

Chapter V
Music instruments in Doxology

- 1- Music Instruments in Doxology**
- 2- Prohibiting the Use of Music Instruments**
- 3- Using Timbrel and Triangle**
- 4- Do the Coptic Hymns Yield to Instrumental Music**
- 5- Praising on Earth and in Heaven.**

1- Music Instruments in Doxology

David and music instruments:

No man on earth was more eloquent than David the prophet in expressing his love to the Lord of Glory, his dedication in praising Him all the time and in inviting each soul to praise the Name of the One he loved.

As an outcome of his continuous praise David got his heart purified, to him the Lord gave testimony and said, *"I have found David the Son of Jesse, a man after My own heart, who will do all My will..."* (Acts 13:22).

He also deserved the honor to be called the "father of the Savior", for Christ was called "Jesus Son of David", since he gained a purified heart & resembled the angels in continuous praise.

David as he loved to praise, invited not only humans and all kinds of instruments to accompany him in praise but included the whole nature, even the silent nature, as he praised saying:

*"Praise Him, sun and moon And you waters above the heavens!
for He commanded and they were created.*

Praise the LORD from the earth, you great sea creatures and all the depths;

fire and hail, snow and clouds;

stormy wind, fulfilling His word;

mountains and all hills;

fruitful trees and all cedars;

beasts and all cattle; creeping things and flying fowl" (Ps 148:3)

David did not discard any known instrument but invited to join him in praise:

+ *“Praise Him with the sound of the trumpet;
Praise Him with the lute and harp!
Praise Him with the timbrel and dance;
Praise Him with stringed instruments and flutes!”* (Ps 150:3,4)

+ *“Then David and all the house of Israel played music before the LORD on all kinds of instruments of fir wood, on harps, on stringed instruments, on tambourines, on sistrums, and on cymbals”* (2Sam 6:5)

+ *“So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the LORD with shouting and with the sound of the trumpet”* (2Sam 6:15)

With no doubt, praising with musical instruments has spiritual power over evil spirits, as stated in the Scripture:

“And so it was, whenever the spirit from God was upon Saul, that David would take a harp and play it with his hand. Then Saul would become refreshed and well, and the distressing spirit would depart from him.” (1 Sam 16:23). That’s why David was eager not to praise alone but to awake his musical instruments to join him in his praise:

*“Awake, lute and harp!
I will awaken the dawn.”* (Ps 108:2)

David made some developments to the harp which was first invented by Hermes since it was not capable by its three strings (sharp, coarse & medium) to match the plentiful tones produced by him:

*“I will sing a new song to You, O God;
On a harp of ten strings I will sing praises to You”* (Ps 144:9)

Surely, the melodies produced by David the musician and prophet contained many tones that could not be performed on the harp of Hermes which was capable only of producing the basic points of stations in the melody.

The diatonic seven musical scale for sure was completed by David the prophet at that time and tones of David was covering areas on the musical scale more than octave¹. It is clear that his fine tones contained the sharp/bass, sharp/shrill, coarse/low, and coarse/shrill as well as medium tones, thus raising the need of new invention - the harp of ten strings².

The Coptic Church took David's idea of the ten strings and produced a hymn called "Ettay Parthenos" for the Virgin Mary, showing her virtues on the ten strings. "This Virgin today had earned honor, this Virgin today had earned glory, and her clothing is woven with gold, in robes of many colors."

David moved the first string of his harp and shouted saying: "At Your right hand stands the queen", and then moved the second string of his harp and shouted saying: "Listen, O daughter, consider and incline your ear; forget your own people also, and your father's house ", and so on the hymn proceeds counting on each string a prophecy about the virgin that was prophesized by David in his magnificent psalms, and finally on the tenth string he moves it saying: "For the LORD has chosen Zion; He has desired it for His dwelling place "

Prophets & musical instruments:

Although most prophets were not talented to play on several musical instruments like David, we capture them while prophesying collaborate with others who know how to praise using musical instruments, as did Elijah the prophet :

"But now bring me a musician, then it happened, when the musician played, that the hand of the LORD came upon him" (2kgs 3:15)

¹ Complete musical scale that consist of seven tones with the repetition of the first tone at the end of the scale

²This instrument can be seen on the frontage of the great temple of Dandara & in Elthia caves in the small temple at Feyala island.

In spite of not having the talent, Elijah asked for a musician, in order to seek God's mercies to inspire him to prophecy in front of Jehoshaphat King of Judah.

Praising with instruments turns earth into heaven:

One of the most noted passages about the influence of praise with musical instruments we find in the second Book of the Chronicles:

"... and the Levites who were the singers, all those of Asaph and Heman and Jeduthun, with their sons and their brethren, stood at the east end of the altar, clothed in white linen, having cymbals, stringed instruments and harps, and with them one hundred and twenty priests sounding with trumpets, indeed it came to pass, when the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the LORD, and when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and praised the LORD, saying:" For He is good, for His mercy endures forever", that the house, the house of the LORD, was filled with a cloud, so that the priests could not continue ministering because of the cloud; for the glory of the LORD filled the house of God" (2Chr 2:12-14)

It is clear how praising with cymbals, stringed instruments, harps, trumpets and instruments of music, set in a magnificent spiritual environment, that turned earth into heaven.

Musical Instruments in the New Testament:

This remarkable concentration on musical instruments found in the Old Testament is seen also in the New Testament; in the Book of Revelation as clearly reveals how praising in heaven will be accompanied by celestial musical instruments & with a similar picture to the one captured in the second Book of Chronicles:

"And I saw something like a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those who have the victory over the beast, over his image and over his mark and over the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, having harps of God. They sing the song of Moses, the servant

of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying: "Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints"..... The temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power, and no one was able to enter the temple" (Rev 15:2-8)

Comparative Doxology:

In comparing the two previous forms of praise, we find very close resemblance between them:

- 1- **Using musical instruments**, in the first form: cymbals, stringed instruments, harps, trumpets and instruments of music, while in the second: harps of God.
- 2- **Place of worship**, in the first: house of God while in the second: the temple on the sea of glass.
- 3- **Singers**, in the first: Asaph, Heman, Jeduthun and priests, while in the second: those who have the victory over the beast.
- 4- **Words of praise**, in the first: song of David (For He is good, for His mercy endures forever), while in the second: song of Moses, the servant of God.
- 5- **Efficacy of praise**, in the first: the house of the LORD, was filled with a cloud for the glory of the LORD filled the house of God while in the second: The temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God.
- 6- **Result**, in the first: priests could not continue ministering because of the cloud, while in the second: no one was able to enter the temple.

This comparison shows how praise in heaven is a continuation of praise on earth, and the hymns & songs we are singing here on earth with true feelings, from the bottom of the heart & with full consciousness might be used also in heaven, for the years could not overcome the song of Moses but survived for eternity. Similarly, all those years could not wipe off the Coptic hymns and their tones which was not written but kept in memories & passed from generation to generation.

The song of Moses the prophet attracted the attention of many, someone commented:

“What is so impressing about the song used by Moses and repeated by the Israelis after him, upon crossing the red sea, is its noble & fine enthusiastic nature. In this state of great blissfulness that Moses felt, after having the honor of leading the people of Israel in crossing the red sea walking on its ground as the water retreated from its depth and the joy of the successful escape from the Pharaoh’s carriages which was drowned and sunk in the sea, Moses chanted driven from the bottom of his heart to thank and glorify the eternal God, raising his voice and saying:

*“I will sing to the LORD,
For He has triumphed gloriously!
The horse and its rider
He has thrown into the sea!
²The LORD is my strength and song,
And He has become my salvation;
He is my God, and I will praise Him;
My father's God, and I will exalt Him ...”*

This magnificent song continues with the same fervent spirit and virility, for nothing was in front of Moses but the influence of the great majestic hands of God. He could not be content with amazement or an ecstasy as a reaction to the miracle of the deliverance of himself and the Israeli people but he proceeded chanting as if he was walking alone and no one is around, and shortly his enthusiasm passed to all the congregation and the women expressed their feelings with their dances”.

This explains how this song deserved to be heard in eternity, for it contained no supplications but was driven only from love and gratitude towards the Lord for His goodness, and His mercy that endures forever. I may consider that Moses, this great musician who learned all kind of music at Pharaoh’s palace, was the first to set the concept of (Worshipping God with melodies)

Consecrating Singers:

Paul Macoman said: “Both instrumental & vocal programs of the Hebrews were organized. Leaders, teachers, players & singers had part in the program. It was expected from players to be consecrated as well as singers and altar ministers. They spared no effort to make the temple services magnificent and meaningful”

Accordingly, I ask: why not to have in each Coptic church consecrated chorus of deacons, a small number (five for example) as a start, to be chosen with much attention having the talent, understanding & spirituality, to care, preserve & sing the hymns with people in the church, thus not sparing hymns to others that may have neither the talent nor the know how.

If you do find in each church gatekeepers, cleaners, Korbana bakers & secretaries ... etc, & all of them get paid for their work, how much more important to have chorus of deacons dedicated for doxology ministry which was passed to us from the apostles who instructed us in the Didascalia (Apostles' Teaching) that singers of the Psalmody (psalms hymns) should be full of understanding, wisdom & talent (i.e. talent of chanting hymns & with understanding & wisdom received hymns according to the sacred tradition). The apostles included that in their teachings because they realized that the Lord himself in His ministry time did not discard Temple services & their beautiful music but on the contrary He used to attend & contribute. The Savior told his disciples several times: “*You have heard that it was said to those of old ...But I say to you...*”, He was always correcting beliefs of old traditions, wasn't He capable of correcting the music program inside the temple if He is not accepting and contributing to?!

The Levites were consecrated for doxology ministry offered to the Lord as a living sacrifice:

“Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: “Take the Levites from among the children of Israel and cleanse them ceremonially. Thus you shall do to them to cleanse them: Sprinkle water of purification on them, and let them shave all their body, and let them wash their clothes, and so make themselves clean. Then let them take a young bull with its grain offering of fine flour mixed with oil, and you shall take another young bull as a sin offering. And you shall bring the Levites before the tabernacle of meeting, and you shall gather together the whole congregation of the children of Israel. So you shall bring the Levites before the LORD, and the children of Israel shall lay their hands on the Levites; and Aaron shall offer the Levites before the LORD like a wave offering from the children of Israel, that they may perform the work of the LORD. Then the Levites shall lay their hands on the heads of the young bulls, and you shall offer one as a sin offering and the other as a burnt offering to the LORD, to make atonement for the Levites. And you shall stand the Levites before Aaron and his sons, and then offer them like a wave offering to the LORD” (Num 8:5-13)

Those musicians were consecrated & their lives were dedicated for only one purpose, to lead the congregation in worshiping the Mighty God in doxology ministry. They used to have special clothes (2Chr 5:11-12); they were taking salaries in return for their ministry (Num 18:21) and they were dedicated for the ministry day & night (1Chr 9:33).

Doxology ministry in our Coptic church needs a stance & an eye on the Old Testament to realize how important praising to God must be more magnificent & spectacular than worldly songs. I feel so jealous when I see how singing for humans is produced by a huge orchestra of 120 players & a chorus of about 70 singers while in praising God we do not find even ten dedicated deacons in each church having the talent. Why not some rich Christians that love this ministry adopt the idea of consecrating a general chorus & orchestra for praise to take the role of the Levites in the Old Testament, to glorify God in an image appropriate to the Lord for His goodness and His mercy that endures forever. The

offerings of the rich should not be limited to the poor but should extend to reach other ministries & more importantly doxology ministry.

The necessity of praising on earth:

It would be a calamity if people stopped praising God as St. John showed in the Book of Revelation when he described the curses that will fall on Babylon the day of its destruction: *“The sound of harpists, musicians, flutists, and trumpeters shall not be heard in you anymore”* (Rev18:22), accordingly, unhearing the sound of praise is a sign of havoc & destruction.

Learning to praise on earth is a necessity for praising in heaven or say it is practice. We can through training, practice and striving to be ready to praise in heaven & without practicing on earth we will be ignorant of praise in heaven.

St. John says in the Book of Revelation:

“And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps. They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth” (Rev 14:2,3)

The harps & the prayers of the saints will be combined in eternity as St. John states:

“Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song, saying: You are worthy....” (Rev5:8)

St. Athanasius & the musical instruments:

It appears to me that St. Athanasius the apostolic used to listen to the harp and knew its secrets. He wrote in his letter to Marsilinus:

“The soul that has the Mind of Christ - as the apostle stated in (1Cor 2:15)– should be in harmony with this Mind, exactly as the harp is in harmony with the performer. The spiritual harp which is the human soul should submit all members and senses to the mind of Christ and hence become submissive to God’s will”

I do not think that St. Athanasius the apostolic was listening to worldly melodies on the harp, for he was used from his childhood to the spiritual atmosphere, for he was a deacon before being a Patriarch.

He also wrote commenting on a psalm of David:

“When the soul does not commit something vain and becomes free from any harmful feelings regarding its faith and life, it deserves to be called a “spiritual harp””

He also wrote as if he is aware of the details of harp performing and its musical secrets:

“Like a person that listens from a distance to a harp that have several different chords and was impressed by the harmony of its tones (i.e. its voice produced does not include low tones only, or high or medium but all chords give a balanced voice altogether) and as if the performer adjusted the harp music & with his wisdom producing the high pitched tones in harmony with the low and the medium ones and got a result of producing one melody, in the same manner Wisdom of God is holding the universe like a harp”

It is clear from the previous, that praising with musical instrument is something sacred since it is meant to glorify and thank the Lord and not to show up & amaze others with instruments.

2-Prohibiting the Use of Music Instruments

If the use of musical instruments is of such great importance, what then is the reason behind prohibiting the use of these instruments in the Coptic Church during prayers? This question we shall tackle hereinafter:

Mr. Paul Makomon, in his book "Music in the Holy Scripture", discusses this issue, saying, "When Christ came and a Christian era began, persecution was greatly directed against Christians resulting in the ceasing of public worship meetings. However, small groups of believers continued to use music secretly, whereas the great performances mentioned in the Old Testament ceased. Still, there remained that natural instinct within the Christians to express their joy for salvation through chanting. The revival of music in the recent years helped satisfy the hidden desire of the people to chant praise. The worship music has been well established and forever, and has become more acceptable to people than at any previous time".

From the words of Mr. Paul Makomon we become more assured that praise songs were performed secretly since that instinct desire to express the joy of salvation was not effaced. However, the word (secretly) shows chanting praise was not accompanied by musical instruments to lower the sound level so as not to be heard outside the worship place.

"Some persons in our days", Paul Makomon continues, "insist that the use of such musical instruments is the work of devil. So they should not be used in worship gatherings. Their point of view is perhaps based on the fact that little is mentioned in the New Testament about the musical instruments. But they neglect another fact that in the new era people were not able to buy such expensive instruments as those used in the past. Moreover, most of the churches were compelled to move continually due to the persecution they faced; this left no time for promoting music or for training musicians.

The issue of prohibiting the use of musical instruments in the Coptic church has been discussed in an article published "El-Ebdaa magazine" the February 1994 issue, in which is written, "Singing in some Ancient Egyptians temples depended on the vocal cords. For example, inside the tomb of Osiris, the god of the dead, in the sacred Feyala Island, the use of the musical instruments was forbidden. It is exactly the same ritual in the Coptic Church. The Israeli people knew two musical rites: the sanctuary rite in which all types musical instruments of those days were used. The other is the synagogue rite in which a capella ³ was used. And when the holy apostles preached Christianity to the whole world, they chose the Jewish synagogue rite, which depended completely on the voice. Moreover, Law number (80) of (Clement of Alexandria) prohibited the use of or the entry of any kind of musical instruments in the church.

For instance, the custom in the emperor's parades from his palace unto the church was to play organ all the way, and at a distance from the church they leave the organ. This was meant to confirm the rite of church music depending on voice only for worship. This is still adopted within the rites of the Coptic, the Greek, the Syrian and the Russian Churches up till now. As for the Church of Rome, it has transformed its voice music since the year 1000A.D. into instrument music, adding to it the harmony in order to be played on the organ.

Some people are of the opinion that man's larynx is the greatest musical instrument capable of performing the difficult quarter of a tone skillfully and accurately. Therefore, there is no need to use the musical instrument, which is less efficient than the larynx which God created.

³ A capella is singing by the chorus without instruments . It is derived from church music for chanting. This way of chanting was its climax in the sixth century by "Palestrina".

Others are of the opinion that prohibiting the use of musical instruments in the Coptic church dates back to the early centuries when the catholic church in the East and the west desired to break up any relationship with other worship forms. Therefore, she prevented setting up statues, and using musical instruments, for these represented a main element in heathen performances. The church wanted to protect the believers against remembrance of idolatry evils, and to help them focus their attention on the power of the divine words .

+ Some researcher, in justification of prohibiting the use of musical instruments in church, says, "The Coptic music is derived from the Pharaoh music performed in the temples, and naturally, the architectural style of the temple is completely different from that of the churches of the early epochs. For the latter were built underground to flee from the persecutions and torments that befell the Copts throughout the different ages of martyrdom. Therefore hymns were chanted depending on human voices. It is unreasonable that musical instruments, especially percussion instruments, were used by such persecuted people who used to pray and worship while threatened to die at any moment. It is well known that the "Gregorian Chant" was the way of singing and composing melodies according to the rules and principles set by Saint Gregory (590-604 A.D.) the Pope of Roman Catholic church in Milan for the hymnology of church songs in the sixth century (AD). It was a style of praising without the use of any harmony or musical instruments. This way of chanting was so distinguished for its gravity and simplicity that it was called "plain chant". This style reached its climax in the years 800 A.D. No doubt this grave Gregorian style of chanting has been transferred to the Roman church from the Coptic mother church.

+ The savants of the French expedition, in their book "Description of Egypt" vol. VII, express their full conviction that the song of Prophet Moses was performed without any kind of musical instruments. They say, "we challenge any innovator composer to prove that there is even one instrument already known or imagined which can produce such perfect tunes that are able to melt with the voice without affecting the sublimity, the nobility and

simplicity of the tunes or the gravity, awe and greatness of the meaning implied therein. If there had been any musical instruments that could accord with such a powerful melody, Moses the Prophet would not have hesitated to use them for his song.”

Saint Clement of Alexandria, in a letter included in his famous book “The Educator”, strongly criticized the use of musical instruments, saying, “Man, by nature is a tool of peace. Whereas musical instruments you search and investigate well, are tools of war and fighting. They inflame feelings of lusts or fighting and arouse anger and resentment. The only tool for peace is the Lord, the Word. He alone we should use in our praise then we will never use the old harp, pictures, tambourine or flute, these which warriors used, not having the fear of God in their hearts, they used such tools in their gatherings and festivals, aiming at arousing their deviating minds by such tunes. Let then our refined and sublime emotions accord with the Law.”

From the above letter of St. Clement of Alexandria we discover that prohibition of the use of musical instruments dates back to the 2nd century (A.D.). Even the gentle flute with its low sound and sweet melody which comforts our tensioned nerves and provides that grave and sad touch that enwraps our Coptic church hymns, even this flute was considered at that time a tool inflaming our lusts and desire to fight and arousing anger and resentment. It was considered fit only to be used by warriors who have not the fear of God in their hearts, and who desire only to arouse their deviating minds by such tunes.

I cannot deny that the letter of St. Clement of Alexandria was very strange to my ears. I could not accept the concept contained therein, because it is opposed to Prophet David’s view of musical instruments, for he made them and used them in singing praise to God. It is also opposed to the spiritual view contained in both Old & New testaments of the Holy Scripture regarding musical instruments.

I call upon researchers to study the nature of music at the end of the second century and the beginning of the third century A.D., for perhaps music in those days was of such a type that arouses anger and resentment, and those who used it in their gatherings and festivals meant to encourage the minds to deviate through such music. This may be the cause of fear that filled the heart of St. Clement lest such a type of music creep into the church and, using these musical instruments, they would deviate. Anger and resentment would then prevail instead of peace and meekness.

We can say, depending on this research, that before that period in which St. Clement of Alexandria led the trend of prohibiting the use of musical instruments, the early Apostolic Church had permitted the use of musical instruments in their meetings. This continued up to the coming of St. Clement of Alexandria in late second century. Some references say that the Copts received the way of praising with the flute in their (Aghabi) gatherings from the Jewish hermits. They continued to use the flute up to the year 190 A.D. when St. Clement of Alexandria replaced the flute by the "Cymbalon" .

It is worth note that in the year 190 A.D. St. Clement presided over the school of Alexandria. His church activities flourished in the period between 190-200 A.D. This shows that since the first day of taking his post as Head of the School of Theology and carrying out his activities, St. Clement decided to prevent the use of musical instruments in the "aghabi" gatherings away from the sacred Liturgical rites.

St. Clement of Alexandria, explaining his point of view concerning using musical instruments, while analyzing Psalm (150) in which prophet David calls upon the whole creation and all musical instruments to praise the Lord, says, "**Praise Him with the sound of the trumpet:** because the trumpet sound will call upon the dead to rise. **Praise Him with flute:** because our tongues are the Lord's flute. **Praise Him with harp:** because the harp is our mouth which the Holy Spirit moves like strings. **Praise Him with the timbrel and dance:** this refers to the church meditating on the rising of the dead through beating

on the dead skin (of which the timbrel is made). **Praise Him with stringed instruments and organ:** because the organ stands for the body, and the nerves are the strings which interact with the Holy Spirit in harmony to gain the refreshment which is translated into voices. **Praise Him with sweet cymbals:** these refer to the lips when the tones are played on them. **Let everything that has breath praise the Lord:** here he calls upon the whole humanity to praise the lord because He cares for them all. Really, man is an instrument of peace. St. Clement goes on saying, "But because each nation uses one of these instruments to declare war and there is not even one instrument for peace (which is the word by which we praise and glorify God), so we use such a word only.

We do not use the trumpet, the flute, the drum or the harp which warriors use in their wars or festivals. Is not the ten stringed harp symbol of the word of the Lord Jesus Christ?

History witnesses that the famous harp of Ireland is derived from the Egyptian harp which the Egyptian preachers brought with them. The most famous of these missionaries was the Thebian battalion which started from Italy to Switzerland then to Ireland. This, of course, proves that the preachers were keen on bringing with them some musical instruments like the harp to be part of their preaching programs; which means that chanting praise was the main element of their evangelizing.

Alexandrians, in particular, excelled all other nations in playing flute and "Genk". Amazingly, any illiterate low class person was able to pick out the slightest mistake of a player. The art of playing flute in Alexandria was so perfect that the players of Alexandria were invited everywhere to performances. It was a great joy to anyone to have one of them play in his performance! In Spite of all this, St. Clement prevented using the flute and substituted it with the cymbalon!

However, though I am very zealous about musical instruments, wishing to use them in praise, yet I agree completely with the church decision to prohibit their use during the holy

Liturgy whether in the Mass Service or in other church rituals administered in the church nave so as not to contradict tradition.

Nevertheless, we should not prohibit using such instruments beyond this. They can be used in special performances for hymns and praise songs, with some spiritual contemplations, that would draw the attention to the divine words.

3- Using Timbrel and Triangle

I would like here to correct a wrong concept related to the cymbals, which we use in our joyful melodies. Many people call it "timbrel" or "Toph" : a Hebrew word which refers to the type of timbrels which women used in the past. The word "Toph" is synonymous to the Coptic word "kemkem" .

The timbrel is a kind of drums, which is called "hand drum". It's a piece of thin leather on a wooden frame stretched tightly. So, when one beats on the leather, it produces a sweet sound. Women in the past used this kind of drums when singing, and often with dancing. It was also used with other instruments to accompany praise singing choruses or music ensembles taking part in worship.

We know from the Book of Exodus that Miriam, the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took the timbrel in her hand and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances and Miriam answered them, *"Sing to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously! The horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea!"* (Ex.15: 20) We read also in I Samuel *"After that you shall come to the hill of God where the philistine garrison is and it will happen when you have come there to the city, that you will meet a group of prophets coming down the high place with a stringed instrument, a tambourine, a flute and a harp before them; and they will be prophesying. Then the Spirit of the Lord will come upon you, and you will prophesy with them and be turned into another man."* (1Sam 10:5,6) And in 1Chronicles it is written, *"Then David and all Israel played music before God with all their might, with singing, on harps, on stringed instruments, on tambourines, on cymbals and with trumpets. "* (1 Chr. 13:8) Psalm (81) also says, *"Sing aloud to God our strength; make a joyful shout to the God of Jacob. Raise a song and strike the timbrel, the pleasant harp with the lute."* (Ps.81: 1-2)

In all the preceding verses, the timbrel is mentioned, not the "cymbals"(or the semantron as some call it) nor the "Hagiosidere" (a Greek word composed of two syllables: "Hagios" which means sacred, and "sideros" (which means iron), which means “the sacred iron.”

The cymbal is a circular, concave plate of brass mixed with another metal, used as a percussion instrument. It is used in pairs which are struck together to produce a ringing sound. Its center is dome shaped with a hole through which a leather cord is fixed to be carried easily. The triangle also is a percussion instrument used some times in orchestras. It is a three angled metal rod forming a triangle. It produces a sound when struck with a small metal stick.

Some church books state that the triangle was a wooden instrument used to control the group performance in certain hymns (not exceeding eight) of the Coptic Church throughout the whole year. Nowadays, it is used in its familiar metal shape described above. It is usually used in the prayers of the Holy Mass and with the joyful tunes.

Ibdaa Magazine, in its issue on "The Coptic heritage, is a heritage for all Egyptians", introduces a certain point of view which says: the use of triangle/cymbal during the Mass prayers and with church hymns makes noise and disturbs prayers, for prayers are spiritual and require an atmosphere of calmness and serenity. The author of this opinion says that he had perused all references and manuscripts of the church rituals available in Egypt, as well as those in the Paris National Library, the British Museum, the Vatican, and the German libraries, and he found them all concurrent concerning the use of triangles cymbals.

In fact, misusing the triangle/cymbal without awareness of its role is the main cause of disturbance, not the instrument itself. The instrument is, and will always be innocent and irresponsible for the bad and ignorant player.

4- Do the Coptic Hymns yield to Instrumental Music

No doubt, according to tradition, we are confined to the use of cymbals and triangle only in the Liturgy. However, this does not mean that hymns do not yield to instrumental music!! I was astonished when I read the opinion of the world famous musician “Newland Smith” which he published in a book, for he mentioned that music cannot be composed by using instruments. He further said that the composer of the Coptic melodies did not follow any musical rules or scales, but he was bound only by the spiritual meaning of the hymn and he depicted his own emotions. Smith indicated also that the Coptic tunes are distinguished from the tunes of other churches of the world in not yielding to the instrumental music.

Being a deacon and a music scholar I found it my duty to correct this opinion. Nevertheless, I give Mr. Smith the excuse for being a foreigner who knows nothing about our Coptic modes. This certainly makes it difficult to him to produce our Coptic tunes, such as “Saba”, “Hazam”, and other Coptic modes. Whereas I hold my lute everyday and play the tunes, from my childhood, and never did this noble lute disappoint me!

The Coptic tunes were composed from the original Egyptian modes which the Arabic music used afterwards and gave Turkish, Persian, or Arabic names such as “Gaharka”, “Sika”, “Nahawand”, “Agam”, “Hazam” ... etc. All of these musical modes were played on musical instruments, and from them most composers outside the Church composed their songs and tunes.

Many cantors, some priests, and a bishop who know well the Coptic hymns and tunes heard me playing the lute in various meetings during praise, and I noticed that they enjoyed much praising accompanied by the lute. This make them enjoy more the beauty of the Coptic hymns. They all admitted the capability of the lute to assimilate the tune accurately.

I will not forget those moments when I was receiving the hymn of the “Descending of the Holy Spirit” (Pi Epnevma Emparakleton) from late Cantor Kamel Ay’ad Kelleny. This tune took three periods because of its length, and in the fourth period, which was supposed to be a test of my ability to memorize, I came with my lute in my hand. The blind cantor did not notice that of course. He asked me “Have you learnt well the tune, deacon?” then he asked me to recite it. So I began to play the lute and sing the sweet hymn tune while observing the impression and the happiness on his face. He began to rub his closed eyes unconsciously and strike one hand against the other spontaneously as if expressing his great joy. He then rose up a little from his seat, then sat down again as if wishing to jump for joy! It was the first time for him to hear a tune without a human voice. After finishing, he praised my memorizing and my playing music, saying, “This lute has a very beautiful sound, and you have memorized very well.”

The Coptic hymns and tunes are also performed accompanied with musical instruments with high accuracy and great beauty. Actually Cantor Ibrahim Ayad the Teacher of Hymns at the Seminary enjoyed much performing these hymns accompanied by the music instruments. Had he suspected for a moment the capability of these instruments to produce the tunes accurately, he would have rejected them immediately.

David Ensemble has produced a cassette tape for these tunes with the combination of some of these musical instruments to stand for a proof of this fact.

Concerning the article of Mr. Smith in which he expressed his opinion that the Coptic composer did not follow any musical rules or scales in composing the Coptic tunes, I am really so sorry to read such an opinion and would give her a refutation thereof:

1. Since olden times the tunes with which man praise his Creator has always been the most powerful, the most sublime and the most abiding by sound music rules. Those tunes have always been a model followed by those who are not of the faith in their

worldly musical works. This fact extended throughout all ages. However, regretfully, this trend got weaker in the present age, for nowadays what is offered to the creation is more accurate, more efficient and more skilful than what is offered to the Creator! This was a cause of pain and distress to me, and made me insist on joining the High Music Institute of the Arts Academy to study musicology at the hands of the world-famous composer Aziz Al Shawan. From this Institute I obtained the Bachelor degree. The only impetus was my zeal for a proper image of praise in the church. Furthermore, for the same reason, I joined the same academy for a post-graduate diploma in leading orchestra. This I obtained at the hands of the world Maestro Youssef Al Sisy.

In the famous book “Description of Egypt” the savants of the French Military Expedition recorded the great vividness and sublimity of the songs of Moses the Prophet which he sang after crossing the Red Sea and those which he sang a short time before his death. The book states, “Moses, who received all the knowledge of the Egyptians with such care that would have been given had he been Pharaoh’s son, certainly compiled his songs according to the principles he learned from his tutors, and with the same sense and taste he acquired from the beautiful Egyptian poetry and songs. This he acquired through his study of the models, the poems and the songs he had to imitate. Such poems and songs deserved –due to their beauty- to be performed in the temples where he listened to and meditated in.” The savants of the expedition continued, saying, “Would anyone wonder now if such genius that taught Moses that beautiful poetry could not inspire him also with sweet songs very expressive and sensitive, while Moses was deeply familiar with all branches of Ancient Egyptian music.” (seventh Book-P. 91, 93)

From these words of the savants we learn that what Moses composed to praise and glorify God with was based on knowledge and study of the rules of poetry and musical composition.

2. The first Theological School which St. Mark established and which –according to history books- had so great a place up to mid fifth century that the Head of that School was considered a second in rank to the Patriarch. Moreover, the popes and bishops of the See of Alexandria were for a long time elected from among the Heads of the Theological School. Furthermore the most prominent Popes of Alexandria who were famous for their knowledge and great zeal had graduated from that School. Among those were: Alexandros, Athanasius, Dionysius, Cyril, and Discorus. That Theological School taught music besides Theological subjects. Would Mr. Smith think that the fathers who joined that School studied music without basic rules, modes, or scales? Certainly, such a world-famous school taught music according to established rules and scales. I even believe that any musical rules have emanated and developed from the rules of music known all over the world. I also dare say that the “Harmony Science” (i.e. the concurrence of the different tunes vertically by playing them at one time harmoniously) and the “Counterpoint Science” (i.e. the concurrence in spite of the diverse tunes) these had their origin in that Theological School.

Again, I support my opinion with the words of St. Athanasius the Apostolic, the 20th Pope of Alexandria (326-373 A.D.) and one of the great saints who graduated at the same Theological School of Alexandria, for he said that when one hears from a distant place the sound of a harp with various strings one

admires the harmony of its tunes [i.e. its sound consists of low, high and medium tunes, and despite its different strings it gives balanced sounds] And as the musician fixes his harp and skillfully realizes the harmony between the high, the medium and the low tunes and other tunes thus producing one tune, likewise God's wisdom holds the universe like a harp. He made the creation in the air concurrent with that on the earth, and what is in heaven concurrent with what is in the air, thus uniting the part with the whole.

From the above words of St. Athanasius, i.e.:

“Concurrence of tunes; All strings give balanced sounds; producing one tune”, we can guess that His Holiness knew well the Science of Sound Harmony. We cannot forget also his unique musical character apparent in the famous melody he composed for the hymn “Omonogenis”.

3. I have analyzed a lot of Coptic tunes and found that they are conform with musical rules, modes and scales. Their melody is divided in to sound musical stanzas, and each consists of eight bars. Each stanza is divided into two musical phrases: the first ending with interrupted cadence; and the second with perfect cadence⁴ to form a sound ending of a musical stanza depending

⁴ The “Cadence” is as important method for composing melodies. It does not apply to the ending of the whole melody, but also the ending of each stanza separately. There are many kinds of “Cadence”, each giving a certain impression concerning the preceding stanza. These kinds include:

- + “Half close” which gives the impression of indecisive close.
- + “Transitive close” which is used for transition from one mode to another.
- + “Imperfect cadence” which is used to give the impression that the tune has not ended, being small part within the tune.
- + “Religious cadence” which is usually used at the end of the worship music stanzas in hymns or liturgy.
- + “Interrupted cadence” which gives the impression of expected perfect cadence, however it transfers the listener to another imperfect cadence.
- + “Vigorous cadence” which contains tune ornaments.
- + “Perfect cadence” used at the end of the main stanza and at the end of the melody as a whole giving the impression of a sure close.

on the tonic⁵ to start another formal stanza. This is the correct scientific shape followed afterwards in various musical works introduced by great world musicians copying from the Coptic music.

4. While analyzing some hymn tunes, I found that some musical stanzas end with prolonged end tone “Korona” consisting of a number of musical bars less than the real length of the correct stanza with the same length. From the musical phase this realizes a kind of musical balancing which many world musicians adopted in their works. They did this by adding “Korona” (the sign of prolongation) to the musical stanza.
5. Scale transpositions are often found in many Coptic tunes. It is the change of mode during the tune movement. The whole world copied these scale transpositions from the Coptic music which enriched their music. The existence of such transpositions in any melody is a proof of the superiority, the sublimity and the richness of the melody.
6. these transpositions in the tunes are an indication that the rhythm of the “tempo”⁶ is not fixed throughout the tune, but it changes

⁵“Tonic”, or the first, or the basic music tone. The music scale is usually called by this first tone due to its importance for music composition and comfortable listening whenever the tune settled there. The traditional melody usually starts with this tone.

⁶The tempos are the roots or the scales of the eastern music. They consist of a number of varied successive strokes or beats that are repeated throughout the hymn. They also differ with regard to strength and weakness: the strong one is called “Dom”, and the weak “Tek”. Some determined moments of silence that may occur within these strokes. They bear Persian or Trukish names, like “Major Masmody”; “Heavy Samaai”; “Dareg”. Usually the percussion instrument controls these stokes. In the Coptic Church the metal cymbal performs this function, besides giving a joyful ringing sound to the hymns. These tempos are also called “Polyrhythm”.

whenever necessary. The change in rhythms or “tempos” is a style that gives color to the music.

There is also the change of the speed during the hymn, a thing that became a characteristic of the world classic music which actually copied this style from the Coptic music. The composer of such symphonies, sonates, and concerts began to set the first step with a speed different from the second step which is usually slow, and from the third, which is usually rapid.

How then could the Coptic music be without roots, rules or scales, while the Coptic church is the real origin of all this to the whole world? How could it be while she taught it to all scholars in the Theological School of Alexandria? Perhaps after the preceding explanation my dear reader would give me excuse for criticizing Mr. Smith’s wrong views.

A team consisting of some great professional researchers in the field of music and computerled by Prof. Robert Gribbs, Sacramento University - California State; Prof. Fathy Saleh, Faculty of Engineering- Cairo University; Mr. Mahmoud Effat, Arabic Music Institute- Arts Academy in Cairo, this team conducted extensive research on the blowing instruments kept in the Egyptian Museum. In 1991, they could proved that the Ancient Egyptian were the first to discover the “Pentatonic Scale” which was used in the old dynasty, then they developed it with the beginning of the modern dynasty “the Seven Note Scale of Amino”. According to this report the Ancient Egyptians were the first to know the music scale. Thereupon, ascribing the discovery of the music scale to the famous Greek mathematician Phythagoras is nothing except mere mingling of history clear facts!!!

This is confirmed by the fact that Phythagoras had lived in Egypt for twenty one years, during which he learnt much of the sciences, arts, and literature of Egypt. The Greeks also wrote about the quality and perfection of old Egyptian music. according to that report the

Coptic music which is the natural extension of the Pharaoh music, the origin of the rules and scales of the music of other nations. If we would like to commend them, we can only ascribe to them the credit of developing these rules and scales to their present form.

5- Praising on Earth and in Heaven

The Coptic hymns which we chant now on the earth will not be strange in heaven or different from those which we will chant there when we stand on the glass sea holding God's harps. I imagine these harps with their sound box made of glass mixed with fire and its strings made of light. John the Visionary heard those in heaven singing the song of Moses the Prophet and the children of Israel: *"I will sing to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously, the horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea! The Lord is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation; He is my God, and I will praise Him; my father's God, and I will exalt Him ... Who is like You, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like You, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises,"* (Ex 15: 1- 11).

It is the same song which God had heard thousands of years before, yet He wants to hear it always from the mouths of those who overcome the beast. If this is the case, how could God forget the hymns He inspired His saints to compose and perhaps composed some Himself when He taught His holy disciples when they praised and went out to the Olive Mount? Truly, I feel that the Lord God will desire to hear them from our mouths in heaven if we will have such an honor as to be among those who learnt to chant that song there, and if we attained such a blessing as to stand around the throne.

What shall we do if He ask us to chant these hymns while we do not know them, nor meditate in them, not live them? Therefore I say: O my God, may You give me the grace that I may be able to delve into the depths of these hymns and bring out new and old! May You inspire me with Your Holy Spirit that I may come out with hidden treasured from them! Make me know how to live each tune so that with the low tune I learn to worship You, to humble myself, to descend with You and bury myself and my pleasures in Your life-giving tomb; and with high tune I rise up from my despair and hopelessness unto the heaven of Your glory. Let me with the quick melody run towards You and be not tied to my feeble knees and with the slow melody be slow to anger and my feet slack to do evil. O my God, do grant me to be a live melody!