This fascinating volume draws together contributions from a wide range of theologians and practicing musicians to consider the ways that theology and belief can interact with the practice and appreciation of music, to mutually invigorating effect. It is an impressive and exciting achievement and I am sure it will be read eagerly by all those for whom music can illuminate the sacred.

—Dr. Jeremy Thurlow, University of Cambridge

Our contemporary culture is communicating ever-increasingly through the visual, through film, and through music. This makes it ever more urgent for theologians to explore the resources of art for enriching our understanding and experience of the Judeo-Christian tradition.

Annunciations: Sacred Music for the Twenty-First Century, edited by George Corbett, answers this need, evaluating the relationship between the sacred and the composition, performance, and appreciation of music.

Through the theme of 'annunciations', this volume interrogates how, when, why, through and to whom God communicates in the Old and New Testaments. In doing so, it tackles the intimate relationship between scriptural reflection and musical practice in the past, its present condition, and what the future might hold.

Annunciations comprises three parts. Part I sets out flexible theological and compositional frameworks for a constructive relationship between the sacred and music. Part II presents the reflections of theologians and composers involved in collaborating on new pieces of sacred choral music, alongside the six new scores and links to the recordings. Part III considers the reality of programming and performing sacred works today.

This volume provides an indispensable resource for scholars and artists working at the interface between theology and the arts, and for those involved in sacred music. However, it will also be of interest to anyone concerned with the ways in which the divine communicates through word and artistry to humanity.

As with all Open Book publications, this entire book is available to read for free on the publisher's website. Printed and digital editions, together with supplementary digital material, can also be found at www.openbookpublishers.com

Cover image: Don Simone Camaldolese. Frontispiece from a Choir Book, ca. 1390. Ink on vellum, 59.4 x 44.8 cm. (irregular left edge). Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn Museum Collection, X1015. Cover design: Anna Gatti.
13. Sacred Art Music in the Catholic Liturgy: Perspectives from the Roman Catholic Church in Scotland

Michael Ferguson

Scholars, theologians and artists continue to debate the relationship between theology and music. Central to this conversation are questions about the theological implications of music as theory versus music as praxis; the ability of music to embody inherent theological meanings versus those that are contingent on the listener; and, more generally, about how musical art can both inform and be informed by the work of theology.¹ Yet the notion of sacred music as art, and the composition and performance of this music as artistry, is largely taken for granted in these discussions. This chapter considers sacred music in the present-day Roman Catholic Church, where we will see that the idea of sacred music as art, and its legitimate role in Catholic worship, are not necessarily assured. To some extent there has always been an uneasy relationship between music and liturgy in Christian worship. In today’s Roman Catholic Church, tensions around music have been shaped, in particular, by the outcomes of the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965). As a result, post-conciliar liturgical music is subject to functional demands that were hitherto unprecedented in the history of Catholic worship. We shall see that the expectation of music to facilitate congregational participation presents difficulties for Roman Catholics, who must somehow reconcile this function with music that also preserves and builds upon the Church’s historical ‘treasure’ of sacred art music.

Drawing upon the results of a national survey of Scottish parish music-making, this chapter considers liturgical music in the present-day Roman Catholic Church in Scotland. While scholarly discourses have tended to focus on defining ‘good’ liturgical music repertoire, and on outlining abstract principles of evaluation, the evidence suggests that those with the primary responsibility for shaping Catholic music-making in Scotland neither experience nor evaluate liturgical music in these purely abstract terms. These music-makers are less wedded to abstract notions of style than they are concerned with what liturgical music can do or achieve for them and for others in the liturgy. This runs counter to recent repertoire-focused attempts to critique and reform Catholic music. Arguably, any understanding of modern-day Catholic liturgical music — or attempts to shape its future — must first and foremost take into account those music-makers who actively shape, evaluate, and realize music in the Mass.

I. The Uneasy Relationship between Sacred Music and Roman Catholic Worship

Music and liturgy have been intimately connected throughout the history of Christian worship. Nevertheless, this relationship has often been complex, and the two elements have sometimes co-existed uneasily. Throughout the Church’s history, Roman Catholics have voiced concerns about the potential of music to appeal to the senses and emotions, and, in doing so, to distract the listener from the worship of God.² Others have warned about the potential of secular influences to make their way into worship through music-making, or of the potential for new compositional practices to threaten existing ones.³ The conduct of musicians has also come under scrutiny, with some complaining of unfit behaviour from music-makers during the Mass.⁴ Nevertheless, in the midst of the complex relationship between music and liturgy, the notion of liturgical music as ‘art’ has generally been affirmed.

² For example, see St Augustine’s Confessions, where he describes his own struggles with sacred music. Here he describes being torn between ‘the danger that lies in gratifying the senses and the benefits which...can accrue from singing’ (St Augustine, Confessions, trans. R. S. Pine-Coffin (London: Penguin, 1961), Book X.33). Echoing Augustine in Tra le Sollecitudini (part of his 1903 motu proprio), Pope Pius X writes that ‘the pleasure that music directly produces...is not always easily contained within the right limits’ (Pope Pius X, Tra le Sollecitudini (promulgated 22 November 1903), http://www.sanctamissa.org/en/music/church-documents-on-liturgical-music/tra-le-sollecitudini.pdf, para. 1).


⁴ The Council of Trent ‘Decree Concerning the Things to Be Observed and Avoided in the Celebration of Mass’ (1562), for example, sought to prohibit ‘all worldly conduct, vain and profane conversations, wandering around, noise and clamour’ from the liturgy, along with ‘lascivious or impure’ music-making. (See The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent, trans. H. Schroeder (St Louis, IL: Herder, 1941), p. 151). For an interesting overview of the musical implications of the Council, see Craig A. Monson, ‘The Council of Trent Revisited’, Journal of the American Musicological Society, 55 (Spring 2002), 1–37.
This was certainly the case at the dawn of the twentieth century. In his 1903 motu proprio, "Tra le Sollecitudini" ('Among the Concerns'), Pope Pius X upholds the importance of liturgical music as 'sacred art', setting out criteria by which it might be admitted into the Mass.\(^5\) The pope draws a clear distinction between 'sacred art', and 'theatrical and profane art'. His intervention can be seen as an attempt to curb musical influences from the world of opera, which had been making their way into the Roman Catholic liturgy throughout the nineteenth century. Sacred art music, the pope warns, must be 'holy' (excluding 'all profanity' in content and performance, for example), must have 'goodness of form' (sometimes referred to as 'beauty'), and it must also be 'universal'. This universality does not necessarily refer simply to style; rather, the pope argues that true sacred art music is able to produce a universally good impression on the listener, irrespective of style, geographical location or culture.\(^6\) Nevertheless, certain styles are held as more appropriate than others, with vocal music being 'proper' to the Roman Catholic liturgy, and Gregorian chant being the 'supreme model' of sacred art.\(^7\)

Sacred art music faced new challenges in the wake of the Church's landmark Second Vatican Ecumenical Council (sometimes referred to as "Vatican II"). This global conference was convened during a period of great social and economic change in the Western world and, in many ways, it was the Catholic Church's response to these changing times. One of the Council's principal aims was to re-affirm the place of the Holy Mass at the centre of Roman Catholic spiritual life — over and above private devotions or prayers — and to embark upon a Church-wide 'reform and promotion' of the liturgy.\(^8\) The drive towards liturgical reform stemmed from the Liturgical Movement, which had emerged during the second half of the nineteenth century, and had gained increasing momentum in the decades leading up to Vatican II. One of the movement's principal aims was to increase the participation of the faithful in the Mass. Initially, efforts to achieve this centred upon educating the laity about the Latin liturgy, but as the Liturgical Movement gained increasing momentum, attempts shifted towards reforming the Mass itself.\(^9\)

Consequently, one of the cornerstones of the Second Vatican Council's reforms was to enable the 'full, conscious and active participation' of the faithful in the liturgy.\(^10\) The Council Fathers recognized that this participation must firstly be internal — for example, that which results from coming to Mass with the appropriate disposition — but crucially, they also considered external participation, including

\(^5\) Pope Pius X, "Tra le Sollecitudini", para. 1, §2.5.
\(^6\) Ibid., arts. 1.2, 2.3.
\(^7\) Ibid., art. 6.15.
bodily gestures, speech, and singing to be fundamentally important.¹¹ This concern for ‘active participation’ underpins the bulk of the Vatican II reforms, not least those that deal with music.¹²

The Second Vatican Council devoted a whole chapter of Sacrosanctum Concilium, its new ‘Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy’, to its directives on liturgical music.¹³ A range of areas are given careful consideration, including the training of musicians, musical instruments used, and styles of music permitted. However, the Council Fathers’ instructions can be reduced to two overarching mandates on music.¹⁴ First, the Council recognized music as a particularly effective means of facilitating congregational participation, especially in congregational singing, and urged that music should play this functional role in the Mass.¹⁵ Alongside this recognition, though, the Council Fathers also urged that the Catholic Church’s ‘treasure of sacred music’ — or in other words, the sacred art music traditions and repertoire that formed the basis of liturgical music-making before Vatican II — should be ‘preserved and fostered with great care’.¹⁶

It is not difficult to see how the promulgation of these parallel mandates has presented Roman Catholics with difficulties since the Council. Those responsible for implementing the Council Fathers’ reforms have somehow had to reconcile music’s functional role in enabling musically untrained congregations to sing, with the requirement that it preserve and build upon repertoire that was originally intended to be performed by skilled church music specialists. In this way, the Council’s directives potentially stand in direct tension with one another, and have presented particular difficulties when it comes to the evaluation of liturgical music. As Anthony Ruff observes in Sacred Music and Liturgical Reform, the side-by-side presentation of these opposing mandates is a compromise formulation by the Council Fathers between different priorities for music that existed at the Second Vatican Council.¹⁷ Nevertheless, Sacrosanctum Concilium presents these two mandates in an unreconciled way, and, as a consequence, much of the debate about Catholic liturgical music since the Second Vatican Council has involved musicians, scholars and clergy trying to reconcile the inherent contradictions.

In practice, Catholics have tended to prioritize one of the central mandates at the expense of the other. These two paths are characterized by different liturgical-musical

¹² For example, the loosening of restrictions on the use of vernacular languages in the liturgy was one of the reforms felt most keenly by Catholic congregations across the globe.
¹⁴ Anthony Ruff makes this point in his Sacred Music and Liturgical Reform, where the second of the Council’s two mandates forms the main focus of his study.
¹⁶ Ibid.
¹⁷ See Ruff, Sacred Music, Chapters 12, 15 and 16.
‘worldviews’, each of which is informed by diverse values, priorities, and assumptions. In order to explore these, let us examine two different perspectives: that of Bernard Huijbers as outlined in The Performing Audience (1969), and that of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI (formerly Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger), as presented in his writings on liturgy published in the 1990s and 2000s.

II. Two Opposing Worldviews in Post-Conciliar Music

Huijbers’ The Performing Audience was published only a few years after the close of the Second Vatican Council. For some, it was a time of great optimism and idealism, and Huijbers’ writing is infused with a strong sense of reformist zeal. Principally, he understands ‘active participation’ to mean congregational singing, and considers the enabling of this singing to be the highest priority for post-conciliar music.

For Huijbers, meeting the Council’s call for ‘active participation’ requires a new kind of liturgical music, which must be composed by a new kind of liturgical music composer. Consequently, the Church’s repertoire of sacred art music, and its associated performance traditions, must be abandoned: in a practical sense, Huijbers argues that they can no longer bear the new functional role of music in the reformed liturgy. In an ideological sense, too, he regards sacred art music as no longer having a legitimate place. Here, Huijbers characterizes the pre-conciliar Latin liturgy and its music as a means by which Roman elites have historically exported and preserved their power in the global Church, in what he describes as a kind of ‘musical colonialism’. The liturgical reforms of the Second Vatican Council, therefore, offer the potential for the Catholic Church to restore its liturgical music-making to the people, which, as Huijbers perceives it, was the case in the early Christian Church. Borrowing the term ‘elemental music’ from German composer Carl Orff, he proposes a new style of liturgical music that is characterized by a minimalism of basic musical

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20 See, for example, the work of Universa Laus (‘Universal Praise’), an international study group for liturgical music that first met during the Council in 1962, and which was formally constituted in 1966, shortly after the end of the Council. The initial purpose of the group was to support those tasked with implementing the Council’s reforms of liturgical music, and its work is primarily informed by a ‘liturgist’ approach to musical reform (in other words, prioritizing the functional potential of liturgical music to foster active participation in the Mass). For a history of Universa Laus, see the group’s website: http://universallaus.org/history/. See also the group’s two key documents on music for an insight into its core ideals and beliefs: Music in Christian Celebration (1980), and Music in Christian Liturgies (2002) (available: https://universallaus.org/documents/).
21 Huijbers, Performing Audience, pp. 9–12
22 Ibid., pp. 75–76.
23 Ibid., pp. 8–12.
elements — melody, harmony, and rhythm — and which, at its core, is simple, repetitive, and formulaic. While the ‘elementary’ nature of this music can only be determined relative to a particular congregation, Huijbers is clear that the Council’s reforms must inevitably result in some loss of aesthetic quality in liturgical music, and that this loss is wholly acceptable. Therefore, composers for the new Mass need no longer feel under pressure to be ‘original’, nor should they feel any need to maintain a connection with the world of contemporary secular art music, or with previous traditions of sacred art music — in spite of the Council Fathers’ clear call to preserve and foster the sacred ‘treasure’.

Benedict XVI offers an entirely different worldview. Not only does he affirm the place of sacred art music in the reformed liturgy, but he also argues that the notion of ‘art’ is fundamental to an ‘authentic’ post-conciliar church music. For Benedict XVI, sacred music must be ‘true art’, which he distinguishes both from purely functional, ‘utility music’, and from the ‘elitist aestheticism’ he believes characterizes the secular art music world. Fundamental to this concept of ‘true art’ is that it is not created by the human artist, but is rather a realization of God’s divine art: intimately connected to, and revealing of the *logos*, the Word of God in a ‘conversion of a vision into form’. These ideas go back to the platonic notions of *Musica universalis*, where mathematical proportions in the universe, including the oscillations of the orbiting planets, are considered to be revealing of a God-given beauty and divine order.

These two positions reside at opposite ends of the spectrum. Each bears the hallmarks of two broader standpoints that have informed the debate about Catholic music since the Second Vatican Council: what have sometimes been dubbed ‘liturgist’ and ‘traditionalist’ positions. Although it is a rather fundamentalist version,
Huijbers’ worldview resonates with the ‘liturgist’ perspective, which is characterized by a prioritization of music’s functional role over aesthetic or artistic concerns. As mentioned above, ‘active participation’ is understood to mean congregational singing, while concepts such as beauty, holiness, and universality are understood to take their meanings relative to a particular liturgical context. Consequently, liturgists have been open to drawing upon musical styles from the secular world, particularly in their attempts to foster congregational singing; they have usually rejected the notion that any style of music is inherently superior due to its age or origin.

On the other hand, Benedict XVI’s worldview resonates with what might be called a ‘traditionalist’ perspective. Concepts such as beauty, holiness and universality are perceived to have objective meaning, rather than a relative one. Consequently, traditionalists have tended to attach more importance to the aesthetic quality of liturgical music, and have given more credence to the idea that congregational listening can be an equally valid means of fulfilling the Second Vatican Council’s demand for active participation. Within this worldview, certain styles of music — especially plainchant and polyphony — are seen as inherently suited to the liturgy, whilst others — for example, those with strong secular associations — are seen as inherently unsuitable.

III. Mainstream liturgical music in the Catholic Anglosphere

Since Vatican II, in the Roman Catholic Anglosphere at least, the liturgist perspective has tended to dominate the mainstream of parish music-making. In the climate of reform immediately following the Second Vatican Council, some Catholic musicians and clergy — particularly in the United States — looked to folk styles that were popular at the time as the basis of liturgical music that could enable congregations to sing, that would be relevant to wider contemporary secular culture, and that would potentially appeal to a younger generation of Roman Catholics. For the first time,
instruments like flutes and guitars started making their way into Roman Catholic worship, alongside the more traditional pipe organs and choirs. In the decades that followed, folk-inspired repertoire became widespread throughout the Roman Catholic Anglosphere, due not least to the international dominance of the ‘Big Three’ American Catholic music publishers: GIA Publications, Oregon Catholic Press (OCP), and World Library Publications (WLP). In the United Kingdom, the global reach of these companies was supplemented by home-grown publishers such as Kevin Mayhew Limited., whose folk-infused hymnbook series, *Hymns Old and New*, became a staple for British Catholic parishes, and continues to be a primary source of folk-descended congregational repertoire today.\(^{34}\)

While folk-inspired congregational music became the norm in English-speaking parishes, towards the end of the twentieth century some were becoming critical of the direction that mainstream liturgical music-making had taken. Thomas Day’s controversial polemic *Why Catholic’s Can’t Sing: The Culture of Catholicism and the Triumph of Bad Taste* (1990) charts what he perceives to be the failure of the ‘reformed-folk style’ liturgical music to engage American Catholics in congregational singing.\(^{35}\) Day portrays this repertoire as ‘oozing with an indecent narcissism’,\(^{36}\) and argues that its prevalence in post-conciliar American Catholic worship represents a wider cultural shift after the Second Vatican Council which has seen individual performers — bolstered by microphones and amplified instruments — become the central focus of the liturgy.

While Day’s polemic gives some insight into the criticisms levelled at mainstream Catholic music-making by the 1990s, more recently, others have taken a more scholarly approach to understanding the development of post-conciliar music, and to proposing solutions for its future. Benedict XVI’s rise to the papacy in 2005 led to his writings gaining a greater Church-wide resonance, heightening the debate about Catholic music in the years that followed. Some Catholics perceived the arrival of the relatively early experiments, and their congregational music achieved wide proliferation due to popular postconciliar hymn books like *Glory & Praise: Songs for the Worshipping Assembly* (Phoenix, AZ: North American Liturgy Resources, 1977). See Don Cusic, ‘Catholics and Contemporary Christian Music’, in *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Christian Music: Pop, Rock, and Worship*, ed. by Don Cusic (Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood Press, 2010), pp. 45–47.

\(^{34}\) *Hymns Old and New* was the dominant Roman Catholic hymnbook in England and Wales at the turn of the twenty-first century. See Elizabeth Louise Theobald, ‘Music in Roman Catholic Liturgies in England and Wales since Vatican II’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Southampton, 1997), p. 123. In the national postal survey of Scottish Catholic music-making undertaken by the present author in 2013/14, *Hymns Old and New* was also by far the most popular hymn book series amongst Scottish parishes, with 78.8% of respondent parishes reporting that they used some edition of the Kevin Mayhew Ltd publication. This compares, for example, to 17% using *Laudate* (published by Decani Music) and 10.8% using *Celebration Hymnal* (published by Mc crimmon). See Michael Ferguson, ‘Understanding the Tensions in Liturgical Music-Making in the Roman Catholic Church in Contemporary Scotland’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2015), pp. 230–32.


conservative pope as an opportunity to reform Catholic music, and to foreground the Second Vatican Council’s call for the sacred treasure to be preserved and fostered. Others saw the arrival of Benedict XVI as a worrying sign of an increasingly traditionalist Roman Catholic Church, and as a potential threat to existing liturgical music-making practices and repertoire. Events such as the introduction of the new English translation of the Roman Missal throughout the Catholic Anglosphere in November 2011 — which required existing English-language settings of the Mass to be revised or abandoned — also prompted some Catholics to ask questions about the future direction of their liturgical music-making, and further heightened the debate.

In the midst of this debate, three major academic studies have sought to examine the state of Catholic music since Vatican II, and to recommend paths for its future. As previously mentioned, Ruff’s *Sacred Music and Liturgical Reform* is an in-depth examination of the Second Vatican Council’s core mandate that the treasure of sacred music should be preserved and fostered with great care. Ruff reaches the conclusion that in the midst of competing mandates, this ‘treasure’ cannot simply be taken to mean a fixed repertoire of historical works, but rather should be conceived of as a dynamic, living tradition. In light of the Council’s call for active participation, not all of the Catholic Church’s repertoire of sacred art music can survive intact. Newly-composed music, and repertoire from other Christian traditions, might also potentially form part of the Church’s musical ‘treasure’. Ultimately Ruff concludes that in light of the Council’s inconsistencies on music, ‘there is no absolute model of worship music in the Roman liturgy’, where, ‘too many ideals stand in creative tension with each other’.

In the face of Ruff’s assertion that there is no absolute model of Catholic music, others have proposed a theoretical basis for forming objective evaluations. In *Catholic Music Through the Ages: Balancing the Needs of a Worshipping Church* (2008), Edward Schaefer draws upon the familiar traditionalist totems to present the case for an ideal style of Catholic worship music. Schaefer argues that, throughout its long history, Catholic music has achieved a balance between ‘formative’ and ‘expressive’ dimensions. Nevertheless, he argues that since the Second Vatican Council, liturgical music’s formative dimension has been greatly subordinated to its expressive one. Therefore, in a modern-day situation he sees as ‘ripe for improvement’, Schaefer suggests that the future of Catholic music depends upon a careful rebalancing of these expressive and formative dimensions. He asserts that this rebalancing can be best achieved through the widespread re-introduction of Gregorian chant.

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37 This optimism may have been spurred on by Benedict XVI’s interventions early on in his papacy, such as the promulgation of his 2007 *motu proprio* entitled *Summorum Pontificum*, which relaxed the restrictions on the celebration of the preconciliar Tridentine Mass. See Benedict XVI, *Summorum Pontificum: On the Use of the Roman Liturgy Prior to the Reform of 1970* (Vatican.va, 7 July 2007), https://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/motu_proprio/documents/hf_ben-xvi_motu-proprio_20070707_summorum-pontificum.html


Most recently, Joseph Swain has sought to build an objective theory of evaluation in *Sacred Treasure: Understanding Catholic Liturgical Music* (2012). Criticizing the other major studies for their focus on liturgical and theological principles, Swain instead proposes a theory of post-conciliar music rooted in what he calls the ‘hard facts of music’\(^{41}\), or ‘musical truths’.\(^{42}\) In this way, he takes as a starting point the technical attributes of the music itself — melody, rhythm, and harmony — in order to show how the post-conciliar folk-derived styles are objectively unsuitable as the basis of a long-term, ‘authentic’ tradition.\(^{43}\) While he accepts that no music can be intrinsically sacred, he argues that liturgical music can possess an objectively definable ‘sacred semantic’, which arises from it being both distinct from wider secular culture, and having developed long-time associations with the Roman Catholic liturgy. Like Schaefer, Swain believes that Gregorian chant best exhibits this sacred semantic, and therefore is best suited for the future of Roman Catholic worship.\(^ {44}\)

Each of these studies grapple with the inherent challenges of Catholic liturgical music thrown up by the Second Vatican Council. But, in doing so, they have generally focused on outlining model styles, or upon formulating abstract principles of evaluation which are underpinned by musical and theological concerns. In contrast to this, understandings of music in the wider field of musicology have moved away from an exclusive focus on decontextualized readings of musical text objects. Instead, there has been a movement towards approaches that recognize that music’s meaning can only fully be known in the moment of realization (or to draw upon Christopher Small’s now widely-used term, in the act of *musicking*).\(^ {45}\) This involves music-makers who create, shape and realize music. Similarly, the emerging field of Christian Congregational Music Studies has seen scholars take a conscious interdisciplinary approach to understanding Christian worship music, often drawing upon ethnomusicological research methodologies which recognize music-making as a living, human activity.\(^ {46}\)

With this in mind, let us now turn to examine liturgical music in the present-day Roman Catholic Church in Scotland. In contrast to the studies above, our understanding will be rooted primarily in the accounts of the clergy and music-makers who realize and experience music-making in Scottish Catholic parishes.

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43 Swain presents a technical analysis of Robert J. Dufford’s hymn ‘You Shall Cross the Barren Desert (Be Not Afraid)’ (Portland, OR: New Dawn Music, 1975), in an attempt to show how the periodic phrase structure inherent in the folk-descended style limits it to texts with highly regular poetic meter. He argues that such limitations make it ‘nearly impossible’ to set more irregular Mass texts like the Gloria and Credo (See Swain, *Sacred Treasure*, p. 49).
46 For a good introduction to this emerging interdisciplinary field of scholarship, see Mark Porter, ‘The Developing Field of Christian Congregational Music Studies’, *Ecclesial Practices*, 1 (2014), 149–66.
IV. Music in Present-Day Catholic Worship: Perspectives from the Roman Catholic Church in Scotland

Roman Catholics are a minority group in present-day Scotland, making up around 16 per cent of the Scottish population.\(^\text{47}\) Scottish Catholicism has had a turbulent history, being effectively outlawed after the 1560 Scottish Reformation, with the Catholic hierarchy only officially restored in 1878.\(^\text{48}\) Today, the majority of Scottish Catholics are descended from the Irish Catholic migrant workers who made their way to Scottish shores during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, settling primarily in Scotland’s industrial heartlands of the West Central belt.\(^\text{49}\) However, this population has been bolstered by migrants from Europe, and not least Roman Catholics from Poland who have settled in Scotland since Poland joined the European Union in 2005. In line with the rest of Western Europe, twenty-first-century Scottish society is becoming increasingly secularized, and the Catholic Church currently faces similar challenges to other Christian denominations, such as falling Mass attendance and a shortage of priests.\(^\text{50}\) Nevertheless, the Roman Catholic population in Scotland is significantly younger than that of other denominations, and Scottish Catholics are more likely to regularly attend church services than their Church of Scotland counterparts.\(^\text{51}\) Considering this, how do the challenges associated with music after

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\(^{47}\) Results from the 2011 census of Scotland show that 841,053 people identified as Roman Catholic out of a total Scottish population of 5,295,403. See Analysis of Equality Results from 2011 Census Part 2, Chapter 3: Religion (National Records of Scotland, 2014), http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2014/10/8378


\(^{50}\) For example, in 2015 Archbishop Leo Cushley, Archbishop of St Andrews and Edinburgh, published his pastoral letter We have found the Messiah: The Future of the Archdiocese of St Andrews & Edinburgh (Archdiocese of St Andrews & Edinburgh, 2015), http://www.archdiocese-edinburgh.com/images/we_have_found_the_messiah_web.pdf. He summed up the problems facing his archdiocese: with 111 parishes in 2015, it was estimated that it would only have 33 priests to cover the area by 2020. Additionally, the Church’s own statistics suggested that only 25% of the baptised population attended Mass regularly. To understand the challenges of secularization for Catholicism in modern Scotland, see Tom Gallagher, Divided Scotland: Ethnic Friction and Christian Crisis (Glendaruel: Argyll Publishing, 2013). Gallagher’s argument is that while in the past it was militant Protestantism that represented the biggest threat to Catholicism in Scotland, now it is untrammelled secularization that presents the biggest challenge in twenty-first-century Scotland.

\(^{51}\) The Scottish Social Attitudes Survey 2014 suggests that 43% of Scottish Catholics attend a church service at least once per month, compared to 22% of those belonging to the Church of Scotland. See Stephen Hinchliffe and others, Scottish Social Attitudes Survey 2014: Public Attitudes to Sectarianism in Scotland (Scottish Government Social Research, 2015), http://www.scotcen.org.uk/media/830110/ssa2014_full-report-public-attitudes-to-sectarianism-in-scotland.pdf, p. 9, para. 2.8.
the Second Vatican Council play out in Scotland? And in the midst of tensions and ambiguities around the evaluation of liturgical music, how do those who create, shape and realize Catholic music in Scotland evaluate it?

There are two useful bodies of information that can help us to begin to answer these questions. First, a national postal survey of music-making in Scottish Catholic parishes was undertaken in late 2013 and early 2014. As a result, data is available for 223 parishes out of the 447 parishes that existed at the time (49.9 per cent), from questionnaires that were completed by priests (67.5 per cent) and musicians (32.5 per cent). Second, in-depth interviews were undertaken with 21 music leaders from the 8 Roman Catholic dioceses in Scotland, including musicians, composers, and clergy. This mixed-methods investigation had wide-ranging focus, and the data that was gathered in the study provides a detailed and multi-layered account of both Scottish Catholic music-making, and the people undertaking it. Nevertheless, for the purposes of our present enquiry, it is helpful to focus on survey questions that dealt specifically with the evaluation of liturgical music. Participants were invited to give open-ended, qualitative answers to the following questions:

1) In your opinion, what are the styles or types of music that make for particularly ‘good’ or ‘appropriate’ liturgical music? Why are these good or appropriate?

2) In your opinion, what are the styles or types of music that make for particularly ‘bad’ or ‘inappropriate’ liturgical music? Why are these bad or inappropriate?

While the respondents were asked to specify ‘styles or types’ of music, few of them mentioned specific styles. Indeed, the respondents seemed much less concerned with abstract notions of style, than with what liturgical music can enable or achieve for them and for others in the liturgy. Where specific styles were mentioned, the same styles were cited as both particularly good and particularly bad. For example, plainchant was cited in both positive and negative terms:

Plainchant maintains tradition, simple melody in unison, easy for congregation, creates very spiritual ambience (Music leader, Diocese of Galloway).

Plainchant — can be done without musicians, theologically and liturgically appropriate (Parish priest, Diocese of Paisley).


I have often found plainchant and complicated music does not go down well as people struggle to pick it up (Parish priest, Diocese of Motherwell).

52 For a detailed account of this survey, and full results, see Ferguson, ‘Understanding the Tensions’, pp. 183–260.

53 For methodological discussions relating to the national postal survey as well as focus interviews, see Ferguson, ‘Understanding the Tensions’, pp. 183–206 and pp. 261–68.
There was similar polarization in the few instances where folk and Renaissance polyphony styles were mentioned. More commonly, though, participants mentioned that any style can be good or appropriate in the liturgy, provided that it does the right things, for example:

All styles can be good if they are respectful, reflective, relevant to the readings of the day and involve the whole congregation (Organist, Diocese of Dunkeld).

All styles have their place and a variety is important to help all people worship and pray. No style or type is superior to another (Parish priest, Diocese of Glasgow).

All styles/types if quality and accessible (Parish priest, Archdiocese of St Andrews and Edinburgh).

Rather than hinging on abstract styles then, the evidence gathered suggests that music-makers’ evaluations are principally shaped by two key factors: what liturgical music can enable for the congregation during the Mass, and what it can achieve as part of the liturgy.

The most common assertion by participants was that they evaluate liturgical music in relation to its ability to facilitate congregational singing. These respondents defined good or appropriate liturgical music as memorable (e.g. ‘simple’ and ‘uncomplicated’, has a strong melody, is predictable, repetitive, is potentially already familiar to the congregation, or has ‘big choruses and refrains’); as easy for the congregation to sing (e.g. has a comfortable pitch range, and no difficult leaps); as appealing to different age groups in the assembly (e.g. combines ‘old’ and ‘new’); as enjoyable for the congregation (e.g. joyful and upbeat); and as generally ‘inclusive’. On the other hand, they defined bad or inappropriate music as difficult to remember; as hard for the congregation to sing (e.g. having ‘strange’ or ‘complex’ melodies); as having overly elaborate or dominant accompaniments; as overly focused on soloists at the expense of the congregation; and as not appealing to what the congregation ‘likes’. The term ‘performance’ was also specifically used by some to characterize liturgical music-making that excludes the congregation.

Participants were also concerned that liturgical music should connect or resonate with the congregation, for example:

That which resonates with ‘folk memory’ or is inspiring in its quality (Parish priest, Diocese of Aberdeen).

Easily learned and relevant to cultural setting. Style is secondary to relevance (Parish priest, Archdiocese of Glasgow).

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54 It is interesting to note that similar polarization in evaluations was noted by Elizabeth Theobald in her survey of Roman Catholic music-making in in England and Wales in the late 1990s. Here, different members of the congregation evaluated the same pieces of music as ‘most helpful’ and ‘least helpful’ within the same worshipping community. See Theobald, ‘Music in Roman Catholic Liturgies’, esp. Chaps. 4 and 6.

55 Where quotation marks are used in this section, it indicates a direct quotation from at least one of the survey questionnaire responses.
For respondents that mentioned this, good or appropriate liturgical music was defined as strengthening the sense of community; resonating with ‘folk memory’; having text and music that are ‘meaningful’ and ‘relatable’ for the congregation; as staying with the congregation after they leave the church; as appealing to different age groups; as appealing to different congregations within the same parish; as creating emotional resonance with the congregation; as fostering spirituality; as giving rise to ‘sincere’ worship; as being generally ‘uplifting’; and as being ‘liked’ or ‘enjoyed’ by the congregation. On the other hand, participants defined bad or inappropriate liturgical music as overly ‘highbrow’, ‘artistic’, ‘intricate’ or ‘long’; as culturally unfamiliar (for example, plainchant); as too familiar; as having an unintelligible text (e.g. being ‘complicated’ or in the Latin language); as creating ‘resistance’ in a congregation; as ‘patronizing’; as being inappropriate for the age group of the assembly; as failing to ‘lift hearts and minds’ to God; and as being ‘insincere’.

The liturgy itself formed the second most referenced criteria of evaluation, with participants mentioning music’s ability to set the mood and tone of the liturgy. In this way, they defined good or appropriate liturgical music as that which creates an appropriate ‘atmosphere’ (e.g. is ‘reflective’, ‘prayerful’ or ‘spiritual’); as fostering devotion; as in keeping with the ‘mood’ of the liturgy; as fostering a feeling of sacredness; as being dignified and not distracting from worship; as drawing attention to God, rather than the congregation; and as being ‘beautiful’. Bad or inappropriate music, on the other hand, was defined as imbuing the liturgy with inappropriate meanings; as ‘trite’, ‘dreary’, ‘tired’ or ‘banal’; as appealing overly to the emotions; as overly loud or distracting; as lacking a sense of the sacred; and as drawing attention towards the congregation, rather than to God.

Participants also evaluated music on the basis of its integration with the wider liturgical celebration. For example, some of the participants defined good or appropriate music as appropriate for the day, time, theme or readings of a particular Mass; as that which resonates with, or ‘clarifies’ the priest’s homily; as having an appropriate text (for example, ‘scans well’ and is ‘theologically sound’); as an effective accompaniment to a specific liturgical action or movement; as being at the ‘service’ of the liturgical whole, rather than being an ‘end in itself’; as in a style ‘proper’ to the Roman liturgy — though as we have already seen, this was often not specifically defined; and as reflecting the history and tradition of the Roman Catholic Church. Likewise, bad or inappropriate liturgical music was characterized as inappropriate for the time, season, or theme of the liturgy; as disconnected from, or irrelevant to, the liturgy; as having theologically unsound texts; as harking back to a former era (e.g. ‘music that takes us back to pre-Vatican II’); as disrupting the ‘flow’ or ‘pace’ of the liturgical action, and as being overly ‘performance-led’ (for example, too ‘ornate’ or ‘showy’).
V. Music-Makers in the Roman Catholic Church in Scotland

Alongside revealing how Scottish Catholic music leaders and clergy evaluate music for the Mass, the national survey also lends insight into who is responsible for realizing music in Scottish parishes. Strikingly, it suggests that music-making is an overwhelmingly volunteer activity. Those familiar with music in Scottish Catholic parishes may know this anecdotally, but the empirical data demonstrates that 90 per cent of the 223 respondent parishes have a volunteer musician, while only 12.3 per cent of parishes have a paid musician.

What is more difficult to know is the musical skill-set of this volunteer majority, and one should be careful about making any assumptions. In the face-to-face interviews, there were at least some volunteer musicians who had positions of significant musical responsibility, but spoke of having rather limited skill-sets, including low music literacy and low technical playing/singing ability. To some extent, the potential of at least some volunteers to have low skill-sets is summed up in the survey response of one music leader in the Diocese of Aberdeen:

> It is traditional in the Catholic Church that everyone is a volunteer, and this can be a great disadvantage in the context of liturgical music, since each parish depends so much on good will first, talent and expertise second. I have been involved in Church music for 50 years but have no qualifications other than from my teaching (teacher) education (in a Catholic Higher Education institute) and a lifetime of participation in the music liturgy.

One might speculate that what is practically viable for an untrained congregation to sing — which as we have seen, is often the primary lens through which parish music-makers and clergy evaluate liturgical music — is also viable for music leaders with low skill-sets to realize.

The face-to-face interviews also give some useful insight into the culture around music-making in Scottish Catholic parishes, and of the challenges and difficulties that can face volunteers. In particular, the interviewees mentioned four key challenges. First, the absence of standardized or formalized entry mechanisms. Interviewees explained that volunteer roles are rarely advertised formally, or opened up to a competitive application process. Rather, entry into liturgical music-making appears to often be down to personal contact with the priest, who they perceived to be the gatekeeper to involvement. Some participants were sought out by priests, while others approached priests in an attempt to gain entry. Others described being ‘born into’ music-making in their parish, describing liturgical music making as something that they had ‘always done’. Secondly, few formal contracts of engagement. Both priests and volunteer musicians spoke of a lack of formal contracts of engagement, and described the challenges that this informality can raise. Each group mentioned a desire to better formalize obligations on both sides: priests spoke of difficulty managing volunteer musicians who were not fully accountable to them, while volunteer musicians often felt that their tenure was vulnerable, and subject to the personal discretion of
an all-powerful priest. Thirdly, difficulty in transferring between roles. Volunteer musicians mentioned that once they had managed to gain entry into parish music-making, there was no guarantee that they could transfer their role in the event of moving to another parish. Participants spoke of a lack of means to demonstrate their prior responsibility, and a lack of formal ‘qualifications’ to attest to their experience. Fourthly, no standard measure of skill-set or competency. Linking closely with the point above, musicians and clergy complained that there are currently no standard measures of liturgical-musical skill-set in the Roman Catholic Church.

To conclude, we have seen that the Second Vatican Council clearly affirmed the place of sacred art music in the liturgy. Nevertheless, this music has also had to bear an important functional role after Vatican II: namely that of enabling the faithful to actively participate in the Mass by singing. In the midst of the ideological challenges thrown up by the Second Vatican Council’s competing mandates, sacred art music has also faced challenges on a more practical level. In Scotland, we have seen that those responsible for choosing and realizing liturgical music have tended to evaluate it in reference to the congregation (and particularly in light of what they consider the congregation to be able to sing and understand). We have also seen that Catholic music-makers work within a volunteer culture in a Scottish Church that is characterized by precarious roles, a lack of standardization in training and qualifications, and a potentially wide variation in skill-sets. All of these factors impose potential limitations on parish music-making, and therefore also pose some real challenges to the viability of sacred art music in Scottish Catholic liturgies.

In light of the Vatican II mandates, it is clear that those who have sought to banish sacred art music from the liturgy are misguided, and their position cannot be supported by the Council documents. Nevertheless, considering what we have seen in Scotland, those who argue for the legitimate place of ‘true art’ in the liturgy are also mistaken in doing so in too abstract a fashion. Indeed, those who shape, evaluate and realize music in the Catholic liturgy do not necessarily experience, perceive or evaluate it in terms of abstract styles. Rather, this music must be realized in the liturgy. So, while Benedict XVI and others talk of the sacred musical work as a ‘conversion of a vision into form’, they would do well to consider that this music must somehow be realized in the liturgy by music-makers in order for it to have any form at all. Music-makers are an intrinsic and inseparable element of Catholic liturgical music, and are essential to its existence and meaning.

This has important implications for those wishing to shape the future of Catholic liturgical music. We have seen that attempts have often focused on recommending ideal musical styles or repertoire. However, drawing upon the metaphor of a seed, one might argue that works of sacred art music have the potential to play a role in the post-conciliar liturgy. However, these seeds must necessarily fall onto fertile soil — in this case, the music-makers, congregations, and clergy in a particular context — in order for their potential to be realized. Those approaches that simply promote ideal repertoire
in the Mass — despite extolling the theological virtues of such repertoire — are akin to throwing seeds blindly onto potentially infertile soil, thereby rendering them unviable. What all this boils down to is that those wishing to shape the future of Roman Catholic liturgical music should aim to understand, before anything else, those clergy and music-makers who are essential to its viability.