

# “With the Voice Together Shall They Sing”

*Laurence Paul Hemming*

My title comes from the Book of Mormon,<sup>1</sup> from the words of Abinadi speaking of those who will receive the message of the resurrection and how the message of salvation shall be declared “to every nation, kindred, tongue and people” (Mosiah 15:28): in other words, to the whole world. That message will culminate in unity and song, the fruition of Zion.

One of my first encounters with the depth and clarity of Latter-day Saint scholarship came about when the Society of St. Catherine of Siena, an organization committed to the renewal of the intellectual tradition in Catholic Christianity (and of which I am one of the founders), invited Professor John Welch of Brigham Young University to be a respondent for the small launch conference we had organized in March 2008 in London for Dr. Margaret Barker’s then recently published *Temple Themes in Christian Worship*.<sup>2</sup> The Society of St. Catherine of Siena has, for some time, taken a strong interest in Margaret Barker’s work, for reasons not dissimilar to those that have attracted the attention of many Latter-day Saints. Like your own, Catholicism is above all a Temple tradition, although all too few Catholics are really aware of what that means. When I was first studying the liturgy of the Catholic Church in preparation for ordination, we were routinely taught that Catholic worship originated in the Jewish synagogue.<sup>3</sup> Nothing

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1. Mosiah 15:29: “Yea, Lord, thy watchmen shall lift up their voice; with the voice together shall they sing; for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion.”

2. Margaret Barker, *Temple Themes in Christian Worship* (London: T and T Clark [Continuum], 2007).

3. This view is routinely repeated in many sources. See, for example, the *Catholic Encyclopaedia* (New York: Benziger Bros., 1917), s.v. “Christian Worship”; “Worship, Christian,” in “Catholic Encyclopedia,” <http://newadvent.org/cathen>.

Laurence Hemming is a devout Catholic who appreciates the value of worship through the repeated expression of sacred texts and songs. As a member of the London Temple Studies group, he is a friend to many Latter-day Saints who share his interest in understanding and preserving the ancient roots of temple service, recognizing that the music of the Psalms was an important part of sacred worship in the Temple of Solomon and before.

In the Catholic tradition, music draws the soul toward heaven by opening spiritual meanings behind the literal meanings of a text. In the medieval era, this worked in several ways. For example, the Cistercians simplified their worship music and architectural style, as Dr. Hemming discusses, in search of clarity and purity. At the same time, the choirmaster at Notre Dame in Paris, Léonin, and his successor, Pérotin, succeeded in weaving so many extra notes and interlaced voices into the vocalization of each syllable of the mass that it required several minutes to chant a single word (as in *Viderunt Omnes* by either composer). Their point was to invite the human imagination to engage and interact with the divine word, one syllable at a time. The same enterprise governed the elaborate surface decoration of cathedrals and the intricate illumination of manuscript pages. Under the church's direction, architects, composers, and artists represented the glory of the "Word made flesh" by filling every square inch, every sung phrase, and every blank margin with material for contemplation, prayer, and worship.

As Dr. Hemming proposes in his essay, the antecedents for these medieval practices extend back to the first two centuries of Christianity. The emphasis on the Psalms as the source for many of the earliest known sung forms of worship in the outer courts of the Temple in Jerusalem unveils a possible link (direct or indirect) between sacred music today and temple worship in the time of Christ and even earlier.

Indeed, the reverberations of songs of the heart are everlasting. Dr. Hemming quotes Abinadi in his title, but he could easily have referred to a host of LDS scriptures as well: "Their souls did expand, and they did sing redeeming love" (Alma 5:9); "how blessed are they, for they shall sing to his praise forever" (Mosiah 18:30); "for as the power of the Holy Ghost led them whether to preach, or to exhort, or to pray, or to supplicate, or to sing, even so it was done" (Moroni 6:9); "yea, the song of the righteous is a prayer unto me" (D&C 25:12); and all "shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, and shall see eye to eye, and shall lift up their voice, and with the voice together sing this new song" (D&C 84:98).

Sacred worship and temple service invites participants to interact with the "conversation" of the service, and the Psalms and other devotional music can draw righteous souls into divine conversation. As Hemming says, "The human voice takes up the song the Lord has given to renew creation."

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could be further from the truth. Our physical churches, consecrated to the Lord by rites some of whose origins appear to predate Christianity and are rooted in the history of Israel,<sup>4</sup> are not themselves exactly temples; rather, they are meant to indicate and make present the heavenly Temple, the Temple of the New Jerusalem, here on earth, whenever the sacred rites of

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Margaret Barker has a summary of these views in *Temple Themes in Christian Worship*, 19f. If we find Gregory Woolfenden writing, "The idea that we can trace a direct line between synagogue worship and that of the early church is now largely abandoned," the idea is remarkably stubborn, and the consequences of abandoning it have resulted in even more misinformation. G. W. Woolfenden, *Daily Liturgical Prayer: Origins and Theology* (Farnborough, UK: Ashgate, 2004), 4. Compare Aidan Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology* (1984; repr., Collegeville, Minn.: Pueblo, 1992), 58, where he speaks of the first service of the day in Christian churches occurring "as in the synagogue," or the claim that for the earliest times "the synagogue form became the basic order of worship for the Christian Church." Benjamin D. William and Harold Anstall, *Orthodox Worship: A Living Continuity with the Synagogue, the Temple, and the Early Church* (Minneapolis: Light and Life, 1990), 14.

Too many authors, of whom these are not the most egregious examples, if they have shifted the emphasis of the origins from the synagogue, have done so to the domestic space, rather than the real source. A typical example of this is Dix, who speaks of the Eucharist in two halves, the synaxis, springing from the root of "the Jewish synagogue service," and the Eucharist proper, which was based on Jewish domestic practice. Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy* (1945; repr., London: A and C Black, 1986), 36, 52ff.

All of this is represented by the strong view asserted by the exemplary Catholic liturgist Aimé Georges Martimort that "the development of Christian public worship was accompanied by a more or less rapid break with the liturgy of the temple and the observances of the old Law." A. G. Martimort, I. H. Dalmais, and P. Jounel, *The Liturgy and Time*, vol. 4 of *The Church at Prayer: An Introduction to the Liturgy*, 4 vols. (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1985; Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1986), 158. This is reinforced by Mario Righetti, who argues that "the sacrifice of the new law . . . has nothing in common with the ancient sacrificial rites of the Temple," but much of its practices are "derived from the liturgy of the synagogue and rendered Christian with the insertion of new elements." Mario Righetti, *Introduzione Generale*, vol. 1 of *Storia Liturgica*, 4 vols. (1964; repr., Rome: Ancora, 2005), 101; compare also 102 for the development of this argument.

4. See, for a full account of these rites, A. J. Schulte, *Consecranda: The Performance of the Rite of Consecration of the Roman Pontifical*, rev. by J. B. O'Connell (1907; repr., New York: Benziger Bros., 1956). One of the most mysterious of these rites is the marking of the interior with the various alphabets of the liturgical languages (see p. 48) at certain points in the sanctuary and on the altar, with the antiphon "O how much to be feared is this place, truly it is not other than the house of God and the gate of heaven" (*O quam metuendus est locus iste: vere non est hic aliud, nisi domus Dei et porta cœli*) alternated with the verses of the hymn of blessing, known as the *Benedictus* (Luke 1:68–79).

our Church are performed in them.<sup>5</sup> We hold this belief in common with Orthodox Christians. What happens within our buildings, we believe, has its origins in the Jerusalem Temple. Margaret Barker has helped me see that the restoration of Temple theology that early Christianity understood itself to be was a restoration of the Temple tradition of Solomon's Temple, which was known in Israel before King Josiah made changes implementing the directives found in the book of Deuteronomy.<sup>6</sup>

And here is where I want to begin my conversation with you—for all my dealings with Mormon scholars and scholarship, Latter-day Saint understandings of what you have inherited from the religion of Israel, and what you believe yourselves to be restoring, have much in common—perhaps more than many in either of our religious communities are commonly apt to realize—with Catholic history and doctrine. Our traditions meet (one could say, would need to join counsel), however, on the ground of one of the most opaque and difficult-to-interpret periods of Christian history for all of us: the period of the first hundred to one hundred fifty years of Christianity. In Catholic circles in the last two hundred years, much confusion and inaccuracy has been peddled about this period, more than any other in the history of the Catholic Church: almost all of what even quite educated (and I mean religiously schooled) Catholics believe about this period is all too often derived either from the assumptions of liberal Protestantism, particularly that of the German theologians of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries or, worse, from the assumptions of secular scholarship that flow from the Enlightenment and the so-called historical-critical method.<sup>7</sup>

It is here that I find Margaret Barker's work so promising. She shows how scripture, properly read, is conjoined to what we call the patristic period, the period of the most venerated and venerable noncanonical writers of the Early Church. Where the assumptions of modern scholarship

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5. Compare John Wilkinson, *From Synagogue to Church: The Traditional Design—Its Beginning, Its Definition, Its End* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2002). Based on extensive mathematical research, Wilkinson observes, "Synagogue and church design depended on the heavenly Temple, and the Temple in Jerusalem was based on the heavenly Temple" (1).

6. This is the theme of the whole of Barker, *Temple Themes in Christian Worship*, but see especially 65ff. See also Margaret Barker, "What Did King Josiah Reform?" in *Glimpses of Lehi's Jerusalem*, ed. John W. Welch, David Rolph Seely, and Jo Ann H. Seely (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2004), 523–42.

7. See, for a discussion of this, my book: Laurence Paul Hemming, *Worship as a Revelation: The Past, Present and Future of Catholic Liturgy* (London: Burns and Oates [Continuum], 2008), 71–74.

attest a breach, she argues for an unequivocal unity, even if it is at times difficult to see. Her conclusions have repeatedly been vindicated by the discoveries of Qumran and research into communities like the Essenes. Her claims that Rabbinical Judaism is, to some extent at least, a later reaction to Christianity and so a reworking of Judaism in order to place it outside the bounds of possible continuity with Christianity (and I am not talking of “supercessionism”) are now beyond reproach.<sup>8</sup>

In his short but very fine paper delivered on Margaret Barker’s book in 2008, John Welch laid down to Margaret what I take to be a characteristically gentle but clear provocation to all non-Mormon Christians when he said, “I would welcome from Margaret a broader definition of the term *worship*. There is no need to limit the domain of Christian worship to the three areas of worship—baptism, Eucharist, and singing.” Welch noted that “the word for ‘worship’ in the New Testament, *latreuo*, also includes within its many meanings prayer, keeping the commandments, missionary work, healing, and confession, and it comprises the whole of Christian existence.”<sup>9</sup>

I would be the first to concur that an all too predominant understanding of worship in contemporary Catholicism has been truncated simply to mean attendance at Holy Mass, without any understanding of the whole range of worship provided for by our sacred activities (fasts, missions, confession, penitence, service), above all our liturgy (by which we mean our church services), without which the Mass on its own barely becomes intelligible. What has touched me so deeply about Mormon lives as I have witnessed them lived, by an increasing number of Latter-day Saints whom I am privileged to count as friends, is that they are, in their religious and everyday shape, worshipful. I think this is also true for non-Mormon Christians, but I could not deny that too often there is—especially in the West—a kind of voluntarism about what worship has often come to mean for many of us: “I will choose how I worship, and when,” as if worship were a sort of bargain with God: “I’ve been to Mass and remembered to fast from meat on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, I’ve ‘paid a debt’ in God’s direction, and I’m free to go about my daily business as I please.” Few Mormons into whose lives and families I have been welcomed appear to live like this; far fewer Catholics should.

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8. See, for just one example of where she presents this argument, Margaret Barker, *The Great High Priest: The Temple Roots of Christian Liturgy* (London, T and T Clark [Continuum], 2003), 299–315 *passim*.

9. John W. Welch, “A Latter Day Reception of *Temple Themes in Christian Worship*,” presented at the Temple Themes in Christian Worship conference, March 5, 2008, London, and printed in *FARMS Review* 21, no. 1 (2009): 5.

In the tradition of Catholicism of which I am a part, the celebration of Mass is inserted into eight other discrete events, or “Offices” (*officia*, duties, requirements) of worship every day—this is what liturgy, in practice, means. Worship begins in the night, with the office of Vigils or Matins—which has two different forms, one ordinary, one festal, but comprises many psalms, readings, and responsories, and then culminates with the service of Lauds—praise for the approaching day—which begins with seven psalms and a canticle, the arrangement of which almost certainly predates Christianity and I suspect in part goes right back *into* the Jerusalem Temple.<sup>10</sup> These two services, together with the office of Vespers, celebrated in Near Eastern regions near sunset, and ordinarily before eating or before fasts are broken, every day, comprise the three great daily services of praise which mirror the eternal hymn of praise of the seraphim before the cherubim throne of God.

There are five other daily services of prayer, still kept, with the other three, in the most observant forms of monastic life, and by many of the most observant Catholics: the morning office of Prime (on rising), which, coupled with the evening office of Compline (on going to bed) and the day hours of Terce, Sext, and None coordinated to the third, sixth, and ninth hours of the day (roughly 9:00 a.m., noon, and 3:00 p.m.), are all for the sanctification of daily existence. These services are simpler and comprise psalms that can be learned off by heart (so that they can be recited while working if it is not possible to reach a church or oratory or place of quiet): they are in some ways the more personal prayers of the Christian soul seeking to unite his or her quotidian, ordinary, activity with the Lord. You will see that there are two cycles here: one belongs to the Temple explicitly—the hymn of praise, which is the insertion of the Christian into the service of the angels before the throne, at the center of which is the Mass (but the Mass is only a part of a greater whole), and the second cycle, which *can* be performed in a church, but can just as easily belong outside.

Of course, only monks and nuns and the clergy, people whose time is fully consecrated to God, can really fulfill these two great cycles (corresponding in some ways, perhaps, to your distinction between temple and chapel life), but there are multiple forms of simpler lay pious practices for

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10. This cycle has been heavily altered and interrupted in the last one hundred years or so and remains preserved in its full original form in only a handful of Benedictine and similar monasteries. I have traced a narrative of these interruptions in several places, foremost among which is my book *Worship as a Revelation*. See also two works by László Dobcsay: *The Bugnini-Liturgy and the Reform of the Reform*, vol. 5, *Musicæ Sacrae Meletemata* (Front Royal, Va.: Church Music Association of America, 2003); and *The Restoration and Organic Development of the Roman Rite*, ed. Laurence Paul Hemming (London: Continuum, 2010).

ordinary Catholics, which almost without exception can be shown to have their home and origin over the centuries in one or other of these cycles. We call these “paraliturgical” practices—where *para* is taken from the Greek meaning “alongside,” “together with,” “trying to be the same as.” These cycles, both in their formal, liturgical sense and in pious practice, are modulated through feasts, fasts, penitential seasons, and greater and lesser joys, in a structure which, if truly lived, even at the paraliturgical level, is like the breathing of God: *pneuma*, the breath of the Spirit in the soul of the faithful Catholic.

This is the “whole of Christian existence” to which I think John Welch refers—a life lived within, and outside, the Temple—a life also in the world, if not always of the world. Moreover, in common with Latter-day Saints, the three great worship services of praise can also be performed for the dead, as Holy Mass can be offered for the dead, so that the souls awaiting final judgment can have it accounted to their righteousness that they continued to sing the praises of God even though for a while their mouths were stopped and the tongues that sing those praises are not their own.

I agree entirely with Welch—at least if I can speak for Catholics—that the other things he lists can be accounted as worship (although with some of these I might want to use the other Greek term *doulia*, “veneration,” in the rendering of certain servile tasks as service worthy of a life lived in God). Where I want to amplify his remarks is in the exact taxis that he proffered: Eucharist, baptism, singing. Having sung a few Mormon hymns in my time, I might agree with him that singing can occasionally seem a more muted form of worship—and I can supply some contemporary Catholic examples to rival any Mormon examples of muted praise—but I come from a tradition in which every word offered in worship out loud (and some words in our services are to be kept silent, like prayers of consecration, muttered, not because they are secret, but because they are too holy for mortals in ordinary circumstances to utter aloud) is *sung*. We even sing the scriptures, where I come from, in sacred tones that again, I suspect, have Temple roots.

If in Welch’s list is confession, I would point him to one of the most beautiful chants in the Roman liturgy—when the deacon (of which I am one), in other words a Levite, sings solemnly the chant *Confiteor*, or *I Confess*, on behalf of the whole people at the Mass of a bishop—or, interestingly enough, before a bishop sings the solemn prayers that lift a sentence of interdict from a city, a land, or a region that has sinned and been successfully called to repentance. Sadly, that tone is heard all too rarely in the modern Catholic Church.<sup>11</sup>

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11. See *Rituale Romanum* of Benedict XIV (1752), *Ritus absolvendi et benedicti populos et agros ex Apostolice Sedis indulto*.

All audible Temple worship for us is better *sung*, which is why the hymns of praise *par excellence* are Temple hymns, psalms—not the metrical commentaries of varying, sometimes questionable, theological value of much contemporary hymnody (in our case at least—I wouldn’t presume to speak for yours). The cursus of our vast sacred liturgy is above all psalmodic. This has important consequences for that period of opacity in which I earlier said we Mormons and Catholics need to meet, the period AD 50–200, but more of that shortly. It seems to me that in a dialogue between us—above all a dialogue of listening, of hearing what we share—I could serve you well by introducing to you an aspect of Catholic life which is above all worth listening *to*: our sacred chant. This chant is heard all too rarely in the modern Catholic Church, and yet at one time in the Church’s life it was forbidden to celebrate either the Holy Mass or the Offices of praise—Matins, Lauds, and Vespers—unless *all* their audible parts were sung.

Why did we sing as we did? Singing liturgically is a levitical work: for much of the life of the Catholic Church, it was necessary to be ordained, as at least a deacon or subdeacon, to sing. For this reason, women were discouraged from singing in church. Not because their voices were not pleasing, but because they did not hold the priesthood. Even now, a choir, to sing in a Catholic church, *should* be vested in black cassocks (to cloak their as yet unrisen forms) over which they wear white linen surplices or cottas—the heavenly apparel of angels. In her paper on Temple music in 2009 at the Temple Studies Group in London, Margaret Barker noted: “Even before the temple was built, David established musicians to serve before the ark, to invoke, to praise and to thank the Lord (1 Chron. 16:4). Their music was to invoke the divine presence.”<sup>12</sup> Barker adds, speaking of the earliest Church, “*The Christians worshipped in the same way as the temple Levites*. St. John said that the Word ‘tabernacled’ among us and ‘we beheld his glory.’”<sup>13</sup> Significantly, Barker notes, in the Temple “the Levites, the temple singers, also made atonement, according to Numbers 8:19.”<sup>14</sup>

My purpose is not to identify a point of disagreement with John Welch. Rather, I am following a suggestion he himself made in his engagement with Margaret Barker’s book: in his concluding remarks on that occasion, he asked what it would mean if we could “imagine enriching hymnody with a theology of the unity and harmony among all the people on earth.”<sup>15</sup> In asking that question, he seems to me to be pointing to

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12. Margaret Barker, “An Overview of Temple Music,” presented at Temple Music: Meaning and Influence conference of Temple Studies Group, London, May 2009.

13. Barker, “Overview of Temple Music,” emphasis in original.

14. Barker, “Overview of Temple Music.”

15. Welch, “Latter Day Reception,” 6.

what that verse in the book of Mosiah also points. If we extend hymnody to cover the kind of song that Catholics have understood to be the proper song of Church life, the chants of the liturgy that are above all psalmodic, it should be clear why I am excited by what he asks.

My suggestion is that this is precisely the theology of singing that was for centuries taken for granted, if only ever rarely—very rarely—discussed in the Churches of the East and West who, I would suggest, inherited their theology of worship *as* singing directly from the Temple and embellished it with what they drew from Greek thought. Here I want to set aside for a moment the intriguing suggestion that Pythagoras himself was a student of the First Temple (which would mean that when the Christians of the Middle Ages turned to Pythagoras for amplification of what they were doing, they were, to an extent, returning directly to Temple theology as his disciples received it from Pythagoras and transmitted it to subsequent centuries).<sup>16</sup> That is certainly a suggestion worth following up, but here we do not have the time to do it.

You will note that I suggested there are two modes of the voice in such a theology: the sung and the silent (or *sotto voce*). The sung voice invokes the divine presence and places us within it: the lowered voice, therefore, is the counterposition to this, of speaking when already *in* the divine presence, uttering words so holy that the divine presence is *perforce* presupposed. The one point in the Catholic liturgy when classically the priest or bishop does not speak out loud is in the prayers of blessing and consecration of the Mass, the words that breathe the Spirit *into* us—the words that result in *us* drawing sacred breath.

If the sanctuary of a Catholic or Orthodox church building is meant to represent the *vision* of the holy of holies, it is also meant to render it *audible*. The language of prayer, rendered as singing, breaks the structures of rationality and representation that constitute the human person ordinarily, so that what is produced to be heard and understood is *not* the product of the human will, but the resonance of the human voice through the sung invocation of the divine.

We get a glimpse of what the theology of music and singing was through one of the great moments of musical reform in the Middle Ages. The Cistercian Reform is sometimes understood as a kind of puritanical reform, a proto-protestant moment in the history of the Catholic Church.<sup>17</sup> It was

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16. This is an intriguing suggestion of Margaret Barker's. See Barker, *Great High Priest*, 263–64. Barker concludes, “*Most of the evidence for the teachings of Pythagoras shows that it was very similar to what can be reconstructed of the teachings and practices of the first temple priesthood*,” emphasis in original.

17. Martha G. Newman, “Text and Authority in the Formation of the Cistercian Order: Re-Assessing the Early Cistercian Reform,” in *Reforming the Church*

arguably nothing of the kind. The emphasis, rather, was to pare back the visual for the sake of the audibility of the divine voice, in the monastic singing of the cycles I have described to you. The musicologist Marcel Pérès has examined in detail the Cistercian musical reforms of the thirteenth century, and from his researches he concludes that “the theoretical preoccupations of the Cistercians were not vain speculations; the intention of the reformers was directed at the incarnation of the Word through the agency of the most basic laws of the resonance of the human voice.”<sup>18</sup> In other words, the coordination of the natural to the supernatural: to place them together at the only point where they could meet. We would otherwise, in Temple theology, call this the Holy of Holies. The Cistercians had a Temple faith.

At the center of the Cistercian reform was an understanding of human being and its relation to God. This understanding was not governed by a modern conception of a spatiotemporal universe (or “individual growth”), but by the ancient cosmology in a musical system that was primarily Pythagorean. In this understanding, the reproduction of certain musical harmonies and relations proportion the human voice and the production of sound to the cosmos as a whole. This understanding was almost entirely lost from the baroque period onward—precisely, in other words, when the so-called Aristotelian cosmos collapsed into the Galilean-Newtonian universe and when all musical relations were mathematically harmonized (that is, when the scale was altered by fractions of a note to eliminate the “Pythagorean comma”) in the baroque period.<sup>19</sup> Long before this, the Cistercians had constituted, by the harmonious collaboration of architecture and sound, an icon of the heavens that was also a figuration of the mystery of salvation and the spiritual reincarnation of the Holy of Holies.

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*before Modernity: Patterns, Problems, and Approaches*, ed. Christopher M. Belittlo and Louis I. Hamilton (Farnborough, UK: Ashgate, 2005), 173–98. Newman both states the more traditional view and modifies it yet further by arguing that the Cistercian reform of the monastic life emphasized what are in fact the surprisingly modern notions of “personal experience and individual growth” (174), which were motivated by “a more general interest in religious experimentation and individual transformation” (175).

18. Marcel Pérès, *Chant Cistercien du XIII<sup>e</sup>* (Paris: Fondation, 1992), 3. “Les préoccupations théoriques des cisterciens n’étaient pas de vaines spéculations: les réformateurs avaient pour dessein l’incarnation du Verbe par l’intermédiaire de lois de résonance les plus fondamentales de la voix humaine.” Compare Michel Huglo and Marcel Pérès, *Aspects de la Musique Liturgique au Moyen Age* (Paris: Éditions Créaphis, 1991).

19. For a popular account of this development, see Stuart Isacoff, *Temperament: The Idea That Solved Music’s Greatest Riddle* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2001), 26–42.

The principles that underlie what Pérès describes were already established in Christian practice: in the first place, the singing of the chant was understood as constitutive of *world as such*, not *a world*, an imaginary place, but the *real cosmos entire*. This is not a world into which a Cartesian agent subject enters from without, from the ideal place of a mental act: a modern self or *I*. Rather, through the work that it undertakes (worship as singing), the participant is disclosed—shown to have become and therefore to be *already* a member of the company of heaven, an angelic figure, which is why the choir should be vested (exactly as Barker notes from the book of Numbers). Singing here is analogous to the unity of the heavens even in their movement—an understanding derived directly from the Pythagorean and ancient understanding of the work of music as reflecting the movement of the heavens, a work that *lifts* the person spiritually and metaphorically into the heavens, and so to the outermost limit of the heavens, from ancient times considered to be the very “seat” of the divine. This is the *performance* of the “anagogical” as that “lifting up,” the saving purpose, which is intrinsic to all worship. We lift up our voices because our voices lift us up: “Yea, Lord, thy watchmen shall lift up their voice,” says Abinadi in the book of Mosiah (Mosiah 15:29).

This viewpoint, derived from pre-Christian antiquity, becomes Christianized in the sense that the heavens are understood as not of themselves eternal (as, for instance, Aristotle had held) but as originating from God. The chanting of the psalms—and the participation in the chants of the Mass—constitutes the form the participant takes within the heavens in his or her relation to the God who alone creates *ab initio*. This form is that of Christ.

In the second place, however, the Cistercian reform aimed to make much more explicit the natural harmony between the heavens and the earth that the atonement in Christ had restored. Pérès makes the point that the great Cistercian abbeys—Fontenay (figs. 1 and 2), Sénanque, Le Thoronet, Fontfroide, and so on—were constructed to possess particular acoustic properties that amplified the human voice in such a way as to add harmonies to it that would not otherwise be apparent to the ear. Pérès adds, “Without recourse to the artifices of polyphony, a single voice or a chorus in unison can produce harmonies that are not the work of the human will, but the effect of the fundamental laws of the vibration of resonant bodies, physical harmony, the impulse of matter that, by means of the absolute logic of its laws, renders the perennity and the magnificence of the thought of God to the human ear.”<sup>20</sup>

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20. Pérès, *Chant Cistercien du XIII<sup>e</sup>*, 5. “Ainsi, sans avoirs recours à l’artifice de la polyphonie, voix seule ou chœur à l’unisson peuvent faire entendre des harmonies qui ne sont pas l’œuvre de la volonté humaine mais l’effet des

**FIG. 1. (right)** The nave of the Cistercian abbey church at Fontenay, France, constructed 1139 to 1147. Courtesy Jesse D. Hurlbut. This abbey was constructed to reflect the Cistercian ideals of simplicity and purity as well as to provide the acoustics in which the chanting monks could create harmonics and overtones.



**FIG. 2 (below)** The exterior of the Cistercian abbey at Fontenay, France. Courtesy Jesse D. Hurlbut.



This form of social relation (as an audition of the society of heaven, not earth) makes present and audible (but does not “construct”) our common being in God, initiated in baptism, achieved through grace, through the gift of faith and the strenuous perfection of the virtues (the Catholic way of speaking of what John Welch was asking for in a wider sense of worship, I think). This divinized society, as singing-with-others, can never be either egotistical or interpersonal, for *my* singing is never directed towards the *thou* (towards “you”) but is always a taking up of words that are presumed really to be a conversation between the Son and the Father, between heaven and earth, into which *we* are to be inserted. We relate to God by singing the words that are exchanged *within* the divine life: we are included in this *through* the Spirit, and so through the relations between Father, Son, and Spirit. This is why *what* we sing must be capable of being read as this conversation: the type of this is the psalms, whose words form the backbone of all liturgical chant.

In the liturgy, as citizens and subjects of the new, heavenly Jerusalem, our true birth (baptism) is itself heavenly: it comes from *above*, and *beyond*, not below, and in the past. It is for this reason that (in except three cases) the Catholic Church celebrates liturgically the day of death of the saints as the “heavenly birthday,” not the actual date of physical birth.<sup>21</sup>

The liturgy actually functions by our inserting of ourselves into the words that are already given for us to speak and that we presume are already being passed between the angels. Above all, this is carried out through singing. Singing, not as performance but as chorus—strophe and antistrophe—and song, an activity that entrains us to a kind of *return*, which, in our absorbing it, our making of it our own, and returning it as having been sung, schools us and lets us into participation in the conversation that the liturgy *is*. This is why the sung forms of the liturgy were always the more basic, more ancient, and prior to the said forms. It is also why the communal activity of the liturgy is always prior to any private form. Private recitation of the liturgy is entirely dependent for its meaning

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lois fondamentales de vibration des corps sonores, harmonie physique, élan de la matière qui par l’absolue logique de ses lois rend accessible à l’entendement humain la pérennité et la magnificence de la pensée de Dieu.”

21. The three cases of the celebration of nativities are those of Jesus, his mother Mary, and St. John the Baptist. In Catholic tradition, Jesus is without sin as Son of God; Mary was preserved from the imputation of sin at her (therefore immaculate) conception, and St. John the Baptist was sanctified (freed from imputation of sin) in the womb, at the moment when Elizabeth and Mary met, and Elizabeth was “filled with the Holy Ghost” (Luke 1:41). These three are all therefore understood to have been born from heaven in advance of their birth on earth.

on the form of public celebration. I would go so far as to say that too much private recitation of liturgical texts has brought with it dangers for us as Catholics for understanding what prayer is at all.

The conversation which the liturgy is, is not less or other than the conversation between the Father and the Son, enacted throughout the cosmos—which is why it cannot be done as something simply “in the heart” (contrary to much modern thought about prayer); it *requires* the gift of the vision of the Temple, a physical building *adequate to the task*, “as a bride adorned for her husband,” as the Catholic liturgy speaks of it on one occasion.<sup>22</sup> In liturgical prayer, we are inserted into that conversation. If we make it our own, at the same time we are *constituted* by it—it makes of us what we *really* are to be: heavenly beings.

Here it is important to recall one fundamental aspect of Temple singing that, again, has been much overlooked, especially in contemporary Catholic discussion. If the watchword of much liturgical change and reform in the Catholic Church in recent years has been “sing unto the Lord a new song,” there has been all too little understanding of what this means (compare Psalms 32:3; 39:3; 95:1; 97:1; 144:9; 149:1). In “sing unto the Lord a new song” (Psalms 96, 98, and 149), the Hebrew adjective rendered as “new” is *chadash*. As Margaret Barker has stressed on many occasions, *chadash* does not mean “new” as in “newly made up” (a human creation), so much as “renewing.”<sup>23</sup> The song that is sung to the Lord is the song that is itself the Lord’s song, a song that renews. In the context of the liturgical songs *par excellence*, this means the capacity of liturgical song as a sacred action *itself* to renew and restore creation to its place in and before God: in our case, the restoration of the Christian spirit—again, this is Temple work.

The human voice takes up the song the Lord has given to renew creation. Temple singing (which is what the Hebrew means) both orders the human voice and person to the divinely given cosmos, the whole order of creation, and at the same time renews the whole of creation. Barker notes that “the praises of the earth were vital for upholding the creation. The high priest Simeon, about 200 BC, taught that the creation was sustained by the Law, the temple service and deeds of loving kindness. The music had

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22. Revelation 21:2. See *Breviarium Romanum* (1623), Office of the Dedication of a Church, Chapter at vespers and lauds. “Vidi civitatem sanctam Jerusalem novam descendentem de coelo a Deo, paratam sicut sponsam ornatam viro suo.”

23. Compare Barker, “Overview of Temple Music.”

to be performed at the correct time.”<sup>24</sup> Temple worship has both proper times and a proper place.

What I have been able to provide only in outline has, I hope, illustrated that worship *without* song is or should be (for Catholics at least) a very strange phenomenon indeed. The Catholic Church’s sacred chant, both at the Mass and in the other services of praise, what I referred to earlier as the *Offices*, above all of vigils or Matins, Lauds, and Vespers, is contained in a book that at one time was the *same* book for all four events of worship, called the Antiphonary (fig. 3): the texts overlapped constantly. This remarkable hand-produced text, usually huge and often richly illustrated, possessed by every cathedral and monastery and many larger churches, stood on a large double-sided wooden lectern. Books like this can still be found in use in Orthodox churches. It is often covered in candle-grease from the lights required around it because so much of what was sung from it was sung at night or in twilight and dawn when the light was coming and departing (the proper times), and it supplied the fundamental texts which framed the verses of the psalms and connected them to the liturgical event or “day.” This “day” could be a major feast, like Easter, Pentecost, Ascension; a saint’s day; the day of a season of penitence (Lent, Advent, the four-yearly “Ember Days” which mark the solstices and equinoxes) or joy (Christmastide); or the “Ferial” (ordinary) days.

The Antiphonary, which has not been produced as a single book since about the fifteenth century, is perhaps one of the most important books of worship the Catholic Church ever had, and yet nowadays it is often the most neglected. The Antiphonary has fundamental connections with that period I keep returning to, the opaque period of Christian life after the death of Christ and before the emergence of the Constantinian settlement. Much of the Antiphonary is itself composed of sections or fragments of scriptural texts. It is, therefore, the juxtaposition of the texts of the Antiphonary with their corresponding psalms which can tell us how the early Church was reading, and so interpreting, the scriptures it possessed.

This text, insofar as it has been known as a *single* book from about the eighth century onwards, has been for us since about the early fifth century entirely in Latin (fig. 4). It is sometimes said in musicological study of the Antiphonary that the text is inseparable from its music, so that what was sung and to what chant melody were inseparable. In fact, this is an oversimplification, although there is a grain of truth in it. The chant of the Antiphonary exists in a series of modes that were codified in the Middle Ages to about eight, plus a ninth, the so-called “wandering” tone or *tonus*

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24. Barker, “Overview of Temple Music,” citing *Mishnah Aboth* 1:2.

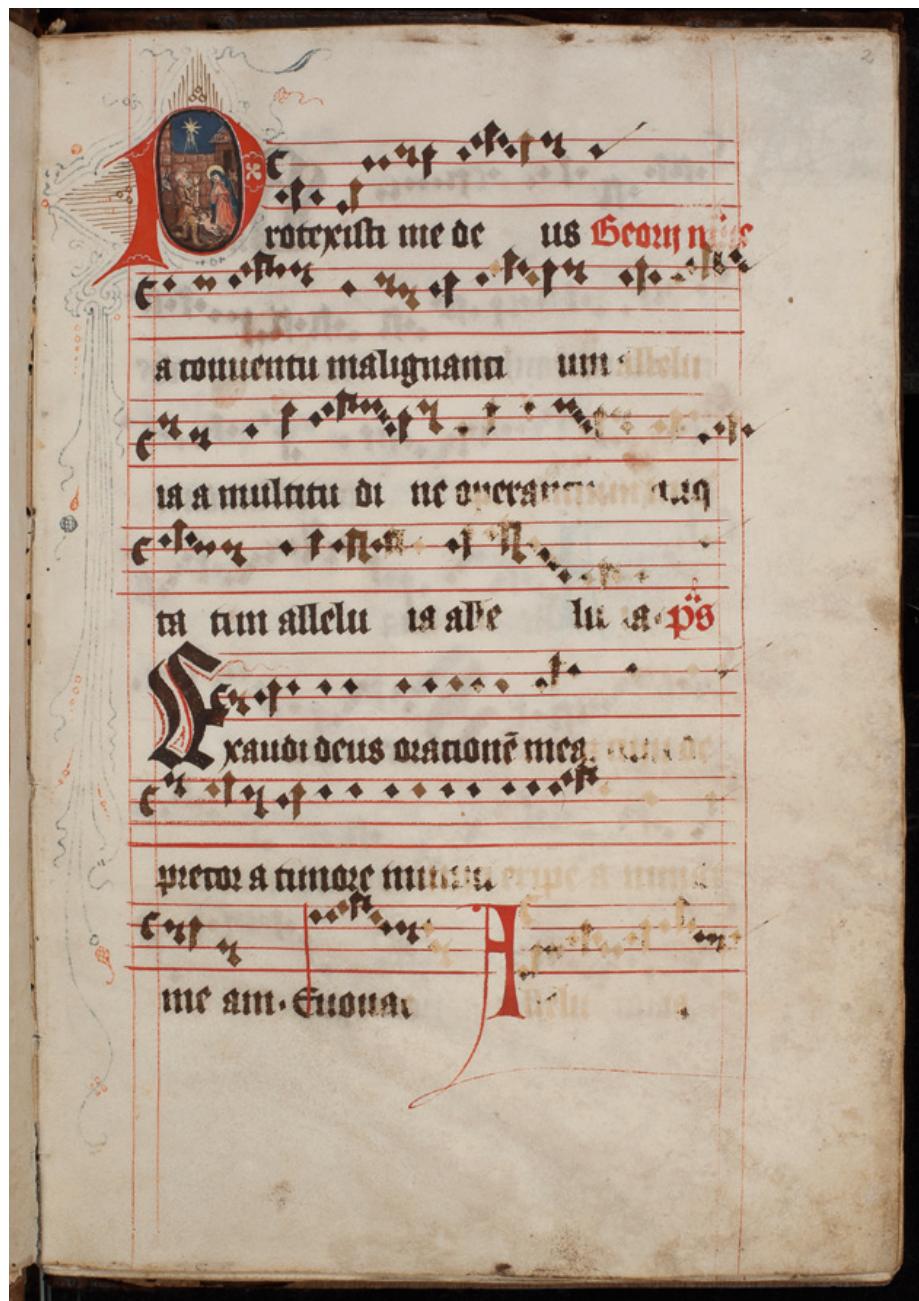


FIG. 3. A page from a Gradual. Late fifteenth century, German, probably used in a monastery. Courtesy L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Brigham Young University. Inside the capital P is a decoration of the Nativity. The Gradual, whose content relates to the Antiphonary, is the book of Latin text and musical notation used by choirs to perform all the sung pieces of the mass.



E igit̄ clementissime  
pater per iesum xp̄m  
filium tuum dñm nostrū  
suplices rogam̄ et  
petimus: uti accepta  
habias et benedic as **N**ec do **X** na  
**N**ec mu **X** nera **N**ec sacro **X** sā  
cta sacrificia illibata. **E**n primis  
que tibi offerim̄ p̄ ecclesia tua sc̄ia  
catholicā: quā pacificare. custodire  
adumare et regere dignissis toto orbe  
terram: una cū famulo tuo papa no  
stro **A**. antistite n̄o **A**. rege n̄o **A**.  
et omnib̄ orthodoxis atq; catholicis et  
aplici fidei cultorib̄. **N**em̄to dñe  
famulorū famulariū tuarum **A**.



FIG. 4. A page from Missale Pragense, printed in Nuremberg, Germany, in 1498 by G. Stuchs. Courtesy L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Brigham Young University. This book was printed in Germany for use in Prague only a half century after Gutenberg created movable type. The missal is the liturgical book containing all texts, in Latin, necessary for the performance of the Mass.

*peregrinus*. The Hungarian musicologist László Dobszay, with whom I have worked closely at times, has argued that the *tonus peregrinus* is arguably one of the modes that has the strongest claim to derive directly from the Jerusalem Temple.<sup>25</sup> Dobszay exercises a great deal of caution in attempting to trace back into the history of Israel the exact shape and sound of the original chant, and, indeed, it is a hazy and dangerous terrain for those who seek decisive conclusions.

A far more important period for formation of the Antiphonary as we have it in the Western Church is the period culminating in the middle to late fourth century. Those of you who work on the Latin Vulgate will, I hope, be familiar with the name of St. Damasus I, as the Pope who instructed St. Jerome (fig. 5) to translate the scriptures definitively into Latin. St. Damasus is also the Pope who decreed that the entire liturgical texts of the Roman Church should be translated into Latin. A lot has been made of this by recent Catholic scholars.<sup>26</sup> You will perhaps be aware that our liturgy was, until 1965, almost exclusively celebrated in Latin. The Second Vatican Council decided that, while Latin should be ordinarily retained, *some* parts of the liturgy could be translated into local vernaculars.<sup>27</sup> With the extraordinary gift we Catholics have for throwing the baby out with the bathwater, you would now be hard pressed to find any Catholic liturgical service in the United States that is not either in English or Spanish, but that too is a story for another day.

A major argument given for this change into the contemporary vernacular was the example of St. Damasus's decision in the fourth century. The demotic language of Christians in Rome in the fourth century was not, however, Latin: it was *koinē* Greek. St. Damasus's decree was to take the sacred liturgy and sacred scripture *out* of the vernacular and put especially the liturgy into a high, literary Latin (the Vulgate retains a simplicity and roughness), the central theological terms of which were forged by such

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25. László Dobszay, "The Origin of Christian Chant," presented at Temple Music: Meaning and Influence conference of Temple Studies Group, London, May 2009.

26. See, for a full discussion of this, U. Michael Lang, "Rhetoric of Salvation: The Origins of Latin as the Language of the Roman Liturgy," in *The Genius of the Roman Rite: Historical, Theological, and Pastoral Perspectives on Catholic Liturgy*, ed. U. Michael Lang (Chicago: Hillenbrand, 2010), 22–44, esp. 32ff. Lang is heavily indebted to the magisterial work of Christine Mohrmann. See Christine Mohrmann, *Études sur le Latin des Chrétiens*, 4 vols. (Rome: Storia e litteratura, 1961–67).

27. See Second Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, §36.1–3, in *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, vol. 56, 1964, 97–133; p. 109f.



FIG. 5. Saint Jerome, depicted in Life, Death and Miracles of Saint Jerome, French, c. 1495–1515. Courtesy L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Brigham Young University.

figures as St. Jerome, St. Cyprian, and St. Ambrose. I add as an aside that the latter two both were clearly in touch with critically important pseud-epigraphical traditions that, for instance, understood the central importance of the figure of Melchizedek in Christian life and to the meaning of Christian priesthood.<sup>28</sup>

The point was to produce a sacred idiom, away from the language of the street, a language appropriate for God's address to his people. It is clear that there were already circulating various versions of the scriptures in Latin, what we now call by the generic term the *Vetus Latina*, by the time St. Jerome began his own work of translation, and that these versions were in places being used liturgically, together with texts added to them, that functioned as scriptural commentary. Although the body text of the psalms in the Roman Liturgy was almost invariably taken from the Vulgate of St. Jerome, in fact much of the Antiphonary comes from the *Vetus Latina*, despite the existence of the Vulgate. The reason given for this seems explanatory enough: the musical setting of the text was in place before St. Jerome's Vulgate was completed, and no one wanted to rearrange the melodies—perhaps they had already forgotten how. The texts in question had already been set to the *Vetus Latina*. We know very little about the principles and understanding behind the composition of the chant and how the chant in its different modes was related to the text. László Dobszay in fact rejects that there is, or ever was, a theological connection between certain modes and certain texts—you will recall he also rejects a direct link between text and chant as a unitary form.<sup>29</sup>

For the word *theological*, however, we should substitute the word *rational*. That we *know* of no *rationale*, no organizing principle or multiple of principles for composition, does not mean there was not one—it simply means it remains arcane. There's that opacity of the first century and a half of Christian life again. Even here, however, things may not be as simple as the kind of historian who can always find a functional explanation for everything would like. Until 1970, many of the Basilicas in the City of Rome had the privilege, which they extracted from St. Damasus I with some determination, it seems, of *not* using the Vulgate psalter for their worship. They used, rather, the Roman psalter that predated it—one of the versions of the *Vetus Latina*. Here the reason can *not* have been musical. This is because the psalms are sung on set tones derived from each of the Gregorian modes. Although there is an important variety of modes,

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28. See, for instance, St. Ambrose, *De sacramentis* 4, 3ff; St. Cyprian, *Epistolæ sancti Cypriani ad Cæciliūm*, Epist. 3.

29. Dobszay, "Origin of Christian Chant."

and a multiplicity of variations of the endings of each mode, nevertheless *any* psalm can be sung to *any* mode and *any* termination. The reasons here *must* have been theological.

Rome was inherently theologically conservative, and this is taken almost as a byword in liturgical study. The question (almost never asked) is, why: why the conservatism? Why would there be resistance to St. Jerome’s Vulgate psalter? And if the argument over the Vulgate had gradually been lost in the rest of the Church with regard to the psalter, why was it not lost with regard to the texts of the Antiphonary, those crucial little bits of commentary on what are above all Temple texts?

My suggestion—and it is only a suggestion—would be that some versions belonging to the *Vetus Latina* preserve important theological matters that were being forgotten by the time of St. Jerome. There were those who knew what was being forgotten, or at least knew there had been a forgetting, and resisted the change. They clung to the record of the Latin translation because it better preserved the Temple tradition that the Early Church had received. There has been far too little study of these important clues, buried in the dense thickets of the material of the Roman Rite.

This is where I want to end—to end, if you like, back at the beginning—with an invitation to you: to “join counsel” with us on that opaque ground of one of the most difficult-to-interpret periods of Christian history, and with a suggestion of one of the ways, for Catholics at least, it could be done: through a careful examination of the texts of our tradition of Temple singing. There is much, I think, we could learn from each other in a restoration of the origins and meaning not only of the sounds, but of the texts of Temple chant.

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FIG. 1. A star-forming region in the gas pillars of the Eagle Nebula. Gas pillars are columns of cool interstellar hydrogen gas and dust that are incubators for new stars. The pillar depicted here is about four light-years long from base to tip.<sup>1</sup> Credit: NASA, ESA, STScI, J. Hester and P. Scowen (Arizona State University).