

## *L'Homme chrétien armé:* The Christian Armed Man

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This first-place winner was a beautiful, scholarly, and richly rewarding investigation into the *L'Homme armé* masses beginning in 1450, the *L'Homme armé* song itself, and by extension a beautiful meditation on the relationship of secular culture to sacred music. Exceedingly well-researched, this paper offered twelve bibliographic sources in the context of 42 footnotes of citation and clarification. This paper was a revelation, a deep meditation, and a profound joy to read. The author carried their reader through the research, the texts, and the impacts in a stunningly clear, comprehensible, and beautiful way, employing a seemingly natural writing style that is among the highest this judge has seen in undergraduate work. The selection of source material, the careful balancing of multiple authors, the synthesis of their arguments into one narrative through-line, and all in as rich and clear a “voice” as seems possible, this paper reveals the author to be not just a master of musical history investigation, but a masterful composer of voices from the past into a profoundly present-focused meditation on what the implications are or could be for contemporary Christian worship. The scholarly research in this paper was wonderful, but the writing itself was exquisite: from the introduction of a theoretical soldier walking out of a bar into a historically accurate encounter with his culture’s acoustic mass, the paper both informs, reveals, and delights the reader along the way with a refrain and a melody that make the reader wish the song would go on and on. Despite being the investigation of a medieval music mystery, the paper brilliantly deploys contemporary references to Taylor Swift, Bob Dylan and a Christian worship lyric that compared Jesus to “a sloppy, wet kiss” to create the astonishing double effect of delighting the reader as it informs them. The scriptural pattern of Proverbs suggests that “more knowledge creates more sorrow”; this paper manages to make you wiser while also making you happier, and does so in a manner that seems both deft and effortless. The author is encouraged to keep researching, writing, and publishing whenever and wherever possible, for the finished product is remarkably refreshing, illuminating, and deserving of a wider audience.

The burly, grizzled soldier staggered out of the bar, still singing snatches of the song his drinking buddies bellowed inside as he tipsily turned into the street. “*L’homme, l’homme, l’homme armé, l’homme armé, L’homme armé doit on doubter...*”<sup>1</sup> He paused in the street, cocking his head sideways as if to hear a distant sound. There it was! The melody he was singing. He stumbled forward towards the direction of the voices, led—so it seemed—by the notion of another drink. But then he reached the source of the sound and stopped, perplexed: the drinking song sounded as if it were being sung by a chorus of angels. And the words, though set to the same melody, were different...they were the words of the Latin mass. The man peered into the window of the cathedral (for it was from its windows he heard the song), and, seeing that the only wine in sight was for the Eucharist, he shrugged his shoulders and kept walking, humming the *l’homme armé* melody. Such was the irony of the *l’homme armé* masses: written beginning around 1450, this mass genre used a popular melody associated with Medieval warfare as the *cantus firmus* line<sup>2</sup> around which the rest of the Catholic *mass ordinaire* was written. The sacred and secular were interwoven; the secular melody was the foundation of the mass, but the sacred mass was the foundation of that pre-Reformation Christian society. How and why was it that the song of the fearsome, secular armed man become one of the high points of Medieval sacred music—what tie was it which bound together the sacred and the secular? Surprisingly, one need not look far to find the connection; the crusade culture had already knighted the secular soldier for a sacred service, typifying a distinctly Medieval approach to relating the mundane and the holy from which the modern church may still learn.

In the context of late Medieval and early Renaissance society, it is not surprising to find such

interconnectedness between the sacred and the secular. The two realms constantly bled into each other: the lives of the people, rich and poor alike, were orchestrated by the high days and holidays of the church calendar; the daily rhythm of their work and rest was dictated by the church. But it was not just their daily lives that were influenced by the church; the church, likewise, was influenced by the mundane things of daily life. Thus it should not be terribly shocking to discover that what was the equivalent of a Medieval pop song was also sung in ornate cathedrals as a mass. During this era in the Western European world, the sacred and secular were closely intertwined; thus it only took a fairly small step—one that really was quite logical—to move from one to the other. In studying the case of the *l’homme armé* mass, we will see that it is indeed a simple connection: the “missing link” between the armed man and the Christian church is essentially an association game centered around the crusade movement.

### CONTEXT: THE FIFTEENTH-CENTURY CHURCH AND ITS MUSIC

Music played a vital role in the fifteenth-century Catholic church. Worship was organized around song; masses were sung and Scripture was chanted. Roger Bowers describes the relationship between fifteenth-century churches and musicians (speaking more specifically of English churches) as being more complex than simply that of patrons and their dependents. While he recognizes that the church certainly encouraged music (and was, in a sense, obliged to do so), it was generally laity who would commission works.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, however, the sacred church depended on (often secular) composers: “[i]nsofar as each church was obliged

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<sup>1</sup> The entire translation of the song text is as follows:

*The man, the man, the armed man*

*The armed man is to be feared.*

*Everywhere it has been proclaimed*

*That everyone should arm himself with an iron coat of mail.*

(“*L’homme Armé*,” *Ptera Tunes*, accessed November 28, 2015, <http://www.pteratunes.org.uk/Music/Music/Lyrics/LhommeArmeBasic.html>).

<sup>2</sup> The *cantus firmus*, “fixed song,” refers to the melody line of a polyphonic piece of music. The *cantus firmus* was also called the tenor line.

<sup>3</sup> Iain Fenlon, ed., *Music in Medieval and Early Modern Europe: Patronage, Sources, and Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 2.

to observe the liturgy in the manner which the founders and benefactors specified, it was obliged to cultivate musicians and music.”<sup>4</sup> Ironically, despite the importance of musicians and their necessity to the church, their work was not given the honor we would likely expect today:

Not a single piece of church music by Dufay,<sup>5</sup> for instance, is known to have been copied into any manuscript written later than a dozen years after his death...the church composer wrote music which he himself would’ve been surprised to hear sung even thirty years later. As a creative artist contributing to the worship of God, his offering was on a level comparable with that of the parish ladies who arrange the flowers on Christmas Eve—a genuine contribution to the overall effect, pretty while it lasts, but not destined for more than immediate use, and therefore of only limited value and esteem.<sup>6</sup>

But even though the mass composer was valued on the same level as the church florist, the sheer necessity of music for worship put the composer in a unique position: rather than creating art for the sole enjoyment of the benefactor, the church composer also wrote to satisfy the Almighty—who, Bowers notes, “was not in a good position to communicate his wishes in any detail.”<sup>7</sup> This meant that, compared to other artists of their time, church composers were left with “a quite unusual degree of initiative and artistic freedom.”<sup>8</sup>

Given the relative freedom they possessed to be creative, how did the composers choose to write their music? Within their freedom, they were still confined to the structure of the mass. The daily mass, known as the *mass ordinaire*, contained five essential chants: *Kyrie*, *Gloria*, *Credo*, *Sanctus*, and *Agnus Dei*.

Musically, there were a variety of ways the composers could arrange them, but they often followed certain formal patterns. By the fifteenth century, one common way of composing mass music was a form that came to be known as the *cantus firmus* mass (also called the tenor mass). This method originated in England but spread to the Continent, where it became the most common form of mass.<sup>9</sup> What distinguished the *cantus firmus* mass from other mass forms was the way in which the same *cantus firmus* line was used throughout each of the mass movements, providing a unifying structure. While the precise reasons for organizing a mass this way are unknown, theorists have speculated that it was to “unify the movements of the mass into an integrated whole”<sup>10</sup> or simply to please the institutions and private patrons who “commissioned settings of the Mass Ordinary for specific occasions or devotional services” by using tunes that had some correlation either to the occasion or to the patron (the *cantus firmus* tune was not necessarily a new melody written by the composer of the mass).<sup>11</sup> These correlating tunes were the backbone of a subcategory of the *cantus firmus* mass: the imitation (or parody) mass.

### THE IMITATION MASS FORM

Imitation masses were *cantus firmus* masses whose *cantus firmus* line was based on a pre-existing melody. The melodies which composers chose for the *cantus firmus* line could be sacred or secular depending on what the patron wanted or what best suited the occasion; the tune would often be chosen to refer to the saint to whom the mass was written or to the institution/ individual patron who sponsored the mass.<sup>12</sup> Although composers wrote many masses based on the tunes from secular songs during the early days of the imitation mass, they would

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<sup>4</sup> Fenlon, *Music in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, 3

<sup>5</sup> A famous early Renaissance composer; he also wrote an especially beautiful *l’homme armé* mass.

<sup>6</sup> Fenlon, *Music in Medieval*, 13.

<sup>7</sup> Fenlon, *Music in Medieval*, 15.

<sup>8</sup> Fenlon, *Music in Medieval*, 15.

<sup>9</sup> Peter J. Burkholder, Donald J. Grout, and Claude V. Palisca, *A History of Western Music*, 7th ed (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2006), 185.

<sup>10</sup> Burkholder, Grout, and Palisca, *A History of Western Music*, 186.

<sup>11</sup> Burkholder, *A History*, 187.

<sup>12</sup> Burkholder, *A History*, 187.

eventually receive backlash against this practice. When this issue was addressed by church authorities during one of the sessions of the Council of Trent in 1562, the church ruled: “Let them keep away from the churches composition in which there is an intermingling of the lascivious or impure, whether by instrument or voice.”<sup>13</sup> And those at the Council had good reason to be concerned about interweaving secular songs into the mass: medieval literature was not lacking in colorful descriptions! Medievals may not have been able to create R-rated films, but that certainly did not stop them from writing equally lascivious poetry which would then be set to music. Although it may have been possible to argue against the church forbidding intermingling instrumental music with the mass as the immoral words would not be directly quoted, the logic behind that ruling is quite clear. The purpose of weaving in the melodies of other songs was to create connections by association. If the hearers of the mass were thinking about the associations of the original song, their minds would become focused on sin rather than on the holy mass.

Despite the eventual censorship of these bawdy songs from the church, it is worthwhile to consider how it was that composers were able to seamlessly weave together sacred masses with secular songs with little church outcry or censorship for many years. Perhaps the allure for these strange bedfellows lay in the way in which sacred and secular were already intermingled or the air of freedom composers of the time had, as referenced earlier by Bowers. Whatever the case, with these masses (while they lasted), the patrons were honored, the church gained her necessary music, and composers received their necessary compensation while still using the opportunity to explore more creative musical options

which might not have been quite as sacred as one would expect for sacred music (but, as Bowers might point out, the Almighty never vocally objected to this, although—understandably—his more vocal Bride the Church eventually did).

### IMITATION MASS CASE STUDY: THE L'HOMME ARME MASS

The history behind the *l'homme armé* mass stems from the history of the imitation mass form; the *l'homme armé* mass is essentially an imitation mass based on the *l'homme armé* tune. To understand the historical significance of this mass, then, we must first examine the history of the basic tune and the context of the early masses. While historians are unable to discern exactly from whence the melody originated, it is likely that the *l'homme armé* tune has an early connection with the fifteenth-century Burgundian court. More specifically, it was probably linked to the Order of the Golden Fleece,<sup>14</sup> founded in 1430 under Philip the Good of Burgundy (reigned 1419-1467), and the Burgundian call for another crusade in the 1450s,<sup>15</sup> shortly after Mohammed II conquered Constantinople.<sup>16</sup> Although this crusade never happened,<sup>17</sup> the call for a crusade as a sign of piety or as a means of increasing wealth was still strong in the Burgundian court. Philip the Good's interest in the crusade movement is evidenced by the ornate copies of the *Livre d'Eracles* (a history of the first two crusades) he and other nobles in his court owned.<sup>18</sup> However, historian Jessica Dobratz argues that the possession of these books point not to a call for arms so much as for propaganda for a new crusade.<sup>19</sup>

Philip de Commines, who was the godson of Philip the Good<sup>20</sup> and became the chamberlain

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<sup>13</sup> Andrew Kirkman, *The Cultural Life of the Early Polyphonic Mass: Medieval Context to Modern Revival* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 141.

<sup>14</sup> As Andrew Kirkman observed, religious orders of knights such as this one with their various ceremonies “are expressive of the close reciprocation - entirely characteristic of medieval power structures - between ecclesiastical and secular power” (Kirkman, *The Cultural Life*, 115).

<sup>15</sup> Burkholder, *A History*, 177, 187.

<sup>16</sup> Jessica M. Dobratz, “Conception and Reception of William of Tyre’s ‘Livre D’eracles’ in 15th-Century Burgundy,” *“Als Ich Can,”* 1. (2002): 585.

<sup>17</sup> Burkholder, *A History*, 177.

<sup>18</sup> Dobratz, “Conception and Reception of William of Tyre’s ‘Livre D’eracles’ in 15th-Century Burgundy,” 583.

<sup>19</sup> Dobratz, “Conception and Reception,” 584.

<sup>20</sup> Philippe de Commines and Jean de Troyes, *The Memoirs of Philip De Commines, Lord of Argenton: Containing the Histories of Louis XI, and Charles VIII, Kings of France, and of Charles the Bold, Duke of Burgundy; to Which Is Added, the Scandalous Chronicle, or Secret*

and councillor in the court of Philip the Good's son (Charles the Bold, reigned 1467-1477),<sup>21</sup> wrote an extensive set of memoirs at the request of the Archbishop of Vienne<sup>22</sup> recounting the events from 1464 to 1498, covering primarily Louis XI's reign (1461-1483). Although very little of the *Memoirs* proportionally covers Philip's time as duke (and it was not written to specifically describe that dukedom), it still gives a good picture of French courts during his lifetime. As much as the kings claimed piety—and may indeed have been pious men—these accounts show the immense amount of military activity that consumed court life...not necessarily the *chrétien* (Christian) character of *l'homme armé*. Yet, in the dedication of his book written to the archbishop, Commines candidly confesses what he thought of the king: "In him, and in all the rest of the princes which I have either served or known, I perceived ever a mixture of good and bad; for they are but men like us, and perfection belongs only to God Himself."<sup>23</sup> As Commines was also acquainted with Philip the Good of Burgundy (the one who had originally called for the crusade), we can assume that, in Commines's estimation at least, he had both good and bad mixed in him; his desire for another crusade was likely motivated by what would be considered both good (Christian piety) and bad (material gain).

Returning now to the relationship between the *l'homme armé* mass and the call for a crusade, let us now examine the evidence that points to the connection. Numerical patterns within the *l'homme armé* melody seem to relate it to the historical context of the Order of the Golden Fleece,<sup>24</sup> such as the fact that the melody is in units of thirty one and the Order had thirty-one knights. There is other historical evidence that points to its connection with the call for a crusade and possibly even the mustering of French

troops.<sup>25</sup> William Prizer, one of the musicologists who first suggested this theory relating the *l'homme armé* mass to the crusades, draws attention to the connection between writing a mass for the patron saint of the Order and using this tune: "the tune would have been an apt one to use as the *cantus firmus* of a Mass of St. Andrew, the patron saint of the Order, chosen partly because of his associations with the area of the Black Sea around Nicopolis, territory the Order aimed to win back from the infidel Turks."<sup>26</sup> Writing a mass for the patron saint—a common practice—would have logically then related to the crusades, and using a tune entitled "The Armed Man" would have been entirely reasonable. Thus, as historians and musicologists piece together the story of the armed man and his song, it is quite possible that the *l'homme armé* mass may have originated as an occasional mass composed around the time of the call for a new crusade; the composers of the *l'homme armé* masses used the imitation form with a tune that already typified the crusade movement.

Although this hypothesis is accepted among many musicologists, others argue for a slightly different link between the tune and the mass. Alejandro Planchart's paper on the history of the *l'homme armé* mass is the story of one red herring after another as musicologists attempted to discover the origins of the piece; ultimately, he concludes that it could not have been a preexisting folk song worked into the mass but was more likely a composed work (art song) directly written for the Order of the Golden Fleece to mock the Turks, and it was only later used as a *cantus firmus* for a mass for the Order.<sup>27</sup> This means that the tune was never without some sacred connotation, although the sacred meaning would certainly have been less direct before it was worked into the mass. A correlating theory to

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*History of Louis XI.*, by Jean De Troyes, ed. Andrew R. Scoble (London: Henry G. Bohn, York Street, Covent Garden, 1855), xii.

<sup>21</sup> Commines and Troyes, *The Memoirs of Philip De Commines*, xiii.

<sup>22</sup> Commines, *The Memoirs*, xlv.

<sup>23</sup> Commines, *The Memoirs*, xlvi.

<sup>24</sup> Relating music patterns to numerical patterns to represent a deeper hidden meaning was a popular compositional technique of the time.

<sup>25</sup> David Fallows, "L'homme armé," *Grove Music Online*, ed. Deane L. Root (Oxford Music Online), [http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/16553?q=L%27homm+arme&search=quick&pos=1&\\_start=1#firsthit](http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/16553?q=L%27homm+arme&search=quick&pos=1&_start=1#firsthit) (accessed 16 October 2015).

<sup>26</sup> Richard Taruskin, "Antoine Busnoys and the 'L'Homme armé' Tradition," (*Journal of the American Musicological Society* 39, no. 2 (1986)): 272.

<sup>27</sup> Alejandro Planchart, "The Origins and Early History of *L'homme armé*," *The Journal of Musicology* 20, no. 3 (2003): 312.

this conclusion is the belief that the “armed man” of the song is Christ Himself.<sup>28</sup> Although the theory that the song was written along with the call for a crusade contradicts the beliefs of other musicologists who posit that the tune was written separately and later incorporated into the mass, both theories posit that the link between the sacred and secular, the holy mass and the pop song, was the crusades: the holy war to free Jerusalem fought by fearsome (and often quite secular) knights. Thus the *l’homme armé* mass was simply one small example of the already blurred lines between sacred and secular during the time of the medieval Holy Wars.

Turning now from the history of the tune itself to the history of the early *l’homme armé* masses, it is generally thought that Antoine Busnoys, who worked solely in Franco-Flemish circles as a member of the so-called Burgundian school,<sup>29</sup> was the first to write a *l’homme armé* mass.<sup>30</sup> This would start a trend that would continue for roughly 250 years.<sup>31</sup> While we do not have concrete evidence that Busnoys was the very first to do so, renowned musicologist Oliver Strunk claims that the fact that his is among the earlier ones (written in the late 1470s or early 1480s) and that other composers, such as Jacob Obrecht, wrote masses that are well-described as “colossal ‘parod[ies]’” of Busnoys gives credence to this thought.<sup>32</sup> In analyzing various early *l’homme armé* masses, musicologist Richard Taruskin concluded

that there is “no compelling reason to assume that any *L’Homme armé* Mass is earlier than Busnoys’s and some good reasons to agree with Strunk’s rather tentative suggestion that his was, indeed, the first.”<sup>33</sup> This makes Busnoys’s contribution to the *l’homme armé* tradition quite valuable, both because he was the progenitor of the tradition and because of the number of composers and music theorists, likely including Dufay himself, who quoted<sup>34</sup> Busnoys’s mass.<sup>35</sup>

In analyzing the musical structure of various *l’homme armé* masses, it is apparent that, while they are based off of the same melody, none of the *l’homme armé* masses use exactly the same form of the melody. Although many manuscripts of *l’homme armé* masses exist, there is only one documented version of the original melody in its entirety (see Appendix A). This manuscript was discovered in 1925,<sup>36</sup> making the tantalizing mystery behind the *l’homme armé* mass a fairly recent one for musicologists to solve.<sup>37</sup> In unwinding the story behind the basic structure and origins of the tune itself, musicologist David Fallows concludes that “it is reasonable to assume that it [the *l’homme armé* tune] had an unwritten origin and was monophonic.”<sup>38</sup> Fallows continues to describe why composers found this melody particularly appealing for the tenor line of a mass cycle other than the likely connection to the crusades (this is assuming that the original song was not written specifically for the

<sup>28</sup> Kirkman, *The Cultural Life*, 98.

<sup>29</sup> Taruskin, “Antoine Busnoys,” 266.

<sup>30</sup> This has been the more traditional thought, but Alejandro Planchart challenges this thought and provides evidence in favor of Dufay and Ockeghem as being the first two composers of *l’homme armé* masses in his article “The Origins and Early History of *L’homme armé*.”

<sup>31</sup> Interest in the *l’homme armé* tune has revived in recent years, and composers have once again been using this tune in their modern compositions. To my knowledge, the most recent major work based off of *l’homme armé* is in South African composer David Earl’s 2013 clarinet concerto.

<sup>32</sup> Oliver W. Strunk, *Essays on Music in the Western World* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1974), 68.

<sup>33</sup> Taruskin, “Antoine Busnoys,” 260.

<sup>34</sup> In the era these works were composed, quoting another composer—which basically meant lifting their music and placing it one’s own music—was viewed as a compliment to the composer. This is quite different from the modern view; in 2003, Bob Dylan was accused of plagiarism, which he, in turn, argued was part of the quotation/appropriation tradition (Chris Francescani, “Bob Dylan says plagiarism charges made by ‘wussies and pussies,’” Reuters, 13 Sept. 2012, accessed 19 Oct. 2015, <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2012/09/13/music-bobdylan-plagiarism-idUKL1E8KCKTK20120913>).

<sup>35</sup> Taruskin, “Antoine Busnoys,” 263-265.

<sup>36</sup> Planchart, “The Origins and Early History,” 307.

<sup>37</sup> The mystery has been so tantalizing to musicologists that rather sharp disagreements seem to have arisen from it; the books and papers I read on the *l’homme armé* tradition contain sections where the musicologists will go point-by-point on why the others are wrong. In writing this paper, I attempted to highlight the most important and least disputed conclusions.

<sup>38</sup> Fallows, “*L’homme armé*” *Grove Music Online*, ed. Deane L. Root.

Order):

its tripartite division makes it singularly well suited for use as the *cantus firmus* in a mass cycle. Other useful features include: the move into a higher register for the middle section coupled with the high A giving a sense of a different tonal centre; the leaps of a 4th and a 5th combined with falling lines at the ends of sections; and the motivic economy of the melody.<sup>39</sup>

Although the precise origins of *l'homme armé* will likely remain a mystery which can never be fully solved, it is clear that the imagery between the song and the crusades resemble each other, and that, musically speaking, the melody contained many qualities which made it ideal for early Renaissance masses.

## CONCLUSIONS

Society in fifteenth-century Europe was characterized by the seamless interweaving of sacred and secular. The questions we must ask of this era are not, then, about what evidence there is of the blending between the two; rather, we must ask what were the common threads that allowed for such a blended culture. In the case of the *l'homme armé* mass, the connection lies not in some profound relationship between the church musician and secular culture but by simple reasoning from association: either the tune *l'homme armé* was originally secular and had no immediate connection to Christ but came to mind when the first composer of the *l'homme armé* masses was asked to write a mass either specifically for the Order of the Golden Fleece (or in honor of St. Andrew, who was the patron saint of the Order), or it was directly written for the crusaders with Christ being represented as the “Armed Man.” If the first option is true, because it was already common practice to use pre-existing tunes that related to the patron or saint as the tenor line of the mass, it was logical to choose a tune about an armed man that was to be feared—after all, that was the goal of

the crusaders! Besides this connection, the musical qualities of the melody made it an exceptional choice for a tenor line, prompting other composers who were not associated with the Order to also write masses based off of this tune after the Order composers had begun the trend.

The original quotation of the tune was most likely not simply due to the musical qualities of the melody. Placed in historical context, there was a definite reason for using the *l'homme armé* tune. It was not as if the original mass composer had a song in his head and decided to use it for the mass—or as if a modern church musician was listening to Taylor Swift’s “Shake It Off” and inserted it into the worship service solely because it was a catchy tune.<sup>40</sup> It was his way of portraying the crusade movement to the culture in which he lived. Yet, at the same time, the *l'homme armé* mass did bear some resemblance to the modern church musicians who quote—or at least model their worship music after—pop artists. The composers of the *l'homme armé* masses wrote for the people; the tune was chosen to cater to a popular audience (the patrons who sponsored them). The modern church musician also writes for the people, only, rather than writing to one specific sponsor, today’s musician writes for the aggregate sponsor of the modern church. Consequently, church musicians, regardless of the age in which they compose, face the challenge of writing and performing for both the secular patrons who pay them as well as the sacred Patron to whom the music is directed.

The fifteenth-century church, already in the midst of a culture that blended the sacred and secular, balanced the challenge of the double patron by composing music such as the *l'homme armé* mass, using sacred words with secular melodies. Today’s musicians are faced with the added challenge of living in a culture hostile to the concept of sacredness; when the Council of Trent addressed the issue of secularizing worship by blending music, it spoke to a culture in which the sacred was recognized—blended with the secular perhaps, but still accompanied by a concept of holiness that modern culture often fails to recognize. Some have tried to reclaim the sacred

<sup>39</sup> Fallows, “L’homme armé.”

<sup>40</sup> On the other hand, if Planchart’s theory is correct and even the *l'homme armé* song was written directly for the Order of the Golden Fleece, the composer of *l'homme armé* may deserve the credit for being one of the founders of the Christian crossover song genre.

by holding Taizé services or creating other distinct avenues of worship intended to focus the worshiper's mind on things away from this world. But what about the average American church service—is there even room for the Holy Uncommon? Or has it already become wholly common? We live in the midst of an audio-visual culture, a people group that lives for sensory experience. How to communicate the otherness of the spiritual—a realm beyond the experience of the human senses—is the challenge of the Christian musician seeking the sacred. One approach to this conundrum is to attempt to create an environment of such heightened sensory experience that the worshippers are overwhelmed by the feeling of an outside Presence and enter into a state of emotional otherness. This group of Christians often incorporates elements of culture which would likely have been outlawed by the Council of Trent as “lascivious or impure” simply because of their close ties with secular culture; this could include everything from using pop melodies to rock instrumentation to lyrics portraying Christ in a way that is more culturally savvy than biblically descriptive.<sup>41</sup> Yet sincere Christians adamantly cling to these songs as a means of drawing near to the Lord in worship. Other Christian musicians take a different approach, instead trying to create an awareness of the set-apart sacred by worshipping with an attitude of “reverence and godly fear” separating it from culture, as described in Hebrews 12:28 (NKJV), focusing not on the sense experience but instead attempting to shape the thoughts of the worshippers. Christians of this conviction often focus on creating an otherness in worship by treating it as a solemn occasion in which the Church triumphant, spanning the ages, worships the Lord, often using the same words and melodies as Christians of past centuries. Ironically, though, it is *this* group of Christians—not the first—who would be more likely to look to the tradition of the ancient mass as a way of finding the sacred... including the *l'homme armé* mass. Granted, the secular cultural context of the mass is more or less lost in today's world, yet it still remains a foundational element of the piece.

Is there any clear answer to the question of worship—can one simply draw a line that certain things are not appropriate for worship under any circumstance, or is the question a question relative to the individual believer? However the question is answered, it is one that ought to be addressed and wrestled with in all its complexity, past and present. It remains to be seen how the balance in modern Christianity (broadly speaking) will be found...and how later generations will analyze and question the methods used to obtain it.

### Appendix B: *L'homme armé* tune in modern notation:<sup>42</sup>

[Click here to see the image.](#)

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<sup>41</sup> An example that comes to mind of this type of worship song would be “How He Loves,” in which Christ is described by the lyrics “Heaven meets earth like a sloppy wet kiss.”

<sup>42</sup> Fallows, “L’homme armé.”



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