship. He briefly digresses to challenge believers to be Christ-like in their appearance and behavior throughout their whole lives (3.11.80.1) but immediately returns to his concern for the church gathering. Commending the practice of head coverings for Christian women who pray at church, Clement offers his second use of *ekklesia*. He wants the conduct of Christians, whether "at church" or away from church, to "really be, not just seem to be" virtuous and worthy of the Lord.¹⁶

The context for Clement's metaphor of the octopus is his references to prayers and head coverings, two liturgical acts of the *ekklesia* found in the New Testament.¹⁷ There are some Christians who seek to be worthy of the Lord and live a virtuous life at church and away from church. In contrast, there are some among the congregation who depart from the "inspiration of the gathering" and, like an octopus that changes its color to match the place where it dwells, adapt themselves to the people with whom they live.¹⁸ Clement does not immediately elaborate on the kind of customs

¹³*Paed.* 3.11.81.2 (GCS 12:281).

¹⁴*Paed.* 3.11.79.3 (GCS 12:280).

¹⁵*Paed.* 3.11.79.3–4 (GCS 12:280).

¹⁶*Paed.* 3.11.80.1 (GCS 12:280).

¹⁷The opening chapters of Acts use *proseuche* (prayer) as a way of expressing the primary purpose of early Christian meetings (Acts 1:14; 2:42; 3:1; 6:4). Paul provides a teaching on head coverings in 1 Corinthians 11:2–16.

¹⁸*Paed.* 3.11.81.2–3 (GCS 12:281).

these Christians were associating with. Still, based on his instruction, it was not a behavior that promotes a life that is worthy of the Lord in meekness, devotion, and love. A couple of sentences later, Clement calls these people godless (from *atheos*).¹⁹ This brings us to his references to church singing. He only directly mentions church singing one time in this passage when he references those who “before thoroughly hymned immortality.”²⁰ But there is much to glean about Clement’s views of church music from his contrasting description of the music that takes place outside the church.

After hearing a discourse about God, the disingenuous Christians “abandon what they heard inside” and go “outside” to “roam about in the company of the godless.”²¹ They join the “striking of strings” and the “twittering of erotic aulos songs,” thus “contaminating themselves with striking sounds, strong drink, and all kinds of trash.”²² Elsewhere in his writings, Clement refers to musical instruments in positive contexts. But in this context, we can be sure that he is opposing the immoral use of instruments for worship, because he associates these instruments with debauched behavior. He also speaks of the contaminating nature of this music, which he calls trash, and the drunkenness that accompanies it. Clement wants Christians to sing music in church and then depart to their homes rather than joining these godless gatherings.

Unlike an octopus that changes its color when it changes location, Clement urges Christians to dress and sing in their daily life the way they dress and sing in church. In doing so, he characterizes the ungodly by describing their music. But there is more in this passage than just a warning about worldly associations. Clement also indicates his view on church songs.

LESSON TWO: SEPARATING FROM THE SOUND OF GODLESS MUSIC

The second lesson Clement offers pertains to the sound of the music that accompanies the text of Christian and Greek songs. He is not only condemning the music of the godless because of its association with the immorality of Greek culture, but also because of the actual music. For Clement, immoral forms of music are conducive to the immorality of the

¹⁹ *Paed.* 3.11.80.4 (GCS 12:280).

²⁰ *Paed.* 3.11.80.4 (GCS 12:280).

²¹ *Paed.* 3.11.80.4 (GCS 12:280).

²² *Paed.* 3.11.80.4 (GCS 12:280).

godless. He describes the playing of the music in which these Christians are partaking with words like “striking” and “twittering,” not just the instruments that are played (strings and aulos).²³ He further states that the *sound* pollutes in the same way that a strong drink intoxicates: “contaminating themselves with *striking*, strong drink, and all kinds of trash.”²⁴

These gatherings of the godless are likely the late-night drinking parties that Clement describes in *Paedagogus* 2.4.40. Like the gatherings in 3.11.80, the parties of 2.4.40 are characterized by drunkenness, immorality, and musicmaking. Clement describes the music at these events, citing the use of the aulos and stringed instruments, choirs and dance, as well as percussion instruments (*krotalon*, *kymbala*, and *tympanum*). He then condemns “the loud sounding noise” of these “instruments of trickery.”²⁵ As was the practice among early Christians, Clement did not promote playing instruments in gathered worship; he did allow the use of stringed instruments as accompaniment for psalm-singing at Christian social meals.²⁶ So he was not opposed to all uses of instruments. Furthermore, although he condemns choirs in this passage, Clement often uses the imagery of the *choros* to represent the people of God.²⁷ He is condemning the immoral use of these musical instruments, not necessarily the instruments, and he especially disdains the sound of the instruments. Clement is not a killjoy who just complains about loud music; he believes that the actual sound of these “instruments of trickery” within this immoral context is deceiving people, leading them astray.

To further demonstrate that Clement considers the sound of music to have a moral capacity, it is helpful to continue Clement’s flow of thought in *Pedagogues* 2.4.43. He transitions to the topic of music in the farm and field as a means of luring and taming animals. His purpose is to convince his reader that music has a certain power to influence its hearer, and Christians who gather for their social meals should use music that

²³*Paed.* 3.11.80.4: “κρουμάτων καὶ τερετισμάτων ἔρωτικῶν αὐλοφάδας” (GCS 12:280).

²⁴*Paed.* 3.11.80.4: “τε καὶ κρότου καὶ μέθης καὶ παντὸς ἀναπιμπλάμενοι συρφετοῦ” (GCS 12:280).

²⁵*Paed.* 2.4.40.2 (GCS 12:181). He uses “περὶ ψοφούμενοι” and “ἀπάτης ὄργανοις.”

²⁶*Paed.* 2.4.43.3 (GCS 12:183). For more on the music outside church gatherings during Clement’s time, see Charles H. Cosgrove, “Music at Christian Social Meals,” in *Music at Social Meals in Greek and Roman Antiquity: From the Archaic Period to the Age of Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 306–39.

²⁷Clement uses other musical terms in this passage. In my study of Clement’s music, I have never found that he speaks positively about percussion instruments (*krotalon*, *kymbala*, and *tympanum*). He usually associates the aulos with dancing and idolatry but does occasionally refer to it positively (see *Protrepticus* 1.5.3). When Clement refers to dance (*orcheomai*) it is usually negative.

promotes reasonable behavior for humans, not the behavior of animals (2.4.41.2). Clement's description of music's ability to control the listener is significant. He is concerned about what is being consumed by the ears and eyes. He wants every dishonorable sight (*opsis*) and sound (*akoen*) that titillates the senses to be eliminated from the Christian social meal.²⁸ If the sexual acts of immorality at the Greek parties excite the viewer, then the music that accompanies them excites the ears. Referencing, again, the sound of the music, he describes this music as having "broken melodies" and "mournful rhythms" that corrupt the minds and morals of the listener with their "licentious and fraudulent music."²⁹ This reference to "fraudulent music" is similar in meaning to the "instruments of trickery" that beguile and deceive the listener.

Clement believes that certain music is not acceptable for Christian worship or social gatherings because it is conducive to drunkenness, immorality, and idolatry. But he also considers the words of the music as an important consideration for Christian church songs, which is the topic of our third lesson.

LESSON THREE: SINGING THE WORD AS IDENTITY

The third lesson from Clement's views on church music pertains to the words of church songs, which Clement views as a form of Christian identity. In the same way that followers of Christ have viewed baptism as identification with their Savior, so did Clement view the words of Christian songs as a kind of confessional identity. To put it simply, Clement not only views the text of church songs as an opportunity to learn Christian doctrine *from* the Word, but also as a marker of Christian association *with* the Word. This is further demonstrated in his contrast between the theme of death that the godless sing and the life of the Word that the faithful sing.

The Alexandrian Christians sang the Word (*logos*) in worship. Like the Apostle John, Clement often uses *logos* as a title for Christ (John 1:1). One example is when Clement calls the "joyful assembly of the Word" to offer "prayer to the Word."³⁰ In *Paedagogus* 3.11.80, in his instruction on the appropriate clothing for Christians who gather to pray, Clement states, "This is what the Word desires."³¹ But a few sentences later, Clement also

²⁸ *Paed.* 2.4.41.3 (GCS 12:182).

²⁹ *Paed.* 2.4.41.3: ἀκολάστω καὶ κακοτέχνῳ μουσικῇ (GCS 12:182).

³⁰ *Paed.* 3.12.101.1 (GCS: 12:291).

³¹ *Paed.* 3.11.79.5 (GCS 12:280).

seems to be using *logos* as a reference to the teachings of Christ. When he refers to *logos* as being that which is received and heard, he is following Paul's pattern who desires for the *logos* of Christ to dwell richly in God's people (Col 3:16). He states, "And they, after showing reverence concerning the Word of God, abandon what they heard inside and, while outside, roam about in the company of the godless."³² This description of the Alexandrian Christian gathering emphasizes their worship *unto* the Word ("showing reverence") and what they received *from* the Word ("what they heard").

For Clement, Christians identify with the Word by the words they sing and hear. He contrasts the faithful Christians and the unfaithful who leave the gathering to associate with the godless: "Indeed, those who sing and sing in response are the ones who before thoroughly hymned immortality; but to the end, wicked and wickedly, they psalm this destructive palinode: 'Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.'³³ Immortality—the eternal life made possible by the Word who is from the beginning—is the theme of the Christian song. In an earlier chapter of the *Paedagogus*, Clement refers to singing about the resurrection in his allegorized interpretation of Psalm 150, stating that the trumpet sound will signal the dead in Christ to rise again (2.4.43.3).³⁴ In another passage of the *Paedagogus*, Clement urges the faithful to sing a text that characterizes the way of Christ, stating that Christians should "sing on every occasion" this "most excellent doctrine": the righteous "stores up treasures in heaven."³⁵ This passage not only commends singing a text taken from the New Testament (Matt 6:20), but also demonstrates that Clement sees song texts as a form of Christian identity.

The godless, on the other hand, repetitiously sing a hopeless psalm of death: "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." Describing the state of the godless, Clement continues: "But they are, in fact, dead, not tomorrow, but already, dead to God, themselves burying their own dead, that is, burying themselves in the earth, for their own death."³⁶ This burying of the dead is reminiscent of Christian baptism. Just as the believers are buried in Christ, but raised to immortality, so do the godless bury themselves as they turn away from the Lord. Just as baptism is a form

³²*Paed.* 3.11.80.4 (GCS 12:280).

³³*Paed.* 3.11.80.4 (GCS 12:280).

³⁴*Paed.* 2.4.41.4 (GCS 12:182).

³⁵*Paed.* 3.6.34.3 (GCS 12:256–257). The quotation is paraphrased and shortened.

³⁶*Paed.* 3.11.81.1 (GCS 12:280). Simon P. Wood, trans., *Christ the Educator*, The Fathers of the Church 23 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1954), 260.

of Christian identity, so are church songs a confessional declaration of identity with Christ.

LESSON FOUR: SINGING AS THE HOLY CHURCH

The fourth lesson from Clement on church music pertains to his desire for the Church to be holy. The Apostles used the concept of holiness to contrast the Church and the world (1 Pet 1:14–15; Rom 12:1–2; Eph 4:22–24; 5:26–27; Col 1:21–22). This call to holiness is a central theme in the “Hymn to Christ,” which he composed as the conclusion for his *Paedagogus*.

In the opening lines of his hymn, using several metaphors, Clement portrays how the Lord leads (lines 1–4), followed by a declaration that the children of God gather to sing to Christ their Leader (lines 5–10).³⁷ In doing so, he describes the way they sing, stating that the children “sing holily” and “hymn sincerely” (lines 7–8).

1	Στόμιον πάλων ἀδαῶν, περὸν ὀρνίθων ἀπλανῶν, οἶαξ νηῶν ἀτρεκῆς, ποιμὴν ἄρνῶν βασιλείων·	Bridle of untamed colts, Wing of unstraying bird, Reliable rudder of ships, Shepherd of royal lambs:
5	τοὺς σοὺς ἀφελεῖς παῖδας ἄγειρον, αἰνεῖν ἀγίως, ὑμνεῖν ἀδόλως ἀνάκοις στόμασιν	Your plain children gather together to sing holily, to hymn sincerely with guiltless mouths
10	παίδων ἡγήτορα Χριστόν.	to Christ, the Leader of children.

The word “holily” is from *hagios*, the word most often translated in English Bibles as “holy.” Clement uses this root four times in this hymn.³⁸ In line seven, it is not just the saints who are holy, but their singing is holy. This exemplifies Clement’s expectations for church songs; the Church should strive to have songs that reflect the holiness of God.

Clement also expects church songs to be sincere (line 7). This word for “sincerely” (*adolos*), which means not deceitfully or not with trickery,

³⁷For a translation of Clement’s entire hymn, see the appendix in Webster, “Your Song Will Instruct Me.”

³⁸God’s *saints* (or holy ones) sing *holily* as the all-*holy* flock and *holy* fish (lines 11, 7, 22, 26).

is used only once in Scripture. Still, this single use is significant for our understanding of Clement's hymn. Peter writes, "Like newborn infants, long for the *adolos* spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation" (1 Pet 2:2). Peter's teaching in his epistle could be a source for Clement's imagery in his hymn. This influence is demonstrated by Clement's later use of Peter's imagery of a nursing mother in his hymn; he calls Jesus Christ the "Heavenly Milk" and states that Christians are "nourished" by the Word (lines 41–51). While much could be written about the context of Peter's epistle and Clement's hymn, it is sufficient to point out that the Apostle, like Clement, wants his readers to be a "holy nation" called "out of darkness" (1 Pet 2:9). When Clement states that Christians "hymn sincerely," he is continuing his resistance against the "instruments of trickery" and "fraudulent music" examined in lesson two.³⁹ Clement's reference to holy singing and sincere hymning portrays the Church in the image of her Lord and separate from the deceit of the world.

As Clement continues his hymn, he calls Christians holy (*hagios*) three more times, connecting their holiness to the Holy Shepherd and King.

	Ἄγιων Βασιλεῦ, λόγε πανδαμάτωρ πατρὸς ὑψίστου, σοφίας πρύτασι, 15 στήριγμα πόνων αἰωνοχαρές, βροτέας γενεᾶς σώτερ Ἰησοῦ, ποιμήν, ἀροτήρ, 20 οἶαξ, στόμιον, πτερόν οὐράνιον παναγοῦς ποιμνης,	King of saints, all-taming Word of the Most High Father, Prince of wisdom, Supporter of sufferers who evermore-rejoice. Jesus, Savior of the human family, Shepherd, Plowman, Rudder, Bridle, Heavenly Wing of the all-holy flock.
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His use of regal-pastoral imagery comes together early in the hymn when he calls Christ the "Shepherd of royal lambs" (line 4). He reinforces these regal-pastoral images when he bookends a new section with references to the holy Church: "King of holy ones" (line 11) and the "all-holy flock" (line 23). As King, the Word is transcendent over his holy Church, and as Shepherd, He is immanent. The "most High Father" (line 13),

³⁹*Paed.* 2.4.41.2–3 (GCS 12:182).

“Prince” (line 14), and “King” (line 31) are references to the Lord’s kingly immanence. The transcendence of the Lord is seen in Clement’s use of the terms “Supporters of sufferers” (line 15), “Savior of the human family” (line 17–18), and “tender children” (line 32). From where does the holy flock receive its holiness? From the “Holy Shepherd of the sheep of the Word” (lines 29–30), who leads as a King to heaven (lines 31–34). The holy Church, like its King, must aim to be above this world; and yet, like their holy Shepherd, Christians must be in the world. This leads to the last reference to holiness.

In the next section of his hymn, Clement calls the Church “holy fish” (line 26) and elaborates on the place of the Church in the world.

	ἄλιεῦ μερόπων	Fisher of men—
	τῶν σωζομένων	those saved
25	πελάγους κακίας,	from the sea of evil—
	ἰχθῦς ἀγνοῦς	the holy fish
	κύματος ἐχθροῦ	from hostile billows
	γλυκερῆ ζωῆ δελεάζων.	with sweet life drawing.

The Lord, as the “Fisher of men” (line 23), saved His holy people from the “sea of evil” (line 25). This word for evil (*kakia*) is often used by the apostles to describe the malice of the world. In fact, *kakia* is in the list of things that Peter commands be put away when he tells Christians to “long for the pure spiritual milk” (1 Pet 2:1–2). Clement also states that the holy fish are drawn from “hostile billows” (line 27). This word for “hostile” (*echthros*) is used to describe the hostility of an enemy. Clement uses this ocean imagery within the context of his hymn to communicate that the Lord has saved his holy people from the world, which is an evil and hostile enemy. This shows Clement’s desire for the *ekklesia* to be a place of refuge and safety from the world for Christians.

LESSON FIVE: SINGING WHOLLY AS THE CHURCH

Clement’s fifth lesson on church music in the *Paedagogus* pertains to the unity of the holy Church. Clement’s call for the Alexandrian Christians to be holy and separate is not just a polemic against the idolatry and immorality of their neighbors. Clement has a vision of a unified, holy Church—wholly holy—that he portrays in his hymn using hortatory language (“let us”) and the imagery of a choir singing together.

In the prose before his hymn, Clement closes the *Paedagogus* with a prayer (3.12.101.1). To begin this prayer, he states that the “joyful assembly of the Word” has one thing left to do: offer “prayer to the Word.”⁴⁰ His word for assembly is *paneguris*, which the writer of Hebrews uses to refer to a gathering of the heavenly hosts and the *ekklesia* atop Mount Zion before the Righteous Judge of all (Heb 12:22–23).⁴¹ Given the liturgical context of this passage, Clement’s “joyful assembly [*paneguris*] of the Word” is the Church (*ekklesia*), which he names at the end of his prayer.⁴² In this same context, using the Apostle’s challenge, Clement calls for the Church to “shine as blameless and pure children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation” (Phil 2:15). This is Clement’s vision for the church: A joyful assembly that sings and prays to the Word and yet shines as a bright light amid a crooked and perverse world.

The Church shines brightest when she is unified and holy. This vision of a unified Church continues in his hymn as Clement portrays the Church as “gathered together” to “sing holily” and “hymn sincerely” (lines 6–8). He uses images throughout his hymn to represent the Church as a unified whole. He calls the Church “saints” (line 11), “flock” (line 22), and “choir” (line 62). This choir stands in contrast to the ocean from which the holy fish were drawn (lines 23–28). Clement describes the sea and waves as evil and hostile, like an enemy. The choir of Christians, on the other hand, are “chaste people” (line 64), not evil, and they promote “peace” (lines 62 and 66), not hostility.

At the conclusion of Clement’s hymn, he uses three hortatory “Let us” phrases (lines 54, 60, 65).

55	αἶνους ἀφελείς, ὕμνους ἀπρεκείς βασιλεῖ Χριστῷ, μισθοὺς ὁσίου ζωῆς διδαχῆς, μέλπωμεν ὁμοῦ, 60 πέμπωμεν ἀπλῶς παῖδα κρατερόν.	Let us make melody together, plain praise, true hymns to Christ the King, our hallowed rewards for the teachings of life. Let us send forth with plainness the Mighty Child.
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⁴⁰ *Paed.* 3.12.101.1 (GCS: 12:291).

⁴¹ Clement refers to this passage in *Protrepticus* 9.82.6.

⁴² *Paed.* 3.12.101.3 (GCS 12:291).

	Χορὸς εἰρήνης, οἱ χριστόγονοι λαὸς σώφρων, 65 ψάλλωμεν ὁμοῦ θεὸν εἰρήνης.	As the choir of peace, a Christ-born chaste people, let us psalm together the God of peace.
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In two of these occurrences, Clement calls the Church to make music, stating “Let us make melody together” (line 59) and “let us psalm together” (line 65). In both statements, he uses the adverb *homou*, which is also used in Scripture to describe being together, such as in the disciples who “were all together in one place” (Acts 2:1) on Pentecost waiting for the Spirit. This togetherness is reminiscent of Clement’s view of Christian singing as a means of identity from Lesson 3, in which Christians sing together to identify with the Word. The image of a chorus (line 62) reinforces the unity of their singing. He wants the church to make melody and psalm together unto the Lord. Their object is Christ; their medium is music; their message is the peace of the gospel.

CONCLUSION

This article has offered five church music lessons from Clement, which he offers from his late second-century perspective as he and his fellow believers sing the Lord’s song in Egypt. The liturgical-musical passages of *Paedagogus* 3.11–12 reveal a counter-cultural practice that distinguished the Alexandrian Christians from the worldly aspects of their Greco-Roman context. Clement’s chief concerns offered in this article are as follows: Christians should separate from the immoral music of their neighbors, sing to the Word as a means of identity, and form a unified, holy Church that sings to Christ.

The final words of Clement’s “Hymn to Christ” form a musical call to unity: “Let us make melody together, plain praise, true hymns to Christ the King, our hallowed rewards for the teachings of life. Let us send forth with plainness the Mighty Child. As the choir of peace, a Christ-born chaste people, let us psalm together the God of peace” (lines 54–66).