

Each year, on November 30, Scots celebrate the feast day of St. Andrew, the brother of St. Peter whose relics, legend has it, found their way to what is now St. Andrew's, Scotland from Constantinople sometime in the first millennium of the Church's history. It continues to be Scotland's national holiday and Scots mark it with many national traditions and customs, including plaid-clad bagpipers on parade.

The Oxford History of Music mentions the first bagpipe being documented in the Middle East in the first millennium before Christ, approximately the chronological range during which King David is believed to have reigned over the united Kingdom of Israel and Judah. The "pipe" is one of the several instruments mentioned in various contexts throughout the Old Testament and it is used in the context of a full range of human emotion - from joy to mourning. When Solomon was anointed King of Israel, "all the people came up after him, and the people piped with pipes, and rejoiced with great joy, so that the earth rent with the sound of them" (1 Kings 1:40). In Jeremiah's prophecy, we read of the pipes figuring the lament of the human heart over the destruction of those in Moab who had made offerings to false gods: "So my heart laments for Moab like the music of a pipe; it laments like a pipe for the people of Kir Hareseth. The wealth they acquired is gone" (Jer. 48:36). Thus we see the pipes being used throughout the Hebrew Scriptures representationally to show the full panoply of human experience and emotion.

While the bagpipes do indeed have their earliest origins in the Middle East and are quite deeply embedded in the Hebrew Scriptures, they have come to be primarily associated in modern times with Scotland. Tradition has it that the bagpipes first arrived in Scotland around the year 1300 and soon thereafter, they began to put down

deep roots on the battlefield. They had originally been used as a means of unsettling and startling the enemy in battle, as well as communication of commands on the field of battle. They may be seen as roughly analogous to the fife and drum corps common during the American Revolutionary era. In modern times, they are common in reenactments as well as in religious services such as weddings, funerals, etc.

Sacred music, including the bagpipes, and like all forms of sacred art likewise can be said to be useful in another less readily visible, but no less real, form of battle - that is, spiritual battle. Those who have preceded us in death and who now enjoy the fullness of joy that we call the Beatific Vision are called the "Church Triumphant." We here below, who continue to sojourn through this "valley of tears," however, are called the "Church Militant," and not by accident. We are called, each and every day, to fight against "the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (Eph. 6:12).

Sacred art, in all its forms, feeds our souls and steels us for the daily battles we must fight on this side of resurrection. This is, in part, why churches and cathedrals have traditionally been repositories of some of the most beautiful and famous art in the history of the west. So even though the Great highland bagpipes have explicit military roots, all sacred art has, in a very real sense, similar roots in (spiritual) warfare. Without the spiritual sustenance given by art and beauty, we would simply be overcome by the ugliness and despair of "the spiritual forces of evil" of which St. Paul speaks in his letter to the people of Ephesus.